



## President's Report 2021

This year's report brings good news about the Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy and Safe Communities! We have been able to retire our debt by fiscal year end and forge a new partnership with Holland College going forward in 2021, when we return to face-to-face events in 2022 on the campus in Charlottetown. We have also had success in attracting revenue from a variety of sources to ensure that this year's ASI Forum is on a firm financial footing.

We launched a new ASI Online Workshop Program in the spring of 2021, with support from the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The workshops were a mix of sessions presented at previous ASI events, as well as new presentations. I want to thank Susan Hartley, Linda Liebenberg and Patsy Beattie-Huggan for their efforts to design, launch and promote this program, which provides good profile for ASI during the year.

The ASI Policy Brief was launched at the ASI 2020 Policy Forum, through the leadership provided by David French and Mary-Jane McKitterick from A Way Home Canada. We attracted a working group of 20 people from across the Atlantic Region and other parts of Canada to provide input into the content of the brief and a knowledge mobilization plan to promote it. A draft of the brief was circulated to external readers in July and presented as a workshop at the ASI 2021 Forum to gather further input. We consider this to be a good example of a crowd-sourced document that we hope will contribute to upstream policies and programs.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic was still with us, we decided to build on the success of our virtual forum in 2020 and offer a virtual event again in 2021. We attracted 135 registrants, more than we had hoped for! The Program Planning Committee developed a program that was full of rich content, with presenters from across the Atlantic Region, Quebec, and other parts of Canada. The Atlantic Policy Forum on Mental Health Promotion – ***The Great Reconnect - Building Personal, Community and Societal Resilience in our Post-COVID-19 World*** – was held online from August 23-25 in Charlottetown, PEI, streaming from the unceded ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people. The theme was inspired by the film, *The Great Disconnect*, which highlighted the impacts of social isolation in our world due to factors such as urban design, transportation patterns, and widespread social media usage. It kicked off with a conversation with Paul Born, Co-CEO of the Tamarack Institute and author of the book, *Deepening Community*, who was interviewed by Dr. Trevor Hancock (School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria, BC, retired). They talked about the importance of community and relationships for our mental health.

The Atlantic Showcase featured exemplary programs from all four Atlantic Provinces. Details can be found on our ASI website. The Opening Plenary, chaired by Trevor Hancock, addressed the question - *How do we reconnect and build a resilient society to support mental health?* The panelists included Mélissa Généreux, Estrie Public Health Department (Quebec), Hon. Dorothy Shephard, New Brunswick Minister of Health, Tyler Simmonds, Filmmaker (Nova Scotia), Heather Wilson, Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, and Mark Greenberg, Emeritus Bennett Chair of Prevention Science, Penn State University.

The Youth Panel, moderated by Brandon Hey from the Mental Health Commission of Canada, featured youth leaders from diverse perspectives, who offered personal reflections on COVID-19 and vision for the future - Claire Byrne, Black Cultural Society of PEI and Black Collective Media, Sumaya Muhammed, New Brunswick Multicultural Council, Madi Sutton, Mental Health Commission of Canada Youth Council, Hanley Ivan Smith, Youth Project, NS, Snowden Pijogge, Nain Youth Centre, NL. Round table discussions allowed participants to discuss *Reconnecting and Building Back Better* from their own perspectives.

Ten concurrent workshops were presented by people from the four Atlantic Provinces and Quebec, allowing participants to learn new information and skills that they can apply in their own communities and settings.

A second plenary provided an update on the ASI Policy Brief and an opportunity to have further input to shape its findings and recommendations. This was followed by a presentation on *Policy in Action – How a strategic plan guides the development of a resilient college community!* – by Sandy MacDonald, President, Holland College.

The Closing Panel, moderated by Olivier Bellefleur, Scientific Lead, centre de collaboration nationale sur les politiques publique et santé/National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy (CCNPPS/NCCHPP), offered comments about *Upstream Policy Momentum in Atlantic Canada, Quebec and beyond*. Panellists were Nicole Bernier, Expert Scientific Advisor, CCNPPS/NCCHPP, “Health in all policies in Quebec: three lessons to consider”, Vanessa Nevin, Health Director, Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat, Integrating Indigenous values, science and world views in shaping policy, Lori M. Wozney, Senior Health Outcomes Scientist, Nova Scotia Health, Health Equity, Technology and Narrowing the Digital Divide, Karen Clarke, Social Worker, NL, Progressing Policy: Honouring Values with Actions.

The Youth Leadership Program attracted 20 youth from across the region to learn, share, network, and participate in the event. Thanks to Cathy Leslie, Arianne Melara, and Karen Clarke for their support of our youth program.

I want to thank our board members who have all contributed to the success of ASI this year - Robert Cahill, Karen Clarke, Susan Hartley, Cathy Leslie, Linda Liebenberg, Arianne Melara, Chantal Peng, Eva Sock, and Patsy Beattie-Huggan. Special thanks go to Patsy and her team at The Quaich, who provided the person power to make all of this happen - Chantal Peng, Youth Leadership Coordinator, Claire Chilton, Communications Coordinator, Anne Götz, international intern, Wendy Kraglund Gauthier, WKG Educational Consulting, Online Technical Support, and Julia Abundo, Online Technical Support.

As we head into the fall of 2021, the Policy Brief is close to its final form for presentation to policy makers, community leaders, and Indigenous communities in the four Atlantic Provinces. We are on a sound financial footing, our ASI Online Fall Program is underway, and plans for the future are taking shape! It is my distinct honour and pleasure to work with such a talented team of people to realize the ASI’s mission to be a catalyst for social change in Atlantic Canada!

Respectfully submitted,



Malcolm Shookner

President