



President's Report 2023

This year has been unprecedented for ASI! We've had two major projects operating at one time – ***Mobilizing Intersectoral Policy for Upstream Investment in Infant, Child and Youth Mental Health in Atlantic Canada*** (PHAC/ISAF) and ***Investing Upstream: Placing infants, children and youth at the forefront of lifelong mental well-being – a shift in policy direction for Prince Edward Island*** (PEIMWA). As I noted in my last report, these projects are complementary to each other.

In the PHAC project, we co-hosted 4 provincial, 5 community, and 2 regional, on-line workshops across the region to introduce the policy brief and learn what is going on in communities and the provinces that is aligned with our brief and its four priorities. The Steering Committee convened for this project offered the wisdom and expertise of people from the Atlantic region and across Canada. The project was completed in June 2023 and the final report submitted to PHAC in July. A copy of the report has been distributed to all ASI board members. We are reflecting on lessons learned as we plan for next steps.

The PEI project is focusing on implementing the four priorities in one jurisdiction - Prince Edward Island. The purpose of this project is two-fold: 1 - To implement Mental Health in All Policies in Prince Edward Island; 2 - To provide training and capacity building to realize and sustain implementation of a whole of society, whole of community approach to mental health promotion for all, and to achieve lifelong mental well-being for current and future generations. We have convened an Advisory Committee under the leadership of Susan Hartley to tap into the interest and expertise of local residents and organizations. The group has identified two areas of focus – knowledge mobilization and communications. Their work will also be applicable to the other Atlantic Provinces.

The ASI 2023 Forum was organized around the theme - ***Inspiring Hope through Community Action***. Our goal was “To advance our understanding of the importance of hope, grounded in and motivating community action, and how resilient communities promote the mental health of infants, children and youth.” We attracted 140 participants to this hybrid event, 18 of them in the Youth Leadership program. The program opened with “***A Conversation About Inspiring Change***” with Brenda Restoule (virtually) in conversation with Tyler Simmonds (onsite). They explored the theme from two perspectives – Indigenous peoples and racialized populations. By all accounts it was an inspiring and moving start to the forum. The Atlantic Canada Showcase featured programs from the four provinces that are examples of our theme in action in communities.

The Opening Plenary – ***Communities Inspiring Hope in Atlantic Canada*** – presented a panel of community leaders who explored how community action can inspire hope and purpose that will benefit current and future generations. Moderator: Jim Mustard, Raising the Villages, Cape Breton, NS, facilitated discussion among the panelists - Kim Chamberlain, Director, Multicultural Assoc., Chaleur region and Mayor, City of Bathurst, NB;

Anna Keenan, CAO Victoria, PEI, Climate Activist; Sweta Daboo, Student (Recent position - ED, PEI Coalition on Women in Government); Colin Corcoran, Chief Executive Director, Community Sector Council, NL.

The Youth Panel heard from youth leaders who explored the capacity and impact of youth engagement in policy development and organizational decision-making. Moderator: Adam McKenzie – Past President, UPEI Student Union. Panelists: Allison Seward – VolunTeens Coordinator, The SPLASH Centre – NL; Hannah Crouse – Student & Youth Advocate, NS; Omar Morad – Founder, Union of Youth Immigrants – NB; Jude Sampson, Climate Activist, NS Youth Council on Climate Action and Misty Dyson, Program Coordinator, Mokami Status of Women Council.

Roundtable discussions provided the opportunity for participants to have an interactive discussion to generate a list of strategies to encourage a shift towards “upstream” that address the roots of mental health promotion and equity in Atlantic Canada and inspire community action.

Eight workshops were offered to enhance skills that support advancement of the ASI Policy Brief. Participants learned from real life experiences and evidence-informed approaches, using culture as a foundation for collective action at all levels to build hope, mobilize communities and foster well-being societies; including advocacy for policy change to promote infant, child, and youth mental health through the life course. Most workshops were offered in person; two were offered online.

The second plenary opened with ***Knowledge to Action – ASI Policy Brief Update*** - Malcolm Shookner, President, ASI. This was followed by the Policy Panel - ***Leading transformative change for upstream investment in policy***. Panelists reflected on activities currently underway in the Atlantic Region that align with the four priority areas of the ASI Policy Brief and demonstrate momentum for upstream policy development in Canada. Moderator: Karen Clarke, Vice President, ASI Board of Directors. Panelists: Sister Elizabeth Davies, - Newfoundland & Labrador Health Accord; Alexia Riche, ED, Community Sector Network/Karen Cumberland, ED, PEI Alliance for Mental Well-Being - Leveraging collaboration to maximize funding resources and drive systems change; Nicole Bernier, Expert Scientific Advisor, National Collaborating Centre on Healthy Public Policy – Developing the Canadian Network for Health in All Policies; Susan Hartley, Chair, PEI Knowledge Mobilization Project – Building Momentum for Upstream Investment – the PEI Experience.

The closing speaker, Louise Adongo, Executive Director, Inspiring Communities (NS), spoke about ***Leadership to Inspire hope and local action for a well-being society***. Evaluations were very positive: A couple of quotes:

“Thank you so much for everyone involved in making this wonderful experience possible. It was a beautiful and safe space where I could learn and nurture my hope with love, respect, acceptance, and support.”

“I’m so impressed with how you and the ASI community have steadfastly evolved through the years to become a beating heart within Atlantic Canada, giving life to so many essential ideas, tools and relationships across our four provinces.”

As we look toward 2024, we have begun to plan around the theme – ***The Enduring Spirit of Collaboration – Celebrating 20 years with ASI!*** ASI 2024 will reflect on the accomplishments and impact of ASI over the past 20 years and inspire a vision for continuing collaboration going forward.

I want to thank our board members who have contributed to the success of ASI this year - Ron Brun, Karen Clarke (Vice President), Susan Hartley, Charlene Kippenhuck, Cathy Leslie (Secretary), Linda Liebenberg (Treasurer), Arianne Melara, Edmund Morris, Adina Nault, Chantal Peng, Tyler Simmonds, Maggie Snow 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. **Canada Summer Jobs:** Stacie Smith, Youth Leadership Coordinator, Mya MacDonald, Communications and Event Planning Coordinator, **International Interns:** Anne Götz, Whova Communications Manager, Milena Scherer - Volunteer Coordinator; **The Quaich Staff:** Ellen Theuerkauf, Communications and Event Manager, Mizuho Miller - Project Manager, Nikki MacKinnon – Bookkeeper; **On-line Technical Support:** Wendy Kraglund-Gauthier, WKG Educational Consulting and Isaac Williams.

We have also experienced great sadness this year when Eva Sock passed away on January 28, 2023. Eva was a resident of Elispogtog First Nation and had served on the ASI Board since 2020, helping us build working relationships with indigenous people and organizations. The ASI First Nations Regional Workshop was dedicated to her memory and acknowledged her work in advancing reconciliation. She was known to say: "*If it is to be, it is up to me.*" She has passed the torch to us!

As we head into the fall of 2023, we continue to be on a sound financial footing. We have successfully completed one project, with a suite of tools and a plan for continued knowledge mobilization for the policy brief. Our second project in PEI will continue to lead the way toward implementing the priorities of our policy brief.

ASI is gaining a reputation as a leader in upstream investment for mental health promotion in the Atlantic Region and across Canada. We have strong partnerships with several national organizations, as well as provincial and community organizations in our region. We have been invited to participate in the new Canadian Network for Health in All Policies. However, we still face the challenge of sustainable funding for our work. We are committed to finding the resources to support us as we fulfill our mission to be a catalyst for social change in the Atlantic Region!

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Malcolm Shookner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Malcolm Shookner
President