



Impact Organizations
of Nova Scotia

IONS Impact Report

2022-2023

DINAO
SIB/HER

Land Acknowledgement:

As beneficiaries of ongoing colonialism, we recognize the privilege in being able to build a life here in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded land of the Mi'kmaw People. This territory is covered by the Peace and Friendship Treaties. This land is also the birthplace of Black heritage and culture in what is now known as Canada following the forcible displacement of people of African descent. As an organization and as people, we are committed to carrying out the long overdue, vital reconciliation and anti-oppression work.

Previously, Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia (IONS) crafted annual reports detailing our activities. This year we are taking a first step in shifting toward an impact-focused report to be more intentional in highlighting the changes we are affecting. The transition comes as a result of our effort to move towards Justice, Equity, Decolonization, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDDI) informed practices, focusing less on quantifying outputs in terms of productivity and instead providing evidence through imagery, storytelling, and direct quotations from those we serve. Through this impact report we aim to highlight the work in community that we have accomplished together over the past fiscal year and focus on the stories of change that have brought us here. It is a representation of our journey, an artifact of celebration, a tool for reflection, and a commitment to continuing to create positive community impact. Thank you for your continued commitment to working together we hope that you enjoy looking back, to look ahead with us!



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One Year as IONS

"IONS gives an important voice to the sector, surfacing and connecting the actors in our areas of common purpose. It helps us be more effective at what we do, knowing we can reach out to others for expertise and support." - COMMUNITY PARTNER



In March 2023, we hosted an event to celebrate our first anniversary as IONS with members of our community. Our rebrand from the Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia to Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia in 2022 was an intentional part of reimagining our work and recognizing the value contributed by community groups across the province.

IONS is on a transformational journey. We are reimagining how we can more effectively act as a connector, leader, and steward of the Community Impact Sector. We know that the status quo is not serving us and that we need to help model the change that's needed. We have made bold transitions in how we operate, experimenting and trialing new ways of working. For example, we implemented a 4-day work week and an internal "Living JEDDI Lab" to explore decolonized ways of working together, which includes shifts to our mindsets, policies, practices, and procedures.

Part of taking a decolonized approach to our work includes centering relationships and creating spaces for people to come together to connect, share ideas and develop bonds. This requires slowing down, focusing on fewer priorities, and being in community. This is a work in progress and we're learning as we go – this year we struggled with boundaries and busyness, but we're continuing to build our muscles for resisting a culture of urgency and moving toward a culture of care and reciprocity.

We're excited about the journey we're on and we're encouraged by the responses we're receiving from the people who engage with our events and content. We hope you'll continue being part of the IONS network and walk with us in this journey!

JEDDI & Our Values in Action

For the last year, IONS has focused on incorporating the principles of Justice, Equity, Decolonization, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDDI) into all our work. We use the expanded version of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, because we feel that JEDDI is more action-oriented and speaks to the importance of reconciling harm and reimagining current systems.

We have been practicing integrating these principles at the core of our work, not as a separate addition on top of programming, communications, engagement etc. This lens matters to our team and how we support the Community Impact Sector, because the transformative change that is needed to address the current social and ecological crises requires fundamental shifts in the way we work and be together.

As colonialism and capitalism often work against our goals for transformative, sustainable change – decolonization is at the heart of what we do in advocating for justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

We invite practices that center decolonial values and reciprocity, including care for people and the land, and resisting capitalist conceptions of productivity and worth.

When considering justice, we learn about histories that have shaped systemic oppression and how we can rebalance power to reduce, repair and prevent harm. Equity asks us to help create the spaces for self-determination and just futures. Centering diversity looks like ensuring First Voices and different identities are equitably represented – and inclusion is building the structures that ensure accessibility to all participants.

Practically, this has guided IONS to ensure our staff team understands and embodies JEDDI – in how we plan and prioritize our work, in how we develop internal policies and practices, and in how we engage with our network of relationships in the Community Impact Sector.

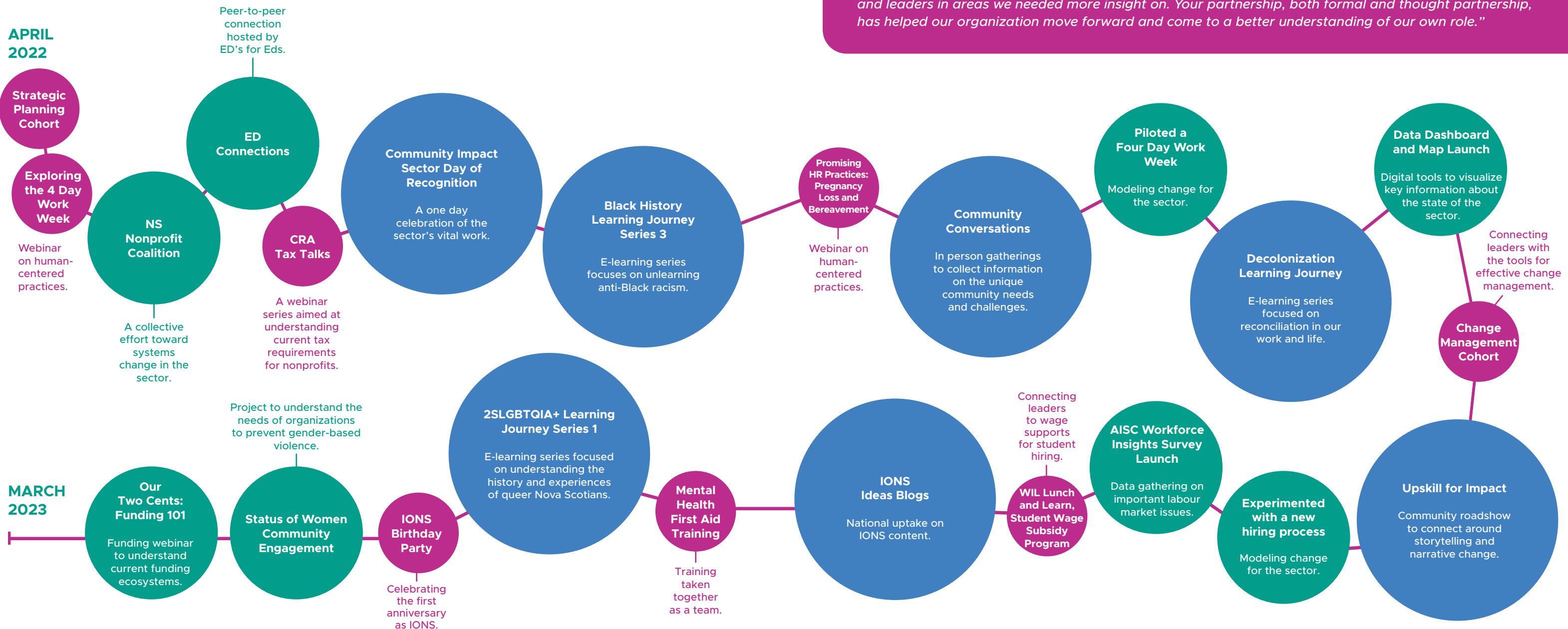


Year in Review by the Numbers

"Thank you for the great work you do! I've loved all the opportunities to learn and connect with others in working in nonprofits, and the events I've attended have been game changers for us"

Now in the final year of our [strategic plan](#), we have focused on building internal knowledge, increasing sector capacity, and creating opportunities for in-person community collaboration. Our efforts this fiscal provided a number of activities aimed at

strengthening connections, modeling change, and moving the needle on systems change. Through offering fewer but more impactful activities, we have gained momentum, building a foundation for reflection, intention, and impact.



52

Total Events.
Some programs included multi-event sessions (i.e., 10-week cohorts and 2-part pilots).

3,343

Total Registrants across all 52 events.
This includes webinar participants, cohort attendees, in person community engagements, and more.

593

Total subscribers from 24 unique sector organizations.
For the Employee & Family Assistance Program

229

Survey Respondents.
To the 2023 Workforce Insights Survey administered in Partnership with the Association of Industry Sector Councils.

"The education pieces have helped build on strengths in our staff and brought access to helpful learning and leaders in areas we needed more insight on. Your partnership, both formal and thought partnership, has helped our organization move forward and come to a better understanding of our own role."

Educate & Innovate

COMMITMENTS UNDER THIS PILLAR

Through this pillar, IONS provides the tools, skills and knowledge to increase the capacity of existing and newly forming impact organizations province-wide. Our goal is to ensure organizations build flexible, diverse workforces that will thrive in today's innovative digital economy.

- 1 We built capacity in human resource planning, workforce attraction and retention, guided by a commitment to JEDDI, through our Promising HR Practices webinar and conversation on accessing programs to hire students.
- 2 We provided training and development in person and online guided by the priorities of the sector on the topics of decolonization, anti-Black racism, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ experience.
- 3 We supported robust organizations by providing accessible training in strategic planning for a cohort of leaders, as well as in financial topics in the "Our Two Cents" webinar on funding.
- 4 Finally, we supported the development of inclusive leadership strategies across the sector and provided Change Management training in partnership with Prosci for diverse sector leaders.



Educate & Innovate

STORIES OF IMPACT

2SLGBTQIA+ LEARNING JOURNEY: ALPHABET SOUP

Spurred by the positive engagement with the Decolonization Learning Journey and the Black History Learning Journey, we developed a 2SLGBTQIA+ Learning Journey in partnership with the Cape Breton Youth Project. This first webinar series focused on the experiences of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in Nova Scotia and highlighted lived experiences through stories and moderated panels.

Sessions focused on topics such as love, queerness, context, and why words matter when talking with and about the community. With a support person available for anyone participating in the live sessions, the learning journey provided a safe and brave space to dive deep into these conversations – creating an environment where people could be seen, heard, and learn together.



"I just wanted to say how moving this has been! I truly appreciate the stories and knowledge being shared. You're all amazing humans, doing wonderful work! Thank you!"

- 2SLGBTQIA+ LEARNING JOURNEY PARTICIPANT



"Thank you, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this training, it has provided the knowledge and tools to enhance my leadership skills, and continue the work that we do"

CHANGE MANAGEMENT COHORT

Now in its second iteration, this sought after program hosted in partnership with Prosci, provided an opportunity for a group of diverse sector leaders to engage in effective change management training. Over the course of ten weeks, 20 leaders from across the sector gathered virtually to learn new techniques, tools, and skills for managing change. In our ever-changing sector, being able to react, adapt, and act effectively are invaluable skills. Participants described this training as "game changing" and "transformative" for their organizations. IONS is looking forward to exploring future options around a community of practice for change management and continuing to offer this training to give leaders the opportunity to grow and learn together with a dedicated group of peers.

Collaborate and Activate

COMMITMENTS UNDER THIS PILLAR

IONS facilitates, supports, and activates connections across networks to encourage new and continued collaborations between impact organizations, the government, private sector, and community. The goal of this collaboration is to inspire systems change to build an inclusive, sustainable, healthy, and prosperous Nova Scotia. Some of the ways we have achieved this include:

- 1 Hosting, convening, and facilitating opportunities for the sector to engage, build trust, collaborate, through the Upskill for Impact workshops that took place across the province.
- 2 Facilitating sharing of ideas, information, best practices, space, skills, and resources through our Sector Transformation Community Conversations.
- 3 Focusing on JEDDI and practices of inclusion to guide both of our in-person community engagements, so that we can be intentional about ensuring that changemakers, older adults, historically disenfranchised communities, newcomers, and all those passionate about making a difference in the sector are included in the envisioning of transformative change.
- 4 Building and fostering networks across the sector through the newly launched [network map](#), and ongoing collaborations with the [Change Lab Action Research Initiative \(CLARI\)](#) and three other impact organizations engaged in the four-day work week trial.



Collaborate and Activate

STORIES OF IMPACT

COMMUNITY ROADSHOWS - UPSKILL FOR IMPACT

In the fall of 2022, we traveled across the province to engage people through a workshop on telling their organization's story. Developing compelling narratives about our impact is critical for building awareness, sustaining funding, and advocating for change. These sessions were designed to prepare participants with the skills to develop the craft of storytelling. 91 attendees participated in five sessions held in different communities across the province, where they had opportunities to practice storytelling and connect with each other.

The capacity-building opportunity provided people with the ability to practice tangible skills, share space, and learn about the work being done across the sector. In one session the energy of the room was almost palpable with individuals able to share the challenges and successes that have made their organizations so impactful. As a touchstone for the work that we are doing with impact organizations, this initial offering is only the start of more opportunities to upskill and connect.



"Beyond the content, I think this session reminded us of the importance of practicing storytelling. I certainly will be practicing storytelling in my work on the regular."

- STORYTELLING WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT



Advocate and Celebrate

COMMITMENTS UNDER THIS PILLAR

IONS work through the final pillar has been about amplifying the voice of the sector. Through research, advocacy, and celebration, the focus has been on bringing the challenges and the successes of the sector to the forefront. This year IONS has achieved this through:

- 1 Engaging in sector research through our workforce insights survey, with intention around understanding the needs of those who work and volunteer in the sector.
- 2 Communicating the findings of this research through our sector dashboard.
- 3 Sharing the economic impact of the sector through our presentations, experimenting with emerging new ways of working, and communicating these findings through reports, blogs, webinars, and conferences.
- 4 Hosting the Community Sector Impact Day of Recognition celebrations with awards for outstanding leaders and organizations in the sector.
- 5 Acting as a conduit between the sector and government through the Nova Scotia Nonprofit Coalition.
- 6 Responding to the needs of the sector through listening and convening community conversations.



Advocate and Celebrate

STORIES OF IMPACT

COMMUNITY IMPACT SECTOR DAY OF RECOGNITION

The Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition is an annual event delivered in partnership with the United Way and the province of Nova Scotia to recognize the sector's people and work. The day proclaimed by the Government of Nova Scotia, is to bring awareness and recognition to the sector and the crucial work done by so many impact organizations across the province.

The celebration was held on April 29, 2022, at the Lighthouse Arts Centre, and saw 285 individuals attend online or in person, with the event featuring artists, performers, and poets, as well as the presentation of twenty "Invisible Champion" Awards, sponsored by the Bhayana Family Foundation. The necessity of this celebration cannot be understated. It provided the opportunity for community leaders and changemakers to share their stories and to be recognized in front of their peers, government officials, and other sector staff for their extraordinary efforts. There was laughter, tears, joy, and reverence for the sector, leaving all who joined "deeply moved" and "inspired."



"Really enjoyed the combination of artistic performances and impact sector information and stories. It was spot on and very enjoyable, loved the poetry, brought me to tears."

"Bright, informative, and easy to use, this is exactly what I plan on going to when I am talking to the government about our staffing needs, this is so incredibly useful and thank you for doing the work you do!"



STATE OF THE SECTOR DASHBOARD

With a focus on empowering organizations with data, this year we launched a Sector Data Dashboard and Network Map alongside the 2022 State of the Sector Report. We hosted a virtual webinar that was attended by 136 individuals from the sector, government, and even community impact sector councils from other provinces. The launch of these tools marked a turning point in how we share the data that we are collecting. Using the dashboard and network map, organizations can now find the most up to date data that we are collecting from our workforce surveys, Statistics Canada, the Canadian Revenue Agency, and publicly available information from the Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stock Companies. We are creating a source for data driven decision-making, and providing quantitative evidence that will show the key sector trends over time. The intention is to make data accessible through these digital tools to empower organizations to initiate their own conversations, collaborations, and discoveries.

What We Heard

Organizations were asked
“HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR IMPACT?”

“We connect residents to services, their community, and each other”

“for a small organization we are filled with an abundance of history and wonderful stories that lends to creating a bright light in a small community”

“we are dedicated to ensuring a vibrant future”

Through our work, IONS has been intentional about listening, centering, and amplifying the voice of the sector. We are practicing reciprocity through ensuring a share-back of solutions, tools, and takeaways. This year we:

- Conducted a State of the Sector survey focused on retention and recruitment.
- Engaged in six community conversations on the topic of sector transformation around the province.
- Led online sessions focused on barriers and sustainability with leaders, senior government officials, and members of the business community.
- Held five “Upskill for Impact” sessions providing storytelling workshops province-wide.

We heard stories of connection, compassion, and resilience in the face of uncertainty, inequity, and obstacles. While the challenges of the sector are well known, from issues of funding sustainability, pay inequities, ever increasing workload demands, and burnout – we heard many examples of the adaptability, creativity, and problem-solving ability of organizations. Through our research, community conversations, and working groups, 10 clear actions emerged. You told us that the way forward is through better and bolder communication, supports to strengthen collaboration, and more opportunities for connection with each other, the government, and the communities we serve.

As was shared in one of our community conversations, “the time is now to be bold”, and IONS is excited to support organizations in this boldness, as we elevate and amplify the collective voice of the sector through our work and advocacy.

ACTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY IMPACT SECTOR

- 1 Tell our story:** The time is now to change the narrative, increase our advocacy, and create a new way of working with government. A one day celebration of the sector’s vital work.
- 2 Unified Voice:** We are diverse sector, but we need to have a collective voice.
- 3 Strategic JEDDI:** We need to make strategic commitments to JEDDI, so this work is not siloed or seen as a side activity.
- 4 Build Networks:** Let’s focus on building networks, supporting activities, and connecting with each other to action what we’ve heard.
- 5 Define Thriving:** More work is needed to develop a shared understanding of what a thriving sector looks like and how to get there.
- 6 Youth & Rural Voices:** We need to include the youth voice and rural experiences in our conversations, decisions, and actions.
- 7 Common Language:** We can use the social determinants of health framework as a common language when talking to government partners.
- 8 Diversify Leadership:** We have to increase diversity at decision making levels, ensure equity is centered in our work, and equip emerging leaders.
- 9 Transform Funding:** We need to advocate for multi-year funding agreements, funding for staff and operations, and less restrictive requirements around allocation and reporting.
- 10 New Ways of Working:** We should explore different governance models, shared services, and experiment with new ways of working.

What We Learned

The pressures facing people and organizations are growing – requiring us to consider how current systems and assumptions about work are perpetuating overwhelm, burnout, and an inability to address root causes of problems.

One of the single most important things we learned this year was the importance of being clear about our focus and ensuring the team has the knowledge, tools, supports, and structures needed to do good work. In the spring of 2022, it became clear that we needed to critically assess how we work together and the scope of topics we touch. That summer we began a series of internal sessions to better understand what was getting in our way of finding our flow. IONS’ Executive Director, Annika Voltan, commented on this in her blog titled [Going Slow to Go Fast: Finding Our Focus and Flow](#).

This journey evolved through the fall to become our “Living JEDDI Lab.” We started meeting to discuss how we can begin to practice more human-centered, decolonized approaches to working. Our intent is to experiment internally so we can share our learnings and inspire others to come along the journey with us. We have implemented a 4-day work week and shared our experience through a variety of media including

an [Imagine Canada podcast](#), [Future of Good article](#), and our IONS Ideas [blog](#). We also revised our hiring and interview process to better hold and support applicants, sharing our learnings through an IONS Ideas [blog](#) and garnering attention from [The Philanthropist Journal](#).

We still have a ways to go, but our efforts will ultimately help us go deeper in our work and ensure we’re providing supports that resonate with people working in the sector. If the response to IONS’ Communication Manager’s, Lydia Phillip’s blog [“Resisting a Rest: How Urgency Culture Polices our Work”](#) is any indication – we know people are craving spaces for reflection, connection, and processing what’s happening in the world.



Looking Ahead

In December 2022, with support from coaches made possible by [Innoweave's Impact and Strategic Clarity stream](#), an internal working group made up of board members and staff began developing our next 3-year strategy and action plan. This was an opportunity to go deep into what we have learned over the past three years and to shape our vision and role going forward.

Our JEDDI journey is just beginning, and we know it needs to be embedded across all that we do internally and in community. Our work will be more intentional about finding ways to bridge from current structures and behaviours to new possibilities for more effective and equitable solutions to the problems we're facing. Internally, we will continue to experiment with developing a culture of care that resists capitalist tendencies such as hierarchy, silos, urgency, and hyper-productivity as a way to learn and affect

change in other organizations. Our efforts to increase capacity and strengthen networks of community changemakers will focus on creating spaces for connection and generating new ideas for action.

We'll continue to work with the Nova Scotia Nonprofit Coalition to develop and advance a sector strategy for public policy change. We're going to build our internal capacity linked to engagement and research to be better able to lift the voices of people and groups working and volunteering in the sector. And we'll be constantly challenging ourselves to listen, connect and learn more about what's happening and what's needed to ensure we're adding value to the people we're here to support.

There are many exciting possibilities, bold initiatives, and community-centered activities on the horizon – and we cannot wait to share with you.



Letter from the Team

On behalf of our team at Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia (IONS) we wanted to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude for all those within the Community Impact Sector, and for the tireless efforts to make our province a vibrant place to live. Your unwavering dedication to serving others, and the support you have shown us in our work have been nothing short of extraordinary. We are deeply inspired by you, and by the selflessness and compassion that permeates our community. It fuels our desire to do even more.

Your contributions, whether through participating in IONS events and learning sessions, providing valuable insights through our community sessions, or advocating for transformative change, have played a vital role in our ability to continue the work that we do. You have helped us to constantly improve our

programs and initiatives to better serve the sector. Your ongoing support strengthens our resolve to experiment with new ways of working, develop more JEDDI informed practices, and create lasting positive impact.

We are excited by all that we been able to accomplish together in this past year, and can't wait to do even more. We are committed to fostering transformative change and inspiring others to join us on this journey. We are truly grateful for your trust, partnership, and engagement. Thank you for connecting, collaborating, and celebrating with us. You are an integral part of all that we do and. And together, we can continue to create a just and equitable society that prioritizes well-being and belonging for all Nova Scotians.

With Sincerest Appreciation, The IONS Team

Reginald Manzer Halcy Mariauty DeCann Phil Alexandra Shering L M Volstan 



Thank you to the IONS Staff & Board

In closing, we would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to each board and staff member who has dedicated their time, energy, and talent to IONS and the sector. Your passion and hard work are making a difference and cannot be understated. We have the privilege of working together on meaningful endeavours with amazing, caring people who bring such gifts, energy, effort, and positive impact.

We want to take a moment to recognize the valuable contributions of the staff and board members who have moved on to new opportunities. Your dedication and contributions have left an indelible mark on our organization, and we extend our deepest gratitude for the legacy you have left behind. Your efforts have shaped us into the organization we are today, and we will continue to build upon the foundation you have helped establish. To all past and present, thank you for your exceptional contributions, and we look forward to a future of continued growth and positive change.



Annika Voltan
Executive Director



Jody Nelson
Director of Learning & Engagement



Diane Connors
Managing Director



Alexandra Theroux
Operations Manager



Lydia Phillip
Communications Manager



Reg Manzer
Research & Evaluation Manager



Haley Moriarity
Digital Marketing & Admin Coordinator



Christopher Googoo
Board Chair



Tim Crooks
Board Vice Chair



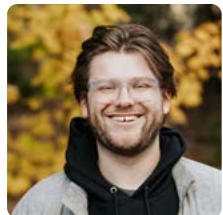
Sally Ng
Board Secretary



Jayne Hunter
Board Member at Large



Sylvia Parris-Drummond
Board Member at Large



Bryce Cross
Board Member at Large



Kelly Bennet
Board Member at Large



Rebecca Slaunwhite
Board Member at Large



Janet Barlow
Board Member at Large



Templeton Sawyer
Board Member at Large



Gurmit Kaur
Board Member at Large

With Recognition

Past team members who have moved on to new opportunities

Nicole Cammaert
Director, Learning & Sector Development

Abdou Kanteh
Director, Strategic Communications & Research

Corey Mattie
Board Member at Large

Sylvia Gawad
Board Member at Large



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