

**Building for Veterans and Families
Through Active Partnerships
and Authentic Relationships**

● 2022-23 IMPACT REPORT

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Message from the CEO and Chair of the Board

As we close the fiscal year for the Atlas Institute, it is with a great deal of pride in this relatively new organization that we can share the results of the past 12 months.

This past fiscal year was the first year of the implementation and execution of our five-year strategic plan. This plan was developed over several months in consultation with Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Veterans and their Families, as well as the service providers and researchers who work closely with this community.

What emerged was very clear direction to focus efforts in four distinct ways: to engage and inform, prevent and prepare, improve care and support, and expand what we know. In so doing, we are ensuring they know that at the Atlas Institute, we do have their backs. The community also shared a sense of frustration at what they had experienced as years of delayed action in spite of many consultations over time, as well as a hope that the Atlas Institute would be accountable with “deeds, not words.”

We understood that in order to build the trust of the Veterans and Families of Canada, words alone would not do, and action would be key.

Over the course of the past year, we have embarked on many different engagement opportunities, led and partnered in research projects, worked to make the resulting data and information more accessible through knowledge mobilization, trained those who work with Veterans and Families, and developed platforms that we hope will give those who engage with us an opportunity to see themselves in the stories of others. Through these many different avenues, it is also our hope that they will choose to share their own experiences, unique wisdom and insights to continue to influence the system of care for Veterans and Families.

We are proud of the work the Atlas team has done over this past year. The stories and numbers within these pages are just a few highlights of the many different aspects of our work. You’ll read about our lived experience campaign that helped build recognition around the Atlas Institute’s new brand identity. You’ll also have a peek at the different resources we’ve developed in response to needs the community has identified, and see how we work with partners to increase access to training so that service



FARDOUS HOSSEINY, PRESIDENT AND CEO



CAL CROCKER, CHAIR OF THE BOARD

providers are best equipped to respond to the unique needs of the Veteran and Family communities. You will see how we have anchored ourselves in the research space by investing in clinical research, partnering nationally and internationally to develop new Canadian-led research, and sharing knowledge while learning from others. And you will see the impact of a post-COVID-19 approach to community engagement and how we are branching out across Canada and finding opportunities to meet with the various organizations that serve Veterans and Families. These meetings are core to identifying emerging issues for Veterans and Families, and help us to bring our focus to these issues and areas of concern early so that together we can continue to make a difference to those who have given so much to us through their service.

The strategic plan we co-created with the community we are here to serve was just the beginning of our journey, setting us in an optimal direction to confidently move forward. The early work we did built a foundation that helped us first to determine a vision. Now, we are building on that foundation, taking the next step and continuing to forge ahead toward a better future for Veteran and Family mental health and well-being.

Fardous Hosseiny, President and CEO
Cal Crocker, Chair of the Board

1 Engage and inform

Build trusted relationships with Veterans and Families, engage them in all key Atlas projects and processes, and empower them with curated, trustworthy information that supports their health and well-being journey

New ways to share voices of lived experience

For Veterans and their Families, sharing stories is not only an important part of their own healing, but can also be a way to help others in the community know that there is someone else who understands their experience, and that hope and support are available.

Since its inception, the Atlas Institute has actively listened to and amplified the voices and experiences of Veterans and Family members living with PTSD and other service-related mental health conditions. It is our belief that the mental health system can better respond to Veteran and Family needs when guided and informed by the voices of lived experience and expertise.

As the Atlas Institute engaged with the Veteran and Family community, we looked at ways to build platforms to allow their stories to be shared from a first-person perspective, in an easily understood and authentic manner. Two high-impact, low-cost storytelling initiatives emerged allowing our Lived Experience team to work with Veterans and Family members to share their experiences in their own words—a podcast and a blog.

Podcast: *Mind Beyond the Mission*—Connecting with community through gritty, authentic conversations

The podcast, *Mind Beyond the Mission*, hosted by Brian McKenna, the Atlas Institute’s National Strategic Advisor for Veterans, and Laryssa Lamrock, the National Strategic Advisor for Veteran Families, dives deep into the real issues experienced by Veterans, former RCMP members and Families living with mental health injuries. Focused on having authentic conversations that are gritty, honest and informative, Brian and Laryssa are building a community following as they talk freely about issues that might not often be discussed publicly. In doing so, they are able to engage with their audience at a personal level, while also building recognition of the Atlas Institute and our new brand.

The first podcast was launched in June 2022.

The vast majority (93%) of our listeners are in Canada, 3% are in the United States, and 1% are in Australia.



Podcast Episodes

The expert in your own journey In the very first podcast episode, Brian and Laryssa explore what it's like to be a Veteran and a Veteran Family member living with PTSD. As experts on their own experiences, they speak candidly about what a PTSD diagnosis really means for them and for those closest to them.

'And their Families' Atlas Institute Lived Experience Lead Polly Maher shares the personal experiences of having a Veteran spouse living with PTSD while balancing motherhood, work life, her own well-being and her spouse's diagnosis. Polly, Brian and Laryssa reflect on their experiences and struggles with compassion fatigue, communication, self-care, living in "survival mode" and managing expectations. They also share resources and strategies that have helped them in their journeys.

Grieving the loss of someone who's alive Many Veteran Family members can relate to the experience of feeling grief, even when they haven't actually lost a loved one. They can grieve the person their loved one used to be or the lives they thought they would have. This can create feelings of isolation and loneliness. Polly shares how she has reconciled her own feelings of grief and loss, and reflects on how her relationships have flourished and strengthened as she processed these complex emotions.

Moral injury with Fardous Hosseiny Moral injury is a relatively new term in the mental health research sphere, but one that countless Veterans can relate to from lived experience. Moral injury refers to the psychological, social and spiritual impact of events or acts that a person performs, witnesses or fails to prevent, which conflict with one's own deeply held moral beliefs and values. It is not uncommon for Veterans to have experienced events that cause moral injury during their service and that impact can continue into their lives post-service. Atlas Institute President and CEO Fardous Hosseiny engages in an in-depth conversation that looks at critical aspects such as how moral injury differs from PTSD, the kinds of events that can result in moral injury, symptoms, and how to support peers experiencing symptoms of moral injury, among other important considerations of how this injury impacts the lives of those who have served and the impact on their loved ones.

Why is communication so hard? While communication is a critical skill for anyone serving in the military, it can often become a challenge for Veterans living with a posttraumatic stress injury (PTSI). Veterans and their Family members can face unexpected barriers that impede the open, safe communication that healthy relationships thrive on. Brian and Laryssa draw from their own experiences to share strategies and resources that have been helpful in cultivating health, effective communication in their relationships with their spouses, children, service providers and others in their day-to-day lives.

931

Total (all-time)
downloads

250

Downloads of
most popular episode:
*The Expert In
Your Own Journey*

50

followers on
Apple Music

52

followers on
Spotify

10

subscribers on
Google Podcasts

Blog: *Perspectives*—High-engagement storytelling

Introduced at the end of the fiscal 2021-22 year, the Atlas Institute blog *Perspectives* saw a significant increase in interest this year. While it was launched prior to the podcast, both share a similar mandate of shining the spotlight on Veteran and Family stories. It has been said that the level of success of a blog depends on why you are sharing and what you're blogging about. What we've seen with *Perspectives* is a high level of engagement from community.

6,230

Total page views
(Apr 01, 2022 to
Mar 31, 2023)

This year, we published four blog entries, with blog posts and podcast episodes alternating to optimize audience engagement. The blog has featured Lived Experience team members sharing personal stories, such as one from Brian discussing what the weight of command truly is, and Polly sharing the vulnerability of her experience of her own mental health challenges as a result of loving someone with a Posttraumatic Stress Injury (PTSI). Special guests from the Veteran community have also been invited to contribute blog posts, including Veteran Reference Group member Floyd Powder, who writes about a special project to ensure forgotten graves of Indigenous members who have served are marked with proper acknowledgement for their service to Canada, among others.

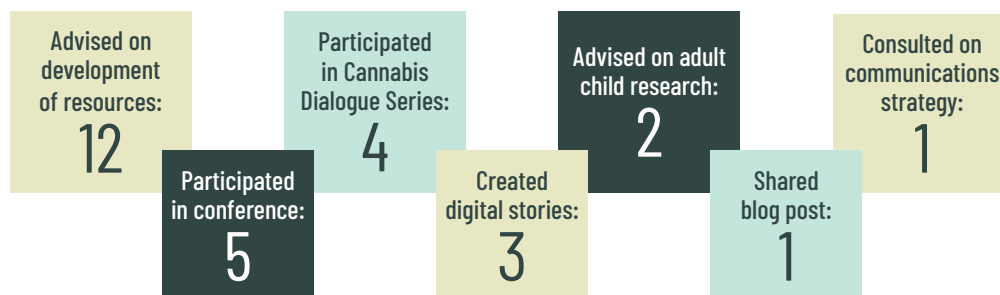
The blog has seen great engagement with steady uptake on both the English and French sites. In addition, requests to share have been coming in from outside of the Atlas Institute, which speaks to the value the community has seen in being given a platform to share their stories authentically.

The Cadre—Providing more opportunities to get involved

To expand our connection with the community, we developed a volunteer cadre of individuals that we can draw upon throughout the year as opportunities arise to bring multiple perspectives to the Atlas Institute's work. Our intention is to be able to engage and work with a larger and more diverse group, to create more opportunities to connect with Veterans and Family members with lived experience and invite them to participate in the Atlas Institute's projects, and to link these individuals to partners and other collaborators who need their lived expertise for their work.

Members of the cadre have opportunities to collaborate in a variety of ways. They might advise on issues important to the community, inform and guide the development of resources and research, or participate in panels, webinars and town hall style events.

Launched in September 2022, the inaugural cadre recruited 33 members, including both men and women Veterans of the CAF and RCMP and their Families, including bereaved spouses and adult children. These individuals have already brought invaluable insight and feedback in support of multiple projects, including:



Digital Stories

Stories heal. Whether in telling one's own or in hearing the experiences of another—these shared experiences can have a powerful impact in many ways. This is why we created a special section of our atlasveterans.ca website for stories. Told in their own words, there is a common thread of recovery and resilience. In providing a platform to bring these stories to life, our hope is these will support others on their own journeys.

On this site you will find 10 videos from Veterans and Families created in two workshops last year where they created digital stories – a process of telling your own story in your own words using new technology with digitized videos, photography, art and music and melding it with the tradition of storytelling. Some of perspectives which can be found at atlasveterans.ca/community/stories-from-veterans-and-families/ include:

- Charlene – A mother whose cadet son died by suicide and her journey to learn to “lift her head again” as she navigated through her grief and loss.
- Diane – one of the first women to enlist in the infantry combat trade, who openly shares her experiences of abuse, discrimination and harassment while proving herself as a soldier. It also speaks to strength, resilience and the power of kindness.
- Jim S. – a military chaplain speaks to the impact of what spiritual caregiving can look like in a war zone, and beyond.
- Jim W. – a retired RCMP staff sergeant who speaks about the importance of reaching out for help, and the immense value of mentors and guides.
- Tim – a male spouse of a military Veteran living with a mental health injury shares his story of loving and supporting his wife as he also comes to terms with the weight that her diagnosis has had on him.

These powerful stories have been so well received, we ran a new cohort this year for the children of those with PTSD bringing to life six new stories from now adult youth reflecting on their experiences which will be shared later in 2023.

The process of making a digital story opened so many doors for me and allowed me to move through some very important thoughts and events in therapy. I made months' worth of progress in the few days that I was with Atlas completing the project. I think that anyone with complex PTSD should get a chance to complete a digital story as it is very therapeutic.

Tabitha, digital story project participant

Veteran Family Virtual Summit— Empowering Families through knowledge, community and hope

On January 27–28, 2023, the Atlas Institute hosted our inaugural Veteran Family Virtual Summit, with the goal of empowering and equipping Families with information, tools and resources about Veteran and Family mental health.

The free two-part virtual summit took a Family-centered approach to addressing the needs of caretakers and loved ones within the Veteran community. Bringing together speakers from across Canada, experts in the field shared their knowledge and insights on issues of critical importance to military and RCMP Families. The summit's keynote speakers included Guy Dailaire, a member of a high-profile, multi-generational military Family who shared his experiences with intergenerational trauma and strategies for coping, as well as Kathleen Mills, a military spouse who gave a glimpse into the unique aspects of this life through the lens of her experiences with her own operational stress injury (OSI) and its impacts on children and relationships.

Acknowledging that a person with an OSI and those who love them can have very different experiences, the summit addressed the unique journeys of the Family by exploring topics such as compassion fatigue, impacts on children and effects on relationships, among others. It was an opportunity for participants from across Canada to not only learn about issues that distinctly affect military and Veteran Families, but also consider how these relate to their own experiences.

The summit was held virtually, with free registration and with accessibility features included, to allow Family members from all over the country to more easily attend and reduce the barriers to participation. In total, there were 443 registrants with attendees in both official languages and almost from every province and territory.

FROM SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to the organizers and presenters. This is so important a topic and absolutely vital to the health and well-being of not only the members and vets, but also to their individual and collective family members.

Bravo for this first summit. The birth of an idea and its conception is a wonder when it reaches and impacts positively the people it was intended for.

Giving a voice to Veterans and Families, one story at a time

Veterans of the CAF and RCMP have served Canada selflessly. Thrust into their various roles, assignments and deployments, Veterans have fulfilled their missions with pride, loyalty and grit, despite the risks involved. On the home front, their Families also have served in their own right and faced their own challenges.

However, often the reality of their lived and living experiences is one that isn't well understood by Canadians in general. Through our engagement with Veterans and their Families, the Atlas Institute has heard that there continues to be a gap in what the Canadian public knows and understands about what it means to serve. We also have learned that those who have served—whether military, RCMP or their Families—are not looking for accolades or recognition. Rather, the hope is for this gap in understanding to somehow be bridged so that Canadians can be privy to the depth of the sacrifices and the physical, emotional and mental stressors that Veterans and their Families have experienced.

With this in mind, the Atlas Institute developed a campaign to provide a platform for military and RCMP Veterans and their Families to share their own stories, in their own words. The campaign was rooted in empowering Veterans and their Families to feel seen and heard, with messages and visuals based on the community's reality rather than stereotypes. In effect, challenging previous perceptions to identify who a modern day Veteran is. The overarching goal was to educate Canadians about the knowledge gap that exists between Veterans and their Families and everyone else, including service providers and researchers.

The stories from community were as wide-ranging and diverse as the community itself. In their own words, the campaign brought forward such messages as from a Veteran and his memories of serving in Afghanistan, to a spouse sharing what it is like to live with someone still so closely tied emotionally to that time in their life, to the adult child of a RCMP officer. Those sharing their stories brought forward messages that included compassion fatigue and unrealistic expectations of those who serve. While some of the stories might have hit close to home for some, and been difficult, this was an important part of the rationale for the campaign—you can't sugar coat trauma.

Hosted on the Atlas Institute's website and shared extensively through our social platforms, the campaign ran from 14 weeks between June 6 and September 9, 2022. The uptake exceeded all expectations.



In terms of social reach and engagement, our top performing ad was the *Veteran mental health is still uncharted territory* video with 40,276 through plays in English and 6,544 in French. Over the course of this campaign, we released content in five different content types on Facebook: campaign videos, cinemagraphs, carousels, quote graphics and linked posts for total post engagements of 128,210 English and 36,981 in French. On Twitter, we saw 5,632 link clicks in English and 2,930 in French. Through the course of the campaign, the **Atlas Institute saw more than 300 new users coming to the campaign site daily.**

While raising general awareness of the Atlas Institute as a newly rebranded organization was a significant objective for the campaign, it was important for us to use the opportunity to draw public attention to the gap in understanding around Veteran mental health and to create a space for Veterans and their Families to feel heard—really heard. What we learned from this campaign is that a strong mix of media and narratives is a critical tool in bridging the knowledge gaps and that Canadians are intrigued to learn about this important subject area.

The success of the awareness campaign has been an excellent first step not only in building a better understanding of Veteran and Family experiences among all Canadians, but also in inspiring empathy through the direct sharing of the community’s voices, words and stories.

QUOTES FROM THE CAMPAIGN

We have some land, and we have one of those shelters to store our tractor in during certain parts of the year. I can't go into that shelter. If I get close to it, I'll look at my husband and tell him that I can't do it. It smells like deployment.

CAF Veteran

That's the reality of loving who you love. They have a heart that cares about a lot more than just you and your little world, and that's a good thing for society. But it's brutal on a relationship.

RCMP Veteran Family member

I gotta sit in a certain spot. And when I'm out with my wife, she knows I gotta have the aisle.

Bill "Mother" Irving,
Chief Warrant Officer (Ret'd)

My friends always ask if I worry when my husband goes to work. The truth is, I can't. You have to be able to compartmentalize... Man, you have to let go. All you can do is pray to God that he comes home at the end of the night. You cling to the hope that he will come home at the end of his shift.

RCMP Veteran Family member

They're saying yes or no based on availability. I'm saying yes or no based on how I think I can handle the chaos.

CAF Veteran

2 Prevent and prepare

Work with partners to strengthen upstream prevention and support for Veteran and Family health and well-being

Bringing together partners and stakeholders

The Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement portfolio leads the development of the Atlas Institute's network, specifically as it relates to four main groups, including Veterans, Families, service providers and researchers.

The central node of our network of networks is our advisory committee and four inter-related reference groups, each representing one of the following key stakeholder groups: Veterans, Veteran Family members, service providers and researchers. The reference groups feed expertise and knowledge to and from the advisory committee, which strategically informs the Atlas Institute's work.

In addition to the our advisory committee and reference groups, we have established and/or we are members of various communities of practice that bring together partners and stakeholders in the field united by a common interest to share information and improve practice as it relates to specific topics (e.g. moral injury, military sexual trauma, PTSD, peer support).

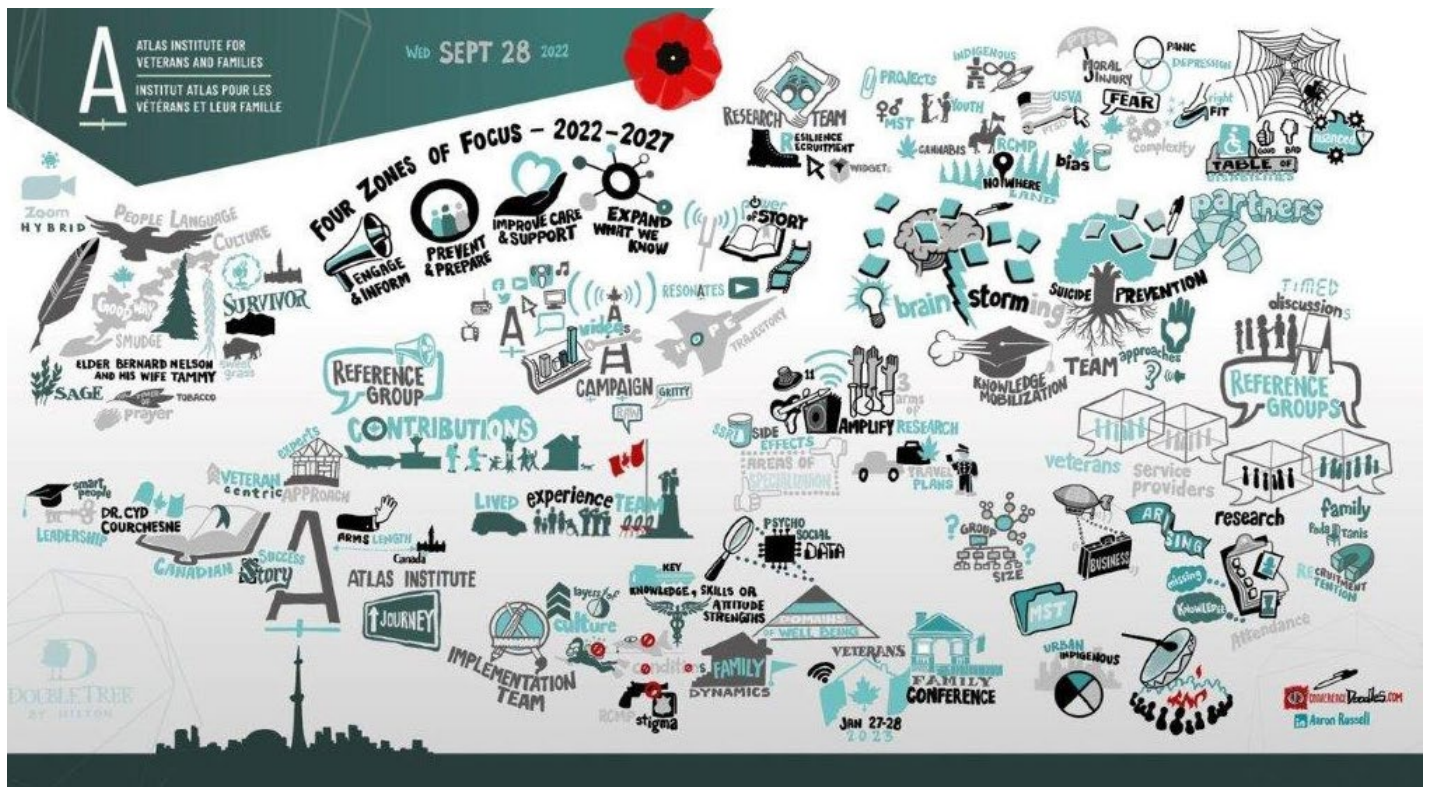
We are striving to build a network in a way that demonstrates how we do stakeholder engagement well, with purpose, modeling to the sector best practice in engagement.

Inaugural in-person reference group meeting: Bringing key stakeholders together

Members of the Atlas Institute's four reference groups met in Toronto in September 2022, the first-ever in-person meeting since the reference groups were launched in October 2020.

Reflecting the Atlas Institute's primary stakeholder groups, Members come together on a quarterly basis to provide strategic advice to guide the Atlas Institute's work, share their experiences and expertise on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and related mental health conditions, network with like-minded individuals, and expand the reach and presence of the Atlas Institute.





The day-long meeting in September provided members with a much-needed opportunity to connect with each other and with Atlas staff, and to provide direction to the Atlas Institute on our 2023-24 organizational work plan. Thirteen reference group members joined the meeting in person and 13 members participated virtually.

The meeting opened with a smudging ceremony conducted by Elder Bernard of the [Eabametoong First Nation](#) and his wife Tammy of the [Nipissing First Nation](#). Dr. Cyd Courchesne, Chief Medical Officer at Veterans Affairs Canada, provided opening remarks and shared her excitement over the progress the Atlas Institute has made, commending the contributions of the reference groups in helping to guide the priorities and activities of the organization.

The conversation was oriented around the Atlas Institute's four zones of focus: to engage and inform, improve care and support, expand what we know, and prevent and prepare. For each zone of focus, Atlas staff brought forward projects for consideration and reference group members were given the opportunity to provide input on how the projects could be approached to best meet the needs of Veterans and Family members. Some of the feedback included; adding further visuals, graphics and videos to the website to increase accessibility of content, suggestions for future topic areas the Institute could explore, and detailed recommendations for improvement on projects that are ongoing.

Participants shared positive reactions to the first in-person reference group meeting and enjoyed the opportunity to network and share knowledge between the four interrelated groups while actively engaging with the Atlas Institute work plan.

National and International Partnerships

Building on our early work in partnership with other key organizations working in the Veteran and Family space, we have continued to participate in discussions exploring the establishment of an evidence support system with the Centre of Excellence (CoE) – Chronic Pain, Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR) among others. Documents produced as a result of the stakeholder dialogue can be found at www.mcmasterforum.org/about-us/products/project/ensuring-that-the-health-related-decisions-affecting-canadian-military-personnel-veterans-and-their-families-are-informed-by-the-best-available-evidence

Additional highlights include:

- Fardous Hosseiny, CEO and MaryAnn Notarianni, Deputy CEO & EVP, Knowledge Mobilization participated in meetings with Phoenix Australia in January 2023 to discuss current partnership projects and explore new potential opportunities to partner such as problematic anger, among others.
- Fardous and MaryAnn also participated in a conference hosted by King’s Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR) and Forces in Mind Research Trust (FiMRT) in the United Kingdom (UK). This visit also included knowledge exchange meetings with the Office of Veteran’s Affairs in the UK and follow up meetings with researchers at KCMHR/Combat Stress and FiMRT to explore potential collaborations.
- In November, Fardous and MaryAnn participated in a two-day in-person meeting of the Five Eyes Mental Health Research and Innovation Collaboration (MHRIC) of which Atlas is a member, co-chaired by CIMVHR and Phoenix Australia. The meeting involved presentations on a range of research initiatives, including research collaborations with Atlas’ involvement, on topics such as moral injury, Veteran Families and suicidality, as well as discussion on emerging issues of shared interest. MaryAnn shared a presentation on integrated knowledge mobilization. Atlas will be supporting the Five Eyes MHRIC in the development of a knowledge mobilization strategy in coming months.



▲ Fardous Hosseiny, President and CEO of the Atlas Institute, flanked by Dr. David Forbes of Phoenix Australia provides remarks at the post-CIMVHR workshop on transforming the mental health system for Veterans and Families.



▲ Laryssa Lamrock, National Strategic Advisor for Veteran Families, and Gabrielle Dupuis, Director, Research Partnerships at the Atlas Institute information booth onsite at the CIMVHR Forum.

Conferences

CIMVHR Forum 2022: Engaging the Veteran community around research and system transformation

In October 2022, we attended the CIMVHR Forum in Halifax, N.S., marking our first large-scale presence at a national conference as an organization. At the conference, we hosted a booth, panel, several symposium (6) and poster (2) presentations, as well as attending a range of presentations. These provided us with valuable opportunities for engagement with the Veteran community, enabling us to connect directly with 423 participants throughout the multi-day forum.

The Atlas Institute hosted two events that coincided with CIMVHR:

- **Pre-CIMVHR session: Research and lived experience interactive panel discussion**

The Pre-CIMVHR research and lived experience interactive panel discussion offered a space to promote understanding of research and empower Veterans and Families in research. Veterans and Veteran Families were invited to enter an in-person dialogue with researchers to discuss research methods and life cycles, priorities, facilitators and barriers in research, and Veterans and Families' needs in research.

- **Post-CIMVHR workshop: Advancing the vision for a transformed mental health system for Veterans and their Families**

This workshop featured a panel presentation on the results and implications of a collaboration between the Atlas Institute and Phoenix Australia to develop a new vision and implementation approach for Veteran and Veteran Family mental health systems globally. The session also facilitated dialogue among participants to identify stakeholders' perspectives and resource needs in the implementation of a transformed model of care to improve the well-being of Veterans and their Families in the Canadian context.

In order to promote and support the engagement of Veterans and Veteran Families in research, Atlas launched a travel grant process. This allowed more Veterans and Veteran Family members to participate in the CIMVHR Forum 2022. We were pleased to have been able to invite 11 different individuals which included members of our reference groups, cadre, and members of the broader community.



◀ Brian McKenna, CD, National Strategic Advisor, Veterans and MaryAnn Notarianni, Deputy CEO and EVP Knowledge Mobilization present at the ANAVETS annual general meeting in Winnipeg.

Other conferences the Atlas Institute attended:

- **The Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada (ANAVETS) 55th Dominion Convention** was held in Winnipeg, Man. in September 2022. A delegation of Atlas staff attended the convention to introduce the ANAVETS membership to the work we have been doing and answer questions they may have. The ANAVETS are a group with a membership of 90,000 with 70 units across Canada.
- **Canadian Policing Wellness Check Conference:** In March 2023, two Atlas staff attended the event hosted by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACCP). The two-day conference focused on the mental health and general wellness issues facing police. The conference was attended by policing organizations from across the country as well as associated community safety and well-being organizations.
- **Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans' annual research event:** In October 2022, three Atlas team members attended the CPCoE 2022 Annual Stakeholders Conference: Co-morbidities and uncovering the influence of sex and gender, in person in Montreal, during which research findings were presented to a large group of service providers, clinicians, researchers, Veterans, Veteran Families and members of intermediary organizations. The conference welcomed additional stakeholders virtually.
- **International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS):** The ISTSS Annual Meeting is an international assembly which provides a forum for the sharing of research, clinical strategies in order to move the field of traumatic stress forward. Team members from Atlas attended the conference with presentations by MaryAnn Notarianni as part of a panel on intimate partner violence (IPV) in military and Veteran populations and Dr. Andrew Nicholson on neurofeedback and its role in reducing symptoms of PTSD with Dr. Sara Rodrigues having a poster presentation with regards to Canadian public safety personnel's experiences of potentially morally injurious events.
- **Operational Stress Injury Social Support (OSISS) Marketplace:** In October 2022, the Atlas Institute was invited to present its programs and services at an OSISS annual marketplace event held in Montreal, during which several organizations serving Veterans and Veteran Families were offered an opportunity to connect with OSISS Peer Support Coordinators from across the country. OSISS coordinators had a chance to ask questions to the presenters and gather printed knowledge products pertinent to the needs of the Veterans they hear within the communities they serve.

Community-focused connections

National Collaborative on PTSD and Related Mental Health Conditions

With funding support from the Medavie Foundation, the Atlas Institute has partnered with the Canadian Institute on Public Safety Research and Treatment (CIPSRT) to convene the National Collaborative on PTSD and Related Mental Health Conditions. Launched in April 2022, the collaborative serves to enhance our collective understanding of PTSD and related mental health conditions, leveraging the breadth and depth of existing expertise across Canada. The collaborative, which meets biannually, comprises 15 member organizations that have a national mandate, are involved at the federal and systems levels in activities related to PTSD and/or related mental health conditions, and carry out work that has implications for military members, Veterans, public safety personnel, and their Families.

Francophone stakeholder engagement

How best to engage with the Francophone community is an ongoing area of interest for the Atlas team to ensure that the unique needs and experiences of this important demographic are integrated into our networks. In March 2023, the Atlas Institute held in-person meetings with Francophone stakeholders in Montreal and Quebec City, connecting with six organizations over the course of three days including Le Sentier, La Fondation, MFRC- Valcartier Clinique BSO, CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale, and CIUSSS de l'Ouest-de-Île-de-Montréal. These meetings brought the Atlas team face-to-face with a diverse group of service providers and organizations who serve Veterans and Veteran Families living in Quebec, including clinicians, Veteran-focused initiatives, and funding and community-based organizations. Through this engagement, we took a critical first step in the work to scope the needs of our Francophone network members and to plan for a future roundtable focused on engaging stakeholders from this demographic. As a result of this early engagement, the Atlas Institute signed a partnership agreement with its first Francophone partner.

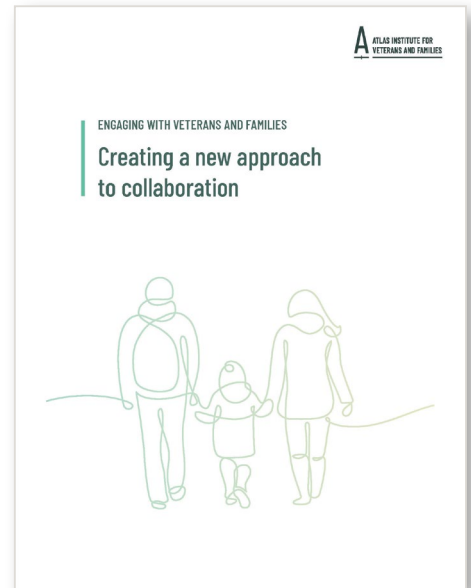
Partnership satisfaction survey

In March of 2023, we launched the first annual Atlas Institute partnership satisfaction survey. The survey is intended to help us report on our progress towards success indicators such as percent of partners who report they are satisfied with the quality of their partnership with Atlas and percent of partners who report they are satisfied with the quality of their partnership with Atlas as well as to allow us to learn about the Atlas Institute's areas of strength and opportunity at the organizational level. Responses indicated that 100% of our partners are satisfied with their partnership with the Atlas Institute, of which 64.7% reported being very satisfied.

Veteran and Family engagement framework resources

We grew our suite of Veteran and Veteran Family engagement resources through the development of a brief companion guide for *Engaging with Veterans and Families: Creating a new approach*, two short videos and a report detailing how Veterans and Veteran Families are being engaged in research. Together, these resources are meant to support network members in empowering Veterans and Veteran Families to participate in system change, as well as to offer strategies to facilitate adoption of engagement principles in their practice.

- Interactive dialogue report
- Brief guide
- Videos



Increase capacity across Canada for more accessible, culturally competent, trauma-informed care and support

Implementation—the science behind effective service provision

Driving better health outcomes for Veterans and Families has always been a key focus for the Atlas Institute's efforts. A critical tool in this work is the use of implementation science, the study of methods and strategies that facilitate the uptake of evidence-based practice and research into regular use by practitioners and policy makers, in effect looking to close the gap between what we know and what we do. By using this science to increase the effectiveness of implementation, there is a better chance of success for a practice or intervention to produce expected health benefits.

Over the past few years, the Implementation team has focused on building trust in the Atlas Institute as a support for service providers across Canada—a resource to which they can turn to find the information they need when they need it and in a format that works best for them, so they can effectively support the well-being of Veterans and their Family members.

In order to provide a variety of supports, the Atlas Institute's Implementation team has built a suite of services using several different approaches tailored to the service provider audiences. These range from activities that involve a lighter touch such as developing and sharing easy-to-access resources, to hosting informational webinars, to providing more intensive or specialized education opportunities including evidence-based therapies trainings. In addition, we continue to provide implementation supports to help service providers put into practice everything they have learned.

One thing in particular we have learned, through our engagement with service providers, is the value training on evidence-based therapies and treatments holds for them.

Training

In 2022-23, we offered two trainings in evidence-based therapies to licensed/registered Canadian service providers working in mental health care for Veterans and Families. Both trainings were offered in a two-part format, with the first part being a four-day workshop, and the second being a weekly group consultation with an expert in the modality for a set number of weeks for those who would like to go deeper into the application of the therapy.

The first opportunity offered was a French-language training on prolonged exposure therapy (PE), an evidence-based therapy that is recommended as a first-line treatment for PTSD in international treatment guidelines. In total, 19 service providers attended the workshop, with 11 of those going on to receive group consultation.

The second training offered was in cognitive-behavioural conjoint therapy (CBCT), a manualized, problem-focused therapy with the simultaneous goals of improving individual PTSD and enhancing intimate relationship functioning. CBCT for PTSD improves the interpersonal environment in which Veterans exist on a day-to-day basis and capitalizes on the support of their significant relationships while they are working through PTSD treatment. Demand for this training was so high that we had to expand spaces in the first workshop from 100 to 150, as well as add a second workshop. Across the two workshops we trained 220 providers, and of those 43 went on to receive group consultation.

In addition to our two evidence-based therapy offerings outlined above, we also partnered with the University of Manitoba on a facilitator training for practitioners interested in providing cognitive behavioural therapy with mindfulness (CBTm). CBTm is a skill-based educational program designed to help build resilience and improve mental well-being through evidence-based self-management strategies with the goal of improving timely access to mental health care. Through a full-day workshop, along with access to mentorship opportunities, the training gives service providers the knowledge, tools and materials to facilitate the CBTm program with their clients.

Demand for this training was so high that we had to expand spaces in the first workshop from 100 to 150, as well as add a second workshop.

3
trainings offered

320
service providers trained, participants were from across Canada (11 provinces and territories represented)

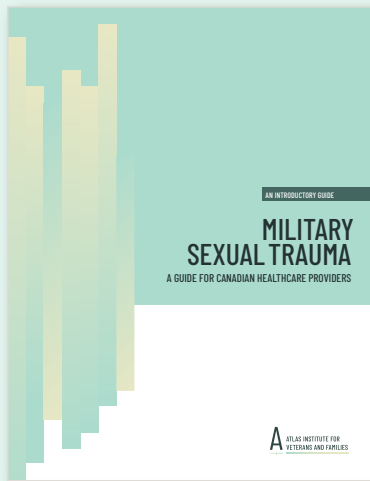
Other implementation successes in 2022-23

Resource development – increasing access to foundational knowledge on military sexual trauma

In Canada, there are few dedicated resources and supports for Veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma (MST), and for the service providers who work with them. Knowing that you are providing care to a Veteran impacted by MST can lead to a more sensitized understanding of their care needs and strengthen best practices in supporting them.

To this end, we created four resources:

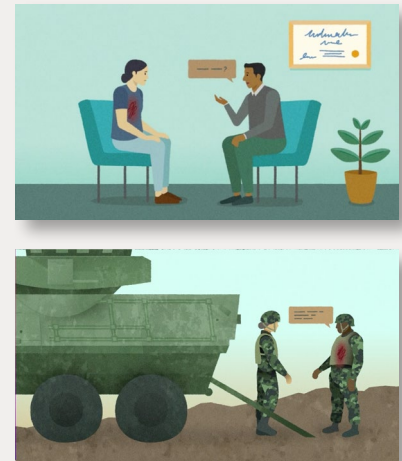
- **A foundational guide to MST – Military sexual trauma: A guide for Canadian health care providers**



- **An infographic based on the guide – Invisible wounds: Clinical practice tips when caring for patients impacted by MST**



- **Two short videos focused on key practice tips for health care providers working with people impacted by MST**



These resources provide foundational information intended to raise health care providers' awareness of the unique military and Veteran-specific factors that can affect care for Veterans who have experienced MST, and to suggest ways to enhance care based on this awareness. The resources were created in consultation with an advisory committee comprised of Veterans with lived experience of MST and health care providers who work in the military/Veteran context.

It is important to recognize the necessity of creating easily accessible resources to build critical awareness among health care providers. Through careful screening and training, more effective and sensitive physical and mental health care can be provided to people impacted by MST. The resources were developed with the recognition that all providers, even those outside the military/Veteran community and the field of mental health, can support Veterans impacted by MST when they have the right tools available to them.

They include an introductory guide to MST titled *Military sexual trauma: A guide for Canadian health care providers* as well as an infographic and two brief videos that are focused on key practice tips for health care providers working with people impacted by MST.

Peer Support Community Network

Over the past year, the Atlas Institute has co-led and co-chaired a national Peer Support Community Network (PSCN) with the Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment (CIPSRT).

I'm glad to have been part of developing these resources based on the real-life experiences of those of us who have experienced MST. Contributing in this way has been empowering — it has enabled us to share the unique challenges and experiences to add to the body of knowledge about the effect of MST, and to build meaningful support. With the development of these resources, I see the potential for change, which brings me hope, and we know hope can be a powerful thing.

Major (Ret'd) Carly Arkell

To create the network, we brought together more than 40 stakeholders across the Veteran, public safety personnel (PSP), peer support, research and service provider communities.

With representation spanning coast to coast to coast, the goal of the network is to co-create national peer support guidelines geared specifically toward Veterans and PSP, by using collective knowledge and existing best practice guidelines, as well as emerging research. The PSCN also continues to explore how these guidelines could potentially inform the evaluation of peer support programs and standardize how they are provided, with the goal of continuing to advance the practice of, and evidence base for, peer support.

The first step in supporting and caring for someone is trying to understand how their MST impacts every facet of life. Not being understood is the worst human trauma in life. Every new research or resource we can develop and share strengthens every person's healing path. As a person with lived experience, my path has been brightened with more hope thanks to the work the Atlas Institute is doing for all of us and our loved ones.

MST survivor M.E. Sam Samplonius, CD

Knowledge Mobilization

Co-creating meaningful resources with Veterans and Families

Co-creating resources with Veterans, Families and those who support them is a key part of our Knowledge Mobilization (KMB) team's work. We incorporate the insights and expertise of Veterans and Families into the content and creative direction of these resources.

In partnership with advisory committees comprised of Veterans and Families, here are a few of the resources we co-created in 2022-23 to meet the knowledge needs of the Veteran community:

Military sexual trauma resources: Supporting the healing journeys of impacted Veterans

There has been growing awareness about experiences of military sexual misconduct (MSM) and the resulting military sexual trauma (MST) among CAF members and Veterans. With one in four women and one in 25 men having experienced sexual assault at least once since joining the Canadian military, the Atlas Institute recognized early into our mandate that this was a key priority that would require significant attention, including the development of resources for those impacted.

In September 2022, we launched a new collection of resources designed for individuals impacted by MST. We created two resources that provide tips, strategies and helpful information to support the healing journey:

- **Recovering from military sexual trauma: From coping to healing**
(355 downloads)

The thumbnail shows the cover of a PDF resource titled "RECOVERING FROM MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA FROM COPING TO HEALING". The cover features a teal header and footer with the Atlas Institute logo. The main content area is white with teal accents. Text on the cover includes: "Military sexual trauma (MST) is a serious issue experienced by many current and former Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members. MST describes the psychological, physical, and social impacts or 'scars' that people who experience or witness military sexual misconduct may feel. To learn more about military sexual misconduct and MST, please refer to our [fact sheet on MST](#)." "This resource was developed in collaboration with people impacted by MST as well as service providers who work with those who have experienced or witnessed incidents of military sexual misconduct. Designed for military service personnel and Veterans who are impacted by MST, this resource offers information that can help inform your understanding of your personal coping and healing. It also provides an overview of how trauma may affect you along with tips and strategies to help lessen these impacts throughout your healing journey." "HEALING JOURNEYS ARE UNIQUE" "Healing and recovery from traumatic experiences differs from person to person. We are unique individuals with our own experiences, backgrounds, and identities. Our coping and healing journey will be as unique and individual as we are. All of your life circumstances, experiences, and identities can come together to shape your preferences, needs, experiences and reactions. It may take some time trying things out to find what works best for you. Ultimately, you are the best person to determine what you need to heal and recover – whether it be therapy, peer support, self-care, advocacy or a combination of tools." "Healing can demand a lot from you at a time when you do not feel you have much more to give. It is important to know that you are worth it. There are supports available to you on your journey whatever they look like."

- **Recovering from military sexual trauma: The role of peer support**
(248 downloads)

The thumbnail shows the cover of a PDF resource titled "RECOVERING FROM MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA THE ROLE OF PEER SUPPORT". The cover features a teal header and footer with the Atlas Institute logo. The main content area is white with teal accents. Text on the cover includes: "Military sexual trauma (MST) can be particularly damaging because it can create feelings of disconnection, mistrust and lack of safety within your military community. Opportunities for a safe connection with others can be helpful for healing. Peer support offers such an opportunity allowing you to connect with a person or group of people who get you, believe you and, most importantly, know what may help to support you." "This resource aims to guide your exploration of the role peer support can play in your healing journey through an overview of what peer support involves, including a definition, its key benefits and some considerations to keep in mind." "WHAT IS PEER SUPPORT?" "Peer support is a type of service or support involving two or more people who use their shared experiences and expertise to help one another. Peer support can offer an opportunity for connecting, correction and healing by interacting with and learning from others who have had common experiences." "In the context of MST, peer support generally involves a supportive relationship between people who have experienced MST. Though peer backgrounds can vary, for example, peers may have experienced sexual trauma in a civilian setting or other forms of trauma in a military setting. In some peer support settings, peers may be clinicians who have experienced sexual trauma." "You may have access to different types of peer support depending on your location and other factors. Supports can vary from informal to formal. Some are drop-in self-help groups and volunteer peer-on-service whereas others are more structured peer partnerships or staff peer supporters (i.e. those specifically hired to offer peer support within an organization). Similarly, you may find some groups offer peer support that is more talk-based whereas other groups are more activity-based. Some may offer a combination of approaches." "You may find peer support is helpful for your healing and coping related to MST, either on its own or as a complement to other supports. While peer support is not a form of treatment, it can complement other therapeutic approaches. To learn about other approaches or creative tools, both therapeutic and non-therapeutic, check out our [Coping and Healing](#) resource."

Both are available as downloadable, accessible PDFs as well as web resources.

Cannabis for medical/therapeutic purposes: Engaging Veterans and Families in discussion about their perspectives on cannabis as a treatment option for mental health

Canada's Veterans often experience physical or psychological injuries as a result of their service—and sometimes both. Over the past several years, cannabis for medical purposes has emerged as a treatment area of significant interest to Veterans and their Families. In 2022, on the recommendations of their health care providers, more than 18,000 Veterans were reimbursed for cannabis for medical purposes through Veterans Affairs Canada.

We partnered with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) to engage Veterans, Family members, service providers and researchers in discussions about their experiences and perspectives on cannabis use and mental health during May and June of 2022. These conversations were summarized in a report titled *Insights into Veteran and Veteran family experiences with cannabis and mental health*. The report found strong interest among Veterans and Family members to explore cannabis as a treatment option for conditions such as PTSD, and to have more research and guidance on cannabis use and mental health.

The report found strong interest among Veterans and Family members to explore cannabis as a treatment option for conditions such as PTSD, and to have more research and guidance on cannabis use and mental health.

The report also highlighted several additional insights:

- Health care professionals need more training and guidance on cannabis use for mental health.
- Cannabis use among Veterans continues to be highly stigmatized.
- Veterans need to know more about how cannabis works and interacts with other substances.
- The quality and independence of cannabis research matters—Veterans and Families want to be engaged in research.
- Knowledge, resources and actions must take diversity among the Veteran population into account.

While cannabis may have the potential as a tool to manage some mental health conditions, studies show that more research needs to be conducted to explore the efficacy, impacts and best practices of cannabis as a treatment option for mental health conditions in Canada's Veteran population. What emerged from this dialogue series is that this is a significant topic of interest. There is a need for more research, resources and guidance not only for Veterans and Veteran Family members but also for the service providers who work with them, so that collectively they can be best informed in their decision-making around the use of cannabis for medical and therapeutic purposes.

Our next steps are to take what the Veteran community shared with us and develop accessible resources specifically for Veterans and Families that provide information about what we know about cannabis as a treatment option for PTSD and other related mental health conditions.

As one of the more than 18,000 Veterans approved by Veterans Affairs Canada to use medical cannabis, I was keen to participate in this collaborative project. As a community, our knowledge of cannabis is, in large part, based on our own experiences and the shared experiences of our peers. We are missing some of the key scientific and medical research necessary for us to make our own informed decisions about how cannabis may contribute to or jeopardize our other treatments.

Major-General Glynne Hines (Ret'd), chair of the Atlas Institute's Veteran Reference Group, and project advisor and moderator for the dialogue series

Resources on posttraumatic stress injuries for current and former military members and public safety personnel: Real-life stories and educational information

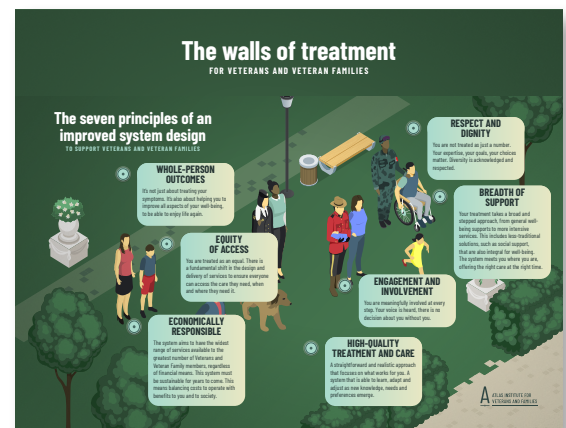
Through generous funding from the Medavie Health Foundation, we partnered with CIPSRT to co-design videos and educational resources relevant to public safety personnel (PSP), current and former military members and their Families. The development of these resources was guided by an advisory committee.

The educational resources included an overview of PTSIs, coping strategies, information on peer support for PTSD, and resources to help Families supporting a person impacted by PTSD. These resources aimed to increase awareness about PTSIs, reduce stigma, and support well-being and help-seeking behaviours. In total, we created seven testimonial videos, four educational videos, four fact sheets and a list of resources and supports available for PSP and their Families.

Conceptual Framework—Animated Resources

The conceptual framework is our vision for a system that meets the needs of Veterans and Families. We worked with an Advisory Committee to co-create visual and animated resources to help illustrate the barriers Veterans and Families face in the current system, as well as a vision and direction for a better system.

Check out the video and interactive graphics here! atlasveterans.ca/conceptual-framework/animated-resources/



Did you know? In addition to creating resources for Veterans and Families, our KMb team also works alongside the Research team to develop “plain-language” summaries of research, ensuring that Veterans and Families can more easily access emerging research that’s relevant to them.

4 Expand what we know

Partner with Veterans, their Families, and leading researchers to explore new horizons for care and support, and actively mobilize that information widely

Expanding clinical research at the Atlas Institute

Clinical research relates to the practice of testing mental health, or physical health interventions to see if a new form of treatment or prevention is safe and effective. The result of these types of studies can lead to significant improvements in quality of life for people with chronic health issues, including those faced by Veterans as a result of their service.

The Atlas Institute has been investing in building a clinical research arm that operates out of our head office located within the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre. This year, Dr. Andrew Nicholson joined the Atlas Institute as our Clinical Director of Research. His interest in understanding how chronic stress and traumatic experiences affect the brain led him to connect with an international network focused on improving the understanding of PTSD and different subtypes of illness in order to improve treatment outcomes.

The work of this portfolio related to the mental health needs of the military and first responder communities includes:

- Utilizing neurofeedback as a non-invasive way to self-regulate brain networks associated with PTSD symptoms
- Examining the impact of minority stress (i.e. oppression and discrimination) on mental health outcomes among marginalized communities (including LGBT Purge survivors)
- A randomized control trial of a novel approach to cognitive training in public safety personnel with posttraumatic stress injuries
- A project on leveraging technology to improve mental health outcomes (i.e. machine learning), as co-investigator with CIMVHR

Neurofeedback: a promising new intervention for treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder

When people develop PTSD, certain parts of their brain can be over or under-activated, triggering thoughts, emotions, moods and behaviours that can be unhelpful or distressing. These responses can happen very quickly and it is often hard for the person experiencing these feelings to know why they are happening. This contributes to making them hard to manage.

A growing body of evidence shows that neurofeedback can help to treat PTSD and other mental health issues by training people to self-regulate areas of the brain that may not be functioning well in the aftermath of trauma. This might include PTSD symptoms such as emotional reactivity or intensity, feeling on-edge, vivid re-experiencing or flashbacks of the traumatic event, avoidance, disturbances in sleep and negative alterations in thoughts and moods.

Neurofeedback is a non-invasive therapy, meaning that it doesn't hurt or involve medication. It helps people learn how to self-control brain activity so they can respond and think more clearly, balance their emotional responses and control triggered behaviours like avoidance, anxiety or panic. This therapy can be used alone or along with other forms of treatment, such as psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or medication.

To contribute to the growing body of evidence showing that neurofeedback is a promising treatment for PTSD and other mental health concerns, the Atlas Institute has initiated a program of research focused on exploring its efficacy.

Neurofeedback/electroencephalogram (EEG) biofeedback may be approved by VAC as a second-line therapy for PTSD, generalized anxiety disorder and major depressive disorder as an alternative to first-line therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy and exposure therapy. However, in order to receive this therapy, the patient must be referred by a primary doctor or mental health professional such as a psychiatrist, psychologist or general practitioner.



▲ Dr. Andrew Nicholson, and PhD student Sandhya Narikuzhy at the Royal Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research Brain Imaging Centre.

Published Research

Clinical trial shows EEG neurofeedback training can help people with PTSD regulate emotions

An international clinical trial collaboration between the Atlas Institute, the University of Ottawa, Western University and the University of Geneva shows neurofeedback to be on par with gold-standard treatments for PTSD such as cognitive behavioural therapy and exposure therapy. Through a series of 20 neurofeedback sessions, participants were trained to regulate parts of the brain that show altered activity associated with PTSD symptoms.

More than 60% of trial participants receiving active neurofeedback **not only saw reduced symptoms, but in fact no longer met diagnostic criteria for PTSD** by the end of the trial.

No study participants left the trial, suggesting that neurofeedback therapy is **highly tolerable and effective** for patients.

Study shows fMRI-based neurofeedback therapy can help reduce PTSD-related reliving and distress symptoms

This collaboration between the Atlas Institute, the University of Ottawa and Western University shows that fMRI neurofeedback therapy can help to reduce symptoms of distress and those related to re-experiencing trauma associated with PTSD.

- This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of fMRI-based neurofeedback training in helping people with PTSD to regulate and strengthen the posterior cingulate cortex (PCC), an area of the brain associated with emotion, thinking about oneself and memory.
- The study showed that as a result of neurofeedback training, participants experienced reduced PTSD symptoms, such as reliving the experience and feeling distress.
- fMRI scans indicated neurofeedback can reset brain network connectivity that may be compromised for people with PTSD and that ultimately contribute to symptoms associated with disrupted memory, emotional difficulties and altered thinking and thoughts about oneself or others.
- Results support PCC-targeted neurofeedback as a way to heal brain networks disruptions that contribute to PTSD symptoms.

Other ongoing neurofeedback research being conducted by the Atlas Institute's Clinical and Applied Research teams and with partner organizations:

- Self-regulation of PTSD brain networks using multiple sessions of real-time fMRI neurofeedback



Engaging with Veterans and Veteran Families to build research capacity

At the Atlas Institute, we have made it an organizational priority to listen to community members about what matters. Their insights shine a light on what research is needed for direct and meaningful impact, help us to conduct timely and impactful research, and enable community members to help us shape our research agenda. Ultimately, the goal is to make a difference in the lives of Veterans, by conducting research that resonates with their needs and experiences.

Co-principal investigator (Co-PI) model

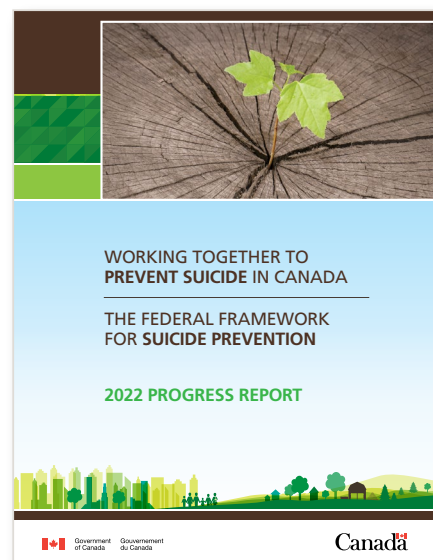
- **Background:** True and meaningful engagement with Veterans and their Families adds significant value to the quality and impact of research.
- **Our response:** The Atlas Institute has implemented a Co-PI model in which members of our Lived Experience team serve as co-principal investigators on select funded research projects. Brian McKenna, our National Strategic Advisor for Veterans, and Laryssa Lamrock, our National Strategic Advisor for Veteran Families, both serve as co-PIs in collaboration with Dr. Duncan Shields (UBC) and Dr. Deborah Norris (MSVU), respectively.
- **Our approach:** Prior to the initiation of the research protocol, Brian and Laryssa engaged with Duncan and Deborah to get a sense of the parameters of the potential research project and to better understand how this work can impact the community. Brian and Laryssa's insights provided crucial guidance in the creation of the protocol, along with input from the advisory group members they convened for this purpose. Brian and Laryssa have supported the research project throughout the project lifespan, from ethics to conducting interviews and interpreting findings, and continue to be critical components of the project.
- The two projects that are co-led:
 - **Maintaining resilience and well-being in elite military cultures** The goal of this project is to explore how people serving in elite military units make sense of the personal impacts of service and negotiate belonging, status, group and personal resilience and well-being.
 - **Adult children of Veterans** The proposed research will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in two interrelated ways: a) through integration of the experiences of an understudied group—adult children of CAF Veterans—within the Canadian military Family research landscape; and b) through the identification of positive outcomes associated with military Family life from the retrospective accounts of experience and meaning provided by the adult children participants. These accounts will contribute to the evidence base required for planning and implementing programs and policies to promote positive development for military Family members, particularly children.
- **Why is this important?** This model of research helps ensure there is lived experience fully embedded throughout all aspects of the project lifespan. Additionally, this collaborative opportunity builds research capacity in the Veteran and Veteran Family community.

Women Veterans Dialogue Series

- **Background:** It is well-known that there is a need for more research about the health and well-being of Canadian women Veterans. Researchers are only just starting to understand the impacts of service on women's health, and there is much more work to be done.
- **Our response:** The Women Veterans Dialogue Series, an Applied Research team initiative led by Senior Research Associate Dr. Kate Hill MacEachern, connected with women who served in the CAF and RCMP to learn more about their needs and priorities, and to ask what research they want to see more of.
- **Our approach:** Our Applied Research team invited women Veterans from across Canada to join the conversation. Fifteen women shared their experiences and insights in a series of meetings in September 2022 and January 2023 and offered insights to guide the direction for new research at the Atlas Institute.
- **Why is this important?** The goal of the series was to hear from women Veterans on the direction for research projects, in recognition of the fact that research that is supposed to benefit the community should be informed by that community and answer the questions that matter to them.
- **What's next?** Launching in the spring of 2023 is a new research study that will explore experiences during service and the mental health and well-being of women Veterans in Canada. The Applied Research team will convene a working group of women Veterans to collaborate on the design and execution of this new study.

Highlights

- **Veterans in the media project:** Atlas Institute's collaborative work with Dr. Robert Whitley, which aimed to assess media content regarding the mental health of Veterans, was a highlighted success in the [*Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention 2022 Progress Report*](#).
- **Conclusion of study on moral injury in public safety personnel:** In October 2022, the Atlas Institute released the results of its study of the types of situations that violate the morals, values and ethics of public safety personnel (PSP), potentially leading to moral injury. The study also aimed to better understand moral injury in PSP specifically within the Canadian context. The research showed that potentially morally injurious events (PMIEs) can arise from the nature of the job, the organizational culture and the health care system as a whole. Study participants reported that PMIEs often resulted in feelings of powerlessness where they could not effectively exercise professional judgment. These events had professional and personal impacts, creating a sense of inner conflict and loss of confidence for many PSP, along with other impacts on emotional health such as anger and frustration. The results were presented at CIMVHR 2022 Forum, the ISTSS 2022 annual meeting and a CIPSRT virtual town hall. The study will also be published in a forthcoming issue of the peer-reviewed *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*.



Publications from Atlas-led Research	Strategic Priority Area
Carmichael, V., Rodrigues, S., Lamrock, L., Benlamri, M., Notarianni, M., & Hosseiny, F. (2023). Involving families in Veteran mental health care: Key considerations and recommendations. <i>Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health</i> , 9(1), 99–103.	Emerging/novel ideas
Lamrock, L. (2023). Loving a broken soul: The lived experience perspective on the implications of Veterans' moral injuries for families. <i>Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health</i> , 9 (2),72–74.	Moral injury
Nicholson, A. A., Densmore, M., Frewen, P. A., Neufeld, R. W. J., Théberge, J., Jetly, R., Lanius, R. A., & Ros, T. (2023). Homeostatic normalization of alpha brain rhythms within the default-mode network and reduced symptoms in post-traumatic stress disorder following a randomized controlled trial of electroencephalogram neurofeedback. <i>Brain Communications</i> , 5(2).	Emerging/novel ideas
Lieberman, J. M., Rabellino, D., Densmore, M., Frewen, P. A., Steyrl, D., Scharnowski, F., Théberge, J., Neufeld, R. W. J., Schmahl, C., Jetly, R., Narikuzhy, S., Lanius, R. A., & Nicholson, A. A. (2023). Posterior cingulate cortex targeted real-time fMRI neurofeedback recalibrates functional connectivity with the amygdala, posterior insula, and default-mode network in PTSD. <i>Brain and Behavior</i> , 13(3).	Emerging/novel ideas
Mercier, J.-M., Hosseiny, F., Rodrigues, S., Friio, A., Brémault-Phillips, S., Shields, D. M., & Dupuis, G. (2023). Peer support activities for Veterans, serving members, and their Families: Results of a scoping review. <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i> , 20(4), 3628.	Peer support
Nicholson, A. A., Shaw, S. B., Ros, T., Harricharan, S., Terpou, B., Densmore, M., Theberge, J., Frewen, P., & Lanius, R. A. (2023). Increased top-down control of emotions during symptom provocation working memory tasks following a RCT of alpha-down neurofeedback in PTSD. <i>NeuroImage. Clinical</i> , 37, 103313.	Emerging/novel ideas

Publications from Atlas-funded research	Strategic Priority Area
Whitley, R., & Saucier, A.-M. (2022). Media coverage of Canadian veterans, with a focus on post traumatic stress disorder and suicide. <i>BMC Psychiatry</i> , 22(1).	Suicide prevention
Phelps, A. J., Adler, A. B., Belanger, S. A., Bennett, C., Cramm, H., Dell, L., Fikretoglu, D., Forbes, D., Heber, A., Hosseiny, F., Morganstein, J. C., Murphy, D., Nazarov, A., Pedlar, D., Richardson, J. D., Sadler, N., Williamson, V., Greenberg, N., & Jetly, R. (2022). Addressing moral injury in the military. <i>BMJ Military Health</i> .	Military sexual trauma
Adler, A. B., Forbes, D., & Ursano, R. J. (2022). Sustaining NATO service member mental health during the crisis in Ukraine. <i>BMJ Military Health</i> .	Emerging/novel ideas
St. Cyr, K., Liu, A., Plouffe, R. A., Nouri, M. S., Forchuk, C. A., Wanklyn, S. G., Bird, B. M., Fikretoglu, D., Mahar, A. L., Nazarov, A., & Richardson, J. D. (2022). Mental health services use among Canadian Armed Forces members and Veterans: Data from the 2018 Canadian Armed Forces members and Veterans mental health follow-up survey (CAFMVHS). <i>Frontiers in Health Services</i> , 2.	Emerging/novel ideas

Publications from Atlas-funded research	Strategic Priority Area
Cowlshaw, S., Freijah, I., Kartal, D., Sbisa, A., Mulligan, A., Notarianni, M. , Couineau, A.-L., Forbes, D., O'Donnell, M., Phelps, A., Iverson, K. M., Heber, A., O'Dwyer, C., Smith, P., & Hosseiny, F. (2022). Intimate partner violence (IPV) in military and veteran populations: A systematic review of population-based surveys and population screening studies. <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i> , <i>19</i> (14), 8853.	Intimate partner violence
Litz, B. T., Plouffe, R. A., Nazarov, A., Murphy, D., Phelps, A., Coady, A., Houle, S. A., Dell, L., Frankfurt, S., Zerach, G., & Levi-Belz, Y. (2022). Defining and assessing the syndrome of moral injury: Initial findings of the Moral Injury Outcome Scale Consortium. <i>Frontiers in Psychiatry</i> , <i>13</i> .	Moral injury
Phelps, A., Lawrence-Wood, E., Couineau, A.-L., Hinton, M., Dolan, P., Smith, P., Notarianni, M. , Forbes, D., & Hosseiny, F. (2022). Mental health reform: Design and implementation of a system to optimize outcomes for veterans and their families. <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i> , <i>19</i> (19), 12681.	Emerging/novel ideas
Ryk, J., Simpson, R., Hosseiny, F., Notarianni, M. , Provencher, M. D., Rudnick, A., Upshur, R., & Sud, A. (2022). Virtually-delivered Sudarshan Kriya Yoga (sky) for Canadian veterans with PTSD: A study protocol for a nation-wide effectiveness and implementation evaluation. <i>PLOS ONE</i> , <i>17</i> (10).	Emerging/novel ideas
D'Alessandro-Lowe, A. M., Ritchie, K., Brown, A., Xue, Y., Pichtikova, M., Altman, M., Beech, I., Millman, H., Levy, Y., Asma, S., Hassall, K., Foster, F., Rodrigues, S., Hosseiny, F. , O'Connor, C., Heber, A., Malain, A., Schielke, H., Lanius, R. A., McKinnon, M. C. (2023). Characterizing the mental health and functioning of Canadian respiratory therapists during the COVID-19 pandemic. <i>European Journal of Psychotraumatology</i> , <i>14</i> (1), 2171751.	Moral injury
Karram, M., D'Alessandro-Lowe, A. M., Ritchie, K., Brown, A., Xue, Y., Pichtikova, M., Altman, M., Beech, I., Millman, H., Hosseiny, F., Rodrigues, S. , Heber, A., O'Connor, C., Schielke, H., Malain, A., Lanius, R. A., McCabe, R. E., & McKinnon, M. C. (2023a). A qualitative approach to understanding Canadian Healthcare Workers' use of coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i> , <i>20</i> (3), 2551.	Moral injury
Ritchie, K., D'Alessandro-Lowe, A. M., Brown, A., Millman, H., Pichtikova, M., Xue, Y., Altman, M., Beech, I., Karram, M., Hosseiny, F., Rodrigues, S. , O'Connor, C., Schielke, H., Malain, A., McCabe, R. E., Heber, A., Lanius, R. A., & McKinnon, M. C. (2023). The hidden crisis: Understanding potentially morally injurious events experienced by healthcare providers during COVID-19 in Canada. <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i> , <i>20</i> (6), 4813.	Moral injury
Patel, H., Easterbrook, B., D'Alessandro-Lowe, A. M., Andrews, K., Ritchie, K., Hosseiny, F., Rodrigues, S. , Malain, A., O'Connor, C., Schielke, H., McCabe, R. E., Nicholson, A. A., Lanius, R., & McKinnon, M. C. (2023). Associations between trauma and substance use among healthcare workers and public safety personnel during the SARS-COV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic: The mediating roles of dissociation and emotion dysregulation. <i>European Journal of Psychotraumatology</i> , <i>14</i> (1).	Substance use
Hansen, K. T., Plouffe, R. A., Walker, D. L., Wanklyn, S. G., Lamrock, L., Maher, P. , Nazarov, A., & Richardson, J. D. (2023). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and well-being of Veterans' spouses: A cross sectional analysis. <i>BMC Psychiatry</i> , <i>23</i> (1), 188.	Emerging/novel ideas

Studies funded by the Atlas Institute:

- **Military and Veteran Families and suicide prevention: Converging on best practices (Phase 2)**
Queen's University
Strategic priority area: Suicide prevention
- **Pilot clinical trial symptom-targeted rehabilitation for concussion in Canadian Armed Forces Veterans (STAR-C2)**
McMaster University
Strategic priority area: Emerging/novel ideas – mild traumatic brain injury
- **Developing a treatment algorithm for treatment-resistant**
Lawson Health Institute/MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre
Strategic priority area: Emerging/novel ideas – PTSD treatment; moral injury
- **Moral injury assessments systematic review**
Lawson Health Institute/MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre
Strategic priority area: Moral injury
- **Patterns of use and experiences related to cannabis in Veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder**
University of Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research
Strategic priority area: Substance use
- **Children of Veterans**
Resilience Research Consultants
Strategic priority area: Emerging/novel ideas – Families
- **Training program in best practice interventions for problematic anger in Veterans**
Phoenix Australia
Strategic priority area: Emerging/novel ideas – Anger

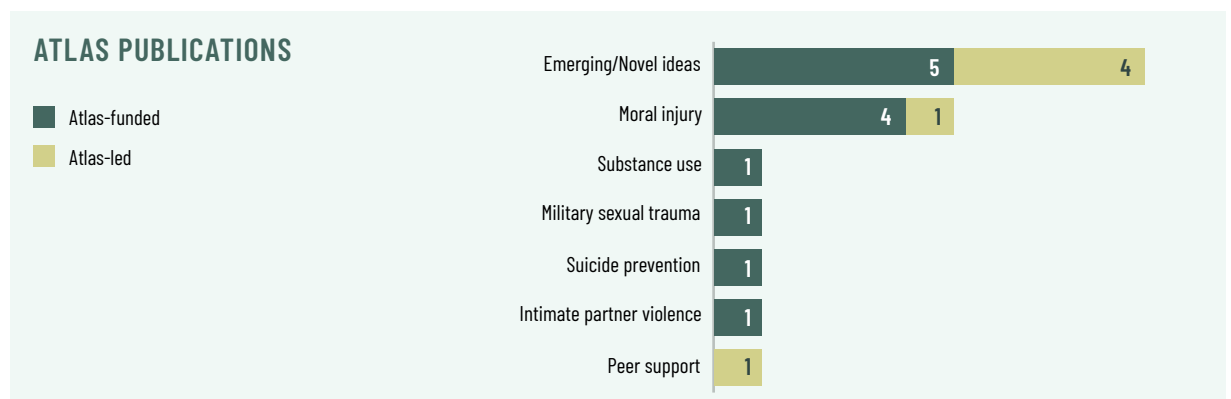
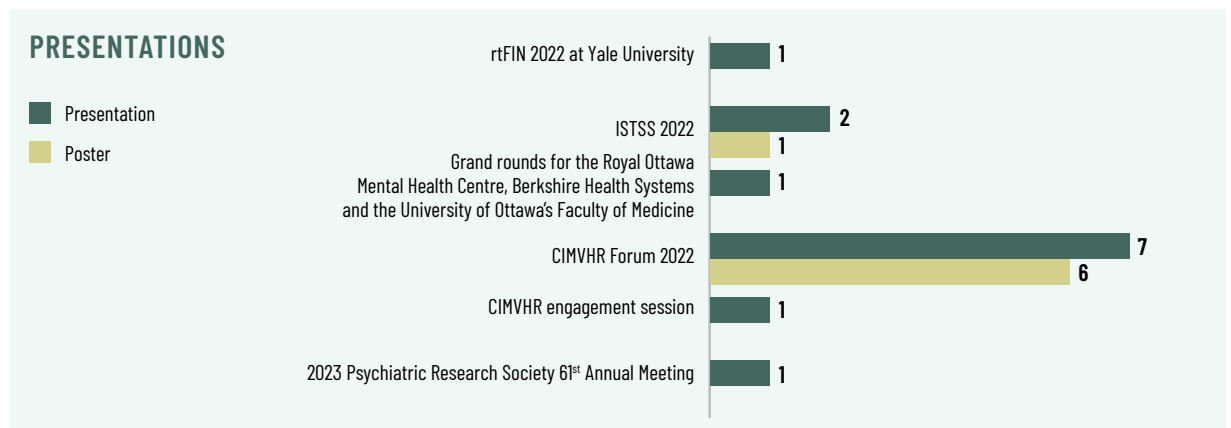
Atlas-led research studies:

Applied Research

- Examining the longitudinal associations between adjustment to civilian life and indices of behavioural and psychological health among Canadian military Veterans
Strategic priority area: Transition to post-military life
- Characterizing mental health in an aging Veteran population
Strategic priority area: Emerging/novel areas

Clinical Research

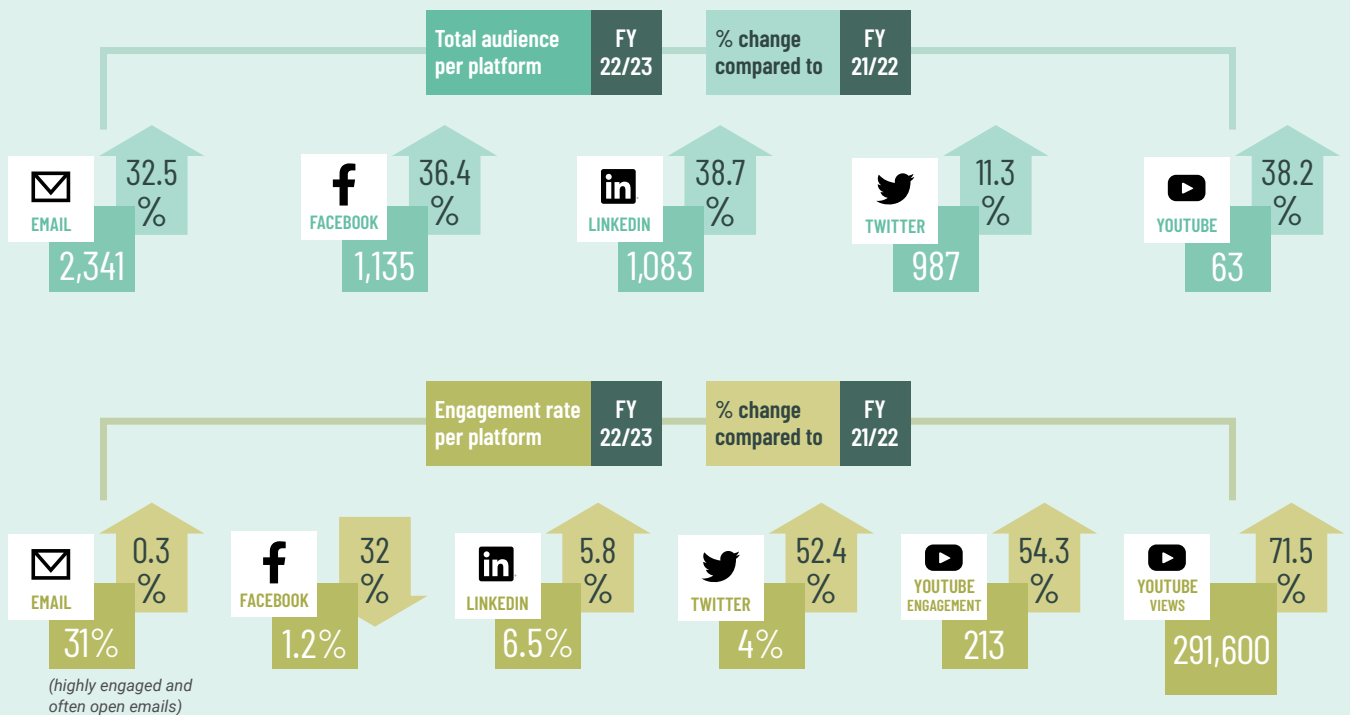
- Trauma through the lens of identity: Minority stress pathways to mental health outcomes
Strategic priority area: Emerging/novel areas, IPV, moral injury
- Big data analysis of resting-state fMRI (functional MRI) for PTSD
Strategic priority area: PTSD, emerging/novel areas
- Systematic review of cognitive strategies used in neurofeedback for PTSD
Strategic priority areas: PTSD, emerging/novel ideas
- Mobilizing the clinical neurofeedback research program
Strategic priority areas: PTSD, emerging/novel ideas



Online Reach 2022/23



Social Media Reach 2022/23



National Media Coverage

Trauma Informed Professional Training

- CBC National (National)
- Canadian Military Family Magazine (National)
- Canadian Press (250+ stories) (National)

What they see campaign

- CBC (National)

PTSD Awareness

- CBC Radio Regina (Saskatchewan)

Moral Injury

- Stratford Beacon Herald (Ontario)
- Paris Star (Ontario)

Veterans and Loneliness

- Globe and Mail (National)
- CHQR 770 Radio (Alberta)

MST Resources

- Radio Canada (French) (Alberta)

Remembrance Day

- Radio Sask (French) (Saskatchewan)

