**SPARC Final Report: LGBTQ+ Affirmative Mindfulness Project, Awarded November 2017**

**Principal Investigator: Gio Iacono**

**Project Goals:** There is a glaring gap in mental health supports for LGBTTQQ2S youth in Canada. The literature suggests that culturally-specific group approaches for LGBTTIQQ2S youth are needed, that teach practical skills and that affirm LGBTTIQQ2S youth identities. To date, no research studies have looked at mindfulness interventions for LGBTTIQQ2S youth. Given the evidence of the effectiveness of mindfulness group interventions for youth (Biegel, 2017), this project sought to address the LGBTTIQQ2S youth mental health intervention gap identified in the literature and in the community.

The SPARC grant has generously provided financial support to help meet the project’s goals of enhancing the mental health of LGBTTIQQ2S youth through research. This project aimed to **develop an affirmative mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) group for LGBTTIQQ2S youth** by: Introducing/practicing core mindfulness skills with LGBTTIQQ2S youth; investigating what mindfulness/affirmative approaches are useful in a group MBI; and developing a culturally-adapted MBI for LGBTTIQQ2S youth to enhance mental health.

The findings of this project will now help inform the next phase of research; to execute a pilot evaluation of an affirmative group MBI for LGBTTIQQ2S youth. The next phase is set to occur over the next year.

Following the pilot evaluation, and based on its findings, the plan is to build community capacity for LGBTTIQQ2S youth group programming by rolling out this intervention to various agencies in Ontario that serve LGBTTIQQ2S youth.

This project engaged LGBTTIQQ2S youth from all walks of life through participation in this study. LGBTTIQQ2S youth reported a sense of empowerment by participating, considering that they are experts on LGBTTIQQ2S youth stressors and as to what a mindfulness-based intervention for LGBTTIQQ2S youth should look like. Participants were very proud that they helped contribute to the development of mental health supports for their peers in the future by participating in this current project.

**Next Steps:**

1. Ongoing reports for community dissemination, publications, and an LGBTQ+ youth mindfulness- based affirmative program manual.
2. Community dissemination (e.g., conferences, community forums for youth and stakeholders).
3. Pilot evaluation of program manual with LGBTTIQQ2S youth.

I look forward building from these findings and evaluating a pilot group program that incorporates affirmative practice and mindfulness for LGBTTIQQ2S youth! Thank you, IASWG for making this research possible through your generous financial support.