

Annual Report
2013-2014

Making
**Nova Scotia
Stronger**



The vision of ISIS is a community where all can belong and grow.

ISIS is a leading community organization
that welcomes immigrants.

Working in partnership, ISIS offers services and
creates opportunities that enable immigrants
to participate fully in Canadian life.

*This year we share the stories of four ISIS staff members -
they are helping to make Nova Scotia stronger.*

*Featured on the cover, Carmen, Huiling, Alex and Soulafa
hold photos of themselves from the year they arrived.*

DIRECTORS

This year we have focused the annual report on a few immigrant staff members at ISIS, who have come from different parts of the world and have chosen to stay in Nova Scotia. At a time when immigration is a priority within the province, they represent not only the many newcomers who come and build their lives and the lives of their families here, but also the passion and dedication of ISIS staff.

It is an appropriate time to highlight the lives and contributions of four ISIS staff. As we faced funding challenges and uncertainty this year, it was the outstanding professionalism and commitment of all ISIS staff members that sustained the organization and enabled immigrants to continue to receive excellent service.

Moving into year two of ISIS Strategic Plan, we continued to focus on our strategic objectives of integrating clients more quickly, capitalizing on capacity, demonstrating impact and enhancing financial accountability. As the contexts changed around us, it has become increasingly evident that these objectives are still crucial and that they are relevant and achievable. We move into our final year having completed more than 80% of our goals, some of which are highlighted in this annual report.

ISIS was also recognized this year as being one of the top **50 Best Workplaces in Canada** and one of the top **25 Best Workplaces in Canada for Women**. We were excited to receive the acknowledgment and our focus is on the future - we are committed to continuing to improve and provide the most supportive and innovative place to work that we can.

In February 2014, Ray Ivany's report, *Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotians*, highlighted the need to increase immigration to the province, and as the imperative is becoming more widely acknowledged, so is ISIS expertise and experience. We move into the new year with optimism, thanking our many volunteers, partners and stakeholders for their support, and our clients for continuing to give us the opportunity to accompany them on their settlement journey. We are proud to say that ISIS is making Nova Scotia stronger by helping immigrants to build their future here.

Gerry Mills, Director of Operations

Claudette Legault, Director of Programs & Services

CHAIR

It was another great year for ISIS; a year that saw the organization's online presence reach impressive new levels, while continuing to expand and broaden its services to communities throughout the province. The topic of immigration and cultural diversity played prominently in the media this year, and ISIS has performed an important role in the discourse on public policy, and community and economic development. We are in the fortunate and unique position to provide insightful information based on more than 30 years experience helping to build a stronger Nova Scotia.

ISIS is a national leader in the settlement service sector, earning respect and recognition across Canada. We are the

largest immigrant-serving agency in Atlantic Canada. Our staff is dedicated, diverse, highly professional, and experienced in their field. More than 80% of ISIS staff have lived and worked internationally as well as in Canada, adding a wealth of cross-cultural understanding and skills competency. ISIS mission can only be accomplished by having caring and capable people who help make a great workplace an essential foundation for excellent service. ISIS is proud to have been recently recognized as one of the **Best Workplaces in Canada 2014** by the *Great Place to Work® Institute Canada*. A workplace is only as good as the people who work there and this award recognizes the board members, employees and volunteers who make ISIS such a great place to work every day.

On behalf of the ISIS Board, I want to thank our community partners, funders, the staff and directors, and all our volunteers for their dedication and commitment to building a stronger Nova Scotia. ISIS strives to make a positive impact on the lives of newcomers and in our communities - something we can be proud of, and which makes ISIS one of Canada's Best Workplaces.

Thanks to our Board of Directors for their dedication to ISIS and for their vision and leadership this past year. I want to acknowledge staff members, managers, and directors for their commitment to providing great service to ISIS clients across Nova Scotia.

Jim Donovan, Chair, Board of Directors

Huiling Zhuang

A search for adventure brought Huiling Zhuang, along with her husband and baby Shuya, to Canada from her home in Qingdao, China, in 2003. "We were young. We just wanted to try new things and new opportunities." She and her husband, then both 28, studied English for two months in Vancouver, even though she had taught English as a Foreign Language in a university in China. "I needed to learn the culture," she explains.

They returned to China, and then immigrated to Halifax where she earned her Master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language, with a focus on curriculum studies, at Mount Saint Vincent University. While still a student, she received an ISIS work placement as an Educational Program Assistant at Pier 21. Her husband's work placement led to a fulfilling job at SoulutionInc, a telecommunications company that needed help entering the Chinese market.

Huiling's commitment to learning the nuances of the English language paid off, as a few months after graduation she became an instructor in the ISIS Family Learning Program. She now instructs English as an Additional Language (EAL), teaching a literacy class and a low-level mainstream English class with 15 to 20 students in each. "At the beginning it was challenging. I worked hard so that I would do my best." The cheerful and outgoing Huiling says she was thrilled to present to tutors of low-level English learners. "I was so happy to share with them. I could tell Canadians something!"

Her commitment extends also to her church where she started a program to teach Chinese language to Chinese children and, realizing that Chinese seniors were having difficulty learning English, designed a program and textbook for them. "I see the needs and I want to do something. I feel happy helping people." She now manages the program, having trained her assistant to teach. Huiling teaches Sunday School there and volunteers at her daughter's school. Although she knows that Shuya, now 11, will have a better future here, she hopes she will feel a sense of belonging to both cultures. "Immigration is not an easy process for anyone. The culture is difficult." Huiling misses her brother in China, although last year she sponsored her parents to come here.

She's content now focusing on family and jobs. "I love working here. People respect and celebrate diversity. My manager gives me lots of opportunities and guides me." And she appreciates the beautiful landscapes and the distinctive seasons. "I love the friends my family has made here, as well as the community spirit." She has faith that life will work out. "We believe there is a purpose and we can survive. We'll work hard and be nice to people around us."

I see the needs and I want to do something.



**Working with people
has been my passion
since I was a student.**

When Alex Atiol was a student in Sudan, he learned that Canada was the “world fishing ground.” In 1993 he arrived here on a World University Services Canada (WUSC) sponsorship. “Other than that I didn’t know much,” he says, chuckling. Today the affable and committed Alex is well informed, as that’s part of his job as ISIS Coordinator of Orientation Services.

He graduated with his BA in Economics from Dalhousie, but financial sector job prospects were slim. He had been an accountant in Sudan and tutored English as a refugee in Kenya, so he volunteered at ISIS helping clients settle. He remembers the shock a new family felt seeing the seemingly endless grocery store choices. That concern and ability to get along with people led to a job with new arrivals. He created the ISIS orientation manual and a 10-unit module to help them learn how society functions. “Working with people has been my passion since I was a student. I had gone through the experience myself and helping comes automatically.” He is especially proud of earning accreditation as a Dialogue for Peaceful Change facilitator. This international program features the best methodologies in community-based conflict mediation, focusing on conflict content, culture and spirituality.

Alex is emphatic about immigrants’ contributions. “We’re injecting new ideas; nothing will be lost.” His experience has

Alex Atiol

been positive. He found Dalhousie to be “amazing” and worked at the library and with campus police while studying. “It didn’t take me long to feel part of society.” He later became active in the community -- ISIS representative in Partners for Human Rights, Atlantic representative on the National Anti-Racism Council, chair of the local Development and Peace committee, and member of the African Association of Nova Scotia and the Sudanese Association of Nova Scotia.

He speaks proudly of his family who helped pay off his student loan, allowing purchase of a house. “That is something I won’t forget.” His oldest daughter is in the Master of International Development program at Oxford University while two study economics at Dalhousie, one proceeding to law school. His son works with street children in Toronto and the youngest attends school. Alex is proud of their mother – an ISIS Life Skills Worker and Superstore cashier — who cared for them alone. He lived without them for three years, until he made friends who helped sponsor them.

Alex feels Halifax is a perfect size, has good schools and a strong sense of community. “ISIS is full of people eager to help and ISIS policies allow that. It’s not bureaucratic; we have a good and happy place. I say ‘we’ because I feel I am part of it.”

14,045

VISITORS TO FRONT DESK

18,285

PHONE CALLS TO FRONT DESK

83,832

WEBSITE VISITS

47,901

UNIQUE WEBSITE VISITORS

18,414

VOLUNTEER HOURS LOGGED

402

ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

22%

VOLUNTEERS ARE IMMIGRANTS

88%

ISIS SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE IN FRENCH

2,222

NEW CLIENTS

314

PRE-ARRIVAL CLIENTS

1,109

ONLINE & DISTANCE CLIENTS

4,188

TOTAL CLIENTS

ISIS STAFF

126

PERMANENT & SHORT CONTRACT STAFF

45

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

60

DIFFERENT LANGUAGES SPOKEN

53.5%

STAFF HAVE WORKED AT ISIS 5 YEARS OR MORE

95%

ARE PROUD TO SAY THEY WORK AT ISIS

93%

SAID THEY FELT WELCOME WHEN THEY JOINED

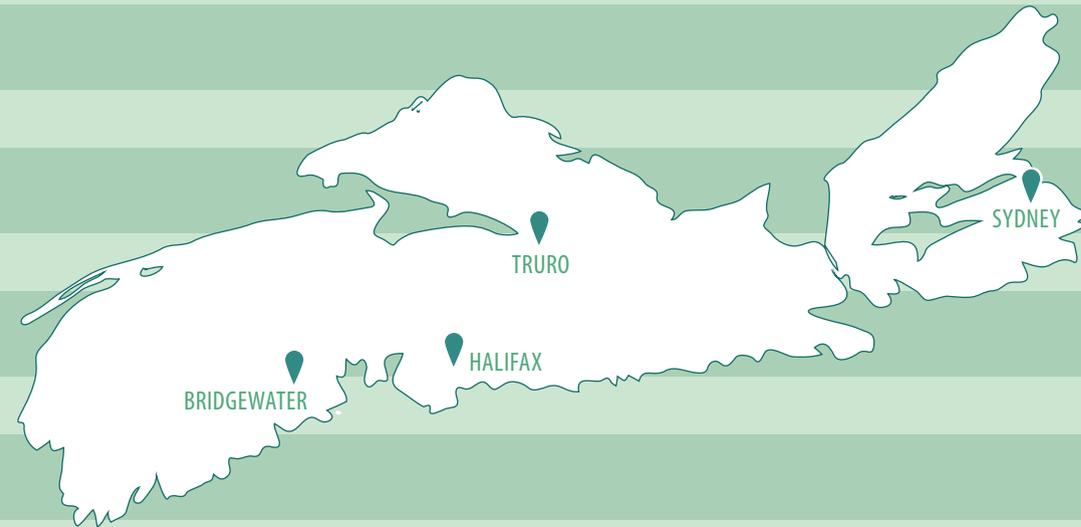
AGREE ISIS OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

91%

AGREE ISIS IS A GREAT PLACE TO WORK!



ISIS OFFERS SERVICES ACROSS NOVA SCOTIA, AND NOW HAS OFFICES IN HALIFAX, BRIDGEWATER, TRURO AND SYDNEY



PERCENTAGE OF CLIENTS WHO INTEND TO STAY IN NOVA SCOTIA

PRE-ARRIVAL 96%

AFTER THEIR FIRST EMPLOYMENT RELATED CONTACT 88%

AFTER FIRST SIX MONTHS 75.1%

AFTER FIRST YEAR 72%

Making Nova Scotia Stronger

Soulafa Al-Abbasi

Soulafa Al-Abbasi is the kind of young person Nova Scotia needs – passionate, educated and ambitious. She is committed to staying here but must explain this frequently to former classmates who left to work elsewhere. Why has she chosen to stay? “It’s the passion, resilience, determination, and creativity that young professionals are bringing to the table. The young leaders who are making waves are my source of inspiration, driving me to make this a better place.”

Soulafa is committed to community – especially through Fusion, a youth organization focused on improving city life. She initiated their diversity photo contest, was Director, Immigration and Diversity and is now Vice-Chair. Her community credentials seem endless and she admits that sleeping is low on her list. She is a board member of Credit Union Atlantic and is the Atlantic youth representative for Passages to Canada. She was until recently Regional Coordinator for the UN Association of Canada and served on the Board of Nova Scotia-Gambia Association. Volunteering permits Soulafa to show her talents, learning that working here is about connections. “You have to be proactive, shape your path and keep going.”

Soulafa earned her Master of Development Economics from Dalhousie University after arriving in 2003. She is well traveled -- born in Damascus, Syria, went to high school in Saudi Arabia and received her Bachelor of Arts in Economics in Egypt.

You have to be proactive, shape your path and keep going.

“Halifax was different for me – small and laid back and I didn’t know anyone.” She worked at a call centre and was involved with the Canadian Red Cross University Club and the Graduate Economics Students Association. Because her mother, now in Montreal, was an ISIS student, Soulafa volunteered for four years as a Diversity Facilitator doing community outreach. As part of her university studies, she analyzed the ISIS language program. For her thesis she worked with a local micro-finance organization in the slums of Cairo on a nine-month Aga Khan Fellowship. She then worked at the International Ocean Institute Canada at Dalhousie, coordinating courses for international students.

Soulafa’s spirit and skills have been evident at ISIS as Community Capacity Building Coordinator –creating events and workshops – and then as Employment Specialist. “I love the client stories. I like to create a space for conversation and partnerships. I provide valuable information and I take something out of it.” She is especially proud of her efforts with engineers in the Internationally Educated Bridging Program. They now work in a three to six-month placement program toward their licensing requirements. “I love working at ISIS. I call us ISISonians, as we’re a living community.” Her commitment to immigration is equally strong. “We’re building a global economy through immigrants bringing with them their networks – and all that innovation and creativity.”



Carmen Celina Moncayo

Carmen Celina Moncayo was a community psychologist in her native Colombia before coming to Canada, where she uses those skills as Community Wellness Program Coordinator at ISIS. A highlight of her work was the recent community mental health assessment. "I was so touched by the stories – in terms of suffering, but also in terms of people's resilience."

Carmen Celina landed here in 1999 with daughter Violeta, then 12, for a break from the political upheaval at home where she'd worked in the Ombudsman's office. "I left by choice but I had no other option." She knew that although she didn't speak English, her two brothers in Canada, one in Nova Scotia, would help her. "If I compared my experience with people who didn't have any connections, it was easy. You need friends to help you navigate." Over the next while the energetic and passionate Carmen Celina volunteered at ISIS organizing resources; assisted a professor researching a women's health project; worked in a Guatemalan handicrafts shop; attended gatherings about women's health issues; studied English; presented her thesis research project at Saint Mary's University; volunteered with the Canadian Mental Health Association; joined the Halifax Immigrant Women's Association; coordinated conversation groups and became a School Settlement Worker at the YMCA.

But it was difficult for Carmen Celina to live in the moment. "I was either in the future, perfectly integrated in society

I'm so grateful to do this work.

with a house, car, everything – or in the past where I had professional status, friends, a woman in control." With two Master's degrees, returning to school to practice psychology here was not tempting. "We have naïve ideas of how it will be, but without them we wouldn't immigrate. We never realize how overwhelming it is not to be able to communicate and convey complex thoughts."

Carmen Celina became Family Violence and Cross-Cultural Coordinator and, except for one contract elsewhere, she has stayed at ISIS, purposefully pursuing the organization's concern about immigrants' mental health. Despite intentions of a brief stay, Canada is home. "I love Nova Scotia because I have met people with whom I have created communities with diverse interests. I have friends that supported my daughter and me." Carmen Celina remarried and lives in a co-op where she also volunteers. Joining a neighbourhood knitting group made her feel part of the community. She drums with Samba Nova and meditates at Shambhala. Violeta attends NSCAD and makes jewelry.

Carmen Celina believes settlement is an endless process. "There are moments I feel totally settled and moments where I'm a newcomer again." She loves that her job allows her to make a difference. "I'm so grateful to do this work. As we say in Spanish, I'm completely in my salsa!"

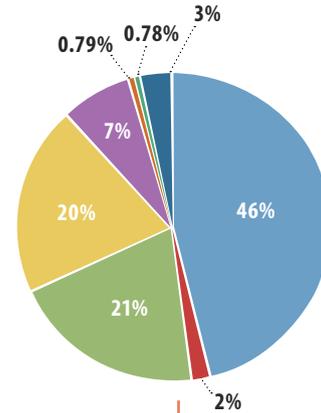


HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ISIS FINANCIAL REPORT

For the year ending March 31, 2014

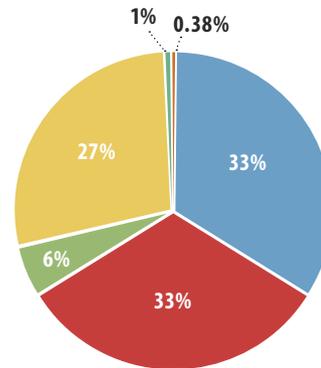
REVENUE

	2013-2014	2012-2013	Increase/Decrease
Citizenship & Immigration Canada	\$3,662,218	\$3,663,566	-0.04%
Employment & Social Development Canada	\$162,665	\$264,823	-38.58%
Nova Scotia Office of Immigration - LMA Funding	\$1,668,722	\$1,452,696	14.87%
Nova Scotia Office of Immigration - Settlement Funding	\$1,595,781	\$1,310,456	21.77%
Nova Scotia Department of Labour & Advanced Education	\$543,133	\$589,907	-7.93%
Nova Scotia Department of Health & Wellness	\$63,135	\$0	100%
Status of Women Canada	\$62,049	\$0	100%
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency	\$0	\$75,826	-100%
Canadian Immigrant Integration Program	\$0	\$32,139	-100%
Other Funding Sources	\$240,067	\$231,746	3.59%
Total	\$7,997,770	\$7,621,159	4.94%



EXPENSES

	2013-2014	2012-2013	Increase/Decrease
Language & Skills Development	\$2,631,862	\$2,551,157	3.16%
Employment & Bridging Services	\$2,625,988	\$2,408,076	9.05%
Business & Workforce Integration	\$436,934	\$403,581	8.26%
Settlement & Community, Communications & Outreach	\$2,157,497	\$2,110,280	2.24%
Strategy Implementation	\$72,226	\$0	100%
Amortization & Others	\$30,062	\$25,731	16.83%
Total	\$7,954,568	\$7,498,825	6.08%



Excess of revenue over expenses	\$43,202	\$122,334	-64.69%
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ISIS BOARD MEMBERS

2013-2014

Amanda Marshall
Basia Dzierzanowska
Brenda Rowe
Catharine Penney
Claudette Legault
Gerry Mills

Jim Donovan
Joe Malek
Merlin Fownes
Olaf Berghaus
Robert Hiscock
Ross Mitchell

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

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Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Dalhousie University
Employment and Social Development Canada
Family Learning Initiative Endowment Fund
Halifax Regional Municipality
Nova Scotia Department of Education
Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness
Nova Scotia Department of Labour & Advanced Education
Nova Scotia Department of Seniors
Nova Scotia Office of Immigration
Royal Bank of Canada
Status of Women Canada
Toronto Dominion Bank
United Way



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