

ISIS Annual Report 2012

→ INNOVATION *impact*



isis | Immigrant Settlement
& Integration Services

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.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD.

This year ISIS took the unprecedented step of reaching out to our key stakeholders and asking you what you needed from us. Clients, funders, employees, volunteers, partners, and board members—all gave input into a new strategic plan that charts the way forward. From your input, we defined four broad strategic goals:

1. Integrate clients more quickly;
2. Demonstrate impact;
3. Capitalize on capacity;
4. Enhance financial accountability.

These goals, implemented over the next three to four years, reflect an evolution of our role and an increase in our level of accountability.

They are rooted in the changing needs and expectations of our stakeholders.

However, our vision and our values have not changed. ISIS will continue to work with our partners and funders to offer services and create opportunities that enable immigrants to participate fully in Canadian life. We are a national leader in the settlement sector because we have a highly capable and dedicated team who deliver innovative and holistic solutions to clients. We are uniquely positioned to understand and adapt to meet newcomers' evolving needs.

On behalf of the board, I thank our funders and partners, all the volunteers, the staff and directors for your passionate commitment to creating a community where all can belong and grow. I am very proud to be associated with ISIS because of the positive difference we make to newcomers' lives every day as we welcome them into our communities.

I would like to offer my personal thanks to our board for the support you have shown me over the past two years and for your invaluable service to ISIS.

The strategic plan will serve to inform our priorities and decisions as the environment in which we operate continues to change. We have a clear sense of direction and we will continue to lead the way!

Joe Malek

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS.

It was another outstanding year for ISIS and this annual report highlights the innovative ways that we have responded to client needs and the positive impact innovation has had. Firmly established as a leading community organization, we are recognized for our commitment to partnership and sought for our expertise on both policy and practice. Our success is the result of many. ISIS is fortunate in having volunteers who give their precious time to make a difference, funders and partners, who assist us to do what we do so well and exceptionally dedicated staff members who focus on service excellence and client outcomes. We thank you all.

Over the past year, ISIS staff has shown on a daily basis what innovation means, setting up a community garden where immigrants can grow produce. As a newly approved sponsorship agreement holder, we submitted our first applications to bring refugees to Canada and reunite families. We worked with immigrant

women to build their skills and confidence to be leaders in their communities and we led the development of the province's Nova Scotia Start program, delivering programs to people before they arrive and coordinating processes post-arrival.

ISIS' usage of Twitter in connecting with the community was recognized nationally as a best practice.

We developed region-specific orientations to Nova Scotia, in French and English. Through our unique bridging programs, 70% of internationally educated physicians passed their exams and 75% of pharmacists, far above the national average of 46.5%. Acknowledging ISIS' expertise, the province seconded an ISIS staff member this year. We showed HRM Planning a new way to achieve immigrant input using visuals and interpreters, and we shared our expertise with other provinces—in business Buy and Sell and in language curricula. We were also honored to receive the IWK Award, recognizing ISIS for demonstrating and living their core values and beliefs: Care and Passion, Excellence and Leadership, Worklife and Relationships.

Reflecting many of these values, we are proud to launch what has been a significant achievement this year—ISIS Strategic Plan 12-15—Leading the Way. As we move into our fourth decade of delivering services to immigrants, navigating new realities, dealing with the complexities of settlement and integration, we are confident that this plan will guide our future, helping us to live each day by our vision—building a community where all can belong and grow.

Claudette Legault, Director of Programs and Services

Gerry Mills, Director of Operations

EFFECTIVE ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE FOR NEW WORKERS.

INDIVIDUALIZED
immediate



A job as a Scotiabank personal banking officer was just what Leon Li wanted. He arrived in Nova Scotia as a student in 2008 and earned his Master of Finance degree at Saint Mary's University.

During his online training, supervisor Mary Anne Wade-Sisk noticed he was experiencing some challenges with language that were hindering his understanding and his ability to feel comfortable.

Scotiabank's Human Resources department suggested she contact ISIS. ESL instructor Andrea Taylor had an opening in the popular English in the Workplace program and met with Mary Anne and Leon to develop a personal plan that would provide the right support for him. The innovative program is successful because ISIS tailors the program to suit particular language needs of immigrants in the workplace.

"With Leon it was paraphrasing and listening strategies. We also dealt with workplace culture, humour and small talk," says Andrea. They role played and Andrea listened to training sessions to gain insight into the precise demands of the job.

They met twice weekly for 12 weeks for 90-minute sessions. "Initially I found it difficult, but after working for a while, it made sense," says Leon. "I didn't feel it was a class as she was here sitting in front of my desk. She's the best English instructor I have ever known." The admiration is mutual. "He was honestly an ideal student—very diligent, eager and open," says Andrea.

From Mary Anne's perspective, making contact with ISIS and setting up the learning sessions proved worthwhile for both Leon and Scotiabank. She

altered Leon's work schedule and moved him to various positions, including greeting clients and working as a teller. "We started in November and I started to see improvement by February. He's smart as a whip and I predict he'll be very successful!"

English in the Workplace has existed since 1993 and has grown from one instructor to four. Last year they taught over 65 classes at 50 worksites in sectors as diversified as law, small business, and even trucking.

Scotiabank was happy with its experience. "We achieved the results we were looking for," says Mary Anne. "At Scotiabank we are committed to a culture of diversity and inclusion and helping newcomers to Canada. We are pleased to invest in helping immigrants make the transition to the Canadian workforce." And for Leon it was also a success. "Conversation skills and cultural things were once challenging, but I realize now that I am improving. Day by day I get better."

WORKING TOGETHER TO CLEAR THE PATH FOR INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONALS.

You'll find Meryat Zaki most days at the Shoppers Drug Mart pharmacy on Joseph Howe Drive. The Egyptian-born pharmacist is happy with her job and especially pleased that the ISIS multi-stakeholder work group made her transition to employment in Canada smoother.

In most professional fields, there are particular demands on newcomers before they can practise in Canada. Meryat completed two examinations and a 20-week community internship. Normally there is also a hospital internship, but this is difficult for international graduates to arrange, because Dalhousie University graduates are given preference.

Thanks to ISIS initiating profession-specific multi-stakeholder work groups to solve these accessibility issues, community internship is now sufficient for pharmacists trained elsewhere. Meryat is relieved. "I would have been at the mercy of waiting for a hospital internship."

The groups bring together representatives of professional associations, regulatory bodies, employers, educational institutions, immigrant-serving agencies, language program providers, government departments and internationally educated professionals.

The ISIS approach is unique and effective. "These groups can be the catalyst for awareness, education and acknowledgement of what professionals have to contribute," says co-chair Jan Sheppard Kucher, an ISIS employee seconded to the province's Department of Labour and Advanced Education. She has learned that it's crucial to bring decision-makers to the table. "Regulators have been seen as the bad guys, but they're often the significant drivers of change."

Jan Sheppard Kucher leads a meeting of the pharmacy multi-stakeholder work group initiated by ISIS.

{ opposite } Leon Li's ESL sessions were tailored to meet his needs at work.

One such group member is Susan Wedlake, Registrar of the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists. "Our group is small enough and unofficial enough that it works. We don't have to wait for answers," she says. "We discuss our problems and how best to navigate the system. We brought advocacy people on board to address issues as we identified them." Susan feels strongly that newcomers can be accommodated while maintaining high professional standards. "We ask the same of them as of local pharmacists."

Law, medicine and engineering are also represented in multi-stakeholder work groups. The groups begin by clarifying pathways to licensure, identifying barriers facing international professionals and then working for change.

Susan is passionate about her participation. "These people aren't a piece of paper. We have people in front of us and we recognize there are issues."

And international professionals are appreciative. "There is an adjustment to working in Canada," says Meryat. "Everything is computerized, including patient files, and counselling is more thorough here. It's great that ISIS helped me make the transition."

40

percentage of
internationally
educated
immigrants working
in their fields in
Nova Scotia

60

percentage of
Canadian-born
residents working
in their fields in
Nova Scotia



PIONEERING *possibilities*

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF ESL LITERACY.

Mohamed Taghei Ali Madad studies English at ISIS after arriving in Canada unable to read and write in his native language.

For Mohamed Taghi Ali Madad, starting English classes at ISIS meant more than learning a new language. At 33, Mohamed picked up a pen for the first time. "They took my hand and showed me how to do A, B, C," he says. "It was not easy. When I went home after class I would have a headache and my eyes were red."

Born in Afghanistan, Mohamed lived with his father after his parents separated, helping him in a pharmacy. He never went to school to learn to read and write his native Farsi. Mohamed came to Canada in 2008 with his wife, now a nursing student, and three children. "I want to teach people how to drive," says Mohamed. "But I need to learn more."

In recent years, an unexpected number of refugees from Bhutan, as well as Afghanistan and Iraq, have arrived unable to read and write in their own

language. After offering only one ESL literacy class for several years, ISIS recognized the need for clients to experience success and progress by moving ahead through the literacy levels before joining the regular ESL stream at level 2 or 3.

So the organization developed its own ESL literacy program and now offers nine ESL literacy classes with 12 to 13 students in each. The approach, strategies and materials are different than regular ESL classes, although they do also include life skills and social and cultural integration. "Through learning and training we've built a program that produces good outcomes," says Jayne Geldart, Manager of Language and Skills Development, Social Integration.

Because of its unique and cutting-edge curriculum, ISIS is at the forefront of ESL literacy and now trains teachers across Canada through an online ESL literacy teacher training program. "It's overwhelming and challenging to teach ESL literacy if you've never been trained," explains Jayne.

The 10-week course is open to anyone with TESL accreditation. Students work interactively with an ISIS instructor, they do projects and participate in a discussion platform. After operating it as a pilot program for one year, ISIS now charges a participant fee. It is expected that eventually ESL literacy will be a requisite part of ESL teacher training.

Across Canada, new arrivals like Mohamed will have their ESL literacy needs met effectively and efficiently thanks to ISIS offering ESL literacy courses and sharing their efforts from coast to coast.



ONLINE SERVICES A LIFE-LINE FOR NEWCOMERS.

Michael Maslowski knows an effective online service when he sees one. The Polish information technology expert—he earned his Master's and his PhD in IT—is impressed that he could prepare for work in Canada before leaving home by taking the ISIS online pre-employment program. "ISIS came up at the top of my searches. It provided indispensable value to me as an immigrant."

Michael arrived with his wife and son in 2010 feeling mentally prepared. "It was time consuming—about two days a week—but extremely beneficial to get into the mindset of the Canadian worker." He quickly found a job he considered a good starting point, then moved on to Research in Motion, and now works as a technical support specialist with ADP Canada, a business solutions company.

1,000 number of registered users with ISIS Online Services

ISIS has long been considered a national leader in online services for newcomers—both pre- and post-arrival. Videoconferencing; online courses and workshops in writing, communication, business and job-hunting skills; training courses for instructors—ISIS is a pioneer and continues to expand its online presence as technology changes and grows. "Online learning is good for our carbon footprint and it's flexible for people with busy lives," says Kathy Burnett, ISIS Manager of Skills and Language Development (Online Learning).

ISIS is leading a new provincial initiative called Nova Scotia Start that helps immigrants—before and after arrival—successfully settle in the province.

In collaboration with La Fédération Acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE) and the Nova Scotia Association of Regional Development Authorities (NSARDA), ISIS provides clients with information, referral, help with pre-employment and business skills, and opportunities to enhance communication, regardless of where they choose to settle in the province.

"One of the government's priorities is to make a push to encourage immigrants to settle outside metro," explains Kathy. "This allows us to respond and support their priorities by diversifying our learning options." ISIS continues to innovate by also offering needs assessments and employment counselling for people outside HRM.

For those outside Canada, such as Michael, the distance courses create opportunities to research particular professions, find appealing workplaces and learn about any necessary credential recognition. There is also practical help with such things as workplace culture, writing skills, resumes and interviews.

"ISIS allows people to build their skills and gives them an understanding of their core strengths coming to Canada," says Michael. "It was an eye-opener. When I landed here, I knew what to expect."

*Michał Masłowski
felt prepared for work
in Canada before
leaving Poland.*

READY
ready
RESOURCEFUL



→ NEW LINKS *new life*

In 2009,
Nova Scotia
received:

123

government-
assisted refugees

22

privately
sponsored refugees

15

asylum seekers

ASSISTING A COMMUNITY TO SPONSOR REFUGEES.

When Emilie Coyle heard that a Palestinian refugee family from Iraq needed private sponsorship to settle in Halifax, she attached a teabag to an invitation and rallied her neighbours to help. They came together as "Neighbours for Refugees" fundraising through bottle drives, garage sales and card sales. They raised money at the local mosque and they linked with Calvin Presbyterian Church.

Because of their efforts, a family of four settled in Halifax. "It was a lot of work, but I strongly believe our neighbourhood needed to do something like that," says Emilie.

In order to assist with private sponsorship, ISIS last year became a Sponsorship Agreement Holder through the federal government. Evelyn Jones, ISIS Refugee Sponsorship Coordinator,

says they had been working on this for several years, ever since being requested by a refugee to assist his brother to join him in Canada. Now ISIS works with other groups—faith, ethnocultural or community. There are two main rules: the group must offer financial and settlement support, and those sponsored must be United Nations documented refugees.

Often government-sponsored refugees arrive without their entire family. "There is anxiety and guilt while trying to integrate in a new community. This is one way we can support families already here," says Evelyn, adding that it's also effective in helping to grow our population since the groups help new arrivals to settle and put down roots.

Ejigu Haile came to Canada from Ethiopia 16 years ago. He started a community group of about 40 people to sponsor others in need of help. He says ISIS provides great assistance to his group as it can often be a long process. He says it was 12 years before his brother could leave a refugee camp in Nairobi. "When you are in a refugee camp you don't see any hope, so we have to help," says Ejigu, who works as a limo driver. Family-linked sponsorship means groups provide transportation, groceries and furniture and help refugees enroll in language schools and to find jobs. "We contribute what we can."

Neighbours for Refugees was part of a coalition of six sponsorship groups that ultimately welcomed about 33 people—one extended family—to Halifax. Others are still hoping to come.

"I'd help again," says Emilie. "I live in a country that is in peace. The family we sponsored is so happy to be here. They finally feel they have a home."

Ejigu Haile's brother spent 12 years in a refugee camp in Ethiopia before coming to Canada.

{ opposite } Noor Al-Anbagi volunteers with ISIS.



INVENTIVE APPROACH LEADS TO VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE.

"When my English gets good, I'd like to work at ISIS," declared Noor Al-Anbagi in the 2010 ISIS Annual Report, as a shy newcomer from Iraq. She spoke little English and, despite not hearing, didn't know sign language.

Shy no longer and talking enthusiastically through interpreter Alice Mailman, her dream has come true. Four days a week she volun-

31 average number of new
volunteers to ISIS each month

15 number of ways
to volunteer with ISIS

teers at the ISIS American Sign Language (ASL) class, teaching English and ASL to new arrivals, mostly from Bhutan.

The assistance ISIS provided to Noor upon her arrival actually led to the organization's ability to meet the needs of the Bhutanese clients. ISIS had partnered with the Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians to help her learn English through sign language. This inventive approach gave ISIS the knowledge and resources to provide an unexpected, yet necessary, service—an ASL class.

And Noor's contribution to the class underlines the importance of volunteers to ISIS. Denise Scott, Coordinator of Volunteer Programs is more than impressed. "Volunteers like Noor are critically important to us to work one on one with clients. Students see her as someone who has overcome literacy challenges. How motivating is that!"

Her spirit and energy also affected Julie White. After returning from overseas travel, Julie, who works in accounting at Stewart McKelvey, was looking for an international connection. "I thought this is awesome; I can meet people here from throughout the world without

leaving my job." ISIS matched Julie with Noor through its Community Connections program and she soon became a dedicated volunteer.

They meet for a couple of hours weekly. "In the beginning we made plans; now it's more hanging out," says Julie, explaining that they go to a gym, take walks and practise English and even ASL, since she has completed a beginner's course. "I spend time with her family. It's a really good way to think globally."

Denise says devoted volunteers like Noor and Julie are essential to ISIS, noting that the organization has about 800 registered volunteers. As well as classroom assistance and community connections, volunteers assist with reception, tutor individuals, conduct practise job interviews, mentor professionals and provide resources for workshops and health fairs.

And sometimes, someone whose life has changed because of ISIS then makes their own valued contribution. "It's very important to volunteer," says Noor. "I love helping people."



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ISIS FINANCIAL REPORT

for the year ending
March 31, 2012

	2011–12	2010–11	Increase/Decrease
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	\$3,432,676	\$3,765,086	-8.83%
Health Canada	\$0	\$115,000	-100.00%
Service Canada	\$244,474	\$476,414	-48.68%
Nova Scotia Office of Immigration – LMA Funding	\$1,731,315	\$1,586,813	9.11%
Nova Scotia Office of Immigration – Settlement Funding	\$847,973	\$1,261,907	-32.80%
Nova Scotia Department of Labor and Workforce Development	\$415,592	\$257,113	61.64%
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency	\$129,712	\$158,423	-18.12%
Other Funding Sources	\$606,173	\$254,776	137.92%
TOTAL	\$7,407,915	\$7,875,532	-5.94%

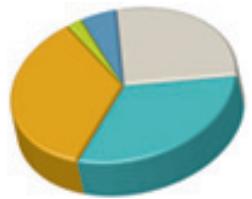
	2011–12	2010–11	Increase/Decrease
Language and Skills Development Services	\$2,458,690	\$2,996,343	-17.94%
Employment Services	\$2,157,988	\$2,279,234	-5.32%
Business Development Services	\$382,781	\$464,509	-17.59%
Settlement and Community Outreach Services	\$1,910,795	\$1,859,450	2.76%
Amortization and Others	\$109,132	-\$12,517	-972%
TOTAL	\$7,019,386	\$7,587,019	-7.48%

Excess of Revenue over Expenses \$388,529 \$288,513



REVENUE \$7,407,915

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada (46%)
- Nova Scotia Office of Immigration – LMA Funding (23%)
- Nova Scotia Office of Immigration – Settlement Funding (12%)
- Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development (6%)
- Service Canada (3%)
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (2%)
- Other Funding Sources (8%)



EXPENSES \$7,019,386

- Language and Skills Development Services (35%)
- Employment Services (31%)
- Settlement and Community Outreach Services (27%)
- Business Development Services (5%)
- Amortization and Others (2%)

ISIS BOARD MEMBERS 2011-12

Joe Malek <i>Chair</i>	Catharine Penney <i>Treasurer-Secretary</i>	Olaf Berghaus	Russell Walker
Jim Donovan <i>Vice-Chair</i>		Basia Dzierzandowska	Claudette Legault

Colin MacLean	Gerry Mills
Ross Mitchell	Arleigh Hood
Paul Schwartz	

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

Citizenship and Immigration Canada	Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education
Service Canada	United Way
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency	Family Learning Initiative Endowment Fund
Nova Scotia Office of Immigration	

90
number of countries that
ISIS clients originate from

16
number of business sectors
ISIS clients are involved in

115
number of staff at ISIS

30
number of countries that
ISIS staff originate from

754
number of children
enrolled with the Early
Childhood Education
Centre at ISIS since 1988;
currently, children come
from: Bhutan, Afghanistan,
China, Yemen, Iraq, Syria,
Tahiti, Togo, Ethiopia, Cuba,
El Salvador, Palestine,
Korea, and Colombia.

800+
number of trained
ISIS volunteers

44
number of communities in
Nova Scotia served by ISIS

3,700
number of clients
ISIS serves each year

1,600
number of new
ISIS clients this year

104
number of new businesses
opened by ISIS clients from
2009 to 2012

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