



A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE PROVINCE

Annual Report 2017-2018





VISION

A community where all
can belong and grow.

MISSION

Helping immigrants build
a future in Nova Scotia.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As you arrive at ISANS you'll be struck by the colourful three-dimensional mural that spans an entire wall just outside the office entrance. "Big Canada", created by local artist Kyle Jackson, captures the enormity of our country and our icons and symbols. When you study this beautiful creation, you identify with the country as if it were one community. The illustration is a fitting reminder of ISANS essential role to champion a welcome and inclusive province.

Never before has ISANS been a more robust entity – with over 250 employees, 20 funding partners, and 700+ volunteers, we work to ensure our 7,500 immigrant clients have the skills, knowledge and confidence to succeed and stay in Nova Scotia.

We acknowledge and thank staff, volunteers, partners and funders who dedicate your time, energy and talents to ensure Nova Scotia is full-heartedly welcoming.

This year our board of directors focused on two primary responsibilities: direction and leadership. One central priority is ensuring ISANS is making measured progress with our new strategic plan. Our clear direction is to empower immigrants, value and support our staff, engage partners and community and champion a more welcoming and inclusive province.

Gerry Mill's decision to retire after 30 years of outstanding, energetic and passionate devotion to Nova Scotia's immigrants – resulted in a leadership challenge. Our board undertook the critical task of selecting a new chief executive officer with diligence and dedication. The nation-wide search resulted in unanimous confirmation of Jennifer Watts as the best possible leader. Jennifer is now at the helm and we look forward to her insightful and value-based leadership.

Board members share a deep sense of honour in serving such a relevant organization. I acknowledge four individuals completing terms. Hasan Naqvi remained faithful to our board despite his relocation to Toronto. Kristy Read was a credible and conscientious staff representative. Brenda Rowe made steadfast contribution to the board and governance committee. Catharine Penny capably chaired the board and the governance committee with skill and dedication.

Returning to our "Big Canada" image – I encourage you to pause next time you visit. Look at the image and also at the many and diverse faces surrounding you. Experience the moment and be mindful of the one vision we share – a community where all can belong and grow.

Catherine J. Woodman, *Chair, Board of Directors*

We will remember 2017-18 as the year of unprecedented growth, when an announcement of increased federal immigration levels was realized within ISANS by both increased opportunities and increased expectations.

We saw the hiring and training of many new staff and the development of new programs and services. We formed new partnerships; we launched a new website and we continued to invest in data collection and technology, not only to support our service delivery, but also to ensure that we could better tell our story.

We significantly expanded our language training and childcare services to become one of the largest federally funded language trainers in the country, providing language support to 2,422 newcomers and caring for 335 children. This expansion was accompanied by an overall 35% increase in the number of newcomers that we served - a total of 7,563 unique clients.

This growth did not come without challenges, but ISANS staff responded to transition and change with ideas, resourcefulness and resiliency. Every day both behind the scenes and on the front line, they work together to prioritize immigrants and their settlement needs, ensuring a welcome to every person who walks through our doors. To ISANS staff - thank you for your dedication and professionalism.

It was not only a time of responding to a new context but also taking the reins to control our future. With great enthusiasm we began to implement our new strategic plan, developing strategies to respond to our four pillars of empowering immigrants, valuing and supporting staff, engaging our partners and the community and championing a more welcoming and inclusive province. We moved forward in all areas and we look forward to continued progress in the coming year.

As we end another remarkable year for ISANS we would like to thank our many volunteer, community, government and corporate partners for their continued support and confidence.

I would especially like to acknowledge ISANS' Board of Directors who worked tirelessly this year to select ISANS' new CEO, Jennifer Watts, who will lead this incredible organization into the future.

Gerry Mills, *Executive Director*

I am so excited to take on the role of CEO and to work with such an amazing staff team. As we work to implement ISANS' vision and strategic plan, we are building on the incredible legacy of Gerry Mills. We have benefited greatly from her wisdom and passionate support for newcomers. I look forward to working with our government, business and community partners and volunteers as we develop innovative programs that will strengthen newcomer integration and sense of belonging in our province.

Jennifer Watts, *CEO*

7,563

clients served

2,967

new clients

16,955

visitors to the
front desk

152,913

website visitors

5,850

formal
interpretations

259

staff:
189 permanent,
70 short contract

Staff are from **64**
countries of origin
and speak

73 languages

728

active volunteers

39,252

volunteer hours

54

community
capacity building
workshops delivered

222

government-assisted
refugees (GARs)
served

95

privately sponsored
refugees served

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

88%

GARs stayed in NS
during first year

562

clients participated in
Introduction to
Nova Scotia
(222 on-site & 340 online)

82

new businesses
opened

2,381

clients received
employment services

1,068

known jobs secured

81% in their field
or related field

438

employers
registered on Skills
Match Online
Recruitment Tool

441 clients

attended **28**
On-site Recruitment &
Information Sessions

2,422

Language clients

186

children in short-term
care in ECE Centre

149 children in
long-term care

1,621

pre-arrival clients

1,965

in-Canada clients
accessed programs
online or by distance

104

programs & services
offered online
and by distance



ALI AL-KHAZAALI

From the insecurity of life in Iraq, to becoming a volunteer with Feed Nova Scotia, Ali Al-Khazaali's journey through life has taken many different turns. Ali arrived in Nova Scotia in October 2017 with his wife, Aster, and twin seven-year-old boys, Ezzuilden and Mohammed. They had fled Iraq a few years earlier to live in Egypt.

Ali, who has a Master's degree in Computer Science from the University of Technology in Baghdad, owned his own computer shop and also worked in the United Arab Emirates. Aster graduated in chemical engineering. "We love Iraq but it is hard to live where something bad could happen to you," explains Ali, whose siblings and parents have settled in Jordan. He and his family were able to come to Canada because Aster's family was already here.

"It was like our dream come true; our life begins again," says Ali. "We have rights to live the way we like, with the people we want." He finds Canada better than anticipated. "People in Halifax are friendly, support us in any way; we had community like this in Iraq."

Ali has volunteered weekly for several months at Feed Nova Scotia where he helps organize the food delivery system. "For me, it's easy. I have worked in many accounting systems and have created some of my own because I had my own business. But I need to learn the Canadian way."

He was informed about volunteer opportunities at ISANS and hopes to also share his skills with Phoenix Youth Programs. "Somehow it makes you feel happy. Even your mood is different when you volunteer. It gives you some power and it feeds your spirit."

Ali says he feels fully accepted as a volunteer. "You are giving something to others without them knowing it. Pushing it forward. I am helping them just like people helped us—they wished and prayed for us to come."

When she's not studying English, Aster volunteers in their children's school library. As well as attending a local mosque, the family enjoys community events. "Our kids need to mix with other kids and get used to them and know them," says Ali.

At ISANS, Ali meets with an employment counsellor, works on his already good English, and has taken a dozen workshops. "ISANS has so many exciting things about settling here and legal issues. They have courses all the time!"

Ali has many ideas for his future. He anticipates opening his own food shop, café, or butcher shop. Exporting goods to the Middle East also is possible. No matter where his future takes the family, he will continue volunteering. "From what I know, volunteering is part of being Canadian. It is part of being in this community."

MARGARET CASEY

Highly regarded Halifax physician Margaret Casey shares her medical expertise as an ISANS volunteer with International Medical Graduates (IMGs). Retired from active practice for 13 years, Margaret works with newcomers, helping them get licensed to practice in Nova Scotia.

"I love talking about medicine but, more importantly, it's been very rewarding for me to meet the IMGs and get to know them," explains Margaret. "I admire their tenacity and courage. It's a difficult decision for them to come here and to get to the point where you're licensed."

Margaret, a Toronto native, worked most of her career at Halifax's North End Community Clinic, and was also Director of Admissions at the Dalhousie Medical School for six years.

ISANS approached her before retirement, and she continues to meet several times a year with a group of about 10 doctors. Many are competing for the same two third-year positions at Dalhousie. "This is an excellent program at ISANS, an absolutely wonderful preparation program that looks at every aspect of practice," she says.

The participants are preparing for a clinical exam in which they must deal with patient-actors and be evaluated. The exam is unfamiliar to IMGs and one of the big challenges on their pathway to licensure, so Margaret arrives with three or four volunteers who act as

patients. "It's a collaborative thing. It's very effective and the doctors ask questions." As well as medical conditions, they address cultural differences, drugs, smoking and other lifestyle issues. "Questions can be uncomfortable, but there are ways of asking," she explains.

Margaret has maintained a friendship with some who have graduated and has worked with two participants on a volunteer project through MicroResearch Nova Scotia, assessing costs of homelessness and addiction to the health-care and judicial systems.

Volunteering is natural to Margaret who has received an Order of Nova Scotia and an honorary degree from Mount Saint Vincent University, where she was on the Board of Governors. She was chair of the North End Clinic board for eight years. She is a member of a refugee support group and has volunteered extensively with many community groups. In retirement, she's had more time to read, spend with family and take care of a very active dog.

Margaret relates warmly to IMGs. "I am sure that they sense that I am supportive and that I want to encourage discussion and hear their views on not only the case at hand, but other issues in medicine," she says. "I am positive in my feedback and we often laugh." Her respect for the international doctors is palpable. "I consider it a privilege to do this. What I do is small on the spectrum of things that are done."





Mentors played a huge role in helping Roshanak Sadeghi-Zadeh settle in Canada, and now she is assisting others by being a mentor and practice interviewer at ISANS. "Mentors really impacted my life," says Roshanak. "They empowered me to find my way in this big scary new world when I first came to Canada."

Roshanak had earned a Master's in Science and taught physics in her homeland of Iran before moving to Toronto with her husband and baby daughter in 2002. She changed her focus, earning her TESL Certificate in Adult Learning and Continuing Education and Teaching from Lasalle College, and then working as a college and language school instructor. "It was a great experience for me to learn the culture while teaching." She changed careers yet again in 2008, graduating in Human Resources Management from Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology, followed by a job with Bombardier.

Although she and her physician husband found Toronto diverse and welcoming, they moved to Halifax for a quieter environment to raise their two daughters, now 11 and 16. She worked in Human Resources with Halifax Housing Authority, and then became Manager Human Resources at Halifax Public Libraries.

Roshanak was a mentor through a Human Resources organization, but still felt something was missing. "It's about the feeling and passion to give back to newcomers. They come the same way I came with

two suitcases and hope." She reached out to ISANS who matched her with three women, two from the Philippines and one from India.

Roshanak met with each under ISANS' formal framework and orientation structure with particular expectations and check-in. Together they determined individual goals and how to reach them. They stayed in touch weekly, whether in person or electronically. Roshanak helped with their resumes and job interviews. "It depends on need; sometimes they get a call for an interview, so I'd go the next day to practice. I know how panicky it can be!"

Two women found jobs in their field, and one is studying further. "I know how important it is to have a trusted advisor to take that journey with you," she says, explaining that networking, writing resumes and doing interviews can be different or nonexistent in other cultures. Having formed a strong connection, she continues to stay in touch.

Roshanak is also called upon by ISANS to lead competency- and behaviour-based interviews, done as role-play with feedback, but her true passion lies with mentoring. "It's so rewarding to see that you can help someone with your time, knowledge and whatever it takes," she says proudly. "I'm an emotional person. When I hear my mentees get an interview or a job, I am in the middle of the hallway screaming. Their success is your success."

ROSHANAK SADEGHI-ZADEH

John Deans was lying on the couch one day in 2015 when he heard an appeal on the radio for volunteers to help resettle Syrian refugees. "I'd never done anything like this," he says. "I immediately called the 211 number, thinking I'd just help out a bit."

John was assigned to the Bayers Lake distribution centre where citizens had donated goods for the new families. He then worked six days a week at Chocolate Lake Hotel, the temporary home for government-assisted arrivals. "I quickly realized I had skills I could employ. I took people shopping, for blood work, medical appointments, whatever was needed."

As a father of two and grandfather of three, he especially enjoyed the children. "I got a kick out of the kids. Coming from refugee camps to stay in a hotel and have beds, and a shower or bath, was absolutely overwhelming for them."

John's friendship with one large Syrian family led to an ongoing relationship. He has helped them settle in Halifax and learn how to live in a country they knew nothing about. "A week doesn't go by without talking with the family. You realize how much support is required. It evolves as you keep finding out something else can you do."

A Montreal native, John's career was mainly with Bell Canada in Toronto including a two-year

procurement helping to modernize Saudi Arabia's telecommunications system. He and his wife retired to Halifax in 2012. They travel extensively and John is a kayak guide. He began running in his 40s and swimming in his 50s, leading to marathons, triathlons, and Ironman competitions.

John also volunteers with ISANS English classes several times weekly. "You see them struggling with something and suddenly it clicks. It made me look at things I think are simple and appreciate that it's really quite complicated when you are new." And he repairs bikes on Friday evenings with the ISANS and Ecology Action Centre bicycle program. "It makes the person who donates feel good, makes me feel good, and makes the newcomer getting the bike feel good," he says. "It's a nice way of giving back without it costing a lot of money. And it's fun."

Although volunteering "just happened," it's been good for John. His sensitivity to immigration issues has increased, as has his patience. "They thank me a hundred times and feed me twenty! It's not that you're looking for it, but it makes me feel wonderful and want to slap myself on the back.

"As I said to my Syrian friend, if I don't help you, who will? Understanding that need is the biggest change for me. As long as I can help them, I'll help them."

JOHN DEANS





GERRY MILLS

"This is an amazing place to work. I come up the back stairs every morning and as I walk in it's a jolt of electricity. Okay, here we go!" That spirit and enthusiasm is indicative of the dedicated career of Gerry Mills, who has retired after 30 years in immigrant support, most recently as ISANS Executive Director.

"When I go to reception, I see clients who are anxious and fearful, wondering what's ahead, knowing that we can help. And there are kids who are delightful and oblivious to what their parents are going through, playing with toys," she says, painting a vivid picture of the place she loves. "Such diversity of people coming through our doors. It's exciting and busy."

Gerry beams with pride for the organization that now employs more than 250 people. As Director of Operations for several years, she led a team that did innovative and effective work. "I love when our staff goes to conferences and comes back so shocked and excited about our national reputation."

ISANS has changed her too. "Working here has made me more empathetic, more patient. I've become a better listener." Gerry admits the early days were stressful, at one point actually mortgaging her house to pay wages.

Gerry had thought she might be a teacher after earning a degree in German and English in her native England. Because her husband was in the fishing industry,

they moved to Canada in 1986 as temporary foreign workers. Despite knowing the language, it was a lonely and profound experience of culture shock. "It gave me an understanding of what people go through."

Gerry divorced, and raised two children on her own. She volunteered in literacy training and teaching and worked part time in ESL at English Unlimited—one of Canada's first settlement language training programs. Within six months she was Executive Director of what was renamed Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC).

HILC later shared offices with Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA). Gerry and MISA director Claudette Legault began discussions for a merger that created ISANS—something Gerry regards as one of her greatest accomplishments. Settling thousands of Syrian refugees is another career highlight. "I am really proud of the way the staff dealt with that; they were my heroes." Gerry says ISANS' accomplishments made the organization influential. "Our vision is a community where all can belong and grow, not just immigrants."

Although she'll miss staff and clients, retirement blesses Gerry with time to travel, garden and read, and, most importantly, walk her granddaughter to school.

"In a new country you look for the right place to do good work and make a difference. I never looked for another job. All you want in life is work you love with values that align with yours."



LEFT

Professional development day for our **Language Services Team**

RIGHT

Literacy students share why literacy is important to them for **Literacy Week**



Our Executive Director **Gerry Mills** retired on March 31 this year. A **Farewell Breakfast** at the **Museum of Immigration at Pier 21** was held in her honour and ISANS staff expressed their gratitude with music and song.



Children in our ECE Centre learn about personal care through a new **Strategies for Parents** book series created by ISANS staff



Youth group participants take part in a team building exercise



LEFT

Newly arrived clients & staff socialize at a **SOPA Café**

RIGHT

43 new Canadians took their oath at a **Citizenship Ceremony** at ISANS to mark Canada 150





200+ people took part in the 4th annual **Walk with Refugees for a Stronger Canada** ...in the rain!



LEFT
Launch of the new **Business Marketplace app**

RIGHT
Entrepreneurs sell their products at the **Halifax Seaport Market**



Our **Community Connections** program provides opportunities for children to play soccer, and introduced them to hockey - for the first time!



LEFT
ISANS receives the **Craig Ennett Legacy Plaque**

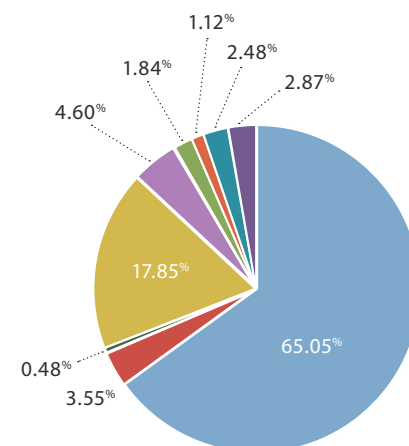
RIGHT
Successful completion of the **Work-based Trades Practical Assessment** pilot project & video launch



HIGHLIGHTS from the ISANS Financial Report for the year ended March 31, 2018

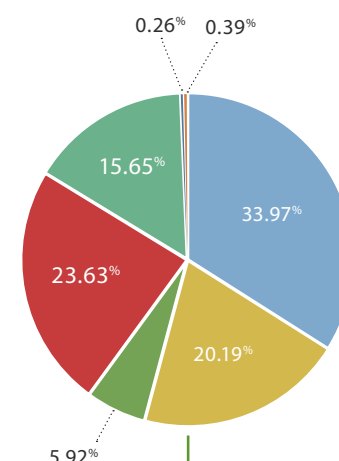
Revenue

	2017-2018	2016-2017	Increase/Decrease
Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada	\$10,555,723	\$8,519,648	23.90%
Employment & Social Development Canada	\$576,251	\$439,122	31.23%
Status of Women Canada	\$0	\$108,930	-100.00%
Nova Scotia Office of Immigration	\$2,896,197	\$2,753,265	5.19%
Nova Scotia Department of Labour & Advanced Education	\$745,686	\$765,724	-2.62%
Nova Scotia Department of Health & Wellness	\$0	\$2,305	-100.00%
Nova Scotia Department of Education	\$12,000	\$18,000	-33.33%
Nova Scotia Department of Community Services	\$298,952	\$60,684	392.64%
Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency	\$195,878	\$105,703	85.31%
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency	\$77,433	\$0	New
Foundations & NGOs	\$403,151	\$203,253	98.35%
Other Funding Sources	\$465,533	\$212,855	118.71%
Total	\$16,226,804	\$13,189,489	23.03%



Expenses

	2017-2018	2016-2017	Increase/Decrease
Language & Skills Development	\$5,401,879	\$3,350,515	61.23%
Employment & Bridging Services	\$3,209,789	\$2,675,342	19.98%
Business & Workforce Integration	\$940,638	\$672,773	39.82%
Settlement & Community, Communications & Outreach	\$3,756,972	\$3,509,037	7.07%
Settlement Online Pre-arrival	\$2,488,360	\$2,664,645	-6.62%
Refugee Emergency	\$41,530	\$38,190	8.75%
Other	\$62,193	\$150,995	-58.81%
Total	\$15,901,361	\$13,061,496	21.74%



Excess of revenue over expenses	\$325,443 *	\$127,993 **	154.27%
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* Note 1: Includes \$282,502 of contributions to purchase capital assets

** Note 2: Financial information for the year ended March 31, 2017 has been restated

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017-2018

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Senior Consultant, Knightsbridge Robertson Surette;
Part-time Faculty, Mount Saint Vincent University

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Team Lead, Communications, Design
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THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

Association of Canadian Community Colleges

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

Bank of Nova Scotia

Community Foundation of Nova Scotia

Employment & Social Development Canada

Employment Nova Scotia

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool

Youngsters (HIPPY)

Family Learning Initiative Endowment Fund

Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada

J & W Murphy Foundation

Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency

Nova Scotia Communities, Culture & Heritage

Nova Scotia Department of Community Services

Nova Scotia Department of Education

Nova Scotia Department of Labour & Advanced Education

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