Strengthening Welcoming and Inclusive Communities

Background

As an immigrant-serving organization, we know that we all benefit from the huge contributions that all members of our community offer. For over 40 years, we have seen the tremendous contributions that immigrants bring to our province: a diversity of experience, skills, and perspectives that help us address the complex challenges and new opportunities we face in our communities and province. When we welcome and include everyone, we are living up to our commitments to human rights and social justice.

ISANS is committed to creating an equitable, diverse, and inclusive community. Our vision, "A community where all can belong and grow," guides us in our collective action with immigrants, staff colleagues, and community partners. Our values of Diversity, Inclusion, Respect, Collaboration, Innovation, and Accountability ground us and move us toward our vision. We are committed to championing a more welcoming and inclusive province, and we hope to encourage others to do the same.

Why Are Welcoming and Inclusive Communities Important?

Discrimination and racism limit immigrants from fully participating, contributing, and engaging in our communities, as they do for other members of society. Discrimination and racism exist in our local communities, our province, and our country; they have deep roots that are embedded in our laws, culture, social systems, institutions, and society as a whole. Immigrants are affected and impacted by racism, homophobia, ableism, sexism, economic status, etc. Through the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission recognizes the diversity of our communities and works to address issues of discrimination that are experienced by many in our province (please visit their website to learn more), and it's important that we all make similar efforts. Honouring and respecting these protected rights found within this legal document is imperative for the growth of our collective communities.

As individuals and as organizations, we recognize that we have work to do to challenge and address the personal and systemic barriers that prevent everyone from fully participating in our communities. There is tremendous opportunity right now to support a provincial, government-wide approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion that – at a minimum – engages us in:

- Acting on our obligations as Treaty People and implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations
- Confronting racism in all forms, and ensuring that Indigenous, African Nova Scotians, Black, and racialized persons are able to fully participate in our society
- Ensuring gender equity
- Protecting LGBTQIA+ rights
- Supporting the full integration of members of the disabled community

Examples of Specific Steps the Provincial Government Can Do to Support this Work

- Lead an approach across the entire government and all provincial departments to address equity, diversion, and inclusion (EDI)
- Support public education and training opportunities on EDI for individuals, community groups, non-profit organizations, and businesses to build skills to create and support welcoming environments across our province
- Initiate public awareness campaigns that engage our communities in dialogue about racism and systemic barriers
- Identify and take action to address systemic discrimination and barriers within all policies, programs, and initiatives
- Create opportunities to celebrate positive actions and contributions that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Ensure equity-seeking groups are represented in decision and policy-making bodies, and ensure fairness in employment hiring processes

Overall Benefit to Our Province

An approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion that spans the entire government would contribute to strengthening a welcoming province where immigrants feel they belong and thus choose to stay to contribute their skills, experience, and perspectives. Overall, it would help strengthen our resiliency and our economic, social, and cultural development as local communities and as a province.