



International  
Social Service  
Canada

Service Social  
International  
Canada



# Annual report

## International Social Service Canada 2022-2023



Une version francophone est disponible

# WELCOME FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sylvie J. Lapointe - Executive Director

ISS has had a busy year. Both at the national and the international level. We must acknowledge the dedication of our Board of Directors, led by our very active Chair, Howard, who has been very involved in the continued development of the organization. Their contribution of time and expertise is a benefit that assures that ISS Canada's policies, services and programs respond in a comprehensive fashion to the needs of the vulnerable children and families we service.

To that end, the ISS Canada Board has been focused on completing its strategic plan. A focus has been on the development of a business/services plan to study ways in which ISS Canada can further support organizations that work with these families on the impact of cross-border issues. Our board has decided to move forward and to engage a consultant to implement this objective. We continue to work with a firm of experts to achieve our goal.

Another working group of the board developed a policy on Accessibility, Belonging, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Our board then adopted this policy and has participated in intense training sessions to integrate these concepts into the overall functioning of the organization.

We are very proud to share this important overarching statement with you and hope that it will inspire other organizations to implement similar policies.

We are thankful for the partnerships that we have with British Columbia, Alberta, Peel CAS, Toronto CAS and Toronto CCAS and Québec. The compliments and encouraging words we receive when working together makes all our hard work even more enjoyable. You can read a selected few of these comments in our report.

As we start our new fiscal year (2023-24), we are excited to plan the 45th anniversary of ISS Canada and the 100th anniversary of the ISS Network. The year 2024 will be exciting and with many occasions to celebrate. We hope that you will join us when the occasion presents itself in celebrating our accomplishments.



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Howard Nadler - Chair of ISS Canada

I welcome the opportunity to prepare a few words to the ISS Canada community as we reflect on our activities of the past fiscal year. This is the first year in recent times in which I am not having to address the pandemic! What a relief!

ISS Canada has increased its impact within Canada with ever-increasing demands for service. Our staff and volunteers continue to receive fantastic feedback. On behalf of the board, I want to acknowledge the appreciation of their hard work, professionalism, and diligence in all aspects of the operations of the organization. Thank you to our caseworkers Adriana, Anne-Josée and Wendy, our volunteer bookkeeper Lori, and Caroline, our communication consultant, our financial accountant Jolanta and most certainly to Sylvie, our Executive Director who is key to supporting all the work accomplished at ISS Canada.

The most exciting development for this past year has been the work of the Governing Board and our ISS Canada Board in planning the Centenary celebration of ISS (1924-2024).

The ISS network will have been intervening with and servicing families and children who face issues that cross international borders for 100 years this autumn.

Celebrations are planned for during the year by each ISS member organization and affiliates involving the global network. The coming year, 2023 and going into 2024, we will be proud to highlight all the work that we have done in 100 years.

The ISS Network Governing Board has met several times during the year. I mentioned the work around the upcoming centenary of the organization. We have continued work on the ISS member contributions policy, been kept abreast around the migration of the residents of Ukraine, and support for the ISS member in Moldova as they quickly adapted to managing large numbers of migrants and refugees from Ukraine. As the Membership Committee Chair, we welcomed Cameroon and Turkey to the ISS network at the International Council (IC) in November 2022. We share with you other highlights from our IC in this report.



Howard to Bagel Bejgl, a social enterprise run by women (ISS partners) at the International International Council meeting in Belgrade.

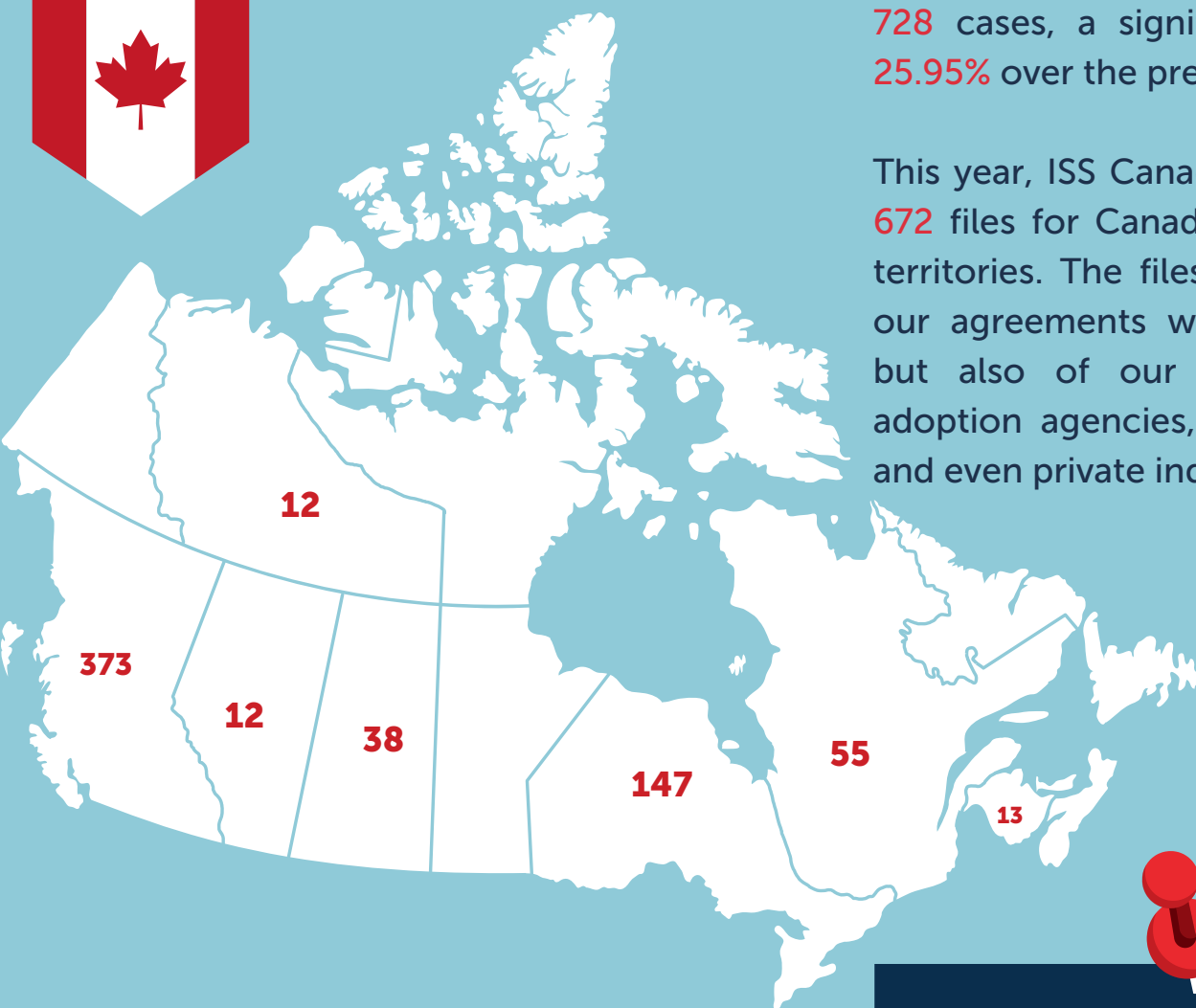


# FILES BY PROVINCE AND TERRITORY



In 2022-2023, SSI Canada handled **728** cases, a significant increase of **25.95%** over the previous year.

This year, ISS Canada processed over **672** files for Canadian provinces and territories. The files are the result of our agreements with the provinces, but also of our agreements with adoption agencies, refugee agencies and even private individuals.



We are proud to have collaborated with SSI members on over **56** cases, including Israel, Great Britain, Barbados, Australia, Switzerland, Jamaica and many others.





# THE CASEWORK COORDINATORS GROUP



Anne-Josée Marion - Senior Social Worker

This Working Group has three separate but interconnected subjects.

The first is reviewing and updating the ISS Manual. The ISS Manual was thoroughly revised a few years ago to become more user friendly but also needed some updating, mostly in the Intercountry Case Practice & Guidelines section. The goal is to ensure that the ISS Manual is a useful tool that all members can use easily as a reference. We added some details to assist new members to know the process when referring or receiving cases, but the ISS Manual can also be valuable to assist in training new staff or even be used as a refresher for some more seasoned ISS caseworkers.



Following the fruitful conversation at the CC Group meeting in Frankfurt, we are looking at the common topics that were discussed in the small breakout discussion groups regarding quality casework. One of our group members has completed an initial draft of a small informative paper based on the notes that were taken from the small discussion groups and the rest of the group will also be providing feedback. Once

completed and distributed within the ISS Network, we hope that the paper can be used to inspire our casework practice.

Finally, we will be looking at benchmarks to help assess good performance within the ISS Network. We have not yet decided specifically on the benchmarks. Some of these might be derived from the quality casework discussion.

This topic will be discussed further at our next meeting, and we will be able to provide further information at a later date.

Our working group hopes that all the subjects that we are looking into will add to our knowledge and assist all the ISS members to continue to provide quality casework and strengthen the ISS Network.



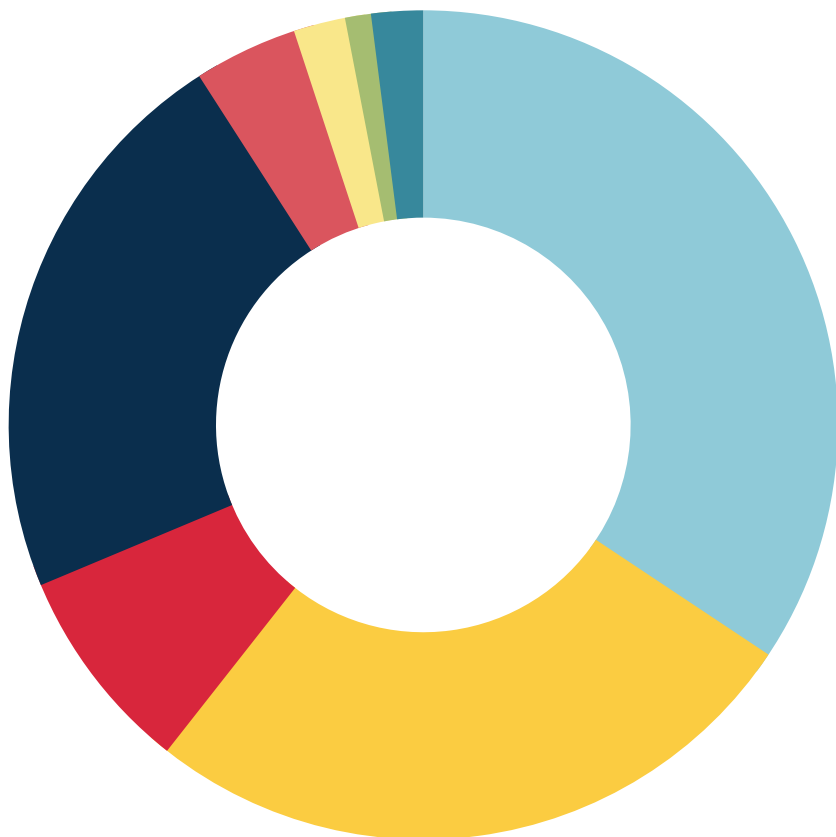


# REVENUE AND EXPENSES



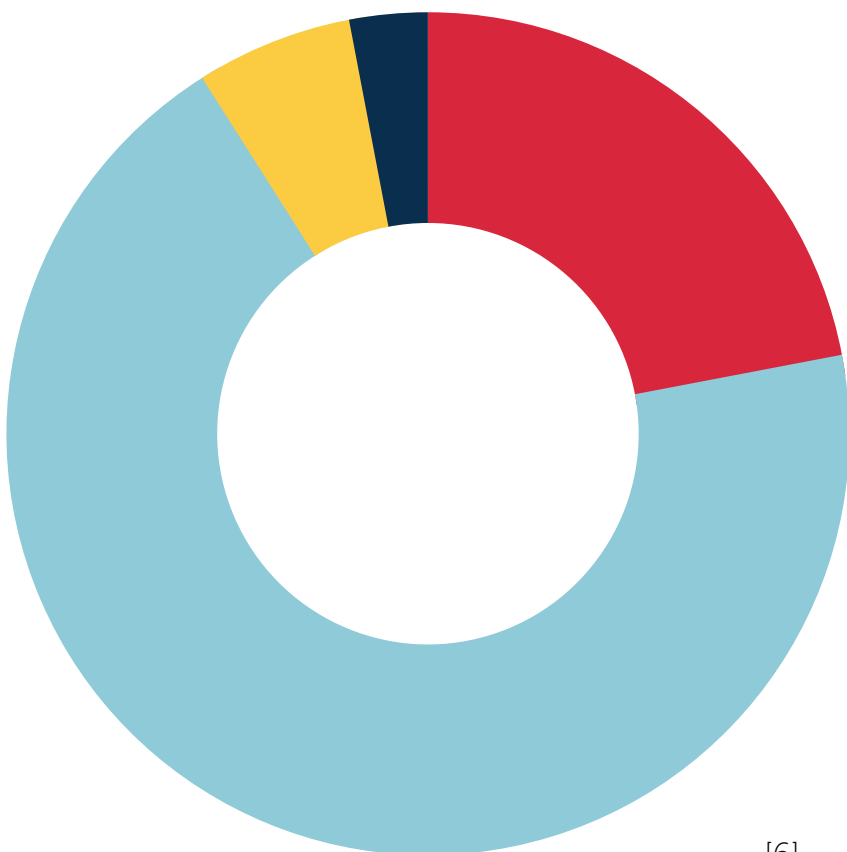
## 2022-2023 ISS CANADA REVENUE

B.C Service Agreement 34%  
Quebec Service Agreement 26%  
Ontario (CAS) Service Agreements 22%  
Casework Revenue 8%  
Ontario Independent Revenue 4%  
Service Revenue Other Province 2%  
Saskatchewan Revenue 2%  
Alberta Service Agreement 1%



## 2022-2023 ISS CANADA EXPENSES

Services 69%  
General Administration 22%  
Governance 6%  
Organizational Development 3%



# WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM TECHNOLOGY AND ISS: A FAMILY REUNIFICATION



« It is no secret that my favourite cases to work on at ISS are the ones that involve reunification. Assisting a family reuniting with a long-lost family member or helping adoptees find their bio family is always gratifying. Not all our cases turn out to be joyous, but most do. I want to share with you a case that I worked on this year. It involved state of art DNA, social media and surprises. » Adriana Pacheco-Graham - Inter-country Case Worker

Angela, a woman in her fifties, was adopted at birth. She explains that she has had a wonderful life, and that it was only after starting her own family that she began to wonder about her biological family. As adoptees often do, she asked to see her adoption file, and was given the name of her biological mother and some information about her father. Through research and a little luck, she found her birth mother. Asking for more details about her father, her birth mother gave her his name, explaining that he had moved to Canada. With the help of local agencies, but faced with a lack of information, the search was difficult, if not unsuccessful. Over the years, the Internet and DNA testing for ancestry became readily available, and Angela saw her chance to advance her search. She submitted her DNA, which led to matches. She then contacted a family member in the UK and together they unravelled the mystery. The biological relative gave her the e-mail address of a family member living in Canada. Angela wrote to her biological father (hoping to find the right person). Keith was married, had children and was unaware of Angela's existence. Shocked, he replied to the e-mail with many questions. Then there was silence. We can't explain what happened, but Angela never received Keith's reply. The silence lasted for years. Angela persevered and decided to work with our Pacific partner. What if Angela got in touch with Keith again, but this time with the support of ISS Canada? After reading the file, I managed to find Keith's wife on social media and contacted her with great discretion and using our specialized methods. Keith and his wife agreed to receive a letter from Angela. That's where I felt ISS added value; it's possible to trace family members through social media or DNA test results, but the human factor remains. Keith didn't need convincing; he wanted to know his daughter, but he didn't know how to go about it, how to tell his sons they had a sister, and so on. We discussed all this and more. Keith and his wife wrote Angela a long letter. After a short correspondence, Angela came to meet her father in Canada. After her visit, Keith's wife wrote to me:

*"Dear Adriana, I just wanted to let you know that Angela and her husband came to Canada to meet Keith and, of course, all the rest of the family. It was a truly wonderful experience, many tears flowed, but tears of happiness. We were sad to see them go. I send you all our kind thoughts for putting us in touch, thank you."*

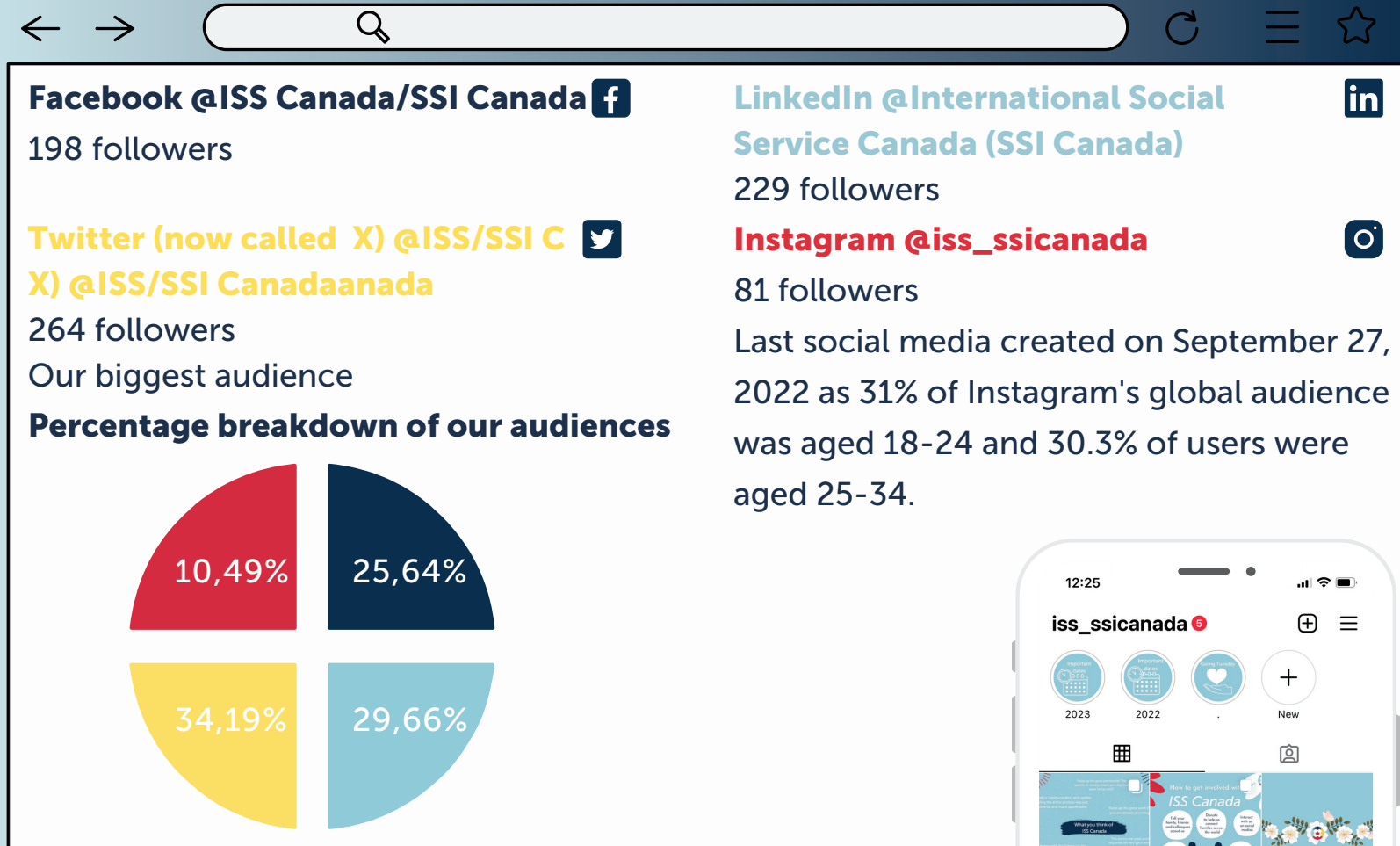


# SOCIAL MEDIA: A KEY STRATEGIC COMPONENT

❤️ 142 💬 37 👤 27

It's through our social networks that we continue to strengthen our online presence, interact with our community and partners, and spread our message in a consistent and engaging way.

## Distribution of our audience on our various social networks



In addition to our networks, our newsletter "The Link", available on Mailchimp, counts 1,146 recipients, or 25.64% of our audience. Since November 2022, 2 newsletters, a year-end message and a message condemning the anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine have been shared.

Our goals for the coming year are:

- increase our social media presence by building audience loyalty (by publishing more content and engaging more),
- optimize our profiles,
- increase engagement and build audience loyalty.





# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING: BELGRADE NOVEMBER 2022



Howard Nadler, Chair of ISS Canada and Sylvie Lapointe, Executive Director of ISS Canada travelled to Belgrade, Serbia to actively participate to the 2022 International Council of the International Social Service Network. Hosted by the ISS partner in Serbia, the network was received with open arms. The executive Director of ATINA (ISS Serbia) Marijana

Savic, opened the meeting and introduced Tatjana Prijić, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality in the Sector for the Promotion of Equality, who enlightened all in attendance about local efforts from the government for women, children and vulnerable populations. During this International Council, Mr. Nadler, a member of the governing board and chair of the membership committee was proud to welcome new ISS members: Nepal, Cameroon and Bangladesh. With these newcomers, this brings the total of official members to 38 partners and confirms our links to over 120 countries. After the first day of meetings, ATINA hosted dinner at their café Bagel Bejgl where we sampled wonderful bagels (savory and sweet). This social enterprise, established in 2003 and owned by local women (ISS partners) is an advocate for the rights of victims of human trafficking and other forms of exploitation. The Bagel Bajgl shop is a unique place for locals to enjoy and relax with the incredible taste and smell of the world-renowned pastry. All proceeds from their sales are reinvested in their efforts. It was a pleasure to see how successful and hard-working our partners are.

On day 2 of the international council, we started with updates from diverse working groups and updates from the General Secretariat teams. The highlight of the day was however seeing our colleague Mariana Ianachevici from Moldova join the meeting. We were pleased to have her explain the ongoing support AVE Copii (ISS Moldova) is offering to Ukrainian Refugees. The flow of refugees from Ukraine through The Republic of Moldova (RM) between February and October 2022. ISS Canada re-affirmed its commitment to continue supporting Moldova in their efforts to assist Ukrainian refugees and was able to provide the donations collected so far through our fund raising campaign.

On the final day of the meetings, the Professional Advisory Committee (Directors and CEO's) of ISS Network met to continue their work. Elections to replace the current chair, Ursula (ISS Germany) were required. The PAC opted for a new way forward by electing a Chair, Cilgia (ISS Switzerland) and Co-chair, Sandrine (ISS France) and vice chair, Sylvie (ISS Canada).





# DIVERSITY. EQUITY. INCLUSION, ACCESSIBILITY, AND BELONGING (DEIAB)

## Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the **harms** done through **colonization** and **genocide** and recognize that this is not just a historical event, but **ongoing**. As such, ISS Canada recognizes that we live and work on the traditional territories of **Indigenous Peoples** and **Nations** from coast to coast to coast. Wherever we are, we recognize and acknowledge those Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories, as such we endeavour to actively engage in relationships of **reconciliation**.

## DEIAB Statement

This statement is meant to be organic and ISS Canada should be constantly making sure the document evolves and represents the reality of our ever-changing society and community.

The purpose of this statement is to provide equity, fairness, and respect for all and create a working and volunteering platform where we recognize our diversity and our intersections.

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging** are invaluable to the relationships that ISS Canada has with clients, international network partners, and service users. We are committed to learning and implementing **accessible, anti-oppressive and anti-racist approaches** to foster, as much as possible, a psychologically safe culture of belonging, and guide our decision-making, our relationships, and our work. ISS Canada aims to exemplify a culture of inclusion where all employees, board members, volunteers, clients, and partners feel respected, valued, and have a sense of belonging.

ISS Canada welcomes employees, volunteers and board members who identify as **Indigenous, Black, and racialized** as well as of diverse ethnicities, geographic origins, gender identities, sexual orientation, ages, socio-economic backgrounds, religions, work experiences, lived experiences, physical and intellectual abilities, and all other characteristics, recognizing that these categories are not siloed or monolithic but intersect in often multiplicative ways.

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging along with anti-oppression will guide our programs, policies, and everything that we do!**



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