



ANNUAL REPORT

January - December 2022

www.rainbowrefugeens.com

Rainbow Refugee Association of Nova Scotia engages in refugee resettlement and exists in the community in Kjiptuk (Halifax), on the traditional and unceded land of the Mi'kmaq people. It is our responsibility, as an organization of settlers and newcomers, to inform LGBTQI+ newcomers to Canada about this country's legacy of colonization, and to promote learning about and engaging with the people of this land.

Rainbow Refugee Association of Nova Scotia is the only registered non-profit society dedicated to LGBTQI+ refugee resettlement and support in Atlantic Canada.

Our mission is to make possible LGBTQI+ refugee resettlement and supports safer communities of belonging through advocacy, education and sponsorship.

Our vision is a world where ALL 2SLGBTQIA+ people are safe, welcome, and included everywhere.

OUR VALUES:

Courageous Conversations

We encourage courageous conversations, whether in the context of personal or professional growth, mentoring, or coaching, where everyone is encouraged to express their views openly and truthfully, rather than defensively or with the purpose of laying blame. Integral to courageous conversations is an openness to learn, stemming from curiosity and compassion.

Joyful Resettlement

We believe that LGBTQI+ newcomers are the experts of their own experiences. While we recognize the barriers and realities newcomers face, we aim to infuse the resettlement journey with hope and possibilities, so newcomers can thrive.

Striving for Equity

We have a responsibility to acknowledge and use our positions & power, to combat personal, interpersonal, organizational and systemic inequities. We aim to be accountable through reflection, meaningful action, honesty and trust.

Nimble & Feisty

We are thoughtful and flexible in our actions, always seeking opportunities to improve. We dream up new ideas, and bring them to life.

Intentional Community Growth

Growing intentionally means we stay aligned with our values when facing tough decisions and potential opportunities. Community growth is rooted in collective 2SLGBTQIA+ histories, knowledge, and relationships.

Leading with Compassion

We believe human connection fosters transformative relationships and systems change. We lead with empathy, through non-judgemental listening, and active learning and unlearning.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRS

We would like to take this opportunity to reflect on our progress and achievements as a team. We have faced many challenges, but with determination and teamwork, we have managed to overcome them and continue moving forward.

Firstly, we would like to thank all members of the board for their unwavering dedication and commitment to our cause. Without your tireless efforts, we would not have been able to achieve our milestones and reach the targets we had set for ourselves.

We would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all our community members for their continued support and partnership. Your trust and belief in our work have been crucial to our success, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration in the future. We have been able to strengthen our relationships with key partners and community members, and this has enabled us to achieve greater impact and reach more people with our programs and services.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to each and every community member and volunteer for your hard work, dedication, and commitment to our organization. Your contributions are essential to our success, and we are proud to be part of a team that is so passionate about making a positive difference in the world.

We are honored to present to you the annual report of our organization. It has been a challenging yet productive year for us, and we are proud of the progress we have made toward achieving our goals.

During the past year, we have worked towards improving our operations and increasing our outreach. We have launched several new initiatives and programs aimed at strengthening our engagement with the community and increasing our impact. Our team has also been working hard to streamline our processes and optimize our resources, ensuring that we can continue to deliver our services effectively and efficiently.

We are optimistic about the future and the possibilities that lie ahead. We will continue to work towards our vision of creating a better world for all, and we are confident that with the support of our dedicated team and partners, we will be able to achieve our goals.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRS

Lastly, we would like to extend a warm welcome to our new staff members who have joined us this year. Your enthusiasm and fresh perspectives have been invaluable, and we are grateful to have you as part of our team. We appreciate your contributions and look forward to working together towards our shared vision. To all our staff, both new and old, thank you for your hard work, dedication, and commitment to our organization. You are the driving force behind our success, and we could not have achieved all that we have without you. Thank you for your unwavering support and contributions toward making RRANS a success.

Warmest regards,

David Gosine (he/him)
Chair



Brie Rehbein (she/her)
Vice Chair





WHO WE ARE

STAFF

Rhiannon Makohoniuk (she/her)
Executive Director

Andrea Puszkar (she/her)
Settlement Coordinator

Peace Nabwami (she/her)
Settlement Coordinator

Abi Hodson (they/them)
Marketing Coordinator

Robin Cunningham (she/her)
PSR Settlement Coordinator &
Education Coordinator

**Dineh Geurrero Hernandez
(she/they)**
Toolkit Coordinator

Kartik Saini (he/him)
Peer 2 Peer Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Gosine (he/him)
President

Brie Rehbein (she/her)
Vice President

Kaitlin Miles (she/her)
Treasurer

Mario Mazraany (he/him)
Secretary

Ahrthyh Arumugam (she/they)
Carol-Anne Bilodeau (she/her)
Kyle DeYoung (he/him)

A special thank you to the incredible contributions of this year's outgoing board members who have dedicated so much to RRANS: **Andy Blair (he/him), Corrie Melanson (she/they), Emma Cameron (she/her), Deborah Mansell (she/her) and Blye Frank (he/him)**



OUR IMPACT

Over the last several years, RRANS has grown as an organization, and a community. From a group of volunteers in 2011, to getting our first part time staff members to provide extra support to LGBTQI+ newcomers during the COVID-19 pandemic, to today, with 7 part and full-time staff members.

This has allowed us to expand what we do and how we support people. Below we will highlight some of the work and fun we have done in 2022.



SPONSORSHIP

In 2022, we put in 8 application for sponsorship. Currently we have 17 applications with the government, for people who should arrive over the next few years.

Three individuals we sponsored arrived through late 2021/ 2022, as well as a family reunification of 3 that was supported by RRANS in 2022.

SETTLEMENT

As our capacity has grown, so has our ability to support LGBTQI+ newcomers. In 2022, we saw a large increase in support needed for people who arrived to Canada as Government Assisted Refugees (GAR), and Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR), through other groups and organizations. With more LGBTQI+ people being prioritized as 'vulnerable' through government assisted programs, we are seeing an increase in specific LGBTQI+ focused support needed for these individuals.

By the numbers, this year, we actively supported 19 individuals who were sponsored by RRANS and an additional 10 people throughout the year who arrived in Canada through other means.

EDUCATION

This year, we have had additional capacity to take on further education work about the lived experiences and issues pertaining to LGBTQI+ newcomers. This has included workshop delivery and keynotes explaining what we do as an organization, media interviews about current events, and workshops geared toward empowering other groups to engage in LGBTQI+ sponsorship.

We have also prioritized internal training, and our own staff have attended many training sessions, including but not limited to:

- PROSCI Change Management Course
- ISANS Welcome Ambassador Program
- Direction 180 Naloxone
- YMCA Centre for Immigrant Program's Gender-Based Violence Prevention Project Training
- HRCE Supporting Newcomer Youth with Refugee Backgrounds
- Conflict resolution
- TNG Community Services Intercultural Communication training.
- Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT)'s Train the Trainer: National Trauma-Informed Care Project

ADVOCACY

The advocacy work we engage in is a mix of interpersonal, organizational and systemic.

Day-to-day we advocate with the newcomers with work with, and on their behalf, for better treatment, and more accessible services. Sometimes this looks like writing a letter or making a phone call to speed up a bureaucratic process, and sometimes it looks like attending a medical appointment with someone as a support person.

We have also advocated for organizations and systems to work better for the people we work with. One thing we proudly advocated for this year was changing and shortening the processing procedures for newcomers at Access Nova Scotia applying for a Nova Scotia identification card.

Nationally, we work with a coalition of LGBTQI+ newcomer serving organizations called the Rainbow Coalition for Refuge. As a steering committee member of this work, we have been able to engage in cross-country knowledge transfer, program creation, and advocacy work. This coalition advocates directly to government - to Ministers and to bureaucrats, to increase the supports, pathways and quality of life for LGBTQI+ newcomers in Canada.



OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Our work to support LGBTQI+ newcomers is made possible through community collaboration and support. This includes: Funders who make our work possible, individual and organizational donors who allow us to sponsor individuals, local businesses, groups, and individuals that fundraise on our behalf and support the work we are doing, community partners who collaborate on programs, services, and referrals to better support the LGBTQI+ newcomers community together, our community partners across the country who share skills, resources, and knowledge with each other, and of course, the newcomers we work with.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you!

Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism & Heritage
Employment and Social Development Canada
Nova Scotia Power
Nova Scotia Arts
Women and Gender Equality Canada

The Tare Shop
JUST Cycle
Good Robot
Java Blend
Julep
Coldstream Distillery
Local Source Market
NSLC
Seven Bays
Bar Sofia

Universalist Unitarian
Church of Halifax
Immigrant Services
Association of Nova Scotia
YMCA of Greater Halifax/
Dartmouth Centre for
Immigrant Programs
Dreadlocks & Kindness
Halifax Pride
Eastern Shore Pride

Rainbow Coalition for Refuge
Rainbow Refugee Society
End of the Rainbow Foundation
OCASI - Ontario Council for
Agencies Serving Immigrants
MCCT - Metropolitan
Community Church of Toronto
Rainbow Railroad
The 519
Capital Rainbow Refuge
AGIR - Action LGBTQIA+ avec
les ImmigrantEs et RéfugiéEs

“Good Robot partnered with The Rainbow Refugee Association of Nova Scotia because we are totally inspired by the work that they do. RRANS provides a unique and essential service in our province, supporting LGBTQI+ refugee resettlement in Atlantic Canada. They truly do make this world a better place. Our Goodwill Partnership with RRANS was our most successful to date as we were not only able to raise a tonne of funds and awareness, but we also made new friends along the way.”

– Brent Braaten, Creative Director/Goodwill Ambassador, Good Robot Brewing Co.

CONNECT WITH US!

Support our vital work by making a donation, signing up as a volunteer or following us on social media and amplifying our work! Your support allows us to welcome LGBTQIA+ newcomers to our community and provide a safe space for them to thrive.

rainbowrefugee.ns@gmail.com

Instagram @rainbowrefugeens

Facebook @rainbowrefugeens

Twitter @RainbowRef



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