

CHS OCASI 12:00-1:00 p.m. ET

>> ONAR USAR: Okay. Hello, everyone. Welcome to OCASI PSI webinar, Person, Purpose and Persecution: Building Community by, for, and with Trans and Non-binary Newcomers. I am Onar Usar, one of the coordinators of the Positive Spaces Initiative at OCASI. Together with my colleague, Hazim Ismail, we are delighted to welcome you all. Before we begin, I will have a few housekeeping items to share. Please make sure to mute yourself to avoid any background noise. We are providing third-party live captioning for those of you who would like to follow the conversation by text. Please turn on the captioning if you would like to do so. Feel free to use the chat box to introduce yourself, your agency and the traditional land you are on, as well as to share your comments and questions throughout the event. We will have some time at the end to have a question-and-answer period at the end. Please note that we are recording this webinar and will share the recording on our website publicly for future access. We will begin our session with the land acknowledgment, after which I will briefly introduce the moderator of today's webinar, Sizwe Inkingi. Sizwe will be moderating the rest of the webinar. Thank you, Hazim, for the land acknowledgement. We would like to acknowledge the sacred land on which we at OCASI carry out our work. It is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. We acknowledge the Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands. We also acknowledge we are all treaty peoples - including those of us who came here as settlers, as migrants, either in this generation or in generations past; and those of us who came here involuntarily - particularly as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. We encourage participants in other parts of Ontario and Canada to acknowledge the land you are on using a tool like native/land.ca to learn more about the lands we inhabit, the history of those lands and how to actively be part of a better future going forward together. At OCASI PSI, we believe that as we advocate for the rights of the racialized immigrant and refugee LGBTQIA+ people and communities we must do this in solidarity with indigenous people and in no way at their expense. Today's webinar is organized in recognition of the International Trans Day of Visibility, an annual event occurring on March 31 dedicated to celebrating trans people and raising awareness of discrimination they face around the world. We are honored to host two great individuals who are advocates and community builders within the refugee, immigrant, and newcomer trans and nonbinary communities, Tatiana Ferguson and Sizwe Inkingi. It is my great pleasure to introduce Sizwe, with whom I have the privilege of working together at OCASI PSI before Sizwe embarked on a new journey at Rainbow Railroad at the beginning of this year, but we are dearly missing her. Sizwe came to Canada in 2010 from Zimbabwe as an international student and graduated with a bachelor's in strategic public opinion and policy analysis from the School of Public Affairs and Policy Management at Carleton University in Ottawa. This is a mouthful. Over the past six years, Sizwe worked as a full-time bilingual positive spaces coordinator at OCASI and supported a public education campaign to inform service providers and the public at large about the urgent need for positive spaces and programming for LGBTQIA+ migrants and communities living in Ontario. Sizwe serves as board member for the Dignity Network Canada, DNC, and has been an active participant in the DNC's Community of Practice on International SOGIESC human rights work and is currently the co-chair of the Community of Practice. Sizwe is currently pursuing a master's degree in design thinking at OCAD University and most recently joined Rainbow Railroad as the Program Officer, Transit Engagement Officer. In her role, she's committed to bringing strategic foresight and innovation to help build durable solutions in countries of first asylum. We are very happy to see you again, Sizwe. The microphone is yours now.

>> SIZWE INKINGI: Thank you, Onar and Hazim. Thank you so much for the warm welcome. Welcome to everybody who is on the call. We're happy to be here with you. So, we have a lot in store for you today. Lots of information. So, at any given moment in time, I will be looking at the chat and if there's any questions you need to ask, I will ask Tatiana, but without further ado, I'd like to introduce my dear friend, colleague and

sister, Tatiana Ferguson. So, Tatiana Ferguson is a leader in equity and inclusion and the cofounder of the Black Queer Youth Collective. Her work fundamentally addresses social and political issues through research, advocacy and public education. At the core of her work is a commitment to equity and working from an anti-oppression framework. Tatiana also coordinates and facilitates capacity building activities for organizational and systemic change. She is known to take an intersectional approach in her work, to increase access to supportive and affirming programs and services for trans people and LGBTQ people of color. So, welcome, Tatiana.

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: Hi everyone. Thanks for having me. Yes, I guess we can dive right in. The title of today's presentation is Person, Purpose and Persecution. Yeah, today's discussion is going to be divided into two parts. Part one will focus on data collection from the Trans Folks Canada study. For those of you who might not know, I'm a coinvestigator on Trans Folks Canada. It's a national research project. I'm actually also team lead for Immigrants, Refugees and Newcomers. We did prepare a report in 2020 that is publicly available on Trans Folks' website. I'll be reflecting on the data. I do have my good sister, you know, Sizwe, here, who also consulted on that research project, and we're actually going to in part two really reflect on our experiences navigating different spaces, including resettlement, how we find community and how we create support systems for bi and with other trans nonbinary people, particularly those who have immigrant and migrant experiences. Today's discussion, today's webinar, centers the lived experiences of trans and nonbinary folks in Canada, so we'll be talking from our personal and professional experiences as we navigated our journeys and our paths. As mentioned, we will be focused on the person, who we are as individuals, the purpose, like why, why are we doing the work that we do? What drove us? What motivated us? And then persecution, seeing that this is a component that definitely effects migrants to Canada. The reasons folks have had to actually leave their countries of origin, or their home countries, their birth countries, to be here in Canada, to find community, to be free, to find safe spaces where they can live, work and be amongst like-minded individuals. So, yeah, that's really what we're going to be doing today. As Sizwe mentioned, you're welcome to use the chat if you have any questions. I would appreciate questions be hold until the end of each component, but of course feel free to write your questions down, and I'll try to get to them during the Q&A. So, with that said, I guess we can get started in part one. As mentioned, well, it wasn't mentioned in my bio, but I am cofounder of the Black Queer Youth Collective. I'm also an inclusion specialist. I'd say those are my primary roles that I occupy, but since 2019 I've been working with Trans PULSE Canada, as mentioned, leading the immigrants, refugees and newcomers priority group, and there is nine other priority groups, but for those of you who might not know what Trans PULSE Canada is, Trans PULSE Canada is the national community-based research project on the health and well-being of two-spirit, trans and nonbinary people in Canada. The project has collected data on 2873 respondents, to be exact, with a focus of 9 priority groups, one of which is immigrants, refugees, newcomers, but there's also the indigenous leadership group, there's the disability group, rural, youth, senior, sex workers, nonbinary. A lot of priority groups the project is looking at. For today's presentation, however, we'll be focusing on immigrants, refugees and newcomers. As mentioned, we're reflecting on our experiences, our personal journeys, navigating spaces, going through resettlement, our own personal gender journeys, and Trans PULSE Canada also, based on some of the work we were doing, collected data on 336 respondents who had similar experiences of migration. I just wanted to include this in the event folks are interested in reading up on some of those other reports that I'm not going to be discussing today. Trans PULSE Canada does have information on the research design, project methods and those reports on the website. Visit www.transpulsecanada.ca for more information. So, the report essentially looks like this, and we're only going to spend about 10 minutes, so I'm not going to be doing a deep comprehensive review of this report, but I just wanted to share some key findings and then kind of use this as a cushion for our discussion for the remainder of the day. As mentioned, persecution is one of the reasons folks leave their countries of origin, and our data in Trans PULSE Canada actually found that one in three newcomers to Canada migrated due to fear of persecution related to their gender identity. We also found that newcomers were two times less likely to have access to a primary care provider while here in Canada compared to those who are established immigrants and

individuals born in Canada. Just a side note, established immigrants were defined as persons who have been in Canada for longer than five years for this project, so anyone who had been in Canada for less than five years is who we deemed a newcomer. Furthermore, 20% of newcomers to Canada access a settlement service, and we're going to be talking a lot about what you folks as settlement workers can do to increase access to settlement services, especially in that first year when folks arrive because delays in care can result in a whole lot of issues down the line, and really just wanted to provide some, I guess, data points, some discussion points. Of the 336 persons that responded being born outside of Canada having this migrant experience, a vast majority of folks were from America, so when you look up – for those who may not know how to read charts -- the blue would be the newcomers and the, I guess, mauve color would be established immigrants. These combined they would make up the immigrant, refugee and newcomer data sample, but when we look at it separately, these are the steps that we are providing. So, a vast majority of the participants came from America, well, 44%, so that's like two in five, but there's, you know, given the fact that Canada has been a safe haven for LGBT folks, there are folks from all parts of the globe that resettled here in Canada. Folks from Europe, from Asia, from Latin America and the Caribbean, folks from Africa and Oceania, and that's just, I would say, a general overview of where folks were coming who participated in the Trans PULSE study, and when we see the reasons for migration, as mentioned, fear of persecution being one of the main drivers. That's where we see one in three, that 31%, particularly among newcomers to Canada, so anyone in the last five years, definitely were looking for safe space to transition, to embrace their gender identity, or even for exploration, for gender play, but the other two I would say main reasons folks are migrating is related to employment or education. I will be talking a little more about that, as well, because sometimes how you show up to work, how you show up to school definitely can affect what your experience in those places would be like. Speaking very highly of, I guess, the Canadian healthcare system, we see that 25%, like one in four, folks actually came to Canada for gender affirming care, which is definitely something that I've accessed, and I'm glad to see that there are other folks who are exploring their gender identities through the medical system, as well. Other reasons being the humanitarian claims and sex-based discrimination, so that's homophobia, biphobia, etc. When we think about newcomers, I did want to include this context because a lot of times there are perceptions of who will respond, and this piece, this component, is often missed. We see throughout for this chart we're looking at newcomers, established immigrants and individuals born in Canada, and we see that all of these groups are fairly educated, with a lot of folks having at least a high school diploma but many going on to pursue postsecondary studies, whether part-time or on a continuing education basis or through a degree program or postgraduate degree program. Surprisingly, though, when we look at newcomers, like I said, looking at that mauve color, well, looking at, I guess, I don't know, I'm not a color, I don't know how to define these colors, but it looks more pinkish, that first row, we see that in recent time, in recent years, the study was launched in 2019, so everyone who would've completed the study between, I guess, our data collection period of 2019-2020, we see that one-third actually have postsecondary, postgraduate studies. Being one of the largest, if not I should say the largest, group based on the data that we have at Trans PULSE Canada of folks with those types of professional degrees and credentials. So, definitely who's shaping the migrant experience. I think this is something that really needs to be highlighted more when we talk about access needs and also some of the key drivers, as mentioned. One of the reasons people are coming is for education, despite having a lot of education already. In relation to settlement services, I was really thinking how do we actively engage you folks here today, active engage settlement organizations and those that provide services to newcomers in general, specifically, those who are working with queer and trans folks. Unfortunately, the vast majority of folks have not accessed a settlement services in the first year. There are a variety of reasons that contribute to that, and hopefully Sizwe and I can reflect on what we think are some of the reasons were, what were some of the challenges for us, but to put the numbers in perspective, when you look at that 79% of folks who have not accessed a settlement service in the first year, that's essentially, I would say about, I'm trying to do reverse math, but let me read it as I have it displayed. When we look at the 21% who have access to settlement services, that's only 19 of the 92 newcomers to Canada, and on the same note, when we look at the 6% of established immigrants who have access to settlement services, that's only 14, so we see that there's over 7200+ folks

who participated in this study who did not access the settlement service. We know that you folks are doing amazing work, and we want to ensure that folks who are in need of your supports, in need of resettlement services, also have access to that, so there's definitely a big gap when it comes to service provision specifically for trans and nonbinary newcomers to Canada. Lastly, like I said, we were trying to put a lot of discussion into a very small webinar, but I did want to include this piece on mental health. Overall, we see that across the board trans and nonbinary people typically rate their mental health fair to poor, so looking at that very last column, but when it comes to, I guess, experiences of joy, experiences of, I guess, improved, you know, enhanced mental health, we see that newcomers and established immigrants are more likely to rate their mental health as excellent or good compared to individuals born in Canada. I think that there's some definitely joy from being in a place where you can express yourself honestly and authentically, and I think that's kind of speaking to why we are seeing this in the study. With that said, there are limitations, as mentioned. Trans PULSE Canada, whilst we were able to engage over 2800 trans and nonbinary people in Canada, Stats Canada actually, in their 2021 census, suggests that there is an estimated 100,815 trans people in Canada, which is a very large number, meaning a lot of folks the Trans PULSE Canada study did not engage. There's an estimated one in 300 people who identify as trans or nonbinary in Canada, with the vast majority of folks identifying as trans women. I'm definitely always looking for folks that, like I said, are like-minded people. I myself am a trans woman, so it's always nice to find community in my, whether work-related or just in my social life, but, yeah, I think it was good that Stats Canada did collect data on gender and definitely in an inclusive way where we can see how many trans people are in Canada. So, that's one piece definitely in terms of, I guess, scale. The Trans PULSE Canada study did not engage the full spectrum of trans people in Canada, but we are, we're grateful for the folks who did participate in the study, and then as it relates to newcomers, as it relates to migrants, Stats Canada also collected data on that with an estimated 8.3 million people describing the experience of migration, whether being a landed immigrant or retaining or maintaining permanent residency in Canada, so there again we see a 336 number is still a very, very, very small percent of folks who actually are part of the community that we seek to engage, but with that, I do want to thank the Trans PULSE Canada team for engaging us. There's over 100 people who contributed to the study design, and also this work, it did not just start in 2019, 2018, 2019. It actually started, I think, for the Trans PULSE Ontario team about 10 or 12 years prior so there's definitely a continuation of the work in promoting inclusion through research, so that's the first part of today's presentation. If there are questions about the study, we can take some time to review those.

>> SIZWE INKINGI: We do have a question, Tatiana. This is from Lauren, so Lauren asks, do we know why so, why we have so, why, do we know why so few access settlement services in their first year?

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: Yeah, and I think, Sizwe, this is where we're going to actually going to just reflect on our personal opinions. The study itself did not inquire explicitly about, I guess, barriers to accessing settlement services. This is the first time Trans PULSE Canada, well, I mean, Trans PULSE Canada is like building on the Trans PULSE Ontario study, this was the first time they were looking at immigrants, refugees and newcomers specifically, and for us, we really just wanted to know are folks accessing settlement services and what, what's the quality of care they are receiving, you know. Are their needs being met through the settlement services? So, short answer is no. We don't know exactly why, but given my work with trans and nonbinary or LGBTQ immigrants, refugees and newcomers, back in 2016, I would say that that's when I first launched a newcomer support group. There are a few reasons that I would say contributed to this, this number in terms of like, I guess, gaps. For me in my program, one thing that I found was the issue of language. A lot of folks, especially in the second year when I was running my program, a lot of folks had linguistic needs that I was unable to meet as a person that only spoke English, so there's that. I think another issue is just about un-awareness. You are in a new environment. You're kind of feeling out the turf depending on if you come in the summer when the weather is lovely or if you come in the winter where it's a bit shocking, especially if you're from a subtropical place like me. That can also be a reason you may not want to get out and navigate those settlement services or even just find information about what type of services are

available to LGBTQ people. A third issue, I would say, would be just the location. Depending on where you live and what your social circles look like, you may not even care. You may not have access to the information about these different programs, so definitely, I guess, part of it is you taking the, having agency and doing your own research, but when you're so new to a place, it's like you sometimes need like a guide to really have those needs be met, but I don't know, Sizwe, what about you? What, what factors do you think are contributing to why folks are not accessing settlement services in like the first year?

>> SIZWE INKINGI: I think you mentioned most of it. Language, how people tend to identify themselves. That might impact the way they navigate. You know, not a lot of newcomers might translate their identity the same way we do here in North America or the way we understand it, and we might not, and then settlement service providers might not feel like they have enough supports for the newcomers in general based on their, you know, needs pertaining to like gender identity. I'd also say one more thing is I think documentation, and as you also mentioned also mapping, so access to documentation is a really big piece. You know, without documentation, it's hard to access specific services, and, you know, especially for, you know, trans and nonbinary folks, sometimes, particularly transgender folks, you might ask yourself if your documentation does not align with who you actually present, and that can also be a big safety and risk factor. So, those are things that, you know, we don't tend to highlight a lot or take into consideration, so it really starts with that and like you're mentioning mapping. So, everything starts with word-of-mouth. People need to know who to go to. I would ask, you know, give a call to Tatiana or give someone a call and then I'll say, hey, have you been here, do you know this person, or Tatiana ask me, you know, do you know this person, and that's how we start like referring amongst ourselves in the community, and you perhaps as a service provider are the trusted source and then it's a ripple effect because you know where to refer me, so it's really ensuring that we're creating safe pathways for a lot of people in the community. So, I would say mapping, getting a sense of the, the, the lay of the land, documentation is one and as you mentioned also, Tatiana, language is a big one. I also have one question for you, Tatiana, based on this report, and I think I'd like to get your opinion. This is the first study I would say that has, you know, taken data, desegregated the data of, you know, trans experience, and I think this is really important because you highlight the trends of what folks in the community need, where folks are coming from, now I'm wondering how, in your opinion, how can service providers on this call like use this study or use the methodologies that you folks have had, you know, to pay attention to who is coming in their doors and then know how to create, you know, positive spaces? Yeah.

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: Yeah, that's, that's a good question. So there's, okay, my immediate thought is, I think it's important that service providers also identify what their needs are. What are they hearing from clients? As mentioned, I technically am a service provider, so I, I can reflect on what the group dynamics were, what my, what areas I need to improve on in terms of engaging folks who did not speak English but definitely wanted to access my program and needed support. So, I think that it can start with really looking internally. What is working within the organization that you're working for, and if there's an inquiry in terms of like, okay, folks, we have this program but no one's coming to it, then really even kind of doing a community audit to hear from folks, to put the call out there. You may want to be a silent partner because sometimes if there are negative reputations associated with different organizations folks may just not come because they didn't hear positive things, but that does not mean the information is unnecessary or not needed. The unique thing about Trans PULSE Canada, however, is we have data on these communities. So, if there's thing that you're particularly interested in, I would say there are, like I said, limitations in terms of how many folks engaged, but we do have some data to give you some insight if you were thinking, I don't know, you're in Ontario, or I'm assuming most of you are here in Ontario, and maybe you're like downtown. There may be specific things that you're looking at. Is the commute an issue for your program, or are folks just not, is the program not well promoted? I think definitely staffing also plays a big role. You need people who are committed to doing the work and not just going to passively do it. I would say kind of that was one of the success of my project. I, I enjoyed doing it because it was a need that personal to me that I saw as an opportunity to meet other trans people. I saw it as an opportunity to find community while working, so, yeah,

I think it worked, it worked for me in that way, so I think service providers and organizations that are in service to queer and trans and nonbinary and refugees and newcomers should really be looking at internally what's working, who they're hiring to do the work and is there that real passion and drive as some of the, I guess, some of the foundations to a successful program.

>> SIZWE INKINGI: Thank you. So, for folks on the call, it's just a matter of taking this a step further in the work that you do and maybe starting this conversation in your circles, and, yeah, it's pretty much doable, and we've seen the approach with Stats Can, you know, so anything is doable. We can integrate some of these practices in the work that we do. So, Tatiana, should we switch gears?

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: Absolutely. I was just going to say it's a nice segue, because part two of today's series or session is really going to be an open discussion about resettlement, community development and, you know, finding, building, creating support systems for bi and trans and nonbinary refugees and newcomers, and it's good, like I said, it's good that, you know, there's history with Sizwe and I, yeah, so, feel free to kick start it. Like, should we take it back because I do have a question for you. I, I feel like a lot of times I'm in the speaking positions but there's so many people in community doing amazing work that are not often centered, and I wanted to hear a little bit about your experience navigating resettlement when you first came to Canada. What was that like for you? How did you find community, and even why did you decide Canada? Of all the places in the world, why Canada?

>> SIZWE INKINGI: Why Canada? Canada was, well, in my community, we always knew, when I say community, my background is from Burundi, East Africa, and Canada was always seen as a migration route, particularly Ottawa because it was an easy way to get papers. So, how, whichever way you can get to Canada, that's the first thing you need to do, so when I was given the chance to come on the plane, my parents told me, yeah, don't come back unless you got papers because, you know, Burundi isn't working, is not for you, you know, and for me, that was such a sad reality because I was so touched. I was so connected to the motherland. I was there until I was about the age of 19, but deep down inside, I also knew that it would be hard for me to live my truth, and I hadn't taken the time to sit with my truth. Fast forward being in Canada as a student, navigating all the different things when you come as a student, knowing that you're working on a timeline, I, like, I think I really came into myself, and I think love really pushed me to come into myself, and from there, I was in Ottawa, and I was in such a precarious situation wherein I was in a, on a student visa, but I could not at that time, the school didn't or could not support me in terms of like settlement needs, and whenever I tried to go into settlement, into the settlement sector for support and help, they could not offer me help because they said, you know, you don't have the particular visa, like, you're a student so you should just stick to being within the school ecosystem, so I was in between two worlds, and also as a French Francophone speaking person, I was afraid to go into Francophone speaking agencies because that's where the majority of people from my country were and I was still in the closet, and I tend to know, I tend to express myself more in French, especially when it comes to feelings, and so I was stuck in a world where I didn't know where to go, and at that time I also did not, I was too afraid to come out to a lot of people because I was still in my newcomer international student bubble and I thought a lot of people within my circle would reject me, and I could not relate with a lot of folks within the community, so I took the courage to go to the space, I think it's in Vanier in Ottawa to this LGBTQ center, and it was a trans woman who was leading it, and I attended the session. I was the only newcomer there, and although I could speak about, like, you know, my experience in regards to gender identity, no one could actually understand my, I guess, the racial dynamic, and when I went to, I guess, Kind Space, at that time they were not offering like any newcomer services. So, Kind Space is an LGBTQ center in Ottawa, an amazing place, but there I got to meet community. That's where I got to meet people of color and then started off my journey in Ottawa, started a lot of advocacy, and then I came to, to Toronto, and I was really entered into the space where I saw a lot of people from different places, and then I remember seeing you walking, I think it was in 5/19, I think when, I think it was somewhere else, though. I think it was where there was a Black History Month event. That's

where I think the first time I saw you, and also I think you were speaking at one, you were part of many panels but you were giving a speech at that time, so there were so many times, and I think we slowly, I slowly gravitated towards you, particularly, I know, because, like, you know, we were newcomer girls but you were working and you were navigating, so that's kind of my journey in a nutshell, and I'm also kind of conscious of time, but I'm kind of passing on the baton to you, or, I guess we'll have this exchange. I'll let you take the lead, sis, but, yeah.

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: Yeah. I would say my journey of resettlement was similar to yours. So, I came to Canada from the Bahamas in 2014 but I didn't, because I came out for school, I didn't come to Toronto until I think it was like summer of 2015 or 2016, like almost going into 2016, and, yeah, I think I was just, what drove me to choose Canada was although I am from the Bahamas and the Bahamas is in the Caribbean, Canada was part of CARICOM, which is essentially the Caribbean community, and it was just an easier option, and it was also more affordable. Like, I know that I did not want to go to America. At the time, there was just a lot happening in America, and I just didn't feel like that was the safest place for me. So, yeah, just thinking about what I could afford and really just what I wanted. It was just an option. When I decided to come to Canada, I, it was not going to be something long-term for me, although, like, eight years later, I'm here still, and I love it. I love Canadian life. I mean, like, also, like, there are so many more people that have decided to come to Canada. I wouldn't say because of me, but I do think that just knowing that it's an option and knowing that there are people who have kind of walked that path is sometimes inspirational, but, yeah, when I came to Toronto, I would say it's the first time I really thought about, well, what, what does community mean to me? What am I looking for in community and kind of like you and your experience in Ottawa. I used to go to a lot of programs, a lot of youth programs because I was so young and all I had was time when I first came to Toronto, so I was just looking for community, looking for friends, looking for opportunities, and that resulted in me going to a lot of different programs, just going, going, going, and, yeah, I would say that was kind of me navigating resettlement personally, but what I ended up, what ended up happening was people started to come to me looking for support, like they would ask me questions and I would be like, I don't really know about this, but then because all I had was time, I kind of took that on and out of that I would say was this desire to, like, support folks, to not, like, because we were all going through the same thing, and I guess I didn't want to be selfish in my exploration of gender and navigating resettlement, so I was like, okay, I started to just with my, with folks that I really clicked with, it was kind of us just getting together to share resources. We definitely were low on cash so looking for opportunities that were paid that could provide some source of income because employment was one of the biggest challenges I would say when I first came, despite my qualifications. So, I did study business management in the Bahamas and I later went on to do a project management certificate here. I often don't talk about credentials. I think it's a very weird thing in community where you want to meet the person, you don't like want to just meet their CV, but anyway I came to Canada with all of this business experience, even I worked in the comms department of a drugstore in the Bahamas. That was like one of my last jobs in the Bahamas prior to coming here, and I, yeah, I don't know. I felt like for a while I had disconnected from that way of working and thinking, but as I started to rethink of life here in Canada, it kind of just came back up, and Perception, which was this group I created that ran out of [unknown] at the time was really described as a personal development group because I was using some of the business fundamental skills that I had to support myself and folks through this process of resettlement. So, yeah, it's like personal development and like looking at what are your strengths, what are your needs, goal setting, how do you achieve these goals that you may have for yourself, consistency, addressing like negative thought and biases that we may have, insecurities, and, yeah, Perception was obviously one of the most fun projects that I ever did because it allowed me to also incorporate what is now called like [unknown] approaches, but essentially it was like I was trying to engage folks in the work in creative ways because the subject matter is sensitive, you know? There are things that you want to share, but you are mindful of how you share it. For me, like, using art. So, there was an activity that I created called, who am I, that really asked folks to reflect on five aspects of themselves that they feel comfortable sharing because that really makes up who you are. Like, you're not just one thing, and there

were other activities that I created that really was this learning development piece, and we did have a counselor there for some of the issues when folks are triggered when things that come up, you know, around these feelings of loss or grieving, disconnect, because it's just a reality of being in a place, not having your family, not having or not wanting to be in your cultural community for whatever reason, maybe feeling like you have to choose between the two, and, yeah, so, Perception was really created out of that desire to connect with folks in community but also to showcase some of the business fields that I thought were unappreciated because I didn't have quote unquote Canadian experience. Yeah, that's a little bit about, I guess, my background, what brought me to Canada and how I was navigating spaces before. I am mindful of time, so I don't think like we're going to be able to get through any, all of these questions, but another question I wanted to ask you, as you think about, you know, how things were versus how things are now, because we did meet, just for those of you who might not know, like I said, we've kept crossing paths. Like, we met, I don't feel like we spoke here in Toronto, but I remember definitely speaking in Vancouver, then we were also at this newcomer conference in Calgary, and I think we were also on a panel or together in Montreal for like an international human rights conference, but, yeah, looking at things, I guess, because I don't, I don't know when you came. I came in 2014 and it's been a whirlwind, but looking at how things were when you first arrived versus the current state of affairs, what are some, I guess, some of the progress measures? What do you think is working really well?

>> SIZWE INKINGI: What is working really well? I would say we're not, I won't say we're not as invisible, but we're not visible anymore within the settlement, within settlement services, so queer and trans newcomers, I would say. That's one thing. So, by that, I'm seeing a lot of groups come up. I'm seeing if it's peer lead or people within community are showing up, which is great. Even within like higher institutional level. The fact that, you know, IRCC pushed for LGBTQIA newcomer programming within their proposals, I think that was something really big, because apparently that was not there a couple of years back so that's, that's, on a big institutional level, I'd say that was a big thing. Yeah, so those are the most of the things I would say in terms of institutionally big proposals that change in terms of like refugee resettlement, you know, queer and trans people are more visible now in terms of how people can come into the country. I would say also networks because people are talking more, we're leveraging technology, so it's amazing because I left thinking that, you know, there's no space for me at home, but now I'm seeing a lot of folks, queer community, trans community people are doing their thing at home and through social media we're all learning from each other, all getting to know each other, so those are the main thing I would say that have changed. Yeah.

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: Yeah, I agree. I think that there's definitely a lot more inclusion, I would say at all levels, because before when I, like I said, when I was navigating resettlement and my own gender journey, it's like you have to choose one or the other, like folks were saying, wait until, you know, you get your PR card and then start your, your gender journey, but I think definitely in consulting with a few government departments and having some discussions around gender identity, gender expression back in 2016-2017 have led the conversation to be different. It's like you are going through resettlement as a trans person. Your trans identity doesn't have to show up after resettlement, so I would say that's a big, big change, and I do think that there's, well, I mean, I don't know if that's kind of a progress measure, but I do think, like I said, there are more opportunities for us to have conversations like this to reflect on, you know, what has worked whereas before, like some of the, some of the discussions were very broad and it was not looking at the nuanced ways that trans people in Canada navigate different spaces and the different reasons. Definitely status is a big one. It can be a barrier for healthcare access. It can also create a sense of uncertainty because I feel like that was another thing, especially early on, where if you didn't have permanent status, it's like you're the unwelcome guest and it's like, oh, I shouldn't say anything, like I should just be grateful, and I think that that's not, well, that's not how I approach it because I feel like at some point everyone's status is going to change, especially if they commit to the process, so folks should be welcome openly. They should not feel like, you know, uncomfortable just because they've had to relocate for whatever reason brought

them here. So, yeah, I would say that's been another change, too. I think there are more spaces where folks are comfortable talking about their background and talking about their history and even when it comes to that cultural piece, that cultural component, being proud to be from whichever ethnic cultural background they're from in a community here in Canada, and a community is definitely, like I said, very layered, but showcasing all of those facets of themselves opposed to just having to, I guess, wear one hat, so those are some of what I would say are the positive progress measures that I've observed over the years.

>> SIZWE INKINGI: One last question. I know, I know maybe, I'd like to ask you one last question because you might give, because I think it's really important, as well. You've always centered your work around youth, and I've always, I've always been interested to know, like, what has been your drive? Why, why really focusing on supporting youth, because I know you started the Black Queer Youth Collective, so I think it's also important for folks on the call to know why we shouldn't have this oversight, right, so I always wanted to get to know why. Yeah.

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: Yeah, why youth? Well, I would say the short answer is because I was a youth. I'm still pretty young, but I was a youth, and I was connected, like I said, a lot of my work was based on the networks that I built, so it was like, if there was a specific need that we were talking about, and at the time it was really related to resettlement and identity documents, as mentioned, traveling to, traveling outside of Toronto required presenting IDs, and it was like, okay, what name do I put on this? How do I go through this process because I don't want to miss this opportunity in another province, so it was like having the discussion and being honest with what our needs were and I guess finding the right people to really support us in ensuring that those needs were met. Going back, like I said, the model was using like a goal setting approach, but, yeah, the Black Queer Youth Collective was created kind out of another need. As I was navigating these different spaces, the discussion about race and racial inclusion was, how can I put it, it was something that was not explicit, like folks would prefer, like in the trans spaces we just focus on gender, in the, what other programs I would go to, like, in most youth spaces, it was just about like activity-based, but the discussion about race seemed to have been a sensitive one, and, I mean, it still is, so the Black Queer Youth Collective was actually created out of this need for us to talk about what do black queer and trans youth need? What are their experiences navigating different spaces? Who feels safe accessing different spaces? When it comes to activities, like, which type of activities are viewed as, I guess, broad enough to appeal to everyone but doesn't really bring joy? So, the BQYC was created to cultivate black joy, to empower, you know, black queer and trans people, and, and I saw it as like a priority, especially after working on the Toronto For All campaign where I was talking about racism and transphobia publicly. It was like, okay, how can I talk and not, how can I talk this talk and not really do anything that's addressing some of these issues? So the BQYC kind of was like that call to action from community, and they put me and a few other folks, I guess, in, they entrusted us with, you know, supporting their needs, and, yeah, five years later, we're still here doing our thing. So, it's good.

>> SIZWE INKINGI: Thank you. Do folks on the call have any questions for us?

>> SPEAKER: Sizwe, sorry to interrupt. I just see one question in the Q&A if you could not mind having, and I don't know the chat, but I see one.

>> SIZWE INKINGII: I think, oh, I don't see any question. I think if it's from Lorraine, I think it was answered. Which question is it?

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: The question, oh, I see it. So, the question is, do we know how many newcomers or refugees face family rejection. Also, do we have a breakdown of ages? We do have age data. So, a lot of folks who participated Trans PULSE Canada study were young, like, they were mostly, I think most folks were under 35 years old with the vast majority being within, I would say, federally known as youth, like

16 to 29 age range, so we do have some data on the age. In terms of family relationships and their experiences or connections with their family, I don't think we have that, that, that data, but what we do have is, like I said, why folks are leaving their countries of origin. It could be due to domestic issues or family issues, but it's not explicit, so I think there's definitely some work needed to, like I said, get more data on these populations, whether through a community audit or a focus group or even just like a drop in group. I feel like drop in groups and panels are useful ways in engaging community, so, yeah.

>> SIZWE INKINGI: We also need to pay attention to how some of these questions are going to impact the work that you do. Is it adding to your work? I try and identify why people are leaving, what types of supports you might have based on this question. I'd also say that, yeah. I see another question, Tatiana. With a wave of anti-trans legislation being introduced in the US, do you have a plan in Canada to welcome more gender diverse folks? Sorry, don't know if this is the right place to ask the question. I think it's something we need to address, I mean, we have the anti-trans legislation in the states, we have the anti-gay bill that is happening in Uganda. There's a big wave that's happening across the world right now, and it's really impacting the work that we are doing, also how we navigate. I can only imagine trans folks living in specific states in the US are seeking refuge in Canada, as well, or in different states, so I think it's something we cannot hide away from because it is, it's knocking at our door and we never know with the change of government. We might also be facing the same issues. I mean, conversion therapy is still going on, so there's so many things that we need to really address and keep pushing. I don't know what is your take on this, also, Tatiana?

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: Yeah, I agree. Just echoing what you shared. I think that anything that affects people globally is also going to affect folks locally, because folks are looking for safe spaces to connect with like-minded people. With everything that's happening down south, I do think the government should be thinking about whether or not the country has the capacity to support more newcomers, but also I think due to some of the rural health agreements, Canada is a designated safe space, so when it comes to LGBTQ violence, that's the persecution we were talking about earlier, when it comes to persecution, folks are going to be potentially viewing Canada as their new home, and hopefully organizations are willing to embrace this influx of, of folks from America, although I would say some of the resettlement laws are also different, and it's interesting that so many newcomers were from the US because, one second, because I think America's also a refugee safe haven, but I'm mindful of time so I think I'll leave it there. I think organizations definitely should be strategic around how do they respond to this potential influx of US citizens who are fleeing America because of transphobia, but also keeping in context of some of the worldwide needs, some of the places where there are harsher persecution such as criminalization and even death penalties that persist.

>> SIZWE INKINGI: Thank you. Over to you. Thank you, everybody. Please feel free to, I guess it's you and I who are saying this, or should I say it. I don't know if I should be saying this?

>> ONAR USAR: Go ahead.

>> SIZWE INKINGI: Thank you again for coming and joining this discussion. Thank you again, Onar and Hazim, for giving us the space to chat. Tatiana, it's always a pleasure being in space with you, and, you know, look how far we've come and look how far we're continuing, and thank you all who are tuning in, and please don't forget to fill in the evaluation that will be shared with you, and if anytime you need to reach out, please contact Onar Usar and Hazim Ismail. Go ahead.

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: One other thing. There is a project that's currently in operation that's looking at black LGBTQ folks' sexual and mental health during the pandemic. We would love if you could share this within your networks of newcomers because I think like, as mentioned in this presentation earlier, newcomers did not have the same access to primary care as established immigrants and those born in, those

born in Canada, so we really want to understand how folks are navigating those spaces, and we need their, them to engage to make some informed decisions around what some of their needs are. So, I'll share that after the session. I'll appreciate it if you can share it in your network. We are also open to connect with service providers, so if you are able to meet maybe for an hour in April, that would be much appreciated.

>> ONAR USAR: Thank you so much, Tatiana. Thank you so much, Sizwe. Tatiana, do you have the link, or do they have the link, or how would they reach you, or should they email you? Like, how would they reach out or state their interest for this project?

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: I will share the link. Sorry, folks, for going a bit over time, but I'll share the link to the study.

>> ONAR USAR: We can also share after a follow-up email with all the participant link, as well.

>> TATIANA FERGUSON: Perfect. There we go. So, yeah, we're looking for both participants as like newcomers as well as service providers that work with those groups.

>> ONAR USAR: Okay. Great. Thank you so much. I'm grateful, and we look forward to continuing this conversation later on in the upcoming months. Thank you so much for joining us today, everyone. Have a great day. Bye-bye.

(End of Session)

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