



**Am I in a safe situation?** ...physically? ... psychologically? ... socially? How can I ensure safety for myself? for my spouse? for my lover? for my friends? for my family? etc. Do I pay attention to elements that may threaten my safety and our safety?

What do I need as a person **to be happier**? ... a bit more than yesterday, than last week, last month or more than last year? How can I plan for a long-term happiness at some point? ... that I will enjoy - Yes, it is possible. - How people around me... enjoy their own life and their happiness? How is my happiness different from theirs'? What do I need, what is my goal and how will I achieve that?

These are topics of reflection, of discussion, perhaps an **opportunity to grow**. Even if I am an older person, I am still learning to be a better person, creating a positive environment for myself, contributing to a positive environment for the people I like and I love. I am still growing and working on these constantly.

Are we perfect? Am I perfect? Nope! Definitely not. And if I was perfect where would I be? My answer is... "I do not know where I would be!" There are no answers to that because perfection does not exist. We can only work at getting better in life.

I have learned to have "realistic" goals to achieve and to work toward... but, for some goals, **it takes time**, more time than we may think. I have learned to be satisfied with progress, often with little progress, but I appreciate that such as it is and I do not become desperate. But don't forget about these...

- My goals are not yours... Your goals are not mine... (necessarily).
- My answers are not yours... Your answers are not mine... (necessarily).
- My solutions are not yours... Your solutions are not mine... (necessarily).

**In moving forward:** What do I need? How can I appreciate life a bit more? At what pace? How can I ensure my safety in the process? How can I respect myself and others that I like/ love? ... my spouse/partner? ... my friends? ... my family? and so on.

In closing, as an association we plan to continue increasing our visibility. Our intent is respect of oneself and to continue to seek the respect of others, as individuals and as a LGBTQ+ community. As president, I was invited to join a committee of the Canadian Nurses' Association regarding LGBTQ+... more to come as I have not attended the first meeting yet. I had an opportunity to inform them that – yes – we have one official Rainbow nursing association in Ontario (and perhaps the only active one in Canada). We are currently posting information on our Facebook page with more to come on other social media platforms.

Sincerely,

Paul-André Gauthier, (he/ him).

Provincial President RNIG (RN - LGBTQ+)

Rainbow Nursing Interest Group (Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario).

Association des infirmières et infirmiers arc-en-ciel de l'Ontario.

**Email** contact : Rainbow-RNIG@hotmail.com

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/RainbowNursing/>



➤ Daniel Shvarts (he/ him), President-Elect ENO

As COVID-19 cases increase across Ontario, I think about those who cannot afford the luxury of safe physical distancing and isolation. As Ontario's Ministry of Health again rolls out new regulations on physical distancing and limits to social gatherings, we, as a province, face an uphill battle protecting those who are marginalized. Unfortunately, the LGBTQ+ community faces increased unemployment as outreach groups struggle to provide support to members of the community. We know that, as nurses, our role is to view the person holistically and we understand that as humans we are heavily impacted by our social determinants of health. According to a report by Egale Canada, a non-profit advocacy organization, 53% of LGBTQ+ households have experienced layoffs compared to 39% of Canadian households overall. Members of the LGBTQ+ representative sample were also more likely to suffer from depression due to isolation and are at higher risk for needing mental health support. To view the full report click here; <https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Impact-of-COVID-19-Canada%E2%80%99s-LGBTQI2S-Community-in-Focus-2020-04-06.pdf>

I felt I needed to do more than just be an advocate. I wanted to get involved and I sought out different volunteer opportunities that will allow me to make a positive, impactful, difference in someone's life.

"The 519" is one of many organizations that is committed to health, happiness and full participation of the LGBTQ+ communities. From legal clinics, which help support refugees and other members with the legalities of the Canadian judicial system, to virtual rhythm classes, there is something for everyone. Learn how you can get involved: <https://www.the519.org>

Remember, we are all in this together and it will take all of us helping one another.

Be Safe. Be well.



➤ Christopher Draenos (he/ him), Policy and Political Action, ENO

Recently, the federal government's COVID-19 Immunity Task Force announced \$661,542 in funding for a national study of the impact of COVID-19 on lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, Two-Spirit, and other sexual and gender minority people (LGBTQ2+). The study will include a national bilingual online survey of LGBTQ2+ people in Canada to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 and public health control measures on their health and wellbeing. The survey will also include an option to receive a finger-prick dried blood spot (DBS) collection kit that will be tested for COVID-19 antibodies in order to help determine the prevalence of COVID-19 within LGBTQ2+ communities, however participants will not receive their individual results as the testing is for public health and research purposes only.

The study findings will inform future public health actions for LGBTQ2+ communities, as well as contribute towards future COVID-19 testing strategies.

I am a member of the core study team. The entire RNIG executive is very happy to have a registered nurse that is part of the LGBTQ2+ community taking part in such an important study. Keep an eye out for details on recruitment later this fall.

[https://www.cbrc.net/cbrc\\_welcomes\\_federal\\_funding\\_for\\_covid\\_19\\_study\\_with\\_lgbtq2\\_communities](https://www.cbrc.net/cbrc_welcomes_federal_funding_for_covid_19_study_with_lgbtq2_communities)



➤ Abigail Bowell (she/ her), Membership ENO

Ever since increasing restrictions have been placed on the public for safety precautions, I have been thinking a lot about the implications of COVID-19 on the LGBTQ+ community, especially since many programs, services etc., are no longer available, are of limited accessibility and/ or have been moved to an online method of delivery. While online resources still serve a purpose and are a method that allows for physical distancing, many persons may rely on or hold great value to in-person interactions, which is difficult in the times that we are living in. I also began to wonder about the effects this is having on the mental health of community members.

“The Trevor Project” released a research report outlining the ways physical distancing, economic strain, and increased anxiety related to COVID-19 has impacted LGBTQ+ youth, while also offering ways LGBTQ+ youth can be supported during this time. I personally am excited to see that these concerns are being recognized and talked about. Although the research paper is targeted towards youth, I think that the issues and supports can have a life-long impact across all age populations. I highly recommend taking a glance through the research paper linked below.

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Implications-of-COVID-19-for-LGBTQ-Youth-Mental-Health-and-Suicide-Prevention.pdf>



➤ Linda Holm (she/ her), Finances ENO

My motivation to become involved with the RNIG in 2014 was my son and his husband. I wanted to advocate for and promote informed, respectful and inclusive healthcare.

Although I am a member of the Oxford Rainbow Coalition, our meetings have been on hold because of community partners’ COVID19 work/ readjustments to providing services. In the meantime, coalition members are encouraged to take advantage of Rainbow Health Ontario’s (RHO) free online training courses until December 31<sup>st</sup>. The coalition members are hoping to increase our communities’ knowledge and capacity. You may wish to explore the available courses as well. You have to register with RHO, and create an account. Then you will have a list of courses that also indicates the time required to complete them. The following is the URL:

<https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/2020/06/rainbow-health-ontario-launches-new-online-learning-platform-for-health-and-social-service-providers-to-learn-about-lgbt2sq-health/>

Please share this information with your colleagues, or with anyone you know who might be able to make use of this opportunity.



➤ Ruth Trinier (they/ them), Communications ENO

As an organization, RNIG has identified the need for healthcare and healthcare providers that are responsive to, and respectful of, the needs of our community. Unfortunately, reports have continued to identify negative experiences for LGBTQ+ members when accessing healthcare. Whether the reasons for these negative experiences is from outright prejudice or a lack of knowledge because of inadequacies in professional education, it leads to substandard care, negative outcomes and a reluctance on the part of clients to seek care.

In an attempt to address this issue, Rainbow Health Ontario has created a Service Provider Directory which lists providers “who have expressed a commitment to providing competent and welcoming care to LGBT2SQ people in Ontario”. Although not a guarantee, interactions with individuals who have made the effort to seek additional education and list their name on this directory are more likely to be positive. The directory, freely accessible to anyone, can be found at <https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/lgbt2sq-health/service-provider-directory/>

Rainbow Health Ontario has a wealth of resources and educational offerings, most of which are free or at minimal cost, available at <https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/>

Perhaps it will be easier to stay safe if we can safely access the care that will keep us that way.



➤ Dakota Carrie (she/ her/ they/ them), Social Media ENO

In light of lacking leadership in the White House (and frankly, in Canada too) on how to condemn white supremacy in North America, the LGBTQ2SA+ community has once again stepped forward.

Modern problems require modern solutions, and as such, physically distanced activism one can do from home comes in the form of hashtag takeovers. This form of activism was popularized earlier this year when K-pop fans took to twitter and flooded the “white lives matter” hashtag with pictures of their favourite artists, and anti-racist posts. Following the U.S. presidential debate, which left racists and nationalists feeling emboldened rather than admonished, the hashtag “ProudBoys” began cropping up in posts, connecting members of the “hate group” (as defined by the Southern Poverty Law Centre).

While there are conflicting messages about where the take-over started, it certainly grew in popularity when actor, George Takei tweeted out the idea, suggesting that the MLM (Men Loving Men) community use the hashtag for photos and posts about gay pride. Now the “ProudBoys” hashtag is full of loving photos of queer couples with their partners, and other “very gay things”. Our community has once again shown resilience in a storm of hate, and demonstrated that love is louder than ignorance.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-proudboys-hashtag-takeover-1.5751543>

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- Zev Bernstein (he/ him), Workplace ENO

As a member of the LGBTQ community, and a full-time practicing nurse, I am pleased to take on the role of RNIG Workplace Liaison for the next two years! I first joined the RNIG hoping to connect with other queer nurses, students and allies, and to discover education and advocacy opportunities relating to LGBTQ healthcare. My hope is that by joining the executive, and specifically taking on the Workplace Liaison position, I will be able to not only recruit new members, but better engage with members who are motivated to create positive change in their workplaces, and help them to do so. As a first step, I want to highlight a few organizations that I have had the privilege of learning from.

**Pride at Work Canada** ([prideatwork.ca](http://prideatwork.ca)) is an organization that aims to reduce workplace barriers and discrimination that LGBTQ individuals face in the public, private, and non-profit sector. They offer a variety of programmes, including e-learning, webinars, networking events, and their staff can provide direct support at the individual or organizational level.

**Rainbow Health Ontario** ([rainbowhealthontario.ca](http://rainbowhealthontario.ca)) is a ministry-funded program to address LGBT2SQ health disparities in Ontario through education, advocacy, research, and more. In December 2019, they released the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition of their [Guidelines for Gender-Affirming Primary Care with Trans and Non-binary Patients](#). They also expanded their online learning platform, [LGBT2SQ Health Connect](#), where healthcare providers can expand their knowledge and competencies in caring for queer populations, and learn how to make their organization more LGBT2SQ-friendly. Currently, their training is FREE until December 31, 2020.

**The 519** ([the519.org](http://the519.org)) is a community centre in the “Village” on Church St. in Toronto. They offer a wide variety of services and programmes, from counselling services and queer parenting resources to coming out groups, trans programming, and senior’s support. They also have plenty of free resources, such as the [LGBTQ2S Inclusion Playbook: A Series of Best Practices for Healthcare Environments](#), which was released in 2020.

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- Kashka Ironside (she/ her), B.Sc.N. student Representative
  - Kieran Thiara (he/ him), B.Sc.N. student Representative

Hello RNIG Members,

We are grateful to be representing the student voice on the RNIG executive this year. We are both in our third semester of the BScN program. Advocating for equity in nursing is important to us because we believe in creating a safe work environment for our future colleagues, and safe care spaces for our future clients. We hope that in working with the RNIG, we will be able to engage with other students and nurses who are motivated to create change. In our August Executive meeting, we were elated to hear about the experiences and stories of others. The passion and commitment of the attendees inspired us to make the most of this opportunity.

Our hope is to create a space for student engagement within the Rainbow Nursing Interest Group. At our last meeting, it was encouraging to hear that almost half of our members were students. As

nursing students and continuous learners, it is important that we educate ourselves to be able to provide equitable care for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. As the RNIG expands social media presence, we hope that we will be able to connect with more students across Ontario. We are looking forward to learning from the other members of the executive, working on student-led initiatives, and participating in this year's educational opportunities.

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- Kieran Thiara (he/ him), B.Sc.N. student Representative

### **Navigating School and Workplace Environments as a Queer Trans Person of Colour**

As a queer, transgender person of colour (QTPOC), I have experienced barriers to accessing health care. I believe that it is imperative for future health care providers, including my peers, to be educated on trans-specific topics in order to bridge the gaps of disparity within the healthcare system.

The barriers that I faced when navigating the Practical Nursing Program directly impacted my academic success. I tirelessly educated peers and teachers as well as advocated for a more inclusive, anti-oppressive curriculum. Through these efforts, LGBTQ+ education sessions were implemented for both students and staff to gain a better understanding of how to support patients/ clients, colleagues and peers within the community.

In light of the recent BLM (Black Lives Matter) protests, I reflect upon the glaring truth that systems have continued to fail BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) LGBTQ+ students. Systemic racism, homophobia, and transphobia have played a large role in the negative health outcomes for marginalized populations. Nursing school programs and hospitals are in a unique position where they have the opportunity to shape a better, more inclusive environment through education and policy.

It is apparent that there is a lot more work that is required in order to have a curriculum that better reflects the inclusivity we need. However, I am hopeful that we can collectively use our voices and experiences to advocate for systemic change.



## **Resources**

### **LGBTQ+:**

**Rainbow Health Ontario** (RHO) has a wealth of resources and educational offerings, most of which are free or at minimal cost, available in English / en Français:

- <https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/>
- <https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/lgbt2sq-health/service-provider-directory/>

RHO about inclusive clinical language:

- <https://cyndigilbert.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Neutralizing-Clinical-Language.pdf>

- Bauer, G. R & Scheiem, A. I. (2015). Transgender people in Ontario, Canada: Statistics from Trans PULSE Project to Inform Human Rights Policy. Retrieved from: <http://transpulseproject.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Trans-PULSE-Statistics-Relevant-for-Human-Rights-Policy-June-2015.pdf> . (Accessed January 2, 2018).
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- McDowell, A., & Bower, K. M. (2016). Transgender health care for nurses: An innovative approach to diversifying nursing curricula to address health inequities. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 55(8), 476-479. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20160715-11>
- Sawning, et al. (2017). A first step in addressing medical education Curriculum gaps in lesbian-, gay-, bisexual-, and transgender-related content. *Education for Health*, 30(2), 108-114. doi:10.4103/efh.EfH\_78\_16

## Covid resources:

**App** official from the Government of Canada / **Application** officielle du Gouvernement du Canada — Coronavirus

- <https://ca.thrive.health/> (EN & FR) \* excellent \*

**Health Canada** (EN & FR)

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

**Ministry of Health of Ontario** (EN & FR)

- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>

**Canadian Nurses' Association** (EN & FR)

- <https://cna-aicc.ca/en/nursing-practice/evidence-based-practice/infectious-diseases/novel-coronavirus>

**Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario**

- <https://rnao.ca/news/information-2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19>

**Mental Health / Santé mentale:**

- <https://cmha.ca> (EN & FR) <https://cmha.ca/fr/>

