YOUR BOARDING PASS:

RAINBOW RAILROAD

ANNUAL REPORT FOR YEAR:

2016

WHAT WE DO:

SAVE LBGTQI LIVES

LIVES SAVED THIS YEAR:

81

DEPARTURE:

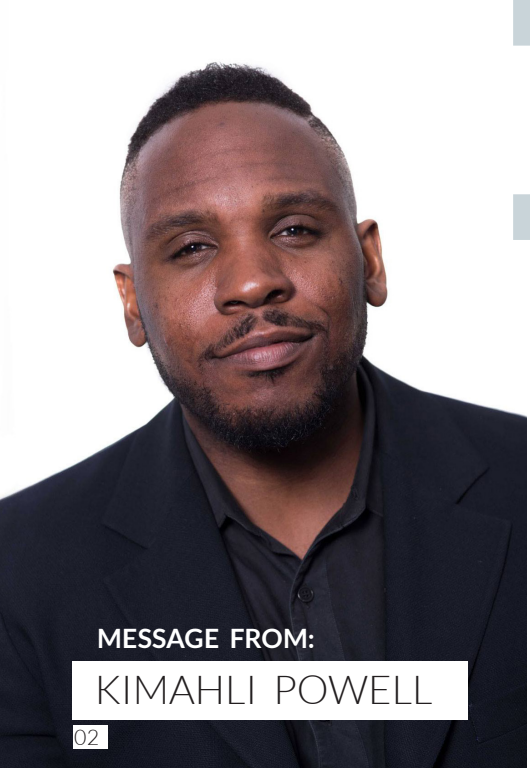
State Sponsored Persecution and Discrimination

REQUESTS THIS YEAR:

630

ARRIVAL:

Save 100 lives in 2017



MESSAGE FROM:

KIMAHLI POWELL

I was asked to take on the role of Executive Director of Rainbow Railroad in 2016, and during the weeks that passed before I started, I was in Jamaica, helping organize Montego Bay's Second Annual Pride festivities. In Kingston, knowing that I would soon begin my new role, I was invited to meet a small group of gay and trans youth who were homeless and living in the "gullies". These individuals have been reported on heavily in numerous publications, and yet, their condition remained the same. Upon meeting one of these individuals, they took off their shirt to show me scars from their second acid attack.

Imagine that, walking down the street, unsure when someone would harm you next – likely by surprise.

Yet, this is the reality of people around the world who come to Rainbow Railroad for help – for a lifeline, to escape dangerous situations. We received requests from over 600 people in 2016, including the person that I met, who thankfully we were able to bring to safety by New Year's Eve.

This one example is our mission in action – helping LGBTQI people to safety.

For so long this mission has been carried out by our volunteers, who pulled together their collective talent and resources to help as many people as they could.

Today, I am supported by a dedicated team of talented colleagues, who pour all of their energy into helping save lives.

I am thankful about the privilege that comes from being a Canadian from the Jamaican diaspora doing this work. Had it not been for my mother's decision to move to Canada before I was born, I could very well be in the shoes of any one of the people that we help.

This is the story of Canada, and it is fitting then that we are really one of the few organizations in the world doing this direct triage work – a Canadian solution to a global problem.

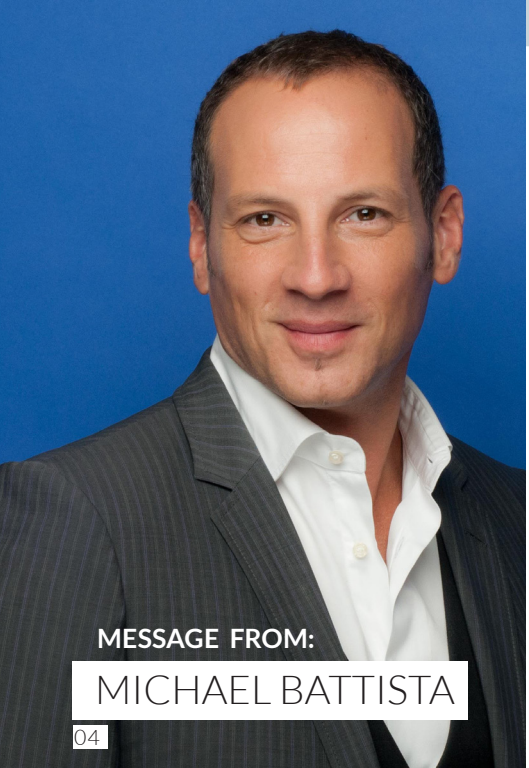
We've been able to grow in such a short period of time due to the dedication of funders and allies like TD Bank, The Upside Down Tree, The Foundation of Hope, the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto, and the many other supporters and community groups that have helped us get to this point.

A big thank you to everyone who made a donation, and contributed to our successful 60in60 campaign.

As we begin our first strategic plan that will take us to 2019, I invite you to take a look through these following pages at the people who we help, and the volunteers and supporters who made 2016 such a transformational year. We're just getting started.

Thank you for your support.

Kimahli Powell
Executive Director
Rainbow Railroad



MESSAGE FROM:

MICHAEL BATTISTA

There are moments when I pause to reflect on the breathtaking growth of this organization.

Rainbow Railroad was simply an idea ten years ago when a small group of community members began a series of meetings in my office to discuss the problems facing LGBQTI people worldwide who experience persecution because of their sexual orientation and sexual identity. Inspired by the legal victories toward achieving equality in the West, we were determined to find a solution for members of our community in other parts of the world who face fear and desperation on a daily basis.

In those early years we were pleased to raise enough funds to assist one or two individuals annually to make it to safety.

As news spread, we heard from supporters like you that the need was greater than our capacity as a collective.

We obtained charitable status in 2013 and in 2014 hired our first Executive Director, Justin Taylor. With Justin at the helm, we transformed into a mature organization which attracted several key international partnerships and donors.

When Justin moved on last year, we were thrilled to bring on Kimahli Powell as our new Executive Director. Kimahli's vast background in not-for-profit management as well as his own experience as a gay man from the Jamaican diaspora makes him uniquely qualified to be leading the team.

Last year we went from helping 29 people to 81 people. This intense growth is due in large part to the Upside Down Tree and the philanthropy of Carmyn Aleshka and Greg Fettes, who strongly believe in our work and gifted us with a transformational $400,000 donation in 2016.

I'm grateful to be the Chair of an exceptional group of people who put their hearts and souls (and talent and time!) into this work. Someone we brought to safety recently wrote to us and said: "My family and I thank you so very much for helping us settle in our new home. The feeling of living without fear is a great one." We do this work because of stories like this.

But we would not be here without you, our donors and supporters. Each time we experience a tinge of apprehension about the pace of growth, we reflect upon the encouragement you have given us. I am proud of what we have accomplished together.

On behalf of Rainbow Railroad and the people we have helped bring to safety, thank you for your continued support.

Michael Battista
Chair, Board of Directors
Rainbow Railroad

TIMELINE:

10 YEARS SINCE TAKEOFF

2006
Created by a dedicated group of volunteers.

2013
Became a Registered Charitable Organization.

2014
Hired its first staff person, an Executive Director.

2016
Received a transformational grant from the Upside Down Tree and provided travel for nearly 200 individuals since 2006.

2017
On track to provide travel for 100 more individuals in 2017.

LANDSCAPE:

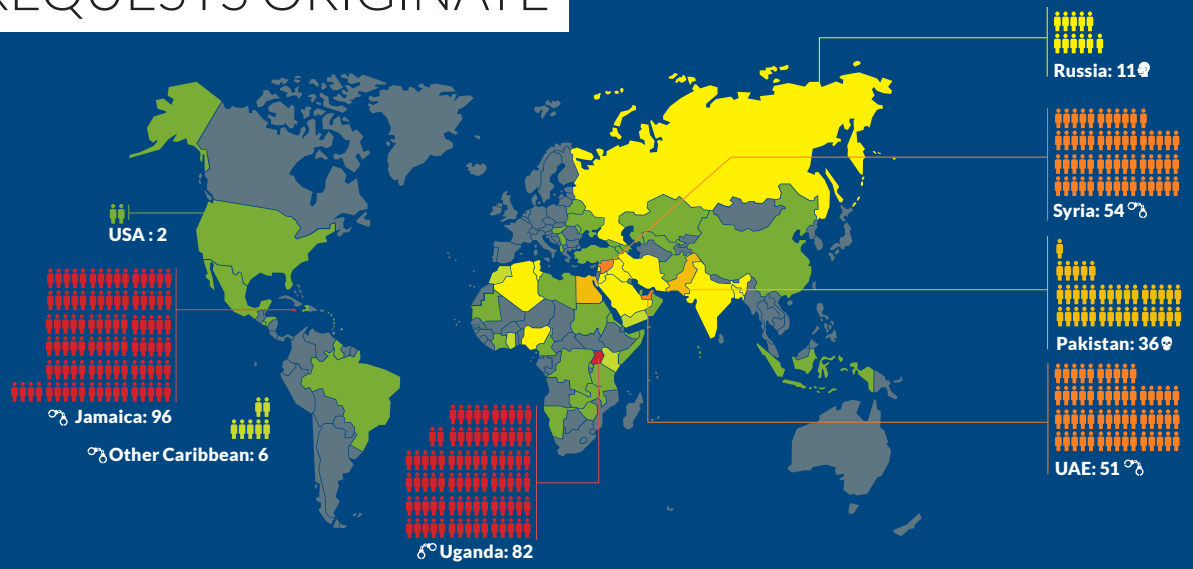
WHERE OUR REQUESTS ORIGINATE

Number of Requests

- 80-100
- 50-79
- 20-49
- 10-19
- 5-9
- 1-4

State Sponsored Discrimination

- Prison or Jail Time
- Death Penalty
- "Gay Propaganda" Laws in Place



"For you to be an organization that is really helping people get out of a country like Jamaica is amazing."

EMERGENCY TRAVEL:

TONI

FROM:

JAMAICA

As a self-described tomboy growing up in Jamaica, Toni stood out, but she didn't care.

"I was comfortable in my own skin."

Despite facing discrimination because she was a lesbian, she thrived: she owned a well-known sports bar and represented Jamaica as a cricket player.

But that all changed in December 2007.

Toni had had been receiving threatening text messages because of a relationship she had began with another woman. While driving home one evening, she was flanked by two bikers who wanted her to pull over. She then recalls someone screaming to hold her down followed by the sound of a gunshot.

"I felt like I was floating in the air and my whole life came in front of me."

After being shot, she spent the next six months recovering in the hospital. Now bound to a wheelchair, this traumatic experience had deep implications, but she still maintained her undeterred spirit. She competed on behalf of her country as a Paralympic athlete, even playing in the 2012 London Games. But when she was once again the victim of violence, she knew she needed to get out.

Toni and her girlfriend were able to get Canadian visas. However, even after selling everything they owned, they could not afford the necessary plane tickets to get out of Jamaica. That's when Rainbow Railroad was able to intervene.

They were introduced to Gareth Henry, a long-time volunteer, board member and consultant with Rainbow Railroad. Within a matter of days, he was able to arrange emergency travel funds to get them to safety.

Now living in Toronto, Toni says she often finds herself in disbelief of her new life.

"A lot of times, I look at my girlfriend and ask "Can you believe we're here?""

Toni is now working part-time and will be attending school in the fall, all without having to fear for her safety because of her sexuality.

She also maintains connections with others who have travelled along the Rainbow Railroad.

"Rainbow Railroad helped me arrive to a place...where I can live the life I'm dreaming of; the life I deserve."

PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP:

BASSEL

FROM:

SYRIA

Bassel had long suspected that he was being watched. Most LGBTQI people living in Egypt knew that being gay meant you could be subject to government and police surveillance. But one afternoon, his suspicions were confirmed.

"Some people who claimed to be members of the government, they entered my house and searched everything. My laptop, my phone, my books, even my clothes."

Originally from Syria, Bassel travelled to the relative safety of Egypt when his country's civil war made it impossible to continue working in Damascus. Once in Cairo, he discovered he was HIV-positive, another extreme taboo in Egypt.

Shortly after his apartment was raided, he met a friend who told him about Rainbow Railroad. Once connected to the organization, he was incorporated into the pilot private sponsorship program under the Rainbow Refugee Assistance Program.

This unique program spearheaed by organizations like Rainbow Refugee in Vancouver and Capital Rainbow Refuge in Ottawa allows organizations or groups to fundraise and sponsor a refugee to come to Canada. Under the leadership of Kate Lazier and the support of the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto, Rainbow Railroad launched a pilot sponsorship program in 2016 as a new means of helping LGBTQI individuals.

Four people were able to come to Canada in 2016 and Bassel was the first.

He landed in Toronto just as the city was ramping up to celebrate Pride month. The transition from his uneasy life in Syria to his new life in Canada might have paralyzed some but Bassel adapted to his new reality with aplomb, even marching alongside Prime Minster Trudeau in the Pride Parade. Although he admits that the experience left him star struck, he recalls speaking with him briefly.

"I wanted to thank him from me and from everyone that came through the initiative of Syrian refugees. Without him, I don't know what my situation would be."

VOLUNTEER:

HARAN

LEAD OF:

THE SOUTH CENTRAL ASIA TEAM

Haran Vijayanathan's job is centred around building trust. As Rainbow Railroad's volunteer lead of the South Central Asia team, he oversees all of the requests for help that come from individuals living in the region, including countries like India, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

"We tend to receive a lot of cases from male-identified individuals who are coming from traditionally homophobic countries with laws that can potentially punish people by death."

Haran understands this situation firsthand, having been born in Sri Lanka and now serving as the Executive Director of the Toronto-based Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention.

In his role at Rainbow Railroad, he volunteers his time, expertise and compassion to assist LGBTQI people looking to escape to safe refuge. A large part of that is breaking down misconceptions and building assurances among those reaching out for help.

Due to the pervasive homophobic climate of many of these countries, those seeking help are wary of connecting with local LGBTQI organizations. But connecting with these groups is an important step in the Rainbow Railroad process, so Haran must get these individuals to trust that they're in good hands.

"They trust us because we are an external organization," he says.

The next step is creating trusting bonds between these individuals and organizations in their countries.

The issues facing these individuals are deep-seated and far reaching. Many experience threats of physical violence, harassment, employment scarcity, mental health issues and even blackmail. The reason for this is steeped in social stigma but also has legislative ties.

"The old British penal code is still applied in many of the law books in South Central Asian countries, so they're fleeing that."

While Haran admits that the work can be taxing, he stays motivated by knowing that he's making a tangible difference.

FINANCIAL:

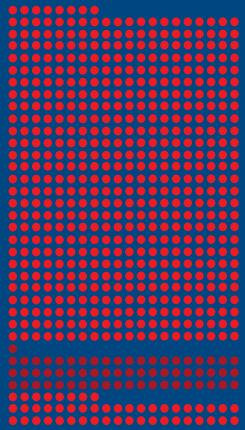
YOUR SUPPORT SAVE LIVES

Total Expenses
$657,040

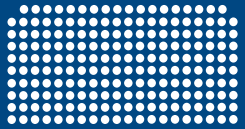
Programs $547,758

Fundraising $61,178

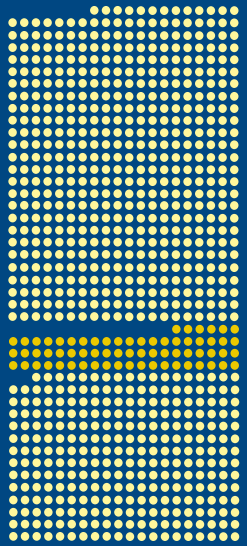
Operating & Administrative $48,104



Balance
$198,694



Total Revenue
$855,734



Grants: $513,082

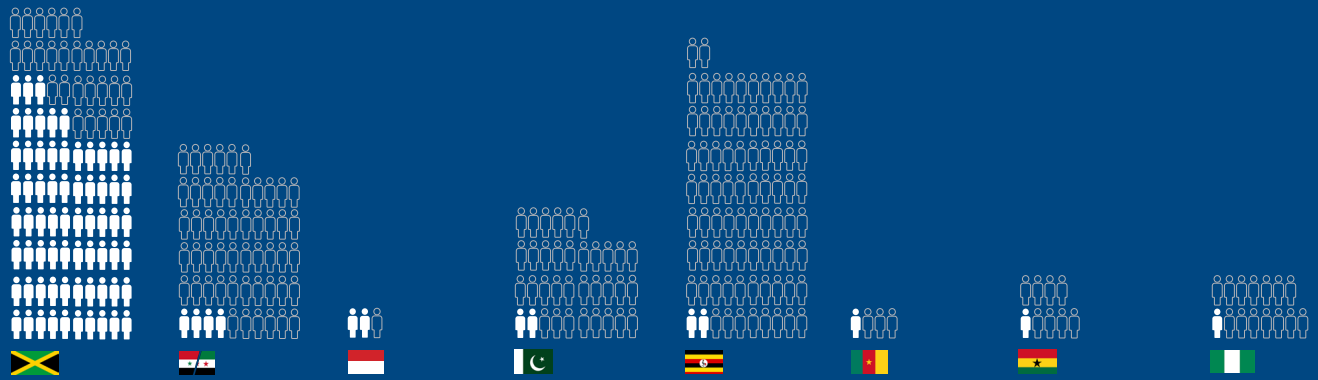
Fundraising Events: 65,495

Individual Donations: $277,157

For detailed financial statements visit www.cra-arc.gc.ca or email info@rainbowrailroad.ca

ARRIVALS THIS YEAR BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:

WHO WE HAVE HELPED



Jamaica: 96 Requests, 68 to Safety

Syria: 54 Requests, 4 to Safety

Indonesia: 3 Requests, 2 to Safety

Pakistan: 36 Requests, 2 to Safety

Uganda: 82 Requests, 2 to Safety

Cameroon: 4 Requests, 1 to Safety

Ghana: 9 Requests, 1 to Safety

Nigeria: 19 Requests, 1 to Safety

DONOR:

CARMYN

FOUNDER OF THE :

UPSIDE DOWN TREE

Carmyn Aleshka lives to turn organizations on their heads. As the founder of the Upside Down Tree, she helps small charities punch way above their weight by providing them mentorship, connections, business expertise and fundraising channels.

"Five years ago, we decided to start giving back to our community,"

Carmyn recalls of the moment she and her husband Greg Fettes resolved to start the foundation. In the time since, they've raised over $1 million for 12 charities, including Rainbow Railroad.

When she was first introduced to Rainbow Railroad she flew to Toronto to meet with members of the team—this hands-on approach is characteristic of her organization's philosophy and it paid off: right away, she knew she wanted to get involved.

"It sounded fantastic and it was directly impacting lives and so I said I'd host an event. I didn't realize it would be such a success."

Referring to that event as a success may be a slight understatement. A fabulous evening of performances, and a live art auction showcased the generosity of the Winnipeg community by bringing in $400,000 in donations for Rainbow Railroad.

She believes that people are galvanized to act when they can directly see how their contributions can help save lives.

In this case, attendees knew that a plane ticket for some LGBTQI people can mean the difference between life and death.

Carmyn understands that just as every organization has different needs, every individual looking to help has access to different resources. Her message? Every little bit helps.

"If you have one person that gives $5,000 or you have 100 people who give $50, you're going to get to the same place."

STRATEGIC PLAN:

BUILDING TO 2019

2016 was a year of rapid growth for Rainbow Railroad.

But guiding that growth was vision, purpose and strategy.

Over the past year, Rainbow Railroad began the process of developing our first strategic plan which was finalized in January 2017. This document provides guidelines for how the organization will scale and grow to adapt to changing global demands of LGBTQI peoples looking to escape persecution.

The strategic plan creates a pathway of growth to take the organization to 2019 and outlines how we will continue our trend of increasing the number of individuals we help to safety, year after year.

The plan also identifies three priorities for the coming years: deepen and broaden our current services; expand reach to new people with new tools; and build the capacity to meet the organization's needs.

WHO WE HAVE HELPED

23 People to Safety in **2014**

29 People to Safty in **2015**

81 People to Safety in **2016**

STRATEGIC PLAN:

THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1: Deepen
& Broaden Current Services

2: Expand
Reach To New People
With New Tools

3: Build
The Capacity to Meet the
Organization's Needs

WHO WE WILL HELP

100 People to Safety in **2017**

130 People to Safety in **2018**

170 People to Safety in **2019**

SUPPORTERS:

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US SAVE LIVES

$100,000+

THE UPSIDE DOWN TREE, INC

CARMEN ALESKHA AND GREG FETTES
JEFF FETTES AND CHRIS WALLACE

Carmyn Aleshka & Greg Fettes

$50,000 - $100,000

ELTON JOHN AIDS FOUNDATION

THE PRIDE AND REMEMBRANCE ASSOCIATION

$10,000 - $49,999

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF RAINBOW RAILROAD

ANDREW BECKERMAN

ROBERT BREWS

TICOT SOCIAL SOCIETY INC

YABU PUSHELBERG

SUPPORTERS:

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US SAVE LIVES

$5,000 - $9,999

PAUL BATTISTA MALCOLM GILMOUR HEART OF THE FLAG
K.M. HUNTER CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
MARTHA MCCAIN MUNICH REINSURANCE COMPANY
GLENN PUSHELBERG KAREN SOMERVILLE GEORGE YABU

$1,000 - $4,999

SACHIN AGGARWAL CONNIE AND DAVID ANDERSON JOHN ANDRU LAURIE ARRON TIMOTHY BANKS AND FARRELL MACDONALD MICHAEL AND KEITH BATTISTA GUY BEAUDIN LAWRENCE BENNETT RANDOLPH BOYD SHAUN BRODIE STEPHEN BROWN CAF AMERICA SUSAN A. CARLYLE CLAW CORP CENTAUR MOTORCYCLE CLUB OF VIRGINIA ROBERT CRAMER ED & MARGARET DACOSTA CRAIG DANIEL AND JIM TURNER RANDALL DAWSON AND RUDY TICZON ANDREW DELAWARE DAVID DUBROVSKY JOSEPH MICHAEL GAGLIANO ROMEO GAGNON DREW GLICK CALEB GOODMAN ANDREW HOOD LARRY HUGHSAM TARA KLECA BRIAN KOMONKO KARIM LADAK BRUCE LAWSON KATE LAZIER GREG LICHTI AND GARTH NORBRATEN DANNY MCCARTHY METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH IN CANADA DAN MISENER MOSAIC SALES SOLUTIONS MICHAEL MURPHY AND SHANE SMALL MUTTART FOUNDATION DAVID NASH LARRY NEVARD IAN NORDHEIMER OLTHUIS, KLEER, TOWNSHEND LLP J ANE PYPER ALEXANDER REDA JEFFERY RICHSTONE SALESFORCE.ORG RUPEN SEONI ROSS SLATER AND WAYNE SMITH JUSTIN TAYLOR STEPHEN TRAYNOR IAN TURNER WAITZER FAMILY FUND MARK WILSON NORA YOUNG

$250 - $999

BARRY ADAM LAURA ALPER ZACHARY ALLEN SCOTT ANDERSON BABYHEAD LLC SARA BANNERMAN MICHAEL BERTRAND MICHAEL BINETTI PAUL BRADLEY RODNEY R. BRANCH GREGG BROWN ROB BUCCI ASHLEY BURNS BYZANTIUM ROY CAIN MIKE CALLAGHAN ROY RYAN CARLSEN DAVID CARTER R. BRIAN CARTWRIGHT NELSON CARVALHO BRIAN CLARKIN JAMIESON COCHRANE EVAN COLLINS DAVID CRAWFORD KIP DAECHSEL MICHAEL DANIELS TANIS DARLING ANTHONY DEFILIPPIS TONY DIPEDE ANNA DIPEDE PATRICK FAHN KEVIN FARRIS PETER FEDECHKO FIRST UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP OF NANAIMO DAYNA FIRTH SUSAN FISCHER ANDREW FLEMING JEFF FRIEDMAN RICHARD FUNG GLOSSI ROBERT GIBSON ANDRE GOH AJ GOULDING JENNIFER GOOD TERRY GOODMUNDSON TOM GREENWOOD MICHAEL GRICE RICHARD GUISSO DAVID HALLMAN CHRISTOPHER HAMILTON DAVID HARLAND RANDAL HARRIS ELAINE HICK MICHAEL HIGGIN LINDA HODGES JILL HOLROYD DANIEL HOOD JOHN HUNT PETER HUSAR TOM HUTCHINSON ADRIAN ISHAK STEVEN IATANVILLE AND SENG LIEW JOE JACKMAN HERBERT JAHN GREG JOHNS STEPHEN JOHNSON PATRICK JOHNSTON AND RONALD MENCHETTI PHILIP JUNEK JUSTIN KEDDY MORGANA KELLYTHORNE DROR KOLTIN PAUL KRIEGEL GEOFF LAWRENCE DENIS LEBLANC PETER LITHERLAND MICHAEL LOADER FRANK LOWERY PATRICK LOWNEY THAI LUU RICHARD LYLE PETER LYONS RAPHAEL MACIAS STEVE MACKINNON EVELINE MAEDEL ROBERT MAISEY AND JEAN-MARC GERVAIS MARGARET'S JOY FUND BRUCE MARTIN TIM MCCASKELL MARGOT MEIJER ULRICH MENZEFRICKE JAMES MITCHELL DAVID MOORE WILLIAM MOUNSTEPHEN IAN MUGGRIDGE KIERAN MULROY MARTA MUSSACALECA DAVID NASH RICK NATHANSON KATHERINE NEFF TUAN PHUOC NGUYEN GAIL NESTEL LEONARD NICHOLSON PAUL NOBLE GLENN NUOTIO AND NIALL O'DEA OASIS AQUALOUNGE KATIE O'DONOVAN MARK O'NEILL ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION ALVIN POON TAO QIU JAMES QUANDT AXEL RAMOS MARK ROBERTSON GARY ROGERS ANN ROSENFIELD PHILIP ROUSE CHRISTOPHER ROWLINSON ROBERT RUGGIERO JAMES SARGANT MARK SCHAAN CHUNG-CHIEH SHAN CHRISTOPHER SHORT NICHOLAS SKINNER STEVEN SMALL ADAM SOFEN MARTIN STERLING CRAIG STUMPF-ALLEN DALE STURGES RAMESH SUKHNANDAN COLIN SUYS MICHAEL SWEENEY ERIC TANG AND JAMES MILLER FEVZI TEMUR DAVID TAMAYA AND JOSEPH MUNESHWAR ROBERT THOMAS ERIC THOMSON TOTALLY NAKED TORONTO BARRY TRENTHAM AND LAMBERT BOENDERS MARY VANDER WOUDE VANIER CENTRE FOR WOMEN JUSTIN VARNEY JENNIFER VELLA BRIAN WALSH CHARLENE WISEMAN WILLIAM WOOLVERTON ALEXANDER WU DARREL ZEHR

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Bobby Hrehoruk, Manager of Development and Community Engagement
Martha Singh Jennings, Manager of Programs

Contract Staff
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Ryan Esquivel, Social Media Specialist
Jay Ginsherman, Graphic Designer
Gareth Henry, Senior Case Consultant, Caribbean
Miles Kenyon, Media and Communications Officer

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Larry Hughsam, Treasurer
Ann Rosenfield, Secretary

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Special Acknowledgments

Brian Cartwright, Board Member, 2016
Joel Cohen, AFRR Board Member, 2016
Ken Gibson, Interim Executive Director, 2016
Gareth Henry, Board Member (to Feb 2017)
Yulanda Lui, Summer Intern, 2016
Peter Marisette, Manager of Operations (to May 2017)
Justin Taylor, Outgoing Executive Director, 2016

Thank You

Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention
Capital Rainbow Refuge
Foundation of Hope
International Refugee Assistance Project
Jamaica Forum for Lesbian, All-sexuals and Gays
Karam Ladak
LGBT Asylum Support Network
Long Mangalji LLP
Metropolitan Community Church Toronto
Rainbow Refugee
Randy Dawson
The 519

...and thank you all of the many volunteers who helped last year!

RAINBOW RAILROAD

rainbowrailroad.ca

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827142530RR0001