

REFERENCE GUIDE

The role of Community Advocacy Networks in addressing gender-based violence against non-status, refugee and immigrant women across Canada

WHAT CAN
WE DO
TOGETHER?

 Women and Gender
Equality Canada Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



Barbra Schlifer
Commemorative Clinic
Freedom From Violence.



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The role of Community Advocacy Networks in addressing gender-based violence against non-status, refugee and immigrant women across Canada *WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER?*

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1. About our National Project

Building Leadership Capacity to Address GBV against non-status, refugee and immigrant women across Canada

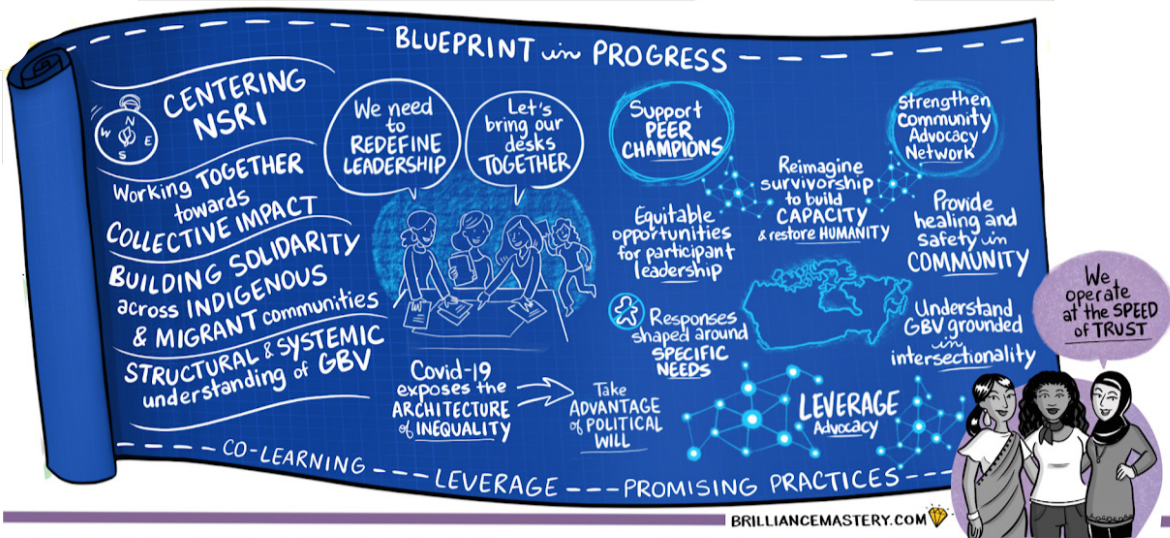
The Building Leadership Capacity Project is a five year project funded by Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) led by the OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants in partnership with civil society organizations working across not-for-profit, education, and grassroots community-based sectors to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Edmonton, Fredericton, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver. Across the regions, we have identified and recruited Regional Partners and non-status, refugee and immigrant women survivors, as Peer Champions, who we work collaboratively with to develop and implement this project.

The primary objective of this project is to build the leadership capacity of non-status, refugee and immigrant (NSRI) women, as Peer Champions, to shape and inform policies and services addressing GBV.

We recognize that NSRI women constitute a diverse group with intersecting identities across race, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, gender identity, ability, etc. At the same time, there are structural barriers that NSRI women have in common, which impact their access to safety, healing, and freedom from GBV. Our approach engages NSRI women as leaders in developing solutions to GBV – solutions that address structural barriers while accounting for the diversity of NSRI women's experiences and communities.

Building a Blueprint

Another aim of this project is to promote knowledge exchange and the sharing of promising practices that support NSRI survivors across regions at annual national meetings. The lessons learned and knowledge exchanged across regions will serve to build a blueprint to strengthen community capacity to address GBV against NSRI across Canada, and specifically support NSRI survivors. This blueprint is intended to capture the process of implementing survivor-led and community based practices while highlighting regional adaptations and opportunities to learn from each other (see image on the next page from our Blueprint in Progress Visual, 2020)



2. Our Project Value Frameworks

Our work is survivor-centered and survivor-led, focused on strategies and practices that support those who have experienced GBV to survive, heal, and take action in advocacy that aims to prevent, and end GBV across Canada.

We are working towards a survivor-led model that centers the voices and experiences of NSRI survivors and enables reflection on the complex power dynamics at the individual, institutional, structural and social level that shape those experiences.

We believe that change must occur at multiple levels. Institutional, interpersonal, policy, and cultural transformation are all needed. We are pursuing goals and strategies that represent the best and highest use of our collective engagement through community based advocacy approaches.

We do not believe that GBV against NSRI communities is inseparable from other forms of structural and systemic violence. We take a feminist intersectional approach to Gender-Based Violence that recognizes contexts of settler colonialism, white supremacy and anti-Indigenous, anti-black racism in Canada. When we use the term 'GBV,' we see it as part of this complex spectrum. We also recognize that GBV takes place in ways that intersect with race, immigration status, disability, gender identity/sexual orientation and other identities that impact access to support and healing.

We are working towards building a national network that centres locally-driven analyses and solutions. We draw from community-rooted, culturally-responsive, trauma-informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive approaches. We aim to foster opportunities to adapt and change according to collective needs.

3. About this Reference Guide

This Reference Guide serves as a tool to support the work of Community Advocacy Networks as part of the Building Leadership Capacity to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV) against NSRI women across Canada project (also referred to as “Building Leadership Capacity” project).

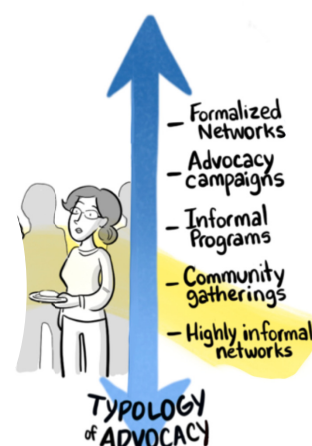
Inside, you will find information about the role and background of Community Advocacy Networks in addressing GBV, where the idea of Community Advocacy Networks comes from, ways to help Community Advocacy Network grow, and specific tools, templates and resources that can be helpful for those who engage and participate in our national project.

This reference guide is a living document created and inspired by the legacy of community-based advocacy work across Canada, and specifically the Community Advocacy Network we model after - Rights of Non-Status Women Network and Peer Champions Initiatives.

The important role of advocacy in addressing GBV against NSRI women across Canada

In 2019, during our Building Leadership Capacity project design and research we learned about the important advocacy work that has long been supporting to address GBV against NSRI women. We found that service providers are uniquely positioned to engage in public policy advocacy and to raise awareness on issues related to GBV and in particular the intersections of immigration. It is critical to acknowledge the relevant ways in which advocacy happens through a ‘typology’ of different channels.

Our typology of advocacy identifies various ways in which advocacy to support and address the issue of GBV against NSRI communities is being implemented. For example, planning tables, provincial councils, working groups, committees, boards and umbrella groups. These advocacy spaces and approaches serve as an opportunity for service providers, community partners and organizations that support NSRI women to network and increase connections, increase their practical knowledge and return to their agencies or line of work with new tools, knowledge and resources.



Although our research identified different forms of advocacy well underway, oftentimes, the integration of NSRI survivors directly in this work is less active or visible. In response, our project proposes Community Advocacy Networks to reimagine advocacy strategies to integrate and create meaningful opportunities for NSRI survivors to participate and lead initiatives to address GBV. Community Advocacy Networks aim to build a bridge to include NSRI survivors voices and forefront the needs of NSRI survivors, as a means to share information strategically, help create awareness, strengthen existing community relationships and partnerships and do work that is deeply informed by lived experiences of NSRI women. In the pages that we follow, we describe the Community Advocacy Network and Peer Champion model and recommendations for bringing these practices to life!

4. Peer Champion and Community Advocacy Network Model

To build the leadership capacity of non-status, refugee and immigrant women (NSRI), our project combines two promising practices:

Peer Champion Network

A Peer Champions program that uses popular education to build *survivor-led leadership* capacity and foster connections between and among non-status, refugee and immigrant women

A Community Advocacy Network

Community Advocacy Networks (CAN) establishes grassroots networks among peer champions, NSRI survivors from the community, service providers, community advocates, and the organizations that support NSRI survivors. CANs emphasize meaningful engagement of Peer Champions and NSRI survivors in the broader community in order to build community capacity to develop survivor-led solutions to address GBV.

Peer Champion Network Model

- Peer Champions recruited for this project identify with NSRI communities and are survivors of GBV. We believe that NSRI survivors' voices should be treated as valuable and core to the development and solution around addressing GBV.
- Peer champions are deeply informed by their lived experiences, they have firsthand experience gathering information, navigating systems, creating peer support networks and strategizing ways to stay safe. We aim to honour this lived experience and create a safe space for Peer Champions to lead as survivor-advocates.
- Peer Champions initiatives feature creating and leading spaces in which fostering relationships and connections with NSRI survivors is centred. This enables a pathway to bring NSRI survivors into conversations around addressing GBV.

Reflecting on the label of “survivor”: our project had the privilege to speak directly to non-status, refugee and immigrant (NSRI) women to include their thoughts and feedback around the project.

One of the conversations was around the label ‘survivor’. NSRI participants in these conversations felt that being labelled a survivor was too limiting. Discussions lead to the idea of “survivorship” as a process, not a label, identity, or a one time thing.

Check out the Research Journey Video from our Roundtable Series 2020 for more reflections on our conversations with NSRI women:

 <https://youtu.be/D8IUcd2Ek2g>

Peer Champion focused training

Peer Champions participate in monthly training and sessions as a national peer champion network. Training is focused on building leadership capacity and includes trauma informed approaches, anti-racism and anti-oppression approaches, asset mapping, community building activities, grant writing exercises, mindfulness and arts-based healing for self and to integrate in programs.

Peer Champion focused activities

Peer Champions host events and build relationships with local NSRI women in their communities, through arts-based workshops and events. These events take place two times a year and are organized according to the needs and availability of regional Peer Champions, with the support of the Peer Champion Coordinator (OCASI) and Regional Partners.

How do we ensure that Peer Champions are supported in their leadership role?

- We seek to create a space that welcomes and holds the experiences of people at any point along their journey of being a survivor, as well as those who may not necessarily self-identify as such, but who, by nature of their personal experiences, deeply associate with the impacts of survivorhood.
- Our project includes a Peer Champion Coordinator who is responsible for the training, coordination and organization of Peer Champion initiatives. The Project Coordinator plays an ongoing role in supporting Peer Champions.
- Regional Partners and Community Advocacy Networks strengthen the relationship between Peer Champions and the broader community supporting equitable opportunities where Peer Champions have the platform to participate to shape and influence the local and national conversations on addressing GBV.

- To support Peer Champions in their leadership role and initiatives, regional partners will develop a relationship with Peer Champions to ensure that they are well supported as individuals in this project, well connected to local supports and referrals, and have access to resources, and opportunities for training for their leadership growth on an ongoing basis.
- In addition, regional partners provide specific support for Peer Champion-led events or initiatives. This includes (but is not limited to):
 - providing a platform
 - promoting Peer Champion events
 - meeting spaces
 - interpretation
 - organizing staff or organizational support for creating trauma-informed, barrier-free community spaces.



Bringing together the Peer Champion and Community Advocacy Network (PEER-CAN) model

While solutions to addressing GBV should be led by Peer Champions — those who identify with NSRI communities and are survivors of GBV — an effective approach must also engage with multiple stakeholders and an infrastructure from which to advocate via Community Advocacy Networks.

Community Advocacy Networks bring together Peer Champions, service providers, community advocates, NSRI survivors from the community and the organizations that support NSRI communities in order to illuminate the connections, gaps and future directions of addressing GBV.

In the next section we describe Community Advocacy Networks and outline recommendations to bring these networks and activities to life!

Community Advocacy Network Model

Community Advocacy Networks (CANs) build community capacity through establishing new links, leveraging existing connections, and fostering more equitable partnerships and relationships between peer champions, NSRI survivors from the community, service providers, community advocates, and the organizations that support NSRI survivors.

- Community Advocacy Networks aim to foster equitable partnerships that can help service providers and organizations that support NSRI survivors engage in practices that are deeply informed by NSRI women's lived experiences and perspectives. Community Advocacy Networks can help transform and introduce alternative, grassroots practices to provide support and healing in addressing GBV against NSRI communities.
- Community Advocacy Networks multiply opportunities for dialogue and exchange, making resources available to more community members. Community Advocacy Networks also extend support and resources to NSRI women who participate in CAN activities and events. CANs are in a unique position to be responsive and share referral and resource information directly with community members.

A note about advocacy

What makes the work of CANs unique is their meaningful engagement of NSRI women and broader outreach of NSRI survivors in our activities, which ultimately expands perspectives and includes multiple lived-experiences to inform the work and solutions to address GBV.

What is novel about a Community Advocacy Network is that it shares information strategically to help create awareness, strengthen community relationships and partnerships and do work that is deeply informed by lived experiences of NSRI women.

This project aims to help regions develop their own advocacy strategies by defining specific issues and developing plans to implement and improve the quality of advocacy in their regions.

Check out our publications and resources, including our Research Journey report:



<https://ocasi.org/building-leadership-capacity-address-gender-based-violence-against-non-status-refugee-and-immigrant>

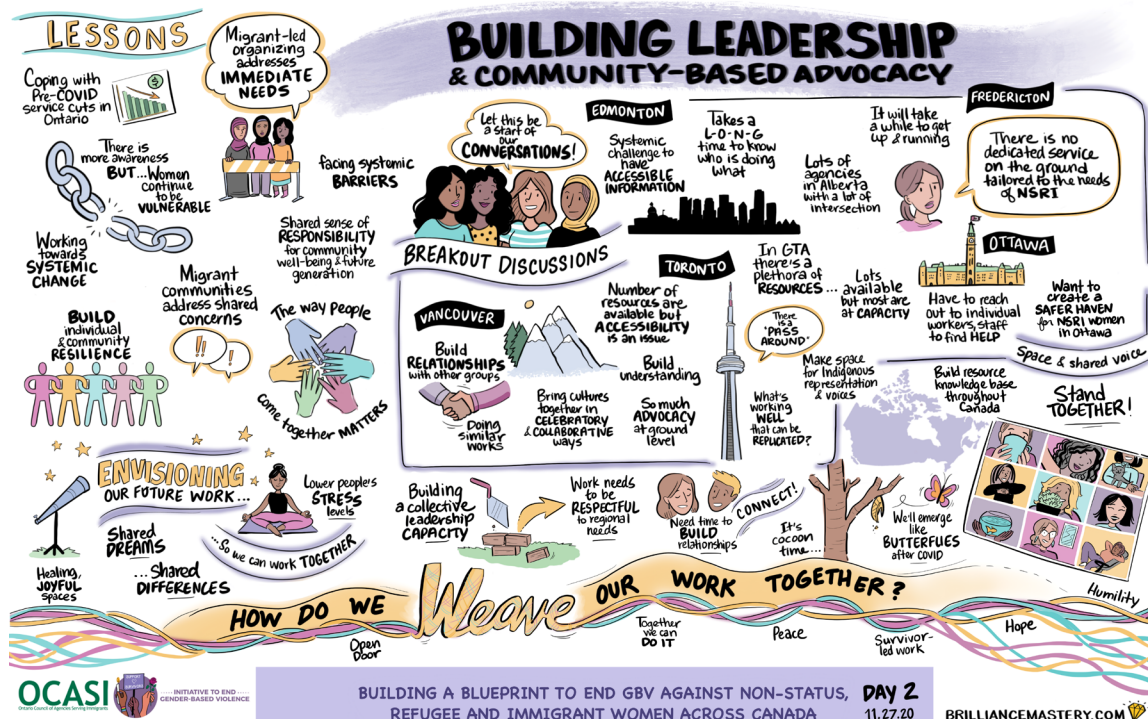
Reflection: “Relationship-building is one of the most important items in a community organizer’s toolbox. Power, for an organizer, is built not through domination, but through fostering relational trust amongst an ever-growing pool of committed and passionate individuals. Relationships are the glue that hold communities together and more importantly make them capable of creating long-term plans and taking decisive actions.”

👉 **JOIN for JUSTICE**

Here is an example of the relationship building and regional exchange that took place at our first Annual Conference in 2020 titled: “Building a Blueprint to address GBV against non-status, refugee and immigrant women across Canada”

Check out more from our Annual Conferences and knowledge exchanges:

👉 <https://ocasi.org/building-leadership-capacity-address-gender-based-violence-against-non-status-refugee-and-immigrant>



5. Recommendations for implementing Community Advocacy Networks

1. *Promote the active participation of Peer Champions and NSRI survivors in meaningful ways.*

It is important that Peer Champions and NSRI survivors are leading the activities of the CAN. Each existing or restored CAN network will have its own plans or schedules, and each region will self-determine its activities. However it is essential that the CAN activities promote the active and meaningful participation of NSRI survivors.

To help support and encourage that integration of CAN activities across existing or restored networks in ways that actively involve survivors, we recommend:

- Peer Champions and Regional Partners act as co-leaders to support and integrate CAN related activities.
- Consider creating a “working group” where Peer Champions and Regional Partners can identify their own priorities responsive to local needs. Needs can be identified in an annual planning and evaluation exercise (“CAN plan”).
- Ensure Peer Champions have the support they need. There are opportunities to receive training and support from the OCASI in core areas of GBA+ as well as trauma-informed and culturally-safe approaches to community-based work.



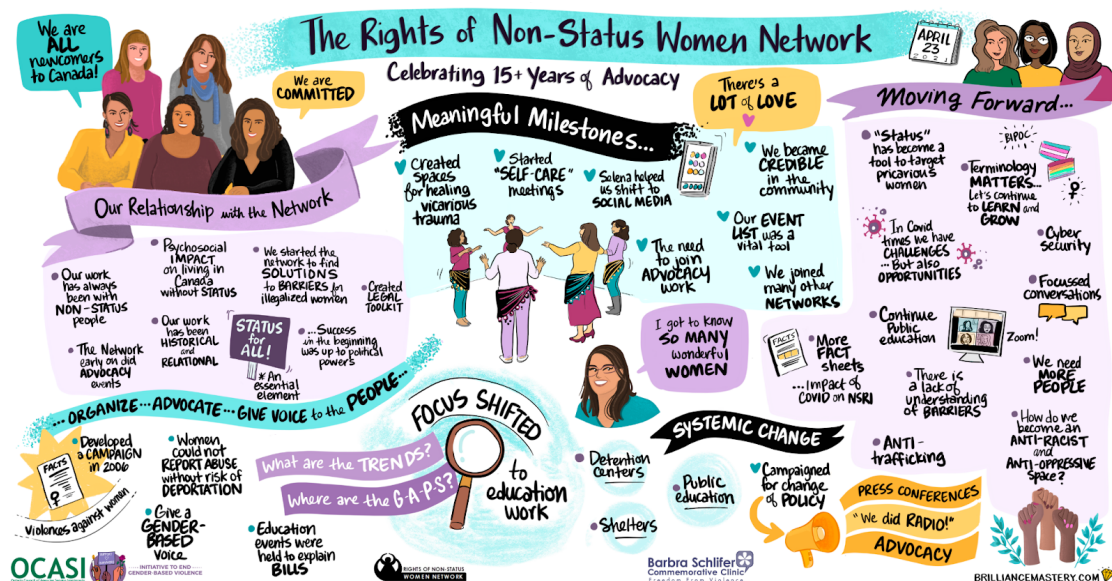
2. Build a Community Advocacy Network in your region by leveraging existing networks

There is already work underway across regions to support NSRI women! How can we use our existing networks to also integrate survivor leadership which centers survivors and supports them to embrace their strength and voice to bring about change? These networks may be research, issue, or policy focused. We suggest:

- Identify an existing network, committee or working group in your region, wherein you or your organization may play a role as an existing partner, supporter, leader or member, that prioritizes the needs related to addressing GBV against NSRI communities in your region.
- Restore an existing network, committee or working group in your region, wherein you or your organization may play a role as an existing partner, supporter, leader or member, that may have reduced its activity. Why not reconnect with the group by way of the project partnership and through prioritizing needs related to addressing GBV against NSRI communities in your region?

Here is an example of a network, The Rights of Non-Status Women Network, who has been organizing and advocating for non-status women and their families in Toronto for 15+ years.

➡ For more information, check out the RNSWN: <https://rnsw.n.wordpress.com/>



6. Community Advocacy Networks Training and Workshops

In the section that follows we outline what makes Community Advocacy Networks more about the activities and less about the ways groups are organized.

Even though the work is already happening across regions, it takes the leadership and championing of the activities by Peer Champions and Regional Partners to advance the goals of this project!

Community Advocacy Network Activities

When we refer to Community Advocacy Networks, we are referring not only to an existing group or network across regions that will champion this work, but specifically the types of activities they lead.

While each region will self-determine its CAN activities, we anticipate that each region will organize two activities each year such as training forums, art-based healing, or other activities. Below we outline key features of those activities:

Key features of Community Advocacy Network Activities

Objectives of Community Advocacy Network Events and Workshops:

At the core of the event and workshops is relationship building and knowledge exchange! For example, it could include one aspect or all of the following:

- Relationship building and connecting
- Introducing the PEER-CAN Project Model
- Hearing from people across communities
- Exchanging knowledge related to healing and support for GBV against NSRI women

✓ *Relationship building and connecting:*

"If leadership is about relationships, and organizing is about relationships then the way in which we relate and develop relationships is essential to this project and we operate at the speed of trust!"

✓ *Introducing the Peer Champion - Community Advocacy Network Model:*

The reports, visual summaries and recordings from this project can serve as both a promotional tool and organizing tool for your sessions.

(Continued, Key features of Community Advocacy Network Activities)

✓ *Hearing from people across communities:*

Sharing about the project focus: supporting NSRI communities across Canada can be a conversation starter and encourage others to discuss what has been accomplished in your regions and what you see next for your regions! Speaking from experiences as service providers and community advocates can identify and expand our understanding of the unique challenges and needs of NSRI communities. It can also help the work organize around the complex ways GBV manifests in NSRI communities

✓ *Knowledge Exchange:*

This is how the Rights of Non Status Women Network describes the objectives and organization of a knowledge exchange event:

"The Rights of Non Status Women Network has one speaker open that gives a general analysis, how are we thinking about this issue. Then we have the nuts and bolts person - what does this mean for your clients? The third speaker becomes the reimagining person -what models have worked in the past. If there is time, we can brainstorm."

The OCASI Team and regional CANs will be organizing annual national conferences as a platform for knowledge exchange across regions. Annual national conferences are platforms where peer champions, NSRI survivors from the community, service providers, community advocates, and the organizations that support NSRI survivors have the opportunity to come together to share their experience and learnings with each other.

In addition to the annual conference, regional CANs are encouraged to organize knowledge exchange activities as a way to promote and engage NSRI survivors, community advocates, and organizations.

Overview of Peer Champion-Regional Partner Workshops

Workshop sessions for peer champions and regional partners aim to provide support, planning and dialogue around Peer Champion initiatives and Community Advocacy Network activities.

The combined Peer Champions and Regional Partners workshops aim to *meet on a quarterly basis* to focus on the following key learnings and opportunities:

- Increase co-leadership capacity among Peer Champions and Regional Partners to establish, leverage and facilitate as co-leaders of regional CANs
- Improve the connections between regional partners and peer champions locally and nationally
- Serve as knowledge exchange and a supportive planning, implementation work space for regional CAN planning
- Provide and lead training for CAN working group members (e.g. how to establish terms of reference, GBA+, trauma-informed culturally-safe programs, how to use various evaluation tools)
- As CAN “working groups” are established across the duration of the project, the schedule and focus of annual Peer-Partner workshops can adapt to include more working group members!

7. Conclusion

This reference guide provides an outline for the collaborative work of Peer Champions and Regional Partners co-leading Community Advocacy Networks as a building block in addressing GBV against non-status, refugee and immigrant communities.

This reference guide is a starting point and will continue to be adapted by the experiences of all those who are active and engage in this project's activities. We still have a lot to learn, but we hope that this guide can serve as a tool to help us build and bridge our work to address and respond to GBV against NSRI women <https://ocasi.org/building-leadership-capacity-address-gender-based-violence-against-non-status-refugee-and-immigrant>.

8. Resources, Tools and Templates Online

For more resources and information visit our project website:



<https://ocasi.org/building-leadership-capacity-address-gender-based-violence-against-non-status-refugee-and-immigrant>

GET INVOLVED!



We are a growing network of service providers, organizational leaders, community advocates and academic researchers working together on a national project focused on **Building Leadership Capacity to address Gender-Based Violence against non-status, refugee and immigrant women across Canada.**

Lead by OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants in partnership with organizations across Canada, this project builds on decades of community-based advocacy efforts and initiatives to address GBV within and against immigrant and refugee communities in Ontario.

Our Community Advocacy Networks organize to:

- Build a strong national network among service providers, organizational leaders, community members, advocates and non-status, refugee and immigrant women to strengthen our ongoing work addressing GBV against immigrant women.
- Call attention to the urgent and unique issues of GBV against non-status, refugee and immigrant women across Canada.
- Advocate for and develop alternative responses to addressing GBV against NSRI women grounded in survivor-led and community-based advocacy models.
- Develop partnerships with groups, organizations and communities to expand our leadership capacity and understanding of GBV against racialized NSRI women.
- Support equitable opportunities for non-status, refugee and immigrant women survivors of GBV to collaborate and integrate their perspectives towards addressing GBV.

For an example of an existing Community Advocacy Network this project models after, please visit the Rights of Non-Status Women Network: <https://rnswn.wordpress.com/>

Interested and want to learn more about our project?

Check out our project website for recordings from our summer roundtable series, where we hear from longtime advocates, community organizers and organizational leaders around community-based advocacy and survivor-led work happening across Canada.

➡ <https://ocasi.org/building-leadership-capacity-address-gender-based-violence-against-non-status-refugee-and-immigrant>

For more information email buildingleadership@ocasi.org

9. General information about yearly activities and budget

Overview of Peer Champion-Regional Partner Workshops

We anticipate 4 PEER-Regional Partner trainings a year, which will coincide with key activities of the project - establishing CANS, Peer Champion events, CAN events/training, National Conference knowledge exchange - to support in this planning, implementation and evaluation phase* schedule to be determined by OCASI.

CAN planning and activities is an ongoing process that would require collaboration between Peer champions and regional partners. It is understood that Peer champions, Regional partners and OCASI might meet outside of the four sessions outlined below for CAN planning and activities.

Relationship Building Workshop and Leadership Training Workshop (Winter January)

We know the importance of relationship building, but do we know the importance of this relationship for building interventions and initiatives to address GBV against NSRI women? The work is multi-level - it happens between the peer champions, between the national level, at the regional level, and it's important to understand these different relationships as not a means.

What makes this relationship between PEER and Regional Partners different? These workshops intended to strengthen the community working relationship of Peer Champion and Regional Partners across the regions. They also offer opportunities to review key approaches in our project work: trauma informed, anti-racist, anti-oppression, survivor centered etc.

Annual CAN Planning Workshop

To integrate our CAN approach and goals across Canada and support the collaborative approach between Peer Champions and Regional Partner we host an annual CAN planning workshop. The workshop allows us to build an annual plan of activities for each CAN, that considers the capacity and unique contexts of each region. This workshop provides opportunities for focused planning and exchange of ideas/approaches among CANS from each region in the project.



Workshop #3: Annual Conference Planning session (Fall)

Peer champions, regional partners, and the OCASI GBV team will work together to prepare for the annual conference. This planning session is an opportunity for CANs to practice organizing forums that are trauma-informed, culturally-safe, inclusive, and accessible for the broader NSRI survivors community and those that support them.

- Adapting our events and workshops to a virtual space! While COVID-19 requires us to maintain physical distancing, we can continue to build and strengthen our social and supportive relationships with survivors using online platforms.

Time for an activity: “brainstorm not time to analyze and judge ideas, but just to share and see what we can come up with:”

Workshop #4: Annual Conference - Building the Blueprint (Early Winter)

The annual conferences are a 2-day event jointly facilitated by Peer champions, regional partners, and the OCASI GBV team. The annual conference is intended to foster and improve connections between NSRI women, service providers, organizations that support them across Canada. This is an opportunity to share knowledge and acquire a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of NSRI women.

Budget for Community Advocacy Network events

We need to have access to funds to host and do our work in meaningful ways.
Consider the work that is being done by your regional CANs in partnership with OCASI.

Co-chairs for each Community Advocacy Network are responsible for managing the funds allocated for Community Advocacy Network events and workshop meetings.

Budgets for CAN events and workshops should be planned and discussed with the OCASI team.

Eligible expense include:

- Honoraria for NSRI participation in CAN activities = approx. 1000 per CAN (transportation, childcare)
- Professional services = approx. 1500 per CAN
Accessibility for events and workshop meetings; arts-based facilitation services; notetakers/visual scribes; translation services
- Facilities = approx. 250 per CAN
Space rental; catering for activities

REFERENCE GUIDE

WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER?

The Role of Community Advocacy Networks (CAN) in Addressing Gender-based Violence (GBV) in Non-Status, Refugee and Immigrant Women (NSRI)

 <https://ocasi.org/building-leadership-capacity-address-gender-based-violence-against-non-status-refugee-and-immigrant>

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NEW BRUNSWICK
MULTICULTURAL
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sace
Sexual Assault Centre
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**MIGRANT
MOTHERS
PROJECT**

