

August 2021



Annual Elections

RAIN Subcommittee Updates



Communications and Outreach

The Communications and Outreach Subcommittee has had a busy few months giving our 'Intro to RAIN' presentation at agencies throughout Washington State. Along with our outreach efforts, we continue to work on updating RAIN's communication products and look to our members to contribute new ideas on how best to bring folks into RAIN and to share the great work going on to support LGBTQ+ staff and the customers we serve.

For our July meeting we welcomed Stella Keating, the first transgender teen to testify in front of the United States Senate, to come speak at our RAIN General Membership meeting.

Last but not least, we welcomed our new committee co-chair, Natasha Holt. Natasha (she/her) has been with the state for 5 years and is dedicated to being a part of positive change.

Best Practices


- Partnering with LLN to put on a panel exploring gender and racial identities.
- Wrapping up data analysis from the Best Practices survey.
- Working on a long term sustainability plan to provide trainings.

Safe Place

Over the course of the last several months, the Safe Place Subcommittee has helped establish a Safe Place program site at the Tumwater Department of Retirement Systems building, and completed a RAIN Safe Places survey with 197 participants.

The survey data has been used for program planning, as we continue to develop an inclusive Safe Place WA community resources packet/list to complement the 16-11 Directive proviso of establishing public-facing state offices as Safe Places where people can connect with emergency and related support services.

We are also in the process of providing guidance on an addendum to the 16-11 directive to include maintaining the existing Safe Place program as a partnership with law enforcement, and developing additional crisis intervention, de-escalation response, and survivor advocacy service resource opportunities. If you're interested in joining this subcommittee, we meet after the RAIN General Membership meetings.



General Membership meetings are open to **all** state employees.


Monthly: Third Thursdays

2:00-4:00 pm

Committee work 4:00-5:00 pm

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What's the Buzz on Enbies (Non-Binary People)?

by Marianne Ozmun-Wells (she/they), DSHS

Around the second week of July every year since 2012, some members of the LGBTQ+ community observe Non-Binary Awareness week with [International Non-Binary People's Day](#) occurring on July 14.

At the time of the Stonewall Uprising, there were a handful of terms used in mixed company to describe the fabulous variety of LGBTQ+ humans, often in a pejorative way. Most of our language was coded, insider speak, as a means of identifying one another and trying to stay safe.

Words like “transgender” and “gender spectrum” and even “bisexual” weren’t all that popular in mainstream vernacular, if at all. The term, “non-binary” is a relatively new term and **some** people use the abbreviated term “enby” or plural “enbies” to describe themselves or others who identify as non-binary.

Western European influence, and more specifically, North American Culture seems relatively fixed in a binary gender construct.

Binary simply means there are two and only two. In terms of gender, that historical construct means male or female. Those two choices are evidenced by nearly every “fill in the blank” form that most of us have encountered throughout our lifetime.



In fact, many of us were raised to believe that two genders and only two genders are the only true, natural, and normal distinctions.

It is interesting to note, that much of the rest of the world was never locked into this binary system before European colonization. Just a few of the cultures which recognize genders outside of the binary include:

- On the Polynesian island of Samoa, near Fiji, fa’afafines and fa’afatamas are widely regarded as third and fourth genders, alongside male and female. These terms translate to “in the manner of a man” and “in the manner of a woman”.

- In Oaxaca, Mexico, a third gender called “Muxe” are those who were typically assigned male at birth but who identify as female or fluid.
- Some regions of Indonesia recognize three sexes, male, female, and intersex, and five genders: men, women, calabai, calalai, and bissu. Calabai are biological males who embody a feminine gender identity. Calalai are biological females who embody a male gender identity. Bissu are considered a “transcendent gender,” either encompassing all genders or none at all. The bissu serve ritual roles in Bugi culture and are sometimes equated with priests.

So the whole idea of a gender binary is a rather limiting view of gender. Some of us who recognize that we do not fit the gender assigned at birth may engage in either social or physical actions to affirm who we know ourselves to be and might identify as transgender. Others are somewhere else on the spectrum.

Non-binary means that neither of those “either/or” checkboxes are accurate or expansive enough for who we know ourselves to be. Many of the terms we used back in the day might now find room to breathe in the non-binary. Terms like “butch,” “gender outlaw,” and “queen” may have been coded language within the LGBTQ+ community to identify both shared identities and proclivities, but as we have become more visible and vocal, our language has become less insider speak and more precise.

Non-binary in the simplest sense of the word means neither this nor that. Turns out some non-binary people have no desire to change their names or appearance. Some non-binary people who were assigned female at birth may like makeup and dresses at least part of the time. Some non-binary people who were assigned male at birth may like makeup and dresses at least part of the time as well. Some non-binary people also identify as transgender while others do not.

Non-binary is an umbrella term that can feel like different things to different people, some of those are:

- Feeling as if neither male nor female identity fit completely or always.
- Feeling as if both male and female identities fit at least part of the time.
- Feeling as if no current gender describes a person’s deeply held sense of self.
- Feeling as if gender is not fixed but is fluid.
- Feeling as if the “rules” around gender are arbitrary and experience a sense of self that does not conform to social gender norms.

Some other words that people might use to describe a sense of self which cannot be crammed into that binary might be:

- Agender
- Bi-gender
- Gender creative
- Gender fluid
- Gender independent
- Gender nonconforming
- Gender queer

All of these are about who we are and not about whom we love. Sexual orientation is another aspect of a person’s sense of self that is not tied to gender. Non-binary people can be lesbian or gay or asexual or experience any other sexual or romantic orientation.

Here’s the thing about evolution...everything we know to be true about a species and habitat one day can change rapidly with new discoveries and new declarations.

Each one of us gets to discover the truth of our own identities, in this moment. Tomorrow new discoveries may lead to still other declarations and we will find new words to describe the ever-expanding fabulousness of our humanness.





Virtual Performances Coming Back In Person


by Ashly McBunch (they/them), COM

The Pacific Northwest is opening back up with a lot of things to do this summer and hopefully it will stay that way for the future. However, that means a variety of things to a number of communities. One of them is the performing arts community here in Washington state.

During the pandemic, performing artists took different approaches to continue engaging with audiences. Some artists took the pandemic as a sign to rest and reevaluate how their art is portrayed, others explored different mediums of artistic expression and many performers found ways to support themselves and other artists by providing accessibility through virtual platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitch, of live or pre-recorded shows. Performing artists became glued to screens by either performing in front of them or watching, sponsoring, or promoting shows. Episcene, a founding member of Free Range Drag out of Olympia, WA said, “Having a virtual platform was life changing and life saving [for me]. Being able to create and perform for folks during the shutdown was the only thing that got me through to the other side of it. Being able to reach folks outside of our community and local scene made [me] new lifelong friends and supporters that I couldn’t imagine not knowing or keeping in touch with. I’ve always wanted to inspire folks and connect with folks on a broader scale and creating virtually made that a possibility for me.” Episcene describes her drag as camp and glamour, and finds it a source of confidence and inspiration for others around her.

The pandemic also brought changes to performance venues throughout the state. The pressure to remain a source of entertainment and livelihood, but without the patronage, resulted in some businesses closing their doors for good. Although a somber occurrence, this also provided space for groups to come together within their communities.

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The Seattle Burlesque and Cabaret Co-Op (SeaBCC) is one of those groups who saw a Seattle venue closing their doors and saw an opportunity for growth. Their mission, "...is to empower, inspire and build a community, run by and for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ artists to create, learn and thrive in a welcoming, inclusive and non-judgmental space. Through performances, classes, and open space, we encourage artistic expression as a way to honor our past and pave the way to a brighter future, while reinvigorating the arts for all." The board consists of thirteen founding members and four separate Washington groups: Puckduction, Fat Bottom Productions, Devil's Advocates and Artisan Guild. SeaBCC was able to obtain the lease to the former Copious Love, in Ballard, WA and as of July, started hosting events within the space which they renamed The Give Inn. The venue includes virtual streaming capabilities, introducing a hybrid effect for this post pandemic performance world and allowing performers to keep those virtual connections or save a recording of their act. The Give Inn will host open mics, monthly burlesque brunches, and creative workshops in the near future.

Are you are a performer or producer looking for a space to belong, or a die-hard fan of performance artists who has missed in-person entertainment? Take a look around, I am sure there will be lots of opportunities to get out from behind the screen.

To learn more: Follow Free Range Drag on Facebook and Instagram, The Give Inn at thegiveinn.com, and Seattle Burlesque and Cabaret Co-op on Facebook, Instagram @sea.bcc, and Twitter @SeattleBCC.

RAIN Annual Elections



We are excited to announce the candidates for our 2021-2022 RAIN Leadership positions.

The election process will take place September 1-September 30. Active RAIN members will receive a Survey Monkey link to vote.

Make sure to attend our October 21, 2021 General Membership meeting to welcome our newly elected leadership!

Co-Chair

- Time commitment is about 12 hours per month
- Serve as the public face of RAIN
- Develop and facilitate Advisory Committee and General Membership meetings
- Act as a representative of RAIN to the Executive Sponsor, the Governor's office, agency leadership, and other stakeholders as needed

Administrative Liaison

- Time commitment is about 6 hours per month
- Maintain meeting notes and documentation related to RAIN
- Coordinate and facilitate Advisory Committee and General Membership meetings
- Organize annual review and amendments to RAIN's charter
- Maintain membership and attendance rosters

*Full position descriptions can be located in Appendix A of RAIN's [charter](#).

Co-Chair

I am beyond honored to accept a nomination for a second term as Co-Chair of RAIN. Since joining the BRG in early 2019, I have fallen in love with the mission, the work, and most of all, the people who give so much of themselves to make Washington a better place for us all to work, live, and BE. We have accomplished and continue to accomplish so much, and it is a joy to help facilitate and support the work that you all do within your respective subcommittees. If selected to help support this group for another year, I will continue to do what I can to boost the work you all are doing every day.

In addition to my work with RAIN, I am a Certified Public Accountant and a bank examiner with the Department of Financial Institutions, where I also serve on our agency's Diversity Advisory Team. Prior to joining DFI in 2017, I spent a little over 10 years at the Department of Revenue.

I have lived in King County my entire life, and currently live in a little Victorian (read: old) house in Seattle's Central District with my husband, Kyle (we're celebrating our 5th wedding anniversary in August), and an 18-year-old cat named 'Mocha.'



Ryan Douglas (he/him)

Co-Chair

Taja [Chi/Her] identifies as cis-gendered, bi, disabled, mixed race-Indigenous, mother to two amazing LGBTQ+ kids. Chi has worked for the state since 2016, and has been a member of RAIN since 2017.

While working for the state, chi expanded their advocacy work for creating awareness, improving education, setting the example, and sometimes drawing the line in the sand to build equity for Indigenous and LGBTQ+ issues via ICSEW, BUILD, and inner agency efforts.

Chi earned a BA from Evergreen with focus on cultural studies emphasizing cross-cultural communication, community building, organizational behavior, and sub-cultural family formations. This combined with 30+ years of experience as a community Diversity Educator has provided chi the opportunity to serve the community in multiple ways on individual, group, and organizational levels. Providing safe shelter for LGBTQ+ youth who were de-housed when they came out. Creating and protecting respectful and safe spaces where LGBTQ+ voices have power and agency. Serving as an idea and informational conduit between interested parties – ensuring everyone affected is included in the conversation and their words and needs are recognized, given due respect, and supported.

On the less serious side; hobbies include getting out into nature, and if water is involved even better; most things fantasy/sci-fi; definite Whovian; tabletop gaming; writing, and painting. Plus for fun: Scorpio with Pisces Moon, and Leo rising.



Taja Blackhorn (chi/her)



Dae Shogren (she/they)

Co-Chair

Hey, All! Big thanks to the person who nominated me for the RAIN Co-Chair opportunity, it's incredibly humbling and I deeply appreciate being seen. I have been a member of RAIN since its inception, albeit a more observant and digestive role than an overt and directive one. (Trust me though, I know how to do both!) So, let me introduce my Self:

My name is Dae Shogren (day shoe-grin), she-they pronouns. My life and work have always been rooted in building bridges...in connecting. At times, I have stated that I was 'born this way': standing in two worlds most of the time as a person who is racially mixed, first generation of an immigrant mom, raised multi-faithful, SOGIE-exploring, and as a bonus, a Gemini. My home life also includes being the primary caretaker for both disabled parents and a momma/bonus momma to my three amazing kiddos (ages 12, 13, and 26).

Currently, I'm at the Dept of Children, Youth, and Families in the Office of Racial Equity & Social Justice. Prior to this, my position was the LGBTQ+/Disproportionality/ Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Statewide Program Manager for Child Welfare Programs. And before joining DCYF in 2013, I spent over 25 years in the private sector centering and supporting children, youth, and young adults. If we want to create change, this is where we need to start.

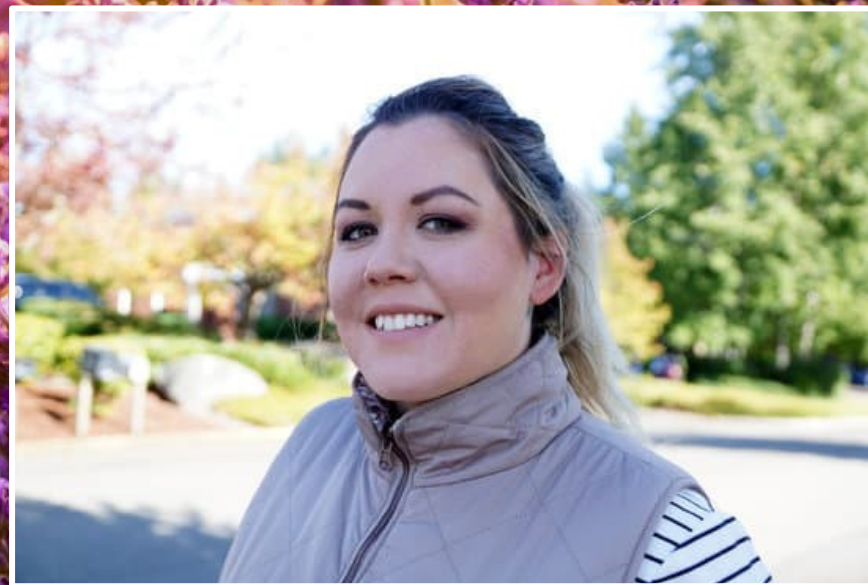
Throughout my career and personal life, I have focused my work on behalf of the communities most vulnerable and dismissed with a consistent integration through partnership, leadership, and mentorship. Dismantling systematic oppression to uplift social justice continues to be at the core of my work. I fully believe it's the work that connects us. The work that motivates us to show up. The work that will build the bridges so *each person can heal and thrive*.

Administrative Liaison

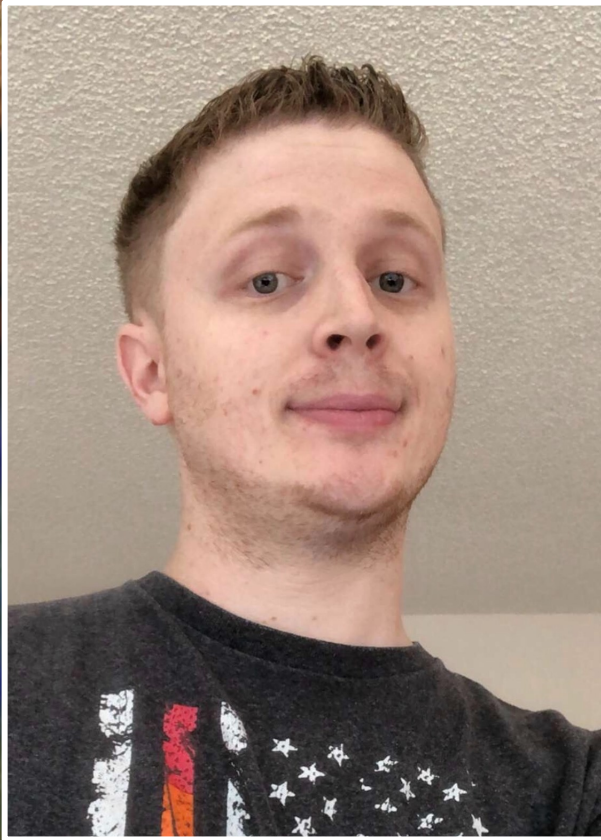
It has been such a wonderful experience to serve as RAIN's Administrative Liaison for the past year. I am honored to work alongside such a wonderful group of people. I am very passionate about advancing equity work throughout the state and helping others. I am so proud of everything RAIN has been able to accomplish this past year working virtually. We have been able to set a standard of excellence for statewide BRGs and lead by example. I specialize in marketing and communications, so I naturally gravitate towards continuous improvement of our website, email communications, and meeting structure. In the past year, I have helped the advisory committee organize meetings virtually, set our brand standard for email communications, and set up and monitor our website that moved to the LGBTQ+ commission website.

If elected for 2022, I hope to continue improving our communications and standards but also plan to work closely with the Office of Equity and all the BRGs to set up better connections and continuity. As allies with all the BRGs, I think it is important to advance our work together and make sure we close those gaps and create strong partnerships. Again, being a part of RAIN has truly been such a great experience for me and I look forward to continuing my work and progression with you all.

Thank you so much for your consideration.



Kristen Jenkins (she/her)



Caleb Baldwin (he/him)

Administrative Liaison

Hi everyone, my name is Caleb Baldwin and I am a Recruiter with the Employment Security Department. I have worked at ESD for 14 months.

I have been a member of RAIN for almost that entire amount of time, attending monthly meetings of the full committee, and the Subcommittee on Communications.

I would like to put my name forward for the position of Administrative Liaison. I want to help the co-chairs make RAIN work well. The work that RAIN does is vital to the LGBTQ+ community and it would be my pleasure to serve in this role to help advance our cause.

Thank you.

Administrative Liaison

Hello, my name is Erika Redzinak, I use she/her pronouns, and I work for the Department of Transportation. I've been in my Restoration Crew Lead position for over three years now and love it! I work outside on our mitigation properties planting trees/shrubs and conducting chemical work on noxious weeds. I also am a WSDOT HQ Diversity Advisory Group (DAG) representative and have held this position for over four years. I help facilitate meetings, send out posters and emails about monthly diversity events/observances and help create WSDOT diversity events. I recently spoke on a Pride panel where over 300 WSDOT employees joined the event to hear me and four other employees talk about our experience(s) at work with being openly out. It was a wonderful event and there is interest to host another one next year!

I am passionate in advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community and actively look for events and activities to get involved with. I'm a huge supporter of Queer City Sports in Tacoma and have been involved for the last two years. I love to play various sports and get involved in community events they have; it's always great to connect with new community members and reconnect with old faces! The Rainbow Center has also put on some great events in the past and I go to those whenever I can.

I love this work and I do it because I want to support local LGBTQ+ communities and newly out and/or transitioning folks. I wish I had more people to look up to when I was younger and trying to find myself – I want to be that person for someone. I also strive to become a better ally to the Black/Brown transgender community and want to work harder to support the community.

As an Administrative Liaison for RAIN, I will do my best to connect more state agency folks with the great work this BRG does, especially within WSDOT, and provide the support that helps run this group. Cheers!



Erika Redzinak (she/her)



Member Spotlight

As a new recurring column, each newsletter we will be highlighting a member of RAIN. We want to provide a deeper dive into the unique lives and skill sets of our members located all across Washington State. If you want to nominate someone to be featured in the spotlight, please email Allison.Fine@dshs.wa.gov.

August 2021



Our inaugural member spotlight is on Ashly McBunch, a contract specialist 3 at the Department of Commerce.

As a contract specialist, they work in the Central Contracts Office, providing support, guidance and training about Federal, State and Interagency agreements, contracts and grants. They've worked for the State of WA for a little over 18 months after a 17+ year career in the US Army, medically retiring in 2018.

Pull back the curtain on Ashly beyond their work life and you find an amazing creative mind with a vast array of interests and artistic talents.

Let's learn more:

Interviewer Allison Fine: How do you identify and what are your pronouns?

Ashly McBunch: I identify as a Nonbinary Femme Panromantic Demisexual Queer human. My pronouns are they/them.

Fine: You're the Poet Laureate of the Capitol of Washington, Olympia. Can you tell us what a Poet Laureate is?

McBunch: The poet laureate is an honorary title appointed by the government to compose poems for special events and occasions. The City of Olympia's take on the position of Poet Laureate is less an honorary title and more about service over status. The duties include promoting poetry as an art form, expanding access to the literary arts, and encouraging poetry as a community voice that contributes to a sense of place.

Fine: How'd you become the Poet Laureate of Olympia?

McBunch: I submitted a writing and video sample of my poetry, a writing/performance resume and a 1000-word proposal answering the questions posed by the city surrounding this year's themes

of healing and inclusion. A jury reviews the information submitted and pick finalists to answer additional written questions, followed by a panel interview about the position.

Fine: What are your hobbies?

McBunch: Listening to crime podcasts, watching horror flicks, and finding new ways of expression through performance, visual or literary art.

Fine: What other organizations do you belong to?

McBunch: A founding board member of Seattle Burlesque and Cabaret Co-Op.

Fine: Why are you a member of RAIN and why is RAIN important?

McBunch: I believe that RAIN is important to provide representation, support and connection amongst LGBTQIA2S+ members and allies and to advocate for legislations that provide the groundwork for equality within our community. With organizations like RAIN there is a hope to be heard and our rights not denied.

Fine: What else do we need to know about you?

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McBunch: Not sure if you need to know any of this, but I like to share. If people are interested in what I am doing for Poet Laureate please reach out through <https://engage.olympiawa.gov/poet-laureate>. You can find a schedule of events, as well as poetry prompts you can participate in.

I also perform burlesque and as a drag performer (Queen and King) throughout the PNW but mainly Seattle and Olympia. Additionally, I have a couple of projects coming up with a reoccurring part on a podcast, if that is your thing, and a play in October at the Olympia Broadway location. I have been married to my partner for three years, have two stepchildren ages 11 and 13 and five cats.

Fine: If people want to learn more about all the things you do what should they do?

McBunch: I have a few ways depending on what people want to know. They can email me at poetlaureate@ci.olympia.wa.us or follow my drag troupe “Free Range Drag” on Facebook or Instagram or learn about events I am a part of at Seattle Burlesque and Cabaret Co-Op on Facebook or sea.bcc on Instagram.

Remaining In the Present Moment

By Ashly McBunch

Strong zephyrs of loving memories whisper in vibrant
sunset hues of carnation pink amongst brown
branches of green leaves.


Ginger rays capture my salty cheeks. I remember
how to cry. Thankful thoughts intertwine with bluebirds in flight,
singing melodies that vibrate off my lips.

A hum filled with graceful reverence of this moment. I remain
another day to see twilight moons and tranquil rainfalls mirror brilliance
in the summer blaze.

Discovering truth inside my spirit to forever embrace each
moment, as its moment
and nothing more.

August 2021





The Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN) is an LGBTQ+ and ally *Business Resource Group* committed to diversity and inclusion efforts that allow staff to bring their full authentic selves to work in order to do their best work on behalf of Washingtonians.



Questions or feedback

RAIN@ofm.wa.gov

Visit our website

LGBTQ.wa.gov/RAIN



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