



ROMANI
CULTURAL & ARTS COMPANY

Gypsy, Roma & Traveller LGBTQI
International Conference 2019
Report

www.romaniarts.co.uk

Written and compiled by Dr Daniel Baker and William Bila

Table of Contents

Background.....Page 3

Conference.....Page 4

Speakers.....Page 6

Context.....Page 7

Recommendations.....Page 9

Afterword.....Page 10

Timeline.....Page 11

Website.....Page 13

Quotes.....Page 13

Biographies.....Page 14

Background

The Romani Cultural and Arts Company (RCAC) was formed in September 2009 as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (No. 07005660) and is a registered charity (No.1138150). Working through the arts the RCAC raises funds to take community development and educational projects onto Gypsy, Roma and Traveller sites and into non-Gypsies communities across Wales. A recent Arts Council of Wales report cited the significance and high quality of the work that the RCAC carries out with Gypsies and Travellers:

<http://romaniarts.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Beyond-the-Stereotypes.pdf>.

In the above report the following statement and recommendations were made: "Team up with the Romani Cultural & Arts Company in addition to providing project funding. This review has uncovered nothing but praise for Isaac Blake—his work is universally acknowledged by academics, Gypsies, Travellers, politicians, public bodies and international organisations. This is a unique Welsh-based company that should be supported in every possible way."

We are a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community development organisation at heart. We are led by Gypsies and Travellers, we are about Gypsies and Travellers, and we are for Gypsies and Travellers. We believe that GRT communities can become fully acknowledged and active participants in mainstream society while still retaining their distinct culture and heritage.

Mission Statement: Racism is born of ignorance, the Romani Culture and Arts Company exists to promote a better understanding of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture within and beyond these communities.

Aims and Objectives: The main aim of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company is to bring about change to make the world a better place for all. Our objectives are: To advance education of the wider public in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture, in particular but not exclusively, through arts-based community activities. To enhance racial harmony for the public benefit by promoting knowledge and mutual understanding between different racial and ethnic groups. To educate by raising awareness across diverse communities, in order to promote good relations.

The RCAC sits on a number of national forums such as: The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups – The Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association Honorary Member - Welsh Government - Wales Race Forum - Cross Party group of the National Assembly for Wales for Gypsies and Travellers

Conference

The Romani Cultural & Arts Company was proud to hold the first Gypsy, Roma & Traveller (GRT) LGBTQI International Conference in the UK on July 4th 2019. The event was hosted by the Senedd – National Assembly of Wales and featured an international selection of speakers including activists, academics, artists and community champions who focused on the current and historic experience of GRT LGBTQI people and the future possibilities for improving equality and opportunity across our communities. The Romani Cultural and Arts Company gratefully acknowledge the support of Welsh Government in carrying out this important event.



Chris Lee, RCAC Community Champion and Chair of the Conference. Photographer Felix Page

This event is one of many that RCAC is currently co-ordinating. The RCAC is a GRT founded and run organisation and we were very proud and excited to be able to give a 'minority within a minority' a platform and a voice with this GRT LGBTQI conference. The conference presented a unique opportunity to participate in discussion with an international panel of inspiring speakers and to learn about their research and their professional and personal experiences.

It was important for us to host the event in a Government building in order to represent the action of taking this important issue directly to the seat of power where decisions are made that can effect change. We now hope that the Government will look more carefully at this particular intersection within our communities to assess the kind of support currently available and determine what more can be achieved. It was a privilege for all involved to be surrounded by other LGBTQI members of the GRT community and to be able to occupy a high profile professional platform to deliver this important conference.

Guests to this pioneering event included Jane Hutt AM - Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Welsh Government, Vera Kurtic, from the Council of Europe's Roma and Travellers Team ROMACTED, Chris Lee, RCAC Community Champion covering GRT history, culture, welfare and racism. Dr Daniel Baker, artist, curator and theorist, William Bila, former President of La Voix des Roms (France), Martin Campbell, Director of the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association, activist and performer Gianni Jovanovic, and Dezso Mate, Consultant of the Open Society Foundations Community Youth Fellowship. This varied range of GRT speakers with their diverse areas of expertise opened up debate regarding the contemporary GRT LGBTQI climate and the broader implications for GRT communities and for wider society.

This exciting event took place in the context of the Romani Cultural & Arts Company's ongoing programme of increasing visibility, opportunity and equality for all members of GRT communities across Wales and beyond. The aim of this unique RCAC venture was to showcase emerging international voices within the field of GRT LGBTQI awareness and to facilitate the development of dialogue across communities about the ways in which articulations and negotiations of difference continue to inform the lives of individuals within GRT and LGBTQI communities today.



Jane Hutt AM - Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Welsh Government. Photographer Felix Page

The event shared aspects of the intersectional experiences of GRT LGBTQI peoples with the general public that have not been openly discussed in the UK previously. It created visibility and an awareness of human experiences that have widely been ignored, suppressed and denied. Such omission has been common throughout mainstream society, the LGBTQI movement itself and the wider GRT community. The very act of refusing to deny the existence of GRT LGBTQI peoples is a starting point for beginning a dialogue that can eliminate the amplification of violence felt at the intersection of antigypsyism and homophobia. Acknowledging the spaces

that these identity positions occupy and how they overlap can lead to new synergies that radiate beyond the intersection to help build a more cohesive and tolerant society.

A new approach to the current situation is certainly needed. In 2008, the National Institute of Mental Health drew attention to “the high rates of mental illness and suicide amongst Gypsy and Traveller individuals in the UK who identify as LGBTQI” (NIMH, 2003 Biddle et al 2008). Fear of the repercussions of revealing one’s sexuality to family and community within mainstream society undoubtedly still exists but the fear of violent reactions to such revelations within tightly knit and widely marginalised GRT communities is often more acute. Ostracism from their community can be particularly difficult for GRT LGBTQI individuals who may often have nowhere else to go. The harsh realities and the wider implications of the points outlined above were explored throughout the conference by the speakers and during the concluding open forum.



From left to right, Gianni Jovanovic, Vera Kurtic, Chris Lee, Dezso Mate, Daniel Baker, William Bila and Martin Campbell during open forum. Photographer Felix Page

Speakers

The Conference was opened by Isaac Blake, proud gay Gypsy and Director of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company, who gave a background to the RCAC’s involvement in tackling discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities on a broader level before focusing on the timely need for the current GRT LGBTQI Conference. He then went on to outline the range of related events which the RCAC has contributed to in order to raise awareness and fight discrimination against GRT LGBTQI persons (see timeline page 11).

Jane Hutt AM - Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Welsh Government, gave a powerful account of the need for recognition and support of issues surrounding intersectionality and the increased

burden that this places on the lives of those involved, and how together, with the help of government policy, we can move toward a new climate of equality.

Chris Lee discussed the continued presence of antigypsyism encountered by GRT communities as a background against which to consider the ways in which LGBTQI issues compound discrimination on a number of levels for individuals not least apparent in the way that issues of sexual identity remain divisive within GRT communities and related agencies.

Vera Kurtic from Serbia drew upon her published book, *Džuvljarka*, to speak of the experience of a lesbian Romani couple in Belgrade and the daily obstacles that they face in trying to make a life for themselves. The stark contrasts outlined in Kurtic's presentation highlighted the innovative solutions required in order to arrive at a successful survival strategy.

Dezso Mate from Hungary gave accounts of Trans and gay GRT males whose existence has been denied within their respective communities. Examples were discussed in detail alongside statistics from his doctoral thesis to support arguments regarding discrimination against GRT LGBTQI individuals. His own personal experience was also drawn upon.

Daniel Baker related extracts from his MA research into the experience of Gay Romani men carried out twenty years ago, titled *The Queer Gypsy*. Selected passages of this text were read in order to illustrate how far the GRT LGBTQI cause has come and also to highlight how far we still have to go to achieve equality.

Martin Campbell of the GRT Police Association in the UK discussed the disproportionately high suicide rates within GRT communities. While direct links between these statistics and those of GRT LGBTQI individuals is not well established, it was made clear that building awareness of the stresses that GRT LGBTQI people find themselves under can move us toward addressing the underlying issues which often adversely affect the lives of those in question.

Context

The conference was not only the first of its kind in the UK, but also followed through on promises initially formalised in the first ever European LGBTQI Romani conference which took place in Prague in 2015. Here the desire to build awareness within GRT communities across Europe as well as recognition across mainstream LGBTQI organizations was addressed in detail. Mainstream LGBTQI organizations were given recommendations to increase intersectional inclusiveness, for example, by including the faces and names of GRT people in their own awareness campaigns.

A year later, again in Prague, the message was repeated, with an additional desire to make sure that the message reached young GRT people who may be living in isolated communities with little access to LGBTQI information, let alone awareness that other people like themselves exist within their wider community. Teenage suicide rates among LGBTQI people have long been established as higher than the norm and can be reduced within more tolerant surroundings which eliminate bullying. The 2019 conference in Cardiff has created a new point of departure to help address mental health and survival rates for GRT LGBTQI people in the UK.



Postcards and literature. Photographer Felix Page

The staging of the conference and the widespread publicity that surrounded it, including broad social media distribution of GRT LGBTQI information and an exhaustive reading list on GRT LGBTQI themes provided by Norena Shopland (Draig Enfys), will hopefully enable other GRT LGBTQI individuals to feel that they are not alone. The inclusion of Daniel Baker's hybrid GRT LGBTQI flag, which was distributed to delegates and used to publicise the event, plus the inclusion of QRTV's flyer provided by its founder Laszlo Farkas were, employed as symbolic of steps toward demonstrating that GRT LGBTQI people can remain part of their respective communities and that there is a growing base of solidarity. The conference also showed that despite choosing to be visible, the speakers have not abandoned their communities, their heritage or their culture. This in itself sends the powerful message that it is possible to live a happy life that occupies the intersection between mainstream LGBTQI and Romani communities.

As well as opening up a valuable forum for discussion, the participants and organizers of the 2019 conference have provided visible role models for other GRT LGBTQI individuals of all ages, genders and sexualities who may be battling with anxiety, depression and fear of the unknown.

Through their presence the speakers also stand as tangible examples that can help debunk widespread stereotypes regarding GRT people. Such visibility remains a valuable resource in addressing the continuing manifestations of antigypsyism and homophobia that dehumanise us all.

The event linked to another first in that several of its participants went on to participate in the first ever GRT LGBTQI contingent at the London pride parade on July 6, 2019. The cumulative effect of such events will be recognized for their significance as they continue to add value within GRT and mainstream communities in the fight for equality across the UK and the world.

Recommendations

The level of misunderstanding and prejudice surrounding Gypsy, Roma and Travellers continues to impact negatively upon the life experience—and life expectancy of members of these marginalised communities. The testimonies of members of GRT communities who struggle with the navigation of their ethnic, sexual and gender identities within differing contexts, as discussed within this conference, tells us that the current experience of intersectionality, of managing a minority identity within a minority identity, for many only compounds their already significant feelings of isolation and disconnection.

Wider visibility of ethnic diversity within LGBTQI organisations, particularly GRT groups, combined with the promotion of wider acceptance of diverse gender and sexual identity positions among GRT groups can help to promote the unity and wellbeing that is the right of all members of the communities in question.

The kind of support needed is beginning to surface on a community and grass roots level with the appearance of an emerging international GRT LGBTQI network but there is still a long way to go. In order to concretise the progressive agenda that is beginning to appear regarding tackling the intersectional phenomena of antigypsyism and homophobia government needs to be willing to move forward in terms of policy.

One practical step toward achieving this would be to update the current Welsh Government main policy, strategy and guidance document which is intended to cover every aspect Gypsy, Roma and Traveller life. The 'Enabling Gypsies, Roma and Travellers Plan' document currently carries no mention of LGBTQI issues.

Another step would be to request that the Commission the Equality and Human Rights Commission audit voluntary sector work currently being undertaken with LGBTQI GRT to get clearer picture of the strengths and weaknesses in provision.

Qualitative data suggests that some of the individuals that make up the above average suicide statistics among GRT communities are also LGBTQI. Accounts from GRT LGBTQI individuals in the UK suggest that they face discrimination both for their LGBTQI status and for their GRT status, discrimination occurring both within the community and within wider society.

Police Officers frequently attend calls involving individuals who later go on to complete suicide during the following 12 months. Often such encounters are due to the person being reported missing or a family member expressing concern for their welfare. The person is often found physically safe and well and referrals are then made according to current guidelines but such calls are consistently overlooked by public protection professionals working in the areas of Health and criminal justice. These encounters with the police could be capitalised upon to signpost individuals in crisis to specific support services that could reduce the suicide risk and rate.

Initiating the progressive suggestions above to cover the points in question would benefit Gypsy, Roma and Traveller LGBTQI individuals greatly and prove valuable in opening up the issue of intersectionality on a national level. It is hoped that this conference and subsequent events will enable greater sharing of expertise in the areas in question and improve service provision to vulnerable people across Wales and the UK.

Afterword by Chris Lee, Chair of the event

For this event to be staged in Wales illustrates the commitment of The Romani Cultural and Arts Company and the Welsh Assembly Government to open up dialogue and initiate change. The event was of enormous importance for individuals who are Gypsy Roma Traveller and LGBTQI. For the wider public, LGBTQI organisations, local authorities, charitable organisations and perhaps more importantly, the Traveller community itself, the conference firmly placed the existence of LGBTQI Travellers and the enormous challenges they face, in the public domain. All the speakers who took part are of Gypsy Roma Traveller heritage and all are LGBTQI. This event took place in our main government building in Wales at the centre of our democracy and was introduced by Jane Hutt AM - Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Welsh Government, so on a very public platform we have now begun an important dialogue about this most important issue in Wales and beyond.

Timeline

Additional Information Relating to the Romani Cultural and Arts Company's activities.

2015

Chris Lee represented the RCAC and GRT in Wales at a GRT LGBT conference in Prague during August 2015. This historic International Conference highlighted and explored the many challenges facing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Roma in Europe and beyond. The programme included presentations and discussions on International and European rights and standards in relation to discrimination and how national legislation impacts on the lives of LGBT Roma in Spain, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Britain.

Chris Lee represented the RCAC and GRT in Wales at an event with Rainbow Pilgrims, an organisation which focuses on the Rites and Passages of LGBTQI migrants in the Britain. Rainbow Pilgrims is a landmark project that discovers the hidden history of LGBTQI migrants in the UK past and present. The project intends to cover the period from the first Jewish Kindertransports to Britain (1938-1940) to today. Rainbow Pilgrims explores the narratives around 'rites and passages', documenting the interconnection between faith, sexuality, gender and ethnicity by using oral history, film and photography. Rainbow Pilgrims culminates in a touring exhibition with pop-up events, a symposium, cutting-edge learning tools and an archive collection. This collection will be the first source of LGBT and migration in a faith context in Britain. <https://www.rainbowpilgrims.com/rainbow-pilgrims-symposium-photostory/>

2016

Chris Lee represented the RCAC and GRT in Wales at the 2nd INTERNATIONAL ROMA LGBT CONFERENCE, PRAGUE 11 – 12 AUGUST 2016. Chris also attended the Prague Pride Parade on Saturday 13th August. The historic first International Roma LGBTQI Conference in 2015 highlighted and explored the many challenges facing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Roma in Europe and beyond. The important exchange of information and lively debate between the delegates resulted in the drafting of the Roma LGBTQI Prague Declaration in which the 28 representatives of Romani LGBTQI professional associations, civil society and academia from 12 countries (Czech Republic, Canada/France/United States, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain and United Kingdom) assembled at the First International Roma LGBTQI Conference in Prague, seeking to address the realities and bring about change to the lives of LGBTQI Roma, Gypsy, Sinti and Travellers across Europe, and positively address the impacts of national legislation on our everyday lives. The keynote Speech at this year's conference was: 'How can European institutions tackle the issues facing Romani LGBTQI people'.

2017

MEETING OF ROMA LGBTQI BUDAPEST 1-3 DECEMBER 2017

Chris Lee once again represented the Romani Cultural and Arts Company in Budapest at the follow-up meeting of the Roma LGBTQI Conference which was held in Strasbourg in June 2017. This important event was organised and funded by The Council of Europe. Representatives of several European countries including the UK participated in training designed to mobilise communities and further establish networks. Many Roma LGBTQI people continue to remain invisible and conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity. The LGBTQI movement itself does not always prove inclusive and responsive enough to the needs of LGBTQI people belonging to ethnic minorities. The stigma they face has a detrimental impact on their life chances. The cultural clash between sexual orientation and gender identity on the one hand and Roma traditions and societal expectations on the other, place LGBTQI Roma at the crossroads of discrimination.

Isaac Blake represented RCAC at ILGA-Europe's Annual Conference in Warsaw, Poland, November 2017. Isaac made a joint presentation with other European organisations around the issues faced by LGBTQI Gypsies, Roma & Travellers and the 'double-discrimination' they face. Isaac won a scholarship to attend this conference. The networking benefits to RCAC were immeasurable.

2018

Equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people in Europe ILGA-Europe's Annual Conference in Brussels, Belgium Isaac Blake has received a scholarship to attend the ILGA-Europe Annual Conference in Brussels in October 2018; representing the Gypsy, Roma & Traveller LGBTQI European Community and the Romani Cultural & Arts Company. He will be delivering a workshop alongside Laszlo Farkas and Dezső Máté. ILGA-Europe's largest Annual Conference is dedicated to the rights of LGBTQI people. The 2018 conference brought together close to 600 activists from ILGA-Europe's membership across 54 European and Central Asian countries. The theme was Politics for Change – From Words into Action and was explored through cutting edge conversations in plenary sessions, panels and over 40 workshops. There was space for informal networking and an exciting social programme to discover the local culture and vibrant LGBTQI community. Organised in partnership with Rainbow House Brussels, Cavarria and Arc-en-ciel Wallonie, it was the first time the Annual Conference took place in Brussels, the capital of Europe and the home of ILGA-Europe and European institutions. ILGA-Europe provides a platform for activists and supporters of the movement to meet and discuss their ideas. ILGA-Europe were delighted that the 2018 Annual Conference programme has several moments where participants could focus on Roma LGBTQI lived experiences and identities, both in Europe and beyond. We are looking forward to continuing to create space for conversations that will help us to move

towards being ever more inclusiveness for all our diversities, including the Roma LGBTQI communities. Isaac Blake; Director of The Romani Cultural & Arts Company said: 'Romani Arts is committed to fighting and promoting tolerance and is proud to represent a minority within a minority; GRT from the LGBTQI community.

The charity has also delivered a queer Roma talk in Brussels in 2018 for ILGA Europe. They also co-created a queer Roma exhibition with Queer Roma TV

2019

Isaac Blake has also been awarded a scholarship to attend the upcoming ILGA Conference in Prague. Jeremy Miles AM said: *"This year's ILGA-Europe Conference is more important than ever, as it takes place during a crucial period of change to the political landscape across Europe and beyond. The movement towards greater LGBT equality over the past 50 years cannot be taken for granted as we look ahead. Isaac's scholarship to attend the conference on behalf of the LGBT Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community will enable him to make an important contribution to the discussions about how we take forward the journey for LGBT equality in all our communities, in all parts of the world."*

Website

The ground breaking work of the Romani Cultural & Arts Company is widely documented on their website which displays a wealth of talent and experience across Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. This includes profiles of many proud LGBT Gypsies, Roma & Travellers; among them are William Bila, Chris Lee, David Tišer, Daniel Baker, Dezso Mate, Gianni Jovanovic, Laszlo Farkas. The charity is very proud of our community and the hard work that many community members carry out as advocates and champions for the colourful and vibrant heritage and culture of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. <http://www.romaniarts.co.uk/profiles/>

Quotes

Jane Hutt AM - Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Welsh Government said: *"I'm proud to support Romani Arts during Gypsy Roma and Traveller History month with their conference on LGBTQI within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. Welsh Government's next Strategic Equality Plan will take an approach that recognises the importance of understanding intersectionality between different protected characteristics. Events such as this will help to provide a platform for conversations to take place and influence policy on a national level, providing reassurance to all communities that Welsh Government strives to ensure that equality is at the core of our business, diversity is celebrated and where discrimination has no place."*

Isaac Blake; Director of the Romani Cultural & Arts Company says: *"An open, tolerant society cannot pick and choose which groups should merit tolerance and understanding. Every individual living on our beautiful planet deserves to be judged on their own words and actions; not on their race, nationality, religion, sexuality or family background. Let's stand together and be proud of the amazing diversity that humanity encompasses."*

Chris Lee, Romani Cultural and Arts Company Community Champion says: *"Meaningful change for the LGBTQI Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community is not going to come from just knowing more information, but from doing something with it."*

Dr Daniel Baker, Romani artist, curator and academic says: *"Discussions regarding the significance of intersecting identities are more important than ever. By recognising commonalities across difference through shared experience and knowledge we move closer toward a more caring society."*

Biographies

Dr. Daniel Baker

Daniel Baker is a Romani Gypsy born in Kent, United Kingdom in 1961. An artist, curator and theorist, he holds a PhD on the subject of Gypsy aesthetics from the Royal College of Art, London. Baker is curator of FUTUROMA at the 58th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale 2019. He acted as exhibitor and advisor to the first and second Roma Pavilions: Paradise Lost and Call the Witness at the 52nd and 54th Venice Biennales respectively. Baker's work examines the role of art in the enactment of social agency through an eclectic practice that interrogates contemporary art discourse and its social implications via the reconfiguration of elements of the Roma aesthetic. Baker acted as Visual Advisor to the RomArchive: international digital archive of Roma arts. His interest in Gypsy visuality was sparked by his research into the experience of Gay Romani men in the UK carried out for his MA dissertation titled 'The Queer Gypsy' which was subsequently published by the ERRC. Publications include We Roma: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art (2013) and Ex Libris (2009). Baker's work is exhibited internationally and can be found in collections worldwide. Former Chair of the Gypsy Council (2006–2009). He lives and works in London: www.danielbaker.net

William Bila

William Bila was born in New York City the son of Czechoslovak refugees fleeing the Soviet invasion of the Prague Spring. He discovered his Romani heritage in late childhood. As the product of a multicultural North American upbringing, he has always been proud and curious about his roots. The turning point for his activism, which started in the 1990s, came when he

moved to Canada and joined the Roma Community Centre in Toronto during the autumn of 2008. Ever since, he has remained engaged with a variety of organizations in support of Romani culture, education, history, and rights themes. He has served in several volunteer positions such as, President of La Voix des Roms (France), member of the board of Roma Education Fund (Switzerland), Roma Education Support Trust (UK) and the Center for Intersectional Justice (Germany). He also took part in the first and second ever European LGBTIQ Roma conferences in Prague (2015; 2016). Among his pioneering career adventures, he participated in the pilot implementation of a worldwide diversity policy at a global financial services provider based in Germany, supporting LGBTIQ+ rights in the workplace. With over 25 years of experience in corporate consulting, strategy and human resource roles, his most recent endeavours as a freelance consultant include managing the on-line communications of the Berlin based RomArchive project, advising the European Roma Rights Center partnerships and network development, and serving as a guest lecturer for Chicago based DePaul University's study abroad program in Berlin. He is a proud member of ACERT and a supporter of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company of Wales.

Isaac Blake - Director - Romani Cultural & Arts Company, Cardiff

Isaac Blake is a proud Gay Romani Gypsy and has worked as a professional dancer and choreographer. He is currently Executive Director of the Romani Cultural & Arts Company in Cardiff, UK, which is funded by a variety of major funders and government departments. As Executive Director of the Romani Cultural & Arts Company (RCAC), Isaac has developed arts and performance programmes on Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites with young children and adults, worked in schools and colleges, and promoted arts as a medium for empowerment and advocacy throughout Wales with Gypsy, Roma and Travellers. He has engaged widely with non-Gypsy communities to promote dialogue and improve social cohesion. His leadership and management of the RCAC has seen the organisation grow from a small voluntary group to a major third sector (NGO) agency that leads the Romani and Traveller field in Wales and is one of the major players in Romani and Traveller advocacy and empowerment in the UK. RCAC is now celebrating its 10th anniversary. Isaac has also been a Dance Curator, leading a team of academics and researchers in collating appropriate items and artefacts for the RomArchive. The RomArchive was devised as an international digital archive for art of the Roma, and remains a constantly growing collection of art of all types, complemented by historical documents and scholarly texts. Isaac has been instrumental in supporting LGBTQI rights in UK, Europe and beyond, particularly with respect to the Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities. Isaac has supported LGBTQI Gypsy, Roma & Travellers to attend events internationally and Isaac has personally attended such events to be an advocate and representative of his community and to positively promote LGBTQI.

Martin Campbell - Director of the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association

Martin Campbell is the Director of the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association, an association set up primarily to support Police Officers and Staff who are from Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities of the UK and Europe. Martin is a Gypsy from the North West of England who is currently serving as a Police Inspector. He has worked in Emergency response, Proactive Crime Squads, Community Policing, CID and various other departments during his 13 years of Service. Martin has been involved in the GRTPA since its creation in 2014 serving as a Director in 2016 and again in 2018 and 2019. Martin has been fighting for fair and equal treatment for GRT communities across the UK and Europe. This has included participation in initiatives in Ukraine and Europe to improve the security of Roma Communities, Challenging in Parliament Police Units (now disbanded) and numerous public speaking events to raise awareness of Suicide, infant mortality and discrimination in GRT communities. "People often ask me why I am involved in challenging Police and other ministry of justice agencies publically when I am in the role of Director to support Officers & staff. My answer is always that discrimination against GRT communities is prevalent within these organisations and this isolates victims from within the community discouraging them from seeking help and support they are entitled to. A combination of frequent & disproportionate Police response and lack of community engagement reduces a fragile state of police legitimacy in the community. We must be part of the Policing community if we want to improve this. My association can support Officers and Staff, we have been doing it since 2014 since our founding members Jim and Petr broke the mould, what I want to do now is ensure future generations of all GRT communities feel that the police of the UK is not only a career option but also an attractive option."

Jane Hutt - AM, Deputy Minister and Chief Whip – Welsh Government

Jane spent part of her childhood in Uganda and Kenya, and was educated at the University of Kent, the London School of Economics and Bristol University. She has lived and worked in Wales since 1972. Jane was an elected member of the former South Glamorgan County Council for 12 years and was first elected to the Assembly in 1999. Between 1999 and 2005 she served as Minister for Health and Social Services in the Welsh Government. From 2005 to 2007, she was Minister for Assembly Business and Chief Whip. In the first Cabinet of the Third Assembly she was appointed Minister for Budget and Assembly Business. In the coalition Cabinet, announced on 19 July 2007, she became Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. In December 2009 she was appointed Minister for Business and Budget, subsequently Minister for Finance until 2016 when she was appointed Leader of the House and Chief Whip at the start of the Fifth Assembly. On 13 December 2018 Jane was appointed Deputy Minister and Chief Whip. Jane Hutt is an honorary fellow of Cardiff Metropolitan University and Cardiff and Vale College. She is a Welsh learner. Responsibilities: Exercise of functions by the Welsh Government · Policy development and the co-ordination of policy · Inter-Governmental Relations including JMC · The Legislative Programme · The Ministerial Code · Civil Contingencies including chair of the

Resilience Forum · Openness in Government including FoI · Oversight of Welsh Government's relationship with the WAO · Constitutional Affairs · Justice Policy and the Justice Commission · Tribunals · Public Appointments · Government Chief Whip · Well Being of Future Generations Act and liaison with the Future Generations Commissioner · Equality and Human Rights · Co-ordination of issues relating to Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, Asylum-seekers, refugees and community cohesion · Anti-slavery, domestic abuse, gender-based violence and sexual violence · The Voluntary Sector and Volunteering · Youth Justice · Community Safety · Relations with the Police and Crime Commissioners, Police and other Criminal Justice Agencies, civil contingencies, resilience and counter-terrorism issues · Relations with UK Government in respect of Prisons and the Probation Service · Advice and Advocacy Services

Gianni Jovanovic

Gianni Jovanovic has been actively involved in the rights of Roma and Sinti for several years. With various projects and initiatives, he also campaigns for people in the LGBTIQ community. He fights for their rights and against discrimination and exclusion. His topics include: Personality Development & Empowerment, Diversity & Intersectional Discrimination. The son of a Roma family, Jovanovic was born in Rüsselsheim in 1978. At the age of 14, his parents arranged his marriage. Two years later he became the father of a son. When he was 17 years old, his daughter was born. At the beginning of his 20s Gianni Jovanovic turned out to be gay and separated from his wife. He is now a two-time grandfather and has been happy with his husband for 13 years. He has close contact with his children. Jovanovic is a successful entrepreneur. He is involved as an activist and is now also an author and a comedian. He is the founder of "Queer Roma" (www.queer-roma.de), an initiative that connects and supports LGBTIQ people in the Roma community. The group has participated at the "Gay Pride" in Cologne on a number of occasions. As an activist he also supports different German associations such as Amaro Drom e. V. or Rome e. V. In 2016 the writer Katja Behrens told the inspirational and exceptional story of Gianni Jovanovic aka Nono in her novel. The book was published by editionfaust. In the same year he initiated the campaign "Say No To Faceism" – a photo project that stimulates discourse on the topic of "being German" (www.faceism.de). Recently he made himself known as a comedian with appearances at the Djelem Djelem Festival Dortmund (solo program), Nightwash (Cologne), Boing Collner (Cologne); City faces Bar Celona (Jülich) among others.

Vera Kurtic

Vera Kurtic is a proud feminist and a Romani woman. She studied sociology and communications and for many years has been an activist for Roma, LGBT, animal and women's rights. She is currently the Project Officer in Belgrade working in the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Team within the Programme ROMACTED -'Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level'. In her research, Vera mainly focuses on intersectionality of gender,

race, nation, and class and minority sexual existence. In her book *Džuvljärke-Roma Lesbian Existence*, Vera tackled the problem of the invisibility of Roma lesbians who are denied their own identities, achieved relations and personal connections, both within the Roma and broader social communities. Vera enjoys veganism, writing short stories and photography.

Chris Lee

Chris Lee grew up in north Wales. Chris is openly gay, a feminist and proud of her Romani heritage. She trained as a Graphic Designer specifically in the area of media design and design aesthetics and has worked in theatre, advertising and education. Chris ran her own graphic design company Chris Lee Design for 15 years. Chris Lee is a Community Champion for the Romani Cultural and Arts Company in Cardiff. The RCAC is the only organisation of its kind in the UK which is run entirely by individuals of Romani Gypsy heritage. She is involved in a wide range of work with the RCAC including participating in training days throughout Wales covering the history and culture of Romani Gypsies and Roma, Traveller accommodation, health, education and racism. In 2016/2017 she was part of a team who over the course of a year, carried out groundbreaking work interviewing Traveller families throughout Wales about their health and wellness. This was the first project of its kind to be undertaken in the UK. The team of 6 researchers recorded important first hand oral testimony from Travellers themselves about their health and their experiences of accessing health care in all parts of Wales. This research is now acting as a foundation to bring about real change. She attended the first International Roma LGBTQI Conferences in Prague in 2015 and 2016. Both of these events were organised by Roma activist David Tiser and his ARAART team. Participants in these conferences and subsequent meetings are creating a Roma LGBTQI 'movement' throughout Europe.

Dezso Mate

Dezso Mate is currently the Consultant of the Open Society Foundations Community Youth Fellowship, which focuses on the Roma LGBTQIA intersectional challenges in public healthcare settings. The programme is supported by the Youth Exchange and Public Health Programme. The Programme's clear aim is to give a voice to voiceless people. Dezso is also working on his PhD at the Eotvos Lorand University of Budapest. Dezso has studied in the University of Pecs in Hungary and also in Eindhoven. In 2013 he was a Junior Research Fellow in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Dezso's research interests focus on the intersection between the Roma and LGBTQ Community; the generational change of Roma graduates; the impact of social resilience; segregation, disability and the 'labelling' of Roma children in education. Dezso has also worked in the Equal Treatment Authority in Hungary and taught in several schools in disadvantaged areas where he supported Romani children. Dezso's mother died when he was 6 years old. His father kidnapped him and his father was later arrested. Dezso Mate was homeless

GYPSY, ROMA & TRAVELLER LGBTQI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2019 REPORT

for years. He started his education at the age of 9. Dezso now lives in a happy relationship with his same-sex husband. He is proud of his intersectional identity as a Romani Gay scholar.



Conference participants inside the Senedd. Photographer Felix Page

Company is also grateful for the support of the following organisations:

Stonewall Cymru

Youth Cymru

Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association Welsh Government

Norena Shopland, Draig Enfys

The Printshop at HMP Parc, Bridgend

Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Team

QRTV.eu