



Spring Newsletter 2024

Healing through Community

Dear Community Members,

Thank you for building supportive networks so that survivors can find safety and stabilization as they work through the first stage of healing. Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC), with amazing support of our donors, offers an array of services that build mental and external safety and stability through the Access Line, Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) and on-site clinic; prevention programs like the Indigenous Response Network and youth programs; and counseling services. These programs help individuals to identify personalized resources and develop positive coping skills to nurture the first steps in their healing process.

The Access Line, SART and clinic are essential for immediate emotional support, whether the incident is recent or historical. Our diverse volunteers and staff are vigorously trained to connect with and encourage survivors as they identify and access their specific needs. Thanks to our donors and funding partners, these vital services are maintained 24 hours every day. Survivors heal in their own timing knowing that they are not alone.

Our prevention programs, which are mostly funded through grants, focus on youth and community to educate, eliminate stigma and false narratives, deter future gender-based violence, and provide safe spaces for vulnerable communities. For 5 years, the Indigenous Response Network has connected with First Nations communities to develop culturally-relevant healing activities. Last year, Project Respect offered Healthy Relationships and Consent workshops to 1,329 youth in schools and community organizations. Project Respect has been a safe space for 10 youth to share their experiences about the intersections between queer/trans identity and gender-based violence. The Black Youth empowerment project is building safer school environments for Black youth through honest conversation around race with staff and teachers. Your donations support healing by showing that you stand against sexual violence and you are committed to social changes for a safer future.

That's how our donors and supporters provide stability to VSAC's programs, and initiate healing for survivors and our community!

Thank you for partnering with VSAC.

Territory Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect the lək'wəŋən Peoples, on whose traditional territory the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ Peoples, whose relationships with the land continue today.

Why we acknowledge the territory:

Acknowledging the territory calls our attention to the ongoing colonization of Indigenous lands. These lands were taken through violence and non-consent, and impacts of colonization continue to express themselves through disproportionate rates of gender-based violence against Indigenous people. Recognizing Indigenous sovereignty and the lands we are on is part of the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre's commitment to reconciliation and taking leadership from Indigenous community in our work of healing, education, and prevention.



**Victoria Sexual
Assault Centre**

healing, education & prevention

201-3060 Cedar Hill ROAD, Victoria, BC, V8T 3J5 ♦ **Business Line:** 250-383-5545
Service access Line: 250-383-3232 · Visit our website at www.vsac.ca
Charitable Business Number: #10822 0054 RR0001

IRN Knowledge Sharing & Blanketing Ceremony Celebrates 5 years

The Indigenous Response Network (IRN) project was developed in 2019 to support accessible, community-based, culturally relevant healing and safety support services. It provides accessible information about these services for Indigenous women, girls, youth, sex workers, and Two-Spirit people who experience unprecedented rates of gender-based (GBV) and sexualized violence in Canada. The program emphasizes developing sustainable partnerships, trust, and increased capacity in communities to lead culturally appropriate supportive options for survivors of gender-based violence. There has been collaboration with artists and knowledge keepers to develop appropriate materials, and mentorship between Elders and men to address the impacts of generational trauma and GBV.

On February 29th, 2024 a Knowledge Sharing and Blanketing Ceremony was held to wrap-up the 5-year program. Participants of the IRN program, most of whom remained throughout the project, were cloaked in blankets to show community support toward survivors' healing journey. The ceremony involved inspirational drumming, sharing of gratitude for healing and the relationships of trust and support, and sharing gifts of art and blankets. VSAC is greatly appreciative and enriched by the experience of learning how to be supportive to Indigenous communities.

IRN is seeking financial support to continue the groundbreaking work that was accomplished in building relationships with Indigenous communities around gender-based violence.

The IRN has supported the building of first steps in community and individual healing through stability and safety. Your donation today will allow VSAC to continue this momentum and reach more Indigenous communities through extension of the IRN project.

Thank You To Our Funders:

- Canadian Women's Foundation
- City of Langford
- City of Victoria
- Civic Forfeiture Office, Province of British Columbia
- Community Gaming Grants Program, Province of British Columbia
- Department of National Defense, Government of Canada
- District of Oak Bay
- District of Saanich
- Funke Furber
- Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Rotary Club of Victoria, Harbourside
- Township of Esquimalt
- Township of View Royal
- United Way of Greater Victoria
- Vancouver Foundation
- Victoria Foundation
- Women and Gender Equality, Canada
- Zonta Club of Victoria



Services we offer:

Access line – providing support and intake to our services.

Crisis Counseling - helps to build safety and stabilization.

Counseling Groups - provide education, skills, and connection.

Sexual Assault Response Team and Clinic - provides immediate emotional support, medical care, and options for reporting to police in one safe, survivor-focused location.

Victim Services - provides help navigating the criminal justice system.

Prevention Education - works toward ending sexualized violence and creating inclusive communities

Weekly Drop in Groups

Mindfulness with Metta – an online drop-in where survivors have the opportunity to practice grounding skills through a for 30-minute guided mindfulness practice.

Comfort and Tea Drop-in Group - a welcoming space for survivors to share tea, snacks, crafts and art, to chat informally, and to receive support.



Celebrating the Black Youth Empowerment project wrap-up



Meet Jackie LeBlanc, Counselor; Neha Pande, Auxiliary Administrative Assistant; Eliza Melling, Outreach Coordinator; and Alicia Sands, Resource & Development Manager who all recently joined the VSAC team.

Prevention Update

VSAC's Prevention team has resumed offering workshops to students and adults who work with youth. Their Healthy Relationships & Consent workshop is aimed at youth grades 9-12 and is delivered through participating schools & community organizations. Safer Spaces is a companion workshop for adults supporting the development of consent-based and trauma-informed practices in work with youth, and resources on how to support youth who have experienced sexual assault.

More information about these services can be found at www.projectrespect.ca.



Triathlon of Compassion 2024

The Triathlon of Compassion is the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre's (VSAC) longest-running and biggest annual fundraising event. In 1993, the first annual triathlon for healing was organized. The triathlon eventually became known as the Triathlon of Compassion and has become a community event with racers and fundraisers of all ages. The event helps raise funds and awareness to support the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre's essential programs. Our partners, Human Powered Racing, host the race each year. We are deeply grateful to them for their ongoing support.

Since the Triathlon of Compassion began, folks like you have fundraised over \$400,000 for the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre! It's incredible what our community can do together. We look forward to celebrating another great event this year.

