



Leadership transition

Dear community members,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC), we are writing to advise you that Elijah Zimmerman has resigned from the position of Executive Director of VSAC. We share this news with both heavy hearts and joy for Elijah as he moves on to new and exciting endeavours. After a productive month of handovers and wrap-ups, Elijah's last day was January 31, 2023.

Elijah held the position of Executive Director of VSAC for three years. During his tenure, he led the Centre through a global pandemic, changes and updates to the delivery of services, and the collaborative development and implementation of a three-year strategic plan—all the while ensuring that VSAC's work was responsive to, and in solidarity with, the needs and priorities of people and communities most impacted by sexualized violence. Elijah's leadership also oversaw the alignment of VSAC's organizational system with its purpose and values. This included efforts to continue to understand VSAC's role in Truth and Reconciliation, and creating policies and procedures for equity, diversity, and inclusion, with a focus on anti-racism. It is difficult to put into words our gratitude to Elijah for his guidance, insight, and presence while in the role of Executive Director.

As of February 1, we welcomed Samantha Loppie as the Interim Executive Director of VSAC. Coming from the Manager of Direct Client Services position, Samantha has worked closely with Elijah to prepare for her transition into the Interim ED role. We are looking forward to working with Samantha and have high confidence in her leadership and connection to a strong management team at VSAC.

The Board of Directors has begun the search for a new Executive Director. We are hopeful that this process will conclude by April, 2023. We will be sure to introduce the new Executive Director.

Thank you for your continued support. As always, it means so very much to us.

Warmly,
Anna Bruce & Ram Aheer, VSAC Board Co-Chairs

Spring Newsletter 2023

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 to this day.

Why we acknowledge the territory: As a non-Indigenous organization, the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre is accountable to reconciliation through continued learning and centering leadership from Indigenous communities on whose lands we live and work. Sexualized violence was and continues to be used as a tool of colonization to destroy communities and displace Indigenous Peoples from their lands. It is our responsibility to address the ways colonial violence and non-consent shape the experiences and impacts of sexualized violence for Indigenous Peoples. As part of our commitment to reconciliation and consent-based relations, we recognize the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples and the rights and relationship they have to their traditional lands and territories.

Update on charitable status

Thank you for supporting the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre as a donor. We wish to update you about the progress of our re-application for charitable status.

On October 29, 2022, the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre lost Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) charitable status due to an administrative error. We have rectified the filing error and have submitted our application for reinstatement to our lawyer to review and submit to the Canada Revenue Agency. The CRA has advised that it may take up to six months for them to complete their assessment. The CRA has confirmed that we are able to receive donations but cannot issue tax receipts for them until our status has been reinstated. Upon reinstatement, we will be able to back-issue receipts for any donations made to us.

We apologize for the inconvenience this has caused and hope you will consider continuing your support of the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre during this transitional time. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Samantha Loppie, VSAC's Interim Executive Director, at samanthal@vsac.ca or 250-383-5545 ext. 108.

Reopening for in-person counselling

VSAC has continued to adapt to community needs as the pandemic has shifted. In December, VSAC counsellors started coming back into the office regularly to provide in-person counselling, in addition to the virtual counselling services that we continue to provide. This change is allowing us to meet the varying needs of survivors for counselling support.

As part of this shift, we have been considering ways to make our space more welcoming for survivors and reflective of our work with them. We have reopened our reception on an as-needed basis to provide clients with a comfortable space, where we provide warm beverages and a calming environment to settle in before appointments. Our staff also participated in a VSAC beautification initiative, where they decorated eight skateboard decks with uplifting messages to survivors to be hung on our office walls as art. This was to create a more welcoming environment for youth coming to the Centre.



Photos from left to right: Counsellor Metta, holding a skateboard deck in progress; Counsellors Leanne and Kaleigh, decorating a skateboard; a skateboard in progress, which reads, "You are not alone"; the finished product!

Services we offer

- **The Access Line** provides support and intake to our services.
- **The Sexual Assault Response Team and Clinic** provides immediate emotional support, medical care, and options for reporting to police in one safe, survivor-focused location.
- **Crisis counselling** helps to build safety and stabilization.
- **Counselling groups** provide education, skills, and connection.
- **Victim Services** provides help navigating the criminal justice system.
- **Prevention Education** works toward ending sexualized violence and creating inclusive communities.

Want to access our services?

Call our Service Access Line at 250-383-3232 or email access@vsac.ca for information and intake.

New counselling supervisor

In the fall, VSAC created a new counselling supervisor position to support the counselling team and build service capacity. Kathryn Saunders brings a depth of experience to the position, including crisis counselling, longer-term trauma counselling, and group support at VSAC.



"Part of my work is still to see clients as a counsellor, and the other part of my work is to support the counselling staff by facilitating team meetings, coordinating case consultations, providing direction and focus, and picking up on themes in the work and keeping the threads together so that we are providing the best services possible for clients." – Kathryn

Program development is a key responsibility of the role. An exciting new program that will be implemented this spring is a drop-in group for survivors, which will be delivered both online and in person. The counsellor supervisor role has made it possible to offer this additional service without reducing the capacity of counsellors to see clients.

"VSAC has a new client almost every day of the year. Although the work can be difficult, it is also really joyful and we have an incredible team. We are able to offer folks connection to reduce the experience of shaming and stigma. Our counsellors are so passionate about their work and about our clients. I'm just grateful to be part of it." – Kathryn

Thank You to Our Funders

Blackbaud – Black Youth Empowerment (BYE) group
Canadian Women's Foundation – COVID relief
City of Langford – Clinic
City of Victoria – Clinic
Civil Forfeiture Office, Province of British Columbia – Access line
District of Oak Bay – Access line
District of Saanich – Crisis counselling
Ending Violence Association of BC – Clinic
The Federation of Community Social Services of BC – Hardware and software updates
Community Gaming Grants Program, Province of British Columbia – Clinic, youth counsellor, prevention education
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General – Stopping the Violence counselling and Victim Services
Public Health Agency of Canada – Prevention education: SHIFT
Rotary Club of Victoria-Harbourside – Clinic
Township of Esquimalt – Clinic
Township of View Royal – Access line
United Way of Greater Victoria – Crisis counselling
The Victoria Foundation – Black Youth Empowerment (BYE) group
Women and Gender Equality Canada – Capacity building, Indigenous Community Response Network
Zonta Club of Victoria – Clinic