

Like most organizations, VSAC has steadily adapted and changed during the last two years. The pandemic has brought forth complex trauma, leading us to upgrade or transform systems to meet the needs of our community. For 40 years, VSAC has navigated twists and

turns to provide survivors with in-depth care and prevention education. Our commitment and passion are as strong as ever to uplift survivors and to teach community and youth tools for relating with respect and dignity.

Last month, we made a major adaptation to remove our long-term counselling (one-year) to focus on our crisis counselling (10-12 sessions) and group skills counselling. While this was a difficult decision to make, we're using our resources to support people more immediately. Our goal is to reduce our crisis wait times so that folks who have just experienced an assault can see us as soon as possible. We know that early wrap-around support can immensely improve a healing path.

We're here for survivors and continue to offer our clinic, counselling, and justice support services free of charge. We're also reaching out to those most likely to be impacted by sexualized violence while supporting consent education being delivered in new ways so we can do so in equity and justice. All of this work is possible because of dedicated staff, volunteers, and the many funders and donors who support survivors and continue to believe that a future free of sexualized violence is possible.

In gratitude,

Elijah Zimmerman
Executive Director

40 YEARS SUPPORTING SURVIVORS!

This year marks 40 years for VSAC as a resource to our community! We're planning on marking this occasion with an event later in the year, hoping we can confidently share space, food, and meaningful connections after this long-stretch of being apart! We're currently collecting stories, experiences, and special words for survivors to share at our 40th anniversary celebration.

If you'd like to participate, please send any contributions to our Executive Director, Elijah Zimmerman, at elijahz@vsac.ca.



Find us on the Web!

www.viac.ca

www.yesmeansyes.com



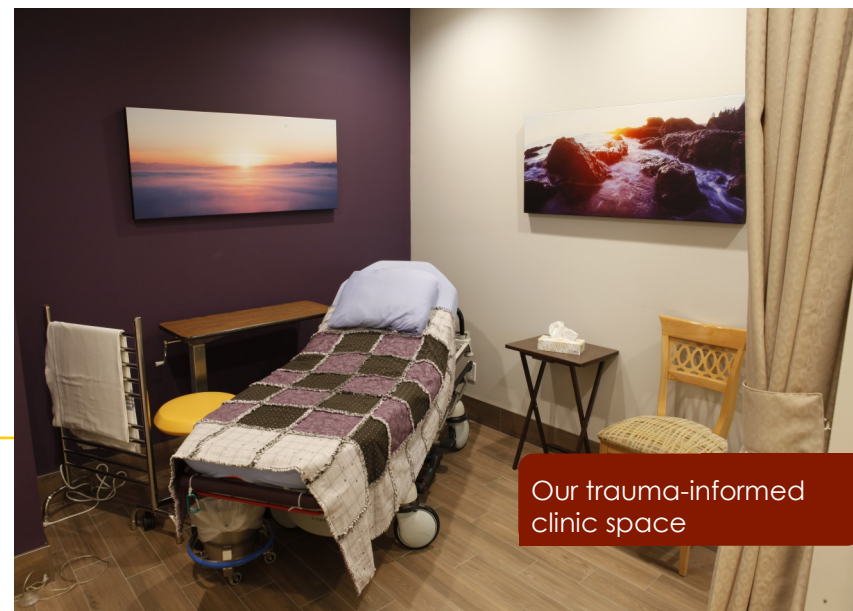
@Victoria Sexual Assault Centre
@Project Respect - VSAC



@VSACentre



@VictoriaSexualAssaultCentre



Our trauma-informed clinic space

Current Outreach with Indigenous Response Network Partner

The outreach department aims to let folks in community know we are here for survivors by building connections between partners and forming bonds with the community, so when this opportunity came up, it was impossible to resist.

In December, the prevention and outreach departments of VSAC collaborated with our partners at the k'wənénjəł i? i?saət Indigenous Response Network to place over 30 bags of consumables and survival supplies, including toiletries, batteries, chocolates, and other necessities, at the Victoria Community Fridge in Rock Bay.

Part of the shared work of VSAC and the Indigenous Response Network is connecting under-served communities with necessary resources. Over the last few years, few support services have been fully operational for folks facing food and housing instability, and the pandemic has added a great deal of strain upon our community's unhoused members.

The outreach project taken on by VSAC and the Indigenous Response Network was a way to connect with those who are under-served without asking anything in return. We reckoned that we could build on VSAC's good name in the community by reaching out to homeless, vulnerable people about where we should place these essential commodities.

Going by the response from this first go (the bags were gone in under four hours), we resolved to keep donating key essentials during important occasions like Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving and so on, so these communities can feel the love VSAC has to give.



Pictured Above: Left, Yetie Bada, Outreach Coordinator and Right, Katie Webb, Indigenous Response Network Co-Coordinator. Below: Diana Leigh, Admin Coordinator, supporting all of our work with office and tech support.



OUR MISSION

The Victoria Sexual Assault Centre is a feminist organization committed to ending sexualized violence through healing, education, and prevention. We are dedicated to supporting women and all Trans survivors of sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse, through advocacy, counselling, &

100% of Your Donation!

We fundraise in a multitude of ways including telemarketing, events and on-line campaigns, just to name a few. We appreciate all donations, regardless of the size or the method in which you choose to donate. However, when you donate directly to our agency through one of our mail campaigns or simply by calling us, **100% of your donation will go towards the healing, education and prevention provided by the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre.**



Black youth teach the teachers:
BYE developing new Safer/Braver Spaces
workshop for professional development days

VSAC's Black Youth Empowerment group is embarking on a new challenge. After focusing their energy on supporting their peers in bystander intervention, the six members of BYE want to bring their knowledge, anti-racism awareness, and intervention strategies to adults. Interventions for adults have been a need identified by many youths participating in BYE's bystander intervention workshops, like the one recently delivered on February 21, 2022, Family Day. This was their second workshop for Black youth.

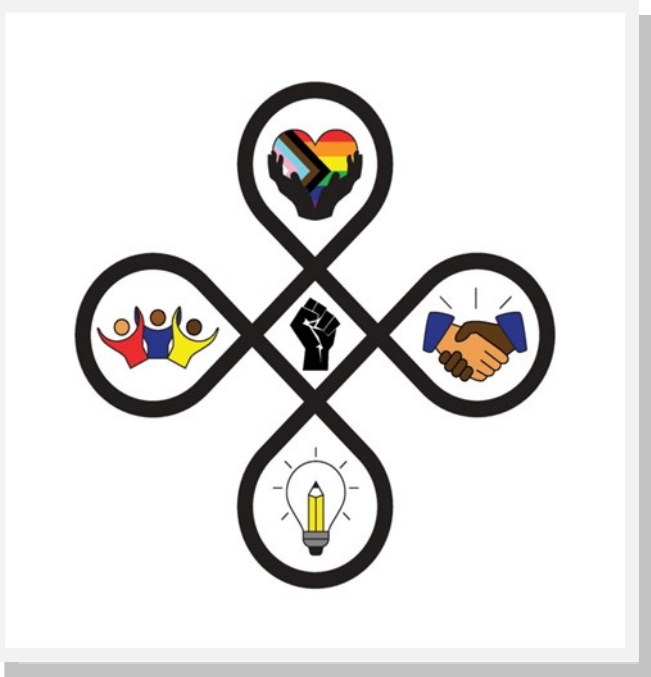
Why the need for Safer-Braver Spaces workshops for teachers and school staff?

Black students shared stories of harm, such as racist and ostracizing comments and behaviors by the adults responsible for their wellbeing: caregivers, teachers, school administration, and school staff.

How can BYE assist teachers in creating safer spaces for Black students? How can school staff stop causing harm to Black students? And how can Black students find safety when standing up to racism from school staff? These are some questions BYE will explore in developing a curriculum for their new workshop tailored to school staff. For now, the workshop's working title is Safer-Braver Spaces.

One BYE member, who co-facilitated the last workshop for youth, recounts the distress Black youth endure when teachers cause harm without even realizing it. For example, she says, teachers often put a Black student on the spot, asking them to be THE expert on Black issues for the benefit of white students. Other times, teachers use the word "negro." This is another example of racism, explains Nichola: "The presumptions from the white teacher are that the word negro is not racist and that it does not negatively impact Black students. These teachers are subjectively defining racial harm based on privilege and positionality." This is a common practice of white privilege, as VSAC staff has learned in whyte dismantlers workshops with Dr. Lisa Gunderson, who also coaches BYE youth.

Nichola Watson, a VSAC counsellor who mentors BYE Black youth and specializes in anti-racism practices, says that in other instances, "Black students are seen in specific ways and treated as othered by those performing exoticizations. While subtle, this is an exposure to racism."



As we can see, intersecting layers of power dynamics and historical trauma lie at the core of these complex issues, which the six BYE youths will explore in this new workshop. The team hopes to deliver the new Safer/Braver Spaces material to school districts, teachers, and staff during professional development days in April or May.

Please help spread the word about this upcoming opportunity to school staff in your networks and among your friends. We are grateful for your support with this important work! To learn more about Black Youth Empowerment, email blackyouthempowerment21@gmail.com or visit <https://vsac.ca/2021/11/black-youth-empowerments-bystander-intervention-workshop-is-back/>

Recent Changes to Our Services

VSAC has removed the long-term counselling program.

Over the last two years, we have seen a significant increase in the number of survivors coming through our doors. Many of those survivors are in crisis and need immediate support for recent or historical trauma. Based on this steady increase in the need for crisis support, we are no longer able to offer long-term (one year) individual counselling at VSAC. This service change will provide counsellors the capacity to focus on providing immediate crisis support and group facilitation to survivors.



What will this mean for survivors on the long-term counselling waitlist?

This means that we will not be able to offer long-term counselling support to any of the clients on our long-term counselling waitlist or to any new clients. This was a very hard decision for VSAC to make, and we know that this news will be disappointing for many of the survivors on our waitlist and in our community. VSAC reached out twice to all clients on our long term waitlist: once with a general message and once with a personal follow-up. We let clients know that we could no longer offer them the one year of counselling they had been waiting on the waitlist for because of the significant increase in the need for crisis support. Clients were contacted by email or phone and reminded of our services that are still available.

What has the response been like from waitlisted clients?

Overwhelmingly, the response from clients has been understanding. Some have reached out for crisis support, but not to a degree that has swamped our crisis waitlist. Many clients have also responded that they understand why the changes needed to happen and that they are no longer in need of support, but they are happy to know that they can reach out in future if needed.

And the response from community partners?

The response from our community partners has also been very understanding. Many of them are also making changes to programs or suffering from significantly longer waitlists because of an overall increase in the need for support and the complexity of issues folks in our community are facing. We have been proactive on our social media about the ending of our one-year program and very open and transparent with the media who wish to talk about the changes. Our overall message to clients, community, and media is that we are still here for survivors, just in a different way.

What services does VSAC still offer to the community?

We want survivors and our community to know that even though we can no longer offer long-term counselling, there are many paths to healing, and we do still offer a number of services to survivors of sexualized violence, completely free of charge. These services include:

- **Integrated Sexual Assault Clinic:** available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to all genders of survivors of recent sexual assault, 13 years and older. Call the Vancouver Island Crisis Line at 1-888-494-3888 to be connected to our clinic.
- **Individual crisis counselling** assists with the most immediate emotional, physical, and behavioural reactions to sexual assault or historical sexual abuse.
- **Group counselling** offers support that focuses on education, skills development, and peer support.
- **Victim Services** provides information and services connected to the criminal justice system, including support with police reports and court appearances.