

Project Respect

Project Respect is VSAC's youth-led violence prevention program which brings together youth and adults to create awareness and dialogue about sexualized violence. The program encourages critical thinking about root causes of gender expectations and stereotypes, imbalances and abuses of power, and the ongoing colonization of the lands on which we live.

This month has been a month of transition and maturation for the Prevention team. Our School Program Coordinator and Community Program Coordinator have completed the updating of the prevention education curriculum and are happy to have finalized the content of our *Healthy Relations and Consent, Part 1 and Part 2* workshops.

The team now moved from this long and productive planning, conceiving and teambuilding phase into an implementation phase, with workshops being offered in person and over Zoom in Greater Victoria schools. The first workshops were delivered with success, eliciting great feedback from Artemis Place School students and teachers. More sessions are already booked in the coming month at St. Michaels University School.

After finalizing that curriculum, the coordinators wonder-duo is moving on to re-develop the *Safer Spaces* curriculum, which is tailored to adults, teachers, and other administrative staff caring for youth. Meanwhile, a new Youth Council has been formed and has started planning leadership activities.

The other youth group, Black Youth Empowerment (BYE), has reconnected with Dr. Lisa Gunderson, consultant in anti-racism and anti-oppressive education, with the support of Nichola Watson, counsellor in Direct Client Services at VSAC. Together they are preparing to deliver workshops on bystander intervention and planning a new workshop for next year.

It is also a transition period for our new interim Prevention Co-Director Sophie Rousseau, who is delighted to have joined the team in September and will be continuing this important work while Laura is on maternity leave.



Production of this newsletter was generously discounted by:

Prevention Co-Director Bio: Sophie (elle/she/her)
Hi everyone! I am Sophie (elle/she/her), and I am overjoyed to join the excellent prevention team at VSAC! I was born in Belgium and moved to the unceded territory of the Wôbanakiak Confederacy in Quebec, in the nineties. Over the years, I traveled the world and had the privilege to learn and work with Inuit youth in Nunavik, francophone and Metis youth in Anishinabe territory (Winnipeg), Haitian youth in Haiti and young women in Burkina Faso, West Africa. I finally fell in love with the magnificent unceded Territories of the WSÁNEĆ and Lekwungen Peoples, where I felt grounded and became a mother. After a long career as a producer and journalist with Radio-Canada/CBC, reporting on countless conflicts, crimes and oppressive systems rooted in harmful patriarchy, I went back to Europe and undertook an MA in Conflict Transformation, focusing on gender-based violence. Back in Victoria, I studied Family Mediation, facilitated Restorative Justice proceedings, and supported marginalized population with harm reduction services. It is truly an honor for me to become part of the Project Respect team, promoting consent culture in schools and communities. In my (little) spare time, as a single mother, I try to keep up with my energetic teenagers, hiking, climbing, camping and mobilizing to protect old growth forest in BC.

Find us on the Web!

- www.vsac.ca
- www.yesmeansyes.com
- @Victoria Sexual Assault Centre @Project Respect - VSAC
- @VSACentre
- @VictoriaSexualAssaultCentre

Thank you to our supporters

We are deeply grateful to each person who has responded to our mailings, phone calls, to third party fundraisers and events with incredible generosity this year. Thank you for your confidence and support as we continue our work in healing, education, and prevention.

Happy Holidays from all of us at VSAC!



Winter Newsletter 2021



Our organization began with two volunteers in a basement in 1982. Almost 40 years later, our volunteers continue to play a vital role in supporting survivors. Many volunteers are trained in our Sexual Assault Response Team model and take on-call shifts when survivors need immediate support after experiencing sexualized violence. Some volunteers support with specialized administrative tasks, and when we can be together, many show up for outreach and engagement. Our Board of Directors is also volunteer driven, taking on the governance of our organization through committees and group consensus. On average, 60 volunteers support our mission of ending sexualized violence through healing, education, and prevention.

experiences and skillsets to share, adding more dimensions and richness to our operations and relationships. I extend my gratitude to all our past and present volunteers. You inspire me in my work to continue growing, exploring, and contributing to our shared commitments in ending sexualized violence.

In gratitude,



Elijah Zimmerman, Executive Director

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, & empowerment.

The time and passion volunteers dedicate to VSAC is nothing short of extraordinary, taking on evening and weekend shifts and sometimes going to an extra meeting to ensure we are there for survivors and our community. Our very structure operates with volunteers as an integral component, and thankfully, so. Each volunteer brings valuable life



Victoria Sexual Assault Centre
healing, education & prevention

#201-3060 CEDAR HILL RD. VICTORIA, BC, V8T 3J5 ♦ BUSINESS LINE: 250-383-5545
ACCESS LINE: 250-383-3232 ♦ VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.VSAC.CA
CHARITABLE BUSINESS NUMBER: #10822 0054 RR0001



SART Volunteer Spotlight



As a SART volunteer, I view my role as being a soft place for a survivor to land during what is likely their worst day. The training that VSAC provides is absolutely stellar. I felt fortified with lots of information and new skills to bring to this role. Even so, I'll be honest – those first few calls were stressful. I think it's the normal human response to tackling something new and wanting to do my very best for the person I was supporting. But after I had a few calls under my belt, it felt really natural and good to be in that role. The entire practice we had put in over the months of our training really did just come out when I needed it – just like Ali, our Volunteer Coordinator, said it would.

My favourite part of this work is watching the arc of the survivor's emotions over the course of the interaction. What often begins with emotions such as panic and overwhelm seems to settle into a feeling of being supported, with a plan of action to further support themselves. Sometimes this is a plan to support their physical well-being by being assessed by a medical professional, and sometimes it's support for their emotional well-being, knowing that VSAC is going to follow up with legal or counselling services.

I love being part of a team that exists solely to help people. I love that I now have the skills to be able to help. I hate that we need to do this work, but I'm very glad that we do. — Sara Baker (she/her)

Access Line

The Access Line provides information about our services or referral to our programs (counselling, groups, assistance with police, and Victim Services) during regular office hours (Monday – Friday). Our Access line workers are the first interaction many clients have with VSAC; the Access line takes calls from survivors, professionals in community, other non-profit organizations, medical and police agencies. The Access line workers maintain a database of client information and assists in compiling monthly statistics for funders. We have one permanent Access line worker and one auxiliary (hiring additional auxiliary staff next month); both of whom are supported by Karen, the Clinic and Access Line coordinator. This is an incredible team that balances administrative multi-tasking with emotional support for survivors and resource referrals for community.

Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)

The Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) provides immediate emotional support and information to people of all genders, 13 years and older, who have been sexually assaulted within the past 7 days. Our SART team is supported by 3 staff members and 25+ volunteers who receive over 80 hours of training for the role.

Our amazing SART worker/volunteer will accompany survivors at the hospital or at VSAC's sexual assault clinic to provide support while they are receiving medical attention and/or police involvement as requested by survivor. Our SART is a collaborative response between the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre, Forensic Nurse Examiners, Island Health, RCMP and the police to provide a trauma informed response for survivors. To access our SART, survivors can call the Vancouver Island Crisis Line (1-888-494-3888) and request to speak to a VSAC Sexual Assault Support Worker, or attend at Victoria General Hospital and our SART worker on call will be paged.

Volunteers Update

Our Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) support worker volunteer training received one of the highest numbers of applicants ever this year. A total of 48 people applied, a true testament to the incredible support in our community. We were able to accept 12 trainees into the Fall 2021 cohort, and 4 more onto the waitlist for the upcoming training to start in February of 2022. This fall 2021 training saw the return of a "field trip" to the Victoria Police Department, a session that was delivered via Zoom in 2020. Unfortunately, the training session typically hosted at the Victoria General Emergency Department will likely be held exclusively via Zoom for the foreseeable future.

These two trainings in close succession will set SART up for consistency over the coming 1-2 years, something that has been difficult in recent months due to the stress of the pandemic wearing on us all. Our few (but mighty!) remaining volunteers have shown incredible dedication by donating their time, skills, and energy as we continue to navigate COVID-19. VSAC staff have done an amazing job of filling in for empty volunteer shifts, going far above and beyond their day-to-day requirements. Big thanks to Jaq, Karen, Daria, and Rachel!

Victoria Integrated Sexual Assault Clinic

The sexual assault clinic is located in the same building as the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (3060 Cedar Hill Rd) and did not close its door even for one day during the pandemic! This is something we are very proud of. The clinic provides a confidential, accessible and welcoming environment for recent survivors of sexual assault to access the following services: medical exams, forensic exams, crisis support, options for reporting to police, connections to community supports and resources. The clinic is available 24hrs a day, 7 days a week.

Over the last year, we have supported a number of requests from other organizations on the island, gulf islands and mainland BC as a model of best practice when developing their own SART teams, volunteer training and client services. While we often share pieces of provincial and regional funding, we are open with each other as organizations to support survivors in many communities.