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Charitable Registration Number:
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01
As an agency working to end sexualized violence and address its impacts, the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre acknowledges the host communities and Nations in whose territories we work and live: the Lkwungen and WSÁNEĆ Peoples.

We would also like to express gratitude to the other local Peoples and Nations in this region including the MALAXEt (Malahat), Scia’new (Beecher Bay), T’Sou-ke (Sooke), Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht Peoples.

We recognize the inherent connections between colonialism and all forms of violence. Recognizing the violence of ongoing colonialism and engaging in anti-colonial actions is critical to our work as a community service provider.
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, and empowerment.

Our Values
As a feminist agency, we value:
- Communicating in a clear, confidential, caring and honest manner, demonstrating respect, accessibility and recognition of all our diversity
- We strive to support the empowerment of each person’s knowledge of self and right to dignity.
- We strive to create a safe and accessible environment where people are supported in healing from sexualized violence.
- Social justice and equity for all
- Enacting an anti-oppressive practice that addresses societal and systemic barriers and our positions of power and privilege
- Creating transparency and accountability with the community through sharing our policies and practices.

Healing, Prevention, Education.
Like the years before it, this past year has brought change and growth to the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC) and the Board of Directors. We will be saying goodbye to many board members this year, whose time and dedication will be missed. It is strange to think that we still have not met in person in these last two years. Deep gratitude to those departing the board this year for their contributions: Morgan, Allie, Sam, Tina, Laura, and Rayme.

A special acknowledgement for Morgan Daye, who has long been the co-chair of the board. Morgan has dedicated years of committed service to VSAC, and I am forever in gratitude for her support and coaching as I stepped into the co-chair role.

We also have exciting prospective Board Members up for election to the Board. We are looking forward to welcoming them to our ranks and working with them moving forward! We trust that each of them will bring a perspective and purpose to the organization.

The Board focused on a few key priorities this year: updating values with staff, policy creation around Human Resources procedures for supporting the Executive Director, board training activities with Volunteer Victoria, working on materials to support our upcoming 40th anniversary, collaboration with staff on an op-ed published locally, and our Fast Five Fundraiser.

An ongoing priority for the Board is to offer support to VSAC in whatever form it takes, to ensure that we can continue to build connections and relationships in our communities, and provide survivors the best possible empathetic care and support.

We look forward to another year of serving VSAC, its staff, and its clients to the best of our abilities to ensure that the important services provided get to where they need, when they are needed.

Finally, thank you to our donors, without your generosity VSAC would not be able to operate in the same way. And thank you to our volunteers, our SART team, office volunteers, and all the people who give their time and energy towards our values and goals.

–Mariel Wendowsky, Board Co-Chair

Board of Directors Report

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–Mariel Wendowsky, Board Co-Chair

Board of Directors 2021–2022

Ram Aheer – Director
Sara Beam – Director
Laura Benoit – Director
Susie Bowles – Treasurer
Anna Bruce – Director
Allie da Silva – Director
Morgan Daye – Co-Chair
Samuel Geisterfer – Director
Felix Gilliland – Director
Tina Lowery – Director
Rayme Raymond – Director
Alaya Simpson – Director
Mariel Wendowsky – Co-Chair
What does it mean to be resilient in the work of our mission to end sexualized violence through healing, education, and prevention? Looking at the meaning of resilience, this sense of again, renew, once more, or the act of rebounding or springing back, we can see that resilience is a central activity in the journey of supporting survivors and addressing sexualized violence. Working in trauma also asks each of us to consider our resilience, and to encourage one another to connect with what helps us to sustain hope.

Over the last year, we demonstrated resilience through balancing deeper adaptations due to COVID-19 with needed internal system updates, a focus on anti-racism and relationship building with Indigenous communities, and a commitment to understanding and developing new pathways for our work to meet those most impacted by sexualized violence. All of this work has asked us to attend to fine details and to make thoughtful, well-considered steps in our work together.

In moving from more restricted lockdowns to hybrid operations, we kept a close eye on the continued safety and well-being of staff, clients, and youth through evolving policies and procedures. Importantly, our clinic and sexual assault response team (SART) were active and available 24/7/365 to support survivors.

We were fortunate to learn from and work with Indigenous Perspectives Society, One Love Consulting, Girls and Femmes with Afro-textured Hair, and the members of Indigenous Community Response Network, kʷənəłətel ʔəsaʔt. These rich experiences of connection continue to inform our path forward in ensuring our work and services have a foundation of accessibility, equity, and justice.

As always, the care work we offer here, through direct services and education, is of collective strength. From staff, volunteers, board members, community members, partners, and donors: It takes many hands and hearts to uplift survivors and to call for a world free of sexualized violence.

–Elijah Zimmerman, Executive Director
Direct Client Services

Message from the Direct Client Services Manager

As Victoria Sexual Assault Centre honours our 40th year, I would like to thank the direct client service team, and all VSAC staff, for their patience, resilience and continued dedication as we navigated major changes and continued pandemic restrictions this year. It is through collaboration, internally at VSAC and with community partners, that we continue to make an impact on individuals and our community. I am constantly impressed by the work VSAC accomplishes and the incredible people that have contributed to VSAC’s history over the last 40 years.

Thank you,
Samantha Loppie,
Direct Client Services Manager

Access Line

Our Access Line is often the first voice survivors hear when they contact our Centre and is made up of a compassionate and talented team that balances emotional support and administration. Our Access Line provided 820 responses last year to survivors, community members and organizations, offering information, emotional support and connection to VSAC services. In some way, the Access Line supported all 1081 clients that came through our doors this year; often being the first point of contact or providing our team with administration, statistics and data management support.

Moving forward, the Access Line will continue to work with other departments to streamline administrative procedures to match the adaptations made to offer services virtually during the pandemic. We will maintain many of these virtual services moving forward, as they offer survivors more options to meet their needs.
The Victoria Community Response Centre was established in 2016, and holds the sexual assault clinic and alternative police interview room. The response centre was designed to be a confidential, accessible and welcoming space where survivors of recent sexual assault can go instead of the hospital or police station.

As a way to provide survivors and community members with more information about our clinic and alternative police interview space, we connected with a local videographer to create a video walkthrough that we could share on our VSAC YouTube page.

We circulated the video walkthrough to our community partners and encouraged them to share with their own networks. We also offer it as a resource to clients who are considering using our space, so they have an idea of what to expect when they arrive.

Scan this code to watch the clinic video walkthrough

Top: Soft room, where survivors meet with the SART team to receive support and discuss their options for service

Middle: Medical exam room

Bottom: Police interview room
Sexual Assault Response Team

The Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) supported 105 survivors, of all genders over age 13, with immediate emotional support and information this year. From the total number of survivors who accessed our SART program we saw 40% under age 24, 41% between 25 and 49 years old and 4% over 50, with a percentage of age unknown.

We see approximately 70% of total survivors come to our on-site sexual assault clinic, over the hospital, with our most common days of the week for SART responses being Monday and Tuesday. We tend to see higher numbers of calls after long weekends, holidays, major festivals, or events. Our incredible SART team is made up of staff and volunteers, who participate in over 50 hours of training so they can provide emotional support, medical exams, police accompaniment, and referrals to VSAC or other services anytime night or day.

Volunteer Program

The Volunteer Program is responsible for the training and orientation of Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), event and office volunteers and participates in our annual Board of Director recruitment. A major component of this program is dedicated to training, orienting and supporting our 30–40 SART volunteers.

This year, we decided to run two Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) trainings, adding a second training in early 2022. This second training was added to help balance the loss of volunteers during the pandemic and the smaller training cohorts that were necessary to keep pandemic health and safety limits in place.

The Fall 2021 SART training ran from September to December and offered 13 sessions of training on communication, emotional support and emergency procedures. The second training received 30 applications, the highest number of applicants seen over the last 3 years and ran from February to May, with virtual modules and smaller cohort in place for pandemic safety. VSAC staff from the Access Line and counselling department offered invaluable support as co-facilitators during the training, as well as guest sessions from VSAC victim service workers, clinic coordinator, forensic nurse examiner and a detective from Victoria Police. Recruitment for the next SART training opens in July 2022 and more information about volunteer opportunities can be found on the VSAC website.
Over the last two years, we have seen a large increase in the number of survivors coming through our doors. Many of those survivors were in crisis and seeking immediate support for recent or historical trauma. We have seen our waitlists grow and have struggled to meet these needs in our capacity as a non-profit organization. Based on this steady increase in the need for crisis support, we made a significant change in our counselling program and are no longer able to offer our one-year individual counselling program at VSAC. We are still able to offer short term crisis and group counselling to survivors, free of charge.

In February 2022, VSAC reached out to all clients on our one-year counselling waitlist to let them know that we were no longer able to offer the one-year program. Clients were contacted over email or by phone and during those conversations, reminded of our free counselling services that are still available.

Overwhelmingly the response from clients was understanding, we had additional counselling staff available in preparation for survivors needing immediate support when hearing this news. Working in a collaborative way in the months leading up to the change, allowed us to respond to the needs of clients impacted and support them with information and resources.

The response from our community partners has also been understanding; other agencies spoke of similar challenges with waitlists and staffing. We were open and transparent with community and media who wished to talk about the changes and announced the change on our social media platforms. Our overall message to clients, community and media is that we are still here for survivors, just in a different way.

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.
Our Crisis Counselling Program assists survivors in dealing with the most immediate emotional, physical and behavioural reactions to recent sexual assault and historical sexual abuse. Our compassionate and professional counselling team specializes in supporting survivors of sexualized violence and connected with 418 survivors, conducted an incredible 1647 sessions this year. Among those survivors, 392 were coming to VSAC for the first time for support and 32% were under age 24, 46% between 25–49, 13% over 50 and the remaining unknown age. Moving forward VSAC will be able to offer virtual and some in-person counselling, continuing to assess and adapt to keep the safety of our staff and clients front of mind.

The changes made within the counselling program this year had a dramatic impact on our ability to offer support to survivors in crisis. Before the removal of the one-year counselling program we were seeing youth, recent survivors and historical survivors in crisis wait months to connect with counselling support. Since February, our waitlists have reduced drastically and the feedback from survivors and staff has affirmed that this change best serves the needs of the community.

Through our partnership with the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC), VSAC continues to offer counselling for indigenous women, Trans, Two-Spirit and Gender Diverse folks through VNFC. Our counsellor is consistently booked with clients, supporting 35 survivors this year through individual counselling sessions. Survivors can get connected by contacting the VNFC for an Intake (www.vnfc.ca/contact-us) and asking to speak to the VSAC counsellor. Survivors accessing counselling through VNFC are still eligible for all other VSAC support services. It is not only through this partnership that VSAC is working towards supporting Indigenous survivors; working on continued education, policy change and reflection of our structures are ways VSAC is trying to understand the impact of colonization on our 40 year history. We are striving to learn more about how we might participate in honouring the land, relationships and traditions of Indigenous survivors on their path to healing.
The Group Counselling Program at VSAC offers education about how people respond to trauma, skills and resources, and peer support facilitated by VSAC counsellors.

This year the Group Program supported 133 survivors to build skills and capacity in their healing journey. Counsellors facilitated 58 group sessions and undertook major revisions of the group material to better suit virtual online delivery. We have chosen to continue offering virtual groups this year and will monitor needs of survivors and the health and safety guidelines of the province, to determine if and when in-person groups might resume.

Our Skills for Healing counselling group received a major revision in early 2022; based on client and staff feedback, the previous model of 2.5 hours sessions was feeling too long for online sessions. We are currently adapting the group to be offered for shorter sessions over more weeks and are redesigning the material to focus on one main concept per session. We hope that with shorter and more engaging sessions, survivors walk away with clear and accessible points from each group meeting.
Victim Services

Our Victim Service Team provides survivors with information, support and accompaniments when navigating the criminal justice system. This year, our victim service program supported 333 survivors; the majority (315) of these clients were new to VSAC. Of all the client’s supported, 30% were under age 24, 40% between 25–49 and 11% over age 50, with a percentage being age unknown. Over the year, Victim Services made an incredible 8109 contacts with clients via emails, phone calls, text, meetings; offering follow ups, resources and accompanying survivors to police stations and court.

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The Victim Service Department continues to work collaboratively with other victim service agencies through participation in the regional Victim Assistance Program quarterly meetings. This is an opportunity to connect with police-based and community-based victim service programs to share knowledge, updates and policy changes in our regions. Our Victim Service Team also continues the 12-year tradition of monthly Team Victoria meetings, which connect local police departments, forensic nurses, crown council and victim service to discuss best practice for supporting survivors of sexualized violence in our community.

Recognition and Thanks

The Victim Service Team said goodbye this year to a long-time employee (Catherine C) who worked with VSAC for over 24 years! Catherine was an instrumental part of our organization, being the first Victim Service Worker in the position and developing the foundation of the program we now have in place.

Catherine pioneered our relationship with local police departments and forensic nurses; developing relationships and policies that have helped thousands of survivors navigate the criminal justice system. She was with VSAC through many changes and developments and has made a significant mark on the community organizations with whom she has worked.

It has been said by community partners that victim service in Victoria has been made a safer place for survivors because of Catherine’s hard work and strong dedication. We hope to honour her legacy by upholding the standards of care, professionalism and humour she brought to this work and wove into the fabric of VSAC. Thank you Catherine for your years of dedication and we all wish you the best of luck.
Outreach Department

This year we were able to develop a new program at VSAC, focusing on outreach to community partners. We hired a Community Outreach Coordinator who has connected with dozens of community agencies across BC and Canada to talk more about VSAC services, referrals opportunities and share resources. As a way to support other organizations, we are open to sharing information and knowledge in relation to our programs; believing that the work of healing and prevention education is a shared community goal. This year, we supported a number organizations with material from our Volunteer Training Program, group counselling and sexual assault clinic. We ask organizations receiving these resources to adapt the material to suit their clients needs and to honour the many employees who contributed to the material development. This approach has allowed us to help develop capacity within BC organizations and across Canada so new programs do not need to start from scratch. We have also been very honoured to receive information, resources and guest presentations at VSAC from other organizations, increasing our capacity to support survivors.

Inclusive Services

This year our Inclusive Services Program focused on a project exploring alternative and transformative justice in our community. Alternative or transformative justice can take the form of information or services and offers survivors of violence opportunities to explore accountability, with or without their perpetrators, in spaces outside of legal or criminal justice systems. This exploration into alternative and transformative justice is new for VSAC and we were honoured to create a community network of other anti-violence agencies to explore what alternatives exist and the challenges and areas for growth. While VSAC does not have adequate funding to continue to explore the growth of alternative and transformative justice in our community, moving forward we are connected to a national coalition whose purpose is to continue this discussion in our sector.

Yetie, Community Outreach Coordinator, dropping off outreach packages created with kʷanéʔat̓al iʔsaat, the Indigenous Response Network, at the community fridge/cupboard.
The last year, the kʷənéʔətel iʔ iʔsaət The Indigenous Response Network (“The Network”) has focused efforts on supporting community care, healing, capacity building and resource development. Two new coordinators joined the team in June 2021, and have continued to host meetings, build relationships and share learning opportunities.

kʷənéʔətel iʔ iʔsaət’s community expanded over the last year to include a new male Elder, folks with lived experience and frontline workers. The Network was also joined by Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services (SCFS) youth council members and their youth leader. Counselors from Tsow-Tun Le lum continue to be present at meetings when able, to provide Network members with emotional, spiritual and cultural support within the group or on a one-on-one basis. In Spring, the team welcomed our first practicum student from UVIC’s master of social work program, Indigenous specialization and look forward to hosting more students in the future.

As a means of reconnecting with the local unhoused populations, VSAC Outreach and the Network teamed up to provide survival/self-care packages before and after the winter holidays. Over 100 self-care and survival supply packs were distributed to the Community Fridge program and through the local Indigenous Harm Reduction Team (IHRT).
In December, the Network hosted a winter gathering via zoom, where members were able to share a meal, play bingo from home, connect and celebrate the winter solstice. February saw the launch of the kʷənéʔatkal iʔ iʔsaat website, a space for visibility, resource sharing and creating access.

In collaboration with and facilitated by Qwíqwelstóm – Stó:lō Service Agency, kʷənéʔatkal iʔ iʔsaat hosted two sessions of First Responders to Sexual Violence Training during the month of March. 16 individuals, including school counselors, VSAC staff and community support workers successfully completed the training process and continue to meet, learn and build next steps.

In June, with summer solstice, Juneteenth, and Indigenous Peoples Day, the team focused on recognition and care. A gift bag of local medicines and treats was gifted to our youth presenter and one of our Network members who is celebrating 6 years of sobriety. On June 17th, we honored and gifted our Elders, Kathy and Doug, in celebration of 50 years of marriage. As the summer ends, in recognition of her love and care, we celebrate and offer support to our Elder, Grandma May and her family.

This year, kʷənéʔatkal iʔ iʔsaat Network participants anticipate the first in person gathering since the pandemic, and we continue together, to create opportunities for accessibility, visibility, and connection in addressing and preventing gender-based violence.

-Katie Webb.
Prevention Co-Director
Along with the current Research Manager, they rekindled engagement in the community. Reaching out and listening to schools, previous staff, partners and community members, they acknowledged critical feedback about the program’s history, and committed to learn from past mistakes in order to rebuild a sense of trust and commitment to other organizations and individuals.

These efforts led to more genuine connections where people believe in the work we are doing and are referring to our services more frequently. Organizations such as the Youth Service Providers Network of Victoria (YSPN), City of Victoria Youth Council, Island Sexual Health and Survivor Support, contributed to the promotion of our programs with youth in their networks. These renewed connections have been a key factor in ensuring our curriculum development and workshop booking success. While our journey towards accountability is still ongoing we are grateful for the renewed support and trust of all our partners.

**Pivoting to Virtual Delivery Modalities**

Incorporating the feedback received from youth and partners, we set out to pivot our program delivery from in-person to virtual and online workshops (Pandemic health measures still limiting our access to schools in person). Learning from best practices on virtual learning and engagement, we updated our curricula, developed tools to allow youth engagement, hired a new educator, designed and delivered training for our facilitators, piloted and revised the online curricula.
Revised Healthy Relations and Consent Curricula

In order to deepen our team’s understanding of the specific contexts of gender-based violence and teen dating violence for youth across their various lived experiences, we met and shared best practices with organizations such as NEED2 Suicide Prevention, the University of Victoria Office of Student Life and the Anti-Violence Project (Sexualized Violence Prevention).

It led us to revise our flagship workshop Healthy Relations and Consent, responding to critiques of relating only to white students, of not having content that is intersectional, anti-racist or gender diverse enough. Its curriculum was broadened to include an exploration of systemic power (class, white whiteness, age, ability, etc.) versus personal power, acknowledging intersectionality and emphasizing that power is at the root of gender-based violence. The notion of consent was also broadened, inspired by the work of our community partner Girls and Femmes with Afro-Textured Hair (Black Youth Empowerment) to recognize the relationship between race-based violence and gender-based violence, relating to violations of consent that come in many forms for Black youth, e.g.: other students or teachers touching their hair without their consent.

New Workshops for Teachers and Caregivers: Safer Spaces

Invited by our research partners at the University of Victoria we piloted Safer Spaces, our new curriculum for teachers and youth service providers, in the undergraduate class of Dr. Mandeep Kaur Mucina. With the support and collaboration from the university’s student-led group, the Anti-Violence Project, this session helped us tailor our workshops to the needs and realities of teachers. Feedback about the Safer Spaces training elicited key learnings about violence prevention education:

- The importance of modeling respect by the facilitators when engaging participants in difficult subject matter: “I really enjoyed the respect of the speakers. I found the content to be difficult but I believe the speakers did a great job.”
- Taking a survivor-centred approach: “I enjoyed learning about how important it is to tell a survivor of sexual assault that I believe them.”

Visual excerpt of our revised Healthy Relations and Consent workshop

Visual excerpt from our Safer Spaces workshop
New Youth Leadership Training Curriculum

Our Youth Leadership Training program of 10 sessions for schools has also been revised and updated. Its curriculum now includes discussions of a wider variety of aspects of power, oppression and marginalization as well as a wider definition of what it means to be a youth leader -- moving away from Western and patriarchal understandings of leadership. Thanks to the contributions from University of Victoria practicum student Mackenzie Monroe, a wider breadth of resources now accompanies that curriculum (e.g., videos, readings and activities) to really engage the students in learning. This program will be offered to partner schools first, with other schools being given the option if resources allow it.

Renewed Youth Engagement: A new Youth Council and the first Youth Social Action Camp in three years!

To ensure that Project Respect is youth-centered in all aspects, from its structure to its programming and evaluation, youth leaders from a paid Youth Council have advised us on our community-engaged research process as well as on our policies and procedures. After a two year hiatus due to the pandemic, a renewed successful recruitment and orientation led to the selection of seven youth to form the new 2021-2022 Youth Council. Meeting bi-weekly, they centered youth voices in the community, provided critical feedback and guidance on our workshops curricula, and shared their learnings with members of the Black Youth Empowerment group.

Supported by Project Respect staff, the Council’s youth embodied ways to develop leadership among their peers through the Social Action Camp, our first camp in three years! They conceived and planned activities and goals of the youth-led camp at Camp Pringle by Shawnigan Lake. Trained in research and facilitation with VSAC Indigenous Response Network (kʷən̓ən̓ l̓eł̓ iʔ iʔsaət) coordinator Vanessa Ramsdale, and University of Victoria research advisor Dr. Mandeep Kaur Mucina, these young leaders were empowered to co-facilitate improv and drama games, junk journaling, slam poetry, tie dying, nature walks, canoeing, a talent show and campfire storytelling. The camp was a success: the 17 participants (and their parents) expressed how they appreciated this unique opportunity to build community, foster healthy relationships, develop leadership and embody a consent culture in a caring, inclusive and safe environment.

Most of the time in everyday life, youth voices aren’t respected. In a space like this I feel the respect but I have to seek out these spaces.

A youth council member’s comment
Strengthened Partnerships with Schools: Over 600 students reached

All year long Project Respect staff had ongoing communication with school administration, teachers, and counsellors from our partner schools about how to navigate COVID-19 and deliver our programs safely. These connections facilitated deeper understanding of our programming for school staff, enabled collaborative responses to issues or challenges with program delivery, created space to discuss emergent issues in schools related to gender-based violence, and built a foundation of mutual trust and respect. This helped us develop a fully virtual, yet, live, interactive and engaging Healthy Relations and Consent workshop curriculum. Towards the end of the year, with pandemic measures easing, we renewed our content and delivery modalities again, upon schools’ requests, and delivered in-person workshops.

This last school year, we have reached 640 students in grade 7-9, through 55 workshops, as well as 469 students in grade 10-12, through 24 workshops in seven schools across four school districts in the Greater Victoria Region. Additionally we engaged in Safer Spaces workshops with 38 adult service providers (teachers and youth workers). Finally, we now have two special partner schools who embarked with us on a journey of discovery and implementation of research-based best practices through the Public Health Canada grant Preventing Teen Dating Violence by SHIFTing Culture. This means we will deliver workshops to hundreds of students in several grades, both semesters, as well as to their teachers, while researching and measuring the culture change our interventions may bring to these schools.

Consent ABC’s: A New Young Learners and Parents Resource

Teaching and modeling consent starts early. If we want to create a consent culture, we cannot solely rely on school educators and professionals. Parents of young children can be key allies in the prevention of gender-based violence and power imbalances when they adopt a consent-based parenting style. Our Program Educator Allison Macrae researched and compiled best practices in this matter to create a new resource for parents, Consent ABC’s, which is available on our website: www.projectrespect.ca. It is divided in sections each outlining a different element of consent and boundaries for children – safety, choices, responsibility, and sharing.

Excerpt of our new resource for parents of young learners: Consent ABC’s
In May, the BYE group facilitated their brand new workshop Listening to Black Students and Creating Safer Braver Spaces in Schools, as a professional development session attended by over 70 teachers from Greater Victoria. They discussed vital questions, such as why it is harmful to use the “n” word, how can school staff better support and avoid victim-blaming Black students.

Teachers examined their biases and learned antiracist safer interventions using BYE’s trauma-informed holistic approach for safer-braver classrooms.

This is heavy emotional work and the anti-racism expertise of Nichola Watson, a VSAC counsellor who mentors BYE Black youth and co-founded Girls and Femmes with Afro-textured Hair, has been invaluable in terms of support offered to the youth. Additionally, the exchanges between BYE youth and Project Respect Youth Council youth contributed to new strategic alliances and to the broadening of our curriculum material, redefining the scope of safety, consent and boundaries. For this ground-breaking work, the BYE youth have been recognized and honored and received the Youth Leadership Award from the African Heritage Association of Vancouver Island.

“I used to think that the only reason people did not stand up when they saw someone being bullied was because they don’t want to add more fuel to the fire. Now I know that it is actually much deeper than that. People genuinely do not know if it’s safe enough, some people may be triggered from past events, and sometimes people just don’t know how to approach the situation without making it worse.”

— a participant of Black Youth Empowerment Bystander Intervention workshop

Our continued partnership with the community group Girls and Femmes with Afro-Textured Hair and the ongoing work by Black Youth Empowerment (BYE) youth has been a source of renewal and inspiration. Since 2020 the BYE youth have engaged in deep analysis and awareness work exploring the components of their lived experience of racist and gender-based violence. This year they refined and facilitated their Bystander Interventions workshop twice, empowering their peers to intervene – and to recognize when it is safe to do so – when confronted with race-based issues. These 6 current and former high school students have become leaders in their communities and schools, and have received numerous disclosures from their peers about experience of violence and non-consensual events, including ostracizing comments and behaviors by the adults responsible for their wellbeing: caregivers, teachers, school administration, and school staff. BYE youths’ unique perspective, rarely accessible to external researchers, allowed them to design a completely new curriculum, research-based and trauma-informed, conceived by and for Black youth: Safer Braver Spaces.

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“Preventing Teen Dating Violence by SHIFTing Culture”: Preliminary Findings from our Embedded Intervention Research

Understanding how violence prevention education works in the context of Greater Victoria schools may reveal promising practices that can be replicated in other school communities, in turn resulting in a decrease in gender-based violence. This is the goal of the program evaluation research study Preventing Teen Dating Violence by SHIFTing Culture, a collaboration between Project Respect and University of Victoria’s School of Child and Youth Care, funded through a five-year funding agreement with Public Health Canada. Integrating research within our activities, Project Respect set out to understand the impact of its programming. Pre and post surveys are measuring: the amplification of youth leadership; the youth’s knowledge, skills & behaviours related to consent culture (i.e., root causes of sexualized violence, healthy relations, bystander intervention); school teachers’ and staff’s knowledge, skills & behaviours for intervening and preventing sexualized violence; a school culture shift towards consent culture; the capacity to respond contextually & culturally to diverse youth. This work will contribute to the national evidence base for effective youth dating violence prevention approaches across different contexts. Project Respect is a member of PREVnet, a Canadian network of experts and NGOs dedicated to research and mobilization on bullying and teen dating violence, who will amplify our findings on research-based best practices.

Preliminary Findings

This last year, surveys before and after our Healthy Relations and Consent workshops were piloted by 381 youth in grades 8-12 in seven schools of four school districts in the Greater Victoria region. Preliminary findings show that 80% of teachers reported that our workshop was valuable, achieved key learning goals, created a sense of community, and that they would recommend the workshops to other teachers and school staff.

Students reporting an increase in knowledge/skills about healthy relationships and consent:

- 71% of youth respondent grade 7 - 9
- 61% of youth respondent grade 10-12

Black Youth reporting an increase in confidence level in their bystander intervention skills:

- 100% of Black youth after participating in the BYE-facilitated bystander intervention workshops

Engaged professionals/service providers reporting gains in knowledge/behaviour/practice:

- 94% reported an increase in knowledge and/or skills about how to create a culture of consent
- 80% gained confidence in being able to foster a safer, supportive environment for youth
- 80% reported that after the workshop they will work to address gender-based violence at their school
“In Conclusion: Gender-based Violence Prevention Is a Collective Effort

As we are entering the last year of our funding agreement with Public Health Canada, we are at once focused on sharing our learnings and best practices, while exploring new partnerships and collaborations. Indeed gender-based violence (GBV) prevention work requires staff, community partners, youth and intergenerational allies with diverse lived experiences and expertise who collaborate together to undermine the overlapping forms of oppression that shape GBV differently for different youth and communities. We are grateful for our collaboration and discussions with Black youths and Indigenous leaders and Elders: with them we realized that the impact of GBV prevention is enhanced when the scope of consent, violence, trauma and relationships is broadened from its initial focus on sexualized violence, to include other non-consensual acts, power imbalances, exploitative or extractive relations, land-based, race-based and identity-based violations, white supremacy biases and colonial harms, to name only a few areas of focus. Our exchanges and training with other GBV responders and anti-violence practitioners have reinforced the importance to collectively address the deep seated systemic power imbalances perpetuated within and between our society’s western, colonial and patriarchal institutions and systems (education, health, judicial, administrative). We have much work to do together if we want to disrupt a normalized pattern of violence which has harmed and divided our communities for centuries.

Gratitude

Our team is filled with gratitude for the dedicated youth, school personnel, community partners and VSAC staff who contributed to Project Respect’s success. University of Victoria research advisor Dr. Mandeep Kaur M., Program Educators Allison M., Jelayna V. and Phoebe C., School Program Coordinator Maggie HS-G, Community Program Coordinators Lisa S. and Nat K., BYE Community Program Coordinator Amara M., BYE consultants Dr. Lisa G. and Nichola W., Research Manager Annalea S., Indigenous Response Network (kʷané ḥ̱a ál ḥ̱ɬ̓ ʔətəl iʔ ʔəsam) Coordinators Katie W. and Vanessa R. Prevention Co-Directors Katie W., Laura V. and Sophie R.
The Victoria Sexual Assault Centre’s work in healing, education, and prevention cannot be done without the many funders and donors that sustain our agency. Your gifts keep us resilient and responsive to the needs of survivors and community members.

Hundreds of individuals and businesses renewed their annual support as one-time and monthly donors. This year, 2435 people and businesses gave a total of 4123 donations to support our work. We welcomed 981 new donors to our community of support. We were also recipients of donations from the Victoria Chapter of 100 Women Who Care totaling $19,000 – Thank you to Paulette for your nomination! Over the year 213 people gave to VSAC on a monthly basis, enabling us to budget effectively so that survivors of sexualized violence have the benefit of consistent programs and services.

Every gift was an investment in the work discussed in the pages of this annual report. It has been important for us as an organization to know our community has our back during challenging times. We deeply appreciate the recognition of the essential nature of the sexual assault support and prevention education we provide.

As we look ahead, we are grateful for the strong foundation of support to weather potential challenges in the future. Thank you for your continued support as our organization and sector continue to grapple with the impacts of the shadow pandemic of gender-based violence.
Our Generous Funders

- BC Gaming
- Canadian Women’s Foundation
- City of Langford
- City of Victoria
- Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada
- EVA BC
- District of Oak Bay
- District of Saanich
- Funke-Furber Fund
- James Darke and Anna Tieman Fund
- Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Rotary Club of Victoria – Harbourside
- Shewan Foundation
- Town of View Royal
- United Way of Greater Victoria
- Vancouver Foundation
- Victoria Foundation
- Zonta Club of Greater Victoria

Thank You

We thank our funders for providing survivors with healing and prevention education to the community to prevent future violence.

Support from our grantors provided greater stability to our programming this year. We saw funders shift funding models to be more supportive and accessible to non-profits. This enabled us to receive critical funding to support the adjustments and changes we needed to make to respond to community needs.
Summary of Revenues

- Grants & Donations: 67%
- Gov't Contracts: 31%
- Bequests: 1.5%
- Fees & Other: 0.5%

Summary of Expenses

- Staff & Benefits: 80%
- Programs: 4%
- Admin: 12%
- Fundraising: 4%
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