

# Shockproofing for the Future



My name is Parissa (she/her) and I hold the Executive Assistant/Special Projects role at VSAC. In my one-and-a-half years here, I have worked interdepartmentally supporting projects in policy development; communications; equity, diversity, and inclusion; succession planning; and strategic planning. Most recently, I have been supporting the shockproofing grant project and doing research and evaluation.

It has been a busy and exciting year working on the Canadian Women's Foundation Shockproofing Communities project. This project was created to address the impact of the pandemic on gender-based violence. We have been researching what has worked in adapting our services and programming as a result of COVID-19 in order to understand how these current and potential changes can best meet the needs of our community. Our goal is to have a report with clear data and analysis

in order to shockproof our operations, services, and programming and to remove barriers for underrepresented populations.

We have made two notable changes to the delivery of our services and programming: increased use of technology for remote services and an update of our prevention curriculum to better address the realities of colonialism and racism. We are focusing our changes on services and programming to address the needs of those most impacted by sexualized violence. This has required various levels of structural change.

Most recently, we have been working interdepartmentally to make sense of existing and emergent data. This includes a donor survey, collaboration on new ways to collect demographic data, and setting up our website analytics to better determine how folks prefer to engage with us and potential gaps in service. This research project will also help us determine priorities for our next strategic plan. Stay tuned for a progress update in our spring newsletter.

## 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

The United Nations has designated the period from November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to December 10 (Human Rights Day) as 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

VSAC is commemorating the 16 Days of Activism on social media with posts about the history and activism that inspired the 16 Days, and about how we can address gender-based violence and support survivors of sexualized violence.

Please follow us on social media to be part of the conversation.

## GivingTuesday

GivingTuesday (November 29) is a global movement for giving and volunteering, taking place each year after Black Friday and Cyber Monday. It is a day to celebrate and amplify the work of the non-profit sector. We are working on an exciting campaign for GivingTuesday and look forward to sharing more about it in the days leading to November 29. Please sign up for our e-newsletter and follow us on social media to learn more.

Subscribe to our e-newsletter:  
[www.vvac.ca/subscribe/](http://www.vvac.ca/subscribe/)



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# Direct Client Services Update

In February of 2022, VSAC decided to remove the one-year counselling option from our healing program. The change was made with a great deal of thought and care for the survivors impacted and transparency with our community about why this change was necessary and what services we continue to offer. The removal of this service had a major impact on the waitlists of the individual and group counselling programs. Our individual crisis counselling program, which offers immediate support to recent survivors and to historical survivors of sexualized violence and childhood sexual abuse, is now able to consistently connect survivors to a counsellor within a week of them reaching out to us. This is a significant change from the four-month waitlist that existed before the removal of the one-year service and allows VSAC to respond quickly to survivors in crisis. Since February, we have also been able to offer additional groups to reduce the six-month group counselling waitlist. Currently, all survivors interested in group counselling have been offered a spot, and all new survivors will be offered spaces in our January 2023 group. Overall, survivors have been understanding about the changes, and feedback about our drastically reduced waitlists has been positive. Community feedback has been supportive as well, with partner

agencies and community organizations referring to our services more, now that they are confident survivors will be supported in a timely manner.

We have also been making some program changes in our volunteer department to address the significant impact the pandemic has had on the number of volunteers supporting our Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). Pandemic restrictions on volunteer training have resulted in fewer volunteers, so we are no longer able to run the program 24/7. With staff support, we have continued to offer emergency response to all recent survivors, anytime of the day or night, but we are trying to re-establish an appropriate number of volunteers to support the program. We are now offering two volunteer SART trainings per year; our newly hired volunteer coordinator is dedicated to increasing not only the number of trainings but putting time and resources towards recruiting and supporting volunteers from diverse gender identities, professional backgrounds, and lived experience. Any community members interested in volunteering with VSAC through our SART program, event volunteering, or Board of Directors, please check out our volunteers' page on [www.vvac.ca/volunteer](http://www.vvac.ca/volunteer).

# Important Update On Charitable Status

Thank you for supporting the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre as a donor. We wish to notify you of a change to our charitable status. As of October 29, 2022, the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre does not have Canada Revenue Agency charitable status due to an administrative error.

We have rectified the filing error and are currently applying to have our charitable status reinstated; however, it will take four to six months for the CRA to reinstate our status according to our latest conversations with their representatives.

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 as we remediate the situation.

We will notify the community once our charitable status changes. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Carissa at [carissar@vsac.ca](mailto:carissar@vsac.ca) or 250-383-5545 ext. 115.



201-3060 CEDAR HILL ROAD, VICTORIA, BC V8T 3J5 ♦ BUSINESS LINE: 250-383-5545  
ACCESS LINE: 250-383-3232 ♦ VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [www.vvac.ca](http://www.vvac.ca)



# Project Respect: Youth Prevention Programming

The past year has been marked by adaptation and deep growth as Project Respect worked to respond to youth feedback and the changing COVID-19 context.

## A renewed youth council

To ensure that Project Respect is youth centered in all aspects, a paid youth council advises us on our structure, programming, and evaluation. After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, a successful recruitment led to the selection of seven youth to form a new youth council. Meeting bi-weekly, they centre youth voices, provide critical feedback and guidance on our workshop curricula, and share their learnings.

A major success was our first Project Respect Youth Social Action Camp in three years. The youth council worked extra hard knowing how important this camp would be for campers. Supported by Project Respect staff, these young leaders were empowered to co-facilitate improv and drama games, junk journaling, slam poetry, tie-dyeing, nature walks, canoeing, a talent show, and campfire storytelling.

After the three-day camp, youth who had been total strangers at the beginning had made connections, inside jokes, and memories. Camp is a place where youth can take a break from their daily lives and be their most authentic selves, a place to see others and to be seen, a place where regardless of differences in identities, they all come together with one goal of building community and creating social action.

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.

*"It was a near-perfect experience"... "I liked the late nights with my new friends"... "It was really, really fun, I like meeting new people"... "[I'm] interested in joining youth council!"* – camp participants



## Black Youth Empowerment (BYE)

In the spring, the BYE group facilitated their newest 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 and how school staff can better support and avoid victim blaming Black students. Teachers examined their biases and learned anti-racist, safer interventions using BYE's trauma-informed holistic approach for safer, braver classrooms.



## School-based workshops

Over the past year, Project Respect has adapted programming to a virtual learning environment. We are now able to provide workshops virtually or in person, which allows us to be more responsive to the needs of schools and learners.

We also revised our flagship workshop, Healthy Relations and Consent, responding to critiques of relating only to white students and of not having content that is intersectional, anti-racist, or gender diverse enough. The curriculum was broadened to include an exploration of systemic power (class, 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 to recognize the relationship between race-based violence and gender-based violence. As we move into the fall and winter season, we are focused on sharing our updated workshop in middle schools and high schools across Victoria.

Pictures from the Project Respect Youth Social Action Camp



# kʷənén̓əṭəl iʔ iʔsaət Indigenous Response Network

kʷənén̓əṭəl iʔ iʔsaət:  
"Helping each other get well."

On October 4, the kʷənén̓əṭəl iʔ iʔsaət Indigenous Response Network hosted our first in-person gathering since the pandemic. The event offered a meaningful opportunity to gather together to expand relationships, build community, and continue to deepen our collaboration in preventing gender-based violence in culturally grounded ways.

The gathering was opened by the Esquimalt Nation's Joseph Singers and Dancers, Gilbert, Liz, and Joseph Thomas. Following the dancers' opening, the Network members feasted together over a delicious lunch. We were honoured to have Doug LaFortune, a Tsawout artist who practices both carving and design, lead participants in a

## Meet our new staff members:

### Chelsie Letendre

My name is Chelsie (she/her) and I am the new coordinator for the kʷənén̓əṭəl iʔ iʔsaət Indigenous Response Network. I am currently residing in the shared and uncenced territories of the sq̓əcíyaʔl̓ t̓əməxʷ (Katzie) sc̓əwaθenaʔl̓ t̓əməxʷ (Tsawwassen) QayQayt (New Westminster) nations or what is colonially known as Richmond, BC. I am originally from the Peace region. My dad is Nehiyaw (Cree) and Métis from Kelly Lake, BC and my mom is a white settler who is of German and Dutch ancestry. I also have citizenship with Saulteau First Nation in Treaty 8 through my biological grandfather, from whom I have been disconnected.



I identify as a fat, urban Indigenous, queer, disabled woman who is on a lifelong journey of disrupting intergenerational trauma and poverty. Through my intersecting identities, I have also experienced privilege. I am a first-generation college graduate and graduate student which has allowed me financial stability. I am currently doing a two-year master's degree in social work with an Indigenous specialization at the University of Victoria. I am passionate about social justice issues, decolonizing, and learning ways to revitalize culture. In my spare time, you can find me at a beach, listening to music, or singing karaoke with friends and family.

drawing exercise that explored people's relationship to the land, to each other, and how we can work together to heal one another and our communities.

We look forward to future in-person events where we can continue together to create opportunities for accessibility, visibility, and connection in addressing and preventing gender-based violence.

Logo created by Brianna Bear



### Niambi Cadiz

Niambi Cadiz (she/her) has recently joined the VSAC team as the Resource and Communications Coordinator for the Indigenous Response Network. She was born in the Philippines, raised on the territories of the šxʷməθkʷəy̓əmaʔl̓ t̓əməxʷ (Musqueam), səl̓ilwətaʔl̓ t̓əməxʷ (Tsleil-Waututh), kwikwə̌ləm (Kwkwetlem), and Qayqayt First Nations (colonially known as Burnaby) and currently resides on the territories of the Quw'utsun, Stz'uminus, and Snuneymuxw nations (colonially known as Ladysmith).



She has a BBA in marketing management and has spent most of her marketing career working alongside not-for-profit groups, including working as the Youth Events and Communications Coordinator with the Métis Nation of BC. This role in particular ignited her passion to learn more about decolonization and explore how she can use her marketing skills for social justice causes.

In her free time, she dabbles in various hobbies including woodworking, baking, and paddleboarding. Above all, she prioritizes cuddle time with her cat, Cookie.