

VICTORIA SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



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TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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 ləkʷəŋən and WSÁNEĆ Peoples.

We would also like to express gratitude to the other local Peoples and Nations in this region including the MALAXEt (Malahat), Scia̱hew (Beecher Bay), TSouke (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 anticolonial actions is critical to our work as a community service provider.

WHO WE ARE



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.

Healing,
Education,
& Prevention

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

The Board would like to express our gratitude to the ləkʷəŋən-speaking people on which the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC) sits, as they have cared for this land for a millennium.

This past year has been like the previous years, with constant change at VSAC. The Board will say goodbye to Board members Felix Gilliland and Anna Bruce (who will be staying on in a different capacity as a Committee Member) before the Annual General Meeting on September 28th, 2023. We want to express our gratitude for all the hard work they have provided VSAC during their term on the Board. We want to thank Dr. Sara Beam and Mariel Wendowsky, who both served as Co-Chairs of the Board before stepping away from the role due to personal circumstances. Following in their footsteps, Anna Bruce and Ram Aheer assumed the roles of Co-Chairs in October 2022.

In December 2022, Dr. Elijah Zimmerman, VSAC Executive Director (ED), submitted his resignation as he had an opportunity to work for a nonprofit that would allow him to be closer to his family. We very much appreciate his hard work over the last three years and the positive changes, and impact, he made at VSAC. We only wish Elijah the very best in his new endeavors.

With Elijah's departure, the Board searched for a replacement for Elijah - a challenging task given the job market. Through this search, we were able to offer VSAC's Direct Client Services Manager at the time, Samantha Loppie, the position of Executive Director - an offer which she graciously accepted. Sam brings a wealth of experience and historical VSAC knowledge to the role and has demonstrated exceptional leadership in her time as Executive Director thus far. We are exceptionally lucky to have her in at the helm of the organization. We want to thank VSAC's incredible team of staff members as we worked through this transition and the patience, they provided the search/hiring committee.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

Thank you to the Executive Director Recruitment Committee and the VSAC management team who all gave a lot of energy to this process.

Board members came out to support at VSAC's 30th Triathlon of Compassion - which is a remarkable feat. They were thrilled to spend time with some staff members and other volunteers, as well as cheer on the incredible participants at this landmark event. Similarly, Board members who supported VSAC's booth at Pride were excited to see such interest in engaging with the booth. The Board continues to support the Fast Five Fundraiser and are seeking new fundraising efforts that align with VSAC values. These initiatives have focused on increasing the presence of VSAC in the community as a place of education, prevention of sexualized violence, and healing for those in the community who have experienced sexualized violence, or supporters of those who have experienced sexualized violence.

We would like to thank those who have donated to VSAC over the past year. These donations are necessary for VSAC to provide access to services and programs that support our community. We would also like to thank the volunteers at VSAC, who continue to be a large part of the reason that help and underpin the organization is able to continue to move forward and support our community. To both our volunteers and donors, we appreciate your time, energy, and generosity more than words allow us to express.

With care,
Ram and Anna

Board of Directors 2022-2023

Ram Aheer – Co-Chair

Anna Bruce – Co-Chair

Susie Bowles – Treasurer

Eva Arriaga – Director

Sara Beam – Director

Felix Gilliland – Director

Roshni Narain – Director

Alaya Simpson – Director

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



I am pleased to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC). I am privileged to work closely with the programs and people who support survivors of sexualized violence, their families, and community.

I am an uninvited visitor on the territories of the ləkʷəŋən people, now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt nations, and the W̱SÁNEĆ people on whose land I have worked and lived for the last 9 years. Originally from Nova Scotia, I gained a master's degree in Sociology from Dalhousie University, located in Mikmaki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mikmaq. I have spent the last 10 years in management and leadership roles over a variety of sectors including sexual health, human resources and anti-violence work.

This last year VSAC wrapped up our 2020-2023 strategic plan, successfully completing many of our goals amongst the struggles of a global pandemic. Over the last year we focused on landing our four strategic priorities: aligning VSAC's operations with

our values, fostering care and rest for staff, highlighting the priorities of communities most impacted by sexualized violence and sustainable resource development. As we reflect on the many changes, successes and challenges of the last year, we move forward with a strong foundation of shared values, purpose and priority.

I would like to thank all of the team members at Victoria Sexual Assault Centre who support with the work daily and the survivors and community members who teach us so much about resilience and connection. Thank you to our donors for their generous support and our community partners for their collaboration. We are looking forward into the next three years of strategic planning goals and strive to better support survivors and community as we uphold our mission of ending sexualized violence through healing, education and prevention.

Thank you,
Sam Loppie

COUNSELLING

418

SURVIVORS
SUPPORTED WITH
INDIVIDUAL
COUNSELLING

1181

INDIVIDUAL
COUNSELLING
SESSIONS

133

SURVIVORS
SUPPORTED BY
GROUP
COUNSELLING

254

GROUP
COUNSELLING
SESSIONS

COUNSELLING



Counselling at VSAC is offered through groups as well as individual counselling sessions. Counselling is offered in person, over the phone or by video call. Our counselling is free of charge and offers emotional support in dealing with the most immediate emotional, physical and behavioural reactions to sexual assault. We can provide short term counselling to women, Trans, Two-Spirit and Gender Diverse survivors who are in need of support after recent sexualized violence or childhood sexual abuse. We also provide some sessions to partners, parents and loved ones, supporting a survivor.

We partner with the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) to offer counselling for indigenous women, Trans, Two-spirit and gender diverse survivors at their location. Our counsellor at VNFC can take referrals directly from VNFC's intake and offer both crisis and longer term (6 months) individual counselling sessions.

Counselling Internship Program

VSAC offers one counselling internship spot per year to a student who is pursuing a career in counselling or social work. Our internship program is supported directly by an internal counselling supervisor and supports students in one-on-one counselling sessions, group counselling facilitation, administration support and participation in teambuilding with the organization overall. We were successful in supporting an intern this year, from the University of Victoria, to complete a 300-hour internship.

Group Counselling at VSAC offers a Skills for Healing group that focused on supporting survivors with the development of skills such as communication, mindfulness and grounding. The Skills group runs virtually with up to 12 participants and two counsellors facilitating sessions over 8 weeks.

An important change to the program this year was hiring an internal counselling supervisor to provide direct support to our counselling team and internship program. This position was promoted from within and is another element of the internal and external supports we provide to our counselling team to develop our programs and best support our staff and survivors.

Since making the change last year to remove our one-year trauma counselling program, and focus on short term crisis counselling, we have maintained no waitlist for services. In previous years, we saw survivors waiting 1-4 months to be connected with a counsellor, but are now able to connect survivors consistently within 1-2 weeks. This elimination of the waitlist has allowed us to connect with more survivors, more quickly, and reduced stress on our staff.

VICTIM SERVICES

333

Survivors supported with victim services.

8109

Contacts made between victim services and survivors.

Our specialized Victim Service team provides information and support related to the criminal legal system. Our victim service support workers provide information, support and accompaniment in making police reports, orientation on the court process, assistance with Victim Impact statements, court accompaniment, case status information and assistance with applications for the Crime Victim Assistance Program.

This is our first year with two full time Victim Service Workers, and we continue to see a need for additional support. We have seen a continued increase in the number of survivors who would like information about the criminal legal system and increasingly a desire to know about any alternatives to the traditional legal process. VSAC maintains our relationship with local police departments, Police-based Victim Services and Crown Council to support survivors in the legal process and is developing relationships with community partners who are exploring alternative justice options for survivors of sexualized violence. Our Victim Services Team works in tandem with our counsellors, with many survivors have access to counselling and legal support simultaneously throughout the process.

SEXUAL ASSAULT CLINIC



Our Sexual Assault clinic opened in 2016 and is the first and only one of its kind in British Columbia. The clinic provides an alternative space, to the hospital or police station, for survivors of sexualized violence to have exams and police statements conducted. Survivors accessing services through our clinic are connected with counselling, legal support and community referrals to provide as much wholistic support as we can. The clinic is available 24-hours a day and operated as a resource for our Sexual Assault Response Team.

This year there was a focus on updating our clinic procedure manuals for the Sexual Assault Response Team and police interview space. We continued our excellent working relationship with the Forensic Nurse Examiner Program, who attend with our staff and volunteers to support survivors with forensic and medical exams. Our clinic continued to provide community outreach, touring new police recruits and forensic nurses, meeting monthly with a network of community partners and sharing resources with other organizations across BC and Canada.



Check
out a clinic virtual
tour at VSAC's
YouTube
page!

68%
of SARTs
supported at
the VSAC
clinic

Offers clinic
tours to new police
recruits, new
forensic nurse
examiners and
community
partners

SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM

47%

of survivors accessed SART the same day as they experienced a sexual assault.

105

Survivors supported through 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 30 days. The SART team is also able to support survivors who have been assaulted within the last 7 days, with accompaniment to the hospital or VSAC clinic for medical exams. SART is on call 24-hours a day, 365 days a year and is supported by VSAC staff and volunteers. SART is a collaborative response between the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre and Forensic Nurse Examiner program and can be access 24-hours by calling the Vancouver Island Crisis Line ([1-888-494-3888](tel:1-888-494-3888)) or attending a hospital emergency room and asking for a VSAC SART worker.

This year we continued to experience a reduction in volunteer interest post pandemic. This presented some challenges in filling the 24-hour schedule for SART coverage and called upon VSAC staff more often to fill empty shifts. We have noticed a significant reduction in the amount of volunteer applicants for SART training and are working collaboratively with our community partners to promote volunteer roles in the SART team. Please check out www.vsac.ca/volunteers for more information.

ACCESS LINE

820 calls
to the
Access
Line

Emotional
support,
information about
VSAC services,
community
referrals



The Service Access Line at VSAC provides information about our services, referral to our programs and information about other community services and programs. Our Access Line operated during regular office hours (Monday – Friday) and is the first point of contact for many survivors, community members and partner agencies.

The Access line also supports our counselling, clinic and victim service team internally with file management, statistics and referrals.

This year we focused on transitioning our database system to a new server to increase efficiency in the post pandemic digital world.

We hired a new permanent Access Line Worker into the position, saying thank you and goodbye to our previous staff who remains in an auxiliary capacity. We hired additional auxiliary staff into the programs as well, to support with sick days, vacation and leaves of absence so there can always be support on the Access Line.



VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

57% of SARTs supported by trained VSAC volunteers

Volunteer opportunities at VSAC: SART, Events, Board of Directors, Administration

VSAC board of directors are all volunteers

Event volunteers supported at the Triathlon of Compassion, Pride, Sexual Assault Awareness events and more

Volunteering at the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre may mean providing support to recent survivors of sexual assault, helping out with administrative tasks, assisting with events, or developing policy. There are all sorts of volunteer opportunities with the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre; each demonstrates a commitment to support, empower, and advocate for women, Trans, Two-Spirit and Gender Diverse survivors of sexualized violence.

This year we had a change in volunteer coordination, saying a huge thank you to our outgoing coordinator who supported the program for the last four years and welcoming our new coordinator into the position in May 2022. Our new coordinator conducted two Sexual Assault Response Team trainings this year, which includes in depth training on communication and crisis support, hospital and police tours and program procedures.

There was a focus on supporting Gender Diverse survivors and volunteers this year. VSAC is an inclusive space for survivors, staff and volunteers who identify as Trans, Two-Spirit and Gender Diverse, and volunteer training and ongoing supports have focused on how we can best support folks inside and outside of our organization. Facilitating a Gender Diverse volunteer committee to discuss policy, procedures, and the impact of the work is one way we are supporting our volunteers in a social climate that can expose them to harm and discrimination based on their gender identity and presentation.

Every year we are inspired by the dedication and compassion of our volunteers. The Victoria Sexual Assault Centre would not be able to provide the services it does without their support and commitment. Thank you.

OUTREACH



This year marked the second year of operation of the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre's Community Outreach Program. The purpose of the program is to increase the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre's public presence through new and deepened connections with organizations and communities who may need our services. Over the year, the Community Outreach Coordinator connected with hundreds of community members, survivors, youth, healing professionals, schools and VSAC staff.

Below are highlights from the past year:

- During the year under review, Outreach met with lawyers from SHARP Workplaces Legal Advice Clinic, operated by Community Legal Assistance Society (CLAS). CLAS provides free legal advice to anyone who has experienced workplace sexual harassment in BC. Lawyers from CLAS gave the presentation in June during a workshop for VSAC counselors about their pro bono services for sexual assault survivors and intimated how VSAC can access these services.
- Outreach held a series of meetings with the Equity and Human Rights Office of the University of Victoria brainstorming ideas on how VSAC can create awareness during their Sexual Violence Awareness Week which is held every September. Outreach later held a tabling event during the Community Day organized by the office of Equity and Human Rights and the Anti-Violence Project.
- Outreach attended a sexual assault awareness rally at the Parliament building with Piper, a grade 11 student at Oak Bay High School who is looking to make a change by bringing awareness to sexual assault and harassment that takes place in and around school settings.

OUTREACH

- Outreach collaborated with VSAC's Prevention Department and the kʷənén̓ətəl iʔsaət Indigenous Response Network three times during the fiscal year to place over 150 bags of consumables including toiletries, batteries, chocolates, and other essential commodities at the Community Fridge pantry in Oak Bay for vulnerable members of the community.
- Outreach gave an awareness talk at the Esquimalt High School about VSAC services for the youth. A group of teachers from the school are proposing a sexual assault awareness club and wanted to know what services they could access for survivors. We held meetings with and gave a tour of VSAC to various colleagues including but not limited to: the Outreach Coordinator of the University of Victoria Peer Support Center; Community Coordinator of the Anti-Violence Project; University of Victoria the Gender Equity and Sexual Diversity Coordinator, Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria; aside several in-person meetings (a few virtual) with outreach coordinators from other organizations.
- Outreach participated in the ESA Crisis Line Advisory Committee Meeting; an initiative launched to cater to the needs of immigrants.
- In celebration of the Black History Month, Outreach participated at an online roundtable discussion with Black feminist leaders working to advance the priorities of Black survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), including non-status, refugee and immigrant women, girls, and gender-diverse people hosted by Ontario Council of Agencies Servicing Immigrants (OCASI).
- VSAC tabled at the welcome day celebration and newcomer expo organized by Here Magazine. Featured a beautiful cultural showcase from various countries, workshop, café and networking

PROJECT RESPECT

Consent Education & Safer Spaces

This year, Project Respect's team of educators facilitated a complete transition of their Healthy Relationships & Consent workshops from online delivery back to fully in-person, doing 115 presentations at 13 different schools and community organizations, as well as 2 Safer Spaces training for 112 adult educators and administrators. We partnered with SOGI leads across Vancouver Island and youth-created sexual violence prevention initiatives to deliver tailored presentations and resource. We also revitalized Project Respect's website with the creation of accessible resources on consent for youth, as well as "Consent ABCs", a guide for parents and educators to introduce consent to young children. - by Allison Macrae, Education Program Coordinator



Poster by Chelsea & Charlize, founders of the Vic High Sexual Health Club, one of the youth-led organizations partnered with Project Respect.

Black Youth Empowerment (B.Y.E.)

"This year in B.Y.E we did some pretty exciting work. We grew closer as a team with some wonderful added members (8 members this year) as we built and facilitated 2 workshops on creating safer braver spaces for Black youth in schools! We had 1 safer braver spaces workshop; teachers and school staff were inquisitive and seemed interested in the learning necessary to better our school environments. We also facilitated a table talk where we took turns at a table discussing many race-based topics, to name a few; hair, the n word, racism experienced in schools, misogynoir, and much more. This experience taught each one of us a lot and hopefully shared some important insight with the staff and teachers who showed up. B.Y.E has been a great team to be a part of throughout this year and has given me a voice I love and am forever grateful for." - by Solange Dorsainvil, BYE member since 2021).



Photo taken by Nathan Smith at N8 Images before The Table Talk with Parker Johnson on May 19, 2023 (Top row: Parker, Xavier, Tinaye, Nichola, Naya, Phoebe Bottom row: Samara, Jelina, Solange, Yanet, Laura)

PROJECT RESPECT

Youth Council

“I Can Relate” is a zine created by Youth Council’s group of 6 youth ages 15-20 to share their experiences about the intersections between queer/trans identities and gender-based violence. “Why are we making a zine about this topic? More attention should be brought to this topic, there’s a lack of resources and a lack of research. People often think that queer and trans people aren’t able to cause harm/be violent, which also silences our voices. Gender-based violence doesn’t look any certain type of way, but society accepts and downplays violence towards us because our view on violence is so focused on cisgender and straight people, so when a queer/trans person is experiencing it, they might not even know it’s happening. People know what a toxic straight relationship looks like but doesn’t realize how different it can look.” Written by Youth Council directly from their Zine.



Photo taken after Youth Council Zine Launch on June 22, 2023. Top row: Anabel, Cryptid, Phoebe, Amy; Bottom row: Jessie, Bri, Harley

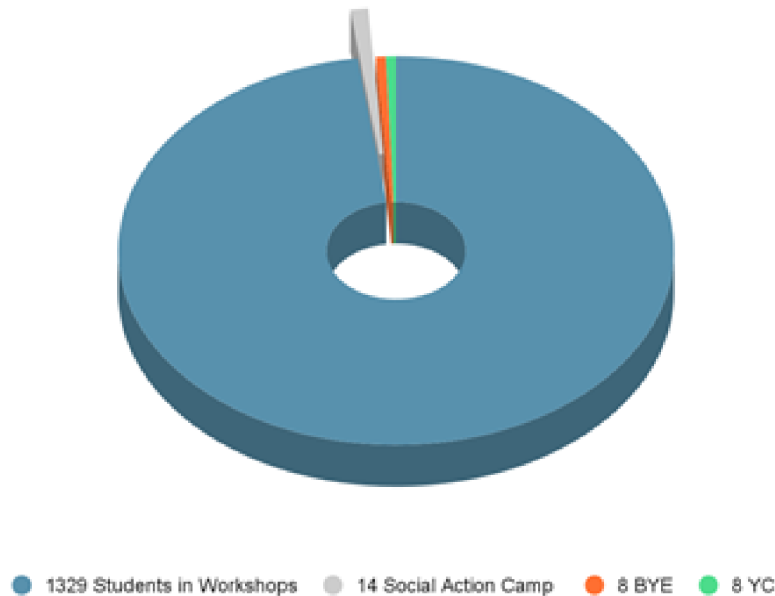


Project Respect’s team shared a meal and reflected on the important work done in the last year to support youth in anti-violence efforts. We’d like to recognize past VSAC staff and youth who made significant contributions to our programs.

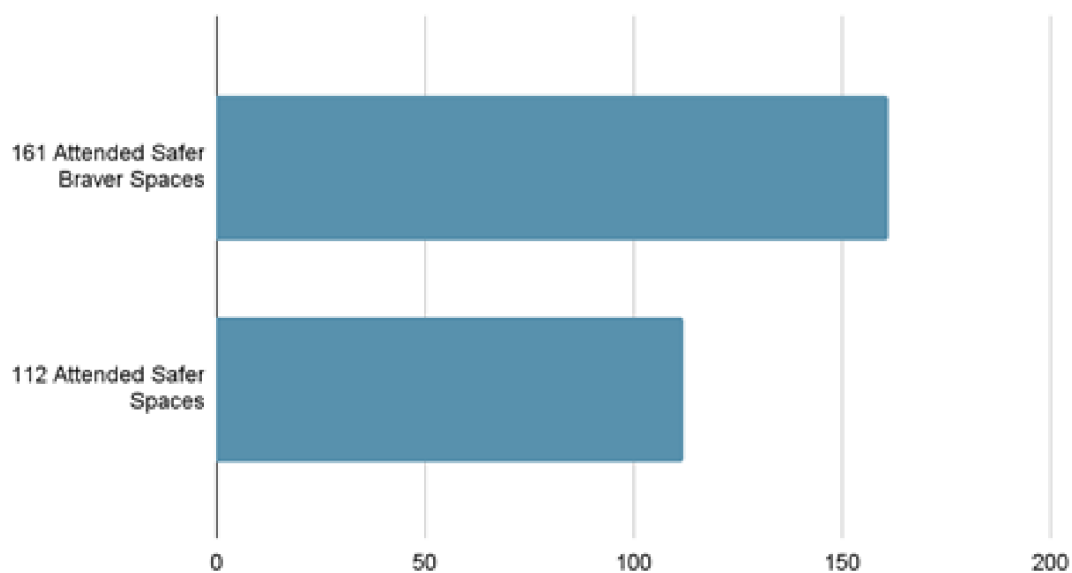
PR PROGRAM REACH

1,329 students attended school workshops + 14 youth attended camp + 14 youth attended community workshops + 10 youth participated in BYE + 10 youth participated in Youth Council = 1,377 total youth.

Youth Participants



Professional Participants



112 safer spaces + 161 bye safer-braver spaces = 273 total professionals.

KʷƏNEN̓ƏTƏL İ? İ?SAƏT INDIGENOUS RESPONSE NETWORK (IRN)

This last year set the foundation for the final segment of Women and Gender Equity Canada (WAGE) funding for the kʷənén̓ətəl i? i?saət Indigenous Response Network (IRN or “The Network”). During this period, the Network focused efforts on relationships, collaboration, resource development and next steps for the Network.

After the completion of Disclosure Training in March 2022, the Trainees met regularly between May and August 2022 to share supportive space, continue learning and collaborate on community needs. The Disclosure Training courses were 5 days long for 2 groups and invited the trainees to critically consider various evidence-based theories, principles and ethics associated with supporting people who are harmed by sexual violence. The Disclosure Training course also took an Indigenous-focused, trauma-informed and mindfulness-based approach to baseline skills on responding to sexual violence disclosures, while situated within an understanding of the Indigenous culturally relevant practices and how multiple identities, social locations and historical contexts inform responses to sexual violence disclosures; and how self-knowledge and self-care are mandatory for the responder. This training is designed for front-line wellness and health staff members, and Indigenous community champions, who are new to working with people harmed by sexual violence.



Network members sharing a song to close our in-person event, May 2022



October 4th, 2022, Elder & Artist Doug LaFortune designing our Network Art Collaboration



KʷƏNENƏTƏL İ? İ?SAƏT INDIGENOUS RESPONSE NETWORK

There have been several shifts in staffing during this period, including the promotion of 1 coordinator to management and the 2nd coordinator leaving to pursue other work. The IRN was able to host the first Indigenous practicum student during the summer of 2022 from the University of Victoria, Masters of Social Work, Indigenous Specialization program. In October 2022, the practicum student joined the team and was hired along with a second coordinator to fill the 2 open roles.

During the summer of 2022, we worked with an external consultant, engaging the Network and staff to support development of a transformative justice themed resource book/guidebook. The guidebook continues to be developed as a living document through the final year of this project. Additionally, the Network continued to work with the Indigenous Harm Reduction Team (IHRT). In July/August 2022, IHRT and their community, hosted a member of the IRN to provide 2 sessions where participants were able to learn how to make beaded lanyards

Fall and Winter 2022 were heavy periods for event planning and grant writing and application. kʷənénəətəl i? i?saət applied to 4 funding streams with the hopes of beginning to map out next steps for the Indigenous Response Network. We have not yet been successful in securing future funding opportunities. On October 4th The Network hosted the first in-person event since the pandemic, coming together at the Esquimalt Gorge Pavilion to share a meal and participate in an art collaboration facilitated by our Elder, Doug LaFortune.

In the New Year, the IRN began to build our relationship with the Surrounded by Cedar Youth Council, gathering twice to share a meal and learning, host space for discussion, brainstorm ways we wanted to work together and begin collaboration on youth supports and resources.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT & ADMINISTRATION

This year the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre celebrated 40 years in healing, education, and prevention. Longevity of this kind is the result of many hearts and hands holding up survivors and the organization. Over our 40-year history, thousands of people have given generously in care for survivors and a belief that healing from the impacts of violence and prevention of future harm is possible. Each year, we reflect on the generosity of our community and are grateful for the overwhelming support of our work.

After 40 years, with many struggles and successes, to say our donors and supporters are amazing feels more poignant than ever. In 2022, we experienced a setback when we temporarily lost our charitable status due to an administrative error. When we shared our struggle with our community, you continued to support us as we took the necessary steps to begin the process of reestablishing our charitable status.

Your financial support has allowed us to continue to provide life-changing services to survivors and prevention education to end violence. Your gifts keep us resilient and responsive to the needs of clients and community members. Thank you for believing in our work.

192 Monthly
Donors

Our monthly donors enable us to budget effectively so that survivors of sexualized violence have the benefit of consistent programs and services. Thank you for your continued support.

3789
Donations

Hundreds of individuals and businesses renewed their annual support as one-time and monthly donors, giving 3789 donations over the year.

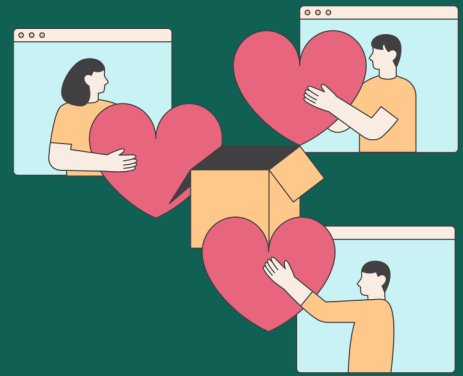
355 New
Donors

We welcomed 355 new donors to our community of support.

1634 Donors

Our annual donors are our everyday champions that sustain our work. This year 1634 people and businesses gave individual gifts.

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS



Grants and contributions from our funders provided stability to our services this year. We saw funders continue to shift funding models to be more supportive and accessible to non-profits, including providing operational funding to support the adjustments and changes we needed to make to respond to community needs. Thank you to our funders for supporting our mission in healing, education, and prevention.

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



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