



Women's Sexual Assault Centre

August 2012 ~ healing, education & prevention

"It is our mission to support, empower and advocate for women who are survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse; and to work towards the prevention of sexualized violence against women."

Q&A with Heidi Exner, WSAC Board Co-Chair

Since 2003, Heidi Exner has engaged in a number of roles, both paid and unpaid – including co-ordinating Project Respect, helping with events like Take Back the Night, Walk A Mile, and volunteering with the Sexual Assault Response Team. Currently, Heidi sits on the WSAC Board of Directors as Co-Chair.

Heidi, you've been a Sexual Assault Response Team volunteer, paid staff (Project Respect Co-ordinator), and now, for the past four years you've sat on the Board of Directors, what is it about WSAC that keeps you engaged?

To put it plainly, this agency has changed my life. So much so, I see my involvement with the VWSAC to be a lifelong commitment.

Why?

Because of what happens when I say I'm with the Centre. People ask me questions. They're curious – and sometimes a bit hesitant. They want to know why I am involved. Was it a "personal experience"? Is it because I know someone who's "been through it"? Is it emotionally challenging to be involved? Is it still "that bad out there"? Other times, they have questions about what to do – like "So, what do you say if someone tells you they've been raped?" or "What's it like to go with someone to the hospital?"

Why do you think people have so many questions about what it's like to work at the Sexual Assault Centre?

I pick up that folks are relieved to have a "safe resource" on the issue – someone who won't judge or blame them for their questions. But every once in a while, I sense they are asking because, perhaps, they've been there. I'm deeply aware of how sensitive an issue it is,

especially for a survivor of sexualized violence.

So I try to remember that any conversation could be one with someone who's a survivor.

Thirty years later, demand for services is still high, and although we've made huge progress since 1982, what work still needs to be done?

If we really want to see an end to sexualized violence, we must look beyond the tip of the ice-burg and get underneath the waterline, where the bulk of the issue lives. WSAC is vigilant in raising awareness about sexualized violence and its



HEIDI as Emcee at Walk a Mile In Her Shoes, May 2011

"If I'm really honest with myself, there is not a single person in my life – regardless of gender – that has not been shaped and impacted by sexualized violence, or the threat of it in our world. Each day, I wake up and the reality of gender-based and sexualized violence shapes my choices in ways that – for quite some time – were entirely unconscious. What will I wear? How will I greet someone?"

(Insert Heidi's signatur)

Heidi Exner, WSAC Board Co-Chair

causes, ending the silence and stigma that often shames, blames and isolates survivors of sexual assault. It does this through its education and awareness work by exposing and addressing the gender stereotypes and beliefs that allow sexualized violence to happen in the first place. VWSAC's "Project Respect" youth program and public awareness events like "Walk A Mile" do the often unsettling, controversial and courageous work of challenging the assumptions that how we dress, act, and identify determines whether we can expect – or enact – sexualized violence.

What do you want our donors to know?

I want them to know how incredibly grateful we are for their contributions of time and money. We could not do this work without their support.

What can they do to help?

How well someone heals from sexualized violence is impacted by how well the community responds to and supports them. Show survivors and their families that you care by attending WSAC events, be a role model for others by learning about the issue and challenge stereotypes, volunteer for SART, and, if you're able, make a one time donation or become a monthly donor.

DONATE ONLINE!



This code will take you directly to our Canada Helps fundraising page, where you can donate directly to WSAC!

Thrifty Food Smile Card Program
We are fortunate to be part of the Thrifty's Smile Card program. Contact us to get a card that you can use when shopping at Thrifty's and 5% of your grocery purchases will be donated to WSAC!



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30 years at the Women's Sexual Assault Centre

1989 - Double budget and increase staff to seven.

1982 - Two women start the Victoria Women's sexual Assault Centre in the basement of a home in Cook Street Village with one phone line.

1998 - Create separate Victim Services Worker position

1999 - Started Project Respect

1994 - Organize first annual Triathlon for healing

1991 - Form Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). A 24-hour emergency service that provides immediate support and information to recent survivors of sexual assault at the hospital or police station

1983 - Publish booklet for teens called "Let's talk about Sexual Assault" & win the Solicitor General's National Crime Prevention Award

2003 - Partner with the Native Friendship Centre to create the Aboriginal Youth Healing & Prevention Program. Also launched www.yesmeansyeas.com

2006 - Respect Revolution youth group receives a Youth Leadership Award in Community Safety from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

2008 - Create the Trauma Informed Practice and Support (TIPS) training program and provide TIPS training to over 10 agencies

2007 - 1st Annual Walk A Mile In Her Shoes

2004 - Project Respect wins Women's Safety Award

2010 - Victoria Foundation honored WSAC with their Leadership Award.

2012 - Develop Transgender Inclusive policy

*You are invited to our
30th Anniversary AGM*

"Celebrating 30 years of leadership"

Thursday, September 20th
4pm-7pm

Ambrosia Centre ~ 638 Fisgard St.
Please RSVP by Sept. 12
reception@vwsac.com
250-383-5545

Appetizers and refreshments will be served.