

SUPPORTING JUSTICE



Shannon is one of our newest members to our **Victim Services Justice Support** program. People may not know that this specialized support is available at the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre, so we sat down with Shannon to hear more about the work she does.

operation, it makes it easier and safer for people to access support. I believe it is more comfortable for people to come here rather than a police station or hospital. The police and forensic nurses come to us to go through whatever the survivor wants to proceed with. Also, the more stigma of sexual assault goes away, the more people will come in for services.

Why do you think having the Victim Services Justice Support program is important?

I know a common feeling is that working with criminal justice system can feel impersonal, survivors can feel that people don't believe them, or have their back. Victim Services are there for that non-judgmental support; our focus is on the survivor. We are there to explain the process and also be there to say, "I believe you."

If someone wants to connect with the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre and access services, do they have to do make a police report?

No, not at all. We are firstly a place to get support and information for people to make the best decisions for themselves. There are different options. Healing is possible regardless of the outcome of the criminal justice system. **It is your process, your choice.** Whenever you are ready, we are here to help.

What is the Victim Services Justice Support program?

We assist survivors of sexualized violence who want to explore the criminal justice system. Starting from the contemplative stages of possible reporting, to supporting survivors through reporting to police, to organizing police to come to our clinic; we are there to organize all of the steps for the survivor. We also support survivors through interviews with Crown Counsel, help prepare people for court and go to court with them. We are able to support survivors through all possible outcomes of reporting and the court process. It can be intimidating, confusing and challenging process, so our main concern is that the people we work with feel as comfortable as possible.

Your program's caseload has doubled in the past year, why do you believe that is?

I think the word is getting out. With our clinic now in

A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

Winter 2016



Makenna Rielly,
Executive Director

The Holiday season brings friends and families together to celebrate and often exchange gifts as a token of our friendship and love. What are the most meaningful gifts we can receive that impact people's lives? This year we ask you to consider giving a meaningful gift to a loved one by making a donation to the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre in their name.

the need for financial support to meet the demand is crucial.

Our **new clinic** provides recent survivors of sexual assault with a calm and private setting to receive medical care and crisis support. The clinic has proven to be a success. Since opening in February, the number of people seeking services has nearly tripled. Additionally, as this clinic is the first of its kind in BC, other communities are reaching out to us for consultation to start their own clinics.

I encourage you to contact us directly to learn more about the programs you support. We invite you to come by for a tour, or we can arrange for someone from our staff to come to your organization or community group for a presentation.

Thank you for entrusting us with your donations. This year we hope you keep us in mind when you are considering a gift for someone. We can send a special thank you to the recipient of your gift and we will send you a tax-deductible donation receipt. **Victoria's most meaningful gifts can start with you!** Together with our colleagues, friends and family we can make a difference.

Peace and Happy Holidays,

Makenna Rielly

WAYS TO SUPPORT



On November 29th, the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre set out to raise **\$50,000 in 50 days** to support survivors of sexualized violence and provide valuable prevention education in our community!

We are unbelievably grateful to everyone who donates. We encourage anyone to contribute to this campaign in any way that they can:

- Donate by mail, over the phone (250-383-5545) or online (www.vvac.ca/donate)
- Join the Monthly Donor Club
- Join the \$1000 Club
- Spread the word - share this newsletter
- For more info about our 50 day campaign, check out vsac.ca/50days

Double your donation

Did you know that there are hundreds of companies in Canada that will **match** the donations their employees make. **What a great way to make your annual donation go further!**

Check out:

www.vvac.ca/matchinggifts to see if your employer is one of the participating companies!

Join us online:

www.vvac.ca

www.yesmeansyes.com

Our blog: www.vvac.ca/blog



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@Project Respect - VSAC
@ Trans and Gender Variant Inclusion at VSAC

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This newsletter provides you with a snapshot of the programs that need your continued support. When making a gift you can choose to direct your contribution to the greatest need, our youth prevention education program, our counselling services, our victim service justice support program or our new innovative clinic.

Project Respect (PR) is our award-winning, youth-led **prevention education program**. PR supports youth to become leaders and take action to address the root causes of sexualized violence and create cultures of consent and respect. There is no core funding provided for prevention education, but we know it is urgently needed to end sexualized violence in our community.

Whether making a report to police or attending court, this can be a stressful and challenging process for survivors. Our **victim service justice support program** provides valuable specialized support to survivors engaged with the criminal justice system. The caseload for this program has doubled this past year; therefore

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.VVAC.CA

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Make a gift on behalf of someone special in your life

Name of recipient: _____

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Please include this information with your enclosed green donation card and we will send a special thank you to the recipient on your behalf.

A PLACE FOR HEALING TO BEGIN

ROOTED IN RESPECT

Welcome to the **Victoria Sexual Assault Clinic**. Take a look at this new facility we have in our community!

With the support of individual donors as well as the Ministry of Justice, United Way and the City of Victoria, the clinic opened February 2016. **The clinic is the first and only one of its kind in BC.** Instead of going to the hospital and/or a police station, recent survivors of sexual assault now have the option to come to the clinic: a calm, confidential and compassionate space.

Our goals with opening the clinic are to break down the barriers that many survivors face when trying to access

support as well as streamline the process for survivors (of all genders) so they can receive medical/forensic care, support and options for reporting to police (if they choose to) all in one location.

Our community partners like the dedicated team of forensic nurse examiners and local police have embraced the clinic and feedback has been overwhelming positive. More importantly, survivors who accessed services at the clinic have expressed feeling welcomed and safe.

Encouraging changes from the clinic so far:

- The number of people accessing services has more than doubled - **more people are getting support**
- Wait times are reduced
- Total time of emergency response and service delivery is reduced - on average 1.5hrs, previously it was 3hrs.
- More survivors feel comfortable to bring family and friends with them to the clinic
- Other communities are reaching out to us with the desire to start their own clinics



↑ VSAC staff Michelle Moreno, Ana Guerra and Karen Wickham

→ Clinic reception and waiting room



→ Fully equipped clinic exam room

↓ Forensic Nurse Examiners station



← Toiletries and clothing are available for survivors



← Private washroom for the clinic exam room

Photos by Liz Cronin



← Private clinic support room, spacious, wheelchair accessible, small kitchen area for coffee, tea and food



← Eagle feather given to VSAC from the BC Association of Native Friendship Centres.

The clinic is a positive space that welcomes and supports queer and Trans survivors



← The clinic houses two police interview rooms with state-of-the-art audio/visual recording equipment

→ Police interview room survivors can use to report to police if they choose to



Sage Lacerte, Youth leader, Project Respect

The **Rooted in Respect Food Justice** program is the newest extension of innovative programming cultivated by our tremendous prevention education team, Project Respect. Rooted in Respect is a two-year project that explores the connections between sexualized violence, colonization and food justice.

Sage Lacerte, one of the youth leaders of Project Respect, shares her experiences about her involvement with Rooted in Respect:

This summer Project Respect was extremely proud to host the first Rooted in Respect Food Justice Camp! Rooted in Respect hopes to create a beautiful community where youth of indigenous and non-indigenous



It's been an exciting and invigorating year for Trans Inclusion, and it also marks the end of the original 3-year Trans Inclusion project

(though we're not done yet!). This project has had a profound effect on the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre, reflected in changes to policy and procedure, a growing confidence and capability in serving Trans, Two-Spirit, and Gender Diverse people, a deeper understanding of gender-based violence, and the change of the agency's name itself.

Another important aspect has been holding trainings and workshops in our wider community to directly support service providers and organizations working towards Trans inclusivity. Our Trans Inclusion workshops - developed and facilitated by 12 awesome members of the Trans community - have reached nearly 900 staff, volunteers, and students.

backgrounds can share their knowledge and personal experiences about food, food culture and respect for the land, ourselves and



Youth leader Addie Elliot with Tsalilip Elder Mae Sam who offered teachings throughout the camp.

others.

The territory we live and work on is full of gloriously lush animal and plant life. We took the opportunity to explore the beauty the land has to offer by asking local knowledge keepers to show us what exactly has sustained the folks who have lived here for centuries.

We were welcomed with open arms by many throughout the community including **Welland Orchard** where we were able to harvest countless

pounds of apples, the **Songhees food truck** who graciously supplied a modern take on traditional indigenous foods, and **Beangka Elliott** who gifted the group with a trip to what is known as Tod Inlet where we began to learn some of the WSANEC traditional uses for leaves, berries, roots and bark.

The third day of camp ended with a gratitude circle. Everyone involved (who started out as strangers!) shared how grateful they were that there was a place we could go to feel safe and enjoy sharing stories about the many different ways food binds all of us together and can heal.

*The Rooted in Respect Food Justice Program is generously funded by the **Homer Foundation** and the **Victoria Foundation***



Rooted in Respect apple sauce was gifted to the clinic to give out to survivors.

TOWARDS INCLUSION

By Alexa Robin, Trans Inclusion Coordinator

Workshop feedback has been overwhelmingly positive:

"Every aspect of this workshop worked, I really connected with the open dialogue, how safe everyone felt to voice their opinion or listen to others, and how brave people felt in sharing their misconceptions, questions, struggles etc. It really speaks to how comfortable the facilitators made everyone feel in the room which is really amazing given how many people were in the workshop."

- Staff at **Victoria Youth Empowerment Society**

What these trainings have also shown us is that the need and demand for this work is greater than ever, which brings us to the exciting part - we're going on tour! With the generous support of the **Vancouver Foundation** and **VanCity**, we're continuing this critically needed project. While we continue to learn and grow as a Centre, we'll also work closely with other agencies across Vancouver Island in connecting with local Trans, Two-Spirit, and Gender Diverse communities, and in furthering their own Trans Inclusion work.