VICTORIA SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

HEALING, EDUCATION, AND PREVENTION
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.

TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Our Centre is located on unceded Lkwungen and WSÁNEĆ territories. We use the word unceded to recognize that this land was never relinquished by Indigenous folks and that settlers continue to inhabit these lands without permission. As part of our work, we recognize colonialism as a root cause of sexualized violence and its continued impact on people’s ability to heal. As a Centre, we work to build meaningful relationships with the people from these territories and beyond.
REPORT FROM MAKENNA RIELLY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

After serving as the Executive Director for the past 10 years I want to acknowledge many of the accomplishments our team has achieved over that time period and the continual pursuit of maintaining excellence in our work, which sometimes can be strained by our funding shortages.

The heart of our agency is our programs and services we offer in healing, education and prevention and what it takes from our incredible staff to ensure that these programs are a success. Whether we are talking about our trauma informed counselling, or our award winning youth-led prevention education; and our Trans Inclusion Education, we take all of our programs seriously.

In addition, none of these program services can perform their work without the support of our administration and resource development teams who play a key role in making everything that we do here possible. I cannot thank all of our staff, interns and volunteers enough for the hard work that they do every day.

As a feminist organization we are dedicated to providing a full range of services that support survivors of sexual assault and historical childhood sexual abuse. These services include an intake line, sexual assault response team (SART), clinic for medical exams and evidence kits, victim services; and crisis, group, and long-term trauma processing counselling. Our services go beyond just crisis information and offer transformative life-skills and support that mitigate the long-term effects of trauma, such as PTSD, depression and suicide.

After 36 years VSAC continues to be recognized provincially as a leader in the field of trauma response and prevention. Two years ago Victoria Sexual Assault Clinic was B.C.’s first and only integrated sexual assault clinic. Shifting key services from the hospital and police stations to one centralized location, the clinic provides recent survivors of sexual assault with medical exams, forensic exams, crisis support, police interviews, and connections to other community resources. Since opening the clinic in February 2016, we have experienced a 169% increase in survivors accessing the services now offered at the clinic. The success of the Victoria Sexual Assault Clinic demonstrates not only the effectiveness of this innovative service delivery model but represents a clear need for this clinic in the Victoria community and beyond. Due to this success, the trickle down effect is increased demands for crisis intervention, crisis counselling, and justice support.

This year, in order to maintain our clinic services, we had to close our crisis line and change over to an intake line. We are seeking additional funds to bring this service back, to avoid wait lists for services, and maintain services as the Clinic has no core funding.

The Victoria Sexual Assault Clinic was made possible through a generous one-time civil forfeiture grant provided by the Ministry of Justice. We rely on various grant opportunities and fundraised dollars to keep its doors open. The clinic has quickly become an essential service that our community cannot live without. We continue to advocate for core funding for this essential service and in the meantime we will be applying for grants to meet the demand.

Eight years ago we began an innovative measure to save overhead costs through a successful Administrative Consolidation with Victoria Women’s Transition House. I served as the Executive Director for both agencies and this fall 2018 the partnership will be dissolved to pursue more funding opportunities for both agencies. As a result, I will be departing as VSAC pursues a new innovative leader to assume responsibility for this essential agency in our community.

To all of our supporters, we are very grateful to have your support and keep you apprised of our funding pressures. Again, it is not just the cost of the clinic, and the loss of our crisis line, but also the impact of increased demand in crisis services. With the #MeToo Campaign our crisis calls for additional services has again jumped, and there is nothing worse than having to put people in crisis on a wait list. Now more than ever, we ask for your continued commitment to ensure that survivors of sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse have access to life-changing services. We continue in every way to value the gifts that you provide to support the needs of the people we serve every year. Thank you for assisting us to make a difference in many lives and supporting our work in the community.

Makenna Rielley, MA, Executive Director
The Victoria Sexual Assault Center (VSAC) Board of Directors experienced a year of change, bringing about new opportunities, ideas, and members. We say goodbye to, and sincerely thank, Lisa Josza, Nat Johnstone, Kelly Branchi, Melanie Litoski and Dr. Gulrose Jiwani. Thank you for your dedication to the center and community. The financial audit for this past fiscal year was presented to the board members by the Finance Committee. The board voted unanimously to pass the motion to approve the audit.

Our Board members had a busy year as we continued our support with the agency's fund-raising events. This spring we continued our popular Fast-Five Fundraiser for the second year, expanding it to more members in the community with increased participation. We continue to receive positive feedback from the community as they look for ways to support our centre. In the summer we received continued and record breaking support from the Triathlon of Compassion. Board members participated and volunteered in the event. Thank you to Human Powered Racing for their ongoing support, this is the centre's longest running fundraiser.

Earlier in the year we received a visit from the Federal Status of Women Canada for our progressive work. VSAC is recognized nationally as a leader in the field of trauma response and prevention. We have a proven ability to develop and deliver innovative, trauma-informed and inclusive programming that prioritizes community partnerships, increasing accessibility, and being responsive to the diverse needs of survivors. Co-Chair Sean Dhillon attended a national round table in Toronto to discuss and participate with other agency leaders across Canada, including the Honorable Minister Maryam Monsef, in the first national Gender Based Violence survey. The discussion assisted the Federal Government's upcoming Gender Based inclusion Policy in 2019 and provided feedback about their national Gender Based Violence Knowledge Centre launching in Fall 2018.

Our Victoria Sexual Assault Clinic continues to be BC’s first and only integrated Sexual Assault Clinic. Demand for its services is placing funding pressures. The Board continues to lobby the Provincial Government for core funding of the clinic. A Government relations team including past and present MLA’s and MP’s are assisting us in reminding the Provincial Government of the increased demand for our services over the year. In addition the Board has begun the process to search for a new Executive Director, the Board and staff are looking forward to maintaining client services and expanding new programming. The Board thanks Makenna Rielly for her hard work, dedication and service to the agency.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge our community of donors and supporters for their generosity and commitment to the work of our agency—we are tremendously grateful for your support.

Sincerely,

VSAC Board of Directors,
Sean Dhillon (Co-Chair), Julia Denley (Co-Chair),
Claudia Fabbri, Peter Gibbs, Melanie Wilson, and Sheldon Kitzul
THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS & GRANTORS

A heartfelt thank you to the funders and grantors whose generous support sustains VSAC’s transformative services for survivors and maintains the vital prevention education we provide to the community.

BC Gaming – Project Respect & Trans Inclusion
Chris Spencer – Trans Inclusion
City of Victoria – Clinic
Coast Capital Savings – Project Reclaim
Department of Justice Canada – Clinic & Crisis Services
Department of Justice Canada, Victims and Survivors of Crime Week – Booklets about Services
Employment and Social Development Canada, Enabling Accessibility Fund – Office accessibility upgrades
Greater Victoria Saving & Credit Union Legacy Fund – Project Reclaim
Harweg Foundation – Greatest Need
Horner Foundation – Project Reclaim
Hunter Family Foundation – Greatest Need
Inspirit Foundation – Project Reclaim
Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General – Stopping the Violence Counselling & Victim Services contracts
Provincial Employees Community Services Fund – Crisis & Information Line, Crisis Services
Service Canada, Canada Summer Jobs – Project Respect
Shewan Foundation – Greatest Need
Shoppers Drug Mart – Victim Services
SM Blair Foundation – Project Respect
Telus Community Foundation Victoria – Project Respect’s Cyber Violence Project
Thrifty Foods Smile Card Program – Counselling Program
United Way of Greater Victoria – Clinic & Project Respect
Vancity Community Fund – Trans Inclusion
Vancouver Foundation – Trans Inclusion
Victoria Foundation – Project Respect’s Cyber Violence Project
Zonta club of Greater Victoria – Clinic

OUR DONORS

The Victoria Sexual Assault Centre relies on the support of our community to sustain and grow our critical services. The generosity of individuals and businesses keep our doors open to welcome survivors who are seeking healing and justice, and empowers us to continue to provide effective education on violence prevention and inclusion to the broader community. Whether you give through mail campaigns, telemarketing, online, as a monthly donor, through one of our annual fundraising events like the Triathlon of Compassion or Fast Five Fundraiser, or by throwing a fundraiser for us, we are grateful for your gift.

This year 2,349 donors supported the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre, giving over $219,000 to support our programming. Thank you for believing in the transformative power of sexual assault support services and prevention education. We are grateful to have each and every donor as part of the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre community.

REVENUE AND EXPENSES 2017-2018

Right: VSAC supporters Jodi and Laureen Bali raised $1,537 through a raffle benefiting VSAC.
REPORT FROM DIRECT CLIENT SERVICES

Written by Linda Amy, Manager of Direct Client Services and Karen Wickham, Clinic and Access Coordinator

The Direct Client Services team has had a busy year due to the success of the clinic and increased public awareness from the #MeToo campaign.

The Stopping the Violence program offered its first Foundations for Healing group for Trans, Two-Spirit and Gender Diverse survivors of sexualized violence this year. This group was offered following consultation with community members who indicated this was a needed resource in the community. We continue to seek funding so this can be offered on an annual basis.

My heartfelt thanks to the ongoing commitment, expertise and compassion of the Victim Services, Crisis Counselors, STV Counselors, SART Workers, Access and Clinic Coordinator, Administration and Volunteer Coordinator, for the exemplary care that you provide.

CRISIS/ACCESS LINE

One significant challenge that we faced this year was the restructuring of the Crisis Line to the Access Line following a 35 year history. In March 2018, due to funding constraints, and to ensure that we can meet the increased demand for our counselling and justice services, we made the difficult decision to reduce hours to the crisis line and change its mandate from providing immediate emotional support and information to primarily providing intakes for our face-to-face services.

This change has impacted the community who had become accustomed to the specialized response to survivors of sexualized violence.

Support calls are now referred to Vancouver Island Crisis Line. Vancouver Island Crisis Line will screen callers for survivors of recent sexual assault who will be directed to the SART Worker. A new protocol has been developed between VSAC and VICL to encompass this new procedure. The program change resulted in a wide variety of changes including print material, website, data collection and a complete re-visioning and rewrite of procedures for the new Access Line.

In March a Daytime SART worker position was created to meet the needs of increased SART responses as well as an increasing number of support calls referred to SART from Vancouver Island Crisis Line.

The Access Line is available 14 hours per week to assess contacts for services at VSAC. This has been a difficult shift for people trying to access VSAC services. There is a significant backlog of calls and emails. A process of prioritizing contacts is in place that addresses some of the highest need but increasing calls from community professionals indicate difficulties people are experiencing accessing services outside of the Sexual Assault Response Team mandate.

“My VSAC counsellor has walked with me from a very scary, dark place to productive, peaceful life.”

- VSAC client
The Clinic had a very successful second year! We have seen an increase of 169% increase of individuals accessing SART compared with access prior to the opening of the Clinic. This means more survivors are receiving essential supports and access to services after experiencing trauma.

The Victoria Sexual Assault Centre and the South Island Forensic Nursing Program began the year receiving an award from Health Employers Association of BC Collaborative Solutions Award of Merit.

Interest in the Sexual Assault Clinic continues to grow with Victoria Police, Saanich Police, Westshore RCMP and the National Investigative Service Canadian Armed Forces utilizing the police interview rooms with survivors. The Forensic Nurse Examiners, SART workers, Victim Services, survivors and community members report that the clinic is a comfortable, calm and compassionate place where survivors can come to begin their healing.

Clinic tours continue on a regular basis with a wide variety of community and policing agencies.

Karen Wickham in the soft room where VSAC support workers provide clients with options and support

Clinic Examination Room

One of the two police interview rooms at the Clinic

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM REPORT

Thank you to our amazing volunteers! From providing SART services during evenings and weekends, to supporting us in the office and helping with fundraising initiatives, to serving as a board member, volunteers make the work of the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre possible.

This year has been busy for the Volunteer Program at VSAC. The spring 2017 Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) training added 10 new volunteers and the spring 2018 SART training added 10 new volunteers to the program. In addition 3 new Senior SART workers were trained to help provide after-hour support to SART workers. This last year we have seen quite a few long-term volunteers move on or move away from Victoria. To increase our numbers we will be running a Fall SART training starting in October and focusing recruitment of Office and Fundraising Volunteers. Board recruitment was completed in the spring.

Spring 2018, Sharde, our Volunteer Coordinator started a leave from VSAC. She continued working some hours completing the Spring SART training. Ali Shewan was hired August 2018 as temporary Volunteer Coordinator and is currently setting up the next SART training and actively recruiting a variety of volunteers.
REPORT FROM PREVENTION

Written by Elicia Loiselle, Prevention Manager

Project Respect:
Project Respect, the sexualized violence prevention program of the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre, works to engage the whole community in addressing the root causes of gender-based violence. Project Respect’s Rhizome Youth Social Action Team, made up of youth ages 12-21 from across Lkwungen and WSÁNEĆ territories (Greater Victoria), are key partners in creating and implementing the vision for the program.

In our school-based work, we engage classes of youth ages 12-19 in sexualized violence prevention workshops, providing skillfully facilitated, safer spaces for young people to begin to think critically about, act to resist, and create positive alternatives to the harmful (yet normalized) messages they receive about gender, relationships, sexuality, and violence. Programming addresses individual, relationship, and societal level influences by focusing on knowledge change, skill-building, attitude change, and social change. Our 2-part classroom workshops continue to be in high demand with many schools booking this programming for entire grades of students in middle and high schools.

Project Respect continues to deepen and broaden the impact of our youth-led social action in order to address the root causes of sexualized violence and create a cultural shift toward wide spread consent culture. In particular, through our food justice work, we have had the privilege of partnering with Tsartlip community leader Beangka Elliott to collaborate on Project Reclaim, a youth-driven, land-based project that engages youth from the Tsartlip Nation to lead their community in healing from, resisting, and preventing violence through two key, interconnected program components:

1) youth-led land restoration to create greener, healthier community spaces, and
2) the youth-led development and delivery of culturally relevant violence prevention curricula to schools and communities

Together, these program components will work to foster safer communities free from violence.

Project Reclaim:
Project Reclaim is centred around key themes/goals such as: building consensual and respectful relationships with land, water, animals, and each other; reclaiming land-based knowledge for Indigenous youth; and decolonizing gender-based violence prevention education and social action by addressing the ongoing harmful impacts of colonial violence in our local communities. Project Reclaim uses a mentorship model, through which Tsartlip youth and Indigenous youth from neighbouring nations are supported by and learn from elders and community mentors. This intergenerational project is implemented by the hands of all willing community members of WSÁNEĆ Nation (Tsartlip, Tseycum, Tsawout and Pauquachin).

The project also seeks to foster practices of consensual allyship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous project partners, youth, and community members. This is an ongoing and transformative learning experience and is shaping Project Respect’s work across all of our projects.

For the summer of 2017, we hired two amazing youth staff from the Tsartlip community, Adelaide Elliott (who began working with Project Respect in 2016) and Graham Olsen, who worked full time on Project Reclaim in July and August. Addie and Graham worked with Beangka to engage youth and other community members in the restoration of a community playground (including removal of debris and invasive plants and creating native plant gardens that can be harvested by the community); worked with Project Respect staff to start developing and delivering consent workshops that would be culturally relevant for Tsartlip youth; hosted community volunteer days to support the land restoration work; and, developed and disseminated communications tools to share the project with the community (e.g. newsletters, social media, posters etc).

This collaboration on Project Reclaim has enabled all project partners to learn from each other and strengthen our abilities to collectively address colonial violence as a root cause of gender-based violence.
Addressing Cyber Violence:

In early 2018, Project Respect also began a new youth-led social action project that engages youth from across our communities in understanding and creating strategies to address the root causes of cyber violence. Cyber violence is the expression of systemically rooted violence (e.g., misogyny, transphobia/trans antagonism, homophobia, racism, ableism) enacted through social media. It can include: controlling/manipulative messaging, non-consensual sharing of photos, rumours, harassment, predatory behaviour etc. Cyber violence impacts nearly all of the (approx. 1000) youth we reach annually through our sexualized violence prevention initiatives; yet, they say responses to this violence are often inadequate, if not irrelevant, or even harmful. Like violence experienced offline, the impacts of cyber violence are often traumatic. Victim-blaming responses result in retraumatization, isolation, and profound negative impacts on young people’s mental and emotional health. Many parents, teachers, and service providers tell us they do not feel well equipped to address this issue with youth. This youth-led project is filling a significant gap in youth-led, sex positive, consent-based, trauma-informed, intergenerational, cyber violence prevention that actively addresses root causes.

Staffing:

A heartfelt thank you to our dedicated and highly skilled prevention team. This team of incredible people create transformative safer spaces for young people and their communities to talk about challenging issues and create collective action for social change. They bring a diversity of experience, insight, approaches, and perspectives that continually enrich anti-oppressive violence prevention work. This past year, our highly skilled Prevention team included: Elicia Loiselle, Kim Smith, Alexa Robin, Beangka Elliott, Adelaide Elliott, Graham Olsen, Lane Foster, meg neufeld, Alyx MacAdams, Tanille Geib, Niko Mumford, Astri Jack, Jonathan French, Quin Djurickovic, Sarah Graham, Yasmine El-Hamamsy, Megan Quigley, Nabeela Ramji, Shantelle Moreno, and Audrey Wolfe.

Challenges:

Funding cuts and reduced staffing capacity continue to impact the ways we are able to provide our vital youth-led education and social action programs to the diverse communities we serve. These cuts have specifically impacted the number of our 2-part consent workshops we are able to offer in classrooms and community programs. These workshops are a critical component of our work. Teachers, counsellors, and school administrators have been relying on us to offer this violence prevention and healthy relationships education for the past 18 years. Project Respect does not have core funding and unfortunately we find it challenging to secure new funding for our school-based workshops as many funders are seeking to fund new projects rather than existing initiatives, despite the clear need for and success of this existing programming.
INCLUSIVE SERVICES REPORT

Written by Lane Foster, Inclusion Coordinator

Trans Inclusion work at VSAC is going strong as we complete the second year of our project, “Integrating Trans Inclusion with Service Providers on Vancouver Island,” and move on to our final year, funded by the Vancouver Foundation. This last year we’ve been excited to continuously build relationships with service providers and Trans, Two-Spirit, and Gender Diverse community members in the Cowichan Valley, Campbell River, Nanaimo, and Ucluelet. Many agencies have become invested in and dedicated to ongoing Trans Inclusion work to better serve their clients, and create more inclusive spaces so all of those seeking supports, especially those that are most marginalized, feel welcome and safer accessing services.

This last year we also said goodbye to our amazing Trans Inclusion Coordinator, Alexa, who presented at the Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health (CPATH) in Vancouver, among many other successful milestones in our ongoing inclusion work. This next year, the new Trans Inclusion team (Lane and Jaq) are looking forward to deepening the work within the agency and externally with other service providers up island.

Above: Lane and Alexa tabling at Alt Pride and the Victoria Pride Festival
Makenna Rielly, Executive Director

**Direct Client Services:**
Linda Amy, Lorinda Allix, Catherine Charlton, Catherine Day, Ana Maria Guerra, Amanda Lynn Halldorson, Shadi Khan, Sharde Long, Jude Marleau, Paula Murphy, Barb Peck, Nichola Watson, Metta VanderVliet, Shannon Weinkauf, Shannon Rasion & Karen Wickham.

**Prevention:**

**Inclusive Services:**
Alexa Robin, Lane Foster

**Administration and Resource Development:**
Lindsay Pomper, Kara, Taylor, Mateo Moreno, Lane Foster, Chava Field-Green, Heidi Gayleard, Myriah Breese, Lorelle Posten, Christine Wright, Sharon Stewart, Carissa Ropponen, Victoria Szstanek, Alison Heard, and Layla Mustafa.
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