Table of Contents
Mission Statement & Values .......................... 4
Territory Acknowledgement .......................... 5
Executive Directors Report ............................ 6
Report from the Board ................................. 7
Direct Client Services Report .......................... 8
Prevention Report ........................................ 12
Inclusive Services Report .............................. 16
VSAC's Year Infographic ............................... 17
Resource Development Report ....................... 18
Our Vision

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.

Our Values

As a feminist agency, we value:

- Communicating in a direct, caring, confidential, and honest manner, showing respect, gentleness, acceptance, and celebration of each other in all our diversity;

- Each individual’s self-defined inner knowledge, empowerment, and right to dignity;

- A safe, accessible, and effective centre where individuals are supported towards healing from sexualized violence;

- Social justice for all;

- Enacting an anti-oppressive framework, that acknowledges societal and systemic barriers and our own positions of power and dominance;

- Being transparent and accountable to the community regarding how and why our policies and practices are determined, enacted, and altered.
Territory Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the Host Communities and Nations in whose unceded territories we work and live: the Lkwungen and WSÁNEĆ Peoples. We use the word unceded to recognize that this land was never relinquished by Indigenous people and that settlers continue to inhabit these lands without permission.

We also express gratitude to the other local Peoples and Nations in this region including the MALAXEt (Malahat), Scia’new (Beecher Bay), T’Sou-ke (Sooke), Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht Peoples.

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 recognize engaging in anti-colonial action is critical to our work as a community service provider and we work to build meaningful relationships with the people from these territories and beyond.
The 2018-19 was an eventful year at the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC). At the end of September, we said goodbye to Executive Director (ED) Makenna Riley who provided inspired leadership to the Society. Under the 2013 Administrative Consolidation Agreement with the Victoria Transition House Society (VTHS), Makenna served as ED to both organizations. Makenna launched VSAC’s award-winning stand-alone sexual assault clinic that provides integrated one-stop support for sexual assault survivors. She kept the Crisis Line going through years of turbulent and precarious funding and established the Access Line as a replacement.

Linda Amy who was the Operations Director and Direct Client Services (DCS) Manager became Acting ED. Linda provided critical operational management during what proved to be a destabilized and stressful transition. Ending the Administrative Consolidation was a daunting challenge. Separating the accounting, financial and payroll systems was ably managed by Linda and VSAC’s new Accounting Manager Joan Bone. After months of finding new problems and pitfalls, by the end of December most issues had been resolved or a plan to do so was in place.

The changes at VSAC highlighted some long standing issues and tensions. The staff and management addressed the concerns head on and by the end of March, VSAC had a renewed sense of purpose, optimism and gratitude about the critical contribution VSAC services provide in supporting survivors and working to prevent sexualized violence.

I joined VSAC as Interim ED in mid-March under a one-year contract to support VSAC’s transition to a permanent ED.
Report from the Board

The Victoria Sexual Assault Centre Board of Directors experienced another year of change, new opportunities and growth. In the fall, our focus was on transitions following the administrative separation of VSAC and the Transition House, and the resignation of the Executive Director. We would like to recognize the work of Linda Amy as Acting ED, and the whole team during this period of transition.

Spring brought many opportunities, and we hired Jane Sterk as your Interim Executive Director. Jane’s knowledge of the organization and the sector has helped bring stability to the organization as we search for our next long term executive director.

We received major grants -- a $200,000 grant from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General to help cover operational costs for the clinic, and two significant five-year grants from the Federal Government. The Public Health Agency of Canada will support expanding and evaluating Project Respect at a school wide level and Status of Women Canada will support a “Collaborative Decentralization” Project focused on indigenous survivors of sexualized violence. These grants will help us to expand our work in the community and work towards inclusion and our aspiration to being violence free. We recognize the significant work of VSAC staff in obtaining this funding, and now to implement this programming.

Thank you to our donors, supporters and volunteers for your continued generosity in supporting our organization and the work that we do.

Sincerely,
VSAC Board of Directors
Kathryn Robertson (Co-Chair), Melanie Wilson (Co-Chair), Julia Denley, Alisha Brown and Sheldon Kitzul
Direct Client Services Report
Written by Samantha Loppie, Direct Client Services Manager

As the new DCS manager, I feel lucky to have been welcomed into such a great team. I am continually impressed by the commitment and compassion of the staff and am happy to be a part of this organization and the amazing work being done for individuals and the community.

Access Line

The last year has seen the development and stabilization of our Access Line. The line is staffed 9 am - 5 pm Monday through Friday with calls going to voicemail after hours. Thanks to the dedicated work of our Access Line staff, callers get the support they need, whether seeking information getting connected with VSAC services or being referred to other community organizations, such as The Men’s Trauma Centre. After hours crisis calls are directed to the Vancouver Island Crisis Line where survivors receive immediate support.
Crisis Counselling

Our Crisis Counsellors continue to be busy with clients in need of immediate short-term support. Specific times of year, such as the end of school terms, holidays and summer festivals can cause increases in the need for crisis support and those trends continue. The crisis counsellors at VSAC do an exceptional job of providing clients with the immediate support they need while preparing them to connect with further services available at VSAC and other organizations that can best serve their needs.

Stopping the Violence Counselling

Our STV Counsellors continue to provide individual and group counselling to our clients, with waitlists ranging from a few months for groups to 18 months to years for individuals; reflecting the need for these services in our community. Counsellors have been working collaboratively to review and revise counselling materials and handouts to better suit the needs of clients and to reflect VSAC’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. This process will be ongoing, to best serve the needs of our clients moving into the future.

Victim Services

The Victims Service team continues to provide clients with information and support when dealing with the police, courts and the intricacies of the legal system. Continued collaborations with Team Victoria connects VSAC’s Victims Service workers with local police detachments, crown council and forensic nurse examiners for policy development and reducing barriers and finding solutions for clients accessing services. In 2018, Victims Service worked with the Pro Bono Society at UVic, an organization that connects law students with local organizations to conduct research and create information for their clients. This collaboration resulted in a pamphlet, for clients and their supporters, on reporting sexual assault and is now available on our website in five languages.
**Clinic**

The clinic continues to be successful in its third year; thanks to the great work of our clinic team, resource development department and community partners. The use of the clinic for recent survivors of sexual assault has grown almost 10% since last year with more survivors choosing the clinic over the hospital for forensic or medical exams, although our SART team provides hospital accompaniment if that’s the survivor’s preference. Communication and relationship building with local police detachments and organizations across the island increase awareness of the clinic and VSAC’s follow-up services and encourages more folks to access our services.
Volunteers

There have been lots of exciting changes in our volunteer program this year with 25 new volunteers recruited and Ali Shewan accepting the role of Coordinator of Volunteers. The Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) training in the Fall/Winter saw one of the highest retention rates, starting with 16 trainees and accepting 15 new volunteers onto the team. Whether it’s a SART call in the middle of the night, a weekly office support shift, a monthly Board meeting, or spending a day at an event, thank you to all of our volunteers for your dedication to supporting survivors in our community – we simply couldn’t do it without you!
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 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. 2019 marks the end of our second decade delivering sexualized violence prevention programming in schools and communities across Greater Victoria!

Project Respect’s popular education, participatory, youth-led approach fosters deep engagement, critical thinking, working across difference, and collective leadership among youth. We use a variety of embodied, arts-based, dialogue, and experiential techniques to engage the diverse learning styles of youth in our projects. We also create leadership opportunities for youth who are often passed over in other contexts.

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. 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. Throughout the past year we have worked with over 900 youth in 8 schools to identify and intervene in the root causes of exclusion and sexualized violence.
Cyber Violence Prevention

Cyber violence (the expression of systemic violence enacted through social media, including: controlling/manipulative messaging, non-consensual sharing of photos, rumours, predatory behavior) impacts nearly all of the youth we reach annually through our sexualized violence prevention initiatives; yet, youth we work with say that responses to this violence are often inadequate, if not irrelevant, or even harmful. The impacts of cyber violence are often traumatic. Victim-blaming responses result in re-traumatization, isolation, and profound negative impacts on young people’s mental and emotional health. Many teachers and service providers tell us they do not feel equipped to address this issue with youth.

We implemented a project to fill this significant gap in youth-led, sex positive, consent-based, trauma-informed cyber violence prevention that actively addresses root causes.

Through a series of youth-led cyber violence meetings we hosted in summer 2018, as well as the 2018 Youth Social Action camp, youth created consent-based, sex positive, cyber violence prevention curriculum components to be delivered in schools to address gaps in knowledge and to contribute to a more positive learning environment.

This project greatly enhanced Project Respect’s ability to respond to the specific realities of online and digital violence in the lives of youth inside and outside of school. We are adding resources to www.yesmeansyes.com to help teachers, caregivers, & adults who work with youth address cyber violence.
Project Reclaim

Initiated in 2017, Project Reclaim is a partnership between the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre’s youth-led gender-based violence prevention program, Project Respect, and Tsartlip Nation youth and community members, including Project Reclaim Coordinator Beangka Elliott, a young leader whose vision for her community is the foundation of this project. Project Reclaim’s Indigenous youth-led, intergenerational, land-based, decolonizing initiative, engages communities in preventing, resisting, and healing from colonial and gender-based violence. We achieve this through land based learning via land restoration; mentorship with elders; youth-led development of culturally relevant gender-based violence prevention curricula, and youth-led action that incorporates arts and digital media. This work is grounded in WSÁNEĆ values and worldview, and the project activities are visioned by WSÁNEĆ youth and community.

Over the past year, Project Reclaim collaborated on: 19 land restoration workshops engaging 245 participants; 5 youth leader capacity building workshops engaging 67 participants from Stelly’s School Indigenous Leadership class and the WSÁNEĆ Leadership School youth leader club; 2 community consultation events to build culturally relevant violence prevention; 6 Indigenous Food Justice Workshops engaging 133 participants; and 6 community presentations engaging 245 participants. This past Spring, Project Reclaim and Share Wisdom organized a successful Indigenous Youth Festival aimed at promoting Indigenous wellbeing, with 60 participants.

Summer youth staff, Danya Erasmus, shares the impact Project Reclaim has had on her life:

“Through my work at Project Reclaim, I strengthen my cultural identity and my understanding of the fundamental and complex relationship between the land and our bodies. As an Indigenous womxn whose traditional territory continues to be highly impacted by environmental violence, Project Reclaim gave me the awareness, skills and vocabulary to identify that violence and how it impacts my life. My training with Project Reclaim has enhanced my facilitation skills and leadership capacity, and has given me the confidence to initiate positive change in my own community.”
SHIFTing Culture: New Multi-year Funding

To build on our innovative, youth-led approaches in our school-based work, in October 2018, Project Respect secured 5-year funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada to embark on a youth-led participatory action project addressing youth dating violence. The SHIFTing Culture Project is designed to support cultural shift within schools through the delivery and evaluation of our whole school approach. This approach involves three program components in each partner school each year of the project: 1. 2-part consent workshops to the broader student population; 2. An intensive youth leadership and social action training program for a smaller number of students, through which youth participants create social actions that engage their peers in the school; and 3. Training and support for teachers and school staff to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

In addition to these components, a group of youth ages 12-21 from various communities will collaborate with Project Respect staff using Youth-led Participatory Action Research methodologies to design the evaluation of this project, gather and analyze data from their peers, and create program, policy, and practice recommendations that will support consent culture and gender-based violence prevention in their school communities.

We are very excited about the opportunities that lie ahead as we continue to work alongside youth, schools, parents, and other community members to address violence and create consent culture in our schools and communities.
Inclusive Services Report

Written by Lane Foster, Inclusion coordinator

Lane and Jaq, the Inclusive Services team, are finishing up their third year of funding from the Vancouver Foundation for the project, “Integrating Trans Inclusion with Vancouver Island Service Providers.” There’s been lots of relationship building and learning with local and up-island service providers who are invested in making their agencies inclusive to Trans, Gender Diverse, and Two-Spirit communities. In meeting with agencies up-island, they identified barriers to access as well as support they need to provide services to these marginalized communities. To make the work sustainable as the project funding comes to a close, VSAC’s Inclusion team created a self-assessment tool for anti-violence organizations to review their own trans inclusion practices and policies.

Inclusive Services participated in a panel at BC’s first conference on responding to violence against sex workers. They collaborated with WAVA W Rape Crisis Centre and facilitated a 3-hour workshop on trans inclusion at the EVA BC Annual Training conference in November. Representatives from anti-violence organizations across the country attended this session, raising VSAC’s profile within the wider community and sharing their teachings on inclusion with a wide array of agencies. Inclusive Services is gearing up for some exciting new work this year and is thrilled to be supporting the interests of marginalized survivors at VSAC, as well as throughout the community.
Last year, the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre:

Received **2035 calls** to our service Access Line from people in need of support.

Provided **critical crisis support and access to medical interventions**, through our SART and Clinic programs, to **121 recent survivors** of all genders across 13 municipalities.

Provided **988 individual crisis counselling sessions** and **1329 trauma counselling sessions**. A variety of techniques, such as EMDR, Somatic, Narrative & art therapy are used by our counsellors who are all trauma specialists.

Devoted thousands of hours to provide **justice support to 384 clients**, on the phone, at the Clinic, courthouse, and the police station, through our **Victim Services Program**.

Delivered **prevention workshops** to over **900 youth in 8 schools** to identify and intervene in the root causes of exclusion and sexualized violence.

Built relationships with service providers and Trans, Two-Spirit, and **Gender Diverse community members** in the Cowichan Valley, Campbell River, Nanaimo, and Ucluelet. We supported those agencies to deepen their **Trans Inclusion work** and create more inclusive spaces for survivors.
"Thank you for believing in the transformative power of sexual assault support services and the prevention education we provide."

I am moved by the support we received this year: 2,218 individual donors and local businesses supported the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre through one-time gifts, monthly donations, and third party fundraisers, giving over $268,000 to support our programming. Each and every donation makes a difference in the life of survivors. Thank you for sustaining our work in healing, education, and prevention by entrusting us with their donations.

In addition, we had three donors leave a lasting legacy of healing through their generous bequests totaling $268,982. Their contribution will provide survivors with support of years to come.
Thank you to our Funders

Thank you to the funders and grantors who sustained our programming this year.

- BC Gaming
- Canada Post Foundation
- City of Victoria
- Coast Capital Savings
- Department of Justice Canada
- Freedonia Foundation
- Funke-Furber Fund
- Greater Victoria Saving & Credit Union
- Legacy Foundation
- Hunter Family Foundation
- Inspirit Foundation
- Life on this Planet Fund
- Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General
- Provincial Employees Community Services Fund
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Department for Women and Gender Equality Canada
- Service Canada, Canada Summer Jobs
- Shewan Foundation
- Telus Community Foundation Victoria
- Thrifty Foods Smile Card Program
- United Way of Greater Victoria
- Vancity Community Fund
- Vancouver Foundation
- Victoria Foundation
- Woodsmere Holdings
- Zonta Club of Greater Victoria

Triathlon of Compassion

This year marked the 25th anniversary of our largest annual fundraiser, the Triathlon of Compassion. Together our community raised over $34,500 in support of survivors of sexual assault! The event was marked by participants’ care and passion for making a difference in their community. It is incredible what a group of committed people can accomplish.

The Triathlon would not be possible without Human Powered Racing, the race organizers, and our fabulous sponsors: Trek, Robert Cameron Law, Peninsula Coop, Passion Sports, Arbutus Physiotherapy, Frontrunners, 91.3 the Zone and 100.3 the Q.

We look forward to next year and hope you’ll join us!
Staff & Board at the Clinic 3rd Anniversary Open House.

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