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Charitable Registration Number
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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 MALAXE’T (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.
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.

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.
We have navigated many changes over the last year. In the fall 2019, we embarked on the journey of looking for a charismatic and thoughtful leader who would passionately reflect Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC)'s values while leading us in creating our vision for growth into the future. In February 2020, we were excited to welcome Elijah Zimmerman as the new permanent Executive Director for VSAC!

Within weeks, Elijah lead VSAC through the changes and unknowns of living and working during a pandemic. Elijah has embraced this challenge and worked with staff to maintain services, while shifting the organization to a virtual environment and ensuring the well-being of staff, clients and volunteers.

With Elijah onboard, we said goodbye to Jane Sterk, our interim Executive Director for the previous year. We want to take this opportunity to acknowledge Jane’s significant accomplishments working with staff to lead the organization to a new sense of purpose, optimism and gratitude for the critical contribution VSAC services provide to support survivors and prevent sexualized violence.

As we navigate our way through uncertain times and shifting priorities, Elijah, the Board of Directors and staff have worked with Cicely Blain Consulting to develop a strategic plan to guide us in growing VSAC into the future. We look forward to seeing the report soon and joining together to achieve the goals collaboratively defined in the strategic planning process.
Moving forward we will focus on supporting VSAC through the pandemic, growing our endowment fund and fundraising efforts, increasing diversity on the Board, and exploring options to expand our office space.

Thank you to our donors, volunteers and other supporters for your continued generosity in helping VSAC to make a difference.

Sincerely,

Melanie Wilson (Co-Chair), Christoph Peck (Co-Chair), Nancy Carleton (Secretary), Kelsey Topola (Treasurer), Madeline Lusk and Susan Ross
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC) continued dynamic and thoughtful operations in the 2019-2020 fiscal year with a specific focus on stability and increased internal and external connection. Interim Executive Director, Jane Sterk, led the team with expertise in policy development, team dynamics, clinical counselling, and administration. She supported increased evaluation, revision of policies, and procedures and further built a culture of open communication and collaboration.

Under Jane’s direction, VSAC continued successful operations of our best practice Clinic and Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), our array of Direct Client Services, and developed new pathways in our Prevention programming to address gaps in survivor supports for Indigenous communities. The dedicated and nimble administrative staff kept operations running smoothly and financially on target to support service provision and needed growth.

I arrived in mid-February as the permanent, Executive Director, and was immediately engaged in provincial-level discussions on how to best support our sector and survivors. Soon after that, VSAC quickly adapted our services to continue serving our community and survivors during our collective response to COVID. Staff, volunteers, donors, and partners recognized how acutely vital our services are in times of stress and uncertainty.
As we look ahead into the next fiscal year, we're poised to realize a three-year strategic plan, and we'll remain agile and responsive in our direct client services, programming, and resource development as the pandemic unfolds. Since 1982, VSAC has championed best practices in supporting survivors of sexualized violence and developing innovative programming for education and prevention. We carry forward this legacy, rooted in collective wisdom and strength.

Sincerely,

Elijah Zimmerman
Executive Director
DIRECT CLIENT SERVICES TEAM
LAST YEAR WAS A TIME OF CHANGE FOR VSAC’S DIRECT CLIENT SERVICES PROGRAMS (DCS), WITH A NEW DCS MANAGER, A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND IN MARCH 2020 ADAPTING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. AS THE NEW MANAGER OF THE DCS TEAM I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO THE TEAM FOR BEING SO WELCOMING DURING MY FIRST YEAR; I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF GETTING TO KNOW THE STAFF AT VSAC AND AM CONTINUALLY IMPRESSED BY THEIR COMPASSION AND DEDICATION TO THIS WORK.

Thank you,

Samantha Loppie, Direct Client Services Manager
ACCESS LINE

In 2019/20 the Access Line saw an increase in client contacts, expansion of auxiliary staff and adaptation due to COVID-19. The Access line responded to over 800 client contacts (increase of 18% from the previous year); half of which were new clients (an increase of 32%). The Access Line team continues to do an incredible job supporting clients and community organizations with information about VSAC services, while acting as an administration hub for internal staff.

The Access line hired two Auxiliary Access Line workers in 2019/20, who provide additional support and coverage for our permanent Access staff when needed. Both started with VSAC as Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) volunteers and were also hired as auxiliaries in our Daytime SART program. We are very happy to welcome Jaq and Cheantelle to these roles!

COVID-19 brought much adaptation to the Access line; in March of 2020 the Access team created systems for counsellors to connect with clients, navigate waitlists and document information in a secure and confidential way remotely. While we are still adapting our systems to meet new pandemic policies and procedures, the Access Line team is an integral part of providing services in a way that respects the health and safety of clients and staff.
The clinic continued to provide survivors with a more comfortable and accessible space for medical/forensic exams and police interviews. In 2019/20 the clinic saw a slight decrease in survivors accessing this space based on the emergence of the Coronavirus in early 2020 (decrease of 13%, mostly due to reduced numbers Dec 2019 - Mar 2020) The clinic did not suspend medical services at any point during the pandemic; taking every precaution to protect the health of survivors, SART volunteers and forensic nurses.

In 2019/20 the SART team engaged in 660 contacts (phone and in-person) providing information and emotional support for recent survivors of sexual assault. SART staff and volunteers did not suspend any of their services due to the pandemic and remained available 24/7 for survivors, providing the 67% of survivors who contacted SART on evenings and weekends, with no change in service.
In 2019/20 the Victim Service (VS) program saw 220 new clients (15% increase) and 6,399 contacts with clients (25% increase). VS workers supported clients through 116 court sessions, 26 police statements and 100 clients received support navigating the forms and documents associated with receiving funds through victim assistance programs.

VSAC’s partnership with the University of Victoria’s Pro Bon Law Students of Canada (PBSC) chapter continued in 2019/20; resulting in three research projects conducted by law students and supervised by VSAC staff. Between September and December 2019 five students created documents exploring the collection of demographic information, information on sexual assault laws to inform education workshops, legal considerations related to posting on social media and information for school administrators about sexual assault disclosures. VSAC will be working with PBSC again in 2020/21 on new projects.

The COVID-19 adaptations for VS workers had been especially difficult to navigate as they operate in close connection to police departments, crown councils and courts; who all operated under different pandemic procedures.
CRISIS COUNSELLING

In 2019/20 the crisis counselling program saw over 352 new clients (increase of 6% from last year) and conducted 1095 individual sessions (11% increase). This program showed increases in all levels of triage, including youth, recent sexual assaults, historical sexual assaults, childhood sexual abuse and referrals from outside organizations).

The crisis counsellors adapted to COVID-19 changes very quickly in March when the Centre made the decision to move counselling services to virtual delivery. Without missing one day of service, counsellors offered support to clients over the phone and via video chat to help them navigate not only their experiences with sexualized violence, but also the challenges of healing during a pandemic.
STOPPING THE VIOLENCE COUNSELLING

In 2019/20 the Stopping the Violence (STV) counselling program saw 96 new clients (6% decrease from last year) and conducted 1177 individual sessions (11% decrease); some significant decreases were seen in early 2020 with the emerging pandemic. The STV program provided 74 groups, ranging from 5-12 weeks in length, for over 400 clients; these groups provided clients with the material and environment to learn skills related to stability, boundaries, communication techniques, healthy relationships and sexuality.

During the last fiscal year, the partnership between VSAC and the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) hired a new Indigenous STV Counsellor to provide counselling services to VNFC clients. The hiring process was a collaborative effort between VSAC and VNFC to find a counsellor that embodied both organization’s philosophies. We were happy to welcome Charlene to this role in June and continue to grow and develop the partnership between our organizations.

The adaptations to COVID-19 in the STV program took all counselling sessions online or by phone in March 2020. Since that time clients continue to be seen virtually and we look forward to offering our first virtual group in the fall of 2020.
The Inclusive Services team has had a busy year! They completed their Vancouver Foundation-funded project, “Integrating Trans Inclusion with Vancouver Island Service Providers.” In September, the Inclusive Services program transitioned to the Direct Client Services department to reflect their important work supporting marginalized survivors of sexualized violence. In the fall, the team focused on developing VSAC’s first annual Inclusion training, interviewing staff and the board, and building their training based on feedback and VSAC’s values. The program hired an Inclusive Services Assistant, Orillia Gail, who assisted Inclusion with several projects and provided an impactful in-service to staff on disability and sexuality. They also assessed and edited the SART training manual, and helped to organize Peers’ Red Umbrella March in December.

The New Year started off with the team’s delivery of the 2-Day Inclusion training to all staff—it was jam-packed with material on anti-oppression, intersectionality, decolonization, trauma-informed practice, recognizing and intervening in microaggressions, and much more. The training was a success and the team continues to incorporate staff feedback and new learnings to improve the training.
Lane, Inclusive Services Co-Coordinator, developed a keynote presentation with WAVA W Rape Crisis Centre’s Inclusion Coordinator and delivered their talk on Trans Inclusion at the Crosshatch Training on Lil’wat and Squamish territories in March. They also helped to organize and speak at Peers’ Mind the Equality Gap Forum. Jaq, Inclusive Services Co-Coordinator, dedicated their time to developing the Inclusion Board training and assisting in delivering several VSAC Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) training workshops.

The New Year also brought with it the beginning of two new Inclusion projects – The Vancouver Foundation-funded project, “Transforming Justice, Healing Communities: Creating Alternative Responses to Sexualized Violence,” as well as the Victoria Foundation-funded project, “We Belong: Inclusion for Marginalized Survivors of Sexualized Violence.” The Inclusion team is excited to engage in these new projects and continues to strive for making services more inclusive, accessible and just for marginalized survivors of sexualized violence.
The volunteer program has seen many exciting changes in the past year! Throughout the spring and summer of 2019, the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) training was revised to have an inclusive, intersectional lens integrated throughout all materials. The updated training was run in the fall of 2019 to a cohort of 16 trainees, and 14 successfully completed the program. The fall of 2019 also saw the integration of 3 new Senior SART volunteers, all of whom had been dedicated SART Support Workers. They have transitioned into this mentorship role wonderfully, offering support and guidance to on-call SART volunteers.

Last year’s Annual General Meeting saw the election of 5 new volunteers to our Board of Directors. The new Directors joined the Board ready to take an active role and have been guiding VSAC over the last year along with existing Directors.

The volunteer program moved to a digital volunteer management database, Better Impact, in early 2020. The most significant change has been the online self-scheduling and hours logging functions which have helped volunteers coordinate their schedules more easily and has freed up staff time.
Office volunteers continually supported VSAC operations through bi-weekly shifts. Unfortunately, COVID-19 forced VSAC to temporarily suspend this program in an effort to keep our office traffic as minimal as possible. We look forward to inviting them back to VSAC as soon as possible.

To our volunteers, we simply cannot thank you enough. You guide our organization, offer much needed day-to-day support, support recent survivors of sexual assault, and mentor other volunteers. You are an incredible group of people and we are so fortunate for the time, energy, wisdom, experience, and hope that you provide to VSAC and survivors in our community.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!
Access Line workers responded to over 800 client contacts, connecting survivors to our services, offering referrals and support.

The Sexual Assault Response Team responded to 113 recent survivors at our clinic and the hospital, providing information and immediate emotional support.

Our Victim Services Team supported clients through 116 court sessions and 26 police statements, and 100 clients received support to access funds through victim assistance programs.

VSAC counsellors facilitated 74 group support sessions that encourage connection and build skills for healing to 420 clients.

The Inclusive Services Team developed and facilitated VSAC’s first annual Inclusion training to enhance our ability to provide effective services to survivors most targeted for violence.

Our counsellors provided 1095 crisis counselling sessions and 1177 trauma counselling sessions to aid survivors on their paths to healing.

VSAC began a 5-year collaboration with local Indigenous communities to develop culturally grounded and community-led healing options.

Project Respect expanded workshops in high schools through a Public Health Agency of Canada Grant that enables a whole-school approach to prevention education.

Volunteers contributed over 8200 hours to supporting survivors in our SART program, on the Board of Directors, at community events, and in the office.

THIS YEAR...
PREVENTION TEAM: PROJECT RESPECT & ᐱ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ ᑕ
It was an exciting year for Project Respect, with many fantastic events, changes in the team, and the delivery of engaging, responsive programming for youth in our community.

In April 2019, we held our fourth annual Youth Social Action Camp at Camp Thunderbird, on T’Souke Territories. Youth came together over three days to explore the root causes of gender-based violence and approaches to social action. Through workshops, art, creative research methods, and conversation, youth and staff explored the power imbalances experienced by youth, and the various factors that form our identities.

Through summer 2019, we worked hard to revamp our website (yesmeansyes.com) and our logo. Early this year, our team welcomed new auxiliary educators to the team, as well as our Community Coordinator, Amara! We partnered with six local schools to deliver consent workshops, social action training, and staff consultations through our multi-year SHIFTing Culture Project. Our Research team worked hard this year to solidify our Youth Participatory Action Research methods, and received ethics approval for this work from the University of Victoria.
Our Youth Social Action Team was also busy throughout the year, learning facilitation skills, and participating in exciting research projects such as Photovoice and survey creation. The youth team also worked hard to put together an amazing program for our March 2020 Youth Social Action Camp, which was unfortunately canceled due to COVID-19.

As always we are so grateful for the support of our community and funders, and we look forward to the coming year as we work from home to continue delivering our program to youth and the broader community!
In April 2019, VSAC received 5-year funding from the Department of Women and Gender Equality to work in meaningful collaboration with local Indigenous communities to develop and implement support and healing options that are culturally grounded and community-led, centring the knowledge, experience, and leadership of Indigenous women, youth, 2Spirit people and sex workers. The early months of this project involved meeting with community members to discuss how people wanted to see this project unfold, and organizing the first meetings of a network of community members who would gather regularly over the next 5 years.

In December of 2019, VSAC was thrilled to have Lacey Jones of the Snuneymuxw Nation and Chaw-win-is from the Cheklesaht Nation both join the team to support this project. In the first meetings of the collaboration network, it became clear that it is foundational to operate in a way that is grounded in local teachings and governance. The winter meetings focused on working together to better understand, respect and implement coastal laws. We also spent time discussing colonialism, gender diversity, gender-based violence and impacts on Indigenous communities.

During the pandemic, a smaller working group of network members has been guiding the work of this project to meet the needs of Indigenous folks facing issues of gender-based violence within homeless communities in the Victoria area.
Currently, a campaign is being developed that will focus on offering socially distanced discussion about colonialism and gender-based violence to folks staying at Hotels and different parks in tents. These discussions will explore the question: “If gender-based violence isn’t a teaching of local coastal laws and governance, then what are the teachings of the Coastal peoples?” (from Nuu-chah-nulth March Against Sexualized Violence 2006).

An important part of this work has also been renaming the project to orient us all toward our collective commitments to upholding local law and governance. Local Coast Salish artist Brianna Bear designed a beautiful logo for the project and we have also connected with local Lekwungen language speakers to establish a new project name in the Lekwungen language: kʷənēʔatəl iʔ iʔsaat. This translates to “helping each other and getting better.” The working group spent considerable time discussing the meaning of the project and deciding on the translation of this name, which reflects the spirit of care, relationship, and reciprocity that are at the core of this work. We look forward to the fall and the upcoming gatherings that will take place over Zoom to move forward with this work.
As I reflect on the last year, I am reminded that our work in healing, education, and prevention is truly a communal undertaking. Thank you to each person who responded to our fundraising mailings and phone calls, raced and fundraised at the annual Triathlon of Compassion, contributed to our events and hosted fundraisers on our behalf, donated supplies, and raised awareness about gender-based violence. We are also grateful to our funders and grantors for trusting in our work and providing financial support to sustain our essential programs.

Our collective efforts to support survivors and build a world free from sexualized violence are powerful. You have helped our agency grow to meet the needs of those impacted by sexualized violence. Together, we’ve weaved a web of care for survivors; from emergency sexual assault response and crisis support, to trauma counselling and help to access justice, to prevention education and community relationship building for more inclusive services. Your generosity enables survivors to emerge from the trauma they have experienced with restored strength, resilience, and resistance.

The support of our community sends a clear message: Survivors are valued. Survivors are believed. Healing is possible.

With sincere thanks.

Carissa Ropponen
Manager of Resource Development
Last year, 1,920 community members and businesses donated over $290,770 toward our programs. A legacy of healing was left by 2 generous individuals who bequeathed $43,669 to VSAC.

Monthly donors enable us to budget effectively so that survivors of sexualized violence have the benefit of consistent programs and services. Last year monthly donors contributed over $38,600 to VSAC.
OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS

BC Gaming
Canada Post Foundation
City of Langford
City of Victoria
Coast Capital Savings
Department of Justice Canada
Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada
District of Oak Bay
District of Saanich
Funke-Furber Fund
Greater Victoria Saving & Credit Union Legacy Foundation
Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General

Provincial Employees Community Services Fund
Province of B.C.
Public Health Agency of Canada Service Canada, Canada Summer Jobs
Shewan Foundation
Thrifty Foods Smile Card Program
Town of View Royal
United Way of Greater Victoria
Vancity Community Fund
Vancouver Foundation
Victoria Foundation
Westshore Business Association
Zonta Club of Greater Victoria
SUMMARY OF REVENUES

- Grants & Donations: 62%
- Gov't Contracts: 34%
- Bequests: 2%
- Fees & Other: 2%

SUMMARY OF EXPENSES

- Staff & Benefits: 79%
- Administration: 10%
- Fundraising: 3%
- Programs: 8%
WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF OUR PROGRAMS