



**Women's Sexual  
Assault Centre**  
*healing, education & prevention*

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## **Backgrounder**

The *Women's Sexual Assault Centre* provides services to assist individuals to cope with the devastating effects of sexualized violence. From crisis line support and hospital accompaniment to counselling and skill development, these services help individuals understand the impact of trauma in their lives; identify their strengths; learn healthy strategies for managing feelings; regain trust in themselves and others; and empower them to lead full and productive lives.

In December 1982 a committed group of women applied for incorporation of the Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre society. The society had two paid staff and a group of trained volunteers and provided a 24 hour crisis line, accompaniment to hospital or police and counselling for survivors of sexual assault. Healing, education and prevention are the goals that drive the society's work.

The conscious decision to develop a diversified funding base has enabled the society to develop innovative programs in counselling, public awareness and prevention. The society currently relies on government for less than 50% of a one million dollar budget. Our fund raising and public awareness events include the annual "*Triathlon of Compassion*" and "*Walk A Mile in Her Shoes – the Men's March to Stop Rape, Sexual Assault and Gender Violence*".

Our commitment to developing best practices for counselling of survivors of sexual abuse and sexual assault has resulted in the development of a gamut of services including support, victim services, crisis counselling and longer term trauma counselling. We currently have a staff of seventeen and more than fifty active volunteers. In 2008 we provided crisis support and counseling to over 1,700 people, criminal justice support to 735 clients and answered over 1,100 calls to our crisis and information line.

We have published award winning booklets and manuals. These have included information booklets for clients, families and partners as well as manuals for service providers on developing and implementing programs.

Our youth focused prevention initiative – *Project Respect* – has produced resources for prevention including games, posters and booklets. Project Respect's program of workshops and youth training reaches over 1500 youth and over 400 adults each year. The social marketing tools (posters, brochures and more) and website [www.yesmeansyes.com](http://www.yesmeansyes.com) reach many more.

We are committed to social change and ensuring that victims of trauma receive timely and appropriate support and counselling. To this end we have regularly conducted training for other service providers including police departments, medical personnel, university residence advisors and staff and volunteers of other community agencies. We have also developed training curriculum for sexual assault counsellors and victim assistance workers that is used at the Justice Institute of BC and by some First Nations groups.

Our long history of community partnerships has led to the development of many innovative programs including a community based *Sexual Assault Response Team* and a province wide umbrella association for agencies in this field.

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