



# Saffron Centre

*Hope and Healing for those Impacted by Sexual Violence*



## 2022-2023 Annual Report

# CONTENTS

## Table of Contents

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04.

Shared Vision

05.

Message From Our Board Chair

06.

Message From Our Executive Director

08.

A Year of Impact

12.

Counselling

14.

Justice, Research, & Outreach

20.

Volunteers & Events

21.

Governance & Gratitude



# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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*With respect, and in the spirit of reconciliation and truth, we honour and acknowledge that where we are, here in Alberta (Treaties 4, 6, 7 & 8) are the traditional and ancestral territory of many diverse Indigenous peoples, namely: the Blackfoot Confederacy – Kainai, Piikani, and Siksika – the Cree, Dene, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Stoney-Nakoda, the Tsuu T'ina Nation and the Métis People of Alberta. We acknowledge and are grateful to the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations and whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community.*



# A SHARED VISION

The Saffron Centre would not exist without the dedication and commitment of the board, staff, students, and volunteers. These dedicated people walk with clients on a journey of healing and hope and engage with communities to work collaboratively toward ending sexual violence.

## MISSION

*Providing compassionate and specialized counselling, education, and advocacy for those impacted by sexual violence as we journey together toward healing and justice.*

## VISION

We aspire to live in safe communities, free from sexual violence where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

## SAFFRON TEAM

- Roxane Tiessen** ----- Executive Director
- Debbie Fillion** ----- Director, Counselling Program
- Kiara Warkentin** ----- Director, Justice, Research, & Outreach
- Deborah Watson** ----- Assistant Director, Counselling Program
- Dawn Busenius** ----- Administrative Coordinator
  
- Felicity Bohnet** ----- Therapist
- Stephanie Chisholm** ----- Therapist
- Tiffany Gloeckler** ----- Therapist
- Caralyn Goode** ----- Therapist
- Amy Goudie** ----- Therapist
- Sarah Hopkins** ----- Therapist
- Rebecca Laarz** ----- Therapist
- Cara Stone** ----- Therapist
- Jasmine Nanooch** ----- Therapist
- Cassandra Fillion** ----- Clinical Facilitator
- Michaela Grenier** ----- Clinical Facilitator
- Madison Gingell** ----- Clinical Facilitator
  
- Nancy Skorobohach** ----- Senior Public Educator
- Hanna McGee** ----- Public Educator
- Allison Deal** ----- Senior Police and Court Advocate
- Kirsten McChesney** ----- Police and Court Advocate
- Mackenzie Thomas** ----- Special Projects Facilitator
  
- Cheryl Assaly** ----- Administrative Supervisor
- Cindy Sinanan** ----- Administrator
- Kirstyn Bailie** ----- Administrator



# MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

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This past year I have been reminded of the adage ... “The key to success in any organization is identifying, developing and empowering the right people”. As I reflect on my past 10 years on the board, this statement certainly holds true. It is hard for me to describe how proud I am of the organization that Saffron has become. And while our growth has been steady, this past year we have seen the pace of change accelerate, much of it the result of the skillful leadership provided by our Executive Director and her team. When Roxane stepped into her role, many of Saffron’s systems were in need of an overhaul. In short order, she has laid the foundations for Saffron to become a more efficient, more effective and more respected agency within our community. I’m also very thankful for the competent and passionate leadership that we see in our two managers, Debbie and Kiara. Each of these ladies has raised the bar in the areas they oversee, and I’m sure we would all agree that our clients benefit from this on a daily basis.

I’m also greatly encouraged by the quality of Board members that we’ve been able to add this past year. Dion, Erin and Lauren bring a wealth of life experience along with fresh perspectives to the challenges we face. I’m sure their contributions will shape Saffron in a positive way for years to come. And to our other Board members, thank you for your faithful service over the years ... your contributions and friendship are important and appreciated.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge our clients, who continue to place their trust in us and allow us the privilege of walking along side them as they journey through difficult seasons of life. Ultimately, everything we do as an agency is for you, and that is reason enough for each of us to continue bringing our best.

As I head into my final year on the board, I’m excited for what yet lies ahead. We have a great team in place with the tools needed to serve our community well. I’m confident our best days are still in front of us.



**Mike Shellenberg**  
Board Chair

*“We have a great team in place with the tools needed to serve our community well. I’m confident our best days are in front of us.”*



# MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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As I reflect on the past year's accomplishments and our continued growth, I believe it is both an opportunity to celebrate the ways in which we were able to support our clients on their healing journey while also recognizing the challenges we encountered along the way. 2022-23 marked my first year as Executive Director of Saffron Centre. While I had long been involved in the organization as a Board member, my passion for helping those impacted by sexual violence prompted me to accept the opportunity to lead an organization with an exceptional team who share that passion.

A key priority, as I first stepped into this role, was to enhance upon strengths of our staff team and to foster even greater alignment between our Board and staff. This year our Board and executive team gathered to chart a new strategic plan for the organization. This strategic plan is a shared vision between Board and staff, and we are excited to move forward toward of objective of "safe communities free from sexual violence where everyone is treated with dignity and respect."

As a charitable organization, we rely on the generous donations, grants, and funding. We are incredibly grateful for our many funders including the Government of Alberta, Strathcona County, Government of Canada, United Way and many others who continue to provide resources for our cause.

We extend heartfelt gratitude to the many volunteers, private donors, corporate sponsors, and other passionate groups who make incredible contributions to our organization. It is because of all of these individuals and groups that we are able to continue our work.



# MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Sexual violence is a crime like no other. The data has shown that sexual assault, abuse, and harassment have impacted almost 1 in 2 Albertans. However, most of those who have experienced sexual violence, have not shared with anyone the hurt they have experienced. When someone takes the step to come forward, to trust a friend or family member, or to contact us – the most important words they can hear is “I believe you”.

Everyone involved in this organization, from our Board of Directors to our staff and volunteers who run the daily operations, we stand together and say “We believe you”. We will stand with you when you seek justice, we will walk with you as you find healing, and we will champion you even before you have found the words to share your own story.

As you read this Annual Report, threaded beneath the numbers and the statistics are individuals who have walked through Saffron’s front doors, and have received support through their journey to healing from our staff team. From our administrators answering the phone call from a client who is ready to tell their story for the first time, to our clinical facilitators finding the right therapist and program for the clients goals, to our therapists supporting strength, resiliency, and healing, to our educators who champion a culture of consent, and our police and court advocates who navigate the criminal justice system with their clients, we are all focused on responding to the lasting impact that sexual violence has had on individuals and communities and to bring hope and healing for all those impacted by sexual violence.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roxane Tiessen'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue background.

**Roxane Tiessen**  
Executive Director

*“We extend heartfelt gratitude to the many volunteers, private donors, corporate sponsors, and other passionate groups who make incredible contributions to our organizations. It is because of these individuals and groups, that we can continue our work.”*

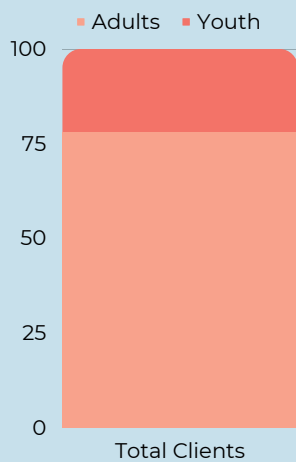


# SAFFRON'S IMPACT

## Counselling

432

Total Counselling Clients



467

Intakes

250

New Clients

182

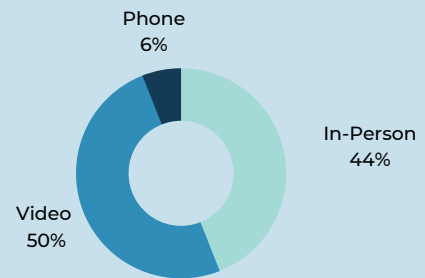
Continued Clients

3,517

Hours of Counselling Delivered

8

Average Wait in Weeks



Service Delivery

### Counselling Program Outcomes

- 70% of clients reported a reduction in overall symptoms of trauma.
- 100% of clients reported having made progress toward their goals.
- 100% of clients reported developing the skills they need to be able to meet their goals.
- 100% of clients describe having a better understanding of the effects that sexual abuse/assault has had on their lives.
- 100% of clients felt their counsellor understood the impact the sexual abuse/assault had on them.





# SAFFRON'S IMPACT

## Education

648

Presentations

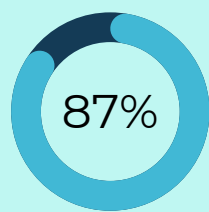
+13%

Overall increase in presentations  
in the 2022-23 year.

3,173

Surveys

86.7% of survey  
respondents increased  
their knowledge about the  
presentation topic.



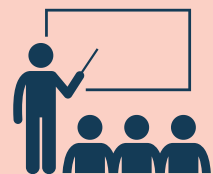
Presentation  
participants  
under 18.

21,919

Participants

*"Very empowering, it's very clear that the presenters cared a lot and it makes a huge difference in a positive way."*

*"Every parent and caregiver needs to hear this message. Thank you for offering it."*



# SAFFRON'S IMPACT

## Justice



548

Hours spent working with clients navigating the criminal justice system.

126

Clients served in Specialized Police and Court Support.

225



Hours spent gathering information and advocating to criminal justice partners on behalf of SPCS clients.

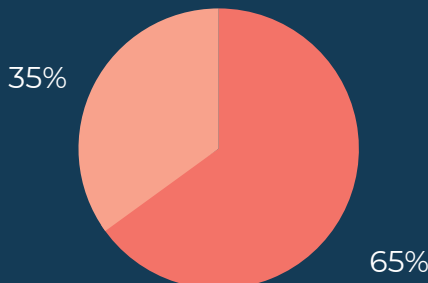


52

Client accompaniments to police interviews and court dates by Saffron SPCS Advocates.

*“If it wasn’t for Saffron I would have been completely alone with no support. They were a blessing to me.”*

## Research



Out of nearly 1000 youth aged 13-17 surveyed by Saffron this year, 65% declared that they have unintentionally viewed pornography.



# SAFFRON'S IMPACT

## Outreach & Volunteering

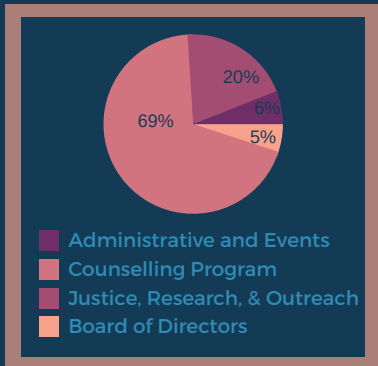
513

hours engaged in outreach



4,372

Followers



3,811  
Total volunteer hours

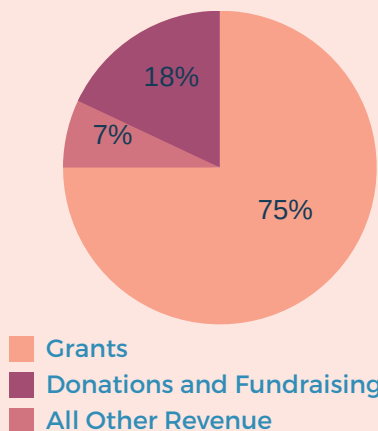


Total number of people educated and supported through Saffron's services

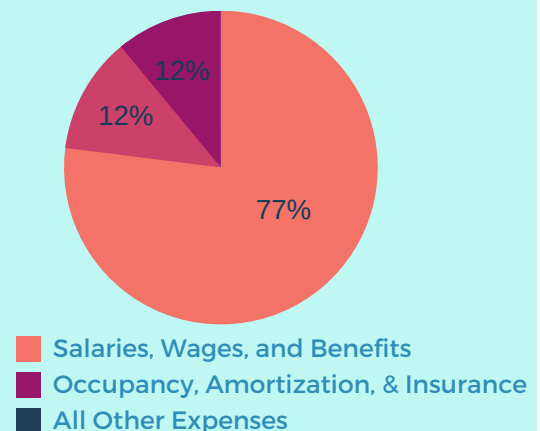
22,477

## Financial Report

Total Revenue:  
\$1,428,882



Total Expenses:  
\$1,230,591



# COUNSELLING

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At Saffron Centre, our dedicated team strives to provide the best quality of care to as many people as possible who need our services. Over this last year, our counselling department has focused on identifying and minimizing several potential barriers to accessing our services. These efforts have resulted in changes to how we intake new clients, creative responses to increasing wait times, policy changes to increase access to our services, increased or new programming to meet identified client needs, and staff education.

Our efforts to remove barriers started in the summer of 2022 by making updates to our intake process. Our focus was to ensure that we gathered only the most relevant information needed to support our clients in selecting the best program and therapist fit for their current needs. We also found and removed some administrative barriers, which has helped us to be able to schedule some clients more quickly into their first sessions. 467 individuals reached out to us for support during the year.

This year has also seen increased collaboration with community partners and improvements in how we receive referrals from these other programs (i.e. Victim Services Units, Zebra Centre), which has resulted in increases to our overall intake numbers. We saw a 19% increase in the number of individuals reaching out to our counselling department. Although increased intakes are welcomed as a sign that individuals are better able to connect with us for services, it does often result in increased wait times. In January and May, we hired additional staff and contract therapists to add to our effort to keep wait times low. Overall, we were able to maintain an average wait time of 8 weeks for the entire fiscal year (only 4% higher than the previous year).



# COUNSELLING

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Another way Saffron has worked on identifying and removing barriers for clients is by ensuring our policies are in line with research-based best practices. One example is that we had several staff, representing various Saffron departments, participate in an exploration of the ethics, Standards of Practice, and research as it applies to policies about reporting assault histories to the authorities. As a result, in January 2023, the counselling department implemented a change so that minors are only required to report to authorities when it is mandated by law. Since

then, we have noticed several new intakes for minors where this change removed barriers for our services. In addition, further research projects were made possible this year due to a new collaboration with the MacEwan University undergraduate psychology program. We hosted four field placement students over the year, and they have helped us with research on best practices around particular topics related to client barriers. As a result of some of this work, at the end of the fiscal year we put in place policy changes that will allow past clients options to re-access therapeutic supports in the event of a new assault, court appearance, or reactivation of trauma symptoms. We also continue to follow up on research on staff wellness and staff retention.

Saffron continued to reduce client barriers by growing and adapting our programs over the course of the year. Demand for the Foundations of Healing program, both individual and group, was up this year. Additional staff were trained in order to increase our capacity to provide individual and group facilitation of this program. Specialized Police and Court Support Counselling, a trial program from the previous year, was continued this year and adopted into our standard services. Saffron also expanded our services through a new partnership with the City of St. Albert. We have teamed up to offer in-person sessions for St. Albert residents at the St. Albert FCSS offices, for children, youth, and adults. Our Healing and Beyond group offered their first in person session during this year. It was very well received by the group members and now this monthly group is hosted 8 times a year online, and 4 times a year in person. We also added a second offering of the Healing and Beyond Group due to growing demand. In addition, time has been spent this year researching and developing new group content which will be offered early in the next fiscal year (Sept 2023).



# COUNSELLING

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Finally, with the growth to our counselling team this year, we were able to expand our availability back into Saturdays on a weekly basis. Overall, we increased the number of clients served by 10% for the year, and the number of children and youth clients increased by 38%.

Finally, diversity within the counselling team increases our ability to meet our clients' unique needs. Saffron's robust work culture includes an assortment of therapist designations and counselling approaches. In addition to our intern therapists, trauma coaches and clinical facilitators, we also have licensed social workers, psychologists and Canadian certified counsellors working and consulting together, sharing strengths, philosophies and camaraderie. Our staffs' assorted trainings have all been aimed, in a variety of ways, at best supporting our clients, who have been impacted by sexual violence. In addition to courses for working with survivors of sexual trauma, numerous hours of more specialized study and training was spent learning more about chronic suicidality, working with Complex PTSD, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), ethical note writing, Emotionally Focused Therapy Externship (EFT), Deep Brain Reorienting (DBR), dissociation, personality disorders, Integrating EMDR with Play Therapy, Sandtray Therapy, "4 Blinks" training, EMDR and Pain, Advanced EMDR 2.0, and Trauma Specialization in Clinical Counselling Hypnotherapy. Not all staff participated in all the trainings, but each freely shares their knowledge and understanding in case conferences and consultations as we work together to formulate the best ways to address individual client needs.

Overall, our team was able to provide 432 clients a total of 3517 hours of counselling services. We saw an increasing number of clients choosing to resume in person sessions (44%), up from 18% last year. A significant number of individuals continue to find it a better fit for them to attend either by video (50%) or by phone (6%). We are happy to be able to offer a variety of options so that our clients can find what works best for them.



**Debbie Fillion**  
M.C., Reg. Psychologist  
Director, Counselling Program

*"Saffron continued to reduce client barriers by growing and adapting our programs over the course of the year."*



# JUSTICE, RESEARCH, AND OUTREACH

## JUSTICE

Saffron’s Specialized Police and Court Support (SPCS) Program serves the community as a victim services program specific to sexualized violence. Our trauma-informed team is comprised of highly trained advocates who are passionate about supporting individuals and families navigating complex investigative and judicial systems. SPCS Advocates provide information, advocacy, and emotional support at every stage of the criminal justice process. This year, we were proud to support **126 clients** through the police and court program, an **increase of 6%** from last year.

SPCS services are free and available to clients of any age who would like support with reporting, investigations, documentation, and court processes. We recognize that the criminal justice system is complex and can cause re-traumatization. Our team equips clients with as much information as they need to feel prepared for the next step of their journey, without judgment. We do this through reporting preparation and accompaniment, court preparation sessions, assistance communicating with Crown Prosecutors, accompaniment to court, documentation support, and completing check-ins and follow-ups with families.

### SPECIALIZED POLICE AND COURT SUPPORT COUNSELLING PROGRAM



Last year, in collaboration with our Counselling Department, our team launched a new program for clients with major court dates approaching. To support clients specifically to prepare for court, Saffron launched our SPCS Counselling Program, providing up to 5 free sessions of solutions-focused therapy for clients. In the 2022-23 year, we provided **27 court counselling sessions to 14 clients** with trial approaching. The focus of sessions is to work with clients to identify their strengths and fears around attending court and find coping strategies that best suit their needs. Information is shared with Specialized Police and Court Support Advocates, who accompany the client to court and facilitate the strategies throughout the day as needed.



# JUSTICE, RESEARCH, AND OUTREACH

## PARTNERSHIPS

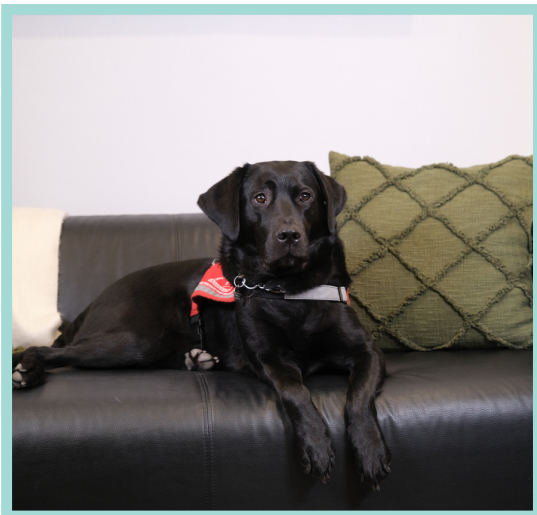
Our SPCS Program is grounded in critical partnerships with criminal justice agencies and community organizations. We have a significant partnership with the Strathcona County RCMP through our joint Supported Reporting Protocol designed to assist individuals impacted by sexual violence with trauma-informed reporting to the Police. Saffron also works collaboratively with the Strathcona County Victim Services Unit and other VSUs surrounding the Edmonton area, the Edmonton Rural & Regional Response Office, The Edmonton Crown Prosecutors Office, and the Sherwood Park Courthouse. Community partnerships are also critical to providing comprehensive support to clients and their families, and include A Safe Place, the Zebra Child & Youth Advocacy Centre, the Family Resource Network, and the Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Services Network. Our Justice, Research, and Outreach team would not be able to do what we do without the support of our community partnerships.

## FACILITY SUPPORT DOG YUKON

In April 2022, our team welcomed Facility Support Dog Yukon from the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides. Facility Support Dogs are service-trained and accredited through Assistance Dogs International with their handlers. Yukon spent the last year supporting Saffron clients in

**over 280 sessions**, including counselling, court, police interviews, staff support, and crisis work. She has also attended dozens of community engagement events.

In April of 2023, our local RCMP detachment lost a member on duty. Yukon spent multiple days in the Strathcona County detachment with sworn and civilian employees, providing emotional support and comfort to the team. She continues to regularly visit the detachment to say hello to our officers and raise awareness about the work Saffron is doing. She also assists clients looking to report sexual violence to the Police.



287

Total Support Sessions

34

Court Accompaniments

157

Counselling Sessions





# JUSTICE, RESEARCH, AND OUTREACH

## RESEARCH

Saffron’s Justice, Research, and Outreach team work on projects each year to keep our practice current and relevant for clients. Research is primarily done by students, who contribute hundreds of hours each quarter assisting our staff with program development. Last year, research projects included staff well-being, court counselling practices, client counselling resources, and new educational material.

Saffron also received funding last year from the Government of Alberta to create a new educational program focused on the prevention of technology-facilitated sexual violence among youth. The issue of online sexual exploitation and sextortion has increased significantly over the last few years, and evidence has emerged on best practices for the intervention and prevention of online sexual violence. The new program created by Saffron includes three new presentations, all launching in September 2023.

## OUTREACH

Saffron’s staff and volunteers contribute hundreds of hours towards community outreach and engagement, including events hosted by Saffron, community festivals, convention booths, and meetings with community partners to reduce barriers to accessing Saffron services.

### SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS



Last year, Saffron partnered with three schools in our service area to raise awareness about our services and promote a culture of consent in the school, working with the administration to reassure students that they are not alone and have support. We attended monthly throughout the school year during lunch hour, bringing games and our Facility Support Dog, Yukon. The turnout was outstanding! Students became familiar with Saffron and its mission and were often seen wearing #GotConsent buttons in the hallways or playing with Saffron stress balls. Saffron would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to M.E Lazerte High School, J. Percy Page High School, and F.R Haythorne Junior High School for their collaboration and partnership.



# JUSTICE, RESEARCH, AND OUTREACH

## COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Saffron is a member of several networks and working groups in the communities we serve. Notable collaborations include the Violence, Trauma, and Suicide Prevention Protocol in Strathcona County, Strathcona County and Fort Saskatchewan Interagency, the Strathcona County Community Safety and Well-being Committee, Northern Alberta Human Trafficking Collaboration Meetings, and the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation Working Group.



Other impactful community partnerships include our specialized work with RCMP and Crown Prosecutors' Offices surrounding investigative and court processes for our shared clients. Saffron and Strathcona County RCMP's joint Supported Reporting Protocol allows individuals who have experienced sexual violence to choose how and where they would like to report to the police. RCMP also assisted Saffron in setting up a satellite interview and monitoring room which was used in several sexual assault interviews last year. Saffron continues to be a warm referral partner to Strathcona County and Fort Saskatchewan Victim Services, the Bridge Youth Hub, the Canteen Youth Hub, and the Family Resource Network, and last year became a regular referral partner with the Zebra Child and Youth Advocacy Centre.



# JUSTICE, RESEARCH, AND OUTREACH

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

Saffron has a highly reputable Public Education program, including proactive and preventative education on relationships, boundaries, consent, sexual violence, and online safety for all ages. Our team delivers presentations for Kindergarten through Grade 12 and offers caregiver and professional training to parents, teachers, businesses, and community agencies. Our team delivered **648 presentations and trainings this year, up 13% from the previous year.**

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Our year in community education was busy and diverse. Our team delivered sexual assault and harassment education to all Sherwood Park Kings Hockey Club players in October 2022 as part of their Character Symposium and trained coaches and managers on receiving and handling disclosures of sexual violence. We also trained the coaches and managers of the Sherwood Park Minor Hockey Association in collaboration with the Family Resource Network in Strathcona County. Last year, Saffron trained hundreds of teachers at several Sherwood Park, Fort Saskatchewan, St. Albert, and Edmonton schools and community groups on managing disclosures of sexual abuse and exploitation from youth. This included a training at the North Central Teachers Convention in Edmonton in February 2023. We also trained over 300 adult professionals through the Department of Justice last October, focusing on the topic of online child sexual exploitation.



# JUSTICE, RESEARCH, AND OUTREACH

## NEW CURRICULUM

Toward the end of our fiscal year, our Public Education team set out to create a new educational program for children and youth. We expanded service delivery options **from 4 to 7 presentations** in the Junior High and High School range and changed the formatting of our Elementary School presentations to be more interactive for children. We also aligned all our presentations with the Health and Life Skills Curriculum Outcomes from Alberta Education to assist teachers with the completion of their curriculum goals. The new curriculum finished development at the end of the fiscal year with a launch date of September 1, 2023.



**Kiara Warkentin**

Director, Justice, Research, & Outreach

*Our Justice, Research, and Outreach team would not be able to do what we do without the support of our community partnerships.*



# VOLUNTEERS AND EVENTS

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## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers continue to contribute meaningfully to the work at Saffron Centre. From our volunteer board, to intern therapists, and event volunteers, these dedicated people make a significant impact on our organization and clients. In 2022-23, 76 volunteers contributed an incredible 3811 hours of volunteer time!

## CONSENT EVENT

In May, we hosted our 8th annual “Consent Event,” a fun run/walk fundraiser. This event happens during Sexual Violence Awareness Month and represents a significant event for raising awareness about the devastating impact of sexual violence and how we can all be involved in creating a safe community free from sexual violence. With 137 participants, this was a biggest Consent Event so far with welcome community support, from individuals and groups, community groups, and corporate sponsors.

This year’s Consent Event helped raised \$23,241 from both Corporate Sponsorships and Participants. The funding contributes to our counselling, public education and Justice departments thriving, as well as raising public awareness within the community about who we are and what services we provide. None of this would have been possible without the 50 volunteers we had helping to ensure the day’s events ran smoothly, many of whom volunteer with us year after year.



# GOVERNANCE AND GRATITUDE

Thank you...

## 2022-2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mike Shellenberg	-----	Board Chair
Bill Tonita	-----	Vice Chair
Lauren Llonsberry	-----	Treasurer
Ken Glover	-----	Secretary
Nicole Andersen	-----	Director
Dion Matheson	-----	Director
Erin Stroud	-----	Director

## OUR FUNDERS

*Saffron is grateful for the ongoing financial support that we receive from our many funders. To our grant funders and our many corporate and individual private donors, thank you so much for your generous contributions. With your ongoing support, we can continue to support those impacted by sexual violence.*

*From everyone at Saffron Centre,  
Thank You.*



Women and Gender Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada



Department of Justice Canada

Ministère de la Justice Canada

