

# annual 2020/2021 report

## Zooming right along...



Smart, wise, open, and caring is pretty much how you might describe every volunteer counsellor trainee here at the Centre – by design. The 2020/21 group of volunteer counsellor trainees were ALSO flexible, resilient, tech-wise, and dedicated!

Starting a 10 month training program in a pandemic certainly takes all that and more. Two groups of 10 began their training in person, properly distanced, last September but come November, right after their first weekend workshop together as a group of 20, new guidelines meant all the rest of their training was done by Zoom – hence the Zoominaries, the only (hopefully) training group ever to do their training remotely. And although challenging, (kudos to the Trainers and Training Assistants for their creative skills in so successfully pulling off a complicated task!), everyone hung in and graduated and

now they are beginning their journey here as graduate counsellors picking up their first clients.

**"The quality of training, leadership and mentorship was so professional and impressive enabling me to reach a high level of confidence as a new counsellor."**

~Sue D

Well done Zoominaries! We so look forward to welcoming you to the counsellor roster. You are welcome – and oh, so needed!

Training with Citizens' can often be a life-changing experience. Here are some comments from the graduates of 2020/2021:

*"I really appreciated witnessing and benefitting from the different trainers, training assistants and guest speakers. Watching them in role plays, as they all took different approaches and leaned on different skill sets gave me confidence that I will find and thrive in my own groove. They were excellent and deeply appreciated!" ~ Heather*

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**Citizens  
COUNSELLING  
CENTRE**



**We will build capacity through state of the heart counselling.**

# Report from the ED

by Brenda Wilson

*"THANK YOU! Without your services available to us we very likely were going to end up as a statistic 'broken family'. By coming we had a safe place, our counsellor was wonderful at coaching us through the walls and excuses. We now have the tools and the spark reignited in our marriage.*

*We love our baby beyond belief and the biggest gift we can give this child is to stay together and be happy and in love with each other. Our counsellor and your services provided that for our family. We are so incredibly grateful."*

Well who wouldn't want to work at a place where clients said these kinds of things about their experiences!

I wanted to start with some words from our clients because, in my day-to-day life of paper shuffling, email tracking, grant applying, planning, reviewing, dissecting, strategizing, advocating, synthesizing and attending to seemingly endless tech concerns, it is easy to forget why I do what I do. When clients take the time to remind



Brenda Wilson, Director

us how important we are to them, we should definitely take a breath and let it in.

*"We make a positive difference in people's lives."*

We do this by listening, by offering respect and kindness, by caring about our fellow human beings, by helping them find their way to their answers. If I do my job with care and attention, if the office staff and supervisors and trainer do their jobs with skill, respect and heart, we all set the tone for our volunteers and it passes down mightily to our clients. And I believe we all do our jobs pretty well. This is a good place – a place of heart.

I am not naive; we all live in circumstances only partially of our making and only partially under our control (and no more so than over this past year). The larger context must always be actively overlaid with the issues our clients bring to counselling, and we must always help them understand this.

But clients here are offered something very potent – one of the most potent gifts any

one can offer – hope. I have heard that we can live about 40 days without food, about three days without water, about 8 minutes without air, but only one second without hope. We help provide our clients with hope for a better day tomorrow and for a better future, one where they understand the choices attached to any decision they might be contemplating.

There... I didn't talk about the pandemic at all... until now. And perhaps it is enough just to acknowledge it's been a tough year for everyone. We're all sick of the whole thing.

I have learned and continue to learn, a lot about how I, and others, respond when faced with the challenge of (in this case historic) change. I have learned once again the care that is needed when planning change, the turbulence that cannot be avoided, and the rewards of change. And I believe I can say, with some confidence, that the Centre is doing very well overall.

The Centre community – my valued co-workers, dedicated Board and compassionate volunteers and students is so important to me and offers me so much – I look forward to the coming year knowing I support and am supported by so many.

# Report from the Board Chair

by Sara Comish

The sun is shining and there is a fresh breeze coming through the window. Literally, but also metaphorically, I believe. The province is opening up again, and the Greater Victoria Citizens' Counselling Centre is too. The Centre has been able to provide much needed and valued services throughout the pandemic. We quickly added on-line counselling for April and May and then in June opened up again for in-person counselling as well as remote. What a year! The need for compassion has never been greater.



Sara Comish, Board Chair

the board, they are doing so with heart and are making a difference in our community. Our admin staff, Supervisors, and Trainers, are also there as the foundation, keeping the Centre functioning. Our funders and donors have generously provided the resources to keep us going, and we are so very

grateful. And Brenda Wilson, as our Executive Director has been simply amazing in steering the Centre through this incredibly challenging time.

As a board, keeping the Centre going during this time has been the focus. At the same time, we have been keeping our eye on the long-term issues of sustainability, and our strategic plan, as well as ensuring that our actions are in line with our val-

ues, particularly in light of meeting the needs of diverse clients. This year we have said good-bye to Sheldon Foisy, who not only volunteered his time to be on the board but also was our Secretary, and also Lindy Duchesne, one of our counsellor representatives, who is also leaving. We are grateful to both of them for their time and input.

Life does seem brighter and fresher again but there are going to be challenges ahead for people, and I know that the Greater Victoria Citizens' Counselling Centre is going to be there to help. Our mission of providing accessible volunteer counselling services to assist adult community members in achieving socially and psychologically satisfying lives has never been so important but the Centre only exists to give that help because of the support of so many, and I am so grateful. Thank-you.



## More quotes from the 2020/21 Volunteer Counsellor Trainees:

"The triads have been the best part, that way we got to know a few of the learners and develop relationships that could continue after the trainings are over. COVID has made that more difficult than it would have been otherwise." ~ Rod

"Citizens' Counselling gave new purpose to my life and a sense of belonging during trying times." ~ Jonathan

"My training experience with Citizens' was life-changing! The quality of training, leadership and mentorship was so professional and impressive enabling me to reach a level of confidence as a new counsellor. The retreat and triad work was incredibly important leading me to a place of trust and vulnerability in a meaningful way with cohort members. I feel extremely privileged to have had such a connecting experience with a group of amazing caring people during an historic time of great disconnection due to COVID." ~Sue

"Invaluable hands-on training, learning came in most pleasantly unexpected ways, loved the shared non-judgmental place and attitude to learning, growing and supporting each other." ~ Rewa

"It was a warm, welcoming and gentle introduction to person-centred counselling. The instructors and teaching assistants developed an inclusive, accepting and safe learning environment within which we were able to open up, share and learn from each other. A wonderful, enriching experience." ~ Mark

"I have been enriched by the friendships forged with amazing, kind and empathic individuals during these 10 months of training, and I feel confident to utilize the skills I have learned and supports available to hold space for others who seek help at the Centre." ~ Jacy

"My training with Citizens' has left me feeling both confident and humbled. I will take the knowledge I've been given and friends I've made with me through the rest of my life." ~ Cheantelle

"Intense, difficult, thought provoking, absolutely indispensable information for everyone. From techniques for effective communication to all the different topics. Essential for counselling, necessary for living." ~ Chris

"Jude and Joanna have been fantastic role models, teachers, leaders and all-around spirit guides. I am also grateful for the ongoing support offered by the teaching assistants.

"I have never felt so supported in reaching a learning goal before nor felt such a deep sense of connection to my classmates. It is absolutely heartwarming to feel the sense of belonging here and safety to be my authentic self.

"I am looking forward now to the next phase with much excitement, knowing that Citizens' Counselling will always be a supportive place where I can continue to grow and learn." ~ Linda

"I came into this training understanding that there was a personal growth component, but I couldn't have known how healing this training would be in its entirety.

"Learning these skills in a context of such support has helped me to practice believing in people, fundamentally and entirely. I have built confidence and a deeper capacity for trust and connection, for which I am so grateful." ~ Gabe

### The Citizens' Team ...

#### Board of Directors 20/21

Chair: Sara Cornish

Vice Chair: David Hume

Treasurer: Lisa Underdown

Secretary: Sheldon Foisy

Special Advisors:

Tim Wedge & Margot Liechti

Members at Large:

Andre Serzisko

Arla Sinclair

Chantelle Jones

Michael Boyle

Neil Webb

#### Counsellor Reps

Lindy Duchesne

Natalia Richardson

Vicki Küng

#### Professional Team

Elizabeth Bradley

Joanna Morrison

Jude Marleau

#### Administration Team

Brenda Wilson

Laura Hutcheson

Meegan Simpson-Cooke

Meg Wiles

Vashti Southern



Our funders this year include:

We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia Gaming Commission.



We acknowledge the financial support of the Barnes Family Foundation

And hopefully YOU!



# Here's what we've been up to this year

## IN THIS PAST YEAR:

- 8,989 hours of counselling
- 989 clients served
- 109 volunteer counsellors
- 645 clients paid less than \$20 per session
- 8.5 sessions per client (on average)

## TOP PRESENTING ISSUES:

- Stress/Anxiety/Panic Attacks
- Depression
- Relationship/Communication
- Self Esteem / Identity Issues
- Addictions (past/present)
- Family Issues (past/present)
- Suicide attempts (past/present)

## DID YOU KNOW?

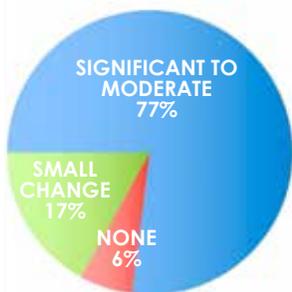
100% of direct service to clients is provided by our trained volunteer counsellors

\$1,000,000 is the market value of the counselling services provided annually

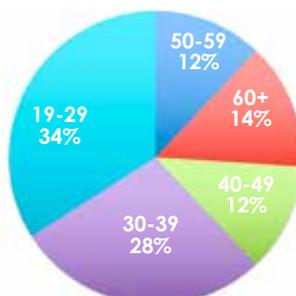
34% of our clients are between the ages of 18 and 29

Only 22% of our clients are employed full-time

CLIENT REPORTED CHANGES AS A RESULT OF COUNSELLING



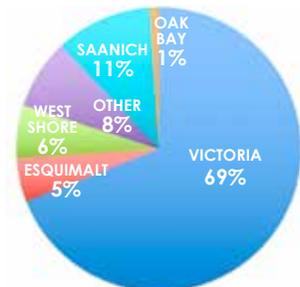
CLIENTS BY AGE



FEES



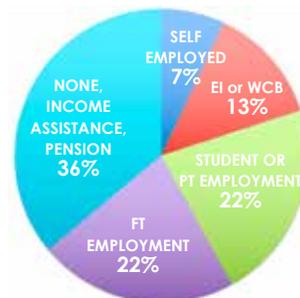
AREA OF RESIDENCE



REFERRAL SOURCES



CLIENT INCOME SOURCE



## CLIENT FEEDBACK FROM THE QUESTION

### "HOW WAS THIS COUNSELLING PROCESS VALUABLE TO YOU?"

"She was kind and patient, non-defensive, brought a calm presence to her sessions and had valuable information to share. It was clear that she was prepared for sessions and I felt safe in the counselling relationship."

"I went through a noticeable transformation while seeing my counsellor. I reached my goals that I set at the first session."

**"When I was completely broke it was okay for me to continue. I'll never forget how much it helped. Thank you."**

"He helped me be more honest with myself, gain confidence, build stronger relationships and cope with social anxiety. My quality of life has increased thanks to him."

"She helped me deal with the loss of my mother, the upcoming close of my business. My counsellor was great at listening and allowing me to have a safe place to be totally & completely raw in my emotions."

Greater Victoria Citizens' Counselling Centre

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Look for Citizens' Counselling Centre on

