

## Adaptation at its finest



### Introducing our 2020 Volunteer Counsellor Training Program Graduates, The Zoominaries!

Citizens' Counselling has been training people to become volunteer counsellors for our community for more than 50 years. In that time, we have trained more than 800 counsellors. Countless numbers of our grads have gone on to advanced education adding to the rich community of helping professionals that the CRD enjoys.

This past year's Volunteer Counsellor Training Program grads had a unique experience as they trained during a pandemic. We're very proud and excited to introduce them to you here.

"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, 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 they are now all launched on their journey here as graduate counsellors.

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*

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

#### WHAT'S INSIDE:

- A Donor's Story
- Blue Love - and Tiffany
- ED's Report
- 2020/21 stats

**Citizens  
COUNSELLING  
CENTRE**



# The Blue Love Campaign

"The first time I accessed counselling, I remember that I was feeling overwhelmed by life and wanted to talk with someone about my emotions."

That quote is from Tiffany, who has a unique role here at the Centre. Not only has she been a client and experienced first-hand the impact of our services, but she became a volunteer counsellor providing a safe space for others to work through their own difficulties.

"I have accessed both individual and couples counselling through Citizens' Counselling Centre. After receiving counselling, I decided to apply to take the training program and then became a volunteer for the organization," said Tiffany. "I have always known that I wanted to be a counsellor and the training program made it possible for me to learn about counselling in a powerful way, to dip my toes in, and to learn how to be a good counsellor."

Through her volunteer work here at the Centre, Tiffany has seen the effects the pandemic has had on people's mental health, with increased cases of loneliness, depression, anxiety and fear.

It's for these reasons she feels the work the Centre does is so important.

"Mental health is not prioritized in our society and is stigmatized in a way that not only inhibits people from accessing services when they need them, but services are not commonly provided in an accessible way," said Tiffany. "Having sliding scale counselling makes an essential service available to anyone who needs it, regardless of their budget. Further, it helps to remove the stigma and barriers around accessing mental health support because it is now something that anyone can access, and then tell others about."

*"Without this organization, I don't know where I'd be today."*

Due to COVID-19, the demand for mental health services has increased by almost 50% on Southern Vancouver Island. The need

for counselling, outreach and peer support services will continue to grow as we live through this pandemic and its aftermath. There are many other people on Southern Vancouver Island who are suffering but can't get help due to the long wait lists or limited-service hours. For someone who is in crisis, these kinds of delays can be catastrophic.



It is because of the extraordinary need that the United Way created the Blue Love campaign targeting the mental health component of the pandemic crisis. And it is Tiffany's unique relations with the Centre that made Tiffany the perfect choice to be the face of Citizens' Counselling Centre in the campaign this year

United Way's goal is to raise \$1 Million by the end of this year to fund counselling, peer support and outreach services across Southern Vancouver Island. We're very grateful to be one of the partner organizations that the fund will benefit.

"At a time in my life when I desperately needed counselling and support, Citizens' Counselling Centre provided a service that made this accessible to me," said Tiffany. "Without this organization, I don't know where I'd be today."

## Board of Directors 2021/22

**Chair** - Sara Comish  
**Vice Chair** - David Hume  
**Treasurer** - Lisa Underdown  
**Secretary** - Chantelle Jones  
**Special Advisor** - Tim Wedge

**Members at Large**  
Andre Serzisko, Arla Sinclair,  
Margot Liechti, Michael  
Boyle, Neil Webb

**Counsellor Representatives**  
Chris Belliveau  
Natalia Richardson  
Vicki Kung

## Staff & Contractors

**ADMIN TEAM**  
Brenda Wilson  
Laura Hutcheson  
Meegan Simpson-Cooke  
Meg Wiles  
Vashiti Southern  
**Books:** - Libbi Smith  
**Communications:** Michele Murphy

**PROFESSIONAL TEAM**  
**Trainer:** Jude Marleau  
**Supervisors:**  
Elizabeth Bradley  
Joanna Morrison  
Jude Marleau  
Michael Timney

## Do you or does someone you know work for the BC Government?

If you do - have you considered naming the Centre as your Donor Choice for your PECSF charitable donations? You can designate that your donations go directly to the Centre. We'll receive those donations twice annually in August and March. See the [PECSF Charities page](#) on the PECSF website for more info!



Provincial Employees Community Services Fund



friends of the centre

# Creating your kind of community

by Selinde Krayenhoff

I contribute to the work of Citizens' Counselling Centre because I like to support efforts that help create the kind of community, the kind of world, I want to live in. Citizens' says to people in the most practical and profound way, "Life has challenges and we're here to walk with you through the more difficult ones. And money need not be an issue in getting the support you need."

When my husband and I started Island Parent Magazine in 1987 we were fortunate enough to become tenants – and friends – of Citizens' Counselling Centre. During the 10 years we were in their building, I watched staff, volunteer counsellors and clients come and go. When my father died, I turned to the Centre as a client to help me through my grief.

Eventually I signed up to train as a volunteer counsellor. During my years volunteering at Citizens', we sold Island Parent to our partners and I started a business teaching Nonviolent Communication. To augment my income, I picked up a part time job. One day I sat in Brenda's office in tears; I did not like this job. Brenda pointed out that life is too short to do something that was so unpleasant and just happened to mention a job opening in the front office at the Centre. I applied and got the job. I loved the years I worked there and was sad to leave when we moved away.

It was then that I wondered how I could continue to support this community agency that has survived years of financial cuts in community mental health services through Brenda's austerity, ingenuity and commitment

when other such centres had to fold. I have had the privilege of being a tenant, a friend, a client, a student, a volunteer counsellor and employee of one of the best run non-profits I know of. Now I will add donor.

I signed up to have \$20 taken out of my account every month. Not a lot. But over more than 10 years, it's a contribution that says, "I care. I commit." And more covertly I am saying, "Brenda is one of the most amazing community leaders I have ever met. Her work says it all. Citizens' is still here."

Can you afford to commit \$10, \$20, \$30 a month to an agency that gives so much to our community? Think about it. We can offer stability to a community agency that matches our values and our vision for a more caring and just world, through our time, talent and treasure.

## A Place of Heart

by Brenda Wilson, ED

**"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."

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 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."

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

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 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 coworkers, 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.

*B. Wilson*



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!



Friends of the Centre is published annually.

**DONATE NOW**



# 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?

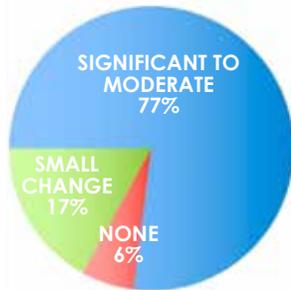
100% of direct service to clients is provided by our trained volunteer counsellors

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

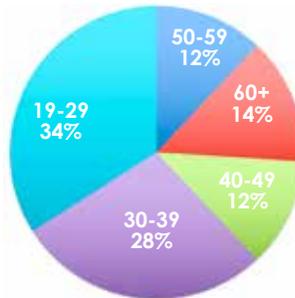
34% of our clients are between the ages of 18 and 29

Only 22% of our clients are employed full-time

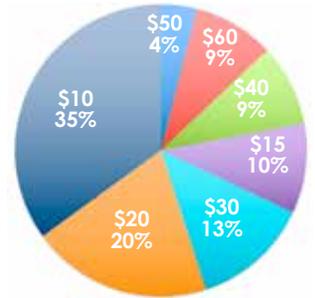
CLIENT REPORTED CHANGES AS A RESULT OF COUNSELLING



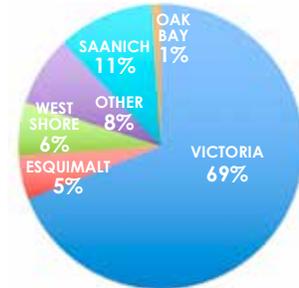
CLIENTS BY AGE



FEES



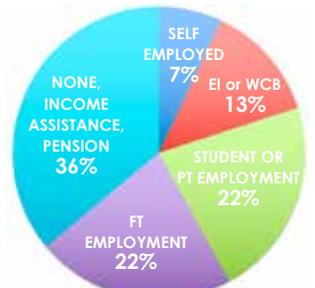
AREA OF RESIDENCE



REFERRAL SOURCES



CLIENT INCOME SOURCE



## We're so grateful for the thoughtful comments made by our donors:

"I hope that this money (which is really energy) can be transformed into something beautiful and life-changing for others."

"We all need help every now and then and unfortunately many places are out of reach for people's financial circumstances."

"The Victoria community is stronger because of people like you!"

**"Thank you for all the heart you bring to our community!"**

"It is a delight and privilege to be a part of this community helping organization."

"We love Citizens' Counselling Centre and all the wonderful work you do for the community."

"I am happy to donate part of my BC benefit to help my community, especially Citizens', honouring all your fabulous work!"

**Greater Victoria Citizens' Counselling Centre**

941 Kings Road, Victoria, BC, V8T 1W7 • 250.384.9934

info@citizenscounselling.com • www.citizenscounselling.com

Look for Citizens' Counselling Centre on

facebook