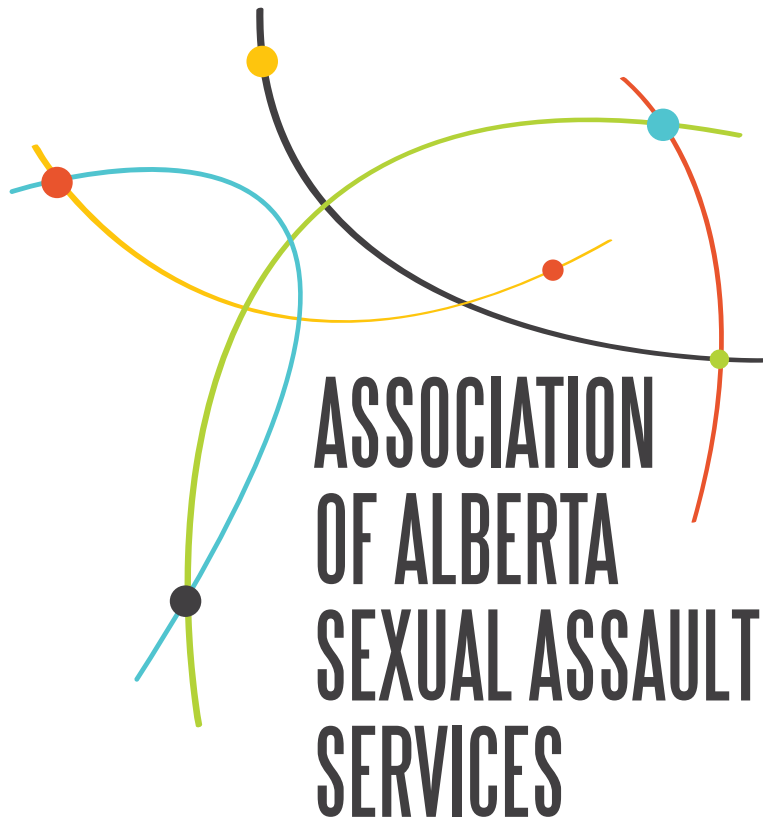




# ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES

Annual Report  
2022-2023

Working Together for an Alberta  
Free From Sexual Violence



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Providing leadership, coordination, collaboration and a unified voice on issues of sexual abuse and sexual assault.

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## Organization Overview

The Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS) is a non-profit, registered charitable organization that began operations in 1993. As a provincial umbrella organization, AASAS provides leadership, coordination and a unified voice on issues of sexual assault and sexual abuse while increasing recognition, support for and access to sexual assault services in Alberta.

### Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of respect and truth, AASAS would like to take a step towards reconciliation by acknowledging the land on which we do our work. Not as a token, or a box to check, but out of a genuine desire to acknowledge the traditional territories and travelling corridors of the people of the Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 regions and Metis regions 1 through 6 in Alberta.

We would also like to acknowledge the pervasive, and intergenerational effects of colonization; colonization, that included sexual violence as a way to harm Indigenous peoples, a weapon that is still used here on Turtle Island to harm others. Violence did exist before the arrival of settlers, but not in the ways that it is present in today's society. AASAS' commitment to reconciliation includes education, increased access to services, and truth telling.

### Our Vision

An Alberta free from sexual violence.

### Our Mission

To provide leadership, coordination, collaboration and a unified voice on issues of sexual abuse and sexual assault.

### The Role of AASAS

The AASAS Member Agencies/Services are responsible for day-to-day, front line delivery of services within their local communities and regional areas. As a provincial support organization, AASAS focuses its efforts in these key areas:

**AWARENESS:** AASAS works to increase public and government awareness of issues involving sexual abuse and sexual assault and the impacts they have on all Albertans.

**ACCESS:** AASAS strives to ensure that all Albertans affected by sexual abuse and sexual assault have access to healing and recovery programs, services and supports.

## Core Beliefs

- We believe anyone can be a victim of sexual abuse and sexual assault.
- We believe anyone affected by sexual abuse and sexual assault has the right to access effective, affordable and timely services that are distinct and specialized.
- We believe everyone has the capacity and resiliency to recover from sexual abuse and sexual assault.
- We believe victims of sexual abuse and sexual assault are not to blame and perpetrators must be held accountable.
- We believe society minimizes the crime of sexual abuse and sexual assault on individuals and that minimization has devastating outcomes for survivors.
- We believe services addressing sexual abuse and sexual assault need to be delivered in an inclusive, respectful and equitable manner regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation or ability.
- We believe there is a need for increased recognition and support for existing and emerging sexual assault services in Alberta.
- We believe education and awareness initiatives need to be targeted at everyone.
- We believe the prevention initiatives are not to be targeted to survivors or potential survivors but towards perpetrators and potential perpetrators as well as those who can intervene.
- We believe that treatment is a form of prevention because healthy individuals and healthy communities break the cycle of abuse.
- We believe in the need for treatment and greater access to treatment for perpetrators of sexual abuse and sexual assault.

## AASAS Member Agencies/Services

### **Pace Community Support, Sexual Assault & Trauma Centre (Grande Prairie)**

Support & Intake: 780.539.6692  
pacecentre.com

### **Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton**

Support & Info (9am-9pm daily): 780.423.4121  
Business: 780.423.4102  
sace.ca

### **University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre**

780.492.9771  
uab.ca/SACentre

### **Saffron Centre Ltd. (Sherwood Park)**

780.449.0900  
saffroncentre.com

### **Mamowichihitowin Community Wellness Program through the Hinton Friendship Centre**

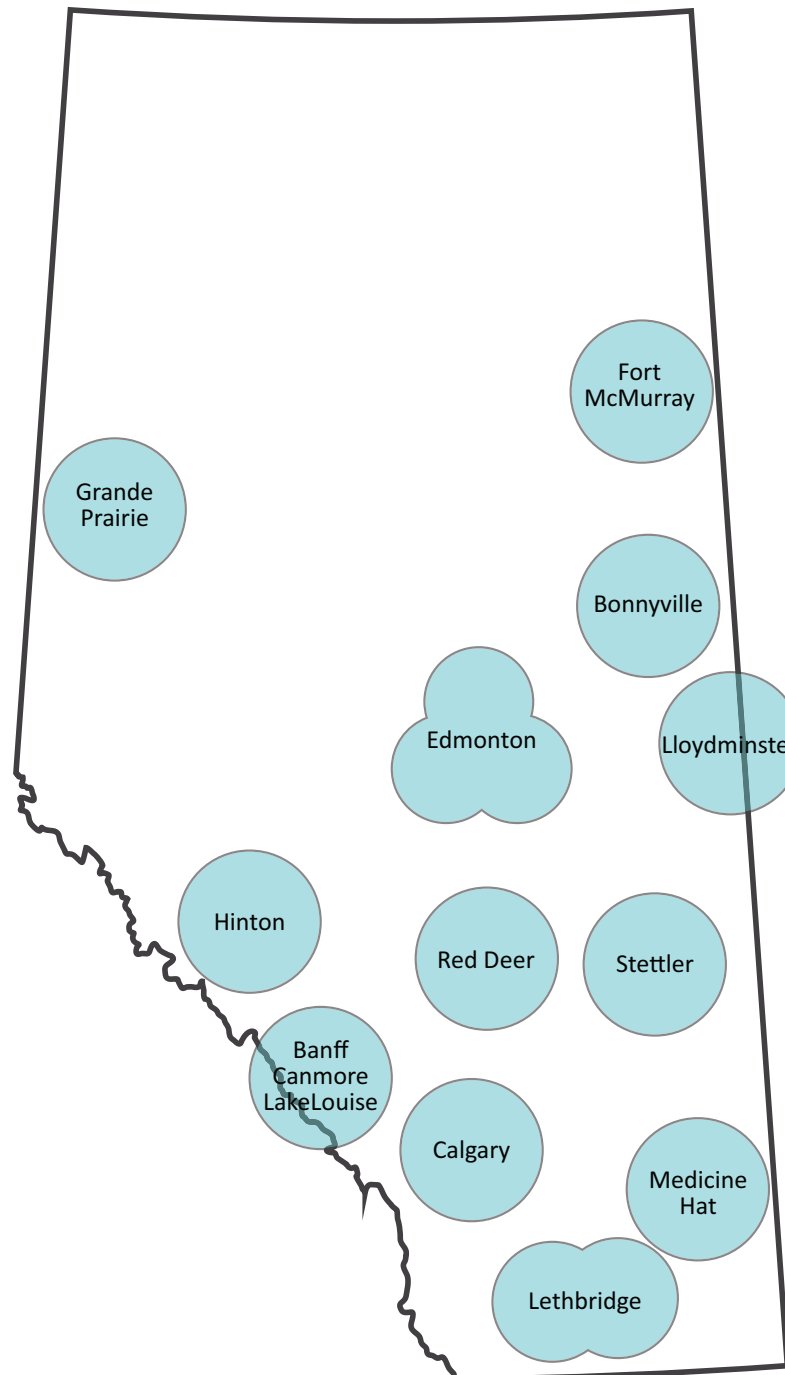
587.280.3395

### **Harmony Project - Sexual Violence Prevention & Response (Banff)**

24 hour crisis line: 403.760.3200  
YWCA programs & services:  
403.762.3560 Option 1  
harmonyproject.ca

### **Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse**

Toll Free: 1.877.237.5888  
Business: 403.237.6905  
calgarycasa.com



### **Waypoints Sexual Assault Healing Centre (Ft. McMurray)**

Crisis Line: 780.791.6708  
Business: 780.743.4691 Ext. 232  
waypointswb.ca

### **Dragonfly Centre: Sexual Assault Services (Bonnyville)**

780.812.3174  
Toll Free: 1.866.300.HEAL(4325)  
thedragonflycentre.com

### **Lloydminster Sexual Assault Services**

Business: 306.825.8255  
lloydminstersexualassault.com

### **Association of Communities Against Abuse (Stettler)**

Toll Free: 1.866.807.3558  
Business: 403.742.3558  
acaahelps.ca

### **Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre (Red Deer)**

Toll Free: 1.866.956.1099  
24-Hour Text: 1.866.956.1099  
Business: 403.340.1124  
Web Chat: casasc.ca

### **Sanare Centre (Medicine Hat)**

Business: 403.548.2717  
sanarecentre.ca

### **Lethbridge Family Services**

Counselling, Outreach and Education  
Contact re: Sexual Violence Action Committee  
Business: 403.327.5724  
lfsfamily.ca  
svaclethbridge.com

### **Chinook Sexual Assault Centre (Lethbridge)**

Toll Free: 1.844.576.2512  
Business: 403.694.1094  
csacleth.ca

## Message from the Leadership

As the veil of secrecy surrounding the crime of sexual assault gradually lifts and the culture of shaming and blaming survivors begins to shift towards believing and support, more survivors are coming forward to seek services. This is good news! It means safer and healthier communities for all of us.

And it also means consistently increasing numbers of survivors reaching out for support to our Alberta sexual assault services to seek healing and access justice. And more and more schools; faith communities, sports and community agencies reaching out to sexual assault services to provide community-based prevention education so that we can prevent sexual assault. This past year, it was clear; demand for sexual assault services was at an all-time high and it was time for AASAS to take-action.

In close collaboration with the 15 sexual assault services of Alberta, AASAS developed a business case demonstrating the needs for additional resources to meet the increasing demands. AASAS and the sexual assault services communicated with Government of Alberta Ministers and department representatives, media outlets, and community stakeholders and asked for their support.

The response from all of our AASAS constituents (governments; business; media; community) was overwhelmingly positive. In March 2023, the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services responded with a \$3.8 million one-time investment in sexual assault services to help address counselling wait times. We are so grateful for this response and most importantly, we know we are not fighting this battle alone.

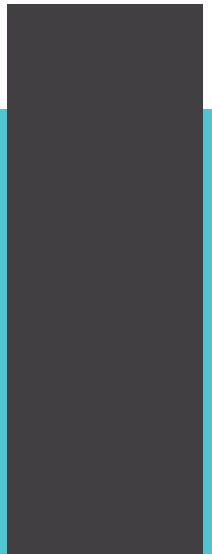
Working together, Albertans can end sexual violence!

### Staff

Deb Tomlinson, Chief Executive Officer  
Cheryl Wallach, Communications Specialist  
Corinne Ofstie, Director of Strategic Initiatives  
Cyndi Jardine, First Responder Training Administrator  
Haley Scott, Director of Operations  
Heather Turner, Collaborative Community Response Coordinator  
Lisa Oracheski, Collaborative Community Response Coordinator  
Pradnya Yadav, Executive Assistant  
Sam Brown, Moments Matter Coordinator  
Tiffany Goebel, First Responder Training Coordinator

### Board

Brenda Murdoch, President  
Brad Cunningham, Vice-President  
Thorna Lawrence, Treasurer  
Linda McCracken, Secretary  
Gabrielle Betts, Director  
John Ferguson, Director  
Kellie Cummings, Director  
Ruth Proulx, Director



# Supporting Hope and Healing

## #SupportSurvivorsAB: The Business Case

During the past year, through regular engagement with member agencies, AASAS consistently heard about the crisis of demand being experienced by sexual assault services across the province. Help seeking for sexual violence was at an all-time high.

A business case was developed that demonstrated additional funds would be needed in four areas to address the ongoing challenges experienced by sexual assault services. Funds were needed to:

- Enhance the counselling capacity of sexual assault services;
- Address the complex needs of survivors;
- Enhance access to justice programming; and
- Enhance prevention education.

AASAS had the opportunity to discuss the needs presented in the Business Case with several Government of Alberta Ministers and department representatives and to participate in a cross-ministerial working group focused on reviewing the Business Case when invited to do so.

The Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services responded with a \$3.8 million one-time investment in sexual assault services to help address counselling wait times.

## Alberta's ONE LINE for Sexual Violence

May 2022 marked the third anniversary of Alberta's ONE LINE for Sexual Violence - a single point of entry for all Albertans to obtain toll-free specialized sexual violence information, support, and referrals by phone, text, and/or online chat. A service that is possible thanks to support from the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, Ministry of Status of Women Alberta and AASAS member agencies: Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse (CCASA) and the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE), as well as the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre (UASAC) and the Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre (CASASC).



*\$3.8M was secured to help address wait times.*

*Since launching in May 2019, Alberta's ONE LINE has been contacted 9,455 times from 97 different communities.*



Since launching in May 2019, ONE LINE was contacted more than 9,455 times from 97 different communities across the province by those seeking to access specialized sexual violence support. Callers and chatters have shown an appreciation for the approach taken by those who answer the line, specifically around the non-judgmental, non-directive, and client-centered methods of practice.

## **Counselling**

With the support of the Ministries of Health and Seniors, Community and Social Services, Alberta's sexual assault services supported 3,824 new counselling clients along with 3,617 continuing clients. The number of new clients accessing services represents an increase of approximately 11% over the same period in 2021-2022. An increasing number of clients also required more counselling sessions in order to process their trauma.

AASAS member agencies provided 34,164 individual and group counselling sessions – an increase of 6%. Sixty-seven percent of individuals served were adults and 33% were children and youth (an increase over the previous year's 20%). While the majority of new clients were women (83%), 14% were men, 1% were transgender, and 1% were non-binary.

## **Enhancing Access to Justice**

*A total of 7,441 new and continuing clients accessed counselling services.*

## **Input into the Victims Services redesign**

AASAS participated in online information sessions about the redesign of police-based victim services in Alberta. AASAS then established a working group to draft information about the Specialized Police and Court Support programs offered through sexual assault services to encourage Victims Services to integrate the specialized services in the re-design.

## **RCMP Sexual Assault Investigation Review Committee**

With support from the RCMP K Division, AASAS and its member organizations make up Alberta's Sexual Assault Investigation Review Committee (SAIRC). SAIRC promotes collaboration between sexual assault services and RCMP members, knowledge sharing, learning, and continuous improvement towards a goal of increasing equitable access to the justice system for survivors of sexual violence.

A case review was conducted over two-days at the Child Advocacy Centre in Red Deer in July 2022.

# Enhancing Access to Services

## Regional Service Expansion

In February 2020, AASAS began a community engagement process in the Central West Region (Jasper, Hinton, Grande Cache, Edson, and Yellowhead County) by hosting initial stakeholder meetings. All communities expressed interest in continued engagement regarding the possible establishment of a specialized, collaborative, and coordinated response to sexual violence in the region.

*Mamowichihitowin Community Wellness Program in Hinton became the fifteenth member of the AASAS network.*

In March 2022, the Mamowichihitowin Community Wellness Program in Hinton officially became the fifteenth member of the AASAS network. This program brings an immense amount of wisdom and practice experience serving Indigenous survivors of sexual violence to our network.

There are still many communities in Alberta that are without specialized sexual violence services and AASAS will continue to support its members with regional service expansion through the coordination of the Rural Response to Sexual Violence Network.

## Allying with Indigenous Peoples - Centring Relationships to End Violence

AASAS, the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association (ANFCA), and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) continued their journey towards building meaningful and authentic relationships between the three provincial agencies through the Centring Relationships to End Violence initiative funded by the federal government Ministry, Women and Gender Equality, and the Canadian Women's Foundation.

This project aims to improve services for Indigenous survivors of gender-based violence in Alberta through relationship building and collaboration. The three provincial associations have taken on the responsibility of coordinating Communities of Practices amongst staff at all service providing agencies within their associations to share information, resources, build on strengths, and address challenges.



## Racial Equity Organizational Change Process

AASAS is committed to ensuring all its team members feel valued and respected and everyone experiences a sense of belonging and connection. With this goal in mind, the team and Board continued working through a racial equity organization change process with consultant Cynthia Okafor.

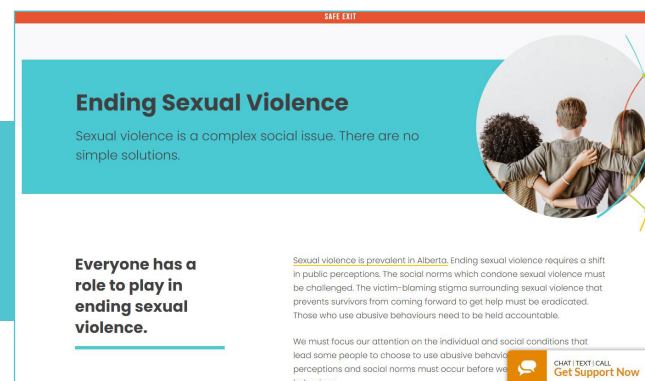
This year the AASAS leadership team, a consultant and two external stakeholders conducted an audit of the organization's culture, policies and procedures from which a Racial Equity Action Plan was developed.

## Website and Logo Refresh

The new AASAS website was launched in August 2022. The refreshed look is bright, modern and warm, and the site is on a newer platform which allows more flexibility and security.

The content was updated and reorganized with a focus on meeting AASAS's primary goals of increasing access to sexual violence support services and increasing public and government awareness of sexual violence and its impact on Albertans.

When accessing the new website, visitors can easily identify information for survivors about what sexual violence is and how to connect to AASAS members for support. The website content normalizes, validates, and encourages help seeking. It also answers questions many people ask, such as: how big of an issue is sexual violence in Alberta, and what can we do about it? Site visitors will find information on the impacts and root causes of sexual violence, as well as tangible actions everyone can take to address and end sexual violence in our province.



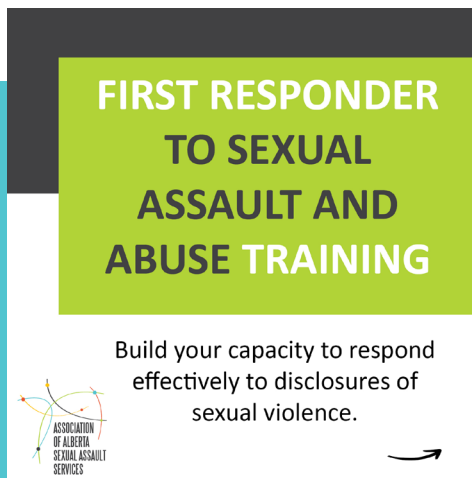
# Enhancing Capacity within Community to Recognize and Respond to Sexual Violence

## First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training™ (FRT)

With in-person meetings possible again in 2022, AASAS provided both online and in-person trainings. Forty-four FRT workshops were delivered with 594 participants in attendance.

There are 49 certified FRT Facilitators and in September 2022 AASAS launched a province-wide FRT Community of Practice to ensure continued growth and connection among facilitators, and improve the already exemplary quality of the training.

A content and curriculum update process also began this year. FRT workshops have been delivered across the province for more than a decade, and while feedback from both participants and facilitators has been overwhelmingly positive, it is time for a refresh. AASAS will work on updating the curriculum to reflect current and emerging best practices in a number of areas, such as adult learning pedagogy, trauma informed facilitation, and embedding intersectionality throughout.



*“If we want a world free from sexual violence, the key is changing the beliefs and attitudes of our societies. The First Responder to Sexual Assault & Abuse Training (FRT) is a well-rounded course that speaks of sexual violence from all aspects from education to social to legal. By the end of the training, not only did I feel more confident about my abilities to respond to a person giving a disclosure of sexual violence, I began recognizing that myself, and all of us, have a voice and collectively we can use this voice to change societal beliefs to end cycles of abuse. I appreciate all of the knowledge I learned from this course. If you’re thinking about taking FRT... Do! It’s well worth it.”*

## Counselling Adult Survivors of Sexual Violence

Counselling Adult Survivors of Sexual Violence is a 12-week online integrative course that is designed for counselors, therapists, and other mental health practitioners who may wish to work with survivors of sexual violence, or who may be already working with survivors and would like to more deeply inform their counselling practice.

*98% of participants would recommend this training to others.*

Two sessions were facilitated with 47 counselling professionals receiving training. These professionals were located all across Canada, including representation from seven different provinces and one international location.

*“This is a phenomenal course, the information and knowledge provided both in class and through extra resource materials is undeniably worth the cost and the time. The knowledge of the facilitators is inspiring. If looking for a course that will benefit you as well as the survivors you support this is it.”*

## Enhanced Emergency Sexual Assault Services Training

The Enhanced Emergency Sexual Assault Services (EESAS) training program is being offered by Forensic Education in collaboration with AASAS. This program is designed for professionals working in the criminal justice system or medical field to respond to people who have been recently sexually assaulted (e.g. healthcare, counselling, and law enforcement professionals).

*100% of surveyed participants said the training enhanced their professional competence and skill set.*

As a result of a collaboration between the Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP), AASAS and Forensic Education, two online EESAS workshops were delivered this period with participation from 100 rural health providers from 45 communities across the province. Participants were equipped with the skills necessary to provide examinations, care, and evidence collection locally, thereby decreasing transportation barriers faced by so many Albertans who have experienced recent sexual assault.

## Promoting Safer and Healthier Alberta Workplaces

With support from the Department of Justice Canada, AASAS worked with Cause and Effect Marketing to continue the #momentismatter campaign and launch the online workplace sexual harassment training curriculum – Engagement Strategies Toward Ending Workplace Sexual Harassment – developed by Dr. Kiara Mikita.

*97% of campaign partners reported having intentionally modeled respectful workplace behaviours since joining #momentismatter.*

The campaign focus this year was Yes, there is a Better Way to Talk about Workplace Sexual Harassment.

The 'better way' campaign and training promotion strategy highlighted how traditional approaches to workplace sexual harassment awareness and training are missing the mark - and how the AASAS approach to engagement, awareness and prevention offers a better way to talk about workplace sexual harassment.

Tactics of the 'better way' included engaging leaders to model respect, and deepen learning and skill development to help stop sexual harassment.

AASAS publicly launched Engagement Strategies Toward Ending Workplace Sexual Harassment in the Fall of 2022. Twenty-two facilitators were trained to deliver this curriculum and seven education sessions were provided. One hundred twenty-eight employers/employees from across 51 organizations attended these education sessions.

*Training participants are more inclined to support, intervene and get help in situations of sexual harassment.*



## Leading the Way

### **Collaboration is Key**

AASAS continues to build relationships and contribute to specialized sexual violence expertise within a number of provincial and national joint initiatives including:

IMPACT Domestic and Sexual Violence - a provincial collective impact initiative whose purpose is to bring about an end to both domestic and sexual violence in Alberta.

The Ending Violence Association of Canada (EVA Canada) - a national non-profit organization whose main purpose is to address and prevent gender-based violence at the national level – and their National Sexual Violence Working Group.

The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) - contributing to the prevention of femicide in Canada by collecting, producing, distributing and sharing research, knowledge, ideas, education, information, resources and strategies which can help reduce femicide and, in turn, improve the lives of girls and women in Canada.

Canadian Women's Foundation's Rebuilding Lives Grants Committee - assisting in the selection, evaluation and capacity building of grantees.

Transformative Justice National Coalition - organizations working in the anti-violence sector to increase internal capacity in regards to transformative justice.

The Government of Alberta Sexual Violence Police Advisory Committee (SVPAC) - providing police and partnering agencies with the opportunity to work together to identify service gaps in the system, improve supports to victims and develop a consistent law enforcement response for the province.



## Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medals

These medals commemorate the 70th anniversary of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne.

Her Late Majesty expressed her wish that Jubilee events be an occasion for enjoying a sense of togetherness and optimism about the future, and celebrating the achievements of people who make our community better.

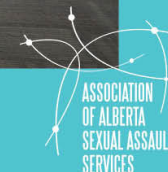
AASAS was honoured to nominate and present Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medals to 10 individuals who have worked tirelessly in the anti-violence and anti-sexual violence sector in Alberta.



THE QUEEN'S  
PLATINUM JUBILEE



LE JUBILÉ DE PLATINE  
DE LA REINE





Award recipients included:

Jacquie Aitken-Kish, Pace Sexual Assault Centre, Grande Prairie  
Danielle Aubry, Calgary Communities Against Abuse  
Lisa Bell, Calgary Sexual Assault Response Team  
Brad Cunningham, Vice President, Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services  
Carla Eckstrom, Pace Centre, Grande Prairie  
Shauna Eriksen, Mamowichihitowin Community Wellness Program, Hinton  
Thorna Lawrence, Treasurer, Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services  
Cpl. Courtney McCarron, RCMP K Division  
Tammy Shopland, Lloydminster Sexual Assault Services  
Erin Willmer, Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre

There were other outstanding individuals from the AASAS network who received Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medals from other organizations in recognition of their work for their communities, Alberta and Canada:

Patricia Arango, Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre  
John Ferguson, Director, Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services  
Mary Jane James, Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton  
Chris Johnson, Sanare Centre, Medicine Hat  
Lisa Oracheski, Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services  
Debra Tomlinson, Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services  
Kiara Warkentin, Saffron Centre.

# Thank You



The funding from the Government of Alberta supports AASAS efforts to increase awareness of issues of sexual abuse and assault and to ensure all Albertans affected by sexual violence have access to programs, supports, and services.



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada



CANADIAN  
WOMEN'S  
FOUNDATION

FONDATION  
CANADIENNE  
DES FEMMES

With funding from the federal government Ministry, Women and Gender Equality and the Canadian Women's Foundation, AASAS is partnering with the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters on an initiative aimed at increasing support for Indigenous women in Alberta who have experienced violence.



Department of Justice  
Canada

Ministère de la Justice  
Canada

Funding made available from Department of Justice Canada supports AASAS to launch a four year public awareness campaign and training curriculum to address sexual harassment in the workplace.

*Audited financial statements for the year (April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023) are available by request from the office of the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services.*

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