

Annual Report 2023 - 2024

MANY VOICES. ONE PURPOSE.

Safe communities free from sexual violence.





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ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

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 districts 1 through 22 in Alberta.

We would also like to acknowledge the pervasive and intergenerational effects of 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.

Who We Are and What We Do

As a provincial association, the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS) brings together a network of specialized sexual violence and trauma specific services.

Together we are many voices working towards one shared purpose – safe communities free from sexual violence.

To achieve our shared purpose, AASAS focuses on:

Connecting Communities

by bringing together sexual assault services to represent and reflect the perspectives of people from across Alberta, urban and rural. We find common ground and unite on the biggest issues and opportunities within the sector.

Connecting Voices

by mobilizing and amplifying the voices of millions of Albertans who care deeply about this issue, which impacts nearly one in two of us. Together our many voices support survivors and the people who love them.

Connecting the Dots

around sexual violence by sharing insights from direct service providers, researchers and advocates to inform policy and funding decisions that build the capacity of the sector, and improve access to justice and support services that help keep Alberta communities healthy and safe.

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.

We Believe:

- Anyone can be a victim of sexual abuse and sexual assault.
- Anyone affected by sexual abuse and sexual assault has the right to access effective, affordable and timely services that are distinct and specialized.
- Everyone has the capacity and resiliency to recover from sexual abuse and sexual assault.
- Victims of sexual abuse and sexual assault are not to blame and perpetrators must be held accountable.
- Society minimizes the crime of sexual abuse and sexual assault on individuals and that minimization has devastating outcomes for survivors.
- 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.
- There is a need for increased recognition and support for existing and emerging sexual assault services in Alberta.
- Education and awareness initiatives need to be targeted at everyone.
- 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.
- Treatment is a form of prevention because healthy individuals and healthy communities break the cycle of abuse.
- In the need for treatment and greater access to treatment for perpetrators of sexual abuse and sexual assault.

AASAS MEMBERS

There are fifteen AASAS members in Alberta providing specialized and distinct core sexual assault services to individuals, families and communities across the province of Alberta.

Association of Communities Against Abuse
(Stettler)
acaahelps.ca

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse
calgarycasa.com

Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support
Centre (Red Deer)
casasc.ca

Chinook Sexual Assault Centre (Lethbridge)
csacleth.ca

Dragonfly Counselling and Support Centre
(Bonnyville)
thedragonflycentre.com

Harmony Project - Sexual Violence
Prevention & Response (Banff)
harmonyproject.ca

Lethbridge Family Services
Counselling, Outreach and Education
Contact re: Sexual Violence Action
Committee
lfsfamily.ca

Lloydminster Sexual Assault Services
lloydminstersexualassault.com

Mamowichihitowin Community Wellness
Program through the Hinton
Friendship Centre
587.280.3395

Pace Community Support, Sexual Assault &
Trauma Centre (Grande Prairie)
pacecentre.com

Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton
sace.ca

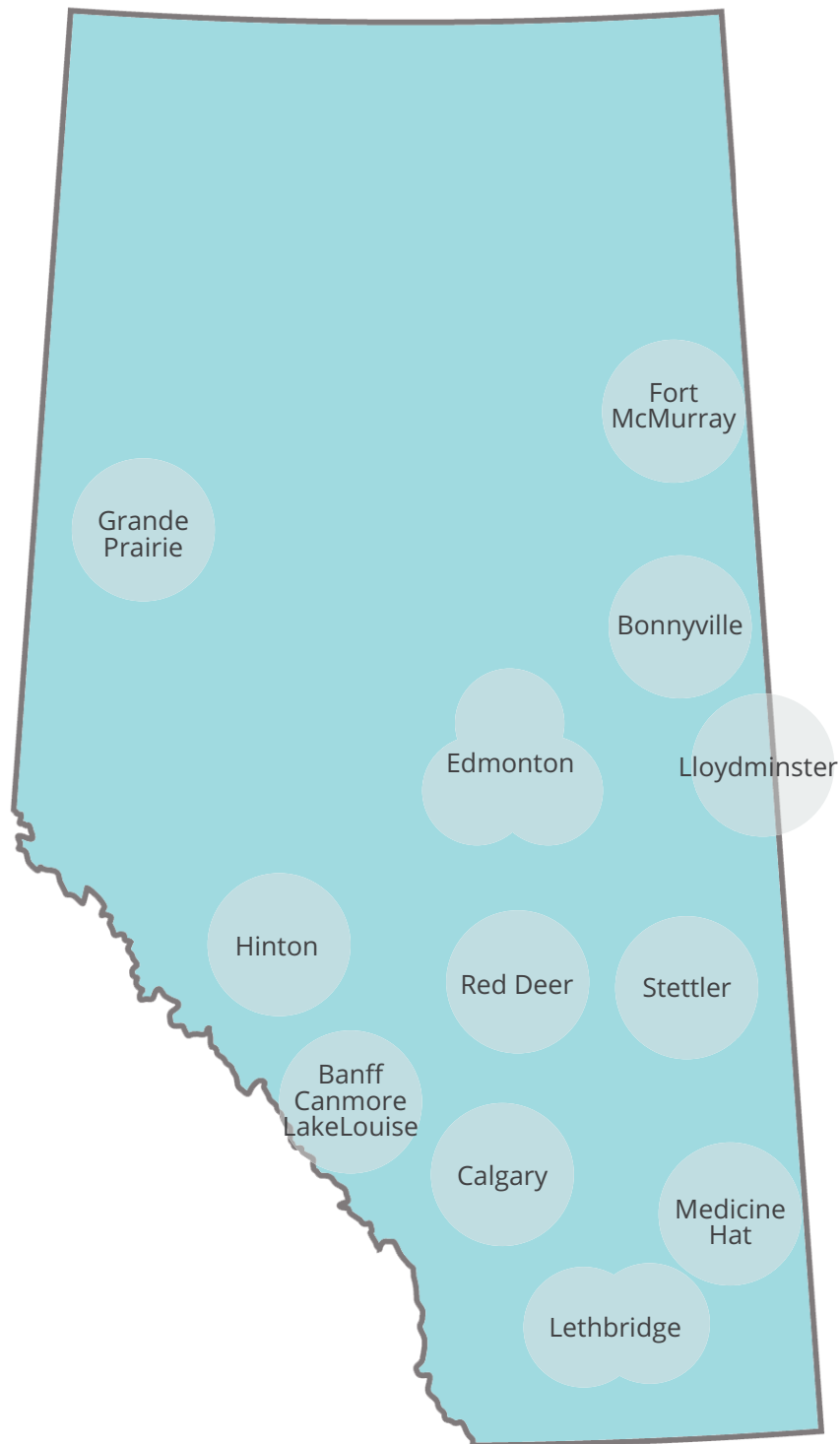
Saffron Centre (Sherwood Park)
saffroncentre.com

Sanare Centre (Medicine Hat)
sanarecentre.ca

University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre
uab.ca/SACentre

Waypoints Sexual Assault Healing Centre
(Ft. McMurray)
waypointswb.ca





MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

If we could describe this past year in three words, they would be: transition, collaboration, and unity.

This year, we celebrated the achievements of AASAS' longstanding Chief Executive Officer, Deb Tomlinson, as she transitioned into retirement, and ushered in a shared leadership model with us as Co-Chief Executive Officers. We are incredibly honoured to continue Deb's legacy in a model that embodies the AASAS network's commitment to relationships and collaboration in the effort to end sexual violence.

This transition was hard work, but together in collaboration with our staff team, our Board of Directors, AASAS members, and funders, we didn't skip a beat. Thank you all, because of your unwavering commitment to our shared purpose and to survivors, we have had an incredibly impactful year. We united to inform public policy on responding to the increased demand for sexual assault services and the complex needs of survivors; we launched an initiative to develop Canada's first provincial online sexual assault reporting to police platform; we ushered in a new brand and communications framework that powerfully communicates that we are a network of many voices united for one purpose – safe communities free from sexual violence; and we mapped out and transitioned to a new Strategic Plan for 2023 to 2028.



As we look back on the past year, and our path ahead as an agency and as a network, we are humbled to be part of a network and an Alberta whose many voices unite to support survivors of sexual violence and the people who love them.

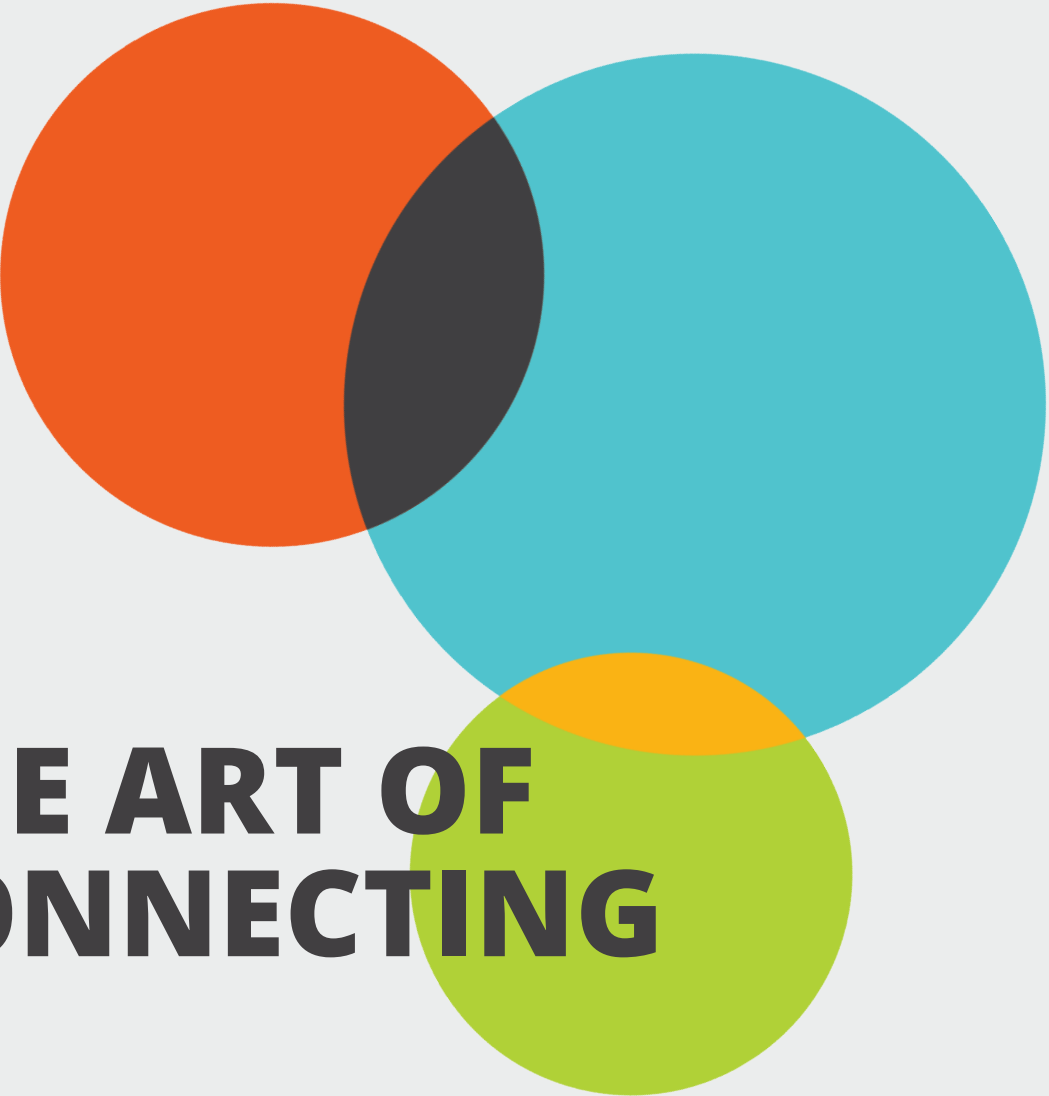
Haley Scott & Corinne Ofstie

Board

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

Staff

Corinne Ofstie, Co-Chief Executive Officer
Haley Scott, Co-Chief Executive Officer
Deb Tomlinson, Chief Executive Officer
Cheryl Wallach, Communications Specialist
Cyndi Jardine, Operations Coordinator
Heather Turner, Collaborative Community Response Coordinator
Lisa Oracheski, Collaborative Community Response Coordinator
Louiza Chak, Administrative Assistant
Sam Brown, Moments Matter Coordinator
Tiffany Goebel, Training Coordinator



THE ART OF CONNECTING



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

by bringing together sexual assault services to represent and reflect the perspectives of people from across Alberta, urban and rural. We find common ground and unite on the biggest issues and opportunities within the sector.

Facilitating Communities of Practice

To support service delivery excellence within our network, AASAS coordinates and chairs a number of different communities of practice. These communities focus on sharing best-practices and resources, identifying issues and trends, problem solving around service delivery challenges, and ensuring that members of the AASAS network maintain strong and collaborative relationships. They are comprised of representatives from AASAS member organizations working in specified core service areas.

Communities of Practice:

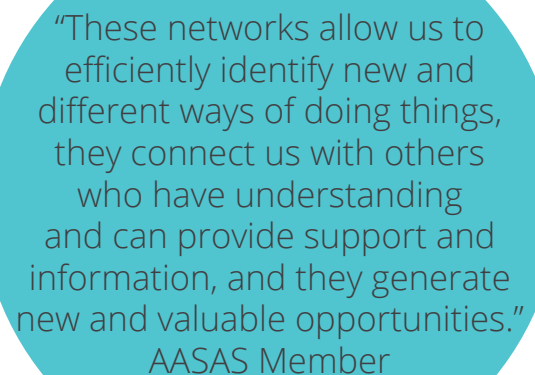
Senior Leadership

Clinical

Specialized Police and Court Support

Rural Response to Sexual Violence

Education



"These networks allow us to efficiently identify new and different ways of doing things, they connect us with others who have understanding and can provide support and information, and they generate new and valuable opportunities."
AASAS Member

Coordinating Alberta's ONE LINE for Sexual Violence

AASAS is proud to coordinate Alberta's ONE LINE for Sexual Violence which celebrated four years of operation in May 2023. This specialized talk, text and chat support service is available to all Albertans and is possible thanks to support from the Ministry of Children and Family Services, Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, and AASAS member agencies: Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse and the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton, as well as the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre and the Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre.

ONE LINE received 2,648 texts, calls and chats, and since launching in May of 2019 has been contacted more than 12,100 times from 104 different communities across the province by those seeking to access specialized sexual violence support.

Piloting a New Core Service: Integrated Case Management

In response to the complex needs of survivors, many AASAS members have been offering a wide array of supports that go beyond crisis intervention services but do not fall within the scope of therapeutic counselling. The AASAS network has been working to address a gap in the Core Services Framework to ensure the full scope of this important work is adequately captured.

The Ministry of Children and Family Services announced funding to pilot a new core service with two areas of focus: meeting basic needs through systems navigation or case management; and creating safety and stabilization through sexual assault trauma counselling interventions such as grounding, emotional regulation, and containment, and psychoeducation.


A working group of AASAS Members oversaw a literature review, environmental scan, and the development of a program design and evaluation framework for the pilot which will launch next year.

Increasing Options for Survivors: Online Reporting to Police

Women and Gender Equality Canada provided funding to AASAS to partner with RCMP K-Division and other law enforcement agencies to develop a provincial online reporting platform for survivors to report sexual assault to the police.

This project is designed with survivors in mind, prioritizing their access to information, choices, and control over their own experiences. While sexual assault is unfortunately common and deeply affects our communities, only 6% of assaults are ever reported to police in Canada. By offering an online reporting option that allows for anonymity, we aim to give survivors more ways to seek justice and connect with the support they need.

The data collected from the reports will help law enforcement better understand violent crime in our communities, provide AASAS with insight into survivor needs, and shape future policies that prioritize survivor well-being and justice.



"This platform
opens doors that
have never been
opened before"

CONNECTING VOICES

by mobilizing and amplifying the voices of millions of Albertans who care deeply about this issue, which impacts nearly 1 in 2 of us. Together our many voices support survivors and the people who love them.

Powerfully Communicating Who We Are and What We Do

AASAS engaged Cause & Effect Marketing to develop a message framework that builds on AASAS's mission, supports its leadership position in the community, and can be integrated into communication platforms.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted with funders, partners, network members, Board members, and staff. From these consultations, brand statements about who AASAS is and what we do were crafted. This new messaging was then used by DeAnne Bedier Design to develop a new logo and brand guidelines which focused on AASAS's confidence, collaboration and collective impact as an organization.

Enhancing Capacity Within Community to Recognize and Respond to Sexual Violence

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

AASAS provides First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training in two different formats – online and in-person over two full days. Thirty-three workshops were facilitated, with 477 participants building their capacity to respond effectively to disclosures of sexual violence.

There are 35 individuals certified to facilitate FRT, along with 17 facilitators in training who attended the March Train the Facilitator Workshop in Calgary. Facilitators are part of a community of practice which met four times throughout the year to ensure continued growth and improvement for themselves and the program.

"I truly feel empowered after this training, and I look forward to being able to give power back to other folks."
Participant

Counselling Adult Survivors of Sexual Violence

Designed for counselors, therapists, and mental health practitioners looking to more deeply inform their counselling practice with survivors of sexual violence, this 12-week online course was delivered twice this year with 48 participants. These participants were from seven different provinces and two international locations.

"Hands down the most supportive, informative, enriching and value for money course I've ever had the privilege to complete!"
Participant



Enhanced Emergency Sexual Assault Services Training (EESAS)

AASAS continued to work collaboratively with other agencies serving rural and remote communities of Alberta to promote EESAS training, which is designed for professionals working in the criminal justice system or medical field to respond to people who have been recently sexually assaulted.

AASAS worked with the Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP) to facilitate a workshop for 78 participants from 25 Alberta communities.

Participants learned to provide examinations, care, and evidence collection locally, decreasing transportation barriers faced by so many Albertans who have experienced recent sexual assault.

EESAS is offered by forensiceducation.ca in collaboration with AASAS.

Promoting Safer and Healthier Workplaces

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

The year-three campaign messaging “Didn’t work then. Doesn’t work now.” centred on a sense of urgency for organizations to attend the education program. It highlighted the fact that workplace sexual harassment training principles haven’t changed in 40 years and neither have the rates of incidents.

Videos were created to promote the education program that included a panel discussion with campaign partners, and interviews with people on the street about sexual harassment in the workplace.

Engagement Strategies Toward Ending Workplace Sexual Harassment workshops were hosted by AASAS and the Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Services Centre. Nine sessions were provided with a total of 171 individuals from 66 organizations attending.

Sexual harassment programs haven't changed in decades.



**Didn't work then.
Doesn't work now.**

#momentsmatter

89% of participants rated their knowledge of how to help stop sexual harassment as high after taking the education program.



CONNECTING THE DOTS

around sexual violence by sharing insights from direct service providers, researchers and advocates to inform policy and funding decisions that build the capacity of the sector, and improve access to justice and support services that help keep Alberta communities healthy and safe.

Advancing Racial Equity

As part of the goal to advance racial equity within the AASAS organization, a Racial Equity Action Plan was developed that was used to inform the new Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan now includes a goal to “embed equity, inclusion and belonging as guiding values and foundational principals within our organization and network”.

Centring Relationships to End Violence Against Indigenous Women

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 (CREV) initiative funded by the federal government Ministry, Women and Gender Equality, and the Canadian Women's Foundation.

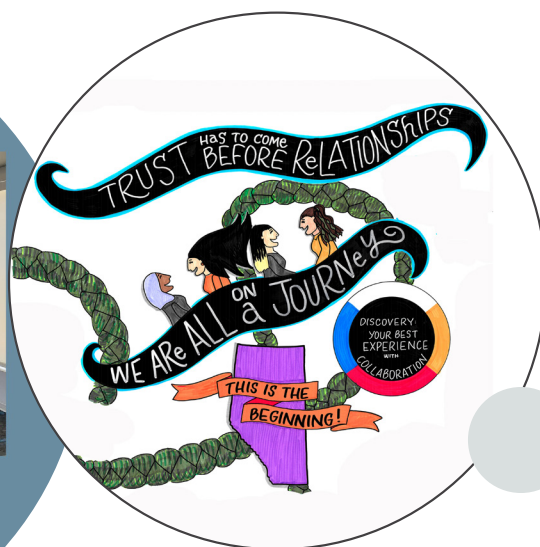
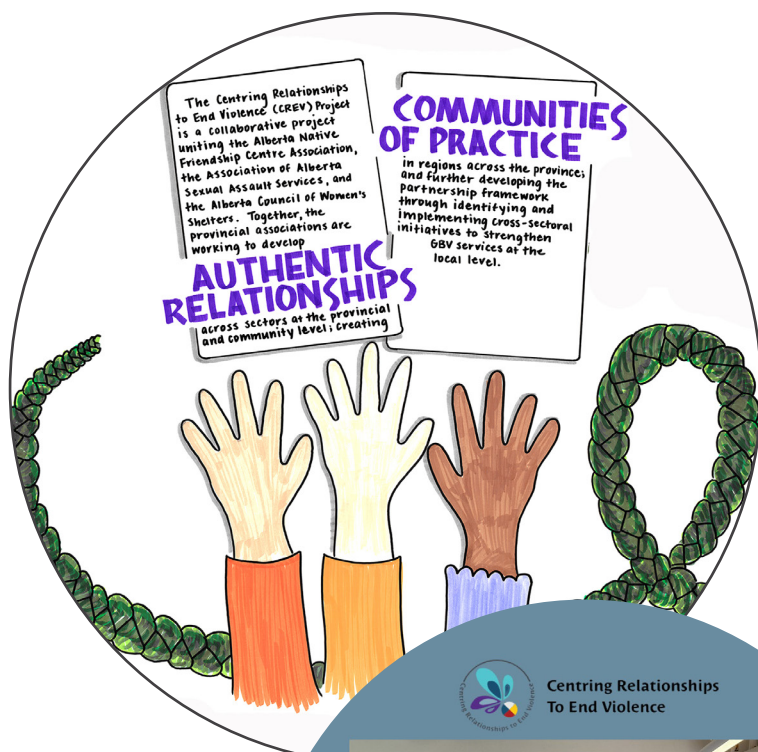
All three provincial associations attended the Leading Change Summit in May 2023, where individuals from forty-one member agencies across the province participated in an engagement session intended to unite the members.

To continue fostering the relationships built at the summit, four online Community of Practice Circles were launched – one in each quadrant of the province, following the medicine wheel framework with north, east, south, and west quadrants. Members were invited to come together to explore how building authentic and sustainable cross-sectoral relationships has the potential to increase access to support for Indigenous women who have experienced violence.

The three associations also began hosting community engagement meetings that provide a safe space where Indigenous women with lived experiences of domestic and sexual violence can share their stories of seeking support – both successes and challenges.

The Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association, with the support of CREV, hosted a two-day in-person Knowledge Exchange which was attended by more than 100 representatives from Friendship Centres, Sexual Assault Centres and Women's Shelters across the province.

A Wise Practices Framework for Building Authentic Relationships was also created to share with member organizations and others.



Developing Sector Priorities: Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence

Drawing from the work of IMPACT, Shift, and the Government of Alberta on the development of an Alberta Primary Prevention Framework for the prevention of domestic and sexual violence, AASAS developed Sector Priorities for Sexual Violence Primary Prevention.

The aim was to review Shift's prevention reports, Alberta's Primary Prevention Playbook and the Strong Women's Circle Report; integrate these findings with a community-practice lens; and identify priorities for AASAS and the membership.

Working with Dr. Sarah Fotheringham and a group of AASAS member agencies, a document was developed that included 31 sector priorities within nine themes for sexual violence primary prevention:

1. Foundations for the Sector
2. Equity Action
3. Educational and Social Norm Campaigns
4. Capacity Building and Training
5. Adults who use Sexual Violence and Children/Youth who use Problematic Sexual Behaviors
6. Engaging Men and Boys
7. Systemic Change
8. Research and Evaluation
9. Healing and Recovery as Prevention

Developing Best Practices for Children/Youth Engaged in Problematic Sexualized Behaviours

Sexual assault services across Alberta continued to experience an increase in requests for support and treatment from families where a child or youth is engaging in the use of problematic sexualized behaviors against other children.

In an effort to better understand and address this emerging trend and with special project funding from the Ministry of Children and Family Services, AASAS contracted with researchers to complete an environmental scan to answer questions related to prevalence; who is causing harm, treatment interventions, best practices and gaps in knowledge. This was followed by a literature review which was combined with the scan.

The resulting report will be foundational research as the network advances programming for children and youth with problematic sexual behaviour.

Customized Case Management Systems

In 2019, AASAS network member Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse, worked with Ripple Group (a software development company) to develop a customized sexual violence service delivery case management platform, the Izzy Case Management System (ICM). Izzy Case Management allows for the secure online storage of client case files while also streamlining data collection, outcome measures, reporting practices, scheduling and case management functions.

Four other sexual assault services were interested in adopting ICM however, the costs were prohibitive. AASAS and Ripple Group received a grant from the Civil Society Fund to support the costs of customizing and onboarding interested AASAS members to the platform. A new case management platform will help support operational efficiencies and increase the organizations' capacity for service delivery.

Increasing Access to Specialized Police and Court Support Services

At the request of the Director of Victim Services within the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services, AASAS and a working group of members developed a Community-Based Specialized Police and Court Support Overview report.

The report was used to help inform the development of the redesign of police-based victim services in Alberta, and to support collaboration within the new regional design. The information was also used to assist the grant review team for the Specialized Criminal Justice Navigator Grant.

Reviewing RCMP Sexual Assault Investigations

AASAS and its member organizations make up the RCMP K Division's Sexual Assault Investigation Review Committee. External review of sexual assault investigations promotes collaboration, knowledge sharing, learning, and continuous improvement towards a goal of increasing equitable access to the justice system for survivors of sexual violence.

Three file review sessions were taken on by the committee during which 12 additional reviewers were trained on the process.

Developing a Funding Formula

AASAS contracted with MNP, and engaged the full membership and representatives from the Prevention of Family Violence and Abuse branch of the Ministry of Children and Family Services to inform the development of a funding formula for the distribution of the Government of Alberta's funding commitment of \$10 million over four years.

Seventy-seven planning, consultation and development meetings were held to create a funding formula methodology that is a standardized yet flexible approach that:

- distributes much needed resources to address the needs of survivors all across the province;
- accounts for the organizational differences between standalone sexual assault centres and programs;
- accounts for the variation in Core Service delivery across the AASAS Network;
- factors in the resource needs of rural communities while also allocating resources to population dense areas of the province; and
- ensures each Sexual Assault Service will get an impactful minimum allocation.

Partnering with Provincial and National Initiatives

AASAS continued to build relationships and contribute to specialized sexual violence knowledge and expertise within 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.
- Gender Based Violence Worker Wellness National Advisory Committee - providing support and guidance for EVA Canada's project, "Building Systemic Health, Safety and Wellness Supports for the Anti-violence Workforce".
- The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability - 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.
- trans-LINK Canada Network - partnering to create and exchange knowledge on supporting transgender and gender diverse survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence.
- Alberta Council of Women's Shelters – advisory committee to help guide and inform an intimate partner sexual violence awareness campaign and training for direct service providers in the gender-based violence sector.
- Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children: Collaborating to Prevent and Respond to Workplace Harassment and Violence Project.
- 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.

THANK YOU



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.



**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.



**Women and Gender
Equality Canada**

**Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada**

Funding from the federal government Ministry, Women and Gender Equality (WAGE), allows AASAS to partner 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. Also with funding from WAGE, AASAS is partnering with sexual assault services and law enforcement to develop a provincial online reporting to police platform for survivors of sexual violence.



Canadian Women's Foundation funding allows AASAS to partner 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. Also with funding from the Canadian Women's foundation, AASAS promoted Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence and developed Sector Priorities for Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence.

Audited financial statements for the year (April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024) are available by request from the office of the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services.
mailbox@aasas.ca





In support of survivors and the people who love them.