



**Saint Mary's
University**

Sexual Violence Support Centre

Annual Report

May 2022 – April 2023



Sexual Violence Support Centre Annual Report 2022-2023

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Executive Summary

Saint Mary's University is committed to promoting a safe educational and working environment for students, staff, faculty, and visitors. Saint Mary's works collaboratively to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence and harassment through a comprehensive Sexual Violence and Harassment Policy; research; the distribution of resources; and the facilitation of sexual and gender-based violence prevention education and training for students, staff, faculty, and the broader community. Saint Mary's provides trauma-informed and survivor-centered support, information, resources, accommodations, and care choices on campus and makes referrals to programs in the community for students, staff, faculty, and visitors who have experienced sexual and gender-based violence or harassment.

Saint Mary's envisions a campus and community that values consent, safety, and respect. The Saint Mary's Sexual Violence Support Centre (SVSC) offers resources and support to students, staff, and faculty who have experienced sexual or gender-based violence as well as sexual and gender-based violence prevention, education, and training for the SMU and broader community.

2022-2023 Highlights

- Revised and expanded Sexual Violence and Harassment Policy passed in September 2022, with 64 staff and faculty trained on new regulations, process, and procedure.
- 205 supportive counselling sessions and 461 check-in sessions offered to students, staff, and faculty who experienced sexual and/or gender-based violence.
- 194 students trained in the Waves of Change Bystander Intervention program through the Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative (SVPI).
- New SVPI programming in consent and healthy relationships developed and piloted with 68 and 17 students, respectively.
- 157 staff and faculty trained in effective response to disclosures of sexual and/or gender-based violence.
- Revised SVSC website launched to enhance user experience and better showcase supports, education, and initiatives.

This year brought growth and expansion to the services and supports offered by the SVSC. We are excited to build on this momentum and continue to work towards a safer and more empowering campus community for all.

Sexual Violence and Harassment Policy

In the context of the 2015 strategy *Breaking the Silence: A Coordinated Response to Sexual Violence in Nova Scotia*, Post-Secondary Institutions entered an agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia to work together to address sexual violence at universities and colleges. A Provincial Committee comprised of government, student, and community representatives; first responders on campus; faculty; and administration was tasked with making recommendations on prevention, policy, and response. The recommendations are outlined in the reports: *Changing the culture of acceptance: Recommendations to address sexual violence on University campuses* and *Guidelines and recommendations for Nova Scotia Universities and the Nova Scotia Community College: Development of survivor-centric sexual violence policies and responses*.

A key recommendation that came from the work of the Provincial Sexual Violence Prevention Committee and two guiding reports was for each institution to develop a stand-alone Sexual Violence Policy, and for the campus community to be consulted on the development and review of the Policy.

During the Spring of 2022, the SVSC implemented a campus-wide engagement process as part of the Sexual Violence and Harassment Policy update. 62 students and 35 staff and faculty participated in online or in person focus groups and an anonymous online survey to provide feedback on the definitions, values, scope, and processes of Saint Mary's Sexual Violence and Harassment Policy. Key themes that came out of this process include:

- Ensuring the policy is rooted in a **survivor-centered** approach.
- The policy should account for an **intersectional** understanding of sexual violence and harassment.
- The policy should commit to **trauma-informed** and **culturally responsive** values.
- Ensuring the policy is **procedurally fair**.

Feedback from the campus wide engagement process is consistent with recommendations on responsive and survivor-centric policies found in the following guiding documents:

- Our Turn: A National Student Led Action Plan to End Campus Sexual Violence
- Guidelines and Recommendations for Nova Scotia Universities and the Nova Scotia Community College: Development of Survivor-Centric Sexual Violence Policies

- Courage to Act: Developing a National Framework to Address and Prevent Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada
- CCLISAR Independent Review of Saint Francis Xavier University's Policies Responding to Sexualized Violence

The updated Sexual Violence and Harassment Policy was passed by the Executive Management Group in September 2022 and was subsequently presented to the Senior and Executive Management Groups and Academic Senate over the Fall of 2022 before being officially launched in January 2023.

To support the implementation of the Sexual Violence and Harassment Policy, a training was developed and delivered to **64** staff and faculty. This in-person training, facilitated by the Sexual Violence Advisor, will be offered on an on-going basis and will be supported by the development of an open access online module for the campus community in the 2023-2024 program year.

Many thanks are owed to the Sexual Violence Policy Review Committee who supported the policy review process:

- Tom Brophy; Associate Vice President of Student Affairs and Services
- Mark Moffett; Associate Vice President of People and Culture
- Claire Milton; University Secretary, Senior Director of Legal Services, Privacy Officer
- Dr. Diane Crocker; Chair, Professor - Department of Criminology
- Kennedy Fitzgerald; former Director, Employee Experience
- Isobel Tyler; former President, SMUSA
- Kyle Cook. former Vice President, Advocacy, SMUSA
- Dee Dooley; Sexual Violence Advisor

Response

In response to the introduction of a dedicated sexual violence support position in the Fall of 2021, both Disclosures and Reports of sexual violence have increased. The trend of increased Disclosures and Reports is in line with other Post-Secondary Institutions across Nova Scotia and Canada that have added specific sexual violence prevention and response supports to their campus communities. The capacity building, increased awareness, and clear and safe pathways for sharing and receiving support are key reasons why such increases have been observed. Feedback from students, staff, and faculty has highlighted the benefits of this support service to the campus community.

In the 2022-2023 program year, the Sexual Violence Advisor provided **205** supportive counselling sessions to students, staff, and faculty who experienced sexual and/or gender-based violence, as well as **461** check-in sessions. Supportive counselling sessions aim to provide a helpful, compassionate, and empathetic space for survivors to explore their options; learn about resources; and build grounding and coping strategies. Check-in sessions consist of a written, virtual, or in-person follow up to review next steps, address questions and concerns, and provide assistance and continued support.

As a part of on-going case management, **47** accommodations (ranging from academic to housing to workplace) were coordinated for students, staff, and faculty who experienced sexual and/or gender-based violence.

A breakdown of cases from 2020-2023 is as follows:

Measure	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023			
Disclosures	12	42	64			
Reports	Code of Student Conduct	Code of Student Conduct	Code of Student Conduct	Human Resources Resolution	SVH Policy Informal Resolution	SVH Policy Formal Resolution
	1	3	4	1	1	1
Total	13	45	71			

In the 2022-2023 program year, there were:

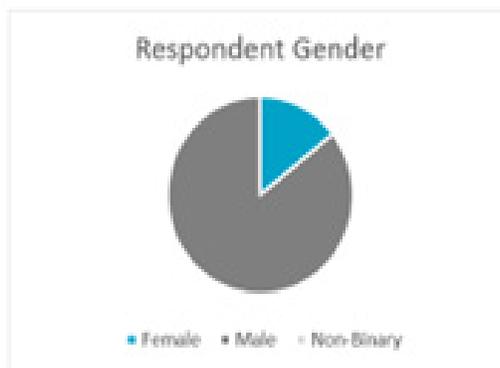
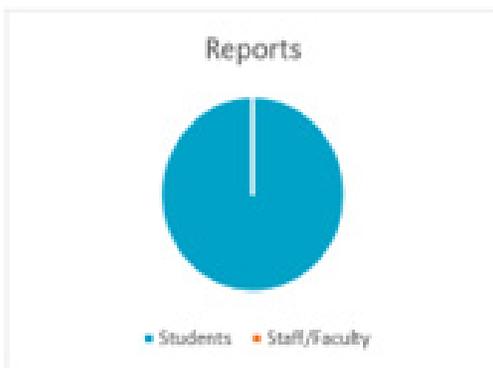
- **Disclosures**

- 62 Disclosures were **from** students
 - 57 Female victim/survivors
 - 2 Male victim/survivors
 - 3 Non-Binary victim/survivors
- 2 Disclosures were **from** staff or faculty
 - 2 Female victim/survivors



- **Reports**

- 7 Reports were **from** students
 - 7 female complainants
- 6 Reports were **about** students
 - 5 male respondents; 1 female respondent
- 1 Reports was **about** staff or faculty
 - Male respondent





Prevention, Education & Awareness

Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative

The Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative (SVPI) is a team of students who are passionate about the education and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence at Saint Mary's and beyond. The SVPI works with the Sexual Violence Advisor and is committed to raising awareness about sexual and gender-based violence; providing peer education on consent, healthy relationships, and bystander intervention and fostering a culture of safety and respect.

The SVPI's vision is a campus and community that values safety, consent, and respect with a mission to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence on campus and in our communities through prevention education and drawing on community strengths.

As part of the SVPI's commitment towards fostering a culture of safety and consent on campus, and working towards eliminating sexual and gender-based violence, we use the following guiding principles to shape our programming and guide our work:

Survivor-Centered

We are fundamentally survivor-centered and ground our work in prioritizing survivor needs, rights, and empowerment.

Intersectional

We honour diverse and overlapping identities with an awareness that some people face multiple forms of discrimination and oppression which created unique barriers.

Inclusive

We are committed to meeting people and communities where they are at, non-judgmentally and with an awareness that everyone is at their own unique stage of learning and development and has the capacity to grow.

Community Resilience

We recognize community diversity as an asset and seek to draw on its strengths when solving issues and filling gaps in prevention education. We recognize that by identifying and nurturing community strengths we are better positioned to achieve gender justice.

Culturally Informed

We accept that we can never fully understand the experience of another person and are thus dedicated to being culturally informed while practicing cultural humility. This encompasses a willingness to be vulnerable and open while recognizing that we are not always the experts; it is an ongoing dedication to knowledge and self-reflection.

Trauma-Informed

We acknowledge the impact of trauma on people and communities, with an understanding of how traumatic experienced influence the ways in which we feel, think, and show up in the world. We strive to validate the unique experiences of all people and work towards both collective and individual healing while fostering trust and transparency.

Holistic

We acknowledge that everything we do exists within systems that affect our well-being, and that these systems do not impact people equally. An ecological or holistic approach requires us to think critically and to have the ability to understand how sexual and gender-based violence is rooted in the systems in which it exists.

These Principles were developed by Krystal Lowe, SMU Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative Coordinator, in consultation with Dee Dooley, SMU Sexual Violence Advisor based on guidance from Consent Comes First at Toronto Metropolitan University and best practices outlined in the Courage to Act Report (Khan, F., Rowe, C.J., and Bidgood, R. (2019). Courage to Act: Developing a National Framework to Address and Prevent Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada. Toronto, ON: Possibility Seeds.)

Throughout the 2022-2023 program year, the SVPI team has worked to build in structure to the program (especially through the Guiding Principles highlighted above) as well as to revise existing educational programming (i.e. Waves of Change Bystander Intervention) to better meet the needs of the campus community. Excitingly, we have also developed new programming to fill gaps (ex. Fostering Healthy Relationships and Creating Communities of Consent). Further, we piloted and incorporated *Courage to Act's* Navigating Power Dynamics as a Graduate Student workshop into our program offerings.

A breakdown of programming and participation is as follows:

Program	Participants
<p>The Waves of Change program is a Nova Scotia resource made up of five separate training modules that take a prevention approach to sexual violence on campus. The goal of the program is to teach participants to recognize sexual violence and to use various techniques to intervene as bystanders and interrupt or stop sexual violence, support survivors and transform the culture that allows violence to happen. The Waves of Change program draws on participants' existing skills, knowledge, and creativity to facilitate broader strategies for social change.</p> <p>The Waves of Change program includes the following modules:</p> <p>Introduction to Bystander Intervention</p> <p>Alcohol, Sex, and Harm Reduction</p> <p>Advanced Bystander Intervention</p>	<p>156</p> <p>18</p> <p>20</p>
<p>Fostering Healthy Relationships is a workshop series that has been designed to provide participants with knowledge of what constitutes healthy dynamics within relationships and how to prevent relationship violence, beginning with the 'Foundations and Ethics of Healthy Relationships' and concluding with 'Preventing and Responding to Relationship Violence.' This series draws on best practices in prevention education and focuses on awareness, skills building, communication development, and self-regulation.</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>The Communities of Consent workshop provides participants with the education, skills, and opportunity to learn about consent in the context of our daily lives, including but not limited to consent in intimate relationships. During this interactive session, participants will learn about the foundations of consent and the barriers to achieving a consent culture. Additionally, they will learn about the ways in which consent applies to a variety of situations while learning to interpret and communicate consent in real-world scenarios.</p>	<p>68</p>

<p>Navigating Power Dynamics as a Graduate Student is a workshop from Courage to Act: A National Framework to Address and Prevent Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada. It is a peer-facilitated workshop for Graduate Students that will support them in developing practical skills around navigating power dynamics in academia and setting boundaries for healthy work and personal relationships. The workshop is designed to reflect the diverse and specific experiences of graduate students.</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>Consent Awareness Week & Sexual Violence Prevention Week</p> <p>Consent Awareness Week is offered during the third week of September and Sexual Violence Prevention Week is offered during the third week of January. Both weeklong initiatives offer a range of events, workshops, training sessions, and campaigns designed to raise awareness about sexual and gender-based violence on campus and in the broader community.</p>	<p>105</p>

Outreach and Awareness

Along with facilitated prevention education opportunities, the Sexual Violence Advisor and the SVPI partnered with several student groups, staff, and faculty to host commemorative events meant to raise awareness on issues of sexual and gender-based violence and increase visibility of the Sexual Violence Support Centre. This year’s events included:

Program	Participants
<p>Moosehide Campaign Day</p> <p>The Moosehide Campaign is an Indigenous-led National movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians from local communities, First Nations, governments, schools, colleges and universities, and community organizations – all committed to taking action against violence. The Moosehide Campaign Day raises awareness about violence against women and children and</p>	<p>63</p>

<p>invites community members to learn how they can make a difference in stopping violence and supporting survivors.</p>	
<p>Sexual Violence Prevention Trivia Night at the Gorsebrook</p> <p>Trivia Night was planned and coordinated by the SVPI student Program Assistants through the Career and Experiential Learning program. Four students worked with our program to organize a night of prevention education at the Gorsebrook Pub.</p>	<p>24</p>
<p>Homecoming</p> <p>Homecoming is the tradition of welcoming back alumni and other members of the SMU community to celebrate. Each year at Homecoming, there is a widely attended football game and this year, the SVPI set up an information table with prizes, resources, and information about sexual and gender-based violence prevention on campus. We gave out 150 harm reduction kits including covid 19 test kits and condoms, as well as speaking to hundreds of attendees about sexual and gender-based violence prevention and support on campus.</p>	<p>150</p>
<p>Wellness Week</p> <p>SMUSA introduced Wellness Week in 2019 to support students in maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Wellness Week is a collaborative initiative that includes workshops, events, and sessions designed to help students relax, be more mindful, and practice self-care. The Sexual Violence Advisor developed a workshop on 'Manageable Self Care' which included putting together our own personalized self-care toolkits.</p>	<p>22</p>
<p>National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women</p> <p>The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women is observed on December 6: the anniversary of the massacre at École Polytechnique in Montreal, Quebec. The day commemorates the 14 women who were killed in the shooting, as well as all those who have experienced violence or lost their lives as the result of violence. It is also a day to</p>	<p>45</p>

<p>encourage action: asking that everyone take the time to educate themselves, their families, and their communities on gender-based violence, to center the voices of survivors, and speak up against harmful behaviours. This year a memorial service was planned and implemented where the victims were honoured in a rose ceremony, women in the Faculty of Science spoke to their experiences as women in STEM, the Sexual Violence Advisor spoke to the role we each must play in preventing and responding to violence, and a young woman engineering student received the December 6 Memorial Scholarship.</p> <p>For more information: https://news.smu.ca/news/2022/12/15/national-day-of-remembrance-and-action-on-violence-against-women-at-saint-marys</p>	
<p>International Women’s Day</p> <p>International Women’s Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action to continue to advance gender equity around the world. This year, the Sexual Violence Advisor worked with a small committee that partnered with the Alexa McDonough Institute for Women, Gender, and Social Justice to host a lecture called “Women’s Bodily Autonomy and The Right to Bare Arms” by Dr. Meredith Ralston. The Sexual Violence Advisor moderated a question-and-answer period after the lecture.</p>	56
<p>Sexual Assault Awareness Month</p> <p>Sexual Assault Awareness Month is an annual campaign to raise public awareness about sexual violence and to educate individuals and communities on how to prevent violence and support survivors. Throughout the month of April, SVPI launched the “Survivor Love Letter” campaign where SMU Community Members could submit anonymous letters or notes of support to survivor on campus. The notes were then shared around campus via posters and other print resources. The Survivor Love Letters campaign originated by filmmaker and activist Tani Ikeda in 2012</p>	24

<p>after she wrote a “love letter” to her younger self on the anniversary of her sexual assault. The movement has since become a national initiative that includes letter writing campaigns, art, and a viral social movement.</p> <p>For more information: https://news.smu.ca/news/2023/5/18/survivor-love-letters</p>	
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Training

Along with the peer-based prevention education, outreach, and awareness opportunities that are facilitated through the SVPI, the Sexual Violence Advisor provided training opportunities across the campus community. A breakdown of programming and participation is as follows:

Program	Participants
<p>Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence and Harassment</p> <p>This training provides an outline on how to support individuals who disclose an experience of sexual or gender-based violence through the BRAVE model and how to make a referral to the Sexual Violence Support Centre.</p>	157
<p>Trauma Informed Care and Practice</p> <p>This training engages participants in understanding trauma from a holistic perspective including the cultural, systemic, and individual experience, as well as the physiology and neurobiology of trauma. Additionally, the training explores the 8 principles of Trauma Informed Practice and invites participants to reflect on how they can be incorporated into their existing approach.</p>	17
<p>Safe and Respectful SMU</p> <p>The Safe and Respectful SMU workshop comes from the work of the President’s Council and is one of the recommendations outlined in the report <i>Promoting a Culture of Safety, Respect, and Consent at Saint Mary’s and Beyond</i>. The workshop is for</p>	177

<p>students and co-facilitated with the Sexual Violence Advisor, the Assistant Director of Student Culture and Experience and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate and Professional Graduate Programs. The workshop explores the creation of a safe and respectful learning environment on campus and our collective commitment to diversity, compassion, empathy, and respect.</p>	
<p>Learning and Healing</p> <p>The Learning and Healing Workshop series is a collaboration between the Sexual Violence Support Centre and the Student Success Centre. In this series, the Sexual Violence Advisor and the Learning Skills Strategist introduce learning concepts and how trauma can influence the learning experience through the lens' of polyvagal theory, metacognition, and interconnectedness. The series provides participants with experiential opportunities to explore learning and healing through nature, movement, art, and joy.</p>	<p>8</p>
<p>Gender-Based Violence Prevention – Facilitator’s Training</p> <p>The Gender-Based Violence Prevention – Facilitator’s Training provides an overview of the theories and models that encompass our campus-wide education strategies, as well as information on the art and practice of facilitation and how to handle group dynamics and potential challenges. This training is offered by the Sexual Violence Advisor, who facilitates the training for the SVPI team at SMU, as well as the Student Peer Educators from all Post-Secondary Institutions across the province.</p>	<p>16</p>

Program Management

It was an exciting year for the SVSC! We have gone through a positive period of growth which includes the launch of a revised, stand-alone Sexual Violence and Harassment Policy, a new website which improves user experience and access to information about support services and education, and strong provincial collaborations on several initiatives including a revision of the Waves of Change Bystander Intervention Training Program, the preparation for a shared position (between SMU, Dalhousie, and Kings)

that will work with Respondents and People who Cause Harm, and Investigator's Training. The Sexual Violence Advisor has been actively involved in the Provincial Prevention Committee and associated projects, including training the Student Peer Educators from each of the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Institutions on gender-based violence prevention education and facilitation, as well as sitting on the supervisory committees for the Respondent Advisor (with Dalhousie and Kings) and the Provincial Waves of Change Coordinator (with Kings and St. FX).

For more information:

<https://news.smu.ca/news/2023/1/25/university-announces-updated-sexual-violence-and-harassment-policy-and-enhanced-supports>

<https://news.smu.ca/news/2023/3/20/newly-designed-sexual-violence-support-centre-website>

In addition, the Sexual Violence Advisor responded to **110** internal and external requests for information on the SVSC; **16** local, provincial, and national consultations on research connected to sexual and gender-based violence; and attended **95** local, provincial, and national committee and working group meetings, including the Trafficking and Exploitation Support Services network, the Nova Scotia Sexual Violence Prevention Committee, the RCMP Sexual Assault Investigation Review Committee, and the Courage to Act National Advisory Committee.

Goals and Next Steps

The SVSC is looking forward to building off the growth that occurred over the past year. Specifically, we will:

- Coordinate on-going case management for students, staff, and faculty who experience sexual or gender-based violence.
- Develop a campus-wide education strategy and action plan.
- Further develop resources that accessibly explain the Sexual Violence and Harassment Policy for the campus community, including an open access module and supporting documents.
- Continue to engage in provincial and national initiatives to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence at Post-Secondary Institutions.

Team

Sally Oppong, Peer Educator

Jordyn Monaghan, Peer Educator

Rachel Creaser, Peer Educator

Shahrzad Mohammadpour, Peer Educator

Krystal Lowe, Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative Coordinator

Olivia Landry, Provincial Waves of Change Program Coordinator

Dee Dooley, Sexual Violence Advisor

We are grateful for the support of students, staff, faculty, and administration to be able to work towards making a difference at Saint Mary's through trauma-informed and survivor-centered sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response.

