

JohnHoward
SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

Annual Report

2023/24



The Year In Review 2023/2024



We would like to extend our hearts and thankfulness to the Lekwungen People of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations and acknowledge their traditional territory, the Xwsepsum Territory, on which we work and serve the community.

JohnHoward
SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

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Our Vision



We create safe, healthy and inclusive communities for all.



Our Mission

We contribute to a safer, stronger, and more sustainable community by supporting people to achieve greater independence.

Our Values



Dignity

We commit to treating each person with dignity and respect in a non-judgmental manner.

Advocacy

We commit to respectfully supporting and championing the human rights of our clients and delivering on our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Empowerment

We commit to supporting our clients to change and grow, to make informed decisions, and to have the agency act on their own behalf.

Collaboration

We value listening, working and evolving with each other, our partners and our community to best serve our clients.

Accountability

We value operating with integrity and being responsible and answerable to each other, clients and the community.

Resiliency

We value embracing challenges with the determination to learn, evolve and grow.



Our Impact



At a glance...

Clients served	1634
Volunteer hours	7184
Outreach hours	1671
Clients completed training	426
Average age	35.7
Indigenous	35%

Our Team

We are a social service non-profit agency in Victoria, BC. We work and serve the community on Lekwungen lands. Our staff are honoured to provide services on the traditional territory of the Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations.

We come from various backgrounds and share a common goal of wanting to make things better in our community, for our community.

We recognize the need for supports for those who face barriers and aim to restore dignity and self-worth to all those who work toward becoming their best selves.



Our Team

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chris Beresford, *Chair*
Ranj Atwal, *Past Chair*
Blair Fisher, *Treasurer*
Hank Mathias, *Vice Chair*
Randie Johal, *2nd Vice Chair*
Wendy Townsend, *Member*
Bob Downie, *Member*

MANAGEMENT

Manj Toor, *Executive Director*
Hendrik Steenkamp, *Director of Programs*
Kayla Grosfield, *Director of Programs*
Karli Cole, *Manager of Community Programs*
Sam Tomilin, *Manager of Employment Services*
Chris Aspelund, *Manager of Residential Programs*
Alena VanDerHaegan, *Administrator*

STAFF

Dayna Berkner
Suzette Biddle
Tamara Bond
Judith Chouinard
Katelyn Clark
Katie Clarke
Shirley Connor
Gabrielle Conway
Philip Cottrell
Wilma Lasrado D'Costa
Ashley Dargatz
Ashlee Dempsey
Kristen Fawkes
Ravi Haere
Max Henry
Crislynn Huerta

Kylie Humble
Samantha Lawrence
Abigail Lepke
Sydney Menzies
Johnston Morris
Melinda Murphy
Kyle Nelson
Sierra Newlove
Anthony Omogolor
Robyn Park
Jamie Peacock
Bianca Peters
Alexander Rajkumar
Chris Rendall
Sharifa Riddett

Naomi Ridgeway
Leighann Rowlandson
Katie Sampson
Ian Schroder
Aidan Schweinbenz
Margaret Seymour
Ronald Smith
Saroop Soofi
Deboarh Stavert
Sam Tomalin
Michelle Wade
Joshua Walker
Emma Welsh
Cameron Whalley
Michelle Wood

YEARS OF SERVICE RECOGNITION

Deborah Stavert, 5 years

MESSAGE FROM MANJ



As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense pride and deep gratitude for the extraordinary milestones we've achieved, the lives we've touched, and the transformative impact we've had on our clients.

This has been another remarkable year for the John Howard Society of Victoria. While we said goodbye to some programs, we also welcomed new ones, such as the Voyager Employment Program for persons with disabilities, the Scared Cedar initiative focused on Indigenous employment training and support within Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Facility and the broader community, and the Intensive Support and Supervision Program, which supports youth on probation.

The growth we've experienced in recent years, coupled with the increasing demand for our services, led us to outgrow our long-standing community office on Bridge St., where we served for over 35 years. But with change comes opportunity. We've found a new space a few blocks away that is not only more accessible to clients but also offers enhanced training spaces and much-needed offices, positioning us for future success.

Perhaps the most exciting development of the year was breaking ground on our new six-story building on Princess Ave. This project will provide 28 units of supportive housing, two floors dedicated to community offices and programming space, and a social enterprise café. A heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported us along this journey, with special appreciation to our key funders—BC Housing, the Ministry of Housing, Correctional Services of Canada, and the Northpine Foundation.

I am profoundly grateful to our dedicated staff, our compassionate Board members, and our tireless volunteers. Their steadfast commitment makes an incredible difference in the lives of vulnerable people every day. We are also immensely appreciative of the continued support from our funders and donors who believe in the power of our work. Lastly, thank you to the many community partners and beyond—we truly couldn't do it without you. Together, we are building brighter futures.

MESSAGE FROM HENDRIK



This year, we've made significant strides towards our strategic priorities: Service Excellence, Organizational Stability, and Capacity. Our achievements are a testament to the dedication and talent of our incredible teams, the vision of our Executive Director and the support from our Board.

Service Excellence - We are thrilled to report that we have maintained a consistent Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 85% and above across multiple programs. This metric reflects the high level of satisfaction and trust our clients place in us.

Our commitment to expanding our footprint is evident with the successful addition of new programs in Nanaimo. A highlight of this expansion is securing the Guthrie Therapeutic Program at NCC, marking a significant milestone in our service delivery. We have further diversified our housing programs by securing funding to support a Housing Program for Veterans.

Organizational Stability - Our efforts to diversify funding have paid off, allowing us to build strong new relationships with partners like the Northpine Foundation. Additionally, we continue to enhance our existing public funder relationships at both provincial and federal levels.

Capacity - Our teams are growing across most lines of business, adding much-needed skills to support our communities effectively. One of our key strategic priorities is to achieve CARF accreditation, and we are well on our way to completing this by Spring 2025. This accreditation will further solidify our commitment to a person-centred philosophy, and ensure continued quality and improvement.

The heart of John Howard lies in the dedication and hard work of all our teams. From supporting residents at our CRF in Victoria, to delivering various life skills training and Indigenous Cultural Programming at both VIRCC and NCC, our teams show up every day, giving 110% of themselves to their programs. Their passion and commitment are truly admirable, and for that, I am incredibly grateful.

As I reflect on this year's achievements, I am excited about the future of John Howard. Our focus on Service Excellence, Organizational Stability, and Capacity ensures that we are well-positioned to continue making a positive impact in the communities we serve.

Community Engagement



Pride Parade



Holiday Hampers



Coldest Night of the Year



Community Service



Pink Shirt Day

This past spring marked an exciting milestone for the John Howard Society of Victoria as we hosted our very first job fair, which turned out to be a tremendous success. With the participation of 8 supportive employers and the enthusiasm of over 25 clients in attendance, the event created valuable opportunities for our community. Several clients secured interviews during the event, and many more were employed by these companies in the months that followed. We're excited to continue building these connections and helping our clients on their paths to meaningful employment.



Job Fair

Victoria Native Friendship Centre



Each Tuesday afternoon Society staff support the Career, Employment, Education and Resources Team at their drop-in job club at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. We support Indigenous youth and adults in the community with short and long-term goals as it relates to their education and career journey. These services are offered to help community members achieve employment goals and foster a sense of focus and self-confidence in order to compete in the labour market successfully. This year we supported 125 people with job search, resume writing, cover letters, and interview preparation.

The Times Colonist Christmas Fund generously donated \$10,000 to our Holiday Hampers program. Our main goal was to relieve some of the pressures our clients face, especially during the holidays. With help of the TC Christmas Fund, we were able to reach 90 families and individuals in the Capital Region.

TC Christmas Fund

"You guys always do such a wonderful job at making people feel like they're not invisible. My kids are going to be really surprised on Christmas morning this year!"

-M.C.



Princess St. Groundbreaking



CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY ON NEW HOUSING AND SUPPORT HUB IN VICTORIA

Slated to open in Spring 2026, The John Howard Society of Victoria's \$17.9 million, fully secured, six-storey building at 736 Princess Ave. is designed to expand residential programs as well as mental health, addiction, life skills, job training, and employment services.

"Thirty percent of our clients are transitioning from corrections to community and need the kind of supported housing and programs research shows leads to a reduction in recidivism and safer communities," said Manj Toor, executive director of The John Howard Society of Victoria. "What's special about this project is that it also enables us to help additional vulnerable people in Victoria with wrap around services they also need to thrive and succeed."

Employment Services



The John Howard Society of Victoria has administered the BladeRunners program for 28 years and continues to embrace the original model. The program is currently funded by The Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. The Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS) serves as the program manager for many of the 19 BladeRunners programs throughout the province.

BladeRunners is an employment program which helps disadvantaged young people aged 15 -30 years of age obtain and sustain full-time employment in a variety of industries. The program was created in 1994 during the construction of General Motors Place in Vancouver, with the purpose of matching construction industry needs with opportunities for urban young adults facing barriers to employment.

Because many of the at-risk youth taking part in the program were experiencing personal problems outside of their working hours, a system of 24/7 support from the BladeRunners staff was developed. This model led to the award winning provincial BladeRunners model.

The program provides job readiness and employability skills, assisted job search, ongoing support, and mentorship.

Clients work with BladeRunners staff to achieve the following goals:

- Complete group-based training and receive industry recognized certifications
- Skills training, resume building and interview practice
- Achieving meaningful employment

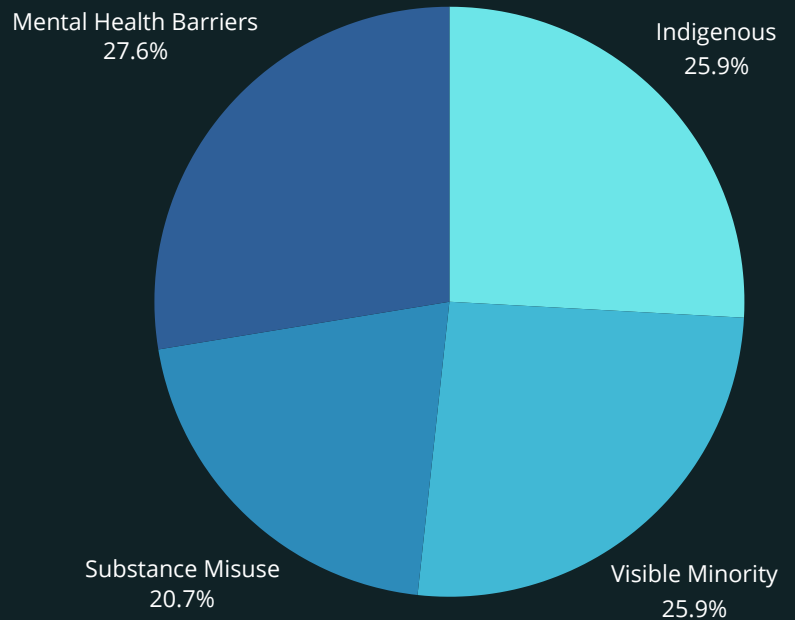


Employment Services



98% of clients completed the program

78% achieved employment



"The program was really helpful. I got my Food Safe, First Aid, barista training and WHMIS. I learned a lot, and everyone was really nice. I felt so stable there, and after I was done the program, my job coach continued to help me.

They helped me get a job! They are so supportive, I wish I could go back to the program. I felt so calm there, it was a lot of fun."

-T.M., BladeRunners Participant

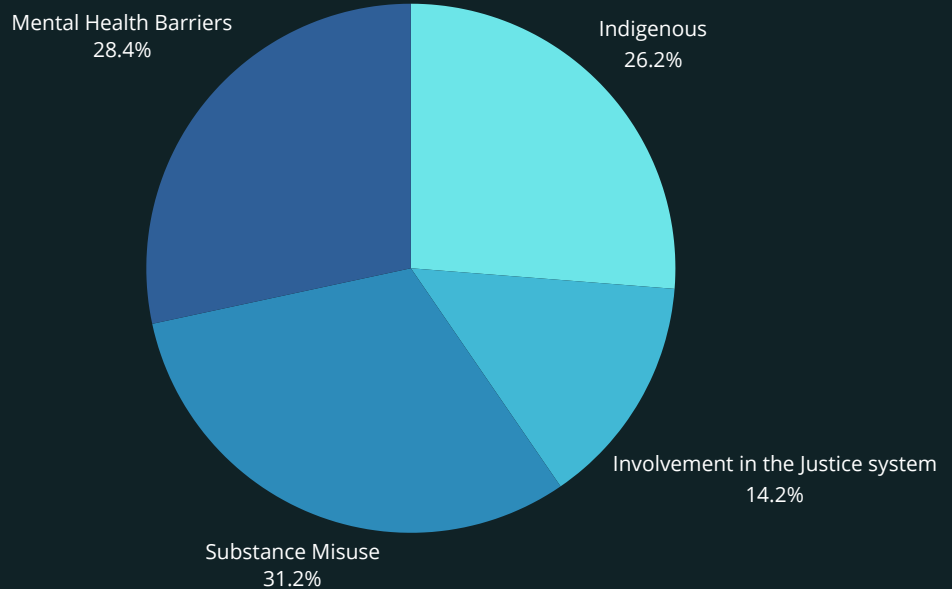


Employment Services



Our Voyager employment program supports persons with self-identified diverse abilities who are experiencing barriers to employment.

The program consists of 3 weeks in the classroom, followed by 12 weeks of paid quality work experience. Group cohort-based training is provided in the following industries: Hospitality, Construction, Horticulture and Customer Service. Voyager provides job readiness and employability skills, assisted job search, ongoing support, and mentorship.



"When I started Voyager, I was nervous but it was a great experience. They made it so easy to get my resume and cover letter up to date. I received my First Aid, Food Safe, WHIMS, and best of all, I got Forklifting training, which I was really thinking that I would never get.

This program is what I needed to get a better job and get a jump start on my employment and interview skills. I want to thank all the staff at John Howard for getting me to where I am today. I am now employed as an Auditor with Aluma Systems, full time."

-Daniella, Voyager Participant

Employment Services



93% of clients completed the program

This is our first year of running the Voyager program. We had 10 intakes during the fiscal year, 4 geared toward Hospitality, 2 towards Construction, 2 Customer Service/Administration and 2 Horticulture.



62 participants went through the program.



"Voyager is an exceptional program which provided me with the steppingstone that I needed to transition from stagnation to reintegration into the workforce. This provided me with the opportunity to be on the pathway to reach my full potential. The staff members are helpful, understanding, empathetic and motivational. While the certificates and workshops were helpful, the benefits of the program went well beyond the trainings.

The structure of the program was instrumental in creating stability and helped me feel prepared to re-enter the workforce. This stellar initiative serves as an invaluable support to those who are seeking employment."

-L.R., Voyager Participant

Employment Services



Our Wellness Employment Skills Training program offers a multi-industry opportunity for participants to get the job they want and the job they want to keep. With support from our staff, participants are able to achieve and maintain meaningful employment.

The program consists of 3 weeks in the classroom, followed by 20 weeks of paid, quality employment. The program provides job readiness and employability skills, assisted job search, and ongoing support and mentorship.

Clients work with WEST staff to achieve the following goals:

- Employability and life-skills workshops
- Safety certificates
- Skills training

32

PARTICIPANTS

77%

95%

ACHIEVED EMPLOYMENT

COMPLETED PROGRAM

"The John Howard Society found me when I had been looking to but to grow in life. This program has helped me do exactly that. It wasn't just the support with my resume and cover letters, it was the confidence they instilled in me. Coming in each day helped my mental health, connecting with others, and I learned that even with my chronic pain, I am more than capable.

I have recommended this employment program to anyone who needs it."

-Sophie L., WEST Participant

8%

LITERACY CHALLENGES

36%

MENTAL HEALTH BARRIERS

Staff Perspective: "This individual came to us unsure of which direction she wanted to go, and left the program with clearly defined career goals and a sense of confidence. It was impactful to watch her transformation throughout her time in the program. She told us that through the words and actions of facilitators and staff, she felt validated and self-confident in her capabilities. Sophie inspired the other participants, and helped to create a sense of community in the classroom by the end of the program.

Shortly after completing the program, Sophie was hired as part-time staff at Pet Smart. The perfect job for her- as an avid animal lover. She continues to shine in her position at Pet Smart, having the opportunity to train in different roles. We are so happy to see her achieve her goals and working at a job she truly enjoys!

31

TOTAL RESIDENTS

74%

RESIDENTS EMPLOYED

25%

INDIGENOUS RESIDENTS

49

AVERAGE AGE



Manchester House

FEDERAL

The Federal residential program supports male offenders who are transitioning back into the community from Federal Institutions.

The program at Manchester House was designed to reflect the philosophies of accountability and to help residents find a path that fosters sustainable success.

Residents can get the most from the Manchester House program by utilizing the components offered: support with life skills; assistance with identification replacement; job search and employment skills training; education upgrading; budgeting; meal preparation, and day to day living skills.

Manchester House staff work in close conjunction with the resident's Case Management Team to ensure all personal and legal obligations and requirements are being met on an ongoing basis.

8

INTAKES

220

HOURS OF OUTREACH

15%

INDIGENOUS RESIDENTS

43

AVERAGE AGE

Residents participated in the “Soap for Hope Program” every Monday where they volunteered for approximately 2 hours. The residents continued doing a great job maintaining the garden plot at the Burnside Gorge Community Centre. They planted, watered, weeded, and enjoyed eating all the vegetables grown at the garden plot.

Other activities included:

- volunteering at the Saturday James Bay Market
- participating in beach clean ups
- taking a bi-weekly cooking class learning to plan and prepare a healthy meal
- attending nutrition classes where more meal preparation was taught and
- learning healthy eating habits

House expectations include budgeting, grocery shopping, planning healthy eating, tending to daily hygiene, bedroom cleaning, weekly house chores, recycling, and assisting with house errands. Along with the program expectations, residents also participated in recreation activities some of which were: walks, playing pool, swimming, hiking, going to a movie and mini golf.

Manchester House

FORENSIC

The Forensic residential program supports adult males who are transitioning back to the community from the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital.

Some of the program services offered include life skills support; assistance with identification replacement; job search and employment skills training; education upgrading; budgeting; meal preparation and grocery shopping; and, overall day to day living skills.

Manchester House staff work in close conjunction with the resident’s Case Management Team at the Victoria Regional Clinic to ensure all personal, legal obligations and requirements are being met on an ongoing basis. The Manchester House Forensic program and the Federal program are managed the same way. Both programs focus on the needs/goals of each resident and daily support is provided to help achieve these goals. Some modifications are made to accommodate individual barriers; however, all house rules, conditions of stay along with all legal obligations must be adhered to in both programs.

Success Story

Total
Clients
Served -
455

Screenings &
Interviews -
324

“One resident successfully completed a 60-day Unescorted Temporary Absence (UTA Bridging Program) which focused on self-identified short and long-term goals to prepare for their Day Parole. Some of his goals were: identification replacement, learning the transit system, becoming more aware of social media, and how to use cell phones, computers, and the internet.

Other goals were to do volunteer work, self care and using their time to get better acquainted with the community and become more comfortable with new surroundings. During his UTA, he was helpful around the house and did lots of yard maintenance. This resident is being supported by Manchester House when he is granted Day Parole.”

-Chris Aspelund, Manager of Residential Housing



Manchester House Garden

Justice Services

Prison Services

The John Howard Society of Victoria has been partnering with Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC) to offer diverse justice-based programs aimed at providing residents at VIRCC with opportunities to learn new skills.

Programs offered are: Indigenous Culinary Arts Training and Restorative Justice Dialogue, Horticultural Program, Basic Construction Awareness Training, and Hospitality Employment and Restaurant Training. Residents can obtain industry recognized certificates such as FoodSafe, Emergency 1st Aid, and Basic Culinary Arts.

Residents are also supported through the provision of critical resources and services to support their reintegration into the community, once released. These services include pre-release planning, assisting with processing of taxes and ID applications, connecting residents to housing supports, counselling and other wrap-around services.



Justice Services

1400

1:1 RESIDENT INTERVIEWS

120

LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMS

600

POST-RELEASE PLANNING

110

RESUME BUILDING

280

HOUSING REFERRALS

271

CLOTHING SUPPORTS

180

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

18

CULINARY PROGRAMS



Justice Services

Sacred Cedar

In collaboration with VIRCC, the Society partnered with the Solicitor General's Office of B.C. to design and implement a unique pilot program that provided Life Skills and Employment supports - Sacred Cedar.

Sacred Cedar provided self-identifying Indigenous residents the opportunity to obtain industry-recognized short occupational certificates (SOC's) and training through culture-based programming. Subjects included: Construction, Horticulture, Hospitality and Indigenous Cooking Skills, and Indigenous Visual Arts. The aim was to enhance the resident's successful reintegration back into the community.

The program consisted of 3 phases:

- Phase 1 was completed while at VIRCC
- Phase 2 & 3 was completed when residents were released from VIRCC

Focus was on continuous learning and finding employment in the CRD. This included wrap-around supports, along with building and strengthening relationships with Indigenous people, and understanding the value of culture and its role in healing.

200

COMPLETED
CERTIFICATE TRAINING



JohnHoward
SOCIETY OF VICTORIA



SACRED CEDAR



Justice Services

Indigenous Cultural Liaison

At the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC) the Indigenous Cultural Liaison (ICL) strives to provide the opportunity for Cultural (re)connection, tradition, and teachings into daily/weekly programming. Inmates can expect to have a Daily Elder's Meditation reading dropped off on their unit each day, and a smudge during outdoor recreation time.

Each unit has their own Talking/Healing Circle and a Wellbriety (12 Steps in the Native American way) Recovery/Study Group. Annual events like the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox Ceremonies provided opportunities for Sacred fires, Sacred Space Gatherings and Elder's to be on site. Cultural activities and crafts, such as drumming, beading and leather work programming continues to grow.

The beginning of the year was spent completing the Totem Pole project, which became an integral part of a submission by BC Corrections called Connecting and Healing Through Culture, which received the award for Organizational Excellence at the 19th Annual Premier's Awards Ceremony!

The end of the year was spent securing a cultural space to call our own, where there is a dedicated indoor space for meeting, and a connected outdoor area for smudging, without any competition from other programming, and without an officer required to be present. It is a place of respect, trust and interconnectedness by all who use it.

-Michelle Woods, ICL



Photo courtesy of the BC Public Service

Justice Services

Indigenous Cultural Liaison

The Indigenous Cultural program at Nanaimo Correctional Center aims to provide residents with access to their culture through activities and traditional practices for healing. Residents have access to smudging ceremonies, healing circles, traditional art, skills and food. Through relation to each other, the land and practices; brothers learn more about themselves, and skills weave into their futures.

The Indigenous Cultural Liaison works with individuals to assist with release planning, spiritual growth and to gather supports that will help them when they return to their communities. Empowering them to envision a path for themselves that includes their gifts, purpose and interests.

Additionally, the ICL provides education to Correctional Centre staff by deepening the understanding of indigenous practice, values, and teachings. The goal is to increase allyship and support of indigenous peoples in custody.



90

INDIVIDUALS

256

SMUDGES

62

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

39

ONE-ON-ONE'S

Community Programs

242

CLIENTS HOUSED

Housing Access Team

The Housing Access Team proactively assists eligible individuals to avoid homelessness or at risk of being homeless by providing extensive outreach services and support. The HAT Outreach Workers provide people with comprehensive landlord support in order to find affordable home options, and they then maintain these housing placements for a minimum of one year.

By providing continued support and services as needed, the program benefits both the tenants and the landlords. Examples of support are food coupons, community referrals, assistance in finding housing, and rent assistance.



Success Story

"I would like to express my deep gratitude to the John Howard Society, for saving me from one of the most difficult situations of my young adult life. One year ago, my boyfriend and I were on the verge of being homeless. I cannot properly describe the extreme amount of fear and stress I felt during this time, but for the sake of others currently facing similar situations, I think it's important that I try. This can happen to people suddenly and without their control, and having the resource of The John Howard Society can change so many futures.

Crislynn has a heart so pure and gentle she melted the stress in my life just through her presence. Crislynn paid for my overdue bills so we wouldn't be disconnected. She connected me with Shirley, the employment case worker, she provided me with so many opportunities and options that I was taken aback by how valuable this Society is. Even the John Howard building itself wrapped me in safety and comfort from the moment I walked through its doors. I saw so many kind people creating a place where others can feel that they belong and inspire hope.

It became more and more clear to me that she, along with all the other caseworkers at the John Howard Society, are heroes. They are keeping people alive.

The John Howard Society saved us in a myriad of ways, and they continue to do so for so many people right now. Because of them I am here right now."

-Madalyn R.

Community Programs



KidStart

KidStart is a personalized mentoring program offering free support to vulnerable youth aged 6-18 in the Greater Victoria region. Designed for those facing risks from challenging early life experiences, KidStart pairs each participant with a trained volunteer mentor. These mentors provide consistent guidance through weekly recreational and educational activities for a minimum of one year.

The program focuses on building self-esteem and improving academic, social, and emotional well-being. By fostering resilience against mental health issues, substance use, and criminal behavior, KidStart helps youth overcome adversity.

The program's early engagement approach ensures significant and lasting benefits through the positive influence of a dedicated mentor.

"Thank you so much to you and your team for making these camps happen. There aren't words for how thankful I am to the John Howard Society."

-KidStart Parent

43 youth
matched and
received 1:1
support

Events attended by youth and their mentors included:

- 'Take a Kid Fishing Day'
- Summer Camps
- Halloween Party
- Winter Holiday Party
- Monster Trucks
- Tsukino-Con 2024

6278 volunteer
hours



Community Programs

Community Adult & Mentorship Support

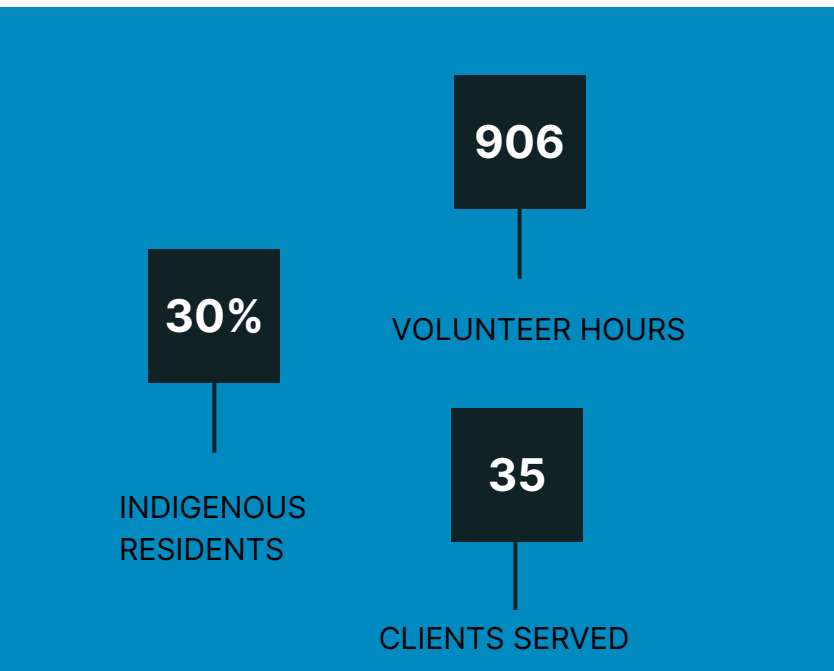
Volunteer mentors support reintegration by:

- helping set appropriate and attainable goals.
- assisting in day-to-day tasks like banking and shopping.
- participating in recreational activities of interest.

The Community Adult and Mentorship Support (CAMS) program focuses on reintegration through restorative justice principles. CAMS offers one-to-one mentorship and support to individuals who have committed offenses and are on parole, supervised by the Victoria Parole Office.

This program pairs volunteers with offenders to provide positive peer support, easing community integration and reducing the likelihood of reoffending. CAMS supports people moving back into new spaces and communities. We have seen first-hand how human connection can empower a person to thrive in a time of uncertainty.

Volunteers and staff facilitate a nutrition class 3-4 times a month for offenders, which teach healthy eating on a budget, hands-on cooking skills and community building. An average of 6-10 individuals participate in nutrition night, in addition to the volunteer mentors.



"I had a great experience and would like to attend the program regularly. I felt welcomed and enjoyed connecting with other residents to learn new skills."

-T.M., Manchester House Resident



Community Programs

Intensive Support & Supervision (ISSP)

The Intensive Support and Supervision Program (ISSP) and Youth Justice Program aim to assist youth on probation in successfully complying with their probation conditions and making healthier lifestyle choices. Through a combination of short and long-term support, advocacy, crisis intervention, life coaching, and referrals to community agencies, the program provides comprehensive assistance to high-risk youth.

The goal of this program is to enhance community safety by supporting youth in activities and programs that address their needs, facilitating rehabilitation and reintegration. The program philosophy emphasizes a balance of surveillance, enforcement, and supportive services to address the criminogenic factors associated with high-risk youth, aiming to lower recidivism rates and better protect the public.

12

CLIENTS SERVED

60%

INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANTS

15

AVERAGE AGE

0

REOFFENDED OR BREACHED PROBATION



"Sierra is my biggest supporter and is there anytime I need her. I feel like I can tell her anything."

-ISSP Participant

Community Programs

Serenity Farms Community Garden

The garden started in 2012, with the goal of creating a meaningful workplace for adults with challenges such as mental illness, substance use issues and experience with the criminal justice system. Participants learn to work in teams, follow instructions, communicate more effectively, and gain new skills. Their self-confidence improves, they became less socially isolated, and many develop a taste for healthy food.

Serenity Farms completed a successful and enjoyable 2023 season. The garden was the site of hard work, lush growth, tasty vegetables and fruits- but most of all it was a harmonious workplace for participants, volunteers and staff.

903

PARTICIPANT HOURS

57

AVERAGE # OF HOURS
PER PARTICIPANT



Sheila Weitman, Garden Manager

Serenity Farms Community Garden

We welcomed Sheila Weitman as our new Garden Manager this year. Sheila has been a volunteer at Serenity Farms since 2019 and brings over three decades of credentials and experience in the horticultural trade and therapeutic programs.

At the farm, we donate and sell the flowers and food we grow. The participants always have first choice of our harvest, and when the larger crops start producing, we donate to those experiencing food insecurity in the broader community. One of our goals is to link the garden with the needs of the community and help address food insecurity.

The season ended in early October with a final feast in the garden, including homemade salsa verde using tomatillos from the garden. We handed out Certificates of Appreciation to the participants, to demonstrate our gratitude for their hard work over the season.



Composting Area - BEFORE

Composting Area - AFTER



Funders & Donors

THANK YOU

On behalf of everyone at the John Howard Society of Victoria, we thank all our generous funders and donors for believing in our cause and entrusting us with your donations to assist us in providing these important services.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Government of Canada's Youth Employment Skills Strategy (YESS)
Correctional Services Canada (CSC)
Canadian Border Services
Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) Opportunities Fund

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Provincial Government of British Columbia's Workforce Development Agreement
Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS)
BC Corrections
Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA)
Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
Ministry of Children and Family Development
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Ministry of Finance
BC Housing

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Island Health
Capital Regional District
Federation of Canadian Municipalities

PRIVATE DONORS

Canada Helps
Times Colonist Christmas Fund
RBC Foundation
Justice Fund Toronto
The Northpine Foundation
Victoria Foundation

Thank You!

After 35 years at our Bridge Street location, we have a new home in the historic Bay Street Heritage Sub Station building, at the corner of Bay and Government streets.



The Society offers several program opportunities that cover a wide range of services. For a full description, please visit our website:



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