



ANNUAL REPORT

20²⁴₂₅



Table of Contents

01

Our Welcome From
Our Executive
Director And Staff

03

Our Response To
Those Facing Housing
Barriers

04

Our Response To
Building Safer
Communities

05

Our Response To
Those Facing
Employment Barriers

06

Our Response To
Honouring
Indigenous Peoples

07

Our Response To
Supporting
Vulnerable Youth

08

Our Response To
Creating Community
Through Food

09

Our Thanks To
The Many That
Make Us Happen

Our Princess Avenue Building Update

The construction of the Princess Avenue Building is well underway. What started as staff-led concept, is now becoming a reality. We are thankful to share that shovels went into the ground on March 14, 2024. Later into the year, plumbing and framing are making the Princess Avenue Building visible from the street. We anticipate completion of the building in June of 2026.

Princess Avenue building is paramount in the vision and mission of JHSV. It will create additional supports for community members to reintegrate while adding and expanding to our community office space for staff and personnel. It will become a new community integration hub, where individuals can seek housing, education, counselling and other integrative supports. It will employ, serve and dignify once discarded members of Victoria's community, connecting and integrating them back into the lives and societies with their own dignity and a sense of pride in the obstacles they overcame. We are so thankful for the progress we've made and look forward to what the next year will bring.





Manj Toor
Executive Director

Being The Change Our Community Needs

Over the past year, we have made tremendous progress in elevating the quality of care we provide. We focused on strengthening our internal structure to better support staff, updating existing policies and developing standardized procedures to ensure relevance and consistency across all programs.

It has also been an exciting year for program growth and innovation. We assumed responsibility for delivering the Guthrie Therapeutic Community at Nanaimo Correctional Centre, deepening our commitment to supporting individuals in custody. We expanded housing and wraparound supports for homeless and at-risk veterans, and we acquired a new property to enhance our capacity to support clients referred from forensic hospitals.

Much of this year has also been dedicated to preparing for the construction of our new integrated residence and community services building, which is expected to open in the spring of 2026. This transformative project will enable us to deliver a more holistic, person-centered approach by consolidating services under one roof.

At JHS Victoria, we are guided by our mission to contribute to a safer, stronger, and more sustainable community by supporting people to achieve greater independence. While we continue to evolve as an organization, our core values—dignity, advocacy, empowerment, collaboration, accountability, and resiliency—remain at the heart of everything we do.

Our progress is made possible by the strength of our community partnerships. We are deeply grateful for the collaborations and support we receive from fellow organizations, volunteers, funders, and community members. Together, we are creating pathways for positive change. To our dedicated staff, volunteers, board members, funders, and supporters: thank you for your continued dedication to this important work. I look forward to continuing our journey together as we build a stronger, more resilient community.

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

We create safe, healthy and inclusive communities for all.

With Deep Gratitude

We would like to extend our hearts and thankfulness to the ləkʷəŋən (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. We are committed to upholding the injustice of the past done against Indigenous Communities, acknowledging that we have a role and responsibility to the 94 Calls for Truth and Reconciliation. Advocacy, restorative justice and relationships must be at the centre for the full flourishing of all Canadians. We endeavour to work with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, amplifying their voice, experience and culture to inform the ways in which we provide our services and programs. We are thankful, mindful and ever seeking a more just and fair world together.



Staff

Debbie Fleming

Louis Gagnon

Marilyn Garriott

Cyprian Jewel Gomes

Jordan Goundry

Ravi Jaspaul Haere

Graham Hafey

Carolina Flores

Julia Folk

Haley Ham

Maisie Heaney

Kassidy Holt

Noah Hovde

Meloney Howard

Crislynn Huerta

Kylie Humble

Shauntel Janzen

Jarod Jawanda

Zoe Kruschke

William Lafrance

Sean Laing

Samantha Lawrence

Abigail Lepke

William MacDonald

Johnston Albert Morris

Melinda Jeanne Murphy

Sierra Newlove

Anthony Ogorchukwu

Naomi Ridgeway

Sasha Rochon

Ana Aurich Rodriguez

Amanda Ruan

Marielle Santiago

Ian Schroder

Aidan Schweinbenz

Deborah Lynn Stavert

Hendrik Steenkamp

Travis Storch

Emma Thomson

Satish Veer

Justin Walter

Rana Weihs

Mark Weiler

Cameron Whalley

Hilary White

Shelene Williams

Michelle Wood



The Heart of John Howard Society of Victoria

Management

Alena Van Der Haegen, Manager Business Services

Jas Bhela, Manager Community Programs

Jordan Goundry, Manager Employment Programs

Josh Smith, Manager Guthrie Therapeutic Program

Wilma Lasrado D'Costa, HR Business Partner

Manj Toor, Executive Director

Chris Aspelund, Manager Residential Services

Board

Ranj Atwal
Chris Bereford

Gareth Dickson
Rob Downie

Blair Fisher
Randie Johal

Henry Mathias
Wendy Townsend

Hans Anderssen

Gelard Augustino

Jaime Baruta

Gabrielle Belisle

Dayna Berkner

Suzette Biddle

Tamara May Bond

Heather Braid

Kayla Brown

Tyler Brown

Marco Caffiero

William Chisholm

Judith Chouinard

Katelyn A Clark

Katie Clarke

Philip Cottrell

Ashley Dargatz

Ashlee Dempsey

Edward Dufour

Daniel Ellerton

How We Are Supporting Those Facing Housing Barriers



Veterans Housing Support Program


"Sincerely, I give my thanks to JHS and to Graham for coming in to provide this totally unexpected help in solving the issue of homeless veterans."

Beginning in June of 2024, the Veterans Housing Support Program was launched. This new program focused on individualized support services for Veterans who have served Canada, enabling their integration into society and connectedness to support structures, such as housing attainment, rental assistance, basic needs and counselling/treatment. Our goal to support 50 veteran annually through the housing continuum was successful through the implementation of a wide range of targeted activities. These include ongoing case management, landlord mediation, housing unit viewings, and the provision of rent supplements and financial support. Veterans also receive life skills coaching, mental health support through one-to-one and group counselling, and

connection to cultural and community-based services.

We've hosted regular Veterans Coffee Breaks, launched group counselling sessions based on veteran feedback, and actively built community and landlord partnerships to expand housing options. These activities ensure each veteran is supported in accessing and maintaining stable housing, while also building the skills and networks needed for long-term success.

We are honoured to serve those who have served, to be a community for people who have given so much. And we look forward to continuing such vital work, making inclusion a human right for those we can never forget.



50
Veterans
Assisted



Housing Access Team Program

"Without this support, I probably wouldn't have been able to leave my abusive relationship and secure safe, affordable housing. Thank you for believing in me."

The Housing Access Team (HAT) assists qualified individuals moving from homelessness and proactively prevents homelessness by providing extensive outreach services and supports. Factors such as cost of living and lack of affordable homes all compress people's ability to come out and above poverty. Our Program Coordinator provides intensive landlord support to obtain affordable housing opportunities and then maintains these housing placements for a minimum of one year for individuals. The program assists the tenant and landlord by providing continuous services and support as needed. Supports may include assistance with finding accommodation, a small amount of rent assistance, food vouchers, and community referrals.

Additionally, the HAT program supports people to access market rentals and continues to check in and support them for a year to ensure they can maintain housing. Short-term subsidies and other housing related assistance (security deposits, bills in arrears, groceries, emergency funding, etc.) as needed are offered by the program and rely on internal and community resources to provide wraparound supports (such as employment services). HAT is also able to offer limited subsidies if an individual or family is at risk of eviction, so they can maintain their housing until they are able to afford rent again.



180
Clients
Housed

How We Are Supporting A Safer Transition Into The Community

Guthrie Therapeutic Community

The Guthrie Therapeutic Community (GTC) is a Cognitive-Behavioral based program that has a blended service delivery. Since the agent of change in GTCs is the community (community as method), most of the program is structured around peer groups and activities with a combination of experiential and didactic learning styles. The Treatment team also consists of trained, skilled, and certified staff to support resident needs through individual counselling and other support services such as seeking stable housing and employment.

This is a structured, peer-led residential program located within the Nanaimo Correctional Centre, designed to support individuals in recovery and prepare them for successful reintegration. The program focuses on accountability, community living, and therapeutic group work to promote long-term behavioural change.

Prison Services Program

The Prison Services Program provides vital, consistent support to incarcerated individuals, helping them prepare for release and reintegration into the community.

Over the last fiscal year, the program supported an average of 105 clients per month. Core services include assistance with filing income taxes (often for multiple back years), obtaining birth certificates needed for photo ID, and accessing status cards. In the first two months of offering the status card program, 14 applications were successfully submitted, a significant milestone in improving access to essential services for Indigenous clients. The program also delivers a variety of life skills and employability workshops tailored to support residents' success both during custody and upon release. A standout initiative is the Indigenous Culinary Arts Training, facilitated by The London Chef. This immersive three-day program combines traditional food processing and preparation methods, such as skinning, smoking, and preserving game, with Cree language learning and storytelling. For many residents, this culturally grounded experience cultivates not only new skills but a deeper connection to their identities and culture.

Manchester Programs

Manchester House provides two programs aimed to support the reintegration of those who have been formerly incarcerated. Manchester House programming provides a strategy to accommodate diverse cultures and spiritualities, including but not limited to, Indigenous culture and spirituality.

The **Forensic Residential Program** supports those who have mental health barriers and are transitioning back into the community from the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital. Residents at Manchester House receive support with life skills (daily hygiene, budgeting, and meal preparation); identification replacement/applications; education and employment skills (if applicable); and daily medication compliance. Manchester House staff work closely with each resident's Case Manager at the Victoria Regional Forensic Clinic to ensure all personal and legal obligations/requirements are being met.

The **Community Residential Facility Program** provides 24-hour residential services to formerly incarcerated men who are referred by Correctional Service Canada. The Federal residential program enables support to those 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 enables sustainable success. Manchester House programming provides a strategy to accommodate diverse cultures and spiritualities, including Indigenous practices.



Community Adult Mentoring & Support

“After 15 years of incarceration, I couldn’t imagine a life outside of the jail. But I had a CAMS mentor who believed in me and dreamed with me of a future I wanted. I’m happy, I have friends and I love being in community.”

The Community Adult Mentorship and Support Program (CAMS) was developed to bridge the social gap of reintegration into the community from incarceration. CAMS was designed to find suitable and valuable members of society who would take on the responsibility to become a role model or positive peer support towards individuals who are being released into the community, on parole, from incarceration. The overall goal of CAMS is to enhance public safety by working closely with the Victoria Parole Office, halfway house staff and other members of the individual’s case management team in order to ensure a smooth transition for the offender.

Volunteers are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities to achieve the program goals, including, but not limited to: assisting with technology/banking/ID paperwork; providing insight on social topics in a safe environment; participating in leisure activities; and completion of their overall goals. CAMS is government funded by the department of The Correctional Service Canada.

How We Are Supporting Those Facing Barriers to Meaningful Employment

“When I started this program, I was nervous, but it was a great experience, and it made it all so easy to get my resume up to date and also my cover letter. . . I want to thank all the staff of John Howard for getting me to where I am today.”

Voyager Program

Voyager is a three-week employment skills training program tailored to support persons with self-identified disabilities to prepare for, find and maintain employment thereby increasing their economic participation and independence. Participants are matched with a job coach who supports them through their certificate training and the process of finding meaningful employment opportunities. This program is cohort based and focuses on three main industry areas: Hospitality, Construction and Horticulture.

We have had extremely positive feedback from our participants about the Voyagers program. The participants said they were extremely happy with the program, courses offered, and the support provided from their Job Coaches. The clients expressed that the program promoted their independence and made them feel more optimistic about the direction their life was going in. Each participant said they would recommend the Voyagers program at JHSV to their friends and family.

BladeRunners Program

BladeRunners provides life skills, job readiness, work experience/on-the-job training, job coaching and ongoing supports to unemployed youth at risk. Since 1994, we have had the honour of helping unemployed, at-risk youth prepare for and find sustainable employment.

During the program, participants will receive soft skills to help manage day-to-day life and finances. They also receive industry training based on their interests during the intake. The various courses offered in our program are completed either in-person or through online training. Our Job Coaches perform mock interviews, help participants build their resumes, take participants out in the community introducing them to potential employers and help them apply to various employment opportunities. The youth who attend the BladeRunners program have said that they are treated with respect, feel safe and are included at JHSV.

A Person-Centred, Tailored Skills to Work Program

A Person-Centred, Tailored Skills to Work Program (APT) is for persons who have episodic/chronic absences from the workforce due to multiple barriers such as disability, substance use/addiction, mental health challenges, housing precocity, lack of basic employment skills, or limited literacy.

APT offers participants a variety of certificate training to support their entry into their desired line of work. Once participants obtain their certificates, the program offers a 72-hour paid practicum, hands-on skill development and a low-barrier work program. The program provides robust supports for those seeking to work in construction, hospitality, janitorial and agriculture employment in the community. Participants are supported through the process by a job coach who assists with interview preparation, resume building, job search and employer mediation.



536
Training
Certificates
Issued



23%
As Visible
Minorities



30%
Indigenous
Participants

How We Are Supporting Indigenous Culture and Practice

"This is the only place in here where I feel like I can breathe and be myself. In the circle, I feel human again."



Indigenous Cultural Liaison Nanaimo

We were honoured to facilitate the Indigenous Cultural Liaison Nanaimo (ICLN) Program this year at the newly built Nanaimo Correctional Centre facility. During the past year, residents of the centre took part in making pow-wow drums with Uncle Fred Rolands. Participants were able to craft 30 hand drums and 20 rattles to play while learning traditional and new songs.

A sweat lodge with Uncle Gerry Oleman was also constructed for the medium security residents to be able to take part in ceremony. Participants

were able to participate in the Sweat House Ceremonies, enabling their healing journey and connection to their ancestral practices. Monthly healing circles, as well as mind/body classes, were also offered to assist participants in learning new skills for managing emotions and stress.

Indigenous People's Day provided cultural sharing sessions from many of the residents. There were games, songs, pow-wow dancing and a reminder that culture is vital to healing.



Indigenous Cultural Liaison Victoria

The Indigenous Cultural Liaison (ICL) program at VIRCC offers Indigenous inmates meaningful opportunities for cultural (re)connection, healing, and community through traditional practices and teachings. Activities include weekly Talking Circles and Wellbriety Recovery Groups, smudging ceremonies, and daily Elder's Meditations. The program also hosts seasonal ceremonies (Solstices and Equinoxes) and hands-on cultural crafts such as drumming, beading, leatherwork, and painting. Medicine Pouches are especially popular.

The program takes place in a dedicated Cultural Space that includes both indoor and outdoor areas, with flowers, herbs, cedar trees, and a Medicine Wheel-inspired design (photo attached). This former segregation space now cultivates respect, safety, and equality, welcoming all participants who embody the Seven Grandfather Teachings — especially Respect.



148
Smudge
Ceremonies



21
Sacred Space
Gatherings



299
Cultural Groups &
Healing Circles



1,366
Total
Participants

How We Are Supporting Vulnerable Youth In The Community

“Nothing seems to get in Emma’s way. She wanted to try crabbing with her mentee and so they did. They went to the Sidney pier, caught some crabs and then cooked them in the local park. . . Between hiking, biking, axe throwing and more, Emma and her mentee are doing it all.”

KidStart Mentoring Program

KidStart is a no-cost mentorship program for vulnerable children and youth, aged 6-18, in the Greater Victoria area. Youth referrals come from a variety of sources, such as the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD), social service agencies, schools, and families. Volunteer adult mentors are recruited, screened, trained and supported to spend approximately three hours a week with their mentee, role modelling pro-social behaviours, doing fun things together in the community, over the course of a year.

Participants must have been exposed to the criminal justice system or be at-risk of future criminal justice system involvement. This could be a result of experiencing family violence or substance abuse issues in the home, or incarceration within the family. Activities range from board games, chess, art, hiking, swimming, skating, basketball, skateboarding, bike riding, soccer, geocaching, crabbing, fishing, rock climbing, attending car shows, playing with remote-controlled cars, and going to the trampoline park, to name just some activities. Ultimately, mentorship needs to be a fun experience for both adults and children/youth - this means providing youth with multiple options and then taking their lead on what interests them.

Intensive Supervision and Support Program

The Intensive Support and Supervision Program (ISSP) assists youth on probation to be successful in complying with and completing conditions of their probation order as well as making healthier lifestyle choices. This is done through short and long-term support, advocacy, crisis intervention, life coaching and assessment and referral to other community agencies.

A range of creative, youth-centred interventions are planned to support the successful completion of ISSP conditions while also addressing broader needs that impact a youth’s stability and progress. Activities are designed to be flexible and responsive, supporting both accountability and positive engagement. In addition to individualized case planning, the program incorporates referrals and access to essential resources such as housing supports, food security programs, and academic or school-related assistance. These wraparound supports aim to remove barriers that may interfere with program completion, while promoting overall well-being and long-term success beyond the duration of the order.

During the year, twelve youth were supported within the program. Seven youth successfully completed their order and five continue to receive support to date.



31

One-On-One
Matches



150

Kids Positively
Impacted

How We Are Creating Connection With Community

“Camaraderie is king; fresh air and nature is therapeutic, a sense of achievement from growing and harvesting.”

Serenity Farm

In 2024, Serenity Farm flourished, once again, as a place of healing, connection, and growth for marginalized adults in Greater Victoria. Nestled in the Blenkinsop Valley, this 14,480-square-foot therapeutic garden has become a sanctuary—not only for vegetables and flowers but for people who often live on the margins of society. A project of the John Howard Society of Victoria, Serenity Farm offers low-barrier, meaningful work and a supportive community to individuals living with mental health challenges, addiction, or involvement with the criminal justice system.

Twice a week, participants gather under an old apple tree to begin their day. They check in with one another, stretch, and choose tasks tailored to their physical and emotional capacities—whether harvesting herbs, repairing beds, or simply weeding the garden’s famously stubborn “biomass.” There’s no hierarchy here; volunteers, staff, and participants work side-by-side, creating a spirit of mutual respect and deepening understanding across very different life paths. One retired police officer noted how working with participants helped him see the human stories behind lives affected by trauma and poverty.

Participants are paid a small stipend for their work, and each session includes a lovingly prepared homemade lunch—often with ingredients harvested just hours earlier. It’s not uncommon for someone to show up with a fresh-baked pie, or for volunteers to host a celebratory barbecue at season’s end. These shared meals deepen the sense of belonging and community. But Serenity Farm is more than just a garden—it’s a therapeutic environment where people find purpose, build confidence, and reconnect with themselves and others. As one participant shared, “When I’m here, the voices in my head go away.” Others spoke of learning new skills, enjoying the exercise, and finding peace in watching plants grow. One simply said, “I feel better about myself.”

This year brought its share of challenges: invasive weeds, heatwaves, garden pests (including some very persistent bunnies), and ongoing volunteer shortages. Yet creativity and community spirit prevailed. A new shelter was installed for protection from the elements, and a misting station helped everyone cool down on the hottest days. Volunteers from ReWood built an accessible raised bed and revamped the garden’s tool shed, ensuring all bodies could participate fully.

Despite its humble roots—born in 2012 as a justice-focused garden program—Serenity Farm has become a model of therapeutic horticulture. The garden nourishes more than just the body; it feeds the spirit. It connects people not just to food, but to each other. By season’s end, participants described their experience as “above and beyond” expectations, with many rating it a perfect 10. Looking ahead to 2025, Serenity Farm hopes to welcome new volunteers and expand its impact. Because here, every weed pulled, every tomato picked, and every sandwich shared is a step toward healing, dignity, and community.



50
Bouquets Of
Flowers



880
Pounds Of
Food Grown



1,044
Volunteer
Hours

The Many That Make Us Happen

Our work is made possible by a host of generosity and people who believe in the inherent dignity of a person. To our long-term funders, community partners, individual donors and the local businesses that support us, we are forever grateful for providing the resources to make this life changing work happen. Truly, YOU are the many that make us happen.

Funding Partners

Canadian Border Services

Aboriginal Community Career Employment
Services Society

Employment & Social Development Canada

Ministry of Children & Family Development

Ministry of Post-Secondary Education & Future Skills

BC Community Gaming Grants

BC Housing

Province of BC, Minister of Public Safety & Solicitor General & Deputy Premier

Correctional Services Canada

Indigenous Service Canada

BC Corrections

Island Health

Provincial Health Services Authority

BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services

Infrastructure Canada



Community Partners

City of Victoria

Victoria Native Friendship Centre

Victoria Brain Injury Society

Volunteer Victoria

Burnside Gorge Community Center

The Foundry

Cool Aid Clinic

Beacon Community Services

Knappett Construction

Donors

Ames Family Foundation

Sovereign Order of St. John

Victoria Foundation

CFAx Santa's Anonymous



38%

Persons With
Mental Health
Barriers



12,607

Direct
Contact Hours



36%

Indigenous
Clients



29%

Persons With
Disability



36%

With History
Of Substance
Abuse



1,415

Clients
Served



JohnHoward
SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

