

SOUTH SHORE SEXUAL HEALTH

Annual Report

2021-2022

*Uncensored:
Gender diverse
puberty*

**The
Bentleys**

*A national award
comes to Bridgewater*

4
Best moments
from the past year

*Show your Pride:
Top Fashion Picks*

**Kendra Ritcey, Chair / Kaitlin Richard, Finance Officer / Susan Berry,
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MAKING a DIFFERENCE this year

Pandemic pivoting: Year Two

Julie Veinot



It's hard to believe we're into the second year since Covid hit our shores. It has changed how we do business. Sometimes, though, in a good way. We've definitely become more nimble in how we serve people outside of the office model. However, it is the third spring that we've been trying to do school presentations in an ever-changing environment.

We've also been working hard to advocate for funding to be opened full-time year around. It's our dream, along with being able to facilitate clinical services somehow, someday. Stay tuned as we strive to fulfill these goals here on the South Shore!

Lots of great things have happened this year, though, and we're highlighting them in our report. It feels like there is change on the wind. Good change. We will be working with our colleagues across the province, and partners in our local communities, to keep championing sexual health for every body. Stay safe, folks.

Four ways to reach people

➡ Sexual Violence Team



This year we've teamed up with partners to create a sexual violence prevention dream team. We hope to coordinate our efforts to educate youth in schools.

Not only is collaboration the *only* way to make our limited resources stretch, it makes for better strategies. It can be energizing to bounce ideas off other advocates, and work towards a common goal of reducing sexual violence in our communities.

➡ Community Hubs



We continue to meet with our local **Community Hub** as well as the **Chester and Queens SchoolsPlus** Interagencies. Each month we find new ways to partner.

One of the biggest benefits of these collaborations is knowing the people on the other side of the email or phone number. It allows for much better referrals that save everyone time, especially the vulnerable folks we serve. It's also great to stay ahead of programming and services in the community that might benefit our clients. Thanks everyone!

➡ TESS Partnership



It's no secret that Nova Scotia (sadly) is a hub of human trafficking of youth in Canada.

We are part of the TESS Partnership facilitated by **YMCA Halifax**. The groups have evolved over time, but we continue to meet with partners to address the root causes of trafficking and find ways to support communities when the worst does happen. Unfortunately, the pandemic has not helped the issue, and we continue to work to get the word out about the warning signs of human trafficking, and ways we can respond to victims and survivors.

For more information, visit <https://www.tessns.ca/>



Road trippin' to Queens

We love a good road trip. It gets us out of the office for a change of scenery, but most importantly, it allows us to bring our services to folks who might not be able to take advantage of things like our Transformation Closet, our free or pay-as-you-can gender affirming gear program.

The reality is that transportation can be a challenge on the South Shore, so we do our best to meet people where they're at. We often do this through the schools, but we've been nurturing a partnership with the **Thomas Raddall Library** in Liverpool. Every two months, we set up at the library and offer a pop-up shop.

We travel with our safer sex supplies, pregnancy tests, samples of gender-affirming gear, and more. There is an opportunity for people to meet one-on-one with us, or just come into the room to check out our wares.

The library is within reasonable walking distance of the Middle and High schools, as well as the alternate school. It's a great opportunity for folks to see what we offer, and pick up a few freebies.

The library is also keeping a small basket of safer sex supplies and other goodies in the main room of the library to ensure people can pick up whatever they need discreetly. We replenish it as needed, so feel free to mention it to people.

Thanks to **South Shore Public Libraries** for hosting us to ensure that folks in South Queens are able to use our services!

THIS YEAR IN A NUTSHELL

STARTED DISTRIBUTING
COVID RAPID TESTS

CREATED NEW PRIDE
SHOP TO RAISE FUNDS

ADDED LIFELIKE MODELS TO
OUR PRESENTATIONS ON
THE CHEAP \$\$\$\$

GAVE OUT OUR FIRST HIV
SELF TESTS IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH **REACH NEXUS** AND
THE **COMMUNITY-BASED
RESEARCH CENTRE** (ALONG
WITH **SEXUAL HEALTH
NOVA SCOTIA**)



Change Makin': Our Top Services

While we think all of our services are awesome, there is no denying that some of our offerings are widely popular. Here are our current trends that we've noticed this year.

01

Hands down, **The Transformation Closet** has become one of our biggest services and brought a lot of new folks into our world. It accounts for 1/3 of our client contacts. Thank you for letting us facilitate this program. It is an absolute honour to be offering this program and getting so much support.

02

Our new sex toy shop **Positive Pleasures** has become a great way for people to get therapeutic tools along with education on using them safely. Not only does it support our programming, lots of folks are benefitting from having this service in our office.

03

People just can't get enough **safer sex supplies**. This program will always be a staple. Condoms and dams are not affordable for everyone and we're happy to shower the South Shore with all the condoms, dams, and lube packets.

04

Our **free menstrual cup program** has introduced a lot of folks to menstrual cups for the first time! Thanks to a generous donation from **Diva Cup**, we have been distributing lots of menstrual cups to people. We're also happy to help coach folks on how to use these cups to have a great period experience.

The Bentleys

We were thrilled to learn in late November that we were the grand prize winner of the Bentley Award because of our **Transformation Closet!** It's a program we're really proud of, because we see first hand how important gender-affirming items are to people. As it so often turns out, we're often the ones to give someone their first binder, which is a huge moment for many! Sometimes there are even tears; other times there are grins from ear-to-ear. We are delighted to be doing this, and thoroughly enjoyed the attention we received as a result of getting the award. Someone saw us in the news and actually donated \$1,000 to the program. We have never had such a large donation before. It has been truly inspiring!

The **Helen and Fred Bentley Awards of Excellence** recognize sexual health innovation and leadership in communities across Canada. They are distributed by **Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights**. The grand prize comes with a \$9,000 bonus for any organization lucky to be recognized. We also applaud **Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC) Manitoba** and the **Sexual Health Network of Quebec** for winning alongside us. Needless to say, some of our prize money will go into keeping our closet well stocked, as it is more popular than ever!





UNCENSORED



UNCENSORED

The Gender Diverse
Sexuality Handbook
for Every Body

Uncut Version

by South Shore Sexual Health

You can download the free PDF of *Uncensored* on our website. Find it under the Resources tab. We hope to have print copies to sell very soon. We have already started a waiting list for purchase. Until then, check out your local branch of the **South Shore Public Libraries**. Thanks to **Awesome South Shore** for the \$1,000 grant to get 40 copies published for distribution.

Gender diverse puberty for all

A project started a few years ago has finally come to fruition. We received grants from the **Lunenburg County Community Health Board** and **Queens Community Health Board** to create a gender-diverse puberty guide because of the lack of gender neutral books out there.

It took a lot of work, but after having some great folks review the manuscript, we launched the free PDF in October followed by hard copies of the book this spring.

Originally, it was meant for an upper elementary audience. However, since some of the topics are a bit more advanced (think sex toys, pornography), it's probably better suited to your typical junior high student. It makes a great follow up to the Grade 7 Sexuality guide published by Nova Scotia annually! Our book goes more in-depth for a total of 300 pages.

We hope to modify the contents so that some of the basics can go into a book for a "junior" version. It will focus more on puberty changes so that youth can learn why we go through puberty, and why it is such a valuable time for folks who are transgender or non-binary.

The hard copy was published by **PrintWright** in Bridgetown. We are happy to support a Nova Scotian printer with this project. We hope to do many more copies in the future.

Other options include trying to get some grant money to do audio versions of the key chapters so those who are more audio oriented can enjoy the information in a way that works for them!

Perhaps, too, in the future we can develop something for the parents who are learning alongside their gender-diverse kids.

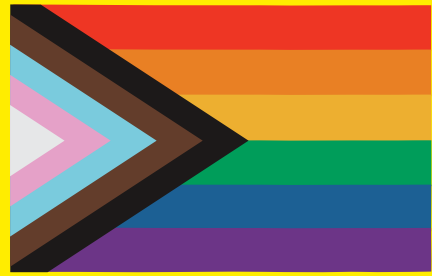
Thank you to all who have helped us develop this resource and made it a reality.

pride fashion



hats off

In our new pride shop we have lots of great things to wear, including these fashionable hats in either red or black. Not only do they keep your head warm, they keep your heart warm too by showing your support for folks who are 2SLGBTQ*!



making progress

We also have lots of jewellery available including these Pride rings made with the new Progress flag! Not only are you showing support for the rainbow community, you're giving a shout out to many including those who are BIPOC, and who due to intersectionality, face marginalization in different ways.



Yearly Stats

Here's some of the numbers measuring our impact

We had a *super* busy year, not only with the Transformation Closet, but also for our other services.

We served folks 306 times (despite being closed in May and only working half time in June and July)! One third of those visits were for the Transformation Closet.

People reached out for clinical services 54 times. It continues to be a challenge on the South Shore to connect people to primary care for infection testing, Paps, and IUD insertions.

Here are some other services we provided this year:

- distributing menstrual products
- handing out condoms and dams
- supporting local gay straight alliances
- handing out HIV self tests
- supporting getting HPV vaccination
- information on pregnancy options like abortion
- resources on surrogacy
- helping with emergency contraception through pharmacy partnerships
- information on masturbating
- one-on-one counselling
- health care navigation

Transformation Closet

This has become one of our top services. Thanks to the following for their support: the Mental Health Foundation of NS, CUA Bank, Underworks, TransTape, The Bentley Awards, and private donors.

111 total contacts (emails, drop ins, deliveries)

Distributed this year:

- 54 binders
- 22 packing underwear or pouches
- 14 packers
- 6 stand-to-pee devices
- 5 breast forms
- 4 gaffs
- 6 trans tape rolls
- 5 harnesses
- 5 therapeutic items for sexual activity

Top presentations: safer sex, consent, inclusive language, gender-affirming gear, pregnancy, and more!

THINGS WE'RE WORKING ON

We're always happy to celebrate our accomplishments, but let's be honest: it's the to do list that drives us into making change and advocating for better services and resources for everyone. Here are some things on our wish list that we're working on with our partners.

Accessible sexual health services

Our first wish is to have accessible sexual health services here on the South Shore. We get a ton of calls of people looking for STI testing or Pap tests, or even IUD insertions (1/6 of service requests). Not only would we love to have a stand alone clinic in the Bridgewater area, we'd love it if it was completely pro-choice, trauma-informed, and inclusive of all genders. We don't know if we'll ever see the funding for us to provide this service, but we'd also be very happy to help facilitate this service through many avenues. Currently, we send many folks to walk in clinics. Anonymous HIV testing would also support the community's well-being.

More access to free counselling therapy

We would love if our clients had access to free counselling therapy for a range of needs, including trans care, relationship counselling, and more. The reality is that it is a huge challenge to meet the mental health needs of our clientele with the current free community services. We'd like to see ample opportunities for vulnerable folks to get free counselling therapy when needed to ensure they stay healthy and have healthy relationships.

Free or low cost PREP

The research shows that pre-exposure prophylaxis is effective in reducing HIV transmission. Ensuring that people have coverage for this important option is essential to keeping HIV rates as low as we can. (Also, see above for the wish to have anonymous HIV testing).

More money for education

Having one staffer handle all our administration, education, fundraising, and marketing can get a little hairy sometimes. A full-time educator capable of going to every school as needed would be amazing, so we could support comprehensive sexual health education for all ages in all schools. Currently, our 30 hour per week staffer has to cover 27 schools. Basically, we do it on a first-come, first-serve basis. As a result, we get to only cover a handful of things with a small group of students. Funding for our educational program would allow us to develop something for all levels of students.

Free or pay-as-you-can contraception

Many calls come in for free contraception or birth control. We're happy to offer condoms, as always, but sometimes folks are interested in hormonal options as well. Some, like the Mirena IUD/IUS can cost over \$400. Access to free contraception would be an amazing opportunity for all folks to get the birth control they need. One big benefit would be youth having access to birth control regardless of whether they have their caregivers' support and financial means. (If we had a stand alone sexual health clinic, I'm sure drug companies would be happy to make donations of compassionate contraception.)

Ways to help us do our work



1. Inquire about joining our awesome Board of Directors.
 2. Make a donation through Canada Helps or our website.
 3. Stop by to make a purchase from our Pride Shoppe or Positive Pleasures adult shelves.
 4. Pass out free safer sex supplies for us.
 5. Tell folks to download our *Uncensored* book for free.
 6. Bring your ideas and volunteer with us.
 7. Donate services or items for event prizes.
 8. Become a member of our society.
 9. Remind your local politicians to ensure we have the funding to do our work.
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