



Living in
Community

Living in Community: 2023-2024 Annual Report



[@livingincommunitybc](https://www.instagram.com/livingincommunitybc)

[@livingincommunity.ca](https://www.facebook.com/livingincommunity.ca)

info@livingincommunity.ca

www.livingincommunity.ca

Messages From Our Co-Chairs



It has been an immense honor to serve as a Co-Chair of LIC's Board of Directors and to witness the transformative journey of LIC into the impactful organization it is today.

Over the past year, we have achieved several significant milestones that underscore our commitment to advancing the rights of sex workers. We hosted our second provincial conference on sex workers' rights, a crucial platform for dialogue, learning, and advocacy. We are also prepared to launch our innovative curriculum designed to increase people's understanding of sex work, aiming to foster greater awareness and reduce stigma. Additionally, we have been diligently working on developing comprehensive advocacy tools to support others in their efforts to champion sex workers' rights.

While acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead, I am deeply inspired by the unwavering dedication of our Board of Directors and staff to enhancing the safety and well-being of sex workers. I am incredibly proud to have worked alongside such passionate, insightful, and knowledgeable colleagues, and I am eager to see the positive changes LIC will continue to inspire as we move forward. Once again, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those, past and present, who have contributed to realizing LIC's vision, mission, and values, as well as to the new members of LIC's Board of Directors who will carry forward this vital and necessary work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Pilarinos'.

Andreas Pilarinos, Co-Chair

As a co-chair of the Living in Community Board, it is my pleasure to reflect on our collective achievements over the past year. Our efforts in advocacy, education, and networking have truly made a difference within our communities. I want to acknowledge our Executive Director, Board of Directors, and staff. Their dedication, leadership, and unwavering commitment have been pivotal to our success.

This year, we successfully hosted the provincial conference, bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders to discuss and address critical community issues. The conference not only fostered meaningful dialogue but also led to the development of an invaluable toolkit. This resource, born out of the collaborative spirit of the event, will now help communities across the province implement best practices and innovative solutions.

Additionally, we have made significant strides in the virtualization of our curriculum. This initiative has expanded our reach, allowing us to educate and empower more individuals and organizations through accessible online platforms. The transition to a virtual curriculum is a testament to our adaptability and commitment to inclusivity in education.

Our advocacy efforts have continued, with prospective partnerships that amplify the voices of those we serve. By working closely with community leaders and policymakers, we continue to push to drive positive change and influence important decisions that impact our communities.

Together, we have achieved remarkable progress, and I am confident that we will continue to build on this foundation in the coming year.

Spencer Johnston
Spencer Johnston, Co-Chair



Message From Our Executive Director

The past year at Living in Community (LIC) has been one of both exciting expansion and massive change.

We started off the 2023-2024 year by obtaining charitable status, an objective we'd worked on for most of the previous year. This milestone means we can access more options for funding and supporting our work to ensure it can continue and have a greater impact. It also holds our staff and Board to a higher standard of governance best practices.

In the fall, we hosted our second provincial conference, bringing together over 160 people for two days of learning, sharing, and relationship-building. This was a huge undertaking for our staff, Board, and volunteers, and we could not have done it without the many folks who pitched in to help as well as our generous sponsors. Then, after 13 years with LIC, we said a difficult goodbye to our Curriculum Developer and Training Lead, Alison Clancey, who was instrumental in developing LIC's training curriculum as well as our reputation as a trustworthy voice on addressing sex work stigma.

Heading into the winter, we welcomed our new Curriculum Developer and Training Lead, Nadia Grutter, who brings a rich background in communications, facilitation and training, violence prevention and response, and rights-based community organizing. Nadia got to work creating a strategy to launch our new online training – completed this year after more than two years of development! – as well as leading a new project consulting with the BC Sex Work Support Service Network about their experiences with policing.

And, this spring, our online training launch strategy was implemented, with the official release of the courses. Our new, self-directed online version of Curriculum for Change offers four unique courses for folks to learn more about stigma, how frontline organizations can best support sex workers, how federal laws impact sex workers, and the differences and nuances between sex work and trafficking.

As always, there is more on the horizon. We'll soon release a report summarizing what happened at our fall 2023 conference, as well as an advocacy toolkit to help folks from every sector join us in taking action on the recommendations made at our conference. But for now, we'll also take a moment to reflect on all that we achieved this past year, and to thank and acknowledge everyone who has been part of it.



LIC is simply the hub in the middle of the wheel; you all are the spokes, the ones doing important work on the ground that informs us and propels our collective forward movement. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Halena Seiferling".

Halena Seiferling, Executive Director

Our Vision:

We envision a future where sex workers' rights are respected and where sex workers are free from stigma, violence, discrimination, and criminalization. We envision a world where diverse stakeholders can come together to share, learn from each other, and work through different sex work perspectives in order to achieve our common goals of health, safety, and well-being for all community members.

Our Mission:

Centering sex workers' rights, Living in Community convenes diverse stakeholders in order to: understand a range of experiences and perspectives; inform sex work-related policies and practices of governments, service providers, and community organizations; and provide education to support these goals.

Our Values:

- We ensure that the diversity of sex workers' experiences and perspectives are at the centre of our work and inform every aspect of what we do.
- We believe that everyone has the right to health and safety, regardless of their social location and lived experience. However, we recognize that, due to differing levels of power and privilege in society, individuals experience inequitable access to health, safety, justice, and other services and supports. We address the systemic root causes which include colonization, criminalization, racism, discrimination, capitalism, and more.
- We are committed to engaging in ongoing learning about how to truly practice decolonization in our work.
- We use an evidence-based, harm reduction lens on sex work to address the impacts of stigmatization and criminalization of sex workers.
- The foundation of our work is being open to listening and seeking understanding of different perspectives in order to find common ground. We value understanding the perspectives of residents, businesses, and other community stakeholders in regard to the challenges they may have in addressing sex work-related issues.

Our Work in 2023-2024



In our strategic plan, our work is grouped under four pillars.

1. Strengthening and building the capacity of sex worker-serving organizations

The first pillar of our work is strengthening and building the capacity of sex work support organizations and other key allies across BC to undertake mutual learning and develop a unified voice for sex workers' rights.

Convening and supporting the BC Sex Work Support Service Network is a significant piece of this pillar. The Network is a group of 27 organizations, located across all regions of BC and including one organization in the Yukon, that offer frontline services, supports, and advocacy with and for sex workers in their communities. In the 2023-2024 year, we welcomed new BC Network members located in Vancouver and Victoria.

We hold quarterly meetings for BC Network members to share updates on their work, identify shared concerns and best practices, and build a unified voice on advocacy recommendations. We also hold virtual trainings for this group to collectively deepen our knowledge; in 2023-2024, we held a training about storytelling and factors to consider when sharing one's experience as a sex worker. We held fewer trainings than in a usual year because we focused on our provincial conference in the fall instead, and we obtained sponsorship to cover BC Network member representatives' travel and accommodations to attend the conference and learn together in person.

Another key moment for the BC Network this year was our consultation about sex workers' experiences with policing. In the winter, we received funding from the Province of BC to hold this consultation with BC Network members and to report back as part of a project to inform the Province's upcoming changes to the Police Act. Through an online survey and three live, virtual consultation sessions, we heard from 66 people across BC about three topics: folks' experiences with police and RCMP broadly, the benefits and drawbacks of training police regarding sex work, and the impacts of Sex Work Enforcement Guidelines which some police forces have in place. Not only did the deep and nuanced conversations we held lead to strong policy recommendations to the Province, but they also strengthened our relationships and our trust in each other as we tackled an often sensitive and heightened topic with grace, with compassion for each other's experiences, and with an openness to understand each other's perspectives.

Finally within this pillar, LIC also convenes the SAFE in Cedar Cottage project in east Vancouver. This group of community members and neighbourhood stakeholders meets regularly to discuss and address sex workers' needs along the Kingsway stroll in the Cedar Cottage area of Vancouver. In the 2023-2024 year, group members focused on the stability and growth of the Kingsway Community Station – a peer-led drop in space for sex workers along the stroll – and continued to share resources and updates with each other to solve local problems and support the community.

By the Numbers:

- 167: number of attendees at our October 2023 conference
- 46: number of speakers who shared their expertise at the conference
- 11: number of SAFE in Cedar Cottage members
- 27: number of BC Sex Work Support Service Network members
- 5: number of BC Sex Work Support Service Network meetings and trainings held

2. Deepening and broadening our education and training work

The second pillar of our work is our anti-stigma education and awareness-raising. Since 2013, LIC has been delivering Curriculum for Change, our training for individuals who provide services to sex workers or whose work duties or life circumstances bring them into contact with sex workers. In the 2023-2024 year, LIC provided or facilitated live training to 67 learners across British Columbia. Learners included law students, social work students, and frontline staff and peers at sex worker-serving organizations.

Excitingly, we also officially launched our new, online, self-directed version of our training. This new option allows individuals to learn at their own pace via videos, interactive exercises, and downloadable resources for future use. There are four distinct courses to meet varying needs: Course One is our flagship training unpacking sex work stigma, Course Two covers best practices for frontline service providers, Course Three educates on how different legal frameworks about sex work (such as decriminalization or criminalization) affect sex workers, and Course Four explores the differences between sex work and trafficking. Thank you again to all of the friends of LIC who tested our training before it went live and gave invaluable feedback that strengthened these courses!

LIC delivered live trainings and launched this online training while managing a transition in our education and training staff. We give deep thanks to our longtime Training Lead, Alison Clancey, for spearheading the creation of our online training, as well as developing and iterating our curriculum over the past 13 years. And, a warm welcome to our new Training Lead, Nadia Grutter, who hit the ground running with facilitating trainings, reviewing and further iterating our curriculum, and leading the launch of our online training.

In 2023-2024, LIC again increased our reach on social media. We use our social media to share information about our work, such as by recording short videos about our policy positions, creating infographics about the results of consultations or projects, and breaking down government actions and reports in more accessible language. Our most engaged social media account is Facebook, where we reached 4,159 people throughout the fiscal year.

By the Numbers:

- 88: number of individuals who attended a Living in Community training or educational session in 2023-2024
- 38: number of individuals who have already registered for our new online training
- 409: average visits to our website per month
- 60: average visits to the 'Find a Service' page of our website – which shows where sex workers and others can find local resources in their community – per month
- 424: total downloads of resources from our website in the year: fact sheets, reports, and infographics
- 5,643: people we reached via Facebook and Instagram in 2023-2024

Learn how to
support sex
workers in
your work &
your life

online curriculum
for change

Living in
Community

3. Supporting law and policy change to uphold the rights of sex workers

By the Numbers:

- 37: number of meetings LIC attended with community groups, coalitions, unions, and other allied stakeholders on shared advocacy objectives
- 8: number of municipal, provincial, and federal government consultations and topics for which LIC provided written and verbal submissions
- 9: number of meetings with municipal, provincial and federal elected officials and decision-makers LIC attended to advocate on sex workers' rights, health, and safety

The third pillar of LIC's work is recommending new laws and policies, and advocating for changes in existing harmful laws and policies, to protect the health, safety and rights of sex workers. The 2023-2024 year brought many opportunities for LIC to advocate to governments and build collective power toward future policy change.

At the municipal level, we celebrated the City of New Westminster passing Sex Worker Safety Guidelines this past November. LIC was a member of the City's working group that developed and advised on these guidelines, and we had also delivered training in partnership with PACE Society to New Westminster's City Council. While some municipalities have taken a prohibitionist approach – such as the City of Richmond, which attempted this year to use its bylaws to close down massage parlours – it was heartening to see New Westminster take a rights-based approach to respecting and understanding those who live and work in its city. In response to the concerning approach in Richmond, we joined an effort led by SWAN Vancouver and supported by several other local

organizations and individuals to call for City Council to change its approach and respect those working in massage businesses. In March, Richmond City Council passed a motion for staff to research and review the impacts of its bylaws on massage workers.

Additionally at the local level, we participated in the City of Vancouver's annual budget consultation – calling for investments in addressing the root causes of inequality and violence rather than investing in more policing – and we gave feedback on the City's update to its Sex Worker Safety Plan.

Provincially, LIC again participated in the government's annual budget consultation, calling for more funding for person-centered and peer-based frontline sex worker-serving organizations and for the BC Bad Date and Aggressor Reporting system which is being developed (and for which we are still a Working Group member, helping to guide the project and the system being created).

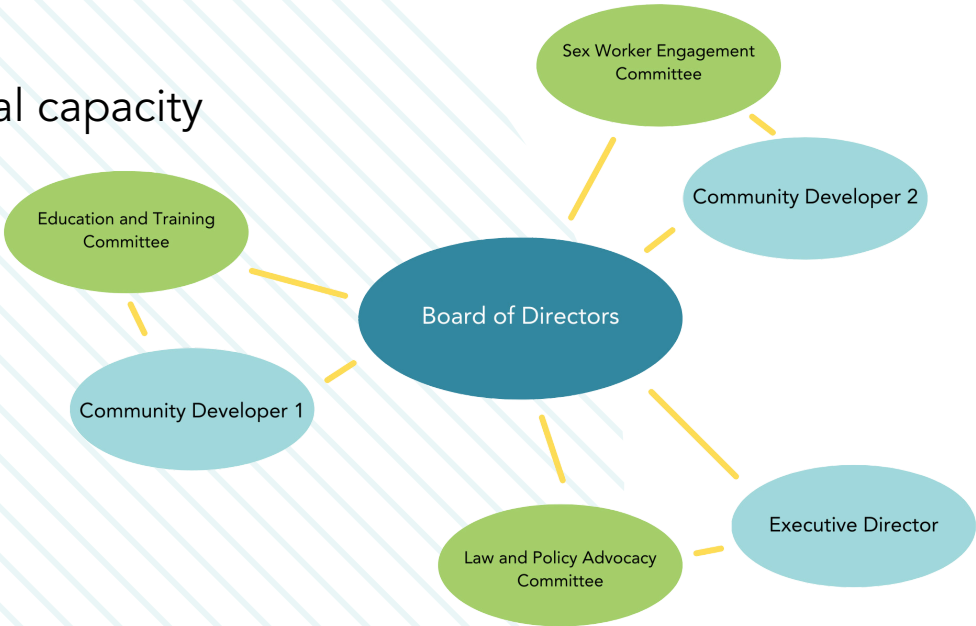
In November, the Province launched a new Gender Based Violence Strategy, which LIC had advised on as a member of the Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity's Advisory Committee on this file. LIC continues to participate in this committee and to push for a nuanced understanding of sex work and gender-based violence to be reflected in provincial policy.

Federally, LIC also participated in the budget consultation, in particular lending our support to the creation of a new and robust Canada Disability Benefit. We discussed the intersections among sex work and disability and advocated for the new benefit to be comprehensive and accessible for disabled sex workers. We were disappointed to see the new Benefit funded at only \$200 per month per recipient, which is far below the minimum of \$2,000 that we and other advocates had called for. Closing out the year, we also sent in a submission, along with eight members of the BC Sex Work Support Service Network, about Bill S-210 which is currently being reviewed by a House of Commons Committee. While this bill intends to prohibit youth from accessing content online that is not age-appropriate, we pointed out that it could infringe on sex workers' rights to work and to share their own work online, and we advocated instead for stronger education about sex, consent, and digital literacy.

In a new turn, LIC also participated in an international consultation this year. In response to a call for papers from the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls related to sex work and violence, we and other sex worker-focused organizations sent in submissions that added nuance to this topic and addressed the conflation of sex work with violence and exploitation.

4. Strengthening our internal capacity

The fourth and final pillar of our work focuses on our internal capacity. 2023-2024 brought some big successes in this area: we became a registered charity, we continued to work with the three committees that help guide our work, and we received new funding to implement the recommendations from our fall conference.



Becoming a registered charity was a significant objective and a directive from our Board of Directors last year. As a registered charity now, we have more access to funding and support that ensures our important work can continue. While we don't currently have plans to hold fundraising events or campaigns, stay tuned to learn about more ways you too can support our work.

Our three committees – a Sex Worker Engagement Committee, a Law and Policy Advocacy Committee, and an Education and Training Committee – continue to work hard to give us feedback, review our work, and bring in new ideas and perspectives for what we should be focusing on. Our Board members each sit on at least one committee, and each of our three staff members also sit on a committee, meaning the discussions and the work is always brought back to both the Board and the staff to ensure our approach is integrated and comprehensive.

In 2023-2024, securing new long-term funding was another major goal that we accomplished. We are grateful to Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) for their support of our new project to scale up our work following last fall's conference and to implement the recommendations that came from the conference.

Thank you to our Board of Directors in 2023-2024:

- Andreas Pilarinos, Co-Chair
- Spencer Johnston, Co-Chair
- Steph Sia, Treasurer
- Rhian Oldale, Secretary
- Norm Leech, Member at Large
- Chelsey Perry, Member at Large
- Heather Paddison, Member at Large
- Leia Brands, Member at Large
- Nikta Boroumand, Member at Large
- Jenny Zhang, former Member at Large

Thank you to our staff in 2023-2024:

- Alison Clancey, former Community Developer and Training Lead
- Halena Seiferling, Executive Director
- Kerry Porth, Community Developer
- Nadia Grutter, Community Developer and Training Lead

Living in Community thanks the following organizations for their generous support of our work in 2023-2024:

- BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU)
- City of Vancouver
- Government of British Columbia
- Government of Canada – Women & Gender Equality Canada
- Law Foundation of British Columbia
- Vancouver Foundation



And the sponsors of our October 2023 conference:

- BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU)
- CUPE BC
- City of Vancouver
- HOPE Outreach
- MoveUP
- New Westminster & District Labour Council
- Peers Victoria Resources Society
- Province of British Columbia
- SWAN Vancouver
- Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre
- Vancity Community Foundation
- Vancity Credit Union
- Vancouver Foundation
- Vancouver & District Labour Council
- WISH Drop-In Centre Society

2023-2024 Financial Statement

Living in Community Society

Revenue and Expenses

April 1st 2023 - March 31st 2024

	Total
REVENUE	
Government Grants Earned	\$132,662
Foundation Grants Earned	\$18,260
Conference Sponsorship	\$30,350
Conference Registrations	\$11,962
Donations & Sponsorship	\$7,387
Training Revenue	\$7,919
Deferred Revenue for 2023-2024	\$79,100
Total Revenue	\$287,640
EXPENSES	
Personnel Total	\$214,972
Employees	\$165,544
Contracted Services	\$24,393
Honoraria	\$25,035
Administrative Expenses	\$9,829
Conference Program Expenses	\$60,519
Program Expenses	\$21,428
Total Expenses	\$306,748
Deficit	-\$19,108

Note: LIC's fiscal year (April 1 - March 31) does not align with most project timelines. Deferred revenue represents funding dedicated to projects occurring in or continuing into the next fiscal year.

Note 2: One funder for 2023-2024 sent payment for the year after March 31. If payment had been received before the end of the fiscal year, our year end would be a deferred revenue of \$10,892.

