

# A YEAR IN TRANSITION

## 2022 Annual Report

When major crises hit, research shows that the impact is felt in individuals, families and communities for years after the emergency ends. While expected, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic made 2022 a hard year for many in Alberta, particularly those impacted by domestic abuse. And Sagesse was there to help.

We supported more clients than the year before, with increasingly complex needs. This increased demand was also seen in the higher-than-expected number of Clare's Law referrals, through which Sagesse connects applicants across the province with appropriate local support.

Meeting these rising demands was challenging. After years of extraordinary effort, the civil society sector is overwhelmed. Volunteer and staff turnover was high, recruitment was glacially slow and partners struggled to commit their scarce resources.

These stresses led us to respond with compassion and grace for others and for ourselves. We doubled down on our values and practices and boldly pursued innovative ways to challenge and disrupt structures of abuse.

At the same time, the Board led Sagesse through foundational work to support a thriving, mid-sized organization. In five years, Sagesse's expenditures more than doubled, from \$1.5 million in 2018 to more than \$3.5 million in 2022. This growth requires us to scrutinize and enhance our underpinning infrastructure and processes, while leaving room for iterative adaptation.



A key part of this work is fostering a culture of belonging. In 2022 we looked at the values, beliefs, behaviours and rituals that underpin our culture, with the hopes of nurturing elements that align with our values and mission and surfacing areas where we are falling short. We continued our Truth and Reconciliation work, led by a cross sectional committee, and piloted the updated version of Rainbow Ready. While this work is far from complete, these are important steps to ensure an equitable organization.

As we move through 2023, we're continuing these efforts to disrupt the systems and patterns of behaviour that lead to abuse.

**Rebecca Stephen**  
President, Board of Directors

**Andrea Silverstone**  
Chief Executive Officer





**Left:** In 2022 Sagesse as honoured to recognize 10 leaders in domestic abuse in domestic abuse intervention and prevention with Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medals.

**Below:** In November we hosted the Disruptor Social, our first in-person fundraiser since 2019.



## 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

### INTERVENTION SERVICES IN TRANSITION

Our Intervention team was at the frontlines of the COVID-19 transition, supporting an increased number of clients with more complex paths to wellness.

The number of clients we served increased by 22 percent over the previous year. Many of these clients found Sagesse through non-traditional means, like Google reviews, leading to an increased number of walk-in clients, something not seen pre-COVID. We continued to support clients where they are, including running a group in a youth correctional facility.

The increased number of clients was not reflected in peer group starts, as the number of groups launched in 2022 decreased by 25 percent compared to 2021. Based on partner feedback, this change can be attributed to sector burnout and community fatigue. This was indicated by increased difficulty finding facilitators and decreased partner capacity to support groups within their communities. Additionally, people impacted by abuse had less capacity to commit to groups, particularly over the summer months.

*Continued on page 3*

	2022	2021
Clients served	602	494
Peer support groups started	47	63
Number of volunteers	180	244
Volunteer hours	4,673	7,000

#### Intervention

- Fostered facilitation expertise within Sagesse and began a curriculum review to bolster our peer support programs.
- Launched a volunteer program to manage our first contact with clients through phone, text and chat.
- Connected 324 Clare's Law applicants with support from 50 organizations across Alberta, and trained 281 network members about the legislation.

#### Prevention

- Advanced the creation of a primary prevention framework for Alberta through the IMPACT collective impact initiative and hosted the third IMPACT Summit.
- Revised and relaunched our Rainbow Ready program, helping organizations better support 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

#### Innovation

- Launched *Innovation Outside the Lab*, a leadership course with New York University.
- Continued advocacy on coercive control, including a second coercive control petition and original research.



## INTERVENTION SERVICES (CONTINUED)

### Supporting staff and volunteers

The impacts of compassion fatigue hit volunteer recruitment hard in 2022. Sagesse volunteers commit a great deal of time, as facilitating one group can require a three-hour commitment, for up to 14 weeks. Sagesse Line, a pilot program where supervised volunteers serve as the first point of contact for clients, requires extensive training and regular shifts. And Step Forward, our one-on-one peer support program, continues to have very high interest in the program without the volunteers to match. With these demands, the pool of suitable volunteers is small.

Faced with these challenges, our Intervention Services team worked to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of their team and programs. To support existing staff, and ensure Sagesse remains an employer of choice, the team piloted different approaches to workdays and hours, including evening and remote work. They updated our volunteer policy and manual, operational policies and technical manuals. This work paid off, as volunteerism picked up in the fourth quarter, with more applications and engagement.



*I got involved with Sagesse through a shelter. I had tried a psychologist, but I chose Sagesse because I felt like I wanted to find a group of women to belong to. Listening and sharing stories helped me grow and move forward. It took me awhile to get comfortable with myself, but after I moved into my own home with my two kids, I knew it was time to work on myself. Sagesse helped me find my voice and my strength, and I'm grateful for their support."*

### GROWTH CIRCLE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

## STOPPING VIOLENCE BEFORE IT STARTS

In 2022, our Prevention team led a massive effort to build the foundations of a growing primary prevention movement.

Since 2020, Sagesse, as the backbone of IMPACT, a provincial domestic and sexual violence collective impact organization, has worked with Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence (University of Calgary Faculty of Social Work) and the Government of Alberta on an iterative learning process with the goal of creating a framework to guide efforts to prevent violence in Alberta. The work is supported by the Max Bell Foundation, Silver Gummy Foundation, and the Government of Alberta Community and Social Services (through an investment in IMPACT).

In 2022 this work included reviewing and providing feedback on five research reports produced by Shift, and organizing and facilitating 13 community engagement conversations with 218 participants. The Alberta Primary Prevention Framework will launch and be operationalized beginning in 2023. To prepare IMPACT members to engage, we worked with 11 networks to increase their capacity and readiness.

To further share the learnings and challenges of primary prevention, the third IMPACT Summit and Men and Boys showcase received positive reviews and high engagement.

The second group that Sagesse backbones, The Calgary Domestic Violence Collective, voted to change the structure of the network to support increased member focus and engagement. The outcome of this process will be shared in 2023.

### Rainbow Ready revitalization

After pausing through COVID, our Rainbow Ready program was revised and relaunched in 2023. Over a year, Rainbow Ready participants undergo a full audit and training program, touching on every phase of their operations. Over the course of the pandemic, we were able to shift the program to focus on culture change for organizations with a grounding in cultural humility and equity, in order to create opportunities for belonging. In 2022, Sagesse partnered with four organizations, performing three culture audits and hosting seven workshops with 96 participants.

*More on Prevention Services on page 4*

*We have partnered with Sagesse in the past and received phenomenal training. The team is professional, informative, helpful and accessible. Through Rainbow Ready, we have increased our organization's capacity regarding our work with clients experiencing violence as well as ensuring our organization is welcome and accommodating of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.*

*The partnership with Sagesse provides a level of security we did not have. We know we can rely on Sagesse to keep us updated as new research becomes available. They are willing to retrain or refresh our knowledge when necessary. They are only a phone call away if we need additional information or client-specific support questions answered."*

**RAINBOW READY PARTNER**

## GETTING REAL CREATIVE

Our flagship informal supporter program, REAL Talk, also went through a transition. Interest in online sessions waned as the sense of community urgency decreased with the end of lockdowns, and facilitators and participants made a slow transition to in-person learning. While we expect REAL Talk numbers to continue to rise, this adjustment reflects a return to pre-COVID community demand.

Highlights included a very successful Family Violence Awareness Month, with 21 workshops and 350 participants in the month of November, supported by a partnership of the Edmonton-based Community Initiatives Against Family Violence. REAL Talk found new audiences including multiple youth-based programs and schools across Alberta, and dementia care facilities.

Following research and quality improvements by our Innovation team, REAL Talk is set to reach new audiences in 2023.

	2022	2021
REAL Talk workshops	102	115
REAL Talk participants	1,656	1,988



*"I attended a REAL Talk session to learn how I could better work with and support my family law clients. I found the information very helpful, and I felt more prepared to have conversations about abuse. A few months later, I got in touch with Sagesse again, as I had an active client who was experiencing domestic abuse. Through Sagesse's Stand By peer support program, I was able to talk through my questions and concerns with others and with the Sagesse facilitator. After my experience with REAL Talk, I trusted Sagesse had the expertise I needed to better support my client both legally and emotionally."*





## ALL-IN ON INNOVATION

What didn't change in 2022 was our commitment to innovation. From extensive quality improvement efforts (Rainbow Ready, REAL Talk, peer support, onboarding) to artificial intelligence tools, to leadership training, innovation impacted every facet of Sagesse's work.

### Leading on coercive control

While the term isn't broadly known, from our founding Sagesse has supported people who have experienced coercive control. In 2022 we continued our efforts to educate the public about this common and dangerous form of abuse. This work evolved to include advocacy, with extensive efforts to inform legislators and encourage them to support efforts to stop escalating violence, including updating our criminal code. In 2022, we sponsored a second parliamentary petition and performed research on the intersections of domestic abuse and coercive control. This research was published through *The Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime*.

### Domestic Abuse Resource Hub

To better reach people impacted by abuse, who are unlikely to seek out formal support, Sagesse took on a true behemoth: the rampant misinformation machine that is the internet. While people are looking for information about abuse, what they find is often contradictory, confusing, or incorrect. Sagesse collaborated with the University of Alberta's School of Public Health to launch the *Domestic Abuse Resource Hub*, an easy and private way to access clear, reliable and relevant information about abuse online. Through an AI interface, users answer a few simple questions, and are then given a short list of resources and support services. Resources on the hub include videos, podcasts, written materials and links to 24-hour support.

### Innovation Outside the Lab

In 2021, *Sagesse challenged* the social sector to disrupt the delivery of social services by embracing innovation. To equip the sector for this work, in 2022 Sagesse launched Innovation Outside the Lab (IOL). IOL aims to shift thinking to investment in and engagement with innovation and entrepreneurship as a mindset and the cornerstone of everyday practice, perspectives and thinking.

Participants in the inaugural offering of IOL learned how to build the capacity of their colleagues to engage in new practices while building organizational ability and models to address social challenges and ensure that innovation lives on long into the future. IOL participants earned an Innovation and Intrapreneurship certificate from New York University.



# THANK YOU to our DONORS & FUNDERS

Our sincere thanks and appreciation to our funders and donors, who supported the work to end domestic abuse in 2022. Your donations, both monetary and in-kind, allow us to thrive, grow and have a positive impact on individuals, communities and organizations impacted by abuse.

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