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**Indigenous-informed Sexual Assault Response Program (SARP) comes to Nanaimo.**

A multi-partnered program providing Indigenous-informed Sexual Assault Response services that are culturally supportive, culturally relevant, and culturally safe.

**Nanaimo, British Columbia:** Nanaimo Family Life Association today announced a new partnership with the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), Island Health's Central Island Forensic Nurse Examiner Program and Warmland Women's Support Services Society. This partnership will work in collaboration to develop an Indigenous-informed Sexual Assault Response Program (SARP) that is focused on providing crisis sexual assault services during the immediate aftermath of trauma that are culturally supportive, culturally relevant, and culturally safe. Funded by the FNHA, the primary goal of the program is to improve the (cultural) safety, access, and dignity of sexual assault services for Indigenous people who experience sexualized violence. The program will serve all genders and all people who access the Forensic Nurse Examiner Program at the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital.

*"Indigenous-informed services are about making spaces, programs and organizations safer and more relevant for Indigenous people by considering current and historical colonial impact and seeking to eliminate structural racism and discrimination." says Deborah Hollins, executive director of Nanaimo Family Life Association. "When we do this work, we create better and more effective services for all people."*

Kathleen Harris, the FNHA's Regional Nurse Manager says *"The FNHA Vancouver Island is excited to be working with our Island community partners to ensure timely access to sexualized violence services that are culturally safe, culturally-informed, dignified and respectful, and improve accessibility to traditional cultural supports and ceremony for survivors."*

Aimee Falkenberg, Clinical Coordinator for the Central Island Forensic Nurse Examiner Program, adds *Forensic Nurse Examiners provide compassionate medical forensic care to survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence for all ages and genders. This collaboration will enhance these patient examinations and make space for a holistic culturally safe healing journey for survivors that is consistent and individualized."*

Kendra Thomas, Executive Director of Warmland Women's Support Services Society underscores the importance of this partnership, *stating "As much as SARP is about sexualized violence, it is also about reconciliation."*

The benefits of this new partnership include.

- Development of a response to sexualized violence that reflects the needs of survivors and engages community to become more than a bystander thus addressing rape culture. Service delivery enhances community capacity, builds on community collaboration, and increases consistent positive social response for survivors.
- The creation of a barrier-free service for sexual assault victims, guided by indigenous wisdom, principals, and consultation.

**About the Partners:** The partners have demonstrated ability to offer accessible, safe, and inclusive spaces, education, outreach, and counseling during many years of service.

Nanaimo Family Life Association is a multi-service organization that has been investing in our community for over 50 years, offering programs designed to address the unique needs of individuals, offered in an atmosphere of respect, inclusion, and compassion.

*The FNHA Vancouver Island mandate is to be community-driven and Nation based and work in partnership with our Island Nations by way of the Regional Health and Wellness Plan to meet our shared vision of “healthy, self-determining, vibrant BC First Nations children, families, and communities.*

All Island Health emergency departments can provide access to a forensic nurse examiner 24 hours per day, seven days per week addressing the medical forensic needs for survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence.

Warmland Women's Support Services is a sexual assault advocacy centre in the Cowichan Valley serving adult survivors of all gender identities. We support survivor's resilience and dignity through services grounded in feminist theory and cultural competence.