



# annual report

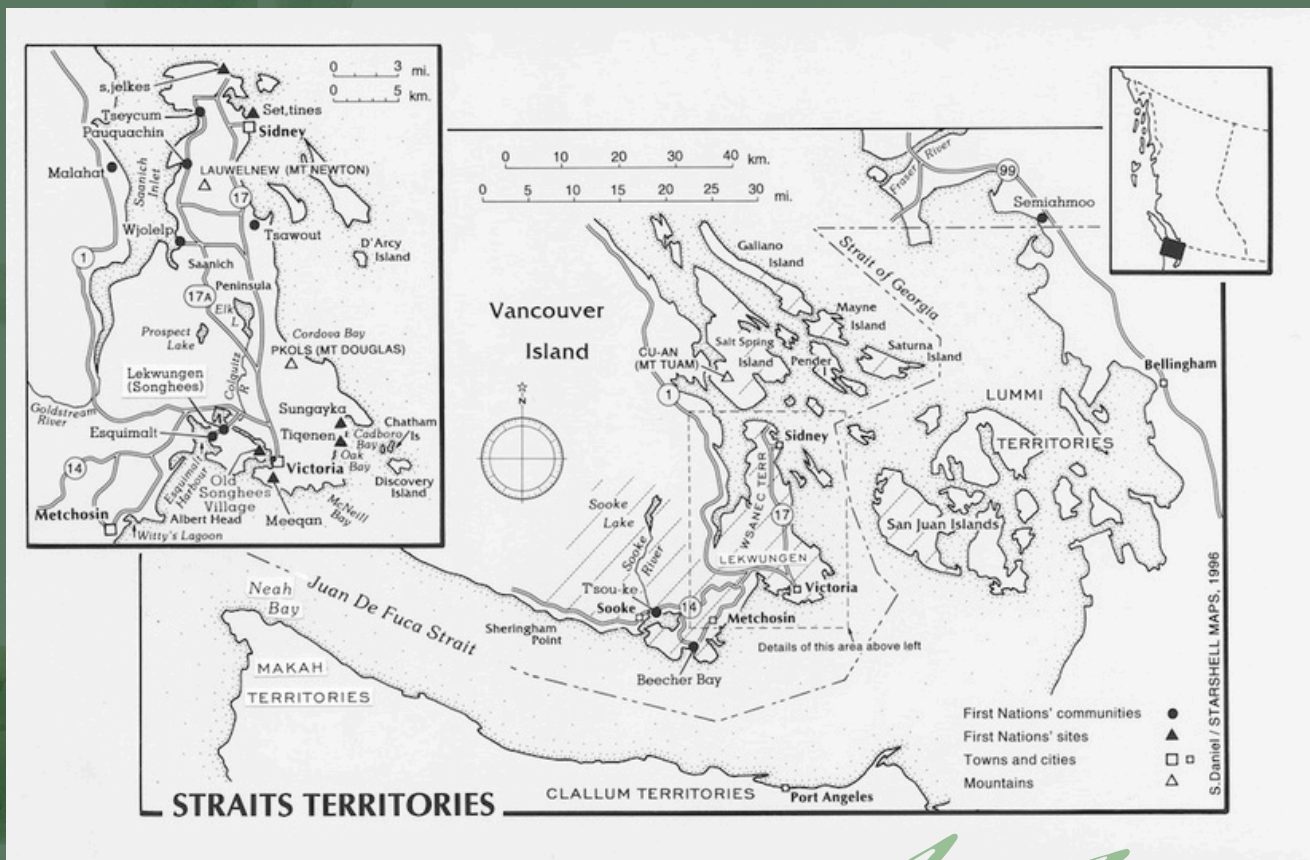
## 2022-2023

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# territorial acknowledgement

UVic, the UVSS, and surrounding communities are built on the stolen lands of the ləkʷəŋən and WSÁNEĆ peoples. As settlers on these territories, we benefit every day from the historic and ongoing displacement and genocide of these communities. Colonial violence such as this is at the roots of homophobic, transphobic, and cis-sexist ideas, and is also responsible for the prevalence of sex negativity within Western culture. As we are a collective built on protecting and upholding rights based on gender and sexuality, it is critical to be mindful of the roots of these oppressive systems, so we can unpack them, unlearn them, and move forward in a better way.





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# who we are

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## The Gender Empowerment Centre (GEM)

Is a collectively run drop-in space on campus focused on the needs of women, non-binary, trans, two-spirit and gender non-conforming folks through an intersectional feminist, anti-oppressive, and sex positive framework. Our space is open to both University of Victoria students and community members, serving a large population on 'Vancouver Island'.

GEM offers access to a large variety of sex-positive safer sex supplies, menstrual supplies (including FREE menstrual cups), pregnancy tests and emergency contraceptive vouchers that can be redeemed at HEART Pharmacy in the SUB. Through its various interpretations, the GEM has been a staple organization in keeping UVic activism alive; advocating for women and gender minorities to feel safe and welcome at this campus by bringing awareness to various social issues through panels, workshops and events.

The GEM has existed in various interpretations since the 1980's; first as the 'Women's Centre', and subsequently, becoming the 'Third Space' in 2014. In 2018 the Gender Empowerment Centre was rebranded to better reflect the diverse range of students that we service and to focus on the impact we wish to have here at UVic. While this has come with numerous changes to our operations and policies, it has ultimately come with a more inclusive and welcoming community in a time where many have felt isolated and alone; namely over the last few years.

We have seen exponential growth this last year, and this report will highlight the amazing work that has been done to cement our presence in the university climate. Whether one is curious, questioning, or confident in their gender identity, we use self-identification and shared ideology as requirements for our membership. Stop by B107 to see what we're all about!

This report will focus on the 2022-2023 academic year, spanning from May 2022 to April 2023.



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# our values

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## sex positivity

the view that all personal decisions around sex are valid, and all sex is good sex, so long as it is consensual

We encourage people to explore their sexuality, their relationships to themselves and others without judgement. This concept is foundational to changing the imbedded bias and judgements we hold against the sexual body, and it is our view that talking about sex in a positive way leads to better sexual harm reduction. Whatever your relationship to sex; we respect your autonomous decision.

## anti-oppression

the active practice of challenging systems of oppression (ex. patriarchy, cis-heteronormativity, colonialism, classism, ableism, institutional barriers, etc)

We at GEM acknowledge there are various forms of oppression present on our university campus, and work with other advocacy spaces to hold UVic and its community accountable. We actively work with the other advocacy spaces to inform the work we do through an anti-oppressive lens.

## intersectional feminism

The understanding that a person's social, political and economic positionality will be impacted by overlapping inequalities and privileges that often exacerbate each other.

Intersectional feminism gives room for a conversation spanning across various forms of gendered oppression, including but not limited to: self-identified women, trans people, and gender diverse individuals, as a part of the conversation of Patriarchy and its ramifications.

Intersectionality particularly helps us to understand the way that Black, Indigenous, and people of colour who experience gendered oppression are impacted. This is an integral part of our mission because uplifting the voices of those who are impacted most by systems of oppression is crucial to gender diversity, anti-oppression and trans-protagonism. (Definition based on the writings of Kimberlé Crenshaw.)

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# how we work

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## Staff & Board Representative

This year our staff team consisted of one full time Outreach and Communications Coordinator, our UVSS board representative; with the addition of a student staff Communications Officer to keep up with the influx of student engagement that we had predicted. Increasing our staff this year proved to be the right choice, as our volunteer and collective membership sky-rocketed to pre-pandemic highs. Moreover our Coordinator and Communications Officer worked together to create promotional materials and give instruction to the work studies.

## Work-Study

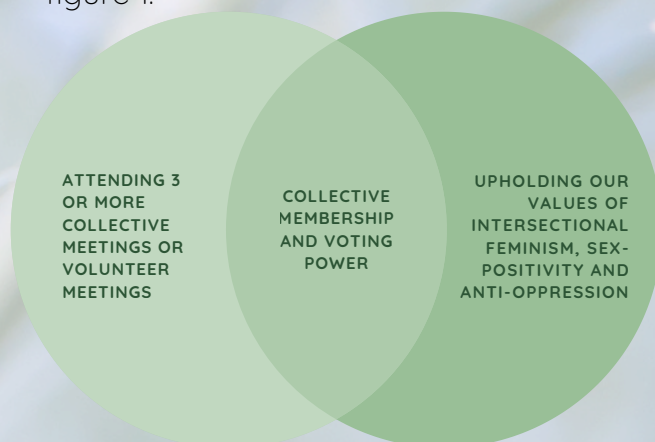
This year the GEM was approved for 405 hours across 3 positions this year; the Education Coordinator, Project Organizer and the new position of Library Manager. Each position was given 135 hours, and 4 people were hired; 2 under the Education Coordinator portfolio. Each work study was given the opportunity to run their own self lead project, with the assistance from our staff team. Both our Library Manager and Project Organizer ran our Inheritance showcase and combed our archives for pertinent pieces of GEM history to display (more on pg 6). Our Education Coordinators worked collaboratively on social media and engagement for our major events, programs and initiatives. Additionally, they alongside some volunteers ran our Gender Diversity Workshop. In the later half of the year, our book club was formed with the work of ¾ work studies, and will continue into next year.

## Volunteer Engagement

This year we decided to remove the Volunteer Lead positions as we had more workstudies approved. Through this our collective became much more active, and collective members elected to volunteer their time at our major events and tabling obligations. As it was last year, collective membership is based on attending 3 or more collective or volunteer meetings. This year we had 19 collective members, and many others who utilized our space daily. Moreover, collective members gain the right to vote and make suggestions on financial and programming decisions that the GEM wishes to embark on (figure 1.).

## Collective Membership

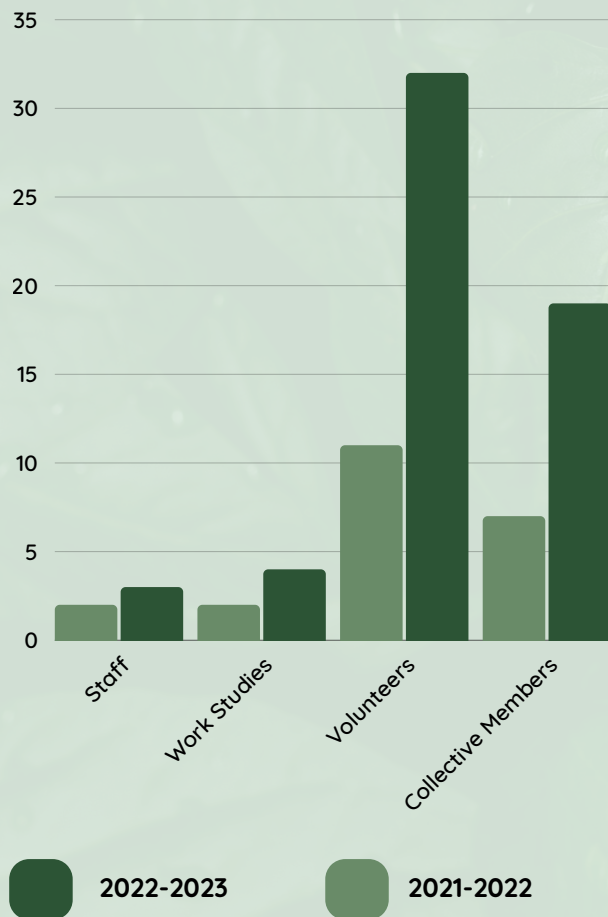
figure 1.



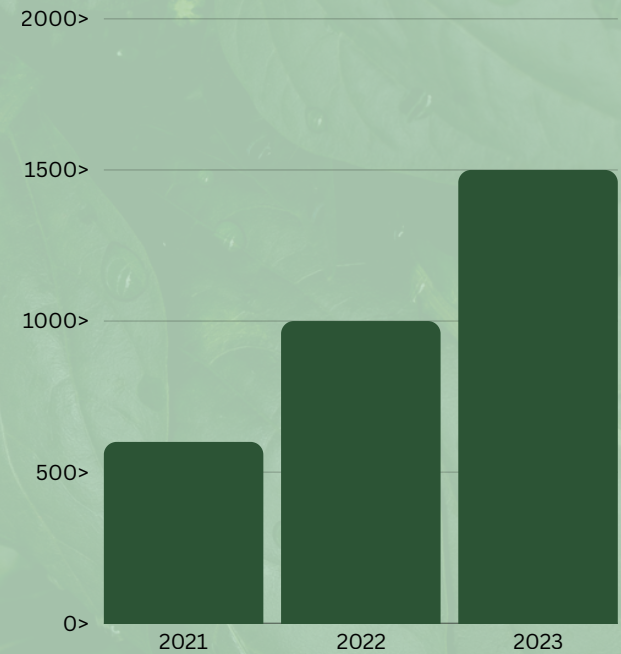
# outreach and engagement

This year we saw exponential growth compared to 2021-2022. We removed the Volunteer Lead positions, increased the amount of paid staff (Coordinator, Communications Officer, Board Representative), as well as increased our Work Study positions. This year we saw a sharp increase in Volunteer and Collective membership. Volunteer numbers include those who volunteered for any of our events, signed up for tabling, restocked supplies and other misc. volunteer tasks. Collective members are those who showed up to 3 or more collective meetings, volunteer nights and other general meetings; as per GEM policy. Our Fall AGM this year was one of the best attending meetings of the year with 16 people in attendance.

GEM COLLECTIVE ANALYTICS



INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS PER YEAR/ END



In 2022-2023 we saw a steady increase in social media engagement. We saw a 401% follow rate increase during the months of January to February because of SEXPO, which roughly equates to 250 new followers on Instagram.

# projects and events

GEM staff played an instrumental role in these collaborative events and programs this year. All program and events collaborations included work with other UVSS advocacy groups. We hope to continue collaborating on events and programs in the future to meet our students' intersectional needs.



## Advo Week

An outreach initiative to make new students aware of the UVSS Advo groups.



## UVSS Trick-or-Treat

Spearheaded by GEM. Students came into our space to decorate condom cases.



## AIR Partnership

A partnership with the Office of Student Life and Vikes to create to get students into adaptive fitness and wellness. See @uvic.air on Instagram for details



## Community Circles

Collaborative project with the Pride Collective to foster student lead support groups for various gender and sexuality based identities.

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# projects and events

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## inheritance

50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY CARE  
PRESENTED THROUGH THE GEM ARCHIVES



[See our virtual tour here](#)

This year two of our work studies explored 50 years of our archives through a free interactive showcase. Through zines, photographs, music, films, condoms, newspapers, clothes, and more, the showcase invited students, staff and community members to explore GEM's history from the progressive and the contentious.

This event was wheelchair-accessible, scent-free, and had seating in the middle of the gallery; we also provided an audio description and virtual tour via our Instagram for folks that required accessibility accommodations.

Inheritance, moreover was a beautiful exploration of our spaces history and highlighted the love and passion that has existed in our space since its inception. We at GEM are happy to have such a well kept achieve of various artistic and educational materials that we are happy to share with our student population and community members.

We are currently in the process of cataloguing our achieves through the UVic Library, in so that these archives can be enjoyed by more students in the future.



# projects and events



## Ready for round 2?

The second annual SEXPO event that ran from February 13th-17th 2023 was an Advocacy run and GEM lead conference that aimed to promote sex-positivity, sex education, and consent education at the University of Victoria. Last year, the first-ever daylong event was the most attended event in the SUB, and this year BIGGER was better! With an incredible week of events, including a two-day table fair that will include a SEXY showcase of sex-positive art (titled fluid), an opportunity for local vendors to sell their art, and additionally, an opportunity for some of the amazing resource centres in 'Victoria' surrounding sexual health, wellness and positivity to connect with students. Our drag event in Vertigo, entitled 'Marry Yourself' was hosted by the amazing local performer Henrietta Dubét and was a sold-out Valentine's Day show. Students and community members could browse the panels and workshops that were FREE to attend - ranging from topics like 'What you missed in Sex Ed' to a 'Panel for Reproductive Justice' (in partnership with SSD). Our last event of Thursday was a two-part grand finale fashion show event in partnership with UVic's Live Music Club that will highlight Victoria's best lingerie and sex-positive style, plus a 19+ dance party themed PROMiscuous in Vertigo right before reading break! Sexpo's engagement was the most our collective has seen, with close to 700 tickets distributed, and over 1000 students and community members participating the week of events.

There were so many parts of this event that made it so special, and we at GEM would like to thank the folks who worked on and volunteered with this event. Over the summer our staff will be creating a working manual for future SEXPO events put on by GEM and UVSS. Please scan here to find last year's SEXPO schedule.



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# resources

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## Emergency Contraceptives and Pregnancy Tests

The GEM continued to offer free emergency contraceptives and pregnancy tests for students and community members. We continued with our direct billing system with HEART pharmacy; making tracking the transparency of our program easier, and ultimately stronger. We provided a record number of emergency contraceptives in the 2022-2023 year, and are happy to be continuing this program moving forward. GEM will need to explore new ways of keeping up with demand until we can receive a budget increase.



## Menstrual Hygiene Products

GEM continues to offer the sustainable brand of menstrual cups 'Viv' and we were able to offer over 150 mensural cups to students and community members this year. We will continue to offer 'Viv' menstrual cups in the 2023-2024 year. Additionally, we handed out thousands of pads and tampons; some purchased through out budget and others donated to us by both UVSS and the UVic wellness centre. Tampons have been switched to include various sizes, and cardboard/ biodegradable packaging. We will be exploring how to get better and more sustainable pads moving forward, and are on track to order our pads from 'Viv' as well.



## Safer Sex Supplies and Education

The GEM handed out close to 10,000 condoms this year; some curtsseys of Island Sexual Health, and others ordered from the Canadian retailer 'Pamco'. To better represent our messaging of 'sex-positivity', we offered various and interesting forms of safer sex supplies, including but not limited to: latex and non-latex options, dental dams, internal condoms, lubricated and non-lubricated condoms, water-based and silicone lubricants, flavoured condoms, glow in the dark condoms, ribbed condoms and ONE designed condoms. We at GEM believe safer sex should be fun, and by offering so many options we had an uptick in demand.



## Library and Educational Resources

GEM has continued to grow our intersectional feminist library, and has increased awareness of our library through a number of initiatives. The UVic Gender Studies Library, who also participated in our SEXPO event, donated many new books to our collection. With this, our library manager and one of our education coordinators were able to start our first official book club, which will be running through the summer, and looking for more participants come September.

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# budget breakdown

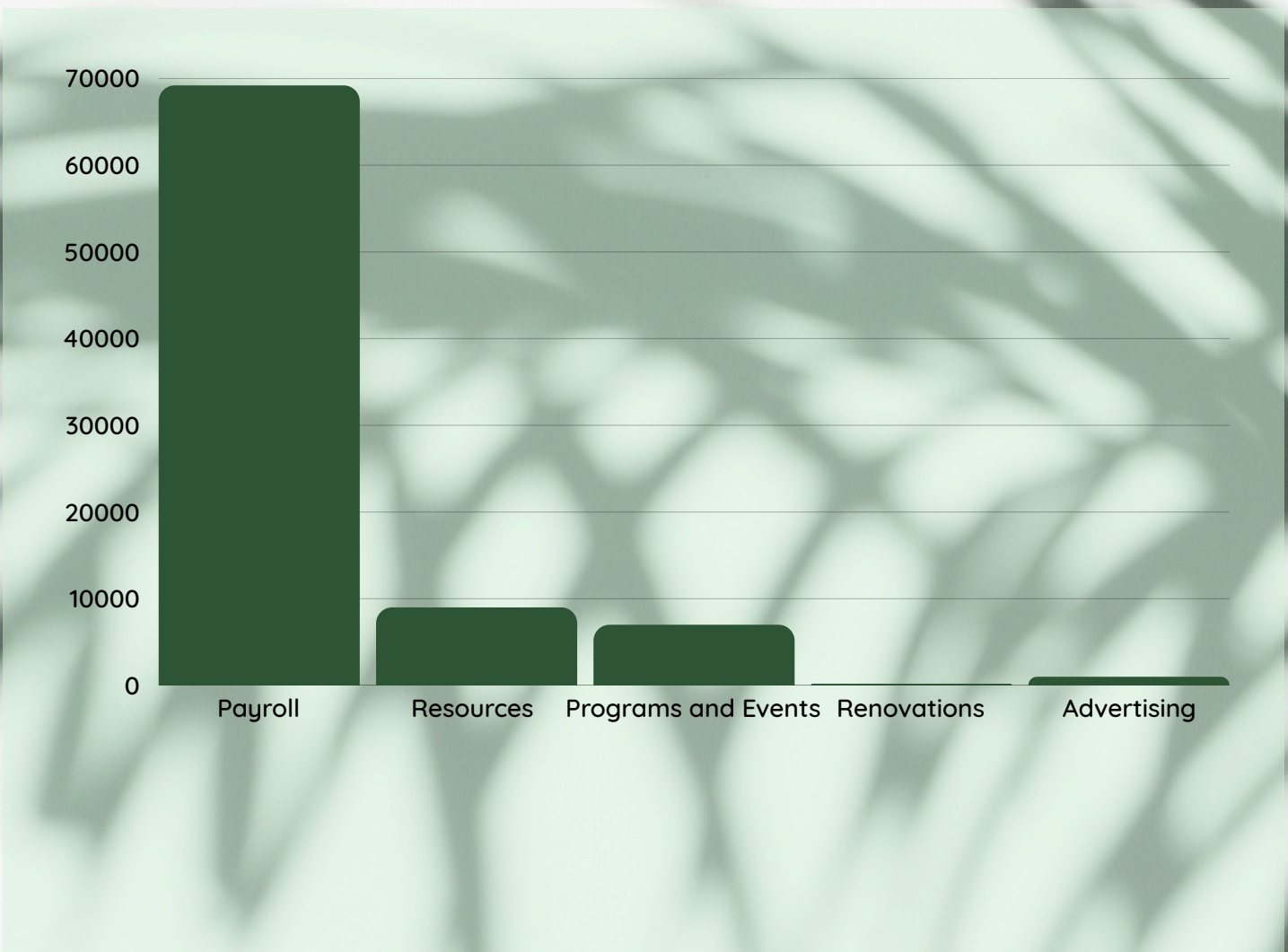
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The majority of GEM's funding this year was provided through student fees. Currently, the GEM receives .95 per full time student; the same funding that we have received since 1993. Other funds were collected during the UVSS SEXPO event, ultimately evening out the cost of running the event.

While the GEM has been able to grow due to accumulated funds during the covid-19 pandemic, to keep operating and growing at the rate that GEM has experienced this year, we will need to pass a UVSS referendum question during the UVSS elections.

Our Coordinator worked with the GEM Board representative and Communications officer to provide an annual budget, which was presented to our collective for approval.

Each expense made is 2022/2023 received at least two signatures from signing authorities and supporting documentation.



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# looking forward

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From everyone at the Gender Empowerment Centre, we would like to thank our community for helping us grow. As a collective, we value giving self-identified women, non-binary, trans, two-spirit, and other gender-non-conforming identities a safer space at the University of Victoria where folks can meet like-minded people. We also value providing education to the larger UVic community to shift and promote healthy conversations about gender diversity. We thank our community partners, advocacy groups, and the UVSS.

Every year comes with new opportunities and new challenges, and as we welcome a new Coordinator for the space, we will continue to push the values of intersectional feminism, sex-positivity and anti-oppression in all initiatives that the GEM takes on.

thank you!

