



UVSS GENDER
EMPOWERMENT CENTRE

***ANNUAL
REPORT***

SEPT-APRIL
2021/2022



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WHERE WE ARE NOW

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the **Gender Empowerment Centre (GEM)** continued its transition from what was once the 'Women's Centre', and subsequently, the 'Third Space' to better reflect the diverse range of students and their gender identities. 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 feel isolated and alone.

This report will focus on the 2021/2022 Academic year; spanning from September 1st, 2021 -May 1st, 2022.

This year, the GEM marketed itself as an inclusive collective and safe study space, focused on the needs of self-identified women non-binary, trans and gender non-conforming individuals. Whether one is curious, questioning, or confident in their gender identity, we have lifted our gender policy to base membership on shared ideology, rather than strict gender binaries. Our requirements for membership in our community are that one believes firmly in the concepts of **intersectional feminism(1)**, **sex-positivity (2)** and **anti-oppression (3)**. We offer a variety of resources, including but not limited to: safer sex supplies, menstrual hygiene products, pregnancy tests and access to emergency contraceptives. Students and community members can keep up with us over Discord, Instagram or by stopping by room B107 in the Student Union Building to join our community.



VOLUNTEERS, WORK-STUDY & COLLECTIVE MEMBERSHIP

VOLUNTEERING

This year, collective membership and volunteering looked a little bit different for the GEM, with the creation of 4 distinct volunteer factions. These unelected positions were created to make volunteering and collective membership easier for members to focus on what interests them about volunteering with the GEM and develop their skills for future employment.

Table 1. shows the breakdown of active members in the different positions.

Community Partnership

Advisors: Strengthened ties between the GEM and other advocacy and affiliate groups; as well as general student outreach efforts.

Communications Directors:

Created graphics, added to GEM's website development and provided feedback on social media engagement.

Library Mangers:

Are tasked with maintaining the library call list and keeping our feminist library orderly.

Gender Diversity

Directors:

Help run and facilitate our 'Gender Diversity Workshop' and bring ideas forward for better gender diversity on campus.

VOLUNTEER BREAKDOWN



Table 1.



WORK-STUDY & COLLECTIVE

Work-Study

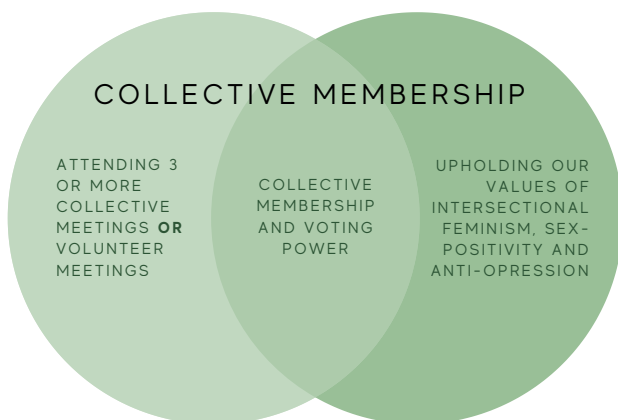
The GEM was approved for 380 hours this year from the Work Study program, which allowed us to hire two candidates this year. Both the Education Coordinator and the Project Organizer aided on various projects and initiatives to boost our engagement and tend to our community. Additionally, the Education Coordinator was tasked with running the Gender Diversity Workshop upon request from the UVic community, and the Project Organizer was in charge of cleaning the space and making sure that our free services (tampons, pads, condoms etc.) were stocked in their proper locations. See Events and Programs on page 5 for more information. The GEM was able to use all 380 hours this year, and we have had lots of interest in this positions for next year. Our hope is to create more opportunities for students next year to work with the GEM.

Collective Membership

This year our collective membership requirements changed alongside our policy, to better reflect our mission. Those interested in becoming active collective members, rather than becoming a volunteer, were asked to attend at least 3 collective or volunteer meetings. Instead of basing requirements on gender identifiers and to invite those in the preliminary stages of discovering their gender identities, we have set the requirements to the shared ideologies of intersectional feminism, sex positivity and anti-oppression. This is shown in **Table 2**. Moreover, collective members gain the right to vote and make suggestions on financial and programming decisions that the GEM wishes to embark on.

Consensus-Based Decision Making

The GEM uses as consensus-based system to make decisions. Consensus decision making is a creative and dynamic way of reaching agreement between all members of a group. Instead of simply voting for an item and having the majority of the group getting their way, a group using consensus is committed to finding solutions that everyone actively supports, or at least can live with. This ensures that all opinions, ideas and concerns are taken into account.



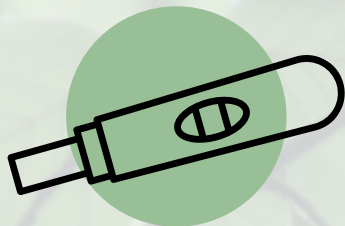
Through listening closely to each other, the group aims to come up with proposals that work for everyone. Making decisions in this way sometimes requires more discussion and can take more time, but it ensures that all folks involved are granted the opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns, and provide valuable input.





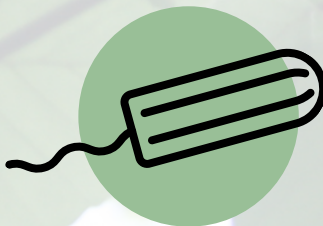
COMMUNITY RESOURCES

RESOURCE OVERVIEW



Emergency Contraceptives and Pregnancy Tests

The GEM continued to offer free emergency contraceptives and pregnancy tests for students and community members. We were also able to set up direct billing with the campus pharmacy; making tracking the transparency of our program easier, and ultimately stronger. Additionally, we collaborated with other advocacy groups to allow students the ability to receive an emergency 'chit' from other coordinators (depending on their comfortability). This is a strong program that will continue into the 2022-2023 year.



Menstrual Hygiene Products

With relationships strengthened between the sustainable brand 'Viv' and the GEM being made in the previous year, we were able to offer over 100 mensural cups to students and community members this year. We will continue to offer 'Viv' menstrual cups in the 2022-2023 year. While we had back stock of pads and tampons and pads that covered last year, we are on track to order more sustainable options this year through the organization 'Joni'. Tampons have been switched to include various sizes, and cardboard/biodegradable packaging.



Safer Sex Supplies & Education

The GEM handed out thousands of 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 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.

YOU GENDER EUPHORIA?



EVENTS & PROGRAMS

BOARD CREATED BY MACK COSTELLO

COMMUNITY & PARTNERED EVENTS



Trick or Treat in the SUB

After campus kick-off in the trying times of the COVID pandemic, the GEM spearheaded a collaboration with other advocacy groups and other UVSS bodies to throw an open house/ trick-or-treat event in the SUB. From this event, many people started volunteering and coming into GEM regularly. The GEM board created different safer-sex supplies and menstrual hygiene products out of construction paper as costumes, and handed out candy apple flavoured lube as 'candy'.

Self Love Event

Valentine's Day often reminds us of the social pressures to be in a relationship— but we believe that our relationships with ourselves as just as important! And worth celebrating! On February 14th, we encouraged our members to stop by the GEM from 11am - 5pm to receive a free care package of self love affirmations and self care goodies— including an entry ticket in our draw to win a sex toy (18+ to win), and write on our self-love board! Additionally, we promoted awareness of February 14th also being the day of the annual Women's Memorial March, to honour and remember the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people across so-called Canada. People were encouraged to wear red in solidarity.



Heating Pad Making Workshop

Our last collaboration of the 2022-2023 year, as part of SSD's self-care week, was to run a heat-padding making workshop (alongside AVP and SSD). This gave two of our regular volunteers an opportunity to practice their facilitation skills, in combination with their talents in sewing. So many people came, that they actually ran another in-prompt-to meeting to make more for the centre. We hope to run more of these in the 2022-2023.



UVSS ADVOCACY PRESENTS SEXPO

UVSS SEXPO 2022

This academic year marked our first ever UVSS SEXPO, a day-long, conference-style event offering a combination of workshops, panels, vendors, and performances centered around informed and empowered sexual expression and sexual health! We created this event with the aims of promoting sex-positivity and consent on campus, spreading awareness of sexuality-related resources and education from the wider “Victoria” area, and facilitating community among individuals and organizations in sexuality-related fields.

The SEXPO was hosted on March 16th, 2022 in various venues throughout the SUB. Our team partnered with many organizations and groups in the UVic community, including UVic Pride, the Anti-Violence Project, CFUV, and the Fine Arts Department to create this widely successful sold-out event.

We are deeply grateful for the support we have received for this initiative, and are already in the early planning stages for next year!



Layout of the Day

Table Fair

10am - 3pm | Michèle Pujol Room

Booths from local adult retailers, sexual health providers, and community support organizations, featuring a live DJ set from Blacasphalt, and our sex positive art exhibit, 'fluid,' organized by the Fine Arts Department.

Panels & Workshops

10am - 6pm | Upper Lounge

A full day of educational panels and presentations!

Opening Remarks | 10am-10:30am

What You Missed in Sex Ed Q&A Panel | 11am - 12:30pm

Intimacy Workshop | 1pm - 2pm

Sexual Politics Panel | 3pm - 4pm

Intro to BDSM (18+) | 4:30pm - 6pm

After Party

6:30pm - 9pm

A back-to-back roster of live drag, burlesque, and music performances, hosted by Henrietta Dubét!

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

Table 2 .

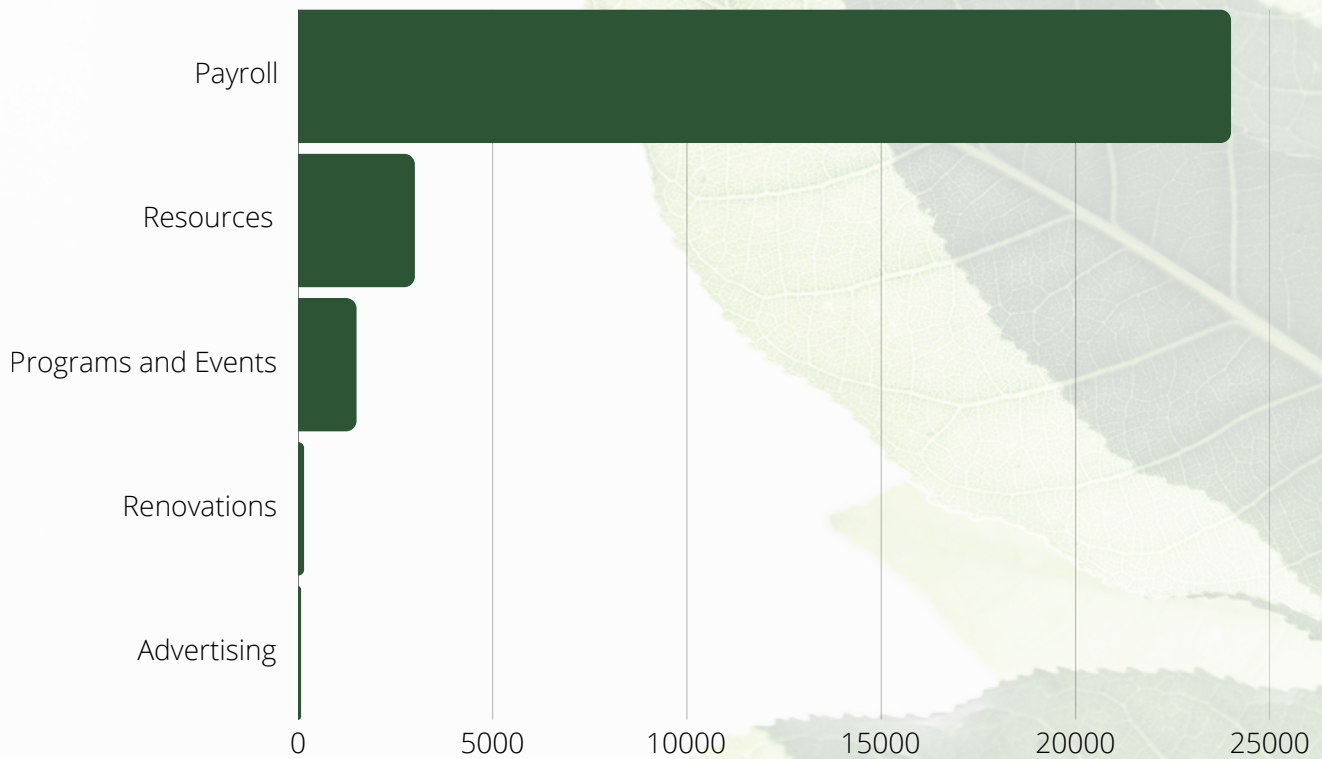


Table 2 represents the expense made by the GEM in the 2021/2022 academic year (Sept-April). The GEM receives its funding from University of Victoria Student Fees. At the beginning of the fiscal year, our collective approves the budget created by the Coordinator and then is approved by Advocacy Relations Committee (ARC) for finalization. Each financial decision thereafter is passed at by our collectives and volunteers at collective meetings.



LOOKING FORWARD

The 2021-2022 academic year marked our collective return to on-campus activities post COVID-19 lockdown. Our team re-opened the space to students and community members, and saw an increase in demand for resources and services that continues to grow. Looking forward into next year, we are excited to build off of this momentum, maintaining our core initiatives while also expanding our reach through collaboration with various groups across the UVic community.

Collaborative Initiatives

Inclusive Movement Program: In partnership with UVic Vikes, we are working to create an inclusive movement-based wellness program, focused on the needs of LGBTQ2S+ and BIPOC students. This program will use group activity to promote physical wellness and community building, while also offering educational elements about systemic health barriers and cultural movement forms. We are starting our pilot program in the summer of 2022, with a plan of launching the full program in the fall.

Advocacy Group Collaboration: Our team is looking forward to continuing to work with our fellow advocacy groups to enhance the community culture of the UVSS, while providing opportunities for students and staff to engage in social and educational events that centre the needs of minoritized students. This summer, we are working on several collaborations for the 2022-2023 year, including an Advocacy Group Week, Pride Week events, workshops, and our second UVSS SEXPO.

Resources and Services

Education: We are working on expanding our menu of educational resources through workshops, social media, and literature. Our team will be continuing to promote our Gender Diversity Workshop to faculty and staff, with plans to establish a volunteer team of facilitators to aid in regularly offering this training at boardroom and classroom levels. We are also revisiting our Queer Sex Ed workshop series, originally launched in 2020, and will be working to add additional trainings to this initiative. Finally, we are working to update our online educational resource library via our website and social media, in order to offer more accessible feminist resources on sexuality, gender, and social justice.

Events: Our calendar for the 2022-2023 year is quickly filling up with plans to bring back several of last year's successful events, as well as several new ones. In addition to our collaborative initiatives, we are working to build a robust rotation of social drop-in events, such as film screenings and topic-based meetups, to promote community building and emphasize access to inclusive spaces.

Resources: We anticipate that the demand for menstrual products and safer sex supplies will continue to grow as our team promotes awareness of our offerings. We are continually revising our supply distribution program in alignment with demand, and are working to increase the accessibility and consistency of this program.





DEFINITIONS

1) Intersectional feminism, is 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 Kimberle Crenshaw)

2) Sex-positivity, simply put, is 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.

3) Anti-oppression, while difficult to put in so few words, is the active practice of challenging systems of oppression (ex. Gender, race, class, institutional, economic, ability). 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.

For more on these definitions, please visit our [website](#).