

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ribbon Community and VPWAS Announce Amalgamation to Strengthen HIV Support Across the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island

Vancouver & Victoria, B.C. – February 18, 2026 – Ribbon Community (formerly AIDS Vancouver) and the [Vancouver Island Persons Living with HIV/AIDS Society \(VPWAS\)](#) are proud to announce their formal amalgamation, effective April 1, 2026. This partnership unites two of British Columbia's HIV organizations to ensure long-term stability and peer-led support for communities in the Lower Mainland and throughout the Islands.

"This amalgamation ensures the continuation of frontline peer support, education and HIV/AIDS treatment information throughout the Island," said Robert Birch, Board Chair of VPWAS. "We are stepping into this next chapter with Ribbon Community to create new opportunities to empower communities living and aging with, and impacted by, HIV and HIV stigma." This month, VPWAS and Ribbon Community memberships voted unanimously in support of the merger which will see all current frontline services of both organizations continue. With this amalgamation, more peer-led services will be available to people living with HIV throughout Vancouver Island. These services include direct support to address income and food insecurity, counselling for newcomer women and their families living with HIV, and one-to-one peer support.

This amalgamation is designed to ensure the continuation of existing services, and increase availability programs by and for people living with HIV. "This amalgamation deepens our commitment to pulling together the past, present, and future of the HIV response in B.C.," said Sarah Chown, Executive Director of Ribbon Community. "By bringing these two teams together, we are bringing together the strengths of both organizations, and increasing the impact of communities coming together to take care of each other. This provides a sustainable future for the vital services our communities rely on."

The amalgamated organizations will continue to operate under the name Ribbon Community, leveraging the combined strengths of both organizations to combat HIV stigma and empower those living with HIV across the region.

Key Details of the Transition:

All existing frontline programs offered by VPWAS, including peer navigation and the women's group, will continue without interruption.

Victoria-based peers Penny and Numa will officially join the Ribbon Community team, maintaining their essential roles on the Island and continuing English and Spanish-language services.

Following the membership votes in favour this February, the legal amalgamation will take effect on April 1, 2026.

Current members of both VPWAS and Ribbon Community will make up the membership of the amalgamated Society

A community event will be held on March 14 to honour the transition and celebrate the legacy of VPWAS's leadership since the early 1990s. This will coincide with the upcoming performance of *In My Day*, a play that brings to life the true stories of long-term survivors living with HIV and their caregivers from the first 15 years of the HIV pandemic in British Columbia.

About Ribbon Community: Ribbon Community was founded in 1983 as AIDS Vancouver. It was one of the first AIDS service organizations in Canada established out of urgent necessity in the early days of the crisis. Since then, the epidemic and the organization have evolved. Today, Ribbon provides leadership opportunities and services for people living with HIV throughout BC. A dedicated team of volunteers and staff Ribbon Community supports and empowers communities in overcoming the impacts of HIV and HIV stigma. Our Registered Charity name is Ribbon Community Society (10668 9896 RR0001).

About VPWAS: The Vancouver Island Persons Living with HIV/AIDS Society (VPWAS) is the only peer based HIV/AIDS organization on Vancouver Island, and has been providing peer support, peer navigation, education and treatment information to persons living with HIV/AIDS since 1991. VPWAS is a for Social-profit (non-profit) organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

Our work takes place on Indigenous lands, with our physical office located on the homelands of x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish), səlilwətəl (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples and Lək^wəŋən (Songhees and X^wsepsəm/Esquimalt) and W̓SÁNEĆ Peoples. Indigenous community care and leadership within and beyond HIV organizations has always been, and will continue to be, a crucial part of the HIV response. We will continue to deepen partnerships and opportunities for Indigenous leadership through this transition.

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