

**Chelsea & Jazelin Maskos (VHS 2004, 2003)**  
**Honouring Social Activism,**  
**Paying It Forward**

By Chelsea Maskos  
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I was sparked to make my donation when I saw a recent post on social media by a friend's daughter about a campaign being held at Vic High for Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). It came at a time when I was looking for a way to address some of my past struggles and it reminded me of all the amazing support I had in the community at Vic High when I was a student.

I got in touch with the students involved in organizing the campaign to see if they needed any funding for the work they were doing. We had a great brainstorming session for future plans but decided it was already too late for supporting the 2021 SAAM effort.

I believe if you're inspired to do something meaningful, an action is necessary, so I decided to make a donation of a broader bursary to recognize a student involved in any social activism. The criteria for this award are that it can go to any Vic High student of any grade involved in social activism, with the provision that the student's actions are safe, follow established school conduct, and are not religious in focus.

When I was in high school I was a bit of a mixed bag, with high marks in science but beyond any one talent a huge appetite for many interests. I was involved in Mechanics in Fairey Tech, Drama and the Vic High Players. I also managed to get into a class that was essentially trying on many hats, and had me gain my credits by volunteering and getting various short work placements. This strengthened my love of volunteering which later grew into social advocacy in the realm of brain injuries.

In broader terms though, Vic High is exceptionally positioned to support an activist spirit through the culture of the student body, proximity to the community of Fernwood with the vibrant Belfrey Square out the back door, and the legislature a short walk downtown. It was inevitable to see and be a part of petitions and protests, for things like a higher minimum wage, (BC is now the highest in the country), to saving the old growth forests, for which we will never stop fighting.

Since graduating from Vic High in 2004 I took a year off working in Calgary where I began serving - which I view as my first career and helped me until I was forced to 'retire' with the pandemic. I came back to Victoria and studied Applied Chemistry and Biotechnology at Camosun followed by a year of research in method development for the detection of pesticides in aquaculture at the Department of Fisheries and

Oceans (DFO). I then attempted my Bachelor's in Chemistry with a minor in Ocean Science at UVIC while maintaining a contract with DFO doing logistics for arctic oceanographic missions.



*Chelsea at work, Royal University Hospital, Saskatoon*

A deep encounter with depression signalled to me that I should choose another path, and although I loved the science I was doing, being a researcher means that you are searching for funding as much as answers through your research. I took a cue from the joy I got from interacting with people while serving and looked to use my skills in a more people-focused environment. This eventually led me through volunteering and then working for the Victoria Brain Injury Society, and then to my current field of Diagnostic Electroneurophysiology which I studied at BCIT in Burnaby. I've been working in this field for three years in Saskatoon SK, but I'm always watching for opportunities to repatriate west.

I've named the award for myself and my older sister Jazelin, who has been a constant inspiration to me and who taught me how to find my voice and then to use that to speak up for people who need it. She's been a passionate activist and advocate all her life.

Creating the Chelsea and Jazelin Maskos Social Activism Bursary already brought me so much satisfaction and inspiration for the future now that I'm finally in a position to give back in ways I was unable to before. I look forward to finding out about the recipient shortly!

## **Chelsea Maskos**

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