

# Connecting Voices

Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers



Photo Submitted by April Andersen MSW, RSW. Makkovik, Nunatsiavut

## Feature

### Implementing Culturally Safe Social Work Practice: Fostering An Inuit Driven Model

BY APRIL ANDERSEN MSW, RSW & JESSICA LYALL MSW, RSW

We would first like to preface this article as our experiences as Inuk social workers in the field. We recognize that other social workers who are Indigenous may experience similar occurrences, however, we want to acknowledge that we are not speaking on behalf of all Indigenous populations, or for all of our Inuk peers. Through speaking our experiences, we have found comradery within the community of racialized social workers, and other workers who work along side us. Our intent is to share these experiences so that we can learn from each other, and for each of us to be invited to break down systems of oppression.

Often in social work practice, we see colonial attitudes as an ongoing crisis that is affecting the people with whom we work. These views have also affected our own social work practice as Inuit social workers in the field. As often as folks

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# Newfoundland & Labrador College of Social Workers

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- Regulatory Leadership
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## Editorial Policy

**Connecting Voices** is a publication of the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers that facilitates information sharing among the membership. It is published two times a year (January and July).

The NLCSW Editorial Committee accepts articles throughout the year. However, the deadline for article submissions for the January edition is November 1 and for the July edition the deadline is May 1.

The Editorial Committee is interested in articles, commentaries and book reviews that address some of the following areas:

- social work practice and promotion
- professional issues
- social and legislative issues
- social work research, theory, practice and education
- ethics
- community development
- social work leadership

The editorial committee reserves the right to reject any article or return it to the author for revision prior to publication, as well as to edit submitted material for clarity and conciseness.

Article submissions and photographs must be submitted electronically.

Advertising space by organizations, groups or businesses is available in the **Connecting Voices** publication.

Publication of articles and advertisements does not imply endorsement by the NLCSW.

A complete copy of **Connecting Voices Editorial Policies** are available on the NLCSW website

<https://nlcsw.ca/practice-resources/connecting-voices>

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## Editorial

# The Beauty of Connections

BY ANNETTE JOHNS MSW, RSW

Our lives are filled with connections and relationships that stand the test of time. These connections can be to the land, to people, and to places. While I moved away from my childhood community nearly 30 years ago, I still feel a great sense of connection, belonging and pride. For me, the Burin Peninsula will always be a welcoming place of outstanding beauty. Throughout the summer, I encourage you to reflect on the meaningful connections that you have and embrace those that give you joy and happiness.

Social work is a diverse profession in Newfoundland and Labrador, yet we are all connected in our shared commitment to engage in ethical practice and promote social work in our communities and workplaces. **Connecting Voices**, while allowing us to shine the spotlight on social work practice and the amazing work that is happening through NL, also exemplifies how connected we are as a profession. As co-editor of **Connecting Voices**, I am always amazed how all the content in each publication is woven and threaded together.

In this edition of **Connecting Voices**, Claire Riggs writes about the importance of connecting with people through a case management model at the Gathering Place, and Brenda Halley shares information about the wellness collective that she helped develop to engage clients in their mental health and addictions work. Madison Patey shares a perspective



Photo by Annette Johns MSW, RSW. Burin, NL.

on the link between social work and transformative justice, while April Andersen and Jessica Lyall highlight the importance of providing culturally safe social work services. These articles highlight the importance of connecting with people and the community, and are only a snapshot of the amazing articles you will read in this summer publication of our provincial social work newsletter.

In thinking about our social work connections, we can each think of someone who inspires us, motivates us, and gives us a great sense of pride. In this edition of **Connecting Voices**, we highlight our 2023 Award Recipients. Henry Kielley MSW, RSW is the recipient of the Canadian Association of Social Workers Distinguished Service Award, and Rita-Anne Voisey BSW, RSW is the recipient of the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers Pride in the Profession Award. Their words are inspirational, and showcase the leadership and dedication they bring to the social work

profession. Collectively we celebrate their accomplishments and extend huge congratulations to Henry and Rita-Anne!!

We have a phenomenal editorial team, and the work they do in publishing each edition of **Connecting Voices** is truly appreciated. While the summer edition is hot off the press, planning is already underway for the January 2024 publication. The Editorial team is looking forward to hearing from and connecting with social workers from across the province who would be interested in submitting an article for publication. We invite articles that explore front line social work service delivery, community programming, theory and research, work with individuals, families, groups and communities, social work ethics, or any topic related to social work practice. Scenic pictures of our beautiful province and landscapes are also always welcomed. Perhaps it might be of a place that you feel connected to and would like to showcase to your social work colleagues.

More information regarding **Connecting Voices** including the Editorial Policies can be accessed at **Connecting Voices | NLCSW**. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at [ajohns@nlcsw.ca](mailto:ajohns@nlcsw.ca).

On behalf of the NLCSW Editorial Committee, I hope you enjoy reading this online summer publication of **Connecting Voices** and that you feel a great sense of pride and connection to your social work community!!



**Deadline for submission for the next edition of Connecting Voices is November 1 • 2023**

## Executive Director

# Regulatory Shifts

BY LISA CROCKWELL LL.M,  
MSW, RSW

The NLCSW Board of Directors held a full day in person meeting in St. John's on June 7th. It was an opportunity to have an in-depth discussion about social work in this post pandemic environment. Annually, board members and staff discuss provincial and national trends in three important sectors of social work: practice, education, and regulation. The provincial meeting was preceded by meetings of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education and followed by meetings of the Canadian Association of Social Workers and the Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators where the conversation continued. Closely monitoring national trends helps us to move forward to meet the challenges of the current environment.

Across the country we see increases in the number of registered social workers. This means that our profession is growing at a time when vacancies, particularly in our public systems, are also increasing. Leading to significant recruitment and retention concerns which in turn impact regulation.

Traditionally, the majority of social workers have been employed in health or child welfare. While these areas remain the largest employers in this province, the growing number of social workers who are shifting from the public to the private sector has led to a focus on clinical registration. Once an area that was the domain of those with a graduate degree and years of experience is now of interest to undergraduate students upon graduation. Therefore, the future of clinical social work practice and entry to practice requirements were discussed extensively.



**NLCSW Board of Directors. Seated – L-R: June Kirkland-Smith, Stephanie Mealey, Cheryl Mallard; Middle row – L-R: Charlene Edwards, Jill Norman; Back row – L-R: Keith Parsons, Richard Lamb, Geoff Peters, Lesley Bishop, Maria Rotondi; Missing from Photo: Nadine Calloway, Rebecca Roome, Jill Williams.**

Licensed Clinical Social Worker has been a regulatory designation in the United States for many years however, the evolution in Canada is more recent. The Canadian equivalent, Clinical Registered Social Worker (CRSW) or Registered Clinical Social Worker (RCSW) is currently in place in British Columbia and Alberta and being considered in other Canadian provinces including here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

To meet the labour shortages in the public system, the provincial government is encouraging immigration, ease of labour mobility and examining registration processes through a piece of legislation titled the **Fair Registration Practices Act**. Social work has been identified as an in-demand profession and is included in this Act as well as many human resource planning and workforce review initiatives. A comprehensive workforce analysis for social work in Newfoundland and Labrador was completed last year.

The number of international credential

assessments completed by the Canadian Association of Social Workers rose from 104 in 2017 to 489 in 2022. This year NLCSW amended its criminal records requirement for out of country applicants to align with federal requirements for the police check required for immigration to Canada.

The role and duties of social work assistants will be another important consideration moving forward. Clearly delineating the scope of practice so that it is understood by employers and the public will be critical. Regulating assistants is a direction which has already been taken by most allied health professions. Examples include occupational therapy, physiotherapy, pharmacy, nursing and in some Canadian provinces, physicians.

The regulatory and practice landscape in Canada is shifting. It is important that we continue to adapt to meet the mission of NLCSW to advance and promote ethical and professional social work practice in the public interest.



## Cover Story continued

are tired of hearing groups say they are experiencing racism, those of us who are experiencing the racism are tired of having to fight against racist mentalities. It generates the question; how can we create a system that is culturally safe? A systemic approach for anti-racism that we can envision where when we call organizations, groups, or people out, we are creating a system that essentially does not allow for racism.

If we think of cultural safety in the ways we support others so that there are systems in place for it not to continue, we are thinking of a world where we are all working together for this to be implemented. Cultural safety supports the provision of programming, and in turn, this supports Inuit as individuals, families, and communities. This includes cultural activities that are used as social supports or services for the client, with the hopes that cultural care for Inuit are in their communities. We honor an atmosphere of pride and confidence for many through cultural healing programs. This approach supports people to heal from low self-esteem, trauma, addictions, family breakdown, mental health concerns, and to build confidence through Inuit culture.

When we think of having an Inuit

driven model, we create social equity, cultural continuity, and ensure access to a continuum of mental wellness services for Inuit. This allows for care that is an integration of traditional and evidence-based initiatives. This helps to encourage and promote Inuit culture within the scope of practice in the social work field that is decolonizing colonial practice. This helps to reduce oppressive practice models so that we meet the needs of Inuit.

We require a system approach to not allow racist mentalities to continue, and that is what we view as part of cultural safety and anti-racist practice. It is a way of supporting people so that they can be served equitably. Implementing culturally safe work practice and an Inuit driven model mobilizes and empowers individuals, families or groups to secure access to services in their home community. This helps to build community wellness by connecting individuals and families to culture and language.

Critical points to remember when integrating Inuit values in practice:

- Engage clients, families, and communities in developing services – This encourages clients and families to take the lead in care planning.
- Strengthen families - As families are our primary source of care and supports, it's important to

acknowledge barriers to care and focus on priority areas set by Inuit families.

- Implement culturally safe social work practice to foster an Inuit driven model – Focusing on integrating Inuit values and knowledge into practice has the potential to create positive change in the lives of the Inuit as a means of reducing the gaps in care.

We are regaining our cultural identity within ourselves and within social work. This helps us empower Inuit social workers to pursue a career path that is rewarding, as it allows for Inuit culture and values to be embedded within social work practice. However, that can only happen if there are systems and supports to allow that to happen. We take pride in knowing the Nunatsiavut Government has been advocating for Inuit social workers, and we have experienced much growth. We often depend on each other for support, and our next steps we would like to see in reconciliation is having non-Inuit having a better understanding of our practice, and to validate our services we provide for Inuit. We give recognition to those who are doing that, and our want for the future is for this to be amplified. For more information, visit **Effective Practice and Service Delivery for Inuit Understanding Historical Trauma - YouTube**.



## NLCSW Private Practice Roster

The following social workers have opted to be included on NLCSW's voluntary roster for private practitioners. Contact information for these social workers is available on NLCSW's website – [https://nlcsw.ca/NLCSW\\_Private\\_Practice\\_Roster](https://nlcsw.ca/NLCSW_Private_Practice_Roster)

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## Ethics

# Informed Consent with Children & Youth

BY ANNETTE JOHNS MSW, RSW  
NLCSW ETHICS COMMITTEE

## Introduction

Social workers across diverse fields of practice work with children and youth. Issues that often arise in working with this population pertain to capacity and informed consent in the delivery of social work services. This article will highlight the practice standards related to informed consent and capacity when working with children and youth. Relevant practice resources will also be shared.

## Practice Scenarios

1. A 15-year-old presents for counselling without a parent or guardian.
2. The parents of my 14-year-old client are requesting to see the youth's clinical file.
3. A 15-year-old client discloses they smoke cannabis but does not want their parents to know. The mother of the 15-year-old client calls to inquire how the sessions are going.
4. The parents of a 13-year-old want their child to attend counselling. The child attends scheduled appointments but does not speak or engage during the sessions.
5. A youth reaches out by text before their next scheduled session to share what is going on with them.
6. A 16-year-old attends virtual counselling and is often distracted by friends who drop in and the family pet.

## Ethical Responsibilities

Social workers often have to navigate complex ethical issues when working with children and youth as it pertains to informed consent, confidentiality, and documentation. To inform one's decision-making, social workers review the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) (2005)

Code of Ethics, CASW (2005) Guidelines for Ethical Practice and the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW) (2020) Standards of Practice for Social Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. The following values and standards are of particular importance.

### CASW (2005) Code of Ethics & Guidelines for Ethical Practice

#### Value 1:

Respect for the Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons

Guidelines:

- 1.3.1 – Social workers promote the self-determination and autonomy of clients, actively encouraging them to make decisions on their own behalf.
- 1.3.2 – Social workers evaluate a client's capacity to give informed consent as early in the relationship as possible.
- 1.3.3 – Social workers who have children as clients determine the child's capacity to consent and explain to the child's parents/guardians (where appropriate) the nature of the social worker's relationship to the child and others involved in the child's care.

#### Value 5:

Confidentiality in Professional Practice

Guidelines:

- 1.5.5 – When social workers provide services to children, they outline for the child and the child's parents (where appropriate) their practices with respect to confidentiality and children. Social workers may wish to reserve the

right to disclose some information provided by a young child to parents when such disclosure is in the best interest of the child. This should be declared prior to the first session with a child.

### NLCSW (2020) Standards of Practice

- Social workers document client informed consent in the client record and update as necessary.
- Social workers provide clients with information on the social work services being provided, risks and benefits of the proposed intervention, and alternate options that exist.
- Social workers provide clients with information on how social work records will be maintained and who will have access to these records.
- Social workers provide information on the limits to confidentiality.
- Social workers provide information in a manner that is easily understood by the client and culturally appropriate.
- In situations where capacity to provide consent is limited, social workers encourage self-determination to the greatest extent possible.

In addition to a review of the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, social workers should read NLCSW's **Informed Consent with Children and Youth: Practice Guidelines for Social Work**. This practice resource outlines some of the things social workers should consider when working with children and youth as it relates to informed consent. It addresses age of majority, mature minor doctrine, factors in

the assessment of a mature minor, ethical decision-making, practice considerations, documentation, and knowledge of relevant legislation. Social workers consider these issues, seek appropriate consultation, use their professional judgement, and apply this information within the context of their practice and organizational policies. Engaging in a process of ethical decision-making is also recommended and NLCSW's **Ethical Decision-Making in Social Work Practice** is a great resource.

### **Virtual Care & Ethical Consideration**

Social work services delivered through technology are held to the same standard as face-to-face service delivery. Only the medium has changed. When providing services to children and youth through technology, social workers consider the client's best interest and the appropriateness of e-service delivery for each client. Social workers should also review NLCSW's **Technology Use in Social Work Practice Explanatory Document**. Through the informed consent process, it is important that social workers provide information on the risks and benefits of this mode of service delivery, how communication outside of therapeutic sessions will be addressed, and expectations around virtual sessions (e.g., how distractions will be addressed).

### **NLCSW Practice Resources**

Other helpful practice resources to review include:

#### **Practice Matters - The Importance of Knowing Your Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice**

#### **Practice Matters – Informed Consent**

#### **Self-Assessment Tools for Informed Consent and Documentation**

### **Conclusion**

This article highlighted the importance of social workers being aware of their professional responsibilities as it relates to informed consent with children and youth. NLCSW practice resources were shared that can assist social workers in navigating this complex issue in practice through an ethical framework. It is also important that social workers seek appropriate consultation to inform their decision-making. Taking these steps will help to ensure that children and youth continue to receive high quality social work services.

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Did you know? **NLCSW's YouTube channel** is a valuable source of continuing professional education (CPE).

Any webinars viewed through the channel can be claimed as required credits under the workshop category.



Practice

# Connecting with Case Management at The Gathering Place

BY CLAIRE RIGGS BSW, RSW

The Gathering Place was originally established in 1994 by the Presentation of Mercy Sisters in response to the needs of those seeking food. It was a small organization that would provide lunch to anyone who visited. As The Gathering Place started to grow and more people presented seeking a meal, it was recognized that there was a further need and people were looking for more support outside of meals. People would often present with questions about their income support, issues with housing, and ways to navigate complex government systems. Now, The Gathering Place is a low barrier community health center that has many supports and services for people 26 years of age and older. A major part in expanding the services of The Gathering Place was hiring the first case manager. This was a huge asset to The Gathering Place, allowing the organization to cover more ground, ensure more consistent service delivery, and provide people more support and service navigation. As additional people presented for services, the need for case management also increased. Now The Gathering Place has a team of ten case managers as well as a Manager of Clinical and Community Services to ensure consistent service delivery and that people's needs are being met.

The case management team consists of four drop-in case managers, a case manager to screen and triage people seeking the drop-in services, two intensive case managers, two housing-focused case managers, and a shelter case manager. As a team, we are social workers who work from

a harm reduction lens with a large variety of people. We often work with individuals who are not connected to other services in the province and who may have had challenges connecting or staying connected to other services. In my time at The Gathering Place, I worked as a drop-in case manager and now as a housing-focused case manager. Both of these roles can be quite challenging as the needs in the community increase and the housing market becomes more competitive.

Working in the drop-in case management role can be very busy. When I worked in drop-in, I would see a lot of people throughout the day presenting with a variety of issues. Many folks come to The Gathering Place from Her Majesty's Penitentiary (HMP), various hospitals, different community organizations, and we have had many people present to The Gathering Place from other provinces across Canada. In the drop-in role, I would help with any task that people presented with during their visit. People would present with issues ranging from helping with their income support, advocating to the emergency shelter line, helping people move or leave the province, connecting people to other services, and helping secure housing. There are a lot of people in the city looking for support who are unable to access it due to barriers and waitlists. Working in drop-in case management, I was able to help people with navigating difficult situations and was able to provide support to people who may have had difficulty accessing support.

With so many people looking for case management and requiring a

lot of support, the intensive case management positions were created. The intensive team works with people who had been presenting to drop-in case management and identified that they need some more support. The intensive team works with individuals to identify goals and work toward those goals. They ensure people's needs are being met, help people maintain housing, support people in navigating complex government systems, and ultimately support people in achieving their goals.

In my role as a housing-focused case manager, I work with people who are currently in the shelter system and help them find and maintain housing. I typically get connected with folks when they are in shelter and support them for a year to two years to help maintain their tenancy once housed. This role can be quite challenging as there are currently many barriers to accessing housing. I spend a lot of time connecting with landlords, applying for rent top-ups, and connecting with folks to ensure their needs are being met and their housing is suitable for them.

Working in case management at The Gathering Place has been challenging, but it is also very rewarding. I like how I get to meet so many different people who have many different backgrounds, stories, and experiences. It is a privilege to earn the trust of people who may struggle to trust service providers. I also love working on a team of case managers who are all supportive, caring, and passionate about the work. As a team, we work hard to support each other as well as the individuals presenting at The Gathering Place.





## Issues

# Incorporating Policy Discussions into Field Instruction

BY JUNE KIRKLAND-SMITH  
MSW, RSW

In my experience of teaching and providing field instruction to students, acting as a field education coordinator, and working in the field for over 30 years, I observed that many students dislike discussing and analysing policy in placement. In this article, I would like to provide some approaches to integrating policy into field instruction. I will discuss micro and mezzo policy issues versus the broad spectrum of macro policies which are very important but require more time and analysis.

In addressing student comfort, it is important to note that many field instructors also feel discomfort when teaching policy skills and analysis to students (Pritzker & Lane, 2014). Like most exposure experiences, once you integrate policy into field instruction, it becomes easier and students can bring a refreshing and contemporary lens to discussions.

During placement, ask students to review a single policy around eligibility for services. For example, in a shelter, discuss the length-of-stay policy, in a mental health program, the number-of-sessions policy or in a foodbank, the frequency-of-visit policy. Have the student consider the etiology of the policy. When was the policy developed; what were the social and agency circumstances around the need for the policy; and what was the overall goal of the policy? Discuss whether the policy is up to date given current social, cultural and organizational circumstances. When considering the currency of policies, students will be prompted to learn about new trends in the agency-service area such as, changes in the number of people seeking services or complexity of client circumstances, changed expectations of the service, or shifts in the agency mandate. This critical reflection and research allows the student to contextualize the policy

and increase their understanding of it, in addition to improving their knowledge of current social trends impacting the placement agency.

Encourage students to consider who has the power in a specific policy and what would happen if the power dynamic shifted. This kind of question can solicit interesting conversations about varying social structures and social inclusion (McKenzie & Wharf, 2016). Have the student consider whether the policy is paternalistic, limiting the decision-making capacity of service users (Lightman & Lightman, 2017) or if it is reflective of an anti-oppressive framework. Encourage the student to consider who is impacted by the policy (Hensley, 2016). For example, a person who may be able to stay in a shelter for just six weeks can be impacted greatly by not being prepared to become independent. However, who is waiting for the shelter service and what are the risks associated with being unable to avail of services? Are those potential service users in higher degrees of distress or is their safety more compromised? These questions support the student in considering the challenging aspects of policy development.

Address whether agency policies are developed within the context of the agency and workers only or if service users are involved. Collaborative approaches to policy development involving a "model that supports the active engagement of front-line practitioners and services users" is more contemporary (McKenzie & Wharf, 2016, p. 265). Students can be encouraged to consider the barriers and processes impacting service-user involvement in agency policies as it is well known that smaller community-based agencies with typically less hierarchy can integrate consumer feedback more readily than larger governmental services (McKenzie & Wharf, 2016).

Students can also develop specialized knowledge and understanding of policy work by examining policies in similar agencies or services within the country and in other countries (Hensley, 2016). Ask the student to rewrite the policy in the way they believe it should be written. Then discuss the implications for the proposed policy. Is it steeped in principles of equity, diversity and inclusion? Does it increase accessibility for everyone or just a few? Is it affordable and within the service budget or might it impact funding sources (McKenzie & Wharf, 2016)? Does it impact worker caseload or workload and if so, how will this be navigated?

Evidently, learning about policy during placement can be far more than simply reviewing the policy manual (Hensley, 2016). It involves a variety of competencies, skills and knowledge that better prepare students to work effectively and mindfully in the field, while having a broad appreciation and awareness of the complexity of policy making and implementation.

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## Community

# Ruah Counselling Centre – Our Journey and Transition to an Independent, Non-Profit, Community Counselling Agency

BY AMELIA O'DEA MSW, RSW

## Introduction

Ruah Counselling Centre, a non-profit community counselling agency, provides individual, couple, and family counselling to those 16 years and older, as well as psychosocial groups, workshops and presentations related to mental health and wellness. Ruah provides professional, therapeutic counselling services in the areas of anxiety, depression, trauma, grief, stress, anger, work-life challenges, life transitions, parenting, suicide loss, separation and divorce and interpersonal relationships. Ruah's psychosocial groups are based on the following five pillars: 1. Parenting; 2. Relationship Building; 3. Wellness; 4. Youth and 5. Spirituality. Ruah's services are person-focused and goal-oriented. We provide professional counselling services in an environment which supports client autonomy and well-being.

Ruah believes in the intrinsic value of each person, embracing their spirit as they strive to reach full potential. We meet people where they are and provide services through a person-centred approach, that promotes the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Ruah values 1. Integrity: We believe that each person deserves to be treated with honesty, respect, dignity and in accordance with ethical professional standards. 2. Compassion: We commit to serving with unconditional positive regard, recognizing the equal value of all persons. 3. Engagement: We meet people where they are in their lives and help them to identify their strengths and to feel empowered to improve their wellbeing. 4. Collaboration: We strive to enhance and further develop community

linkages and partnerships with a view to being more responsive to the needs of individuals, families and communities. 5. Excellence: We strive to provide evidence-based programs, designed to respond to the needs of individuals, families, and communities. Programs are provided by competent and professional staff. 6. Access: We embrace the importance of inclusive, timely, and affordable services for those who need them. 7. Sustainability: We strive to do what is necessary to ensure the future of Ruah Counselling Centre.

## Ruah's Services

While there is a standard fee for services, one of Ruah's hallmarks and strengths is that we recognize that not all clients can pay for these needed services. Therefore, we offer a sliding scale that includes a reduced fee or no fee, depending on one's ability to pay. Most of Ruah's clients come from financially vulnerable and marginalized backgrounds with approximately 86% of clients in 2022 not paying the standard fee for service. All clients receive the same calibre of services. Social justice is at the heart of Ruah's mission, and we strive to provide low-barrier mental health and wellness services to those who may not otherwise be able to access them.

Ruah is staffed by 3 Registered Social Workers which includes myself as Executive Director, 1 full-time Masters of Social Work Counsellor and 1 part-time (evenings) Masters of Social Work Counsellor. The 4th Counsellor holds a Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology and is a Canadian Certified Counsellor. The team also includes an office manager. We are governed by an independent, volunteer Board of Directors with various levels of experience and expertise including

business, education, finance, law, and social work. Volunteers also sit on committees that support and inform Ruah's Board of Directors.

In 2022, Ruah's staff responded to an average of 483 requests per month (approximately 5,796 for the year), that included mental health interventions such as regularly scheduled counselling sessions, crisis interventions, brief counselling, group programs, workshops, presentations, and redirection of clients to appropriate agencies. Ruah provides a critical service that is very much in demand, and we have evolved to become a staple within the mental health support system of our province. People and professionals have come to trust and seek out Ruah's services in times of need. Clients self-refer and referrals come from a variety of professionals (e.g., Family Physicians, Nurses, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, and Social Workers). Essential community organizations, such as Stella's Circle, The John Howard Society of NL, The Murphy Centre, Connections for Seniors, as well as government departments including Children Seniors and Social Development (CSSD), also refer their clients to Ruah's services. Eastern Health's Mental Health and Addictions Services (e.g., Doorways and Waterford Hospital Psychiatric Assessment Unit) consistently recommend Ruah to their clients who are needing timely and affordable counselling services.

In recent years, Ruah has shifted to a 10-session model for counselling services and is focused on maintaining a wait-time of 3 months (or less) from referral date. If additional sessions are needed, clients may be eligible to re-activate their services for up to 3

additional sessions. Clients can also re-apply for services at any time and receive an additional 10 sessions, as needed.

### Community Linkages

Ruah partners with community agencies in workshop delivery. We have partnered with The Gathering Place, Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW) as well as the Association for New Canadians (ANC) and The John Howard Society of NL to deliver virtual and in-person mental health and wellness workshops. We believe that feeling connected and supported in your community promotes mental health and wellness and enhances well-being.

Ruah also has a long history as a registered field practicum site for master's students in the areas of psychology and counselling. In recent years we began offering part-time and full-time field placements for Master of Social Work students through Memorial University and we are now a well-established field practicum site. Mentorship opportunities are also available for Bachelor of Social Work students through Ruah's delivery of psychosocial groups. While accepting students provides future clinicians with valuable training and learning opportunities, it also helps Ruah to maintain our low wait times, as more clients can be serviced.

### Ruah's Transition

Ruah (formerly the Family Life Bureau) was established in 1976 by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. John's, as a component of its community outreach. The primary financial support of Ruah had been the Archdiocese, with other financial support from the community including businesses, United Way, and other community partners. However, as of December 31, 2021, the Archdiocese was no longer able to financially support Ruah and the Board of Directors made the courageous decision to incorporate as a separate entity and apply for charitable status. As of January 1, 2022, Ruah began operating as an

independent entity and was approved for charitable status by the Federal Government as of February 11, 2022. Because of financial vulnerability, Ruah operated with reduced staff while we worked with the Board of Directors and community partners to explore and avail of diverse funding sources. 2022 was a re-building year for Ruah, as we continued to strengthen and develop as an independent entity, applied for, and were granted charitable status and made efforts to secure funding to continue the vital mental health and wellness services we provide.

Since Ruah's transition, a focus of the Board of Directors has been sustainability. Ruah's staff, community partners, and Board of Directors have worked tirelessly to focus on the continuation of Ruah to deliver critical mental health and wellness services. However, there have been challenges to securing the necessary funds to continue the work of Ruah. In September 2022, we made the decision to increase Ruah's fees, which had remained the same since 2015, due to the rising costs within the province. Ruah's sliding scale payment options remain the same, so that clients who are unable to pay the standard fee, were not impacted by the fee increase. Most of the clients who access Ruah's services do not pay the standard fee. We continue to seek core funding to continue Ruah's essential mental health and wellness counselling services.

### COVID-19

Ruah's transition was not the first challenge. As a small, non-profit agency with limited resources and manual office systems, COVID-19 brought a unique set of challenges for Ruah. To adapt to the changing world around us, we had to expand Ruah's service model to include telephone and virtual (telehealth) counselling sessions to continue supporting clients. Through community grants and initiatives, staff were able to receive training regarding virtual services, policies, and practices. Staff were set up to work from home in a professional and ethical way. The expansion of Ruah's service model increased

flexibility for clients and staff and reduced barriers that often-impacted clients' abilities to effectively engage in services (e.g., transportation, childcare, etc.). Clients were also experiencing an added layer of uncertainty and distress related to the pandemic, resulting in more reactivations of services for previous clients, as well as additional sessions required to deal with the complexity of needs. Further, due to the financial impact of COVID-19 on businesses, Ruah lost significant funding.

While the pandemic created many challenges, it also made way for growth. We were able to acquire the necessary equipment to provide all services virtually; we were able to extend Ruah's reach across the province, including Labrador, and we were able to embrace new systems and structures that allow us to function more efficiently and effectively (e.g., online scheduling system, ability to accept electronic payments, etc.) Further, we acknowledge the importance of focusing on what we can do, instead of what we can't do for clients who may not be eligible for, or able to access services elsewhere. We continue to use this as inspiration for how we can remain flexible and accessible, while adhering to Ruah's policies and procedures and staying true to Ruah's roots in social justice.

### The Future of Ruah

Over the years, Ruah has developed competency and expertise from which thousands of individuals have benefitted. As a newly established independent entity, operating under a management Board of Directors, Ruah's focus has now shifted from transition to sustainability as a non-profit community counselling agency. We continue to review Ruah's program and service delivery and engage in strategic planning, with the goal of becoming sustainable to ensure the future of Ruah.

For more information about Ruah's programs and services, please call our office at 709-579-0168 or visit Ruah's website at [www.ruahcounselling.ca](http://www.ruahcounselling.ca).



Clinical

# Mobile Crisis Response Teams: Rapid and Responsive Mental Health & Addictions Services

**BY JASPEN BARKER MSW, RSW & MAUREEN MOORES BSW, RSW**

Mobile Crisis Response Teams (MCRTs) provide rapid, mobile, and community-based assessments and crisis interventions to persons in crisis, their families, and caregivers throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

At present there are seven MCRTs throughout the province. These teams are located in St. John's, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Corner Brook, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Labrador West. MCRTs are a key component of the "Towards Recovery" Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador (2017).

MCRT is based on the Memphis Model, which is an international model that focuses on increasing safety for persons in crisis, family members, and the public. The Memphis Model assists in diverting individuals in crisis from the criminal justice system to more supportive mental health and addictions services. The Memphis Model includes a specialized mental health Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) course for police officers. This course provides information on mental illnesses and how to recognize symptoms; information about the local mental health system and local laws, with first hand client experiences; verbal de-escalation training and role plays to practice the skills learned during the course. MCRTs strive to provide CIT training to all patrol police officers within our province. At present, there have been approximately 300 police officers trained in CIT.

MCRTs are comprised of a nurse or social worker with extensive mental health and addictions experience paired with a CIT police officer (either RNC or RCMP). Within the St. John's and Corner Brook Region, MCRTs have CIT trained RNC officers who work solely with MCRT. These officers wear plain



**Emma Fifield RSW and Cst. Picco - Members of the MCRT in St. John's, NL**

clothes and respond to mental health crisis calls in an unmarked vehicle. In other areas of the province, MCRTs can include a uniformed officer paired with a nurse or social worker, who attend calls jointly in the community.

Prior to May 2022, the provincial Mental Health Crisis Line was operated by social workers and nurses who also provided the Mobile Crisis Response visits in the St. John's region. In May 2022, The Mental Health Crisis Line service transitioned to 811 as the main referral source for clients and families. MCRT services did not change as a result of this transition. Community partners and police continue to have direct access to

MCRTs.

Individuals in need of crisis intervention now call 811 from which they are triaged, assessed, and referred to the appropriate service or resources to meet their needs. To facilitate this transition, while maintaining rapid and comprehensive client care, MCRTs have focused on increasing connections with community partners. Through education sessions, the development of a community partner line; and increased collaborations with our police partners, MCRTs have made considerable gains towards ensuring client centered and recovery-focused care.

Service recipients of MCRT include

Region	Days of Operation	Hours of Operation
St. Johns	7 days a week	Mobile Visits 0900-2300 daily consultation services 24/7
Gander	7 days a week	1000 to 2000 daily
Grand Falls-Windsor	7 days a week	1000 to 2000 daily
Corner Brook	7 days a week	1000 to 2000 (Mon to Sat) 1000 to 1800 (Sun)
Labrador City	7 days a week	1000 to 2000 daily
Happy Valley-Goose Bay	7 days a week	1000 to 2000 daily

individuals of all ages presenting with symptoms of mental illness or individuals in acute crisis situations. Loved ones or support persons can also avail of MCRT services. MCRTs provide service for the following issues: acute stressors or situational crisis (e.g., relationship breakups, job loss, involvement with the Department of Children Seniors and Social Development, recent diagnosis); caregiver stressors or burnout; support for a family member or loved one; critical

incident debriefings; parental stressors and/or family dynamic issues; school issues; and wellness checks.

The services provided by MCRTs can include: assessment and stabilization; crisis support and brief counselling; education, advocacy, and consultation; follow-up contact with individuals involved with police or emergency services; wellness checks; critical debriefings; and referral and follow-up.

How to reach MCRTs:

- Clients and loved ones can contact 811 or local police agency to be referred to a MCRT within their region.

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## Innovation

# The Wellness Collective: Harvesting Hope And Health

BY BRENDA HALLEY BSW, RSW

What started out as a small initiative in downtown St. John's to incorporate nutrition and exercise as a complement to traditional talk therapy, has grown in both size and ideas in the past six years. In 2017, Brenda Halley, social worker, and Patricia Waddleton, dietician, joined forces to begin "talking the talk, and walking the walk" with individuals who access support through Mental Health and Addictions Services.

Rather than simply talking to people about incorporating physical activities and improved nutrition into their wellness journeys, they recognized the therapeutic benefits of actually practicing these skills together. They also sought to address the barriers that exist for many people to try new skills, such as fear, lack of money and social isolation.

Initial activities of the Wellness Group included walking, hiking, snowshoeing and yoga. Through a partnership with the Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, the group started growing vegetables in raised garden beds on the church grounds. They harvested, prepared and ate the food together in the church crypt, creating a true farm-to-table experience. Eventually, through a combination of grants and volunteer time, the group realized the dream of building a greenhouse – a place



where group members meet, practice mindfulness, share time and food growth together.

Whether the group are hiking together, snowshoeing, having a boil-up in the woods or digging through soil with their hands, the focus is always on holistic health and wellness. Participants share with each other, support one another in learning skills, and welcome new members with an understanding of the courage it takes to try something new. With over 100 participants thus far, the group continues to grow in size, ideas and community partnerships. Expanding membership has brought new talents including art and horticulture, as well as a need to increase the frequency of weekly meeting times. To reflect its evolution over the past six years, the group recently decided to rename

the Wellness Group to the Wellness Collective – a name that better reflects the diversity of its membership and reasons for joining. Crossing the boundaries that sometimes divide us, including socio-economic, cultural and intergenerational boundaries, the Wellness Collective provides a therapeutic place for people to connect, share wisdom and talents, try new skills and journey towards improved holistic health together.

The Wellness Collective recently had the privilege to present at the Provincial Recovery Forum held by the Mental Health and Addictions Division of the Department of Health and Community Services. Approximately a dozen members showed up to showcase accomplishments and lead the forum in a hands-on therapeutic horticultural experience. With the support of the department, the Collective is thankful to be able to share their experiences and build on their momentum. In the coming year they look forward to building new community partnerships and including certified peer support in their activities. The Wellness Collective looks forward to a time when physical, social and spiritual health activities are available and accessible to all people who seek to improve or recover their mental health.



## Initiatives

# Restorative Justice: St. John's Youth Justice Committee Young People: Making it Right Victims: Having a Voice and Making a Difference

BY SHERI THOMAS BSW, RSW

### Mandate:

The Extrajudicial Sanctions Program (EJS) in Newfoundland and Labrador is federally mandated under the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) and approved by the Attorney General for youth in Canada aged 12 to 17 who are in conflict with the law. The program was initiated in 1979 and was initially housed in Unified Family Court. Today, the program relies upon volunteer Youth Justice Committees across the province to support meaningful consequences and rehabilitation for young people while working closely with victims. The crown attorney's office is the gatekeeper for referrals for suitable candidates. The program is covered by provincial policy under the administration of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD) and overseen by a social work liaison who works collaboratively with the committee.

### Restorative Justice:

The EJS program operates from a restorative justice approach. Restorative justice is described as "an approach to justice that seeks to repair harm by providing an opportunity for those harmed and those who take responsibility for the harm to communicate about and address their needs in the aftermath of a crime" (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, 2018). When crime occurs, it is a violation of people and of relationships. Restorative justice reflects the principles of inclusivity,

respect, restoration, responsibility, empowerment and prevention. Holistically, it recognizes the physical, psychological, spiritual and social context that surrounds individuals and aims to bring out transformation in a safe environment.

### St. John's Youth Justice Committee:

The St. John's Youth Justice Committee underwent extensive restructuring in 2022 and currently has a membership of 8 volunteers that come from diverse backgrounds and offer a broad representation of the greater community. Members include: an educator, an Indigenous representative, a daycare home provider, two social work students, a social worker, a member of the Department of National Defence, a nurse, a former Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) member and current security officer. There are three ex-officio members, one from the RNC, CSSD and the Crown Attorney's office.

The program aims to: provide early intervention; foster a forum for youth to accept responsibility; educate young people; promote community involvement; encourage harmony between youth, victims and the community; avoid the stigma of formal court proceedings; repair harm done to victims and provide a response that is meaningful for every individual. Common offenses referred include: administration of justice offenses; mischief; theft; fraud; trespassing; assault; uttering threats; break and enter and possession of stolen property.

The committee works with first-time offenders, however subsequent referrals after completion are assessed on an individual basis to determine if it is in line with the principles of the YCJA. Young people can participate in the program more than once if deemed appropriate. Upon completion, the crown attorney will withdraw the charges. If the youth is not successful, they are referred back to the crown attorney for potential prosecution.

The program offers two paths to completion: diversion or mediation. Diversion allows for a representative of the program to connect with the youth and parent to develop an agreeable solution to compensate for the alleged wrong committed. Mediation involves reaching a mutually agreed upon solution between the victim and the youth. Solutions may include: community work; personal service; referrals to counselling or community agencies; educational sessions; financial compensation; written work and artwork; apologies and projects within the community. Contract conditions are suited to the individual needs of the young person and provide a creative community response to learning for the youth and giving back to the community.

Ongoing training and learning for members is important to ensure the program can be sensitive to participant's needs and approach all situations with dignity and respect. The program works with vulnerable youth who may face barriers due to struggles with mental health, addictions and trauma.



**Top Left:** Diana House, Lori Ann Upshall, Kyle Smith, Pat Buist.  
**Bottom Left:** Sheri Thomas, Jillian Hurley, Andrea Williams, Emma MacNeil.  
**Absent:** Eric Keating, Jackie Sullivan

**Benefits to the Youth:**

Youth who complete the program will not have a criminal record, will not have to go through the formal judicial system, will have their matter attended to quickly and will have the ability to make amends to the victim and the community.

**Benefits to the Victim:**

Victims who participate have the support of caring individuals who understand that nobody wants to be the victim of a crime. Through this process their voice can be heard and the youth can be held accountable by assuming ownership of their mistakes. Even if the victim does not want to be directly

involved, they can still talk to a program representative about the outcome of the sanction.

**Benefits to the Community:**

The program respects that sometimes victims do not want to be directly involved. If the youth cannot make amends with the victim directly, they can still restore a relationship with the community. The St. John's Metro region has displayed a welcoming response to the efforts of the St. John's Youth Justice committee. Just a few of the many important connections made include: an animal sanctuary; community centers; Association of New Canadians; First Light Centre; Ronald

McDonald House; Daffodil Place, Warm Buddies, Supper Bowl, Wild Outside, and local food banks. The committee has a heart for the community and a vision for expanding their volunteer base as well as community partners. They are currently working on initiatives such as making sensory blankets for the Alzheimer's Society and connecting with local farms for youth opportunities. In addition, they are working on a website, developing a youth advisory committee and hoping to become a charity so they can expand the reach of their work.

**Conclusion:**

If you would like to get involved or if you have any questions, please reach out to Sheri Thomas, EJS Liaison Social Worker, CSSD at [sherithomas@gov.nl.ca](mailto:sherithomas@gov.nl.ca). Check us out on [youthjusticestj.ca](http://youthjusticestj.ca)!

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NLCSW encourages all members to avail of the *Update My CPE* option available through the MyNLCSW portal. Members can quickly and easily record and track completed CPE credits throughout the year with 3 easy steps:

1. Log in to the MyNLCSW portal
2. Click on 'Update My CPE'
3. Record and save CPE details including event date, title, category, and number of credit hours

## Reflections

## Safe Spaces

BY STEPHANIE HOWLETT  
MSW, RSW

Have you ever been invited to push yourself from outside your comfort zone? To get comfortable with the uncomfortable? To challenge all your thoughts and learn and unlearn? Over the past 10 years, I have had many of these moments moving from a frontline social worker to a nursing manager to a diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging consultant with my own business-DiversityNL.

One of these moments was not just a comfort zone stretcher but a defining moment for me as a settler who is white with the intersectionality's of being queer, a woman, businessperson, advocate, wife, daughter, friend, fur momma, social worker and most recently a cancer warrior. I am not going to talk cancer, or the scars left on my body and spirit. I use the word impact as my word which I embrace to move forward.

My story is a very small but humbling step on my own journey to embrace reconciliation by creating meaningful and respectful relationships with our beautiful Indigenous community in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I was asked to be a guest speaker at "Empowering Indigenous Women for Stronger Communities." My first thought was nope, not going to happen, as imposter syndrome crept in saying you're not good enough, what can the Indigenous community learn from me? Then the fear of not being accepted entered my thoughts as I was told I was going to be the only settler in a room with members of the Indigenous community of Newfoundland and Labrador. Then my head went to the vivid recollection of working with Indigenous communities early in my career in child protection. The weight of colonization weighed heavily upon me. I hesitantly agreed as I knew that as a person, I took on other people's trauma



and internalized it, which has at times impacted my psychological health over the course of my 22-year career.

It was a day like no other that I will ever forget. It started with a 5-hour drive and a sleepless night which I will blame on menopause and fear. I could not calm my thoughts and sleep was not coming. So, I read over my talk and managed to rest at least for what was to be the best experience I had had in my entire career to date.

What do you do to overcome fear? For me to overcome my fears, I practiced a lot, I mean A LOT of positive self-talk and many hours of reflection on how I wanted to mentally, physically, and whole heartedly show up, be open in my mind and heart. I spoke to members of the Indigenous community and

spent hours researching best facilitation techniques, how to be respectful, what to wear, practiced greetings, and in the end, after all of that there was no PowerPoint or technology just me sitting vulnerable, all shields down, open to learning and unlearning and being very appreciative and honored to be there in a sharing circle with 22 other people of whom were esteemed Elders and Indigenous groups in Newfoundland and Labrador including Innu, Inuit of Nunatsiavut, Inuit of NunatuKavut, and Mi'kmaq as well as a few other settlers.

Soon upon arrival, I settled into an empty chair and an Elder reached over and shook my hand and welcomed me into the circle. My nervousness and anxiety fell away, and a peacefulness came over me as I sat there waiting for the day to start. In the middle of the circle was a beautiful medicine wheel, as seen in the picture, made up of the vibrant colors white, yellow, red, and black and placed on top were drums, feathers, instruments and sweetgrass. I had no idea what I was about to experience.

My friend Jenny, who recommended me as a facilitator, arrived and gave me the biggest hug which she had no idea I needed at that very moment. It gave me

Continued on page 19



## Topics

# Social Work, Transformative Justice, and Advocacy

BY MADISON PATEY BSW, RSW

As part of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (2005), social workers are expected to pursue and promote social justice. Understanding the realities of incarceration and the harm endured by folks who have interacted with the criminal justice system can place social workers in a position to explore and understand transformative justice (TJ) practices; TJ practices can be used as a means of addressing harm which we know can be further perpetuated in the criminal justice system. In turn, TJ practices can promote healing, accountability and work towards building community.

The West Coast Prison Justice Society (n.d.) states that "people are often in prison because of issues related to poverty, colonialism, mental health or drug use. Prisons often exacerbate these issues, exposing people to violence and harsh treatment, isolation, poor medical care, and other violations of their rights." Additionally, as explained by Faith (2000), prisons are often unable to provide the resources, services and supports required by incarcerated women to successfully reintegrate into the community following a period of incarceration. While Faith (2000) focuses on the experiences of incarcerated women, the struggles of reintegration into the community are not specific to women and are experienced by many folks who have been incarcerated; however, barriers are often greater and more extensive for those who are marginalized because of aspects of their identity. To connect this issue to the social work profession, the CASW Code of Ethics (2005) states "social workers promote social fairness and the equitable distribution of resources, and act to reduce barriers and expand choice for all persons, with special regard for those who are marginalized, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and/or have exceptional needs" (p. 9).

As an alternative practice, TJ can be best understood as "a political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence" (Mingus, 2019). TJ practices, which have roots in Indigenous practices, challenges the status quo, and utilizes an alternative set of skills, values and principles to address harm (Sultan, 2020). More specifically, "TJ responses and interventions 1) do not rely on the state (e.g. police, prisons, the criminal legal system, foster care system (though some TJ responses do rely on or incorporate social services like counseling); 2) do not reinforce or perpetuate violence such as oppressive norms or vigilantism; and most importantly, 3) actively cultivate the things we know prevent violence such as healing, accountability, resilience, and safety for all involved" (Mingus, 2019).

It is important to note that there are currently social workers doing this work by advocating for criminal justice reform and increased support for those who have interacted with the criminal justice system. "By advocating for the human rights of system-involved youth, adult offenders, and sexual assault and domestic violence victims, social workers have played a key role in criminal justice reform"(Hounmenou, 2021). While social workers have played a role in criminal justice reform through advocacy efforts, there continues to be immense harm and injustice occurring. As stated by The National Associations Active in Criminal Justice (2022, p.18), "We know that a more socially responsible, inter-sectoral approach that focusses on the community can be cost-effective, humane, and produce the long-term results we seek. We have the combined knowledge, experience, tools, programs and services to reduce our reliance on incarceration, to provide transformative alternatives to punishment, and to support people

where they are at through evidence, collaboration, compassion and hope." It remains evident that we, social workers, have the skills, tools and resources to pursue social justice. It is imperative to the wellbeing of those we work with that we continue to work towards and advocate for a socially just criminal justice system that centers transformative justice practices.

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Book Review

# The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, & Healing in a Toxic Culture by Gabor Maté with Daniel Maté

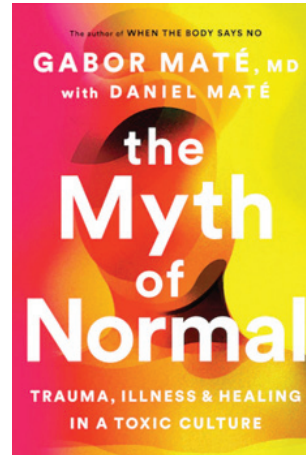
BY MARK GRIFFIN BA, MSW, RSW

One of the central tenets of *The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, & Healing in a Toxic Culture* by Dr. Gabor Maté and his son, Daniel Maté, is that modern medicine has failed to address the social sources of illness. Essentially, that the contemporary focus on the biological causes of illness, has come at the expense of ignoring the central role of trauma, adverse childhood events, and even prenatal life on health outcomes for individuals and communities. Maté and Maté (2022) argue that modern living overall has contributed to increased rates of autoimmune disorders, chronic mental health conditions, and diagnoses of conditions in childhood such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), depression, and anxiety in levels that were unheard of previously. The book also centralizes the mind-body connection, and the role emotional wellbeing plays on physical health. While this may seem like a basic assumption to a social worker, the authors cogently outline numerous examples in health systems that actively discredit that critical connection, where health systems ask about symptoms, rather than about people. Convincingly, Maté and Maté (2022) contend that the myth we have all collectively accepted is that our current approach to health is correct and normal.

The underlying theme on the wide-ranging topics covered in *The Myth of Normal* is trauma, and how trauma is more pervasive than generally accepted. Rather than affecting a small group of individuals who have experienced war, famine, natural disasters, or gun violence, trauma is a wide-reaching spectrum that potentially includes everyone. Maté and Maté (2022) define trauma as "a psychic injury, lodged in our nervous system, mind, and body, lasting long past the originating

incident(s), triggerable at any moment" (p. 20). This definition resonates with me because it does not mention severity of the event or define symptoms. Instead, the definition lends itself to inclusivity, understanding that trauma is an internal injury, experienced and expressed individually, in both the mind and the body.

The inability to separate thinking and feeling from our physical bodies is the crux of understanding how trauma leads to physical and mental illnesses. One of the most interesting parts of the book for me personally, as man who has no ability to birth children, was the section on the medicalization of childbirth and the decentering of community and maternal wisdom in the birthing process. The authors promote the sacred role childbirth has in our civilization, and how critically important it is to ensure the mental well-being of pregnant women, and for society to prioritize that both individually and systemically. The book makes a compelling argument that maternal trauma, depression, and carrying the emotional labour of relationships can affect the child prenatally and have a lasting legacy on the child's physical and mental health as an adult. The concepts in the book challenged my thinking on the messages our medical system sends to pregnant persons, that their bodies require advanced technological intervention when giving birth, despite thousands of generations where the technology was unavailable. There are clear connections made between parental trauma and how intergenerational trauma is transmitted, providing scientific credence to traditional, cultural, and Indigenous



practices and ways of thinking that have been making that argument for some time. The science has finally caught up to what traditional modalities have already been telling us.

Despite outlining many ways in which our toxic culture manifests diseases and pathologies, the authors also outline ways of healing that have particular relevance to social work practice.

Though the focus of the book is on understanding how trauma impacts bodies from a biopsychosocial lens, it does not discount the biological causes of disease. Rather, Maté and Maté (2022) argue that focusing on treating physical symptoms alone misses the crucial role of the social and psychological aspects of all diseases. When being asked about cancer, a doctor will rarely ask about trauma histories in childhood or address the parts of the person's thinking that may be impacting upon their physical selves and exacerbating their health issues. This is not a new way of thinking for social workers; however, the power in *The Myth of Normal* is in combining that body of research in one place and making it accessible to multiple disciplines focused on health, well-being, and education.

Some of the chapters in *The Myth of Normal* are covered in more detail in Dr. Maté's other books, such as addiction, ADHD, self-compassion, and the impact on our bodies when we are not expressing our authentic selves. There have been critiques that the themes in the book are parent blaming, however, Maté and Maté (2022) clearly outline that is not their intention and that parents should not feel guilty in passing

on unresolved trauma, as we have not as a society implemented the structural mechanisms to address systemic trauma. While reading the book I was able to feel more compassion for people with trauma histories who we typically pathologize with diagnoses or diseases. Rather than viewing addiction or violent behaviour as individual failings the book argues for seeing the person's behaviour for what it is – that they are acting out their own trauma experiences, and their behaviour is a predictable response to trauma, not only a biological or genetic predisposition. There was clear

alignment with the social work value of respecting the inherent worth and dignity of persons.

I highly recommend this book and my review does a disservice on the depth and breadth of the topics covered within. It is particularly pertinent to those practicing in child welfare, corrections, addictions, pre and post-natal care, and health care generally, especially any health field where trauma is not already a part of the assessment process. The book would also be relevant to social workers practicing in policy to ensure health and well-

being policies are trauma-resilient. If and when Western society becomes fully trauma conscious, social work is uniquely positioned to do the difficult trauma work with individuals, groups, and communities and to advocate for structural change for whole person healing.

## REFERENCE

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## SAFE SPACES continued from page 16

courage in what was to be a safe space to participate in my first ever smudge which is a First Nations' ceremony where sacred medicines of tobacco, sage, cedar and sweetgrass are burned. The smell is amazingly sweet and beautiful. A feather was used to fan the smoke. I was taught to draw the smoke over my head, then to my eyes to open my eyes to see the world around me, then drew the smoke to my ears to allow me to hear the good things around me, then drew the smoke to my mouth to speak the truth, drew the smoke down

over the front of my body to my heart to feel love and compassion, and to my feet to be reminded to walk gently and respectfully on Mother Earth.

The braid of sweetgrass was given to me as a gift by an Elder and I was ecstatic, and gob struck at this act of kindness. I am told that the braid is to say thank you, to honor, to heal and strengthen. To me when I smell it, it is grounding and a constant reminder to give back and form meaningful relationships.

I share this as a way for all of us to learn, respect and find ways to give back. Look at how we interact with the world and those around us. We each have so much to offer if we only open

our eyes to the opportunities around us. I ask that you always give voices to those who cannot speak and create safe spaces, so all people have a voice at the table. Sometimes we need to rebuild our tables and spaces, so everyone feels empowered and included. In our workplaces do we talk about diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and anti-racism (DEIBAR)? If not, start the conversation. If you struggle with how to learn more, check out my podcast at **BE the CHANGE by DiversityNL**. Wela'lin

If you have any questions or want to talk more about DEIBAR connect with me at [stephanie@diversitynl.com](mailto:stephanie@diversitynl.com).



## In Memory of Denise Patey MSW

**BY DARLENE WAREHAM BSW, RSW, DEANNE O'BRIEN BA, MSW, RSW & ERIN DALEY MSW, RSW**

Denise Patey dedicated her career to social work and was very proud to call herself a social worker. One of her greatest accomplishments was obtaining her Master of Social Work (MSW) degree. On October 9, 2022 Denise passed away peacefully surrounded by her family. She will be remembered by her friends and colleagues for her witty sense of humour, her friendly and kind nature, her strong sense of fashion, and her fun office presence. Denise was not only passionate about her career, she also loved to travel and would share her pictures fondly of all



**Denise Patey MSW**

her adventures. Denise was a dedicated social worker for 22 years and spoke of her social work career with pride. She was a great mentor and inspiration to many social workers and those aspiring

to enter the profession, as she worked closely with the Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador School of Social Work. Denise had a warm and free spirit that will be greatly missed by her social work colleagues and friends. Her true love was her family, husband Randy, son Shannon, daughter-in-law Corinne and grandchildren Chloe and Ava. She spoke fondly of them so often in the office that her colleagues felt like they knew them. Family meant everything to Denise – she surely enjoyed spending time with them at her trailer on the beach. Denise's passion for social work and her presence in the office will be missed greatly by her friends and colleagues.



School

# News from Memorial University's School of Social Work

## Strategic Plan

The School of Social Work at Memorial University unveiled its new **Strategic Plan, Passion and Purpose**, on May 24, 2023. The **Strategic Plan** was developed with input from various stakeholders and seeks to guide the School's future growth and success. An Implementation Committee will be formed to ensure that the **Strategic Plan** is executed effectively. The **Strategic Plan** is described on the website of the School at <https://www.mun.ca/socialwork/about-us/strategic-framework/>. This is an exciting time for our School, and we hope you will join us in ensuring its continued success.

-Dr. Sulaimon Giwa, Interim Dean

## Memorial University School of Social Work Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

For the 2023 admissions cycle, the School of Social Work admitted nine new doctoral students. The cohort consists of international students from Ghana and Nigeria in addition to students from Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Quebec. These students are undertaking the first of two spring doctoral residencies. In addition to the 98 BSW students admitted for the fall 2023 start date, 40 MSW students were also accepted. We wish them all the best in their studies. Between April 20 and May 8, 2023, the School participated in 10 successful recruitment drives with the purpose of attracting a wide range of high school students. The ultimate goal was to foster their interest in social work and motivate them to apply to the School's undergraduate programs.



Memorial University School of Social Work & Nunavut Arctic College BSW Program graduates, along with faculty and staff.

## Memorial University School of Social Work & Nunavut Arctic College BSW Program, Cambridge Bay

In the fall of 2021, the School of Social Work (SSW) introduced the Bachelor of Social Work degree program at Nunavut Arctic College (NAC). This program is part of a partnership between the SSW at Memorial University and the NAC in Cambridge Bay to offer graduates of the Social Service Worker Diploma program at NAC a Bachelor of Social Work degree. Currently, Memorial University social work faculty and instructors teach courses and organize practicums. Overtime, these responsibilities would shift to the community. This arrangement, despite its challenges, such as a pandemic, has been a rewarding experience for everyone involved.

On March 24, 2023, the interim dean and several academic staff had the honour of travelling to Cambridge Bay to participate in the graduation of the first five BSW graduates. This event held significant historical importance for the Government of Nunavut, NAC, and Memorial University. Congratulations to these students who worked diligently and mastered many challenges along the way. This was a team effort with many people from

Memorial University, NAC, and the community supporting the implementation of the BSW Program. A special thank you to Margaret Sullivan, whose commitment to students is unparalleled. Plans are in place for a new cohort of students to start in September 2023.

## Field Education

Spring marked another successful semester of BSW and MSW student placements in various practice areas. In spite of many disruptions, including the MUNFA strike action, students, field instructors, agency mentors, and field team members successfully navigated the term. We are proud to report that many students have secured employment with their placement agencies. Plans are well underway to place another cohort of BSW students for the fall. MSW students continue, each semester, to successfully complete placements across the country in a variety of social work settings.

As always, we are grateful for the ongoing commitment from the social work community in Newfoundland and Labrador. Registered social workers and agencies interested in hosting a social work practicum can reach out to the Field Education Team at [scwkfield@mun.ca](mailto:scwkfield@mun.ca).

Registered social workers can access the National Field Instructors Course available through the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE-ACFTS) and claim continuing professional education (CPE) credits as per NLCSW's CPE Policy. For registration and information on the course, email [scwkfield@mun.ca](mailto:scwkfield@mun.ca).

## Scholarships and Awards

At its Scholarships and Awards ceremony on May 31, 2023, the School of Social Work celebrated the academic accomplishments of BSW students. The event brought together faculty, staff, families, friends, NLCSW, and donors to recognize these deserving students and highlight their remarkable accomplishments. Twenty-three students were named to the Dean's List and three students received the Dean's Award of Academic Excellence. Thirty-two scholarships, awards, and bursaries totaling \$34,628 were awarded to students in recognition of academic excellence, practicum participation, and service to humanity. The list of scholarships and awards and recipients can be viewed at <https://www.mun.ca/socialwork/alumni-and-donors/awards/scholarships-awards-and-bursaries/>. During the Graduate Awards Ceremony on May 25, 2023, nine awards, fellowships, and scholarships were presented to eight MSW and PhD students. In addition, two PhD students successfully applied for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council doctoral award for the 2023-2024 scholarship year. Congratulations to each and every one of these students on their extraordinary achievements and a huge thank you to all our generous donors and friends of the School.

## Inaugural Awards Established to Honour Past Social Workers and BSW Alumni of the School

This year, two inaugural awards were presented that honour past social workers.

The **Pauline (Eddy) Anthony-Kane Award in Social Work** was established by family, friends, and classmates of Pauline to honour her professional life as a social worker. The award description describes how Pauline (BSW'79) was devoted to alleviating suffering and was a fierce advocate for resources and rights. Those who knew Pauline may remember Pauline as one who

went above and beyond what was reasonably expected to ensure that her clients had their fundamental needs met with financial assistance and accommodations. The award was valued in 2022-2023 at \$998 and will be presented annually to a BSW student who is completing their practica in Labrador and who is not a recipient of another award.

## The Andrew Harvey Memorial Scholarship in Social Work

remembers Andrew and his lifelong dedication to learning and education. Andrew earned multiple degrees including a BSW from Memorial University in 2012 where he was presented with the NLCSW Student Award at Convocation. The award description highlights his commitment to growing a better community while being engaged in social work, affordable housing, political activism, Indigenous culture, supporting the arts, and food security. Those who knew Andrew may recall how he added joy to any occasion. The award was valued in 2022-2023 at \$2328 and will be presented annually to a BSW student who identifies as Indigenous and/or is working with (or expressed interest in working with) people in an Indigenous Community.

## Spring 2023 Convocation

Memorial hosted spring 2023 convocation ceremony, during which 1 PhD student, 15 MSW students, 52 first-degree BSW, and 18 second-degree BSW students graduated. Congratulations to all graduates and best wishes as you continue your social work journey.

## Service Milestones: Honouring Dedication

This spring, Memorial University honoured three staff and faculty members for their years of committed service to the School of Social Work, Memorial University, and the community. Ms. Lisa Muise and Dr. Sheri McConnell were honoured for reaching the milestone of 20 years of service. Professor Janice Parsons was honoured for her 35 years of service. Congratulations to these members for achieving these significant milestones and for their ongoing contributions to the School's success.

## Stay in Touch!

Update your profile at <https://www.mun.ca/alumni/info/> and be sure to follow us on social media – Facebook: [www.facebook.com/MUNScwk](https://www.facebook.com/MUNScwk), Twitter: @MUNScwk for all the latest news and events.



## Newfoundland & Labrador College of Social Workers

### Documentation Matters

NLCSW's Documentation Matters offers documentation tips to social workers in a short and concise format. Access the full series at [Documentation Matters | NLCSW](#).



## Distinguished Service

# CASW Distinguished Service Award Recipient 2023: Henry Kielley MSW, RSW

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Distinguished Service Awards are presented annually to remarkable social workers selected from the membership of CASW Partner organizations. The 2023 award recipient for Newfoundland and Labrador, Henry Kielley, received this award in honour of his significant contributions to the social work profession. This award was presented during a virtual awards celebration held during Social Work Month 2023. The following are excerpts from Henry's acceptance speech which has been printed with permission.

I am very humbled and honoured to have been nominated and selected for the CASW Distinguished Service Award. Sincere thanks to my colleagues Tonya Sullivan and Steve Ross for the nomination. Sincere thanks as well to the NLCSW Board of Directors and CASW for selecting me.

Getting an award of recognition as a social worker is, I will admit, a little counterintuitive for me. I have always maintained the perception of social workers as those behind the scenes – working to connect clients with resources or facilitating connections within and between systems. Nonetheless, I am very grateful and very moved to be in the company of the incredible former recipients of this award. I would also like to acknowledge and congratulate Rita-Anne Voisey, who is receiving the Pride Award today. Your pride in the profession is obvious and inspiring.

As I reflect back on my body of practice, I am reminded of some of the amazing social workers who have been examples



**Henry Kielley MSW, RSW**

for me: Heather Saunders, Judy Paul, Suzanne Brake, Ivy Burt, Mike Devine, Carol Snelgrove, Nancy Sullivan, Shelly Birnie-Lefcovitch, my former colleagues on the Board of Directors, former colleagues from long-term care and current ones in the provincial public service – such amazing educators and practitioners whose example makes me want to be a better social worker.

I jokingly say sometimes that I only did social work so I wouldn't have to do math. Turns out I'm among the 22 out of 7 people who don't even know what pi is. But more sincerely, I was drawn to social work for the values and skills it promotes and how the practice of social work challenges us to not be okay with the way things are – to be agents for change and champions for social justice. I have always considered myself a benevolent rebel – continually trying to find ways to affect change for what I hope and believe is the greater good.

In the fall of 1998, I was in Twillingate, Nortre Dame Bay for my first BSW field placement. Heather Sanders was my field instructor. One of Heather's many lessons that stuck with me is that **social workers don't give advice**. It is a notion that has flavoured my practice ever since and has helped me invest completely in the process of working with clients (be they individuals, communities, or systems) while helping me separate my own biases from the decisions that those clients have sought to make.

I've never been one to have a career path. Years ago I recall wanting to be a DJ, but mostly because I've been told I have a face for radio. I've always just followed opportunities and have been very fortunate to have been at some interesting tables with fascinating conversations. As I reflect on my social work practice to date, it has been a privilege to have had opportunities to be part of conversations and help facilitate change at the individual, community, provincial and national levels. I do not have time here or the word count in my **Connecting Voices** article to name them all, but several stand out.

My very first job post-BSW was at the mental health crisis centre in St. John's. At that time, it was an old house near the downtown core. It was a 24-hour call and drop in centre, and as the new kid, I was on nights. That first 8:00 to 8:00 overnight shift lasted about 3 weeks. I remember feeling nervous, waiting for the phone to ring, often wishing it wouldn't. But it did, and as the rubber of my social work education hit the road, I found myself using the skills I had been taught. A woman called in the wee hours of the morning to explain that she had taken a job for cash while in receipt

**Continued on page 24**

## Promotion

## NLCSW Pride in the Profession Award Recipient 2023: Rita-Anne Voisey BSW, RSW

**The Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW) Pride in the Profession Award is presented annually to a registered social worker who promotes the advancement of social work in Newfoundland and Labrador and demonstrates outstanding pride in the profession. This award was presented during a virtual awards celebration held during Social Work Month 2023. The following are excerpts from Rita-Anne's acceptance speech which has been printed with permission.**

I would like to thank the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers for hosting the virtual award ceremony on March 14, 2023. I would also like to extend a congratulations to Henry Kielley as the 2023 CASW Distinguished Service Award Recipient.

I am absolutely humbled to be the recipient of the 2023 NLCSW Pride in the Profession award. I would like to thank my friend and colleague Krista Mogridge for the nomination. Krista strives to always see the best in everyone that has the privilege to work along side her. I would like to thank my supervisor, Danielle Baikie for the continued support and for supporting Krista's nomination.

I am originally from Postville, which is the smallest community located in the Nunatsiavut Inuit region in Northern Labrador. I have been a registered social worker since 2013, when I graduated with a bachelor of social work degree through Memorial University. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Social Work program with Memorial University.

Since 2013, I have been in different

social work roles varying from social development and community work, child protection including front line and supervisory roles. And currently, I lead family support and prevention programming for Labrador Inuit.

As an Indigenous person working within an Indigenous context, I hold a dual role as a professional social worker and community member. Given this, I always strive to reduce my social location as a social worker, while still upholding the social work values and principles. I aim to practice social work while maintaining respect from the community that I work with, which is important to attain given the sometimes difficult responsibilities and reputation of the profession in many Indigenous communities.

Within my profession, I practice a daily effort to decolonize social work practice and work towards the reconciliation and deconstruction of systemic discrimination experienced by the Inuit community in all aspects of life. I practice social work with great pride and integrity while acknowledging the role that social work has had in the oppression and colonization in Newfoundland and Labrador as well as Canada; I believe in the positive implications and approaches that serve a sincere willingness to improve the outcomes for all those that I work with.

I want to extend a thank you to each and every mentor that I was privileged to have over the last 10 years in my social work career; too many to name personally. I am also extremely grateful for those that I have had the opportunity to work alongside of: my supervisors, colleagues, friends, community members, collaborative



**Rita-Anne Voisey BSW, RSW**

agency partners, and the individuals and families. I have learned something from each and every person that I have worked with.

I strive to practice with an anti-oppressive & anti-racist lens, and I adhere to the upmost respect of the social work code of ethics. In my current role as Family Connections Program Manager with the Nunatsiavut Government, I take pride in my profession, and I will always strive to do my best to advocate for fair and equitable access to public services for all Labrador Inuit, ensuring that services promote health, wellbeing and quality of life for all Inuit families, and that Inuit culture and knowledge is respected and adhered to through all service delivery.

My hope for the social work profession is that it does not participate in systemic racism and cultural genocide, and that we as social workers, will begin to shift away from the primary practice being the biomedical model and practice more inline with the core social work values outlined in our code of ethics.

Thank you, Nakummek



## CASW AWARD continued from page 22

of income support. But it was just until she could pay off her washer – she had never owned one and it made such a difference in her life. She asked me if that was ok.

Another time, I got to be at the table of a man in a small fishing community who was burning his light bills for heat because he couldn't read and after his mother died, and the lights were eventually cut off for non-payment, he burned his mail in the wood stove.

I also think back on moments – interactions that I wish I had handled differently – moments when I was not sure how helpful I was being or had been. During my BSW studies, Sharon Taylor used the analogy of a painter to describe therapeutic interactions. Just as a painter reflects on previous work and develops their craft, so it is with the practice of social work. I think the key word there is practice. We can never stop learning how to be a social worker.

Back in 2013, I worked in Manitoba for a hundred years. I had the opportunity to be the manager of social work and spiritual care at a long-term care centre in Winnipeg (a fascinating assignment for an introverted non-theist). One lesson I took from Winnipeg (in addition to the crucial role that a block heater plays in your daily commute) is the platinum rule. The golden rule says, **treat others the way you would like to be treated** while the platinum rule says, **treat other people the way they want to be treated** and this requires knowing those we serve. This means taking the time to know that person. All relationships take time and effort – the therapeutic relationship is no different. Social workers are uniquely positioned to know the people we serve.

Most of my social work practice has been with older adults. I have seen firsthand the impacts that ageism can have on an individual and on our systems. Our social work values remind

me that inherent dignity and worth do not have a best before date, and that regardless of age, ability, or anything else that makes us the other, we all want the same things. Through my work in long-term care, I have been privileged to walk with individuals and their families on journeys through dementia and through the later stages of life. Erikson describes the last psychological stage in life as integrity versus despair – a look back over one's life and deciding if it has been well lived or filled with missed opportunities. I have worked with individuals with profound experiences of both, and it has challenged me to think about the kind of review I want to experience at the end of my life. I hope it will be a blend of compassion and humour with not a lot of regrets. The Greek philosopher Epictetus once said, **he who laughs at himself never runs out of things to laugh at**, so I will not be short of things to chuckle about any time soon.

These days, through my policy work on seniors and aging, I get to discuss issues like how we build capacity within communities to become more age-friendly and plan for changing demographics, or how the digital divide perpetuates the impacts of social isolation as more and more things move on line. Through my adult protection work, I am privileged to work with skilled practitioners from social work and across disciplines as we balance the need for protection with our right to autonomy.

I still get energized by the daily challenge and the daily choice that is social work. Our code of ethics sets a very high bar for the way we are expected to view the world and the people in it. I am learning that our code is an invitation to a job that will never be finished – at what point will we truly recognize the inherent dignity and worth of **all** persons? When do we say we have achieved social justice? The COVID-19 pandemic turned a very bright light on many social issues – some of which were in the dark, but

many of which social workers have been illuminating for years. Leonard Cohen said, **there is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in**. Our recent experiences with COVID-19 have exposed cracks in our social and health systems. Social work is a catalyst for change and social workers are exceptionally positioned to be part of what has to come next.

I have also learned so much from my time as a member of the Board of Directors and as a field instructor. My time on the Board gave me such rich insight into the breadth and scope of our profession and a better appreciation of the responsibility to the public that comes with our regulatory model. I have to thank Judy Paul for her mentorship just a few years into my career that brought me into the world of field instruction. I learn at least as much from my students as they learn from me. I encourage every social worker to try at least of one these experiences.

I want to thank my family for their support. My first teacher, my mom, is on her very first Zoom call today, joined by my sister Bernadine. My wife Karen is also on the call. These remarkable women were and are educators – both professionally, and at home by virtue of their kindness, patience and good example. I also have to thank Karen for tolerating my flights of ideas and occasional rants about the way things are and could be.

As social workers, we share an individual and collective responsibility to shape and advance our community of practice. None of us has to do it alone. To that end, I very much share this award with all of you. I hope you take time, especially during social work month, to think about the social workers that have influenced your practice. Finally, we often do not give ourselves enough credit for the complex and relentless effort required to be social workers. I hope you take time reflect on your practice and make time for genuine self-care. Thank you.

