

Mylandra Zielinski-Douglas Pt. 2 | Discover Stories Episode 71

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Tanya Griffiths 00:57

Have you noticed or experienced any differences in the music therapy landscape between Vancouver and Saskatchewan?

Mylandra Zielinski-Douglas 01:04

I think the biggest thing is it's just a little smaller. We in Saskatchewan have, I think it's about two dozen music therapists that are spread throughout the province, mostly in the bigger centers, like Saskatoon and Regina. So with that, we have a smaller Music Therapy Association, smaller board, smaller team for things. So it does limit our ability to be present, I guess and advocate for music therapy within the province. Because we are limited just solely based on numbers. But I would say music therapy everywhere is one of those professions where it's sort of a create your own career passion type of thing. It's not like a, especially in Saskatchewan, it's not like there's job openings that are popping up every week for you to apply. A lot of it is partnering with hospitals or care homes or autism services and an offering the service of music therapy and then being supported by either a foundation or some sort of grant system. So most of it is new creation or expanding what is existing within the province. Whereas I do see in Vancouver, there are a little bit more of those, you see job opportunities pop up and and people apply. And there are some of those longer term existing places. And I think partially, it's population, and it's also just the longevity of the history within the city as well. I think music therapy has been practiced in Canada, I think it's 45, almost 50 years. And maybe I should check that because I'm not 100% sure. But some of these things within like Saskatoon, for example, where I live, have only been around for 15 years, maybe 20. So it's just sort of smaller, younger, growing - it's

growing lots of opportunity. But yeah, it is definitely more of a create the awareness project here.

Tanya Griffiths 03:51

Yeah, yeah. And is there a demand for it, though? Like, do you do you see that there are more people who are more interested in experiencing music therapy?

Mylandra Zielinski-Douglas 04:03

I think so. And I'm not sure if that's just based on sort of the experiences that I have. I was able to work in a mental health facility in Saskatoon here. And it was just a short pilot project, but it was so well received by staff. And the people that were there that it was one of those things where it's like, oh, well how do we find funding to make this happen? How do we keep this? And so I think there is a lot of opportunity and there are a lot of people once they see it, hear of it, it's how do I how do I access that? And sometimes it is starting from the ground up and creating those programs or offerings. And sometimes there are some things in place already.

Tanya Griffiths 04:54

I definitely hear you. I feel like especially being in Vancouver, there's so many programs available for folks. And sometimes people also feel a little bit intimidated to receive that support and receive that help and apply for grants, for example, but it's there, and it's for people. And I can imagine how within Saskatoon or within the province, you're still building that foundation, I guess, or like building onto that foundation you already have. Yeah, so that is really interesting. And currently with your role, what prompted your transition to end of life or palliative care and how does music therapy support individuals and their families in this stage of life?

Mylandra Zielinski-Douglas 05:50

Well, I guess, first, I think I sort of came into it, just based on some of the work that I did in long term care. Because I was the only music therapist for the residents. There were times where I was the end of life provider of care, I guess, as far as music or like the recreation, the rec workers wouldn't be able to necessarily offer a lot of programming just because of the state of somebody's either consciousness or ability level. And so music was the thing that provided that comforting, quiet space. And could meet the needs level in a different way. So I did quite a bit of that sort of music therapy within long term care. So it kind of tweaked a bit of an interest, I guess, in being part of that in a more prominent way, I guess.

When I came back to Saskatoon, I had been doing kind of some smaller contracts here. And didn't have a lot going on when I first moved back. But a position actually did open up in palliative care at the hospital. And so I applied for that and was able to take on that role. So part of it was the practicality of a job position. And the other part of it was something that it's work that I absolutely love doing. I think kind of more to the second part of your question, the end of life, if you've worked in end of life, I think you understand like that tenderness, that vulnerability of, of somebody's end of life journey. And with that their family members and loved ones around them. And I think there's just a different level of communication, I think that happens at that end of life, that people are more open or willing to be vulnerable. And so very meaningful conversations, and meaningful memory making. And not to say that other times in life it's not but there is a difference, when people know that they might not be able to speak about these memories for that much longer. And something about being present in those moments and having that Well, for one that privilege to be part of those discussions and in that room is humbling because they don't need to invite me into that space, they could keep that space for themselves. But instead people invite you in and allow you to offer something in some capacity and whether that's relaxation, whether that's a favorite song, whether that's just a moment of conversation. There's just a depth that happens in end of life care that it is just so special, and so beautiful and powerful to be part of.

Tanya Griffiths 09:22

Wow. I'm getting emotional.

Mylandra Zielinski-Douglas 09:27

Haha! I'm trying not to tear up myself.

Tanya Griffiths 09:32

I can only imagine what it's like to be in that space with somebody who knows. And I definitely believe that too, that you are sharing that there's this depth and almost clarity and wisdom that is being shared. And to be part of that is such a gift. Wow, I'm actually kind of lost for words. I, I think it's so easy for us to think about therapy as a means to solve our issues or to be less traumatized, or to be better people. And then there are stories like this, where therapy is conducive to sharing memories and meaning making and almost acceptance, I guess of where, where life is and where life has come to. And, and that's just so beautiful. And I'm, I'm just in awe of the work that you do.

Mylandra Zielinski-Douglas 10:52

Well, thank you.

Tanya Griffiths 10:55

Oof! I should have gotten a tissue before. Um, well, you've sort of shared a story. But I'm also wondering if there are any other stories that you can share that have stayed with you and have been impactful to your career and identity as a music therapist.

Mylandra Zielinski-Douglas 11:18

For sure, I mean, there's so many that come to mind, but a couple, I guess, since we're sort of in the end of life care conversation, I think one of the most foundational moments for me, which kind of did project me until end of life care was when I was working, I was actually still an intern, or pre professional practicum, I was part of that 1000 hours that we do before we write an exam to become accredited. And I was working with a family. And there was just a lot of complicated layers and just complex family history. And this person was at their end of life. And again, there was just so many layers of family tension, and even members not being allowed to come in and, and just kind of that crappy situation all around. But in that journey, there was a moment when this person's children were in the room together. And I just happened to be there at the right time for this and we all sang together; we picked a song that was important and all of them sang with me in that room, and it was just one of those moments where at least this is a memory that is positive at this end of life and hopefully a memory that this family can hold on to as well to maybe balance out some of the bad stuff.

Tanya Griffiths 13:13

So it was it was a means to foster connection and some form of belonging and tuning into that love that is probably there under all that tension - is that love and wow, what a what a powerful memory to have.

Mylandra Zielinski-Douglas 13:39

Well, and I think - I keep talking about end of life stuff - but hearing is the last sense that we lose and I think as well for this person being able to hear their children's voices as well would - I don't know - I think it would bring me a lot of comfort to hear that and in a positive way as well. So as much for the family as well I think them having that familiar voice, that familiar presence, must have comforted them as well. Or at least that's what I believe.

Tanya Griffiths 14:14

Yeah, absolutely. That's a very heartwarming story. And and I think such a beautiful note as we come to the end of our episode here. And you said this was like, during your your practicum hours still right? So this was sort of at the just like the beginning of your experience being an accredited music therapist, and wow. So yeah, as we, as we come to a close, is there anything else we haven't talked about that you'd like to share with our audience?

Mylandra Zielinski-Douglas 15:01

Not sure if I have anything specific but I would say that if music therapy is something that stands out to you, maybe go take a look at the association websites, there's pretty much one for every province. And there's an opportunity to learn more. Most of us have our contact information available on those websites. And if you have questions, or you want to learn more, just reach out. I think I speak for myself maybe but I'm think a lot of us love talking about what we do and love relating to people. And just bringing more awareness to what music therapy can offer. So yeah, I think if anything stands out to you just feel free to ask.

Tanya Griffiths 15:53

Absolutely. No, thank you. Thank you so much. I hope that people who do feel called to look into music therapy, act on that and follow that intuition almost, or that curiosity. Because it does sound so powerful. And so needed to so thank you so much, Mylandra, for taking this time and for sharing your stories. The stories you shared are definitely going to stay with me. It was such an honor to speak with you today. So thank you so much again.

Mylandra Zielinski-Douglas 16:40

Well, thank you for inviting me it's been a privilege to share about what I do and, and talk about the beautiful work that that can happen. So thank you.

Tanya Griffiths 16:52

Yeah, amazing.