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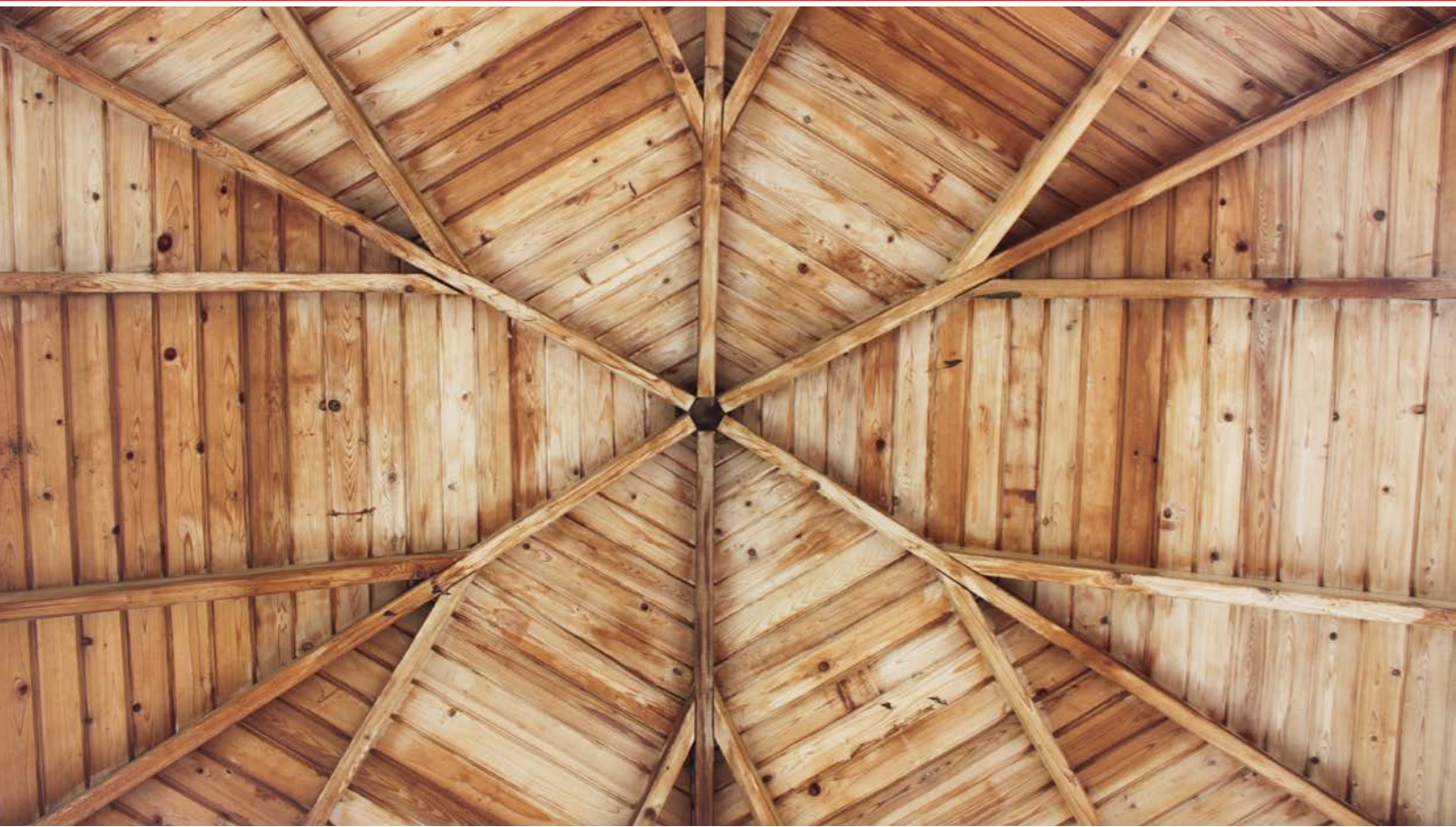
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# Kaleidoscope

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Newsletter of the Counselling Psychology Section

Canadian Psychological Association



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Kaleidoscope focuses on teaching, scholarship and practice for Counselling Psychologists and graduate students in training. We are proud to offer newsletters throughout the year and a blog site for our membership. We hope you will feel inspired to give us your feedback and become even more involved with our vibrant community.



# HOUYUAN LUO

## CPA COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY SECTION CHAIR

Happy Holiday Season everyone!

I am a Registered Psychologist (Counselling and Clinical Psychology) practicing in Downtown Toronto. I am also a Certified Therapist in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) by the Canadian Association of Cognitive and Behavioural Therapies (CACBT). I am excited to serve as the new chair for the Section on Counselling Psychology. I was in the role of Chair-elect and Convention Coordinator for the past two years and look forward to starting my role in the chair position. I am thrilled that the Section is full of new energy this year! I'm delighted to be working with an executive committee committed to social justice, con-

textual perspective on therapy, and the discipline of counselling psychology in Canada. Our diverse group brings together individuals from both academia and practice. In this issue of Kaleidoscope, I provide a brief overview of who we are as an executive this year. Then, I summarize the last Calgary CPA Convention and give an update on our planning for the next one in Toronto. Later in this issue, I also summarize our 2022 pre-convention workshop. Our Executive Committee as of June 2022, our executive committee includes the following members: Dr. Tanya Mudry (past-chair), Dr. Allison Foskett (chair-elect), Dr. Jessica Van Vliet (convention coordinator), Dr. Jon Woodend (secretary/treasurer), Dr. Janet Miller (awards coordinator), and Thomas Qiao (student representative).

In addition, Dr. Miller continues to be the newsletter editor, and I believe this is her 10th year in this role. I sincerely appreciate everyone on our executive committee, past and present, for the time and energy dedicated to ensuring that our Section continues to thrive.

### CPA Convention

After two years of virtual conventions, we eventually met in-person this year in Calgary. We had 36 presentations and 38 posters in the Counselling Psychology Section, covering various topics. We were privileged to have Dr. Karlee Fellner (University of Calgary) as our featured speaker before our AGM, with her presentation entitled Indigenous Wisdoms for Applied Psychology: Shifting toward Survivance-Based Research, Training, and Practice. We also hosted Dr. Fellner for an incredible pre-convention workshop focused on Indigenous approaches to complex trauma and clinical practice. This workshop was one of the only two that wasn't cancelled due to low registration. The seats of both the featured speech and pre-convention workshop were full, and participants had positive feedback on them. Additionally, we held our hybrid AGM with in-person and virtual participants and a reception afterwards, where we could meet and talk with like-minded colleagues. Last but not least, at the conference and following the poster presentations, we celebrated our award winners for the Distinguished Member Award, Thesis and Dissertation Awards, and Poster Presentation Awards (see Awards update). I hope we can continue such meaningful contributions and collaborations in the future. Looking forward to the next convention in Toronto, June 23-25th, 2023. Abstract submissions are now open. Also, please remember to nominate your students for Section awards!

### Counselling Psychology Google Group

We have 173 members now. I encourage you to join this group and recommend that colleagues and students do so. You can join the group in two ways:

1. Here is the official guide to find and join a Google group (<https://support.google.com/groups/answer/1067205?hl=en>); you can type Canadian Counselling Psychology to find our group and join.
2. Send an empty email with the title "JOIN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY GROUP" (copy and paste) to [drhouyuan@gmail.com](mailto:drhouyuan@gmail.com), and I will add you to the group.

### Impact of COVID on My Practice

COVID has changed how I practice, and so do many other colleagues. At the beginning of COVID, I moved all sessions to a virtual format, and it was a short adjustment process for me, as I already did some virtual sessions with clients from the remote area. I enjoyed virtual sessions most of the time, although I have to say in-person sessions do have their uniqueness. For example, experiential-oriented therapies (e.g., EFT) are more effective face-to-face for me. As COVID enters the second half of 2022 and most Canadian cities eased their restrictions, I also returned to the therapy room. That took me longer to re-adjust compared to in-person to virtual. In addition, as the clinic requires everyone to wear masks during therapy, I can only see their eyes and the staring felt particularly heightened, which made me uncomfortable for a while.

Houyuan Luo, Ph.D. C. Psych.  
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I am grateful to live on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.



# Executive Update



Hello everyone!

I am back in the role of Past Chair. Almost immediately following the 2022 CPA conference in Calgary, my family expanded with a baby! As I navigate this new transition, and privilege my little one, I will be participating in the Section in a limited capacity.

As I have considered our theme this month, post-COVID, I have had a flurry of reflections on how COVID has impacted daily life – particularly for caregivers. For myself, it's been a journey over the past year, navigating pregnancy during a pandemic including contracting the virus and a visit to the hospital, missing professional opportunities (unable to attend CPA convention in my home city), and avoiding social opportunities to keep myself and baby healthy. Now, with an infant, there remains new challenges around work-life balance or parental leave-work balance. With COVID brought normalcy and convenience of teleworking, which has allowed me to continue to supervise students, participate in professional development, research, and service (including Section involvement). This has allowed me to continue to foster my identity as Counselling Psychologist, Academic, Supervisor etc. At the same time, it has taken some time and attention from my baby and my parental leave. I acknowledge my privilege in having a choice to continue to engage professionally. There are institutional structures like Canadian parental leave policies that I am afforded, and I have a partner who is employed fulltime, which allow me choice.

I am grateful that I can choose to stay engaged with students and colleagues through technology like zoom. I participate in online meetings while bouncing my son, nursing him, or having him nap in a carrier. I think back to a professor I once had who spoke about her experience in another country where it was common to bring a child to meetings on campus, nurse, and attend to baby as needed. I remember feeling in awe of such an academic culture. I have also been reflecting on my various students' life circumstances. While teaching at Acadia, I facilitated a new mom's request to take a class following the birth of her baby, and she shared her final presentation while caring for her baby (changing a diaper I believe!). Fast forward to 2020 when the pandemic hit, there were students who had children at home and were trying to juggle childcare and/or online school, while attending class on zoom. And now, (post?)-COVID, there remains ongoing ambiguity around missing class because of changing rules in childcare settings for kiddos with runny noses. What would happen if a student attended class with their child, or remotely with children in the background? Is this a new reality of Canadian daily life post-COVID?

**TANYA MUDRY**  
PAST CHAIR

From a social justice perspective, I think about the implications of normalizing the blurring of parenthood and professional life (e.g., paid work, school). By making allowances to blur parenthood and professional life (children coming to class or work, work from home policies etc), are we responding in a justice-oriented manner to the diverse needs of our students and employees? Or, alternatively, are we under the influence of neoliberalism – dictating that we must continue to work at all costs? Are we facilitating parents' choices to integrate work and caregiving responsibilities? Or, are we providing an excuse to continue to allow for inadequate childcare and family leave policies?

I'm also reminded of gender differences in acceptability of blurring parental with professional. In my MSc in Health Promotion studies, my thesis research focused on worker ideology of employed mothers (who were health care professionals) and their social support composition. I recall being struck by a quote in one of the transcripts, where the woman described how when she had to bring her kids to work, she felt pressure to "get her act together" and felt like a failure as both a mother and a worker. She described an instance when a man brought his kids to work, he was celebrated as an "amazing dad." This notion of "motherhood penalty" and "fatherhood bonus" has been studied (Kmec, 2011; Yu & Hara, 2021). I am also reflecting on the intersecting discrimination that might occur in non-traditional families or gender-diverse caregivers. What are the additional "penalties" at play? Differences in salary and promotion are known to occur in various sectors for gender (Pelletier et al., 2019) and race (Qiu & Schellenberg, 2022). What about students/workers who are caregivers of different kinds, for example, aging parents? Finally, we must consider the systems in which we are situated. When someone brings a child to work or misses work, how does this impact the other students/employees and employer/instructors?

As usual, I am left with more questions than answers. I invite you to consider them with me: How has the pandemic impacted the blurring of caregiving and professional roles? How has caregiving changed over the last few years? How has the pandemic impacted the wellbeing of caregivers? What about employees and employers? What are the various systems and structures implicated in the blurring of caregiving and professional responsibilities? How do institutional structures and social policies create barriers to successfully managing professional and caregiving responsibilities? How do workplaces or academic settings support or hinder success and wellbeing? How might we advocate for caregivers who are struggling

with oppressive policies and structures? What about those who face additional marginalization and oppressions? How might we support our clients who are struggling to "hold it all together"? What discourses or narratives might we stand up to in our work with clients? How are we, as professors, students, clinicians, employers, and community members knowingly or unknowingly participating in oppressive practices?

If you have thoughts or reflections, consider sharing your thoughts in the next newsletter!

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Past Chair, CPA Section on Counselling Psychology  
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I respectfully acknowledge that the University of Calgary is located on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

# Executive Updates



## ALLISON FOSKETT

### CHAIR ELECT

Hello everyone,

I am honoured to hold the next Chair-Elect position within the Executive Counselling Psychology Section of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA). It is a pleasure to begin collaborating with such a warm and keen group of team members. I am looking forward to supporting the advancement of research and fostering a sense of community within our counselling psychology profession.

As a Registered Counselling Psychologist located in Edmonton, Alberta, I look forward to offering my business and leadership acumen in the context of having owned and operated a private practice for the last 10 years. What I treasure the most about being in the field of counselling psychology is the simplicity and power of building a relational presence and connection with other human-beings. There is nothing more powerful than sitting with others in their challenges and victories and being able to provide a safe space where they can feel seen and heard.

Currently, I work with adults and support individuals and couples with a broad range of concerns including life transitions, workplace/career concerns, depression, trauma, anxiety, and stress. I integrate several approaches into my counselling including Person-Centred Therapy (PCT), Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy as well as Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) for individuals and couples.

My journey and inspiration to make a difference in the field of counselling psychology started in my beautiful hometown of London, Ontario, where I completed my Hons. B.A. at Western University. In my senior years, my interest in helping others blossomed as I began offering workshops in various counselling centres and social organizations on topics within psychology. Eventually, I pursued my Master's of Science degree in counselling psychology at the University of Calgary and my Ph.D in counselling psychology at the University of Alberta. One of my most enriching years was my doctoral internship experience at Memorial University in Newfoundland where I was immersed in diverse cultures and gained

## Executive Updates

lifelong friendships as well as a strong sense of community with colleagues.

Alongside my experience, I am an educator and researcher at heart. I have always been interested in, and committed to, the professional development of counselling trainees and psychologists and disseminating associated research. My doctoral research focused on supervisee experiences in clinical supervision, particularly their 'nondisclosures' or what they did not share during supervision with video-recording review. As a recipient of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship Award, I was able to have my research published in a peer-reviewed journal.

My journey is interdependent, and I recognize that I, like others, did not arrive here on my own. Many mentors, professors, friends and colleagues have extended generous hands and tremendous help along the way. More than ever, I am in a position to 'pay it forward' to burgeoning students, trainees, and the larger community. I look forward to embracing what the future brings and the pleasant surprises of how our pathways may cross in the future.

As your new Chair-Elect, I promise to offer a critical lens that will help promote fresh and diverse perspectives as we advance psychological research in our profession. I am excited about our current newsletter theme, "Looking Back, Looking Forward" and how our world and lived experiences have been shifting during the coronavirus pandemic.

In my personal and professional life, I have noticed that everyone is at different stages of grieving various forms of loss, many of which have been experienced as

devastating. As we look to the future, we seek new sources of hope, healing, and 'normalcy', yet we do so within the context of a prolonged pandemic, global instability, and hypervigilance about what the future holds. Some people report feeling like life has 'returned to normal' and others are still largely in survival mode, especially those in more vulnerable positions.

For me, returning to in-person sessions at the office (after 1.5 years of working from home) and being part of a wonderful, supportive community has been a blessing. Most of my clients have returned to in-person counselling yet many clients still enjoy having the option and convenience of doing video sessions from the comfort of their home. Telepsychology during the pandemic has raised interesting ethical issues including the request to serve clients not only from the comfort of their homes, but from other provinces and countries.

This is an excellent opportunity to reflect on how we are living and adjusting within the next phase of the pandemic. Where have you been and where are you headed? How does your present and future continue to be impacted? There are many ways to make a difference in our profession; my hope is that you will consider having your voice heard by contributing an article to one of our upcoming newsletters.

Sincerely,

Allison Foskett, Ph.D., R. Psych  
(she, her, hers)  
Edmonton, AB  
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As part of my reconciliation, I acknowledge residing on Amiskwaciwâskahikan (Beaver Hills House / Edmonton), the land that is part of Treaty 6 territory, which is home and a gathering place to many diverse Indigenous Peoples including the Métis, Cree, Dene, Nakota Sioux, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, and others. I recognize the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who have marked and cared for these lands, as well as Turtle Island for many generations. I respect their unique heritages, language, culture, spiritual beliefs and healing practices, and continue to learn how this enriches our community.



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## JESSICA VAN VLIET

### Conference Coordinator

As I reflect on what it means to be in the “post-COVID” era from my perspective as professor and psychologist on Treaty 6 territory in Edmonton/Amiskwacîwâskahikan, gratitude in the face of uncertainty comes to mind. After more than two years of working almost exclusively online, the majority of my professional activities are once again in person. For me, the most uplifting aspect of returning to campus at the University of Alberta is the buzz of energy coming from students who are bringing the campus back to life. The excitement that I see on the faces of students who I pass in the corridor and encounter in the classroom fill me with a renewed sense of gratitude and joy for the work that I do. At the same time, I am reminded that, despite our collective desire to put COVID-19 behind us, the virus has not yet run its course. New—and apparently more vaccine-resistant—variants of COVID-19 have arrived.

Canadian counselling psychology has certainly flexed and grown in the face of the pandemic (for example, through creating new opportunities for online learning, convening, and counselling), and we will continue to do so. However, we are still facing much uncertainty as we look to the future.

Over the next decade or so, I believe that our field has much to contribute when it comes to researching how people cope with uncertainty, and developing culturally sensitive and responsive strategies for helping people thrive in uncertain times. In addition, much work lies ahead in helping the staggering number of people contending with grief, trauma, and the long-term physical and mental health effects of COVID. As we rise to these challenges, Canadian counselling psychology will no doubt grow in promising new directions.

This brings me to the 83rd Canadian Psychological Association Conference, which will be taking place in Toronto in June 2023. We hope that you will join us in person during this pivotal time in the history of psychology. We invite you to be part of the many conversations, presentations, workshops, and other activities that help move us forward as a field. There are also opportunities to contribute specifically to the Counselling Psychology Section of CPA. As the Conference Coordinator for our section, I am seeking volunteers to serve as reviewers of conference submission abstracts. The deadline for abstract submissions is December 14, 2022. Reviews will occur over the following month, and you will be provided with clear criteria to help guide your review. Last year, we had a superb team of reviewers whose contributions helped make the 2022 Conference a huge success. If you are interested in joining this year’s team of reviewers and/or would like more information, please email me at [jvanvliet@ualberta.ca](mailto:jvanvliet@ualberta.ca). I hope to hear from you soon!

K. Jessica Van Vliet, Ph.D., R.Psych. (she/her)  
[jvanvliet@ualberta.ca](mailto:jvanvliet@ualberta.ca)

#### Territorial acknowledgement:

I am coming to you from Amiskwacîwâskahikan on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to shape our community.



# Executive Updates

# JON WOODEND

## Secretary Treasurer



Greetings everyone!

My name is Jon Woodend and I am a settler on the unceded territories of the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples (Victoria, BC). After being acclaimed at the 2022 AGM in June, I have stepped into the role of Secretary-Treasurer from Danielle Brosseau, and I hope to serve the section with the same integrity and dedication as Danielle – Thank you, Danielle for all your service to the section!

A bit about me, I recently started as an Assistant Professor at the University of Victoria in the CACEP-accredited Counselling Psychology program. Along with teaching and training students, my counselling practice has focused on working with young adults in secondary and post-secondary settings with a range of concerns (academic, career and personal) and from different contexts. My research program at UVic focuses on the international career transitions of immigrants, international students, and people from refugee backgrounds.

Reflecting on the newsletter theme of counselling psychology in a ‘post-COVID’ world, I am reminded of the urgency of this research: As governments, particularly in Canada, start to engage in pandemic recovery it is clear that they are doubling down on immigration as a solution to growing the Canadian workforce and addressing labour shortages. After the pandemic highlighted existing social inequities, particularly for immigrants and refugees who, although they are highly adaptive people, face disproportionate un/under-employment, it is no longer acceptable to simply embrace immigration. Instead, effective and relevant policy and service provision is needed to support immigrants’ and refugees’ long-term transition into meaningful and decent work. Given the scarring effects of un/under-employment on wellbeing, counselling psychology needs to play its role in co-creating solutions with immigrants and refugees, and advocating for systems change.

Although I am originally from Halifax and I completed my graduate degrees in Calgary, I returned to Canada this year after living in Australia and working as a Lecturer in Counselling, Guidance and Career Development. I put my name forward for the Secretary-Treasurer position so that I could reconnect with the Canadian Counselling Psychology community and contribute to the important work that you all do across research, practice, and advocacy. I’m looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible during my tenure in the Secretary-Treasurer role, particularly at the 2023 AGM in Toronto – Until then, wishing you all a warm rest of 2022 and well wishes for 2023!

Cheers,  
Jon Woodend, PhD, RPsych  
Assistant Professor, University of Victoria

# Executive Updates

## THOMAS QIAO

### STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE



Happy winter everyone!

I hope 2022 has been easier than the last two years for you! As we navigate through these uncertain times, I hope you are taking proper care of yourselves and finding a supportive community to support you. Since I started my graduate school journey in 2021, I have been so encouraged by you, my peers, for your adaptability to change, your commitment to growth, and your resilience when dealing with challenges. I have learned so much from many of you, and I am so grateful to have joined this inclusive and caring community in counselling psychology. For those of you who just started graduate school in September, I extend a warm welcome to the counselling psychology family. Graduate school sometimes can be difficult, but it comes with fruitful rewards: I hope you are on your way to growing as clinicians (and researchers), finding your passions and niches, and possibly making some lifelong connections and worthwhile relationships.

To introduce myself, I am currently a second year master's student in Counselling Psychology at the University of Calgary. I am currently working on my thesis (hopefully I can finish it this year!) while completing my year-long practicum in the Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Program. Beginning this summer, I have started serving as your Student Representative for a 2-year period, and I am delighted to act as a liaison between you, my peers, and the Counselling Psychology Section. To get in touch with me, please feel free to send me a message either via the Counselling Psychology Section Facebook Page, or by email ([qingqi.qiao@ucalgary.ca](mailto:qingqi.qiao@ucalgary.ca)). As your representative, I am passionate about connecting with you – students in counselling psychology – and learning about your experiences. We look forward to your engagement with the Section, especially if you are in a master's program or if you live in eastern Canada. We are so interested in your experience in counselling psychology, including your learning, clinical training, supervision, and your experience in graduate school in general. We want to hear your voice and (re)connect with you! The Section is committed to providing you with our support, so please reach out to us! We'd also love to connect and collaborate with you, if you'd like to share your ideas, thoughts, and feedback on how to advance the work of our Section, and about training in counselling psychology. As the Fall semester is coming to a close, I wish all of you a safe and enjoyable holiday and a well-deserved time of rest and relaxation. Just a reminder, the submission deadline for the CPA 2023 Annual Convention is December 14. I invite you to share your research and experience with us at CPA next year! I am excited to connect with and learn from you all in Toronto!

I respectfully acknowledge that I currently live and work in the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations), and homeland to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

Sincerely  
Thomas Qiao  
[qingqi.qiao@ucalgary.ca](mailto:qingqi.qiao@ucalgary.ca)

## Executive Updates

# Janet Miller

## Awards Coordinator

It is my pleasure to add my well-wishes alongside my colleagues in this addition of Kaleidoscope. I am a registered psychologist working and living in Mohkinstsis, the place now known as the city of Calgary. I am honoured to make my home here, where the two rivers meet, and I feel so fortunate to be so close to the Rocky Mountains and their foothills. Any time spent outdoors is so good for my mental health and well being, and I am grateful to live in this part of the world.

As a psychologist, I work within the Student Counselling centre of Mount Royal University and in a small private practice in the heart of the city. It has been fantastic to be involved with our CPA Section on Counselling Psychology, and especially fun to serve as your Awards Coordinator. In the pages ahead, I am pleased to showcase our 2022 Section Award winners, and eagerly invite you to nominate your colleagues, classmates, supervisors, or students for our 2023 award process. I am sure that you'll agree that there is much in our profession worth celebrating. I'd like to extend my gratitude to all the adjudicators who supported our poster review process at the 2022 CPA Convention: Rob Bedi, Danielle Brosseau, Sonya Flessati, Houyuan Luo, Marvin MacDonald, Jessica Van Vliet, and Kaori Wada. The process was fun, but also very challenging due to the excellent work on display. I am already looking forward to the Toronto Convention and hope you will join us there.

Janet Miller, PhD. R.Psych.  
jbmiller@mtroyal.ca

The city of Calgary is located in the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of the Treaty 7 region in southern Alberta, which includes the Siksika, the Piikuni, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina and the Iyârhe Nakoda. We are situated on land where the Bow River meets the Elbow River. The traditional Blackfoot name of this place is "Mohkinstsis," which we now call the city of Calgary. The city of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation - Region 3.



Deadline for award  
nominations

**April 30, 2023**



# The Experiences of Parents who Affirm Their Child's Diverse Gender Identity

The gender identities and expressions of gender diverse children (GDC), those children who defy, and broaden the confines of an externally imposed binary system of gender, illustrate the limitations of gender as a binary system by refusing to fit neatly into the opposing categories of female or male, feminine/masculine and/or girl or boy (D'Augelli et al., 2006; Wyss, 2004). Growing evidence suggests that affirmatively raising a GDC in a world that promotes and sanctions binary conceptions of gender can result in unique parenting challenges (e.g., negative emotions, Ryan, 2010; secondary stigma, Johnson & Benson, 2014; loss of support, Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2015). Despite the fact that research on GDC unequivocally points to the criticality of parental support (e.g., Ehrensaft, 2016), research on the experiences of these parents is only beginning. Furthermore, while parenting a child is a relational and developmental process, the majority of studies on parenting a GDC are retrospective in nature, and therefore may not adequately capture aspects of the parenting process that unfold over time.

This dissertation addressed two research questions: (1) What are the experiences over time of parents who are affirmatively raising a GDC? and (2) What is the function of blogging for parents who blog about supportively raising their GDC? Data were sourced from four multi-year blogs in the public domain, each written by a parent who was supportive of their pre-adolescent child's gender diversity. A feminist constructivist epistemological stance and a narrative approach to inquiry were applied. Data were analyzed using a narrative-informed thematic analysis, a process of identifying, interpreting, and recording patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012), while attending to the commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and spatiality (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007.)

## LAURA COPELAND

McGill University

Dissertation  
Award Winner  
2021



## Affirming Diverse Gender Identity (continued)

Results highlighted the intrapersonal and interpersonal processes that parents experience over time as they raise their transgender or GDC (See Appendix A for a list of themes). The first inquiry employed a discourse analysis to contextualize and critically interpret its results, situating the experiences of parents in relation to currently accepted social norms and beliefs about parenting and gender resulting in the finding that affirming parents become both leader and follower in their parenting practices. The results of the second inquiry indicated that blogs were spaces where parents practiced advocacy and activism (see Appendix B for a list of themes). This was interpreted through the frames of transformative gender justice and mediated kinship in order to consider the sociopolitical realities of the participants in relation to the function of blogging for parents.

This research reinforces the findings of the existing literature on the experiences of parents affirmatively raising a GDC. The application of a discourse analysis highlighted dominant narratives related to parenting and gender and offers a new understanding of parenting a GDC across time. Notably, this is the first study to illuminate the function of blogging for parents who write about supporting their GDC. Additionally, this study offers several methodological contributions. Using blogs as a data source in this project allowed for an exploration of in-the-moment reflec-

tions, over time, that emphasized the narratives that parents themselves deemed important. Findings should be interpreted and transferred with caution given the homogenous sample. Limitations notwithstanding, the findings of this study offer important implications for counselling psychologists working with parents of GDC. For instance, psychologists can help parents understand the ongoing, iterative, and relational processes that they may experience, can normalize the struggle with internalized genderism while encouraging outward support of the child, and can aid parents in building gender affirming community and connecting with other gender affirming professionals. Practitioners also have a duty to advocate for institutional and societal level change on behalf of parents with gender diverse children.

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# Uncanny Phenomenon: Existential Experiences among Iranian International Students

Cross-cultural transitions can evoke reflections about existential concerns (Cooper et al., 2019). Existential concerns are universal conflicts related to human experiences of living in the world, namely: death anxiety, isolation, freedom, and meaninglessness (Yalom, 1980). The adjustment experiences of international students can touch upon various underlying existential meanings. For example, facing the unfamiliarity of the host culture poses a challenge to one's sense of meaning and can bring up the existential dilemma of meaninglessness (Berra 2021). However, the literature on the adjustment of international students has primarily focused on their general adjustment problems and acculturation stress (e.g., Moores & Popadiuk, 2011) while neglecting their underlying existential meaning.

My qualitative study aimed to explore the existential nature of adjustment issues, as experienced by Iranian international students, who are one of the fastest growing groups of international students in Canada due to political and economic tensions within Iran (Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE], 2016). The research question I explored was: How do Iranian international students make sense of their existential concerns during their acculturation in Canada?

I used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which is suited to explore individuals' lived experiences and examines how they make meaning from particular life situations (Eatough & Smith, 2017). I conducted two 90-minute semi-structured interviews with six Iranian international students in Farsi. The first interview was aimed at getting to know the participants and their general migration experiences, while the second interview focused on their existential experiences during their acculturation. To facilitate conversations about existential experiences I asked participants to bring pieces of art (e.g., paintings, photography, poems) that represented their existential experiences to the second interview. During the second interview, I also used cards with existential terms written on them to prompt participants to reflect at a deeper level. Data was analysed following the steps outlined by Smith et al. (2009).

Through analysis, three overarching themes were identified: (a) Migration as a Boundary Situation, (b) Facing Existential Concerns, and (c) Coping with Existential Concerns. The findings highlighted a connection between feelings of

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University of Calgary

Masters Thesis  
Award Winner  
2021





## Uncanny Phenomenon (continued)

not-being-at home or uncanniness in an unfamiliar host culture and existential reflections. It was also revealed that existential inquiries may be masquerading as adjustment problems. Moreover, the findings demonstrated participants' resiliency, growth, and ability to reflect on their adjustment challenges and existential issues. Lastly, results highlighted the lack of attention to geopolitical factors affecting international students' experiences.

The findings are important considering current literature that overemphasizes international students' deficits and conceptualizes their acculturation challenges as pathological. Although not all adjustment challenges represent existential concerns, the dominance of a deficit model in the literature about international students may have overshadowed the possible manifestations of existential dilemmas, thus rendering issues such as meaninglessness, identity crisis, and isolation resulting from cross-cultural transition as psychological pathology (Olofsson et al., 2021). Moreover, possible misinterpretation of existential concerns as pathology may have left researchers and those who work with international students remiss about the growth-promoting nature of these concerns (Basma & Gibbons, 2016).

The findings suggest the need for counsellors to be attentive to the possible existential concerns accompanying an international student's acculturation stress, and to provide a space that allows for authentic conversations about such concerns (Spillers, 2007). Counsellors are also encouraged to seek to understand the sociopolitical and contextual factors that may be impacting an international student's challenges (Panagiotakopoulos, 2020).

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# Second-Generation Canadians' Understanding of their Cultural Identity

Cultural identity can be described as the way an individual understands and orientates toward others (in terms of nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religious community, etc.), which is shaped and negotiated through interactions with others (Sametband & Strong, 2018; Yan, 2018). Second-generation Canadians is a term used to describe individuals who were born in Canada to at least one immigrant parent (Statistics Canada, 2021). There are several terms used to describe second-generation individuals; some include 'bicultural', 'multicultural', 'in-between worlds', and 'hyphenated Canadians' (e.g., Barros & Albert, 2020; Goitom, 2017; Stroink & Lalonde, 2009; Sundar, 2008). Difference in terminology may indicate the complexity of cultural identity for those who are members to more than one cultural group. Narrative analysis was used to analyze data as it is interested how individuals make sense and find meaning through the stories they tell (Silver, 2013).

This study aims to respond to the questions: How do second-generation Canadians describe their cultural identity? And how is cultural identity of second-generation Canadians managed, maintained, and negotiated in social interactions? Participants were Mount Royal University student born in Canada to at least one immigrant parent. Four participants participated in semi-structured interviews which lasted between 15 and 45 minutes. No identifying information was recorded in the transcripts. Following the interview participants were debriefed and sent a list of Mental Health Resources. Audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using narrative inquiry steps described by Crossley (2007).

Results showed that cultural identity descriptions varied from participant to participant in how they relate to being Canadian and their other held culture.

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Mount Royal  
University

Undergraduate  
Project Winner  
2021



## Second-Generation Canadians' (continued)

One participant said, "It's funny cause I'm kind of in, like, a limbo state. I'm not really one, but I'm also not really the other. And I don't really know where I fit –". Her tone is pessimistic depicting as she uses imagery to depict a level of disconnect from both of her identified cultures. Other participants positioned themselves either more closely to Canadian culture or their other culture, but one reoccurring theme was the lack of tangible Canadian cultural experiences. When participants talked about their other culture referred to food, dress, language, and events/celebrations, but when it came to describing their cultural experiences as it relates to being Canadian, they often only talked about their relational experiences with other Caucasian Canadians or minority groups.

Findings of this study may show how the Canadian culture is taken for granted as it appears there are no tangible expressions of the culture that individuals can relate to, often referring to aspects of the Canadian society as a default (e.g., cultural foods relating to that which is not Canadian). This "invisible" culture makes it difficult for second-generation Canadians to conceptualize their Canadian identity. This research contributes to the broader research in multicultural counselling and may be useful for mental health professional (i.e., counsellors, family therapists, psychologists) working with this population and who are navigating the cultural dynamics of differing generation individuals (i.e., first-generation and second-generation individuals).

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# DOCTORAL POSTER AWARD WINNER

## The Role of Forensic Assessment in Counselling Psychology

**Victoria Pasyk**  
University of Calgary

According to the Canadian Psychological Association, counselling psychology is a broad specialization of practice that is demarcated by the focus on wellbeing, multicultural competence, collaboration, and client strengths. While this specialization consists of a broad range of competencies, psychological assessment is considered one of the core practices of counselling psychology. Yet, forensic assessment is more often conducted within the field of clinical, as opposed to counselling, psychology. Thus, in this poster, we synthesize the literature on the role of forensic assessment in counselling psychology. Through exploring the history, purpose, and potential ethical issues of assessment in counselling psychology, we discuss how forensic assessment fits within our field. Although there are notable differences in the core values and ethical considerations between the fields of counselling and forensic psychology, counselling psychologists possess many skills that would bring benefit to forensic settings. Professional identity and competence should be multi-faceted, and counselling psychology can provide a useful foundation for work in forensics. As such, we provide recommendations for counselling psychologists seeking to conduct forensic assessments.

Co-author: José Domene.

**The Role of Forensic Assessment in Counselling Psychology**  
Victoria Pasyk, JD, MSc & José F. Domene, PhD  
Workshop School of Education, University of Calgary

**Introduction**

- Counselling psychology is a specialization that focuses on the following:
  - wellbeing
  - multicultural competence
  - collaboration/working alliance
  - client strengths
- Psychological assessment is considered one of the core practices of counselling psychology
- Forensic assessment has been largely ignored within counselling psychology
- Thus, we examine the potential role of forensic assessment in counselling psychology

**Benefits and Purposes of Assessment in Counselling Psychology**

Cost consideration	Identifying therapeutic readiness	Increased knowledge on client functioning
Manage risk	Enhance client's learning of themselves	Minimize clients' harmful of themselves
Introduce new means of assessment	Encourage new goals in therapy	

**Arguments for Incorporating Forensic Assessment into Counselling Psychology**

- Counselling psychology's strong training and emphasis on the working alliance
  - Facilitates establishing rapport for conducting assessments in forensic settings
  - Reduces the likelihood of clients perceiving the assessment process as adversarial
  - May contribute to enhanced validity of forensic assessment results
- Counselling psychology's core values of multicultural competence and social justice orientation
  - Provides an ethical and client-centered approach to assessment
  - Promotes appropriate contextualization of assessment results (particularly for clients from equity-seeking groups)
- Psychological assessment is within the scope of practice of counselling psychology
  - Many of these skills are transferable to forensic settings
  - Counselling psychologists' willingness to engage in their full scope of practice may increase forensic-involved individuals' access to assessment services
- Counselling psychology lays a foundation for the development of a multi-faceted professional identity and competencies
  - This allows for professional development and practice in forensic psychology, including forensic assessment

**Assessment in Counselling Psychology: Existing Patterns of Practice**

- Psychological assessment within the field of counselling psychology still varies widely in terms of:
  - depth of training in graduate school
  - use of different measures
  - attitudes towards assessment
- Although career counselling and assessment were once considered a core activity of counselling psychologists, only around 15% of psychologists actually engage in vocational assessment and 0.3% of counselling psychology doctoral student time is devoted to vocational assessment
- Only 12% of time in counselling psychology doctoral programs is spent conducting other kinds of assessments
- Over 16% of doctoral students and 15% of counselling psychologists desire additional training in assessment
- The low rates of engagement in assessment may stem from counselling psychology's humanistic underpinnings, which could lead counselling psychologists to move away from prioritizing diagnosing, categorizing, and labelling

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# MASTERS POSTER AWARD WINNER

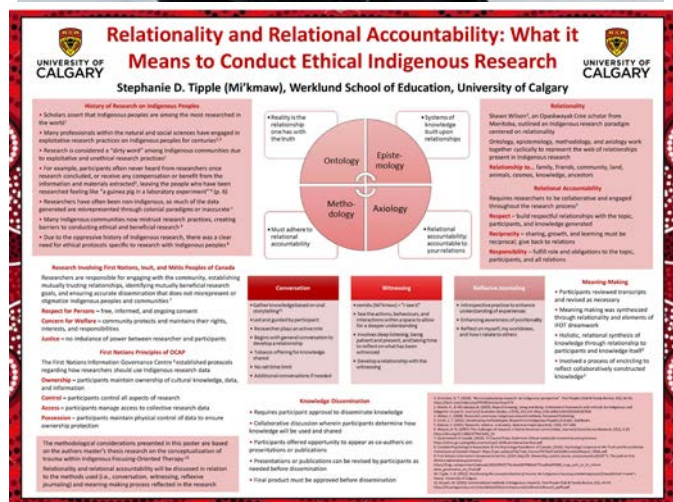
## Relationality and Relational Accountability: What it Means to Conduct Ethical Indigenous Research

Stephanie Tipple (Kihêw-iskwew)  
University of Calgary

Colonization has impacted Indigenous Peoples for centuries. Within the social sciences, many professionals have engaged in exploitative research on Indigenous Peoples. Thus, it is no surprise that many now mistrust research practices, creating barriers to conducting ethical and beneficial research.

Due to the oppressive history of Indigenous research, there is a clear need for ethical protocols specific to Indigenous research. The task force created on behalf of the Canadian Psychological Association and Psychology Foundation of Canada advocated explicitly for ethical Indigenous research practices by referring readers to the Tri-Council Policy Statement protocols for research involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada and the First Nations Principles of OCAP.

Wilson (2008), an Opaskwayak Cree scholar from Manitoba, outlined an Indigenous research paradigm centered on relationality. He explained that the components of his paradigm all work together cyclically to represent the web of relationships present in Indigenous research. The current study used Wilson's relationality to gather data through conversation, witnessing, and reflexive journaling. Thus, this poster will present a Mi'kmaw students' experience conducting Indigenous research using Wilson's methodology. Specifically, its relevance to the recommendations outlined by the agencies mentioned above.



# UNDERGRADUATE POSTER WINNER

**“We need immunizations so that we can all be together again”: A qualitative study of domestic service providers’ experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saskatchewan**

**Nicole Camacho Soto**

University of Calgary

Social distancing regulations implemented as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a massive and fast modification of domestic violence (DV) service delivery. Previous emergencies have been known to increase challenges with accessing DV services (Morrow & Enarson, 1997). During the pandemic, physical distancing and stay-at-home orders may create and/or intensify challenges for DV victims and service providers. This study qualitatively assesses the opportunities, needs, and challenges of service providers and DV victims when providing and accessing services, respectively. Six DV service providers from Saskatchewan were recruited using a purposive sampling strategy and interviewed remotely. A range of themes and sub-themes were identified through a thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analytic approach. Victims’ needs and barriers to accessing services primarily related to limited access to technology, connectivity issues, lack of opportunities for human connection, decreased availability of support services, technological discomfort and mistrust, and isolation. Similarly, service providers experienced difficulties with keeping clients mentally stable; managing increased workloads; and assisting victims properly due to a limited capability of reading and understanding body language signs. Based on these findings, recommendations for addressing these challenges and informing the development, implementation, and/or adaptation of DV services during future global crises are provided. **Co-author: Lisa Jewell**



**“We need immunizations so that we can all be together again”: A qualitative study of domestic violence service providers’ experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saskatchewan**

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<p><b>BACKGROUND</b></p> <p>The home is considered a safe space for many, but not for all. Even though the spread of COVID-19 is currently the foremost worldwide health threat, DV is also considered a rising public health and social challenge (Wathman &amp; Saba, 2020). Recent literature has suggested that during the pandemic, individuals have been more vulnerable to DV and have faced limited access to essential DV resources due to the massive and fast modification of DV service delivery (Canada, 2020). Current changes in healthcare and human service delivery during COVID-19 may present challenges to both service providers and DV victims.</p> <p><b>PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>Acknowledging that our responsibility is to create legacy knowledge that will help us build a more resilient and stronger society for future global crises, the following questions were explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the unique needs and challenges faced by victims when seeking services during the pandemic?</li> <li>What are the unique opportunities, needs, and challenges that service providers face when serving survivors during the pandemic?</li> </ul> <p><b>METHODS</b></p> <p>This research was conducted using a social constructivist epistemological worldview, which recognizes that knowledge is shaped by the social and historical conditions in which they are constructed.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews were conducted with DV service providers (SPs) located in Saskatchewan via the Zoom platform to gather service providers’ insights and interpret the varied and multiple meanings that service providers have formed regarding their experiences when delivering DV victim services during the pandemic. Interviews were video-recorded, transcribed and thematically analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analytic approach.</p>	<p><b>DATA ANALYSIS</b></p> <p>The results suggest that online DV services are a promising service delivery model to assist DV victims despite the limitations of using an online DV service delivery model including lack of in-person access, limited lack of context and trust, declining personal matters remotely, limited service providers’ ability to read victims’ body language and facial expressions.</p> <p><b>Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barriers: Technology access and assistance, Internet access</li> <li>Opportunities for social connection</li> <li>Service Providers: Technology access and assistance, Consistent staff meetings, Personal equipment protection</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barriers: Decreased availability of support services, Technological discomfort and mistrust, Social distancing measures</li> <li>Service Providers: Reading DV victims’ body language, Managing increased workloads, Difficult reading and understanding body language signs</li> </ul> <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of a new service delivery system</li> <li>Increased reach of service</li> <li>Strengthened relationship with community organizations</li> </ul>	<p><b>DISCUSSION</b></p> <p><b>Needed micro-, macro-, and policy level responses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The government needs to ensure equal access to broadband internet in communities for both service providers and DV victims</li> <li>Community members must be encouraged to be alert to any victim’s attempts to ask for help</li> <li>Service providers should be engaged in educational programs focusing on video-conference specific communication skills</li> <li>Discussion of community based organizations serving DV victims should advocate for obtaining needed public policy attention for DV services (e.g., childcare, as they receive less policy and funding attention)</li> <li>Directors, supervisors, and administrators should advocate for creating a supportive work environment to foster service providers’ emotional and psychological wellbeing. Service providers were dealing with multidimensional distresses resulting from the pandemic.</li> </ul> <p><b>Limitations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited sample size due to service providers’ heavy workloads</li> <li>Connectivity issues when conducting interviews</li> <li>Lack of anonymity between service providers and the interviewer may have influenced service providers’ responses.</li> </ul> <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First qualitative study to explore the challenges and needs faced by DV victims and service providers during the pandemic</li> <li>Systematic approach used in sampling, data collection, and analysis</li> <li>Social constructivist epistemological worldview</li> <li>Diverse participant sample</li> </ul> <p><b>FUTURE DIRECTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A wider study involving other regions in the country may be warranted to enhance comprehensiveness and generalizability of the findings</li> <li>A study asking victims directly about the challenges they experienced during the pandemic</li> </ul> <p><b>Scan QR code for REFERENCES</b></p>
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# DISTINGUISHED MEMBER

## Janet Miller, PhD

Our Distinguished Member Award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of Counselling Psychology, and we are pleased to announce that our 2022 award winner is Dr. Janet Miller.



Dr. Miller is a registered Counselling Psychologist who holds the academic ranks of Full Professor at Mount Royal University and Adjunct Professor with the University of Calgary. She has been a trainer for the Centre for Suicide Prevention for over 20 years, and she currently is the Chair Support

Coordinator for MRU, where she offers leadership training and mentorship for academic department chairs. Most of Janet's therapeutic work revolves around counselling individuals (through Student Counselling Services at Mount Royal University as well as through her private practice), and she is recognized for moving the field of counselling psychology forward through her service, scholarship, and contributions to practice. Dr. Miller is an accomplished key note speaker, writer, and facilitator. Her recent book, *You@the U: A Guide to Your First Year of University* was published by UBC Press in August 2021 and has received excellent reviews: [www.ubcpres.ca/you-at-the-u](http://www.ubcpres.ca/you-at-the-u). Dr. Miller has demonstrated leadership and service on the Counselling Psychology Section Executive Committee, particularly in her role as Editor of our national newsletter, *Kaliedoscope*. Dr. Miller has served in this role for ten years and we are grateful for how she has shone a light on our counselling psychology practice. It is our pleasure to recognize an outstanding colleague with this distinguished member award.

# CONGRATULATIONS!

# Looking Back and Looking Forward

## A collective reflection of graduate training during the pandemic.

Samara Wessel, Thomas Qiao & Noah Furlani  
University of Calgary

### Introduction

It has been two and a half years since the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic forced universities around the globe to transition to online learning. Although it has only been a short amount of time, researchers have already begun to understand the effects of this transition on students' learning and clinical experience. We hope to add to this discourse by providing a collaborative reflection on our experience as graduate students, with a focus on areas that were the most impacted by the pandemic.

### Online Learning

When we began our degree in the fall of 2021, most provincial public health measures targeting COVID-19 had been dropped. One could easily get the sense that the pandemic was over. With the exception of the indoor masking requirement, our initial experience of graduate school was mostly 'normal.' The return to in-person learning provided our cohort with more opportunities to create bonds amongst ourselves and with faculty members, and facilitated interactions in class, such as during group discussions and classroom demonstrations. This ensured a smooth transition into graduate student life.



The fourth wave began to peak during the holidays, and sometime after Christmas we were told that we would be going online for part, if not all, of the winter term. Switching to online learning came with perks and drawbacks. Canadian winters are notoriously harsh, and online learning provided us with a more accessible option for attending classes. Students who fell ill or contracted COVID-19 did not have to miss class. Others could stay in their family homes, mitigating their feelings of loneliness and isolation. While accessibility was notably increased, the general consensus has been that the drawbacks far outweighed this benefit. Attending classes over Zoom limited student and faculty connectedness. Many felt a sense of disengagement from class time and course content. Even when students and faculty fully engaged with lectures, Zoom fatigue and the feeling of disconnection wore most of us down. Students had difficulty fully engaging in group discussions or asking questions as readily as in person; professors sometimes had difficulty delivering course materials meaningfully online, creating an additional barrier to student engagement.

## Looking back, and Looking forward... continued

We believe that in-person classes facilitate quality student engagement more readily than online learning.

### Clinical Training and Supervision

The pandemic also had an effect on our clinical training. Our cohort started our first in-house practicum in January of this year. Because of public health measures, clients—for some, our very first—could only be seen online. Like online learning, this experience was a mixed bag, both challenging and rewarding. Due to the online format, we were provided with limited opportunities to observe our supervisors' sessions before starting to see clients of our own. This felt similar to a sink or swim situation and added pressure to the already stressful event of counselling for our first time. Further, while the popularity of teletherapy increased during the pandemic, our coursework and training materials did not reflect the uniqueness of teletherapy. As a result, many of us felt unprepared.

The teletherapy experience was not all negative, however. Many of us found the clinical experience gleaned from this practicum was valuable. First, experience in teletherapy is increasingly valuable, as even without public health restrictions, more and more clients are choosing this format, making therapy more accessible. We appreciate that our training supported us to develop skills for working with clients virtually. Second, we also learned about clients (e.g., children with ADHD) and therapeutic techniques (e.g., two-chair) for which teletherapy was a less suitable format. As a result of our experience, we feel more capable of planning interventions with future clients. Finally, we gained first-hand experience of some of the challenges of working online: unstable internet connections, malfunctioning cameras and microphones, lack of privacy at home, and so on. We learned different ways to troubleshoot during sessions, learned about how to maintain confidentiality even in imperfect environments, and developed skills for maintaining the therapeutic relationship online.

Many in our cohort found that our experience of supervision during the pandemic was vastly different from our current practicum experience, doing mostly in-person work. During that first practicum, some of us only ever met our supervisors virtually. We felt that virtual relationships created a gap, which impeded our ability to connect and form a solid supervisory relationship. This gap interfered with supervisees' ability to communicate our training experiences, including discussing countertransference in our sessions with clients and during supervision. While all of our therapy sessions were recorded for supervisors to review, this approach was not as efficacious as live supervision (e.g., bug-in-the-ear, live observation, or co-therapy).

As a result, many of us felt deprived of the support that would have been available had things been in person. In earlier stages of our clinical training, some of us had supervisors message us directly during sessions to guide our practice. Unfortunately, this practice is highly distracting, interrupting the natural flow of sessions, and many of us did not find this particularly useful. Nevertheless, there were silver linings to our supervisory experience during the pandemic. The challenges posed by both therapy and supervision being conducted mostly online meant that we, as students, were called upon to be more independent and creative in our thinking and problem-solving. We felt that the balance of power between ourselves and our supervisors was more even. While the challenge of that first practicum was significant, it also offered us unique opportunities in learning and skill development.

### Self-Care and Community Engagement

Psychology students were not alone in feeling the negative mental health impacts of the pandemic. Indeed, the deleterious psychological effects of the pandemic were widely acknowledged. While online learning allowed us to continue with our program



## Looking back, and Looking forward... continued

and maintain some social bonds, connecting over Zoom was often not enough to keep people from feeling isolated. Self-care was paramount. Luckily for our cohort, having our first term in person allowed us to connect and form strong bonds that could be relied upon during periods of isolation. These relationships helped many of us survive the lonely, cold months of lockdown at the beginning of this year.

We also felt that our friendships were solidified during this period, as we went out of our way to provide support for our fellow students. For example, I (Samara Wessel) facilitated a weekly, communal yoga practice to promote wellness and connection. The connections and friendships we have made within our cohort members have been the most fulfilling aspect of our graduate program. They have significantly eased the difficulties of completing our academic work and clinical training during the pandemic.

### Conclusion

Students, faculty, and supervisors showed great resilience and flexibility in adapting to the unpredictable realities of the pandemic. While the effects of the pandemic on student learning and engagement are yet to be fully understood, we have attempted to outline the benefits and limitations that we have thus far experienced in our graduate studies. The transition to online learning negatively impacted our engagement with course material and clinical supervision. However, it also provided unique opportunities for us to develop skills in the delivery of teletherapy, and to forge lasting relationships within our cohort.

We hope our experience can provide some comfort for other students navigating the uncharted waters of learning and clinical training during the pandemic. We also hope our experience can inform the advancement of training pedagogy in professional psychology.



# ART BEYOND THE PANDEMIC:

The significance of artmaking  
and creativity during the  
COVID-19 pandemic  
and its role in the  
future of Counselling Psychology

## Sepidar Yeganeh Farid

University of Calgary

We are now two and a half years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As I reflect back, what stands out most to me is how artmaking featured in my life. I have been creating art for as long as I can remember and I was working as a professional artist prior to the pandemic, but artmaking gained a different meaning for me during the pandemic. I think of doing shows on zoom, writing my own play, creating music on my couch, and singing in my car. I soon realized that I was not the only one focused on art during the pandemic. In almost every virtual conversation and all-over social media, there was talk of novel creative endeavors. At the time, I was completing my master's in Counselling Psychology coursework at the University of Calgary, and even one of our professors talked about learning the ukulele when the pandemic started. The highlight that emerged from these stories was the incredible feeling of excitement and accom-

plishment that we all felt through artmaking, and how these creative activities got us through the daily struggles of the ever-changing dynamic and restrictions of the pandemic. This emergence of art was not limited to the people around me, or even to Canada, it was universal:

neighbours in Italy singing  
together from their  
balconies, line dancers out-  
side of the windows  
of senior homes,  
artists painting murals  
relaying messages  
of hope...

In a time when we were all faced with survival, fear, grief, isolation, and endless stressors, art rose to the surface. I was left wondering, what was it about art and why are we not talking more about it?

## Art Beyond the Pandemic -- continued

As a student of Counselling Psychology, I have always wanted to showcase the significant marriage of creativity and wellbeing in both research and practice. The rise of artmaking during the pandemic fascinated me but it did not surprise me, I was seeing what I have always believed, so I knew I had to explore this further, and what better way to do that than in my master's thesis! With the support of my supervisor Dr. Tanya Mudry,

**I decided to change my thesis topic to discover why art became a central part of coping during the pandemic.**

Literature has shown many benefits of engaging in art such as improving psychological well-being (Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017); promoting hope, healing, empowerment, self-esteem, connection, and innovative coping strategies to address everyday issues (Lith et al., 2011); reducing social isolation (Lith et al., 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2013); guiding self-reflection (Stafford, 2016); and facilitating positive mental health recovery (Lith et al., 2009). I also referred to my own undergraduate capstone project which showed a significant increase in positive mood



following attending an acting class (improv or film acting). By looking at all these benefits found through prior research, we can see why artmaking would be a useful tool in facing the specific struggles of the pandemic. For my master's thesis, I chose to utilize the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1996) method as I was interested in the lived experiences of individuals engaging in artmaking during the universal experience of the pandemic. My discussions with five participants led to incredible discoveries about the struggles of the pandemic and a further understanding about the detailed connectedness of artmaking and wellness.

Some of the principal struggles identified included isolation and disconnection; drastic changes in daily lives including work, school, and home life; lack of job opportunities; zoom fatigue and anxiety; grief; mental health struggles; negotiating space with loved ones at home; and fear and stress around COVID itself. The participants then became excited to talk about their creative endeavors during this time. It was amazing to see the similarities between their experiences as well as the uniqueness of what artmaking meant for each of them during the pandemic. The extensive array of emerging themes depicting the benefits of artmaking along with select accompanying quotes are presented here under four overarching themes.

### THEME 1: COPING

- Regaining connections
- Virtual artistic collaborations
- Finding your voice in the chaos: expression through art
- Reflecting & Processing
- Releasing stressors: a way to escape
- Feeling present: Meditative, peaceful
- Navigating grief
- Feeling joy



## Art Beyond the Pandemic -- continued

"But it's the days where it's like:  
Ah, I'm so stressed, I'm so upset -  
Throw a bunch of paint down  
and it's like, wow,  
I feel a million times better! ...  
I feel like I'm getting it out in one way or another,  
because I don't have that during COVID,  
obviously, the accessibility that I would  
have to like, go in for coffee with a friend  
and talking through some stuff."

"Art's a constant for me. ...  
COVID just, it was - I was processing  
much deeper, I'll say that, on a different level.  
... I was finding the tool to give me  
coping mechanisms."

### THEME 2: THE SELF

- Deeper connection with the authentic self
- Vulnerability
- Growing & accomplishing with art
- Mapping of the self
- Feeling rooted in the body
- Reigniting a passion
- Re-living good memories

"What is my true self now that I've been  
wearing all these other masks?

...I think COVID really was an interesting  
play on the mask idea.

Because wearing all these masks  
pre-COVID and now forced to wear a mask,  
and then try to find your true self maybe in art,  
like using the vulnerability that we all feel  
as a gate to reaching, you know,  
reaching that essence."

On creative movement:

"there's flow, authenticity, self aware"



Photo credit: Citrus Photography

"Then I start dancing and then it's this  
process, again, of understanding what  
is my body physically doing?  
What mythology does that body have?  
I've gone through my body,  
and there's like a map  
provided already."

"I think if the pandemic didn't happen,  
I might not, I would not have even thought  
of going back to dancing or singing...  
it actually helped me seek out the passion  
that I loved before, and gave me a  
different reason why I'm doing it."

## Art Beyond the Pandemic -- continued

### THEME 3: HUMANNESS

- Pulse: Feeling alive
- Innate
- Universal
- Healing the mind, body, and soul
- Connection to something bigger

"I hear music, it's just like, instantaneous.  
Do you feel kind of your heart racing?  
You know, you start- your pulse is like, getting  
stronger. Just like kind of, I'm alive, right?"

"Art really feel more alive  
when I do this things. ... you don't need  
to basically drive a car at 170 kilometers  
to feel that rush, right? Or jump to a plane."

On artmaking:

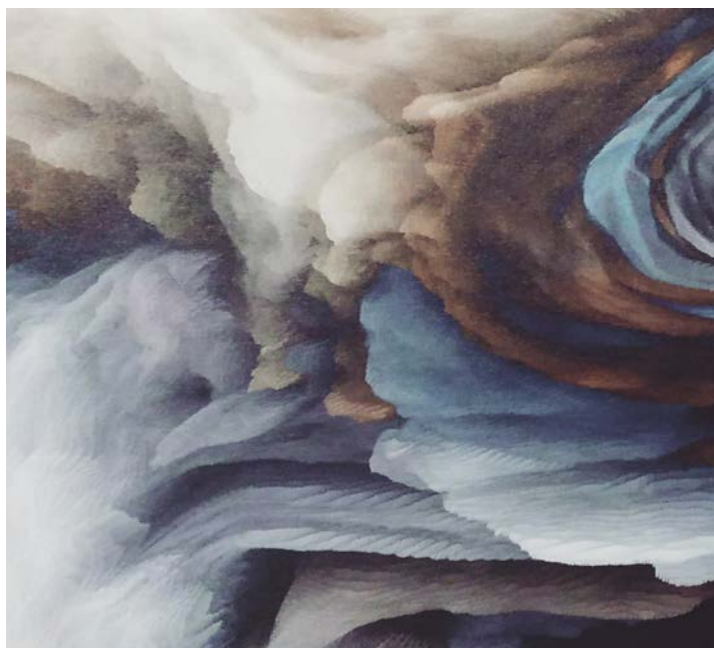
"It just feels like...  
what I'm supposed to do in a way. ...  
I just sort of do it because  
I feel like I have to do it."

"I think there's an expression that needs to  
happen...it's not just art:  
this is like documentation, culture and art...  
it's instinctive to do it."

A striking part of all the interviews was the natural  
emergence of this final theme: activism through  
art and for art.

**This was a highlight of art  
that I had not previously read  
in other literature,**

and as the researcher, I must admit that I was taken  
by surprise when each single participant discussed  
this theme in a comparable but also unique way.  
What made this theme particularly special in my  
eyes was that all the participants spoke to the im-  
plications of the study – what did we learn during  
the pandemic about the value of artmaking and  
why we need to take action to keep it alive in our



### THEME 4: ACTIVISM THROUGH ART & FOR ART

- Breaking free from societal norms
- Keeping the arts alive
- Promoting the value of art in daily life
- Saying something important  
with your art

"I think like, so much of what we have,  
nowadays, whether it be clothing,  
or you know, a bookshelf, or painting...  
it's just manufactured, right?  
So, being able to, like physically make it...  
I feel like I'm kind of  
breaking away from the mold."

"We all know that in life,  
the society we live in,  
they suppress certain things.  
... When I'm immersed in my artform  
...I feel like... I've conquered that barrier."

"Artists [are] so low on the totem pole  
of things that the government care about.  
And it's... it's pretty disheartening."

## Art Beyond the Pandemic -- continued

"Okay, so if all these art courses are being canceled, because they don't bring [monetary value]... you will have individuals who are all slated to fit into a certain slot, there's no room in between, for gray areas or like interpretation. ... So what I like about art is that it strengthens that inner artist, but I'm not talking artist, it's actually inner human. Art is not just for the artist, art is human. And that's my take on it forever. And I think that that yeah, art makes society strong in that it makes the individual strong."

The words of the participants in this study resonate the significance of art not only through the pandemic, but also beyond the pandemic. As we continue to face challenges on personal and also universal levels, it is important to consider incorporating this valuable tool that made a significant appearance during a global pandemic.

This study shows that when faced with novel challenges, extreme circumstances, and a mixture of stressors, artmaking provided coping tools, relief, and a profound connection to the authentic self and humanity. The implications for Counselling Psychology in particular include incorporating artmaking in individual or group sessions and promoting creativity outside of the therapy room as ways to reduce stress and enhance wellness.

It is also my hope that in the years to come, there will be a flourishing of Canadian research about artmaking in the field of Counselling Psychology in order to further understand the benefits of art as well as advocate for its preservation and recognition in all levels of society.

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# TWELVE TIPS

for working with

# Trauma-Exposed Professionals

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Trauma-exposed professionals are individuals who are regularly and chronically exposed to traumatic events through their work duties. While the majority have direct exposure to traumatic events, (such as police, firefighters, paramedics, and corrections officers) some are not directly exposed in the traditional sense of being on-scene (e.g., dispatchers) yet are equally affected by what they hear on the radio.

Working with trauma-exposed professionals poses unique challenges that psychologists typically do not encounter with civilian populations.

If you're a clinician new to working with trauma-exposed professionals or are considering serving these groups, here are twelve tips that may be helpful for your practice based on my thirteen years of working with these groups.

## Tips for working with Trauma-Exposed Professionals -- continued

### 1. Be real.

In my experience, trauma-exposed professionals know when you're being inauthentic or when you're lying. They may err on the side of being suspicious, and if you give them a reason not to trust you, they might not return. Remember that some trauma-exposed professionals (e.g., dispatchers, police officers, paramedics) frequently deal with people who lie, so when you're honest, they will appreciate it and will, over time, see you as more trustworthy and may be more likely to show their vulnerability to you.

### 2. Set up the therapeutic experience.

Set your intention to not harm your client and yourself. Don't try and fit them into a specific framework. Trying to create an expected outcome will only lead to disappointment.

### 3. Own your expertise as a psychologist.

You are an expert in helping those suffering from the effects of exposure to the most horrific and gruesome aspects of the human experience. You are skilled in helping them recover from operational stressors, some of which include exposure to violence, death, and human suffering. Try not to downplay your skill set. If you do, some of your clients may believe you're not qualified to help them.

### 4. Some of your training as a psychologist may be perceived as unhelpful.

Aspects of training such as being non-directive, treating the client like the expert in their own lives, allowing the client to take the lead, and avoiding advice-giving come to my mind. While these tenets are not harmful per se, they may not be helpful to some trauma-exposed professionals. Many of these professionals work in military or paramilitary environments with clear hierarchies, standard operating procedures, and rules of engagement. They expect you, the professional, to provide a clear and direct treatment plan and concrete strategies to help them achieve their counselling goals. When a psychologist is indirect, the client may perceive that as being incompetent, not having a plan or procedure, and avoiding responsibility.



Trauma-exposed professionals often work in high-stress, chaotic environments and rely on procedures and protocols to save lives. Psychologists should be prepared to share their procedures and protocols for how they will help their clients reach their counselling goals. There are many excellent clinical training opportunities that focus on working with trauma exposed professionals if you would like to learn more or hone your current skill set.

### 5. Don't overstate your competence.

Trauma-exposed professionals can have well-honed abilities to detect deception, dishonesty, and insincerity. Stick to the facts and what you know from your clinical training and experience. If you don't know something, say so, and let the client know you will find the answer to their question. Let your clients know if you are new to working with trauma-exposed professionals. Many will appreciate your honesty, and some will be more than happy to give you the lay of their land so that you can learn more about their organization and job stressors.

## Tips for working with Trauma-Exposed Professionals -- continued

### 6. Acknowledge the organizational stressors as well as the current political climate.

Based on my thirteen years of working with trauma-exposed professionals, I've noticed a deep sense of betrayal that some feel from their employers. Organizational responses to chronic traumatic exposure that tend to be viewed as unhelpful may be perceived as either unintentional acts of omission or well-intentioned acts of commission.

Certain groups in the emergency services world appear to be more highly regarded than others (e.g., fire vs. law enforcement), while some are not even acknowledged as first responders (e.g., paramedics and dispatchers). The current political climate has made policing more stressful than ever, with constant scrutiny and threats that civilians may file complaints for what police may perceive to be trivial matters. It is important to ask all members how this affects their ability to cope, do their job, and deal with the public.



### 7. Embrace structure and predictability in sessions.

When dealing with chronic trauma, not knowing what to expect feels life-threatening. Most trauma-exposed professionals have never seen a psychologist and don't know what to expect or what will happen. Some may even tell you about hearing of someone who had their paramedic license revoked or a police officer's gun taken away because of too much self-disclosure to a psychologist. They can often feel unsafe despite looking calm, poised, and confident (their "public face," as one police officer put it). If you can, have your client sit with their back against the wall facing your office door to increase feelings of safety. Be transparent. Tell them what you're doing and how you will do it. Share risks and benefits when discussing treatment options. All of this demonstrates competency and provides accountability for both the client and you. When their world is chaotic, your counselling sessions could contain the structure, predictability, and safety they don't have at work and/or in their personal lives. Small changes will be noticed immediately whether that is your background during telehealth sessions or a new piece of clothing they haven't seen you wear.

### 8. Be prepared to listen to the details of difficult calls.

I have lost count of the number of times I have listened to police officers and paramedics talking about scooping up the brain matter of children at fatalities, being unable to relieve the pain of individuals with third-degree burns while listening to their agonizing cries, or recovering bodies of children who drowned. You are working with individuals exposed to more traumatic events in one block (two day shifts and two night shifts) than most civilians in North America will be exposed to in their lifetimes.

Please reconsider working with this population if you cannot stomach these details or will be too emotional during these disclosures. They need a safe and non-judgmental place to talk freely about their worst calls without worrying about potentially upsetting their psychologist.



## Tips for working with Trauma-Exposed Professionals -- continued

### 9. Familiarize yourself with their languages and cultures

Familiarity will come with time. Earlier in my work with trauma-exposed professionals, I created cheat sheets for the different organizations with whom I work so that I could remember what the different acronyms and expressions mean. If a client uses an acronym with which you're unfamiliar, don't hesitate to ask for clarification.

### 10. Laugh.

During last year's fire season in the Okanagan, I conducted clinical hypnosis with a firefighter. I was describing a scene of wildflowers but accidentally said "wildfires." She opened her eyes, and we both burst out laughing. She brings it up from time to time in session, and it still makes us laugh. A soldier once asked me if I thought he was crazy. I replied, "You're not Animal Mother," and he laughed. I could tell he felt more comfortable with me after my Full Metal Jacket reference. Therapy doesn't have to be serious all the time. You can use humour effectively to challenge core beliefs or tactical thinking errors (aka: cognitive distortions), change distressing emotional states and encourage new perspectives.

### 11. Avoid discussing your work.

Sometimes, your clients can discuss details of specific incidents that did not make the news. It is important that you do not share these details (or the incident) with anyone. Confidentiality is especially important when working with trauma-exposed professionals. The trauma-exposed professional world is small, and it's very easy for your client, who may be a paramedic, to figure out that their buddy in the RCMP is also your client.

### 12. Prioritize your self-care.

Listening to gruesome and horrific details of calls, providing treatment for the operational stress injuries your clients develop and holding space for them to do so can be taxing. It's important that you engage in appropriate self-care regularly. Part of this self-care should include consulting with another psychologist who also works with trauma-exposed professionals and understands their cultures. Vicarious trauma is a real risk when working with trauma-exposed professionals.



Working with trauma-exposed professionals has been, and continues to be, a wonderful and rewarding experience. I have learned, and continue to learn, so much from the professionals with whom I work. I hope you will consider working with trauma-exposed professionals whose mental health needs have been underserved or ignored for a long time.

**Dr. Anoosha Avni** is a registered psychologist, located in Kelowna, BC. She runs a full-time private practice and focuses on assessing and treating trauma-exposed professionals. Dr. Avni can be reached through her website: [www.dravni.ca](http://www.dravni.ca).

# Sonya's Sound Corner



Podcasts are great avenues to follow one's curiosity and immersing oneself into a topic. With more than 2M podcasts available through Apple alone (<https://podnews.net/update/2-million-podcasts>), there is something for everyone. Mental health podcasts can provide information, inspiration, hope and maybe even decrease a sense of isolation through hearing about the latest science or individuals' lived experiences. From soup to nuts, stress to happiness, I am excited to share some of the podcasts I have been listening to.

## All in the Mind - Misadventures in Multitasking

(29 minutes - Broadcast July 30-2022). Do you scroll through your phone and watch TV? Text and Walk? Send emails while in a meeting? In a day, we all are likely to find ourselves doing more than one thing at once. The podcast All in the Mind by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation has a great episode "Misadventures in Multitasking" which focuses on the research and neuroscience of multitasking, the illusions of productivity, its' impacts and if you really need to do it, how you can do it in a way that successfully works for you.

## The Happiness Lab with Dr. Laurie Santos - How to Adopt a Growth Mindset

(22 minutes - Broadcast November 22, 2021). This episode focuses on mindsets and how they can be limiting (fixed mindsets) or how they can allow for flourishing in one's life (growth mindsets). The episode features David Yeager, psychology professor at University of Texas (Austin) who will take us on an exploration of growth mindsets – their benefits to happiness, how they play out in health and longevity, and how the power of internal stories can profoundly impact our behaviours and connections with others. Laurie and David explore strategies on how to adopt a growth mindset.

## The Hilarious World of Depression - Steven Page Camouflages Songs About Depression

(45 minutes - Broadcast May 18, 2020). Despite the oxymoron nature of the podcast title, this podcast focuses on the lived experiences of depression – the ups and downs of this experience. The episodes feature the stories of people who have experienced it. In this episode, the musician Steven Page, formerly of the Barenaked Ladies, talks about his bipolar diagnosis and how threads of this experience have made its way into his song writing.

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# APPS FOR THAT

Whether we see it as a supplement to therapy, or as a light form of entertainment, self-help apps are certainly being well used among today's clientele.

Sonya Flessati, PhD

## MindShift CBT

A comprehensive and evidence-based app, MindShift CBT was developed by the organization Anxiety BC and BC Mental Health and Addiction Services, can help clients navigate the challenges of worry and anxiety. As the name suggests, the app is rooted in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy strategies. The available tools are focused on managing issues such as worry, panic, social anxiety, phobias, and perfectionism. The opening page asks what you are experiencing (e.g. general worry) and information about the experience, signs, and coping tips are provided. If it feels overwhelming to move through all of the app's features, it is possible for clients to select specific features to focus on - "Healthy Thinking" which would include thought journaling and coping cards; "Chill Zone" for responding to the physical elements of anxiety; and, "Taking Action" which guides individuals in gradual exposure exercises and healthy habits. It's been a wonderful resource for clients.

## Mindfulness Coach

Available via Google Play and the App Store, this app was developed by the National Centre for PTSD, US Department of Veterans Affairs. While it was initially developed to support US Veterans and service members, it can be used by diverse individuals outside of this population. The app focuses on the development of mindfulness skills which can contribute to the reduction of stress, anxiety, and depression. It provides a self-guided program for mindfulness skill development. The self-guided program includes information on the benefits of mindfulness, guided mindfulness exercises, strategies to overcome challenges faced while developing the skill, a goal setting feature, and an assessment tool that can be used to track one's progress.

## Saying When - How to Quit Drinking or Cut Down

A free app developed by the Canada's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. The app is designed for individuals concerned about drinking, but do not have a severe drinking disorder. For individuals looking to address their concerns, there are features focused on the self-assessment of drinking habits, goal setting (both short and long-term) to match one's preferred lifestyle, and self-monitoring of consumption levels and urges to consume. The app keeps track of one's progress and shows how patterns of drinking change over time. Psychoeducation about the low-risk drinking guidelines and tips for success are included. For those in need of additional support, there is a list of resources included in the app. CAMH has developed a short YouTube video summarizing the features, available here: <https://youtu.be/MuMBdvKqYEQ>





## SAVE THE DATE --- CPA CONVENTION --- JUNE 23-25, 2023

The CPA's 2023 Annual General Meeting and National Convention is scheduled to take place from June 23rd to 25th, 2023, at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto, ON. This year's CPA Convention is being held in conjunction with the 5th North American Correctional and Criminal Justice Psychology Conference (NACCJPC). Numerous pre-convention events, including the CPA's Pre-Convention Professional Development Workshops, will take place on June 22nd. Call for Abstracts remains open until December 14, 2022.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

I hope you've enjoyed reading this edition of Kaleidoscope as much as I've enjoyed putting it together. I'm inspired to know that research in our field has continued to flourish despite the pandemic, and I am delighted to celebrate the accomplishments of our student award winners here. I am also incredibly honoured to be selected by my peers as a distinguished member of our Section. I hope you know that I am grateful for your encouragement!

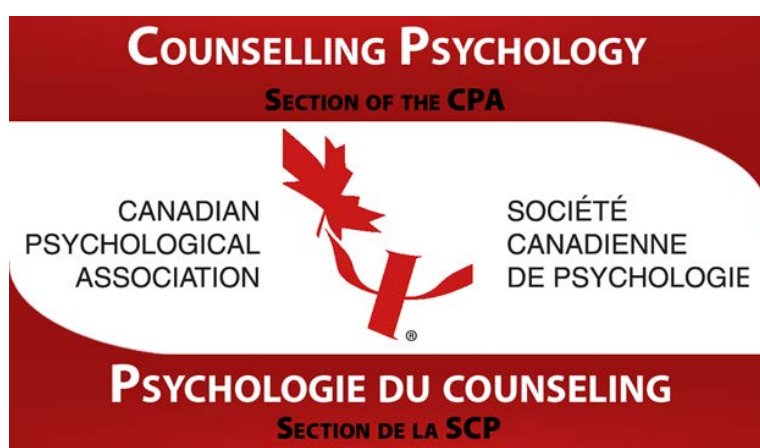
As for my own reflections about how things have changed in my practice since the onset of the pandemic- the largest difference for me is the persistence of online work. My private counselling practice pre-pandemic was completely in-person. Now it is 80% online. I feel confident with virtual work in a way that I never thought possible. I am amazed at how close I can feel to my clients, and how effective the work can be through a screen. In my university counselling practice the outcome is reversed. I am back to being 90% in-person, campus is buzzing with life, and I am delighted to experience community events again. That being said, as much as my extroverted-self loves high-volume hallways, I cherish the days when I can join meetings remotely from home. I now experience a flexibility in my schedule that wasn't there in "the before times." I find myself more relaxed (yet still very productive), and I am going to preserve that vibe for as long as I can!

I'm curious to know how your working world has changed, and I welcome your stories. Please write to me with your reflections, suggestions, and experiences for our next edition of Kaleidoscope. Sending good wishes and warm thoughts -- Janet



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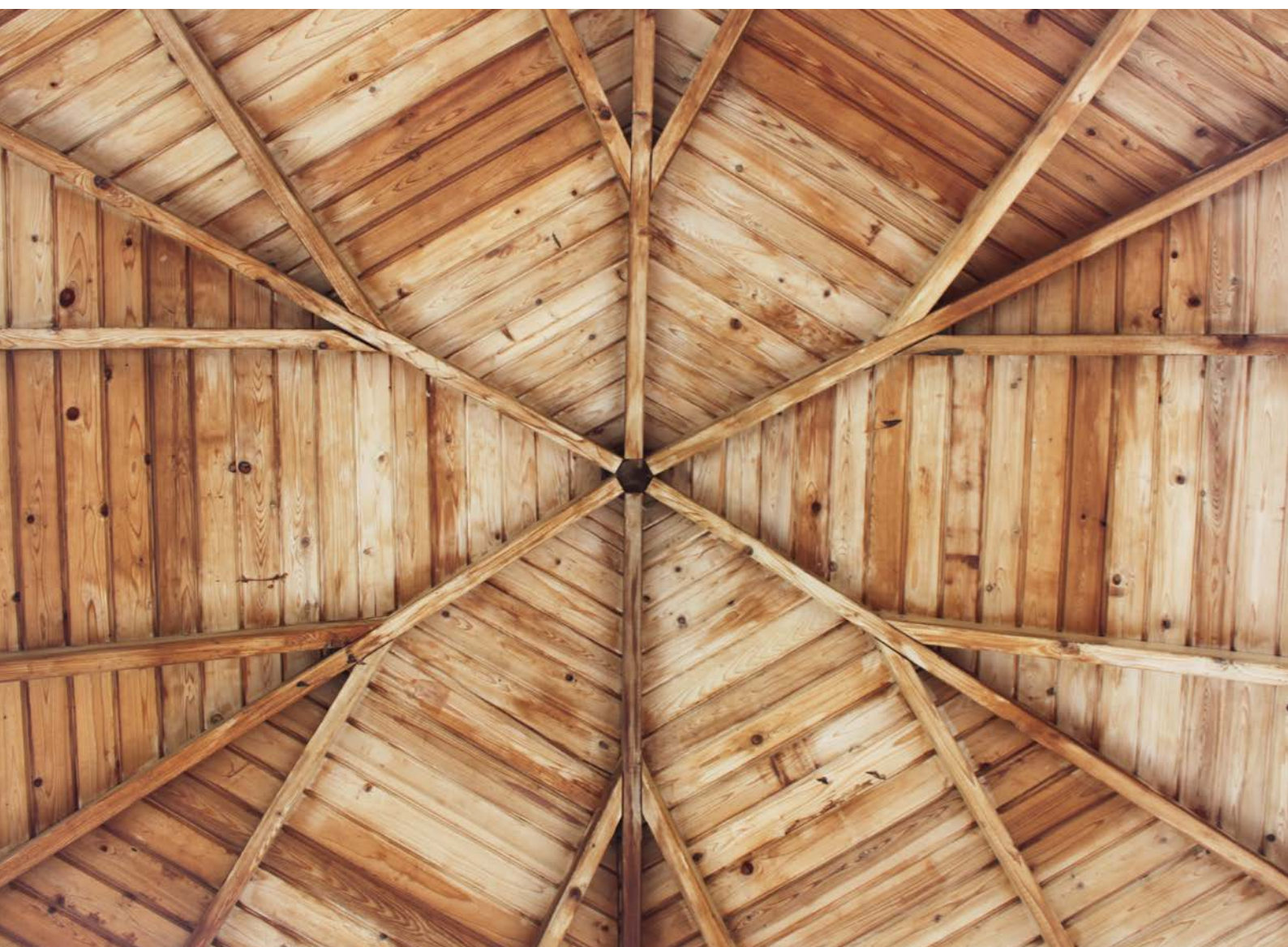


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# KALEIDOSCOPE

Newsletter of the **Counselling Psychology Section**  
Canadian Psychological Association



Questions, Comments, Suggestions or Feedback?

Please contact us:

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