



HEALING THROUGH MUSIC

MUSIC THERAPY AT BC CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

PRESENTED TO

Long & McQuade

November 2021







YOU'RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Because of the generosity of donors like you, for nearly 20 years children and families at BC Children's Hospital have had opportunities to experience the healing power of music. Music therapy is a crucial component of Child and Youth Therapeutic Services at BC Children's Hospital, and it is only possible because of donor support. Thank you, Long & McQuade, for your ongoing support of music therapy at BC Children's.

MUSIC THERAPY

Music therapy supports children and families at BC Children's by tapping into their unique interests, personalities, and coping styles. Music and relaxation techniques administered by a music therapist provide comfort and distraction during procedures, or help manage the side effects of treatment. Playing, exploring, or learning a musical instrument and singing songs often alleviates tension, provides meaningful interactions for families, and promotes physical, emotional, and mental well-being.



It's no surprise that the pandemic has been particularly hard on children's mental health. For example, a recent study conducted by researchers at BC Children's found that two-thirds of children and youth in British Columbia are struggling with mild to moderate mental health challenges during the pandemic. Compound that with the stress of being in the hospital with limited visitors, and children can feel isolated and scared. Younger children, especially, can be wary when everyone entering the room is wearing personal protective equipment. It is more important than ever to be able to provide music therapy and reduce fear and anxiety by bringing instruments right into patient rooms. Creating music at the bedside provides support, connection, and a much-needed outlet for emotional expression.

Ongoing distancing requirements have put a pause on group music therapy sessions. Instead, the music therapy team has focused on individual sessions with patients at their bedsides, where they are needed most. Over the past year, music therapists on the BC Children's campus—which now includes Sunny Hill Health Centre—provided nearly 2,800 interactions with patients and families, helping to calm, distract, engage, and inspire through the power of music.

Music therapy at BC Children's is only possible through the generous support of donors like you. Thank you, Long & McQuade, for providing patients and families with important opportunities for meaningful connection, emotional expression, and a brief sense of normalcy.

“As I approached a room, the nurse acknowledged me but wondered if music therapy would have much appeal to an 18-year-old who was sedated for pain. Mom welcomed me and began to tell me about his love for singing. She shared that his favourite artist was Beyoncé. I began to play Beyoncé’s ‘Halo’ and Mom tearfully exclaimed, ‘That’s his favourite song!’ The teen turned towards me. Keeping his eyes closed, he softly whispered, ‘Play more songs.’ The nurse glanced at the monitor and noticed the patient’s elevated heart rate had decreased. Now more relaxed, he was ready to re-attempt a challenging medical procedure. Through the therapeutic use of melody, rhythm and meaningful lyrics, the patient and I worked together to focus on the music, bring awareness to his breath, and imagine himself singing. The procedure went well, and the nurse commented, ‘What a powerful intervention music can be.’ Everyone, regardless of age or ability, can benefit from the unique healing elements of music.”



- BROOKE ANGUS, MUSIC THERAPIST

MUSIC THERAPY BY THE NUMBERS



2 PIANOS

7 KEYBOARDS

3 XYLOPHONES

15
UKULELES

20 GUITARS



5 MUSIC THERAPISTS PROVIDING THERAPY ON 4 FLOORS IN THE TECK ACUTE CARE CENTRE AND SUNNY HILL HEALTH CENTRE

17 DRUMS,
2 ELECTRONIC
DRUM KITS,
AND A VARIETY OF
WORLD DRUMS

COUNTLESS TAMBOURINES, HAND DRUMS, DRUM PADS, SHAKERS, BELLS, CHIMES, SOUND EFFECTS, RECORDERS, HARMONICAS, WHISTLES, MELODIANS, AND BAND INSTRUMENTS

1 SOUNDBEAM SYSTEM—A TOUCH FREE DEVICE THAT USES SENSOR TECHNOLOGY TO TRANSLATE MOVEMENT INTO MUSIC AND SOUND. THIS DONOR-FUNDED INSTRUMENT GIVES KIDS OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY MUSIC.

“The new Soundbeam is such a wonderful tool. Recently a kid who enjoys bathroom humour had a blast exploring its unusual sounds, particularly ones that sound like ‘body sounds.’ It motivated him to move his head and arm—an important part of therapy—to trigger the beam.”

- D. LOUISE WHITEHEAD, MMT MTA,
CERTIFIED MUSIC THERAPIST,
SUNNY HILL ACUTE REHABILITATION

MUSIC THERAPIST SPOTLIGHT: **MEET MICHAELA**



WHAT IS YOUR ROLE WITH THE MUSIC THERAPY TEAM?

In my part-time, temporary role, I get to work with patients and families on the sixth floor of the Teck Acute Care Centre, the Mining4Life Inpatient Unit. Kids are there for all sorts of procedures: neurosurgery, orthopedic procedures, skin grafts, and more. I also work with children having a 'burn bath,' which is a painful procedure to help new skin grow after a bad burn. Music can help to calm them before and after procedures, or while sedatives or anesthetics are being administered.

But it's not limited to pre- or post-surgery. For example, I remember one girl who had been waiting all day for surgery. She was not allowed to eat, and her scheduled procedure got bumped for an emergency surgery. She was miserable, and it was affecting her family as well. I brought over some drums and the entire family—all four of them—happily took part in an improvised drum session. It helped take everyone's mind off things, allowing them to have some unexpected fun during an otherwise tense situation. Another time, an older sister of a patient was getting bored while I was playing music with her family, and I encouraged her to help me by writing a song. She was very excited to try her hand at songwriting—and ended up with a very sweet song about how much she loves her little sister.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT THIS WORK?

In a hospital, children have so little control. Music therapy gives them some say in what's happening to them, such as choosing a favourite song for me to play. Or it can be incorporated into their care. One boy was consistently having a hard time taking his oral medication. We wrote a song together that included a countdown to swallowing the pills. By taking charge through music, he was able to swallow his pills with no trouble after that. It's rewarding to be able to provide these opportunities. And parents appreciate seeing their child just being a kid.

I also love that every day is different; you never know what to expect and things can change at the spur of the moment. I try to set a calming mood all around (for staff as well as patients and families) to make it as positive as possible. It can be infectious—I clearly remember singing a lullaby to a baby when another patient's mom overheard me and suddenly she was singing the same lullaby to her baby. It was a beautiful moment.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO BC CHILDREN'S?

Studying music therapy is a rigorous venture. Music Therapists need hundreds of hours of practical training to become certified. I completed my studies at Capilano University where I was lucky to do 1,000 internship hours here at BC Children's—I jumped at the chance to come back here! It's an amazing opportunity to be a part of a diverse multidisciplinary team. But ultimately, it is about seeing the immediate impact of this work. I'm so grateful to be able to help families during their most traumatic moments, and to offer something to offset what they are experiencing, such as providing comfort through a familiar song.

WHAT DO YOU DO OUTSIDE OF WORK?

In addition to kids at BC Children's, I provide music therapy to young adults with autism spectrum disorder, as well as seniors in a long-term care home. Outside of work I love spending time with my two daughters who are ages 2 and 4. Before COVID-19, I was very active in musical theatre and sketch comedy. I have over 10 years of improvisation training which also helps in my music therapy work. Like improv, music therapy requires you to be able to walk into a room, read the situation, and decide the best thing to do. Kids also love it when I improvise songs about them on the spot.



THANK YOU

Often, children's and families' interactions with music therapists are just as important as contacts with their doctors and nurses. The music therapists within the Child and Youth Therapeutic Services teams are integral parts of care teams at BC Children's, and because of you they touch the lives of thousands of children each year. Generous donor support is why music therapy exists at BC Children's, and is able to grow and thrive. Thank you, Long & McQuade, for making a difference in the lives of so many children and families.

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