



Artists in Healthcare Manitoba
ANNUAL REPORT

April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021

Artists in Healthcare Manitoba 2001 - 2021
Two Decades of Care

Artists in Healthcare Manitoba acknowledges that we are on Treaty 1 territory, the traditional gathering place of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene people and the traditional homeland of the Métis people.

Music and the arts are essential for a healthy life



April 4, 2020

“Wow, wow, wow! Today was amazing! Jesse did incredibly well just going with the flow! Residents enjoyed him playing at their windows and everyone was thrilled to have music!”

“The building is buzzing about yesterday’s music and we can’t wait to hear Jesse again!”

-Staff at The Saul and Claribel Simkin Centre

April 11, 2020

On hearing that we received a second \$10,000 TELUS grant for the songwriting program at the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre: “This is fabulous! We are ready to come back whenever that’s possible, but also fully understand that everything is going to take a while before safe protocols are established.”

-Musicians

May 1, 2020

“Would you have musicians available for Mother’s Day? If we can make this work we would need 2 musicians to play outside the dining room windows at each meal, so two shifts.”

-Staff at The Middlechurch Home of Winnipeg

May 1, 2020

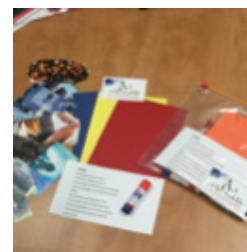
“As the weather gets nicer, is it possible that your musicians would play an outdoor performance here? This is something that we all need right now. We can bring a group of residents to the outdoor patio.”

-Staff at Maples Personal Care

May 8, 2020

St. Boniface Hospital staff initiate a PA music trial with their four year-round musicians recording from home.

Anne-Marie Williot, St. Boniface Hospital musician



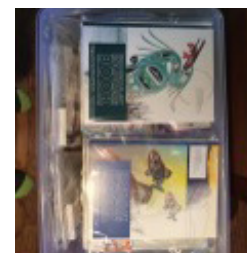
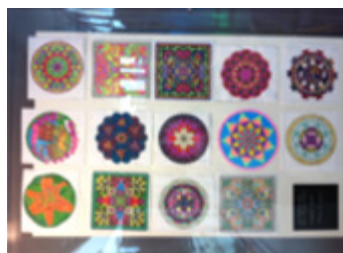
May 10, 2020

The Art at the Bedside program at St. Boniface Hospital goes “virtual”. Claire Stephensen made hundreds of infection-controlled art kits for staff to give to patients. “We just love the kits!”

June 4, 2020

The Manitoba Arts Council gives permission to repurpose \$3,600 remaining in our grant for Art at the Bedside at CancerCare Manitoba to create art kits: “Go ahead with this – sounds great and in the spirit of the original project. With this pandemic, it makes sense for MAC to be flexible where it can be.”

-MAC staff



June/July, 2020

Thanks to a Winnipeg Foundation collaborative grant with the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, outdoor concerts begin: June 29 at Concordia Hospital; July 6 at Bethania Personal Care, and July 10 at St. Boniface Hospital. Thirty concerts are held, distanced, outside at numerous facilities until late September when restrictions prohibit this. They are scheduled for staff change over times and located in areas outside each facility's screening entrance.



"Thank you for all your efforts to make work life just a little more enjoyable!"

-Valerie Wiebe, President and Chief Operating Officer Concordia Hospital and Concordia Place

July 16, 2020

The first two Service Canada musicians of nine, start playing; one virtually and one inside, fully PPE-trained. Dependent on management's choices and with respect to the status of cases in each hospital or long-term care, this year the placement dates ranged from July to two start dates December 2020. This is the first year Service Canada has allowed varying start dates and the first year they allow musicians and staff, to decide whether the jobs are full-time or part-time. Given safety restrictions, part-time is often the preference which also extended each facility's music program from 9 weeks to 18 weeks. Staff comments start to reflect the stresses of isolation with feedback like: "We need music now more than ever" and "isolation is worse than COVID."

"Without music, life would be a mistake."

-Friedrich Nietzsche

**"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind,
flight to the imagination, and life to everything."**

-Plato

A message from the Board Chair

And so, began a year which will never be forgotten; one day at a time, one project at time, with staff finding creative ways to continue to bring music to their patients, some live, some virtual, musicians learning to record from home, and Foundations and funders finding ways to adapt program funding to constantly changing realities.

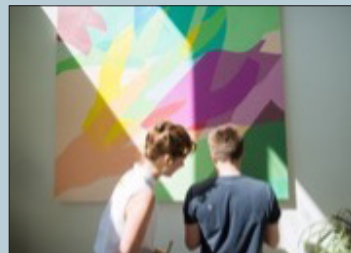
Looking back on a year which began with all of our music programs suspended inside, to a February 2021 Stay Safe Manitoba grant which funded 19, thirty-minute video recordings to be shared with thousands of patients and residents, we celebrate what we have been able to accomplish and celebrate the healthcare community we are honoured to serve.

So much occurred in the last year which might have seen an organization like ours brought to a close and yet the opposite happened; feedback from staff and the community was intensely grateful. They found ways to ensure that safety and restrictions were respected while continuing, differently, to bring music and the arts to their patients.

With gratitude and appreciation for the perseverance and resiliency we are witnessing and continued hope.



Tom Carson
Chair, Artists in Healthcare Manitoba



From left to right:

Sierra Noble recorded under our Stay Safe Manitoba grant

As well as Raine Hamilton, vocals/violin; Natanielle Felicitas, cello; and Quintin Bart, Double Bass.

A Jewish Foundation of Manitoba grant to Artists in Healthcare Manitoba was deferred for over a year as we waited for restrictions to lessen at St. Boniface Hospital. We have resumed planning and hope to see the tunnel between the ER and McEwen Psych Health Centre transformed with a light, colourful design in the next year.



WE BELIEVE:

Music and the arts transform patient, family, and staff experiences in healthcare. They facilitate communication, hope, and healing and can inspire compassion and resilience.

OUR VISION:

Artists in Healthcare Manitoba envisions a future where music and art are part of one's natural experience in healthcare.

OUR MISSION:

Our mission is to incorporate musicians and artists into those circumstances that will enrich the patient experience and nurture health and wellness through the arts

“After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music.”

-Aldous Huxley

Greetings from our Executive Director

It was a year filled with disbelief and anxiety. In March all of our live/inside music programs were suspended. Payroll dropped from over 20 musicians monthly to zero. We began isolation, masking, distancing, and waiting.

Surprisingly, before June, we started hearing comments from staff such as: “we need music now more than ever” and “isolation is worse than COVID.” Musicians started exploring virtual technology and soon many of them were teaching from home, while waiting to be able to play inside again.

The Service Canada summer program granted us nine musicians, with a tenth funded by a private donation. We worked with staff to discover what was possible; who could play inside, which hospitals and long-term care would train musicians to work inside, with full PPE, and who was restricted to the extent that they could only allow virtual music?

Which staff in a facility had the time to facilitate virtual visits? Initially there was concern that this would be too complicated to do, but increasingly, feedback was so positive that the importance of the virtual music visits took precedence.

In all, there was an overwhelming sense of people’s willingness to help, to find ways to do things differently, to keep fostering connections and communication.

Typically, all the Service Canada musicians would start and end on the same date but in 2020, a few started in July, a few more in August and over the fall, with two starting in December and completely in the last week of February – unheard of. Again, Service Canada administrative staff were incredibly helpful. The jobs were allowed to be held part-time, extending the length of the program and making it easier for staff and musicians to work. In the end, over 70% of the musicians were able to play inside, instrumental music only; no voice.

Outside music continued until it was too cold, and we headed into a long, quiet winter. Completing the year and heading into 2021, conversations about some year-round musicians returning to play virtually, slowly resumed.

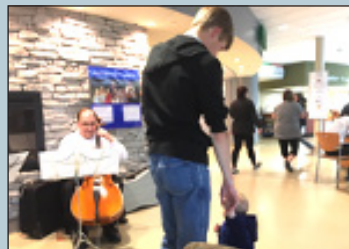
We were granted a \$36,600 Stay Safe project grant in February and started recording and videoing in March, ultimately making 19 30-minute videos which continue to be shared with hospitals and long-term care throughout Manitoba. The grant employed almost 150 musicians, recording engineers, and videographers, and reached over 13,000 hits.

I am so grateful to all the staff who helped us find new ways to do what we could, and we are hopeful that we will be able to resume full inside programming in the fall of 2021.

Sincerely,



Shirley Grierson
Executive Director,
Artists in Healthcare Manitoba



Remembering these days with hope

The Art in Hospitals donation program continued with Indigenous art given to the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre, the Grace Hospital, Centre de Sante, St. Boniface, Klinik, SERC, WRHA's Indigenous Health.

Our Organization

Artists in Healthcare Manitoba (AIHM), was established in 2001. Our vision is to improve the patient, family, and staff experience in healthcare and to address the needs of the whole person through meaningful engagement with the arts.

As of March 2020, our live music programs were suspended inside, with some music continuing to be offered outside, restrictions dependent. The art donation program decreased during isolation.

We applied for and received a second TELUS grant for the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre which is not able to resume until summer 2021.

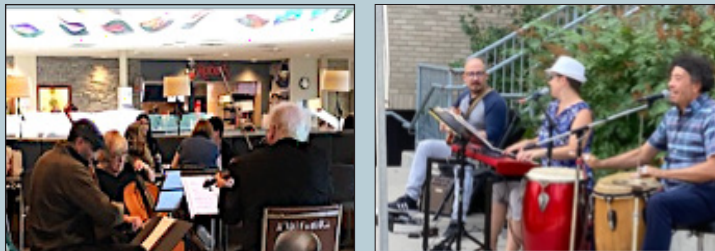
In collaboration with the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, 30 concerts were held outside of healthcare facilities over the summer and into the fall.

The live music and Art at the Bedside programs in hospitals, CancerCare, hospices and long-term care facilities were suspended or continued virtually.

The Service Canada Student Jobs Program provided 2,700 hours of music.

Accomplishments and Highlights in 2020/2021

- The Service Canada musician at Misericordia made such a positive impact that staff found a way to fund him to continue to play twice weekly after the placement ended. He played through the winter and we were able to find a private donor to fund him to continue through the early winter through August 2021.
- A second \$10,000 TELUS grant was awarded for the excellent Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre's songwriting program. Due to COVID, the program will resume July 2021, initially virtually.
- We continued the concert series collaboration with the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra outside over the summer 2020 and will resume outside programming summer 2021.
- Johnston Group, City of Brandon, Selkirk District and Community, Jewish Foundation of Manitoba, Brandon Area Community Foundation, Winnipeg Foundation, and other grants were deferred until programs can resume safely. Foundations were contacted and updated as to the status of their grants and funds deferred until restrictions allowed programs to restart. The consideration and understanding shown was very much appreciated.
- Applied to Bell Canada for a new live/virtual music program for the 78 St. Amant Community Residency homes after successful pilot visits. One person in care had been depressed, unable to have the usual family visits and unable to comprehend why. They simply stopped getting out of bed which resulted in a complex cascade of health issues and hospital visits. After one musician visit, there was a notable turn around. She was excited for days over her personal music.
- Spring 2020 the St. Boniface musicians started recording from home to provide an evening concert over the hospital PA for patients.
- Nine Service Canada student placements were awarded. A tenth job was funded through a private donor. Two positions were not used.
- We applied to the Province and received a \$36,600 grant to record and video concerts for the Stay Safe Manitoba project.



The Johnston Group Series, St. Boniface Hospital inside, then outside

Accomplishments and Highlights In 2020/2021 (continued)



As in all of our reports, outcomes are most often captured by patient comments and musicians' stories. Excerpts from George's report below triggered a donor's gift which provided another four months of music to Misericordia residents. The donors have agreed to fund George again spring 2022 and through that summer.

“I don't think words can express the impact of the music program, but I will try my best! This has been a particularly sombre year. COVID restrictions prevented us from doing group programs. Residents have been for practically confined to their rooms. Though staff continues to do amazing work, many of the residents have been suffering from boredom and loneliness.

When I come in the halls are usually empty and quiet. I sit or stand in the hallway and start playing a gentle tune like Edelweiss to let people know that I've arrived.

As I play signs of life gradually begin to emerge, heads begin to peek out of doorways and applause might drift out of people's rooms between songs. Once I can see that most people are awake and engaged I start to sing more fun, upbeat songs like “Hey Good Lookin” or “Walk the Line”. This is when the magic really starts to happen!

Once things get grooving, people start to smile and laugh, frowns and furrowed brows melt away as people lose themselves in the old songs and memories. Sometimes a resident will get up and start dancing for a tune or two (which can be very nerve-wracking if they forget their walker!). This is especially awesome when the physiotherapy people are working with a resident who is recovering their ability to walk.

Sometimes I can get them dancing, turning what might be a great challenge of exertion into a source of fun! One thing that I find very heartening is how much many of the residents enjoy seeing each other enjoying themselves. Often while I'm playing I'll have residents point each other out to me, they'll say 'wow look at her! what a great dancer' or 'look at that lovely smile, he's usually frowning' or something like that. I could tell you about the woman who hadn't left her bed since arriving getting up to dance to my music.

I could talk about the crying lady who bursts into a beautiful smile when I play the right song.

I could talk about the way the music interrupts the negative thought cycles some people are trapped in.

I could talk about many things, but the truth is that words can't really do this justice. If everyone in the world were to witness this work in action there would be no need for advocacy.

I am extremely grateful that I can continue doing the work that I love, at a time when people need it the most!”

-George Bajer-Koulack

Our Programs:

Music to My Ears

Music to My Ears remains our core program though it was hugely affected during this year. The year-round inside music programs were all suspended March/April. By June, staff were saying that they needed music now more than ever and that isolation was worse than COVID.

In an attempt to continue to offer some music to patients St. Boniface Hospital brought three inside musicians to work with staff in McEwen Psych Health, Recreation and the Day Hospital. Staff set their patients up with laptops and the musicians zoomed in for visits, which actually worked quite well. We would have loved to do so much more.

Outside music began in May, though on a very limited scale. The Manitoba Chamber Orchestra series continued outside over the summer with 30 concerts at various facilities.

STAY SAFE Manitoba

Thanks to the Province's Stay Safe project, we applied for and received \$36,600 to record and video concerts in February 2021. The concert links were available on the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra's website, and a mass email to healthcare throughout MB was created. Twice weekly a new concert link was sent to staff at the hospitals, and thanks to the Long Term and Continuing Care Association of Manitoba, the links reached Personal Care Homes which were new to Artists in Healthcare Manitoba. The series fairly quickly reached over 13,000 hits which was very encouraging. The grant employed close to 150 musicians, videographers and recording engineers. Each musician/group received a copy of the final product for use in grant applications and for their own marketing purposes. We could not have done this without an amazing partnership with the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra.

“I was just wanting to know if there will be a link provided every week for further concerts? Our residents enjoyed the Back to the '60s concert and we would like to provide them more music.”

“Ordinarily we would have community groups, church choirs and school groups come in to do singing for our residents. However, due to covid restrictions we have not been able to have that and they very much miss it.”

“Thank you for providing this resource. We really appreciate it.”

“How long is this program running? I would like to schedule more virtual concerts for our residents.”

Our Programs (continued)

Program hours	2019/2020	2020/2021
CancerCare Manitoba	546	3
Grace Hospital and Hospice	50	0
Bethesda, South Eastman Steinbach	144	0
Brandon Regional Health Centre	1,020	9
Boundary Trails Health Centre	208	0
Middlechurch Home of Winnipeg	36	276*
Beacon Hill Lodge	72	0
Health Sciences Centre	986	0
Maples Personal Care	265	0
Misericordia Place	384	270*
St. Boniface Hospital	1,008	327*
Riverview Health Centre	384	270*
Selkirk Mental Health Centre	144	10
Deer Lodge	384	300*
MATC	116	7
St. Amant	240	270*
The Saul & Claribel Simkin Centre	279	540*
Concordia	384	300*
Stay Safe Manitoba	over 13,000 hits, 19 concerts	

* These hours include the Service Canada Student Jobs Program hours. This program was accessed by healthcare most enthusiastically at a time when we were uncertain of this. They were so wanting programs for their patients and residents.

These hours do not include the 30 outside Manitoba Chamber Orchestra concerts

Art by the Big Blue Chair CancerCare

The Art by the Big Blue Chair program was suspended March 2020 and has not resumed in person yet. We repurposed the existing Manitoba Arts Council Grant in the spring of 2020 to make art kits for patients in treatment.

When the grant was reported out we applied for and received our fourth MAC grant for Art by the Big Blue Chair. CancerCare also contributed \$6,000 for art supplies so Kate Black will be purchasing new supplies to make more art kits, until such time CancerCare decides that it is safe to restart the in-person program again.

The CancerCare music program resumed inside, August 2021.

Art at the Bedside, St. Boniface and Grace Hospitals

Both programs are suspended until hospital volunteers are allowed back. Art kits were made for each hospital.

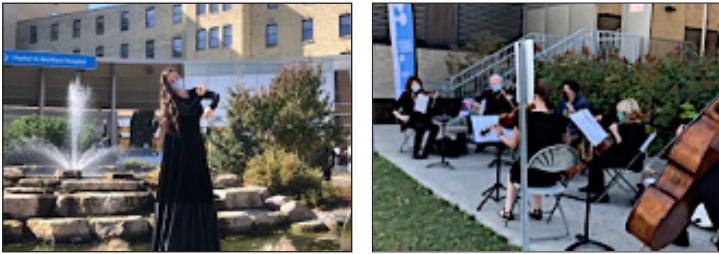
“Where words fail, music speaks.”

-Hans Christian Andersen

Our Programs (continued)

Culture Days 2020

Two Culture Days events were planned but restrictions changed at the end of the first day so only one was delivered. The Landscape Dancers performed outside, along with live music by the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra.



Art in Hospital Donation Program

Gary Scherbain created and ran Artists in Healthcare Manitoba's Art in Hospital Donation program for almost five years. He volunteered hundreds of hours, documenting, appraising, and donating from the Wah-sa Gallery collection. An irreplaceable human being of great character, we are deeply sorry for his loss and grateful for the many hours shared thanks to this program. A full tribute will be offered in next year's report.



Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre Songwriting Program

Our second \$10,000 TELUS grant will be used fall 2021 when musicians are allowed back inside. Madeleine's songwriting process with the youth was amazing. Staff comments were that they learned more from listening to one child's song, than they did in four hours of one-on-one counselling. Clearly, the arts are a universal language.

Past quotes:

"Thank you so much for coming here, this has been really seriously helping me."

"I love this, I'm going to keep writing after I'm out of here."

"I'm going to stop getting fake nails so I can learn how to pay the guitar."

"We've been really impressed with the engagement we've been seeing. Everyone has been really interested and they get excited for every class." - staff

"I've always wanted to write a song, this is awesome."

"This is several of the kids' favourite group." - staff

"Oh, so you can practise expressing yourself, and you'll get better at it..."

Our Programs (continued)

Rejuvenation, Resilience, and Recovery through the Arts – Selkirk Mental Health Centre

The live music and the Mindfulness, Yoga, and Music programs were both suspended for the year. A few hours were resumed when restrictions lifted over the summer and we offered some outside concerts as well.

Funds from the Winnipeg Foundation and the Selkirk District and Community Foundation will be used as programming becomes possible again. Virtual programming is being considered as needed.

A few quotes from last year's report, included for morale this year:

“We are having a great time with lots of participation and so much mobility! Even my friend who has always opted to go out and smoke, sat and had coffee with us and did all the breathing exercises today!”

“Every week, we practice a variation of Chair Yoga classes with multiple Areas including Geriatrics, ABI, and Forensics. When this became a regular practice, the participants consistently showed enjoyment through the class, we formed connections as teacher and student, and they would often express their appreciation in various ways. When classes were held in the DBT Area of SMHC, there would be a student present in every class and always voicing how relaxing each class was and how wonderful she felt each week.”

“Seeing recognition on the faces of some Geriatrics students and having many say they are happy to see the yoga classes return are some of the moments that make our yoga practice equally valuable for myself, as the teacher.”

Ashley

“Music is the universal language of mankind.”

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Who We Are:



Executive Director

Shirley Grierson

Board of Directors

Chairperson - Tom Carson

Treasurer - Pam Campbell

Directors - Dan Donahue, Jennifer Dubiensi, Chuck LaFleche

Honorary Advisory Council

Dee Buchwald, Ken Campbell, Sylvia Kuzyk, Randy Moffat,

Dr. Merril Pauls, Dr. Brian Postl

Advisory Committee (Special Projects)

Sylvia Kuzyk, Dr. Merril Pauls, David Northcott

Communications

Leif Norman

Program Staff And Support:

Art at the Bedside – St. Boniface Hospital

Program Coordinator – Claire Stephensen

Art by the Big Blue Chair – CancerCare Manitoba and Misericordia Health Centre

Artist - Kate Black

The Care Home Outreach Project – Brandon

Student Musicians – University of Brandon

The Johnston Group St. Boniface Atrium Concert

Series Various Manitoba Chamber Orchestra musicians as well as others from the community: Latin, Jazz, and '60s musicians – these musicians will also be scheduled for the concert series in 18 facilities through our new Winnipeg Foundation Collaborative Grant with the MCO.

Music to My Ears

Winnipeg:

Lynn McClure – CancerCare Manitoba; Peter McClure – CancerCare Manitoba; Ann-Marie Williot – St. Boniface Hospital; Aaron Shorr – CancerCare Manitoba; Lois Gillespie – St. Boniface, Middlechurch; Ashley Au – CancerCare Manitoba; Daniel Nemez – Riverview Health Centre; Jesse Popeski – Deer Lodge Health Centre; Liz Goossen – Grace Hospital; Kyle Cobb – Health Sciences Centre; Brian James – CancerCare Manitoba; Nic Lawrenz – St. Boniface Hospital; Ryan Guth, Concordia Hospital, Sam Singer, Health Sciences

Centre, CancerCare Manitoba and the Maples Personal Care, Gabriella Ocejo, CancerCare Manitoba, Nic Lawrenz, St. Boniface Hospital, Madeleine Roger – Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre

Brandon – Ann Germani, Ainsley Friesen, Naomi Leadbeater, Lyndon Bournon

Brandon Home Care Outreach – Ainsley Friesen and Naomi Leadbeater

Boundary Trails – Jess Reimer and Linda Hiebert

Bethesda – Willie Wiebe

Selkirk Mental Health Centre – Luciano Armenti

2020 Service Canada Students – Winnipeg
Narrative and student names listed below

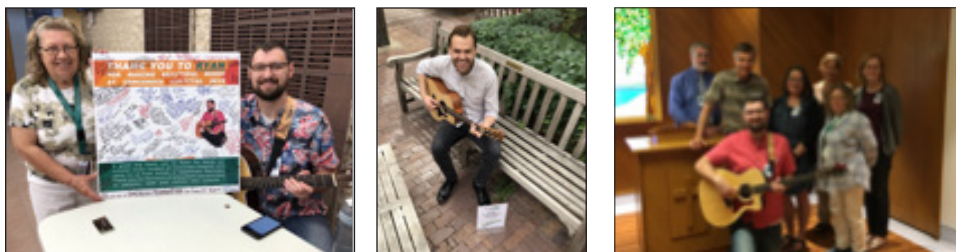
Rejuvenation, Resilience and Recovery with the Arts – Selkirk Mental Health Centre

Yoga, Mindfulness, and Music – Ashley Voth
Musician – Luciano Armenti

The Art in Hospital Donation Program



Stories From Our Service Canada Students:



Service Canada 2020 student narrative

Artists in Healthcare Manitoba received nine CSJ students through Service Canada this year. Brandon declined theirs due to COVID cases. Timing did not work out with Middlechurch this year either.

St. Boniface Hospital – Dan Keding

Deer Lodge Health Centre – Kyle Cobb

Riverview Health Centre – Daniel Nemez

Concordia Hospital – Ryan Guth

St. Amant – Erika Einarson

Misericordia Health Centre – George Bajer-Koulack

The Saul & Claribel Simkin Centre – Davide Verrilli

St. Boniface Hospital – Dan Keding

It was nice getting to know some patients! I would play for Dave almost every day. He really liked hearing David Wilcox, Tom Jones, and Elvis, and I thoroughly enjoyed learning tunes that were a bit outside my comfort zone. Bernice loved Elvis as well as Johnny Reid, and always took some time to chat during the call. She paints lovely pictures as well! Elise enjoyed hearing hymns, Sinatra, and of course, Elvis. I'll be keeping All Shook Up and Blue Suede Shoes in my repertoire for future occasions!

Recording and editing is what took up most of my time. I made about 20 videos total, hopefully patients have been viewing them to their heart's content. I have certainly become more proficient with my recording/editing software, which will help with any future recording endeavours.

In all, I have loved being a part of Artists in Healthcare Manitoba. The timing worked out perfectly, what with being locked down the past few months. The staff were incredibly friendly and easy to work with as well!

I have quite a few life changes taking place right now, so I don't know what my spring/summer schedule will look like yet. Please keep me posted on when the next session rolls around, and maybe I can be a part of it.

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity!

Stories From Our Service Canada Students (continued)

Deer Lodge Health Centre – Kyle Cobb

The staff at Deer Lodge are simply excellent at what they do. From nurses, to recreation staff, to physicians, everyone is greatly concerned about patient well-being and health as their first priority. To contribute to this goal was an absolute privilege and pleasure. I learned a great deal from the experience.

Riverview Health Centre – Daniel Nemez

This summer at Riverview was one of extremes. I usually get a variety of performance settings throughout the day, from singing to a gathered group of patients to wandering the halls to playing outside to visiting families and staff. Due to Covid, I mostly wandered the halls this year, and hardly ever sang. This was a musical challenge as well as a mental one. With myself and all the staff wearing masks, it was much more difficult to read expressions, and sometimes it felt like I was unnoticed, or even a nuisance. Of course, my own anxiety was extrapolating from what was really just staff doing their jobs and me doing mine, but without the smiles I'm used to, it was so much harder for me to feel assured that my job was helping.

On the other end of extremes, there were a few patient interactions that impacted me more than usual, perhaps because it was so rare this year that I was able to interact with patients at all. One was a man in Palliative Care who requested that I step inside the room so he could talk to me. He said he loved my guitar playing, and told he about how him and all his siblings used to play banjo, mandolin, and guitar, and fiddle together growing up. I would come say hi each day, and eventually he was moved to the long-term respiratory care unit. His wife would often visit, and he would tell me that they are still in love.

Another patient in Palliative Care turned a guitar student's grandfather. My student's mom visited with her sister, and they asked me to come in the room and play for him. He said that when he heard me in the halls each day, that this was the best part of his day. He was a guitar player himself, and also, the author of a book about the multi-generational Indigenous experience in Northern Canada from the fur trade to his own life.

I'll share one final story about a patient. He was on the rehab wing, and each time I'd come through, he would come out of his room and just stand in the hallway with a huge smile on his face as I'd play. He never said any words, just smiled and listened. After a few weeks of this, one day he came out and handed me a sheet of paper. It was a drawing of me playing my guitar! I was speechless. It's crazy to me to think that someone was impacted by my music to the point where they thought of me when I wasn't there, and wanted to thank me in the best way they knew. I was reminded and encouraged that art is a powerful form of communication. Do I make people feel the way he made me feel when I saw his drawing? If so, I can't imagine a better thing to do with my life.

Concordia Hospital – Ryan Guth

I'm in my last 2 weeks of my placement at Concordia Hospital and loving it. I am connected through to their computer system now so I have email correspondence with Spiritual Care and Recreation Therapy. Every day they will email me suggestions of patients who would benefit from hearing some music. Playing for patients was a bit different this year. Infection control protocol prevented me from being able to sing and I am not allowed to enter patient's rooms. So, I started the process of creating solo guitar arrangements from all of the songs in my normal sung repertoire (see attached song list). I also started to keep a timetable of my playing time so that Kathleen is able to see where I play and for how long each day. It also helps me to stay organized and not play in the same areas too often.

It has been an excellent summer, even with the setbacks caused by COVID-19. I have learned a lot in my time here and have been supported by my wonderful coworkers Kathleen, Lori, Kayon, Deborah, Magda, Adrien, and Devon. I have been getting great responses from patients, families and especially staff. I've been told that my music can really "relieve the tension" in the entrances of the hospital where the public will screen in. These are tense areas due to the restrictions in place to ensure sanitation and safety to those who reside inside the hospital.

Stories From Our Service Canada Students (continued)

St.Amant – Erika Einarson

Working for Artists in Healthcare Manitoba this summer looked considerably different from last year, but even as we were challenged to make changes that accommodate health and safety, it was clear that having music at St.Amant was more important than ever. While all units were confined to their own floors due to many residents having compromised immune systems, some couldn't even leave their bedrooms to see their next-door neighbours. Live music, as presented through video calls on iPads or SmartTVs, was a beautiful gift and break from isolation that we could provide this year.

Although we sometimes had to work through internet connection issues or technological errors, I observed many positive mood changes for the residents over the course of the summer through playing their favourite tunes and interacting with them on a regular basis. Even for those who weren't always aware that the SmartTV was showing a live phone-call rather than a movie, picking the right song would create dramatic changes in physicality, expression, and awareness. It was during these moments that I realized how crucial it is that all people, especially those living in care home settings, have access to music and entertainment for the sake of well-being.

I will share an experience I had during my final work week as an example. I was in the middle of a virtual concert with one of the 'Adult Health Services' units. One song I selected was 'Can't Help Falling in Love' by Elvis Presley. As soon as I started singing, one woman rolled her wheelchair right up to the webcam and started singing the words loudly with me- this was an incredible moment as this individual has always been less interested in music and often preferred to be left alone. I decided to play a few more Elvis tunes with her, and because I made this choice, she stayed by the webcam to have a conversation with me and also appeared to be more interactive with those around her than usual. It was a very special moment to have at the end of my work term, and I will never forget how much we need music even if it is through a webcam!

Misericordia Health Centre – George Bajer-Koulack

I just wanted to let you know how amazing the job placement has been for me and the patients this fall.

Just like always I've so many wonderful experiences with the patients. This year is different however, since the covid situation prevents the hospital from bringing in entertainers from the community. When I first started playing on the units I had so many patients tell me how bored they had been and how music brought life back into the place. Now whenever I walk on to a floor there are people who are happy to see me staff and patients alike. So many of the folks who have trouble remembering anything remember my name (pretty much the best compliment I can think of). Often when I arrive on a unit I can feel the stress; the patients are often silent with downcast faces, always when I leave there are smiles and laughter again. I think that with all the covid troubles community and connection is more important than ever, even if it is more challenging to facilitate. It is possible to wear PPE, social distance and still connect as a community.

This job has been really important to me this year too, as a place where I can share my art with a community and recognize the importance of the work I have done and am still doing. There are so many musicians out there right now questioning the effort they've put in, thinking about giving up and doing something else. To me the work I do here is proof that music is vitally important regardless of commercial value. I'd rather be here making people smile than at the big stadium. I feel almost guilty that this job is ending, I've built up so many important relationships this year and I feel like there are people counting on me to lift them up. I hope there is more funding so I can continue to put my full effort in here, but if that doesn't work out I will continue to come in as much as I can in a volunteer capacity. (Thanks to The Mark and Zita Bernstein Family Foundation who funded George to continue to play)

Music has its own intrinsic value, our society needs musicians. It's hard work but the reward is great, even without so much financial appreciation. I will never stop, I will keep on working to be a better musician and a better person, no matter what!

Stories From Our Service Canada Students (continued)

The Saul & Claribel Simkin Centre – Davide Verelli

“Is that a mandolin or a ukulele?” I was asked this question on a daily basis by the same people during my time at the Simkin Centre. For whatever reason this included a number of recreation therapists, at least as often as it included the residents. I suppose this is because it didn’t matter what it was at the end of the day. “Do music”, they said.

What stands out to me time and again is the humour and playfulness of the residents. It does not matter what their ability is, their spirits are alive. Their humour is so good not only because of what they say, but how they say it. To hear a person in their last days who suffers with chronic pain and hasn’t seen their loved ones in person for months crack a joke, means more than anything. What strikes me further is that when the residents engage in this kind of play it is never superfluous, but I believe - often necessary to their continued health. In a way, this attitude of pursuing life in the midst of suffering is very familiar to live music.

I recall my piano teacher attesting that she refused to train a “technician”, who would never miss a note, but would fail to express emotion and movement. This demands a certain vulnerability from the musician. Indeed, I find that when I intentionally do not attempt to reserve any of my energy for future concerts or one-on-one visits, and give as much as I can of myself in the music, it is always appreciated and vitalizes me to having an energy level greater than when I began.

What is further shared in common between the residents’ humour and live music, is that each are unique and unrepeatable. Music is slightly different every time it is played in person, and it is firmly rooted in a place and a time - a setting. This shared setting means that audience and performer are present to each other in a way that recorded music fails to replicate. That’s why I think the Artists in Healthcare Manitoba initiative is special. “I hunger for music”, I once heard from a resident. For some, having live music helps to fight loneliness. For others, it staves off boredom. For others still, it is a way to reawaken memories that they can relive as they sing along. In truth, residents’ moods change from day to day, no different than anyone else. One rainy morning, one of my biggest fans was curled up in his usual napping chair, only this time he was having a sad day. “I’m sad that my life is almost over”, he said to me. In that moment, I expected that he would want some space, but instead he pleaded that I play songs for him. Afterwards, he was,” sad and glad, both at the same time.”

An Observation:

Truly, the people I have met at the Simkin Centre have been diverse and always changing. They are, in fact, open to learning new songs, whether they are less popular songs from their own generation, or Ed Sheeran ballads. Responses to different songs are not always predictable and change from floor to floor (except maybe You are My Sunshine, Que Sera Sera, and Walking my Baby Back Home).

My favourite quotes:

“You’re cool.”

“You’re my hero.”

“I love you”

“Who’s your favourite guitarist?... For my birthday I’m going to pay for you to have lessons from him... I really think you should get together with a group and bring back this music. Because if you play it, then that’s how it comes back.”

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Pamela Campbell
The Gail Asper Family Foundation
Ben Plett

Leif Norman
Poco Beads

Links

Art at CancerCare: <https://vimeo.com/154359060>

CancerCare Music: <http://www.artistsinhealthcare.com/videos/>

Music to My Ears: <http://vimeo.com/24829257>

The Grace Hospital (this program will run year-round at many hospitals, hospices, and long-term care in Winnipeg and Brandon, Bethesda, Boundary Trails, and Selkirk Mental Health Centre)

Art at the Bedside, St. Boniface Hospital: <https://vimeo.com/37978606>

String Quartet Series: <http://vimeo.com/16381026> and <http://vimeo.com/16381760>

Shaw piece on Art by the Big Blue Chair, CancerCare Manitoba:

<http://youtu.be/rHwqTUXsPqE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBwS2OaKAZM>

**2019 Culture Days video on Kate Black,
our Art by the Big Blue Chair artist at CancerCare Manitoba**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBwS2OaKAZM>



Artists in Healthcare

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