



# ART THERAPY

## History of Art Therapy in Canada

Introduced to this country in the 1940's and 1950's by Psychiatrist, Dr. Martin A. Fisher, Irene Dewdney, and Marie Revai, art therapy has now entered its second generation in Canada. Art therapy has grown into a full-fledged profession with training institutes, individual practitioners, institutional connections and professional associations across the country.

In Edmonton, Alberta, St. Stephen's College offers accredited specialized art therapy training in its Master of Psychotherapy and Spirituality Degree program.

## What is Art Therapy?

Art Therapy is a form of psychodynamic treatment using simple art materials. Spontaneous art expression in a non-judgmental atmosphere allows the person to freely articulate both expressed and repressed thoughts and feelings in a safe and nurturing therapeutic environment.

Sometimes art therapy involves interventions and directions which can form part of a treatment plan, given the needs of the client it is serving. Alongside the trained art therapist, a client or patient can explore issues that have surfaced as well as experience benefits from the artmaking itself.

Art therapy is useful as a primary or adjunct therapy for healing. It can be used with children, adolescents and adults, be offered individually or in group sessions, and support addressing a variety of needs. Art therapy encourages creativity and the imaginative process for healing.



## Who is an Art Therapist?

Art Therapists are trained professionals who have graduated from a masters-level degree program in art therapy. They are qualified to be members and registered members of provincial and national art therapy associations, for example, the Canadian Art Therapy Association.

Art Therapists have training in the health sciences, education, sciences, arts, fine arts and humanities with a focus on psychology and counseling curriculum in addition to art therapy studio studies.

## Research

Most art therapy research is found in qualitative research methodologies, with a recent increase in evidence-based research. A bibliography can be found through the AATA (American Art Therapy Association) website.

## Clinical

Art Therapists work on specially-designed programs to meet both individual and group needs. Art Therapy can work in hand with music therapy and other forms of Expressive Arts Therapies. Art Therapy can happen bedside, as well as in an art-based room or studio.

## Consulting

Provided to medical staff, therapists, teachers, parents/ guardians and others on the use of art therapy to enhance the learning of cognitive skills, communication and life skills, support behavior and developmental goals, enhance self-esteem, confidence and self-expression.

## Practica

Art Therapy graduate students perform 350 clinical hours of art therapy services in a variety of placements. For more information on how to include a practicum student at your site: **Please contact the Chair of the Department of Psychotherapy and Spirituality for St. Stephen's College.**

## Who Benefits from Art Therapy?

Art Therapy is a Mental Health and counseling profession as well as a treatment useful in physical and occupational therapies.

### The following clients benefit:

- Children, adolescent and adult populations (pediatric and geriatric).
- Various DSM diagnoses including clinical depression, eating disorders, autism spectrum, attachment disorders, bereavement, anxiety disorders, fetal alcohol syndrome and co-addiction.
- Art Therapists often work as part of interdisciplinary teams in psychiatry, oncology, brain injury, and a variety of trauma-informed contexts.
- Various social and educational agencies employ art therapist for their work with victims of abuse, AIDS patients, those with disabilities, in palliative care, and with at-risk populations.
- Treatment goals may include working on developmental issues, pain control, coping skills and contributing to quality of life.

## Resources

<http://catainfo.ca/cata/about-cata/>