Encapsulating 525,600 minutes of Change, Growth, and Renewal
You know how every once in a while, you do something and the little voice inside says, "There, That's it. That's why you're here."

...and you get a warm glow in your heart because you know it's true?

Do more of that.

Jacob Nordby
Fate whispered to the warrior "you can't handle the storm"

The warrior whispered back "I am the storm"
Live Simply.
Love Generously.
Learn Constantly.
My love of gardening comes from my mother. When I was young, she was consistently in our yard creating beautiful space. As an adult, I find great joy in the creation of my own beautiful spaces, and each year, look forward to spring, to begin my yearly trek to the
local greenhouses, in search of inspiration to transform my outdoor spaces into something beautiful and unique every year.
About 5 years ago, my mom and I started a project transforming our front yard from a traditional lawn into a completely different landscape, and have been adding to it every year. One of these spaces is a teardrop garden, which housed over 18 different rose bushes. Our winter this year was atypical, an unusually mild January which melted the snow cover that usually protects the roots. We lost 16 rose bushes along with other perennials to mildness. So instead of creating a flower pot, I decided to transform this space instead.

This project symbolizes my own year of growth throughout my Masters of Social Work program at Renison College, although much like my front yard, this journey began a number of years ago, and finally came to fruition last August. It has been a strenuous journey, and I have been pushed to grow in ways I had not imagined when we started. While it has not always been comfortable, I believe it has been worth it! Come walk with me through my process.
Envisioning possibilities: design (theoretical framework)

let-it-grow

Commitment harmonious mountains competencies cooperation flowers hurdles
Indigenous
Creative connection plants balance CASW sea-to-sea growth
In good garden design, thoughtful planning needs to occur to create a successful landscape. The size and scope of the project, the type of soil, the amount of light, and the type of plants (perennial or annual) are some of the aspects that must be considered.

The same could be said of social work practice, that it is important to build rapport, assess the client's issue, explore the impact of the issue on the client and their environment and determine the appropriate approach to best help the client address his/her issue. According to Hepworth, Rooney & Larson (2002), the ecological systems model provides a unifying theoretical approach that allows practitioners the
flexibility to take both the clients **habitat** (resources, housing, social networks, etc) and **niche** (status/role of the client in their community, sense of purpose of the client, or understanding the social determinants that may hinder the development of purpose) into consideration.
Perennial, but will it survive our winter temperatures? Full Sun/partial sun/shade?
During my practicum, I was introduced to relational-cultural theory (RCT), which highlights the importance of relationships in the growth and maturation of human beings. Contrary to the contemporary Western idealism of separation-individuation as a sign of maturity within a client, RCT therapists believe that humans require growth promoting relationships to move fully into maturity and to have a healthy sense of self-worth.

According to Duffey and Somody (2011) the RCT counsellor will “help clients conceptualize themselves within a broader context, [moving] out of a position of shame, defectiveness and isolation toward genuine authenticity and connection with others” (p.225).

I deeply believe this is my foundation for good, therapeutic practice. Like good, rich topsoil, it provides me with nourishment and enough room to spread my roots (values and ethics), clear the debris (unhealthy coping mechanisms) and make room for something healthy and new.
4 - dead flowers and weeds
5 - clearing the debris
6 - Making room for the new.
Building the vision: Flower selection (social work values and ethics; Indigenous plants across Canada)
When I began to cultivate my ideas of what this project would look like, I knew that I wanted to create something with multiple layers of meaning, that would remind me of the various things I have learned in each course, each client I have worked with, and what I have learned about myself. Utilizing the CASW Code of Ethics Core Social Work Values and Principles, I began to research the meanings of different flowers that could reflect the meaning of each of these values as well as would grow in my climate. I also wanted to include plants that were indigenous to the provinces and territories my classmates have come from. While we have the CASW Code of Ethics to guide us all, each province and territory has their own governance body, and it seems that the focus and drive differs based on the environment you are in. Further, I wanted to have elements that would
remind me of the specific skills and competencies I have acquired over the past year. No small feat!
Core Social Work Values and Principles

Hydrangea paniculata ‘Quick Fire’ symbolizes “gratitude for being understood”, which I related to the value of Respect for the Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons.

Rudbeckia hirta or more commonly known as Black-eyed Susans, symbolize “justice”. I chose this flower to represent the value of Pursuit of Social Justice.

Upright junipers symbolize protection and anti-theft, which I equated with the value of Confidentiality in Professional Practice.

Spruce trees are associated with peace and protection. Together with violas, which symbolize remembrance and humility, I related these two plants to the value of Service to Humanity.

Dahlias symbolize “grace under pressure, drawing upon inner strength to succeed and commitment to another person or ideal”. I used these to represent the value of Integrity in Professional Practice.
Delphiniums have multiple meanings including: reaching for your goals and striving to achieve it all, expanding options and attracting new opportunities, celebrating the positive. I chose these flowers to remind me of the value of Competence in Professional Practice.
8 - Black eyed Susans
9 - Upright Junipers
10 - Dwarf Alberta Spruce
11 - violas

12 - Dahlia (unfortunately mine is in between blooms)
13 - Delphiniums
FROM SEA TO SEA
15 - Dwarf Alberta Spruce: British Columbia and Alberta
16 - Morden Sunrise Hardy Rose: Alberta (to represent the Alberta wild rose)
17 - Red Prairie Grass: Saskatchewan
18 - Echinacea: Saskatchewan and Ontario
19 - Black-eyed Susans: Ontario
20 - Iris: Maritime provinces
21 - Lobelia Cardinalis: Nova Scotia
23 - Cattails (ok, it’s really ornamental millet, but I was going for scale!): any marshy area in Canada
Building the vision: Developing a plan (social work practice and core competencies)
In learning the symbolism of all of the plants in this flower bed, including the flowers that were already established (the survivors), I can say that each and every single element of
This flower bed represents important aspects of my social work practice, and ideals I strive for each day.

Established original plants

25 - Tinkerbell Lilac (pink blooms): strong friendships (also, the bloom time is vibrant and short which can also symbolize a therapeutic relationship with a client)
27 - Yellow Daylilies: forgetting worries
28 - Yellow Lilies: good health and healing

29 - Dahlias: grace under pressure, drawing upon inner strength to succeed and commitment to another person or ideal
New plants and elements

30 - Rocks (to symbolize the Mountains): Constancy, eternity, firmness and stillness. My grounding place.
31 - Delphiniums: Reaching for your goals and striving to achieve it all, expanding options and attracting new opportunities, celebrating the positive.
Hydrangea: Gratitude for being heard
33 - Morden Sunrise hardy rose: Cultivated in Manitoba to withstand Canadian winters, this rose has been a part of every flower bed I have created for the past 14 years. I had thought about utilizing Alberta wildroses, but I couldn’t imagine my life without this one! For me, this rose symbolizes stability (and it’s stunningly beautiful in all stages of the flower’s bloom).
34 - Prairie grass: movement
35 - Violas: remembrance and humility
36 - Iris: faith and wisdom
37 - Echinacea: strength or health
38 - Icicles: sometimes you choose things just because they are esthetically pleasing!
Ornamental Millet to symbolize Cattails: Peace and well wishes for prosperity
Campanula (bellflower): Gratitude
41 - Elderflower: Compassion
42 - **Anemone**: Health, Protection, Healing

*Cedar mulch: retention (of ideas, concepts and competencies)*
43 - Lobelia Cardinalis: distinctive

Black-eyed Susan: justice

Alberta dwarf spruce: Peace and protection
From Vision to Living memory

The final project completed
Love it when a plan comes together
This pathway of rocks symbolizes both the Rocky Mountains, and my journey through the MSW program. There have been bumps, twists and unexpected turns...and for this, I am grateful! I have become a better social worker, and more in tune with myself as a result!
Thank you for being a part of my journey!

References


