Tribute

A tribute to Carolyn Bereznak Kenny

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Our music therapy community has lost another beloved scholar, author, teacher, mentor, collaborator, researcher, speaker and practitioner. After living with cancer for 15 months, Dr Carolyn Kenny passed away peacefully in Santa Barbara, California, with her loving family around her.

Carolyn was born of a Choctaw mother in Mississippi, USA, and a first-generation Ukrainian father and, in keeping with tradition in her indigenous community, she was adopted into the Haida Nation in 1999 by Dorothy Bell, matriarch of the Masset Haida people in British Columbia, Canada. Her given Haida name was Nang Jaada Sa-êts, which means Haida Woman with a Mind of the Highest Esteem.

For over 45 years Carolyn contributed significantly to our world music therapy community by teaching in higher education in the US, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Brazil and Japan, being invited to speak at regional, national and international conferences and congresses, authoring and editing a vast number of books, book chapters and journal articles, and by offering professional supervision and mentoring of graduate students from many universities around the world. Carolyn was a theorist, a poet, a philosopher, and an intellectual, interdisciplinary scholar and presenter, who worked and taught in music therapy, indigenous, aboriginal and cultural studies, leadership and change programmes, and in research. Carolyn’s passion was teaching qualitative research methods such as phenomenology, ethnography, auto-ethnography, arts-based research in social change, and portraiture. She was involved in conducting research throughout her long and successful career.

Carolyn’s strength, courage, and ability to envision new training programs resulted in the co-founding of Capilano University’s music therapy bachelor’s degree programme in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976, British Columbia’s Open University’s MMT programme in Vancouver (1995-1999), and a special Master of Education degree at Simon Fraser University that combined First Nations Education and Administrative Leadership. Carolyn was a contributor on many scientific committees for World Congresses and association
journals, and she had been editor and reviewer for many journals and published works in music therapy, native education, and indigenous studies. She was the editor of the Canadian Journal of Music Therapy from 1999 to 2004 and was co-founder and co-editor-in-chief with Brynjulf Stige of Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy from 2000 to 2013.


Carolyn was my inspiration, my mentor, my technicians of the sacred, one who waits for sound… one who dances on the edge of time, one who can guard the threshold of being, one who waits for sound…” (Kenny 2006: 80)

Honouring Carolyn’s clinical legacy, Capilano University has established a scholarship in her memory that is given to a student who demonstrates compassion to others, appreciation of cultural identity, and self-awareness in their clinical setting ([https://www.capilanou.ca/programs-courses/music-therapy/Scholarships-Bursaries-Awards/](https://www.capilanou.ca/programs-courses/music-therapy/Scholarships-Bursaries-Awards/)).

Carolyn also established the first music therapy position at the Santa Barbara hospice in California in 2008 and fundraised her last weeks of life to maintain this position ([http://www.vnhcsb.org/carolynkenny/](http://www.vnhcsb.org/carolynkenny/)).

**REFERENCES**


Tributes poured in from all over the world upon her passing; acknowledging the depth and breadth of her professional and personal influence, her mentorship, and her friendship (see Henley 2017; Hesser 2017; Stige, McFerran & Hadley 2017; Summers 2017). Carolyn deeply touched thousands of people throughout her life through her writing, her teaching, and her in-person beauty. We are richer for knowing her and we owe her much gratitude for all she has done for music therapy. Her loss is deeply felt.

“...one who sees the vision and hears the song of the one and the many, the one who dances on the edge of time, one who can guard the threshold of being, one who waits for sound…” (Kenny 2006: 80)

As Haida, we believe that the intricate patterns of song and art weave the relationships between the people, the land, and the creatures on the land into a fabric of resilience and strength. We are intimately bound to ecology and place. Our singing reinforces this sacred relationship.” (Kenny 2016: no pagination)

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