

numa

caring for the spirit in island health

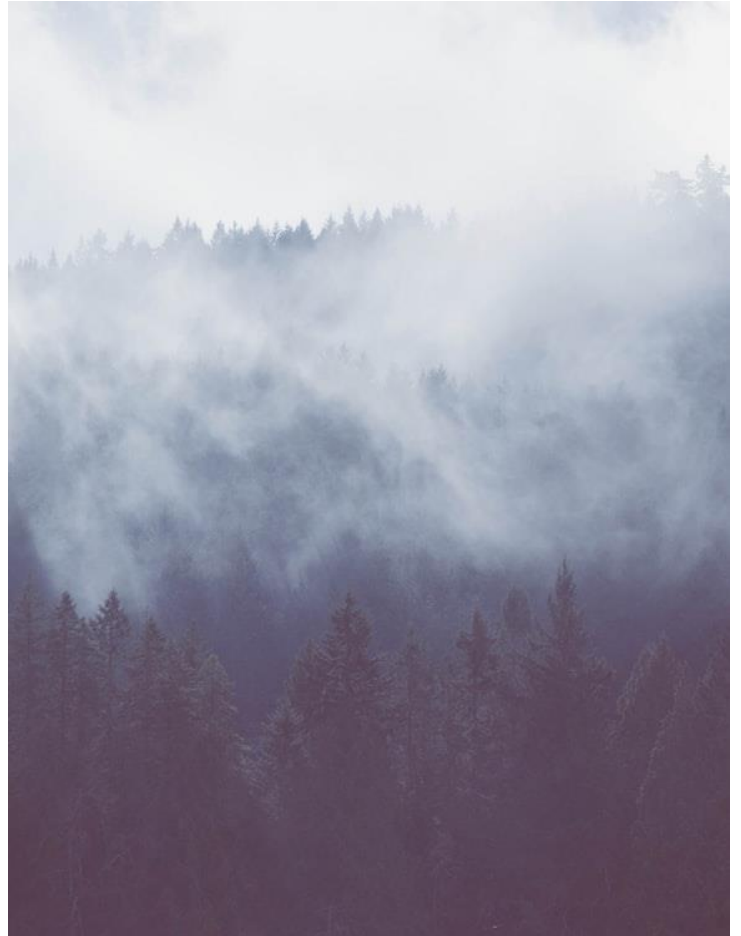
Spiritual Strength

When I first stumbled upon the quote *"It's not the strength of the body that counts, but the strength of the spirit"* Google informed me that this was something that the famed author J.R.R Tolkien had written. As an avid lover of Tolkien's writings I was drawn to it thinking, "Well, if it's from him it ought to be a solid bit of truth!"

Subsequent searching however revealed that Tolkien, in fact, was not the author. I was tempted to bail on using the quote to help celebrate *Spiritual Health Week* and simply search for something else when I realized that even if we don't know who said it this quote is still quite insightful.

This quote of course does not mean that our physical strength does not matter. For the myriad of folks who come under the care of health care professionals their bodily condition is generally the primary concern to them. The mending of broken bones, the healing of mental health conditions, the treatment of cancer or the physical challenges that come with facing the last days of one's life are the central issues of the people that we care for.

What this quote gets at is that, aside from our physical condition, there is something else that is very important to us as human beings. Something that, when well cared for, enables us to endure, overcome and even thrive amidst the physical pains and challenges that we experience.



**It is not the strength
of the body that counts,
but the strength of the spirit.**

Unknown

This something else can be called our spiritual strength. It is the ability, despite what is happening to us physically, to find strength, hope, meaning and purpose in the very midst of those physical challenges.

If we have served as a health care professional for any length of time we will have witnessed the power of spiritual strength: The athlete involved in a motor vehicle accident who has had her legs amputated is able to find a deep well of emotional strength and resolve to help orient her to the loss and find a new view on life. The patient, whose recent diagnosis means that they have only weeks to live, turns and works to restore broken relationships that have been

neglected for years. The nurse who, after an assault in the workplace, finds inner healing and the strength to return to her job. The estranged family that finds reconnection at the bedside of a mother in palliative care. The new manager who initially feels like an imposter in his role develops a humble and compassionate leadership style that is a gift to his team. The family that digs into their spiritual roots amidst the darkest of hours as their elderly grandfather breathes his last breaths.

Events like these, and countless others, happen each and everyday in Island Health and exemplify the truth that nurturing spiritual strength is integral to living a full and healthy life.

While we all want to be strong physically it doesn't always work out that way. That is why we need the whole spectrum of health care professionals to tend to what ails our bodies. Similarly, while we all may want to be spiritually strong there are times when we are not. Times when we are spiritually weak; afraid, confused, burnt-out and exhausted. For those moments too it is good to have people like Spiritual Health Practitioners who help us find our inner strength, regardless of what we are going through.

This week we not only celebrate the compassionate, professional care that Island Health's Spiritual Health Practitioners give each day as they help patients, loved ones and staff find spiritual strength we also celebrate the wonderful reality that each of us, sometimes with a little help, can find spiritual strength in the toughest of times.

Spiritual Health Week

October 23-29

Island Health staff are invited to enter the **'What lifts your spirit?'** contest to WIN!

Simply send an image of an activity, event, hobby, pet or anything else that lifts your spirit to spiritualhealth@islandhealth.ca.

A winner will be chosen at random.

For more information about the Spiritual Health program go to the [Spiritual Health Intranet page](#).

Celebrating Island Health's Spiritual Health Professionals



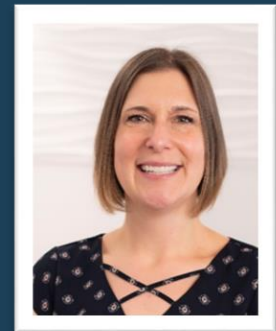
Oceanna Hall
SHP @ SPH



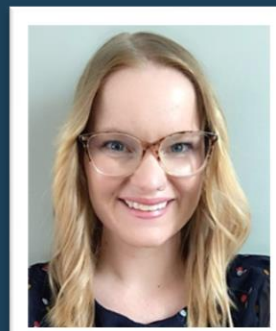
Sandy Reynolds
SHP @ CVH & CRH



Michael Politano-Bowles
SHP @ VGH



Marysia Riverin
SHP @ NRGH



NUMA (Greek for "spirit/breath") is produced by Island Health's Spiritual Health team to draw awareness to issues of spirituality in health care. The editor of numa is Darren Colyn, Spiritual Health Leader. To read past issues of NUMA go to the [Spiritual Health public webpage](#).

Island Health's Spiritual Health team members acknowledge, with humility and gratitude, that we live and practice on the ancestral lands of the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth and Kwakwakaw'akw people. We commit ourselves to ongoing learning as we work towards reconciliation and strive to ensure that the spiritual beliefs and practices of all people are supported for their individual and collective wellbeing.