

# numa

caring for the spirit in island health

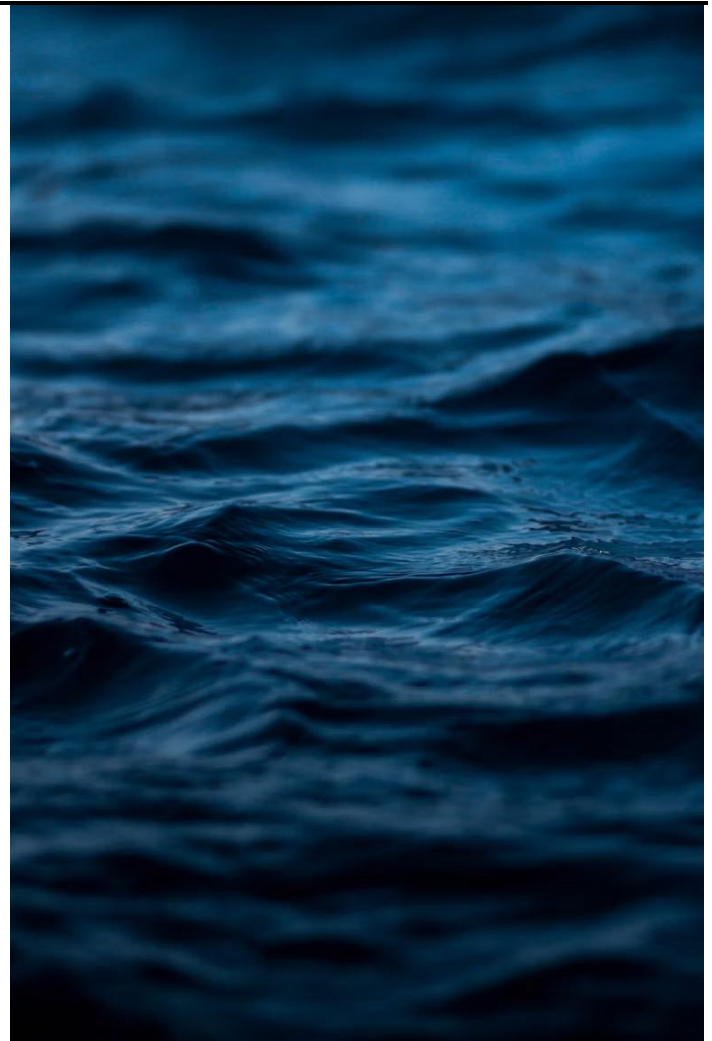
## Spiritual Health Matters

When Teri\* was diagnosed with a life-limiting illness, life changed abruptly for her and her partner, Marty. What had once been familiar and predictable became filled with uncertainty, anxiety, and fear.

As Teri's condition worsened, they began discussing the possibility of having a medically assisted death. Both came from cultural and religious traditions that struggled with the idea of an assisted death, and they knew that family and friends would question such a decision. The weight of these competing values left them feeling torn and isolated.

Teri had long been wary of hospitals because of difficult experiences during her childhood and early adulthood. However, when a severe pain crisis brought her to the Emergency Department, she had little choice but to seek help. During that admission, Teri shared with healthcare staff that she wanted to learn more about MAiD. She was given a form to begin the assessment process. What seemed like a simple next step quickly became another obstacle.

Neither Teri nor Marty could read English well, they didn't have a family physician, and they had no access to a computer to help process and complete the paperwork. After arriving at such a significant and deeply personal decision, they suddenly found themselves unable to move forward. Sitting together in the assessment room, overwhelmed and discouraged, they broke down in tears.



Noticing their distress a nurse contacted the site Spiritual Health Practitioner (SHP) for support. During this consultation, Teri and Marty were given space to tell their story. They spoke openly about the cultural and familial tensions surrounding their decision, as well as embarrassment and shame they felt about being unable to complete the paperwork themselves. The SHP helped them explore the beliefs, values, and relationships influencing their decision-making. Together, they worked through sources of anxiety, clarified what mattered most

Perhaps the most important thing  
we ever give each other is our  
attention.

Rachel Naomi Remen

to them, and navigated practical barriers that had left them feeling stuck and powerless.

By the end of this and subsequent consults, Teri and Marty felt a renewed sense of peace and confidence. Their concerns had been heard, their challenges had been addressed, and the MAiD form had been completed.

A few weeks later, the SHP's phone rang. It was Teri. She was calling with one final request: that the SHP be present when she received MAiD.

This year's Spiritual Health Awareness Week theme is **"Spiritual Health Matters."** The theme carries a dual meaning. It speaks both to the matters that Spiritual Health Practitioners attend to every day and to the reality that an individual's spiritual health matters profoundly to their overall well-being.

For Teri, the matters requiring her deepest attention were not medical in nature. They included questions about dying, conflicts between personal choices and cultural beliefs, concerns about family reactions, feelings of shame, and the struggle to advocate for herself during one of the most vulnerable periods of her life. These were the deeply human concerns that lay beneath and were uniquely suited to Spiritual Health care support.

Addressing these concerns also mattered profoundly to Teri herself. Left unattended, they fueled fear, anxiety, isolation, and distress. By creating a space where these concerns could be explored with compassion and dignity, Spiritual Health care supported Teri in making healthcare decisions that aligned with her values and enabled her to approach the end of her life with greater peace.

In the end, the support she received mattered so much that when Teri considered who she wanted beside her in her final moments, she chose to include the person who had helped her navigate some of her life's most difficult questions.

During this year's Spiritual Health Awareness Week, we invite you to learn more about Island Health's Spiritual Health program and the gifted individuals who provide this care daily to patients, families and staff.

## Call to Action: *Knowing When to Refer to Spiritual Health*

Spiritual Health Practitioners provide care in a wide variety of contexts and situations. [The 6Es of Spiritual Health Support](#) help inform staff around when to refer to their SHP.

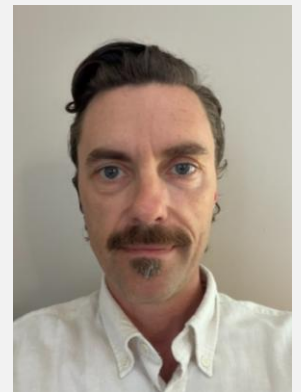
## Spiritual Health Program Updates

### Spiritual Health Awareness Week Info

Check out the [Spiritual Health Intranet page](#) for more information about this year's Spiritual Health Awareness Week.

### CPE Students

Island Health's Spiritual Health program regularly provides clinical placements for individuals enrolled in the Clinical Psycho-spiritual Education programs at Providence Health and Fraser Health. Currently, there are two students in our midst: Mike Domes (L) at WCGH and Robin Stamp (R) at NRGH. To learn more about CPE click [here](#).



### CSV Information for Staff

Community Spiritual Visitors play a vital role in connecting patients with representatives from their own cultural, religious and spiritual communities.

Knowing the role of CSVs is important for Island Health staff. Refer to this [new poster](#) to understand the CSV role.

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