



Community Arts-Based Supervision: A Model for Collective Learning and Support

Carmen Oprea & Lindsay Clarke

The Community Arts-Based Supervision model grew out of six years of collaborative supervision by arts therapists and supervisors Carmen Oprea and Lindsay Clarke within an art hive community and an international community of art therapists.

After Covid-19 hit, they witnessed firsthand the power of collective learning and creative process in strengthening the professional Self of art therapists working in the Concordia University Art Hives. Based on this experience, they developed an international model that centers on co-holding among members, non-judgmental sharing, and small group formats where arts-based processes are at the core.

This model emerged from the needs of collective rhythm and safe connection in these circles of supervision, instead of focusing on clinical details. The approach supports the development of presence, confidence, and the ability of the supervisees to hold therapeutic space, qualities that research identifies as central to effective therapy (Delgadillo et al., 2020; Heinonen & Nissen-Lie, 2019)

The model is also informed by theories that highlight co-regulation, co-empathy, and shared rhythm (Perry, 2010, Perry & Winfrey, 2021), and by traditional communal practices of collective healing, such as gathering, celebrating life transitions, alternating work and rest within community, and creating art together.

These collective experiences within the supervision groups revealed that developing the capacity to hold space as a therapist—and to keep learning—emerges more naturally through connection and direct experience, by being both the one who holds and the one who is held within the group. The presentation outlines the foundations of the model, grounded in both theory and lived practice, a model that is steadily expanding among supervisors internationally.



Through concrete examples of the model and what has emerged in the groups, the presentation will reflect on how community- and arts-based supervision can restore a sense of belonging, strengthen confidence, and refuel the creative energy of arts therapists in their professional journeys.

References

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Biography

Carmen Oprea, MA, MFA, RCAT, ATR-BC, is a Canadian registered art therapist with post-graduate training in sandplay therapy. Holding master's degrees in art therapy and fine arts, she is currently a doctoral candidate in psychology.

Her professional career includes art therapy services for individuals and groups of all ages with various life challenges, at her clinic in Montreal. She is the co-founder of the learning platform Creative Arts Therapies Events and the organizer of the World Art Therapy Conferences. Carmen is co-investigator in a research project related to art therapy effects for depression and anxiety at Concordia University, Montreal. She provides supervision to creative art therapists in person and online.

Lindsay Clarke, MA' RCAT, ATR, CCC, has for the past 10 years provided art therapy at a women's shelter, schools, and art hives. She has enjoyed developing and facilitating community art exhibitions to support the voices of those who have survived violence, the impacts of suicide and living through homelessness and mental illness.



She now offers art therapy to people of all ages at her Montreal studio, atelier lanterne. Her practice is with a focus on art making and creative process as a catalyst towards change, health, and empowerment. Her work is guided by principles of trauma-informed, attachment-based, and strength-based art therapy practices.

Lindsay provides supervision to individual art therapists and also within a community context.

Recent Publications

Reichardt, D., Zeltzer, S., Katz-Mazilu, I., Visnola, D., Oprea, C., & Pröll, J. (2025).

Discourses of Homing, Belonging, and Dwelling after Traumatic Experiences. Panel 3rd International EFAT Conference. London, UK

Gingras, G., Oprea, C., Périer, C., & Riccardi, M. (2024). **Singing Together in Supervision: Integrating Art and Psychodrama.** *ECArTE Conference: Singing Together in Dark Times.* Ghent, Belgium

Oprea, C., Clarke, L. (2024). **Online Art Hive — A Virtual Public Practice Art Therapy Initiative. Highlights and Challenges.** *World Art Therapy Conference. Art Therapy in the Digital Era*, Online, February 17 <https://www.artstherapies.org/digital-art-therapy>