

# Anna Byrne

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## Summary

The unifying principle of Anna's personal and professional experiences is a deep regard for, and devotion to, the inherent dignity of all people. Her passion and skill unite in providing end-of-life education and support.

## Experience

### **Founder & Facilitator: The Hospice Book Club**

The Hospice Book Club uses *Seven Year Summer* (Finalist, Whistler Independent Book Awards) as a starting point for meaningful conversations around dying, bereavement, and caregiving. This book club is ideal for educating and engaging hospice volunteers, staff, and community members. Included is a Discussion Guide and 1-hour virtual Q&R with the author.

### **Co-Founder & Facilitator: Community-Supported Dying qathet**

Community-Supported Dying (CSD) aims to build community literacy and social infrastructure where those who are dying and bereaved are returned to a central, honoured and supported place. CSD facilitates workshops and events that ignite thoughtful engagement with end-of-life questions while providing practical skills to support those who are seriously ill, caregiving, or grieving.

### **Guest Speaker**

These book circles, author talks, and presentations aim to both inspire and inform about aspects of end-of-life care. Using my personal story as a cancer patient for seven years, as well as my experiences working and volunteering with hospice, these talks foster a deeper appreciation for, and engagement with, life. I work with organizations to create unique presentations tailored to each audience. Previous speaking engagements include keynote speaker for the Canadian Cancer Society, guest on the End-Of-Life University podcast, presenter at the BC Patient Safety and Quality Council, author talks.

### **Author**

Author of *Seven Year Summer*, Finalist for the Whistler Independent Book Awards. Worked collaboratively with LA-based actor, composer, and filmmaker Jacqueline Kim (Netflix film "Advantageous") to produce an audiobook version.

Other publications include:

Article: "Beyond a Good Death: Authenticity at the End of Life"; Zest Magazine

Contributed Chapter: "A Room Prepared: Women and the Mystic Experience." *Feminism and Religion: How Faiths View Women and Their Rights*, Praeger

Contributed Poetry: *Children of the Collapse*; 2013

Currently working on a second book, a work that explores the potential of community-supported dying through the story of one woman.



## **Hospice Coordinator: Four Tides Hospice Society** (May 2017 - Aug 2020)

- Responsible for the oversight and administration of the three pillars of the society: Care for the dying and their caregivers; Support for the bereaved; Community education and advocacy for end-of-life issues
- Client care - coordinate care from diagnosis to after-death, including intake, ongoing assessment of emotional, spiritual and social needs and bereavement
- Training, supervision and support of 40 volunteers in a variety of settings (home, hospital, longterm care)
- Support and education to health care staff and community organizations (advance care planning, dealing with compassion fatigue, etc.)
- Program development and implementation (Support groups, bedside singing, *Memento Mori*)
- Work closely with the Board of Directors to plan, implement and evaluate a shared vision and mission
- Liaise with acute care, longterm care, community nursing, and mental health professionals to provide continuous, equitable care to clients



## **Instructor: Vancouver Island University** (Jan 2016 - May 2017)

- Instructor for Workplace Essential Skills and Training (WEST) Program for adults with cognitive and physical differences.
- Responsible for course development, teaching, student intake, student assessment, record keeping
- Foster a safe, positive and creative learning space for learner growth
- Liaise with parents, caregivers and support staff to best serve students
- Maintain excellent relationships with VIU faculty, volunteer organizations and community businesses



## **Educator: Greater Essex County District School Board** (Sep 2001 - Jun 2012)

- Special Education teacher in a multi-disciplinary setting for adolescents with serious mental health, emotional, and behavioural challenges.
- Four years delivering specialized curriculum to youth 12 - 18 years of age, found guilty of committing a crime and sentenced to a secure-custody facility
- Maintained exceptional standard of care for the treatment needs and dignity of each youth

## **Education**



### **University of Toronto: Master of Theological Studies** (2022)

Final Project: "An Integrative Examination of Medical Assistance In Dying (MAID) This project examined the history, defining aspects, and key data related to MAID in Canada. Spiritual, ethical, and denominational considerations of MAID were explored within a Christian context, along with practical tools for congregations and clergy to better provide pastoral care to those who are considering or choosing MAID, and to their loved ones. Designed and delivered a survey and feedback session for churches seeking deeper engagement with issues surrounding MAID.

### **British Columbia Bereavement Helpline:**

Supporting Grief and Loss as a Result of Substance Abuse (2019)

### **Victoria Hospice: Psychosocial Care of the Dying and Bereaved Course** (2019)

5-day course examining psychosocial perspectives on hospice-palliative care, including self-care and team issues, the impact of disease transitions and holistic care, counselling and bereavement support.

### **Victoria Hospice: Learning Essential Approaches to Palliative Care (LEAP) Core** (2018)

Two-day course aimed to provide healthcare professionals with basic competencies of the palliative care approach.

**Center for Action and Contemplation: The Living School (2015-2017)**

"Grounded in the wisdom and practices of the Christian contemplative traditions, [the Living School's] purpose is to nurture the conditions for inner and outer transformation through equipping students with tools, teachings, and experiences to work together for a more just and connected world."



**University of Windsor**

Specialist Degree in Special Education (2004)



**University of Windsor: Bachelor of Education (2001)**

Elementary Level Education and Teaching



**McMaster University: Honours B.A. (Psychology and Gerontology) (2000)**

## Licenses & Certifications



**Certificate of Registration: Ontario College of Teachers**

## Honours & Awards



**Finalist: Whistler Independent Book Awards (2020)**



**Good Shepherd Award: Maryvale Adolescent and Family Services (2012)**

"Presented to the staff members who most demonstrates kindness and concern for others, a desire and willingness to be involved in community service, a commitment to their own growth and the healing processes, a commitment to the vision and values of Maryvale."



**Citizen of the Year: Town of Amherstburg, Ontario (2007)**