

Canada

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Snapshot

Area

9,976,140 square kilometers

Population

33,930,830

Official Language

English, French

Ethnic Groups

Although initially settled in the 1600s by individuals from France and the British Isles, today Canada contains a widely diverse mix of ethnic groups and cultures from all parts of the world. First Nations peoples make up approximately 4 % of the population.

Median Age

39.5 years

Children under 5

1,837,724

Sources

Statistics Canada
www.statcan.gc/start-debut-eng.html

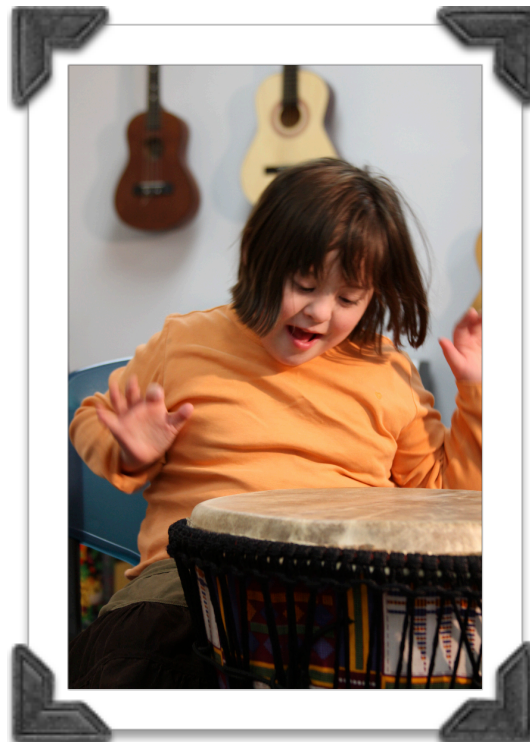
Your Canada
www.yourcanada.ca

"Play is the answer to the question. How does anything new ever come about?"

- Jean Piaget

Demographics

Of the 300 music therapists working in Canada, approximately 100 provide services to children. Music therapists in early childhood work in a wide variety of settings: hospitals, government-run pre-school or daycare programs, private schools, therapy clinics, creative arts camps and in private practice. Music therapy is used in segregated as well as integrated settings, in groups and with individuals. Government funding often is not available for these programs. In many locations, music therapists are paid directly by parents or through special fundraising efforts. In Canada, we face the challenge of a small population spread over a large geographic territory. Families in urban settings may have access to programs that do not exist in more remote areas. At the same time, education and social services are mandated on a provincial basis, resulting in differing policies from one province to another. The Canadian Music Therapy Trust Fund (CMTTF) provides funding for pilot programs in music therapy and a number of programs for young children have been able to hire a music therapist as a result of a Trust Fund grant. This has been particularly important for



small towns and remote areas where children with special-needs have traditionally had very little access to therapy services.

Background Information

Music therapy in Canada has existed since the 1950s. The Canadian Association for Music Therapy (CAMT) was founded in 1975. Currently, the CAMT has approximately 500 members including clinicians, educators, retired therapists, students and associate members.

There are six university training programs in Canada, two of them offering Master level training. There is a strong trend towards graduate studies in music therapy, as many experienced clinicians are seeking advanced training. However, at this time, Canadian music therapists must leave the country to pursue doctoral studies in music therapy.

Music therapy as a treatment modality is well-established in many long-term care facilities, hospitals, palliative-care facilities and mental health programs. Music therapy for children is less common in Canada, although there are children's hospitals and therapy centers

that recognize the value of music therapy programming for their populations. In general, music therapy has not been offered through the public school boards, although there are individual administrators that have successfully advocated for music therapy programs within their schools to provide programming for children with special needs. This is an area for potential growth, as educators and parents are becoming increasingly aware of the contribution of the arts to the development of children with disabilities.

Common Approaches

Music therapists working with young children in Canada use a wide variety of methodologies and approaches. In addition to utilizing the multifaceted auditory experience offered by listening to music in many forms, music therapists employ visual, tactile and kinesthetic experiences with instruments, pictures, props and movement. The integration and organization of the sensory experience is key to optimizing global development in the young child with disabilities. Music therapy is used in other settings to help young children cope with traumatic life experiences, hospitalization, chronic illness and brain-injury rehabilitation. A growing trend in Canadian music therapy with young children is family-based therapy in both developmental as well as pediatric settings.

The use of Nordoff–Robbins and other improvisational approaches, often in conjunction with a developmental model, is very common. The acceptance of behavioral programs for children with autism has influenced music therapy work particularly with this population. However, in general, strictly behavioral approaches in music therapy are the exception rather than the rule in Canada. Music therapy frequently is being used in conjunction with other therapies in interdisciplinary settings resulting in a rich sharing of knowledge and expertise. In general, humanistic theory informs much of the music therapy practice in Canada, leading to an eclectic child-centered approach.

Prominent Publications

The following is a sampling of music therapy literature from Canada. Specific research on music therapy for children is difficult to access as this area is just emerging and not all studies have yet been published.

- Ahonen-Eerikainen, H., Lamont, A., & Knox, R. (2008). Rehabilitation for children with cerebral palsy: Seeing through the looking glass-Enhancing participation and restoring self-image through the Virtual Music Instrument. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*, 12 (2), 41-66.
- Bargiel, M. (2002). Berceuses et chansonnettes: considerations theoriques pour une intervention musicotherapeutique precoce de l'attachement par le chant parental aupres de nourrissons au developement a risques. *Canadian Journal of Music Therapy*, 9 (1) 30-49.
- Boisvert, S. (2002). Music therapy with children having physical or sensory deficits. *Canadian Journal of Music Therapy*, 9 (1), 65-74.
- Herman, F. & Smith, J. (1988). *Accentuate the positive, expressive arts for children with disabilities*. Toronto: Jimani Publications.
- Herman, F. & Smith, J. (1992). *Creative arts for preschool children with special needs*. Tucson: Communication Skill Builders.
- Starr, E., & Finnigan, E. (in press). Increasing social responsiveness in a child with autism: A comparison of music and non-music interventions. *Autism: The International Journal of Research and Practice*.



About the Author

Wanda Gascho-White, MTA has been working in music therapy with young children for the past 22 years. She is currently the head of the music therapy department at Zareinu Educational Centre, a private special-needs school and therapy center for children from 0–21. Wanda has been a lecturer and workshop presenter at conferences and training programs across Canada. She is an advocate for the role of music therapy in facilitating creative and social play experiences for children with physical disabilities, developmental delay and/or autism. Wanda has served as president of the Canadian Association for Music Therapy and is the chair of the Canadian Music Therapy Trust Fund, a charitable foundation that funds music therapy projects and research in Canada.

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