

RADICAL MENTAL HEALTH DOULA (RMHD) NEWSLETTER

The first RMHD pilot officially wrapped up in December 2023. Thank you to all the doulas and clients who participated and shared their courage, patience, and wisdom. Thanks as well to our community partners and funders that continue to support this project!



From left to right: Ian Kinney (doula), Madalyn Hart (practicum student), Kali Hoogenboom (doula), Maryam Shakir (doula), Michelle Martel (doula), Tiffany Boulton (co-PI), Byran Treichel (doula), Yangyang Fang (postdoc/project manager)

Over the last few months, the research team has analyzed data from RMHDs and their clients through final check-in interviews and monthly surveys. Progress to date shows that RMHDs have a unique ability to support client rights and dignities as they engage with the mental health system. Working outside of formal systems, RMHDs established deep trustful relationships with clients and provided flexible and continuous support tailored to each client's evolving needs. Through resource sharing, connection building, and acting as a safe sounding board, RMHDs enabled clients to move through system encounters more smoothly, with less violence, and in ways that make them feel more confident and respected. As a collaborative and community-based support, RMHDs can cultivate acceptance and belonging for those accessing resources and services in the mental health system.

Findings from the first pilot are informing further discussions about adaptations to the RMHD training curriculum, doula and client recruitment processes, and how to increase visibility and legitimacy of RMHDs role working parallel to the mental health system. As we move forward, we continue to develop community partnerships and are working on multiple grant applications to support the expansion of RMHD scope and reach. As part of a SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant, we are currently working with IslamicFamily in Edmonton to integrate faith-based mental health support into the RMHD training curriculum and launch an RMHD-informed community mental health program.

Doula Spotlight

I am a certified End-of-Life Doula from Douglas College and a Radical Mental Health Doula through the RMHD project at the University of Calgary. I have over 20 years of experience and knowledge working as a palliative health care aide, licensed funeral director, certified embalmer, mental health support worker, and hospice volunteer. I tailor my services to clients needs and support them through their unique emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental health and/or end-of-life journey.

Partnered with Ian Kinney (a fellow RMHD graduate), I launched [Grassroots Doula Services](#) to offer both mental health and/or end-of-life doula services to low-income marginalized people and their families who are seeking non-medical mental health support, end-of-life care, or both. We believe in the creation of collective wellness for people who do not have the economic and social privilege to have total inclusivity in mental health and end-of-life doula services. Our mission is to achieve social justice in community care and to provide access to mental health and end-of-life doula services for all people.



Michelle, RMHD (Cohort 1)



An accomplished Support Worker, Doula, Peer Coordinator, Father, Husband and Friend. I am a very compassionate and understanding Airdrie community member and am usually found helping out at community events supporting addictions, mental health, overdose and suicide prevention, and advocacy. I really enjoyed being one of the first doula graduates from the Radical Mental Health Doula (RMHD) pilot project and aim to support clients and their families navigate the mental health system. I understand the need to advocate for those struggling with the mental health system and empower them to understand and locate resources that would contribute to building a life worth living.

After 21 years of bouncing around the system with many misdiagnosed labels and an opioid addiction, I decided to tackle the main issue - ADDICTION. I am currently 6 years in recovery and see that the grass is really greener. I noticed my mental health would slip in between clinician appointments, and this inspired me to become a doula as I recognize the gaps in the mental health system. I would love the opportunity to be your "in-between" and help smooth out the rough seas ahead. I will not be the captain of your boat; but I will do my best to show you how to become your own captain."

Bryan, RMHD (Cohort 1)

RMHD Pilot 2.0 Recruitment

The second RMHD pilot project will run from June - November 2024, with training held in Calgary from **May 6 - 10**. Recruitment of doulas and clients has now begun and will continue to the end of April.

Please scan the QR code or visit our [website](#) to learn more about the pilot project and register to participate. If you work for an agency and wish to refer clients for additional mental health support, please fill out this [link](#).

If you want to learn more about the pilot project or have one of our team members come present to your staff or community, please contact us at RMHD@ucalgary.ca.



Sign up here!

Project Announcements

New publication!

Our paper *Co-Developing a Radical Mental Health Doula Model of Support: Reflections on Doing Feminist Participatory Action Research* is now out in the winter publication of *Critical Disability Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal* Vol. 18 No. 1 (2024). You can read it [here](#).

Members of the RMHD Research team will be presenting at the following upcoming conferences.

Mathison-Littmann Mental Health Research Day - *Health Sciences Centre (Theatre 4), March 15, 2024* (Register [here](#))

CRDSSA Conference - *Sinneave Family Foundation Child Development Centre, March 16, 2024* (Register [here](#))

Congress 2024 of the Humanities and Social Science - *McGill University, Montreal, June 17-21, 2024* (Register [here](#))

Please visit our [website](#) to learn more about the team, project updates and our doulas.

