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An Interview with Lindsay Finnie by Nicki Iskander '15



Lindsay Finnie '15 is a massage therapist and birth doula. Her focus is working with the childbearing population and empowering her clients to have the best pregnancy and birth experience possible. After graduating from S-C, Lindsay briefly worked in Toronto before moving to Victoria, British Columbia, where she lived and practiced for nearly three years. Having recently moved back to Toronto, she is excited to start a new chapter in her career by providing perinatal massage care in the east end of the city.

What made you choose to study at Sutherland-Chan?

I chose S-C based on its reputation for training exceptional therapists. I was also drawn to the extensive specialty clinics the school offers its students. As a hands-on learner, it was imperative for me to find a school that would best accommodate my learning style and I felt Sutherland-Chan would meet my academic needs.

What took you to Victoria, BC?

Having only lived in Southern Ontario, the thought of moving someplace new was both scary and exciting. My partner was completing a master's degree at the University of Victoria while I was at S-C and we both finished our respective programs at the same time. Having been to Victoria several times to visit him over the two years, I got a pretty good taste of island life, so when he told me he didn't want to leave just yet, it didn't take much convincing to get me to move out there with him. That I managed to find extremely rewarding work while there was just the cherry on top of having the ocean and mountains in my backyard.

Could you describe the registration process in British Columbia and what kind of CMTO membership you maintained in Ontario?

BC has recently changed their massage therapy training from a 3000-hour program to 2200 hours in order to be more congruent with other training in Canada. This made getting my licence to practice a lot easier than it maybe would have been five years ago. If you are a massage therapist moving to BC from a regulated province, the process to getting registered is pretty straightforward. I was required to prove my successful completion of an approved massage therapy program, that I was a member in good standing with the CMTO, that I had liability insurance, and to provide character references.

I also had to complete a jurisprudence course (online) followed by an exam on the course material (that I did in person once I was in Victoria). From start to finish, it took me about a month to obtain my licence with the CMTBC. While I was in BC, I maintained an inactive membership with the CMTO.

What are the main differences between working in Victoria and Toronto?

I found the compensation model to be the biggest difference. In Victoria, clinics generally seem to be charging therapists rent rather than putting them on a split, and if they are on a split there is a monthly cap. In the few years I was practising in BC this was becoming more and more the norm. In my albeit limited experience in Toronto (through talking with fellow Toronto therapists and in my own job search), clinics seem to be sticking with the split, no-cap model. I would also have to say that the rumours are true: island life moves a little slower than in Toronto and people don't seem as rushed.

What are some of the biggest challenges you've had to overcome in your career as a massage therapist?

For sure the biggest challenge and learning curve in my career has been physical and emotional burnout. When I was a new grad I wanted to be busy and, let's be honest, I had a lot of student debt to pay off. Before I knew it, I was working six days a week and giving 6-10 treatments each shift – it was exhausting! This kind of availability set a precedent to the clinics I worked at and to my clients. It became hard for me to say no, even when I felt myself on the verge of a breakdown. I had to start setting boundaries for myself, which is hard to do when you're fresh and ambitious. I maintained this work schedule for two years before I realized it would be a short-lived career if I kept it up. So, I swallowed my fear of losing clients, cut my workload, and made more time for self-care. I didn't lose any clients and I am a better (and better rested) therapist for it.

How do you balance the unpredictability of your work as a doula with the appointment-based nature of massage therapy?

Pregnancy and birth are definitely unpredictable! I have found that an open line of communication and complete transparency with my massage and doula clients is paramount. When I am waiting for a birth, I am on call two weeks before and two weeks after the due date. I message all my massage clients who have appointments booked within that time period and I give them the option of rescheduling if they're uncomfortable with the possibility of their appointment being cancelled at the last minute. I find that since I've been upfront about it, clients generally have no problem keeping their appointments. I've only had a few ask to reschedule outside of my on-call hours. More often than not, they think it's really cool that I'm a doula. They'll come for their appointment and ask, "Is there a baby yet!?" and we share in the excitement. Some clients aren't familiar with what a doula is so when I tell them they think it's amazing and I have to agree. Witnessing babies being born and supporting the birthing parent has been a highlight of my life.



Is there something you love most about being a massage therapist?

Taking care of people. I've always been told that I have a nurturing personality. I like helping others and I find deep happiness in providing support and creating a space where they can really plug into their bodies and feel safe. I love that I get to work with people from multiple walks of life. They bring in all different kinds of experiences and I'm always humbled when they gift me their stories. It's a very rewarding job; I'm extremely lucky. The flexibility of the career isn't so bad either!

Do you have any advice for recent grads?

Don't try to appeal to every client. The minute you try to get everyone and their mother on your table, you're setting yourself up for disappointment. Find a demographic you feel really passionate about (for me it was pregnant people) and focus your energy on getting them into your treatment room. Make yourself stand out by having a really clear practice focus and you'll make the decision easy for the clients you're most excited to work with. Also, always have quick snacks on hand for you to eat between clients and get massages yourself!

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