

Dr Terri-Leigh Aldred

Dr Aldred answers the Proust Questionnaire, telling us a bit about her life and what drives her.



Dr Aldred is a new member of the BCMJ Editorial Board. She is Carrier from the Tl'azt'en territory located north of Fort St. James. She is a member of the Lysiloo (Frog) Clan, who are traditionally known as the voice of the people. She follows her mother's and great-grandmother's line, Cecilia Pierre (Prince). Dr Aldred grew up in both the inner city of Prince George and on the Tachet reserve (in Lake Babine territory) and these experiences helped motivate her to go to medical school so she could give back to her community. She has a doctor of medicine degree from the University of Alberta and completed the Indigenous family medicine residency program through the University of British Columbia. At present, Dr Aldred is the medical director for primary care for BC's First Nations Health Authority, the site director for the UBC Indigenous family medicine program, a clinical instructor with UBC and UNBC, a family physician for the Carrier Sekani Family Services primary care team, which serves 12 communities in north-central BC, and the Indigenous lead for the Rural Coordination Centre of BC.

Where do you live?

Lheidli T'enneh traditional territory, whose colonial name is Prince George.

What profession might you have pursued, if not medicine?

Pharmacy was the program I was in before medicine, but looking back I think a career in the humanities would have suited me well.

Which talent would you most like to have?

To be able to sing.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

It's hard to pick. Graduating high school felt huge—the first generation in my family. Defying the odds to get into and complete an MD and not lose myself. My work as the site director for the Indigenous family medicine program, nurturing amazing people.

Who are your heroes?

My older brothers, who always looked out for me. My Indigenous ancestors, who have always walked with me and survived despite the odds. Authors like Maya Angelou, Brené Brown, and Gabor Maté.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

I'm not sure that it exists, other than in brief moments, like my baby being placed skin to skin after she was born, walking down the aisle, toes in sand, a sip of a perfect cup of coffee or a delicious wine, setting your eyes on a wonder of the world, and finding the balance between service and play.

What is your greatest fear?

Fear itself. To not do the thing. To not truly and fully live. And on the other side, being driven too much by FOMO!

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Deploping traits about myself. Being ridiculously hard on myself.

What characteristic do your favorite patients share?

It's less about individual people and more about the moments I've had with many people, where we meet in our humanness during surreal moments of joy, pain, and sorrow.

Which living physician do you most admire?

I deeply admire and look up to many female Indigenous physicians, like Drs Marcia Anderson, Nel Wieman, Danièle Behn Smith, Shannon Waters, Shannon MacDonald, and Nadine Caron. Dr Evan Adams, of course, and many more.

What is your favorite activity?

Reading and writing as a solo activity, and enjoying a great meal with family and friends.

On what occasion do you lie?

When it's bedtime (haha).

I used to be impulsive to avoid conflict, which I learned as a survival mechanism growing up—I've worked hard to stop this, believing fiercely in the value of honesty. However, I do try to reflect on my words to ensure they are true, necessary, and kind.

Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

"Umm," "like," "so," and "as the saying goes."

What is your favorite place?

Moloka'i. Beaches. Experiencing a new place.

What medical advance do you most anticipate?

Gene therapy.

What is your most marked characteristic?

My grittiness, passion, and perseverance.

What do you most value in your colleagues?

Hard work and dedication.

What are your favorite books?

Nonfiction: anything by Brené Brown.

Fiction: anything by Mitch Albom.

What is your greatest regret?

Anytime when I could have been kinder and offered more grace.

What is the proudest moment of your career?

All the moments when the people I've served have said they felt heard. And being awarded the University of Alberta Rising Star Alumni Award and the Resident Doctors of Canada Mikhael Award for Medical Education.

What is your motto?

"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."

—Edward Everett Hale

How would you like to die?

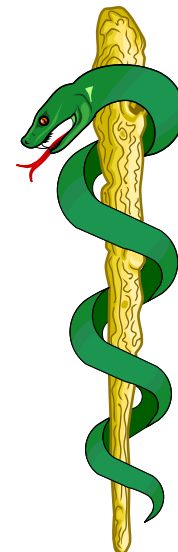
Old. Worn-out from a fully lived life. At peace.



Symbols of medicine

Deriving meaning and encountering misunderstandings.

James D. Warren, MD



Logo: a symbol or sign; derived from the Greek *logos*, meaning *word*; and designed to represent, at a glance, whatever it purports to represent. Today, thousands of symbols are used as logos, but they are often so graphically simplified that they no longer resemble the source. A symbol can identify a product, idea, company, profession, or activity, and once a logo becomes established, it is often recognized despite being disconnected from its source idea. Symbols can also hold power, based on what they represent.

The rod of Asclepius is the historically correct symbol of the medical profession and is employed worldwide. Asclepius was the Greek god of medicine or healing. The rod

is often depicted as a fat club being held by Asclepius with a single snake, gentle and benign, wrapped around it, consistent with gentle healing and idealized medicine.

The wand of Hermes, also called the caduceus, was a symbol that, for a time, mistakenly represented the medical profession in the United States. The wand consists of a winged staff with two snakes wound around it. Hermes was the god of commerce and many other things—travel, luck, fertility, animal husbandry, sleep, language, and thieves. It was an unfortunate choice for a logo for medicine (it was eventually jettisoned), and it isn't altogether clear why the US chose to use the more elaborate but clearly inaccurate caduceus for a time to represent the idealized physician.

The Canadian Medical Association's logo is now designed with a straight line, tapered at the bottom, with a snake loosely twisted around it. The American Medical Association has adopted a similar symbol for its logo—a straight line, on a slant, with a snake coiled around it, much like a spring.

Whether to portray a serpent as a squiggle or a spring is moot. Both associations agreed a stroke line is suitable for a club, and both logos morphed from using clear symbols to cryptic ones. Regardless, we still try to symbolize that medicine, at its best, is widely separated from commerce, though that may be a false hope sometimes. Hermes, god of commerce, is still at the door. ■

Dr Warren practised orthopaedic surgery in Victoria for 38 years, retiring in 2001. He obtained his MD from the University of Manitoba in 1957, an MSc in anatomy and a minor in classics from the University of British Columbia in 1960, and an FRCSC in 1963. In 2013 he gave the Listerian Oration to the Victoria Medical Society and the Osler Lecture to the Vancouver Medical Society on early Greek practices and theories of medicine. He was a member of the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia for 12 years.

This essay has been peer reviewed.