

## Confluence Podcast Transcript: Adrienne Tauses

**Kirsten Murray:** Adrienne brings a presence with her that is, um, so grounded and so invested in whoever or whatever she's with. And for me, that's one of the most trustworthy ways you can go about being in the world.

**Veronica Johnson:** One thing I really appreciate about Adrienne is she is up for whatever challenge is presented to her. We were co-teaching a research class together last semester and, and I think she was kind of nervous going into it.

And she comes in and she says, “I have a surprise.” And she pulls up her sweatshirt and she's got this t-shirt on underneath a sweatshirt that has like this giant rainbow unicorn on it. And she's like: “This unicorn is to bring us luck today.” And it was great. You know, it's just like she, um, she thinks of other people and she, I think, inspires other people to just be positive and, and be their best selves.

**Ashby Kinch:** You just heard the voices of Doctors Kirsten Murray and Veronica Johnson, professors of counseling, talking about their student, Adrienne Tauses, one of the Bertha Morton graduate students scholarship winners for '22-'23. This episode is part of a series recognizing the achievements of some of our outstanding graduate students. The Bertha Morton Award was named for a great Montanan who dedicated her life to public service. The award recognizes graduate students for the distinctive contributions they make in research, creative activity, and public service.

Adrienne's a student in UM's PhD program in Counselor Education and Supervision. She has over a decade of experience as a licensed clinical social worker working in a variety of contexts, including equine facilitated psychotherapy and recovery support. She also runs her own mental health practice, Change is Strength, and works in the area of grief and trauma support. The impact her work has on our community exemplifies a key component of the Bertha Morton Legacy. and we are delighted to share her graduate story with listeners.

Welcome to Confluence, where the river is always with us.

**Ashby Kinch:** Welcome to Confluence, Adrienne.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Thanks, Ashby.

**Ashby Kinch:** We're celebrating Bertha Morton winners. You're a recent winner of the Bertha Morton. Did winning that award have any special resonance for you?

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yeah, I think, um, I feel overwhelmingly grateful all the time about anything that happens in this school because I never thought that I would be getting my PhD. And so, um, when I applied for the scholarship to have funding for my dissertation year, it just felt really lovely and I just was feeling very honored by someone that decided that she wanted to give money for people to extend their research and their education. I think that's quite honorable.

**Ashby Kinch:** It is. And it's really kind of an amazing story. Of course, she had no ties to the university.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yeah. It's so bizarre!

**Ashby Kinch:** No one cultivated her, [she] just kind of came outta nowhere. Yeah, that feels good--that validation. And then this notion, I mean, it's really important I think in your case because one of the key elements is sort of leadership and service impact. And of course that's at the core of your work. And so part of what I want to talk to you about is, is to get you to sort of tell your Montana story. You're in the PhD program now in, um, counselor education and supervision, but your path to that, it's a little non-linear. So, um, how'd you end up in Montana and, and especially how that clinical work you did prior to getting here, how did that kind of inform your decision to kind of make this turn and do the PhD?

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yeah, that's a good question. I think non-linear is well-said. Yeah, so basically I went to graduate school. I'm from the east coast and so I did all my schooling on the east coast. And then when I finished graduate school, um, in social work, I knew that I wanted to work with teenagers, but I wasn't quite sure what capacity. And I also knew that I wanted to work outside and felt very unconventional in that way and literally started--

**Ashby Kinch:** Unconventional because on the East coast, that's not like a normative thing?

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yeah. Like, I was less interested in talk therapy and wanted to kind of delve into the experiential realm. And so I literally started Googling

‘wilderness’ and ‘therapy’ and ended up finding a program in Oregon that I absolutely fell in love with. And, um, they were unique because the therapist would be in the field the whole time with kids. And that's what I was looking for versus someone--

**Ashby Kinch:** This is like the equine psychotherapy model? That's part of maybe?

**Adrienne Tauses:** This is wilderness therapy, which I did right outside of grad school. And then while I was doing wilderness, I decided that I also wanted to be certified and trained in equine therapy.

**Ashby Kinch:** And had you had experience with horses before?

**Adrienne Tauses:** Oh yeah. Good question. Yes. I grew up riding dressage. It was a huge part of my life. But I had done less work on the ground with them. And the equine therapy that I became trained in was totally focused on the ground. Okay. And again, I thought, using experiential, um, activities and horses, especially, was such a unique way of looking at human behavior and helping people heal.

**Ashby Kinch:** Yeah. Big, rich, um, anthropological or human tradition, though, of our animal relationships being kind of an extension of our social identity. So it kind of makes sense that there would be this, this powerful link that you could tap into.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yeah.

**Ashby Kinch:** Horses especially, right? I mean, we have such a longstanding human relationship with horses: 10,000 years long or something like that.

**Adrienne Tauses:** They're transformative, for sure. And some of the most perceptive beings that I've ever been around.

**Ashby Kinch:** Yeah. Interesting. So then, you've worked in a lot of different clinical through that, that work history.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yep. Yeah. From wilderness, I kind of moved into more of a medical realm. I'm very, I've always been really interested in the brain and trauma. And so I worked in neurotrauma with, um, people that experienced strokes and, um, kind of mass traumas around car accidents and things like that, that ended them into the hospital.

And then I moved into cancer research, area oncology. And then I've delved into dual diagnosis and, um, kind of all of these work experiences happened in Oregon and mostly led by curiosity and wanting more training. I think one of the things about counseling is you go through your formal education, and then the learning really starts.

**Ashby Kinch:** Right. Because you need to get into the field and do the work to kind of, uh, hone the craft.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Exactly.

**Ashby Kinch:** and the, and, and kind of have that feedback loop of like: “Oh, that didn't go so well” and you know, so it's a special kind of training in that way. You reach higher and higher plateaus. Am I wrong in thinking though that there's a kind of through-line in some of this work in blending, a kind of physical sense of the physical body and how that might be part of therapy, not just the talk therapy part. That's what you started by saying. But even in the, in the neurotrauma and in the cancer, it's getting people to engage with their bodies fully as part of the therapy.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Exactly. Yeah. I've always been really interested in how, um, mental health shows up in the body and what the connections are with that, and, um, how experiences are held in the body, like in the nervous system. So that yeah, that's a good observation.

**Ashby Kinch:** And on the flip side would be like, what can we do in the body to kind of move that, that back into a positive mental health?

**Adrienne Tauses:** For healing, yeah, exactly.

**Ashby Kinch:** Well, that's really powerful. And I note in your record that, you know, you've done some work in grief and that's an area where I, um, do a lot of my own research and thinking. And know you've connected with Tamarack, which is just an incredible local organization. Yeah. I mean, [it's] hard to quickly summarize what they do, but you know, it's a community resource for helping people process trauma and grief both at the individual, but also at the group scale, you know, families, but also communities that experience trauma. Was that what brought you here into this community?

**Adrienne Tauses:** It is! Yes. I apologize, I digressed. But, yes, it is. Exactly. I was living in Oregon, in southern Oregon at the time out of Ashland, um, and have always wanted to live in the Rockies, truly—was not planning to do it

during the winter, however. And, um, decided that I would look and see if there was any opportunities here and found Tamarack and applied kind of on a whim. And was grateful to, um, accept a job here. And so ended up moving in February in the middle of a blizzard in 2019. And actually, in all honesty, I love it here. And I totally fell in love with this place.

And it was at Tamarack that I met a lovely colleague named Kim and she was in the counselor education program at the time. And she, um, talked to me about the PhD program, which, I had previously applied to some PhD programs kind of various times throughout my career and never had quite found the right fit or the timing wasn't quite right. And when I came to, um, know some of the faculty here before even applying, I just fell in love with them. And the relationship building is so clear here, um, and the way that they interact, the cohesiveness and it's just, yeah. So I was overwhelmed with, um, desire to apply and felt really grateful.

**Ashby Kinch:** Well, and of course you're not the only person to say that about that particular group. They're, they kind of have that reputation on campus. A very tight knit, very close knit. They work incredibly well together. And just an amazing group of people. And attracting, um, a really talented set of new faculty and students. And so you've been in that PhD program since 2020. What are you working on? What's your research interest there?

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yeah, good question. So my research is very similar to the thread that you noted throughout my work history, which is how traumatic experiences can show up specifically in athletes in their body regarding physical injury and kind of difficulty recovering from injury or chronic pain, that kind of pieces.

**Ashby Kinch:** Interesting. Uhhuh. And then that's not something you'd worked on before. What's your sort of, uh, you know, your data set? Is it involving UM athletes or community athletes?

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yeah. It's actually with the athletic trainers. I'm hoping to kind of shift that focus from a performance-based, uh, view of physical injury to more of a mind-body approach. And how can we also incorporate the historical experiences that athletes may have experienced that are impacting their bodies?

**Ashby Kinch:** Okay, so it's a kind of holistic shift in how the training, itself, would be done, that would take into account, you know, mental, psychological factors, as well as just the injury point and you know, what needs to be fixed on the body.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Exactly.

**Ashby Kinch:** Wow, that's really exciting. Yeah. And so, um, you know, you're two years in

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yeah. Two years in.

**Ashby Kinch:** Coursework's done. You're moving toward, uh, dissertation. Proposal accepted or on its way?

**Adrienne Tauses:** Proposal hopefully will happen in the fall.

**Ashby Kinch:** Okay. And, and part of what we talk about on the show, that's why I'm getting into the nitty gritty, is sort of demystifying graduate school and what, what it feels and looks like. And so you, you have these phases and you know, coursework, of course, really important. You find that question that is gonna burn, uh, and gonna drive your passion. And now you've found it and you're gonna shape that into a research proposal in the fall.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Let's hope.

**Ashby Kinch:** And the Bertha Morton gives you that drive, that extra little wind in your sails to go do it.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yes, exactly. It was so cool to have that funding. Yeah. I wasn't expecting that. So it is always nice.

**Ashby Kinch:** And when you're done with your PhD, what do you imagine doing?

**Adrienne Tauses:** Oh gosh, that's a good question. I seem to do better with my hands in a few different things. And so I'm hoping to keep my clinical work. I have a private practice here in town.

**Ashby Kinch:** Yeah. Thanks for bringing that up. I mean, yeah, you, you've maintained a private practice all during your time as a grad student. That must be kind of challenging.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Uhhuh,

**Ashby Kinch:** Have you had to kind of limit the number of clients?

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yes. Turns out graduate school is a lot of commitments. And a lot of responsibility.

**Ashby Kinch:** Pretty demanding. Yeah. So you'll try to maintain that and then, and then think about research projects or connections with other...

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yeah. I hope to continue to be connected with the university, somehow, I think, because I didn't come to Missoula specifically for grad school. I really love it here and I would like to stay. I wasn't anticipating loving research so much. And so I'm really excited to hopefully continue in that realm somehow.

**Ashby Kinch:** Yeah. Well that makes my heart sing 'cause we do like to tell that story too about how important research is to drive a great research institution. You know, we need people that get that bug, you know? And of course, that's not everyone. I mean, a lot of professional degrees that they don't do a lot of research. But when people do, it's great to have that structure and that environment and that support to kind of push a boundary.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Yeah.

**Ashby Kinch:** Well, congratulations on the award and, and thank you so much for joining us on Confluence.

**Adrienne Tauses:** Oh my gosh. Thank you, again. It's been lovely.