

ARTWORK & PERFORMANCES



The Healing Hand by Nikki Butani

ARTWORK

FIRE POEMS AND THE MATERIALITY OF VOICE (56)

Evan J

Background / Purpose:

This project presents Fire Poems, a hybrid poetic form combining text and installation, where poems are physically constructed and then burned in politically and ecologically charged landscapes. Inspired by Robert Montgomery's fire-based textual performances, my Fire Poems extend his aesthetic project into the realm of health humanities and Indigenous-informed environmental ethics. My works have been installed in many geographies, including on the shores of Lake Winnipeg during 2025's wildfire-heavy spring, and along the Texas-Mexico border during the first months of Trump's second presidency—sites marked by ecological crisis and colonial violence. This is new, unpublished work.

Methods / Process:

Each Fire Poem is crafted through a multi-phase process: writing, editing, die-cutting letters, assembling installations, and performing the burns. The words are shaped by the ethics and politics of place and identity, and the installations are constrained by material realities—wind, drought, border surveillance, etc. The installations are ephemeral, designed to interact with nature and risk, emphasizing the body's role in art-making and the temporality, yet power, of protest. The process is documented through photography and reflection, forming a living archive of poetic resistance, even if the words have already burned to ashes.

Statement on Identity:

Drawing on Brian Burkhart's concept of delocality, Fire Poems resist the abstraction of voice from land and lived experience. Burkhart reminds us that voice is not merely sound or symbol—it is physical, material-based, and rooted in place. Fire Poems embody this principle, re-localizing poetic expression by situating it in specific geographies and histories. Fire becomes both medium and message: a metaphor for transformation, the evolution of poetic form, and a protest against neocolonial erasure. In this way, Fire Poems enact a poetics of identity that is materially grounded, ethically engaged, and deeply attuned to the health of bodies, communities, and ecosystems.

Biography: Evan J (he/they) is a researcher, writer, and community collaborator whose work engages the intersections of northern literature, northern health, and socio-ecological justice. Evan holds an MA in Literary Studies from York University and has worked extensively in northern communities. Their roles have spanned from front-line social services to nonprofit managerial work. For several years, Evan managed an arts-based Indigenous literacy initiative in Northwestern Ontario, working primarily on reserve. Now a PhD student at UNBC and a researcher with the university's Health Arts Research Centre (HARC), Evan's current research explores how northern art—specifically literary fiction—can illuminate the intricacies of northern health inequities and potentially offer unexplored solutions. Their writing spans academic and literary genres, reflecting a deep commitment to ethical land relations and collaborative knowledge-making. Evan is also an experienced literary curator and workshop facilitator. From 2023 to 2024, they served as Programming Coordinator for the THIN AIR Literary Festival in Winnipeg, curating events that foreground marginalized voices and community storytelling. They have facilitated poetry and creative writing workshops in remote First Nations schools, at literary festivals, and through national arts organizations, often focusing on the therapeutic and educational power of art in health contexts. Outside of research, Evan is an avid birder with over 400 species seen, and a passionate long-distance runner who, last year, ran 484 kilometres across Manitoba in seven days.

COI Disclosure: I do not have an affiliation (financial or otherwise) with any for-profit or not-for-profit organizations

ILLUMINATING SHADOWS: ARTS-BASED ADVOCACY IN HEALTHCARE (65)

Sheena Doyle

Background/Purpose

Indigenous women and families in Canada have long endured the harms of medical colonialism, forced and coerced sterilizations, obstetric racism, and the erasure of Indigenous birthing knowledge (Basile & Bouchard, 2022; Shaheen-Hussain et al., 2023; Webb, 2023). These practices have produced intergenerational trauma and violations of bodily autonomy that meet the United Nations' definition of genocide. Nursing, as both a caring and colonial profession, has been implicated through its historical participation in Indian hospitals, residential schools, and the biomedical control of birth (Symenuk et al., 2020). Yet nursing also carries transformative potential to confront these legacies and advance decolonial, strengths-based, and relationship-centred care.

Methods/Process

ILLuminating Shadows is a mixed-media shadow-art installation created from discarded hospital objects, IV bags, vials, and newborn hats. A single light source projects the shadow of a family holding a newborn, symbolizing resilience, interdependence, and the enduring light of Indigenous wisdom. The creative process drew on decolonial and arts-based methodologies, including relational aesthetics and critical reflection, to bridge artistic practice with advocacy (Basile et al., 2023).

Findings and Insights

The artwork reframes colonial shadows as spaces for truth-telling and relational restoration. Three key insights emerged:

1. Colonial Shadows – coercive obstetric and sterilization practices as mechanisms of colonial control.
2. Families Left in the Dark – biomedical authority obscures relational strengths.
3. Illumination as Decolonization – centring Indigenous knowledge reframes care as collective rather than purely clinical.

Statement on Identity and Theme

By transforming literal shadows into metaphors for collective healing, this work explores how identity, both personal and professional, is shaped by colonial histories. It invites nurses to reclaim an ethical identity grounded in truth, justice, and relational accountability, aligning with the conference theme of identity as an evolving practice of decolonization and care.

Biography: Second-year Master of Science in Nursing student at McGill University, committed to improving access to healthcare, reproductive justice, health equity, and decolonizing healthcare through research, advocacy, and knowledge translation. In addition to her work in nursing, she is passionate about the arts as a medium for advocacy and storytelling. Her creative projects often explore the intersection of policy, practice, and social justice

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I AM BECAUSE YOU ARE (72)

Ms. Elisabeth Jonah

Identity is one of the most crucial characteristics in defining your individual perspective on life. It is the core of who we are. Yet despite being a deeply personal part of our lives, our identity is often compromised by factors outside of our control. This piece, titled 'I am because you are', was created

with the purpose of showing the power of culture in identity formation and development. Even before we are born, systems and structures are already in place that will significantly influence how you grow. Influenced by the South African philosophy 'Ubuntu', my work is meant to highlight that we are products of those who come before us. Ubuntu is often translated as 'I am because we are', and meant to show that we do not exist in isolation. This piece was created with symbolism inspired by West African artwork to pay homage to my own Nigerian ancestry. Additionally, the fetus in the artwork was intentionally depicted with darkskin, as inspired by Chidiebere Ibe, a medical student and illustrator who noticed that the majority of anatomy textbooks did not depict dark-skinned individuals. The work is also meant to serve as a form of representation, which links to identity by seeing yourself in others. This work directly relates to the themes of this conference of understanding the seen and unseen factors influencing your identity, and being aware of how these factors affect the lives of both patients and physicians.

Biography: First year medical student at McMaster University, passionate about advocacy, EDI, and Black health.

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SEEING THE UNSEEN: MIGRAINE (88)

Dr. Nahid Shukralla

Background/purpose

Migraine is a complex neurological disorder that affects about one in seven people worldwide and is a leading cause of disability among young adults. Although migraine with aura can include four phases (prodrome, aura, headache, and postdrome), many still perceive it as simply a headache. The sensory and cognitive disruptions that accompany migraine can be debilitating, yet they remain largely invisible to others.

Methods/Process:

I have lived with migraine since childhood and now I experience chronic migraine. Chronic migraine is defined as fifteen or more migraine days per month. I am a physician, board-certified in pathology, but chronic migraine has limited my ability to practice medicine. During this period, I turned to art as both refuge and expression. Through digital painting and animation, I visualize my migraine auras, experiences that are otherwise unseen and difficult to describe. I recreate their shapes and movements as accurately as possible, often depicting the auras that awaken me from sleep. To date, I have created over 190 digital representations of my auras. The paintings feature dark backgrounds with a grey oval centre representing my visual field, capturing the shifting, luminous patterns that define each episode.

Statement linking to the conference theme:

Seeing the Unseen: Migraine conveys the lived experience of an invisible illness and invites others to see what is often hidden from view. My work bridges medicine and art, transforming personal experience into shared understanding and fostering empathy for those living with invisible illness.

Biography: With a background in medicine and pathology, Nahid Shukralla is a visual artist who lives with chronic migraine. She digitally paints and animates her migraine auras to raise awareness of the condition and to share the visual and emotional experience of living with an invisible illness.

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TENDING (96)

Ms. Martha Wiggin

I am writing to express an interest in creating a submission for the Creating Space 16 conference. I know this is unorthodox as artwork is expected to be finished by the Nov 3 deadline, but I do not have a current piece to submit, as it would be tailored to the conference. My submission would be a zine (short for magazine) that is created as part of a series on 'Tending' that I have been creating as 'artivism' as a healthcare provider in response to climate change.

My submission would expand on the themes of the conference, particularly on 'identity' in the context of tending for one's self, others and the Earth. Zines have a great history of bringing activism, marginalized voices and art to others through self-publishing.

Copies would be available for everyone who attends the conference. I have previously had zines showcased at Saint Paul University for their 2025 Colloquium on the theme of Horizons: Encountering Diverse Perspectives, and I created a zine in partnership with the Ottawa Wildflower Seed Library for the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation in September and was distributed in Ottawa Public Libraries across the city.

While they can vary in size, my zine is printed, folded and cut on one piece of 8.5x11 paper, which becomes an 8-panel zine. I have attached examples of two zines (please note the panels are not in order, until folded). I would supply the display stand, accompanied by an 8x10 frame that includes explanation of zines and enough copies of the zine for all attendees. Copies of previous zines (seen in the attached PDF) can also be made available.

I would also be open to speaking about zines, or do a collaborative zine project as part of the conference- something I have previously done with groups.

Biography: Martha is a Facilitator with Living Healthy Champlain, where she designs and delivers workshops locally and at the provincial level for health care and social service providers, as well as individuals living with chronic conditions. She also runs a private psychotherapy practice and is currently pursuing a PhD in Interdisciplinary Research, focusing on climate-informed psychotherapy. Martha began her career as a Recreation Therapist, where she first explored therapeutic expressive arts- an approach she continues to weave into all her work. She considers herself 'artist-ish.'

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GROWTH (111)

Emmanuel Grenier

Learning objective : For the public to appreciate the art work and appreciate the patient's perspective of an injury.

Background : I had an injury and made a visual art piece following it.

Method : (In the visual art world we call this medium), I used Prismacolor pencils on gray toned paper.

This is an art piece I drew following a distal finger tip amputation I suffered. The medical intervention I had was to let my fingers tips heal by secondary intention with dressing changes every two days. As well as weekly occupational therapy. The fingers affected are my right index and middle finger (I am right-handed) so this injury greatly affects my right-hand dexterity. Aside from the hypersensitivity I still experience, I also struggle with the physical appearance of my fingers. This artwork represents the stages of recovery my fingers went through, from the X-ray immediately after the accident to the tip regrown with scar. This is also the first art piece I realized after my accident. I've attached the artwork in "Part 2" of the submission.

In the past I have also produced art pieces following medical experiences I've had. I also plan on producing more, as I am able to draw more and more following my accident. If selected, I would have more art pieces to accompany this one.

Biography: Emmanuel is a young visual artist who uses arts to express his experience in receiving medical care. Themes included in his art include his body and interventions to it, corporal loss, and the role of providers in his health.

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PERFORMANCES

IMPULSE: TRANSLATING TOURETTIC EMBODIED EXPERIENCES (33)

Dr. Daniel Jones

'Impulsive Body' is a work-in-progress choreographed performance that reclaims Tourette identity through autoethnographic practice. It challenges and resists dominant narratives around Tourette Syndrome, which have too often been shaped by fearmongering academics, sensationalist media, and reductive public perceptions. Rather than accepting these external framings, the work takes back authorship of the Tourette story.

Developed through conversations with the Tourette community and grounded in the artist's own lived experiences, the choreography positions Tourette tics not as objects of study or pathology, but as creative catalysts. By using tics as the foundation of research and artistic expression, the piece pushes back against ableist frameworks that reduce Tourette Syndrome to symptoms or spectacle. Instead, it foregrounds identity, agency, and embodied knowledge as central to understanding and representing Tourette experience.

'Impulsive Body' is both performance and methodology. It exemplifies a research approach that privileges lived experience and collective knowledge-making, offering a counter-narrative to clinical or deficit-based representations. The work embraces Tourette movement as a legitimate and generative choreographic language that is unapologetically expressive, disruptive, and insightful.

As an artistic and research practice, the performance opens space for alternative readings of Tourette Syndrome. It invites audiences to engage with the complexities of Tourette life: the support needs, frustrations, and angers that exist alongside the joys, creativity, and hopes for Tourette futures. In doing so, the performance resists oversimplification and highlights the richness of embodied experience.

Ultimately, Impulse is not only a performance but a reclaiming. It is an assertion of voice, presence, and possibility. It challenges audiences to reconsider how Tourette Syndrome is represented and understood, offering unfiltered insights that center Tourette people as narrators of their own stories.

Biography: Daniel P Jones is a disability scholar and creative practitioner based in the North East of England. His work focuses on translating the embodied experiences of Tourette Syndrome, and imagining a future of 'Tourette Studies' through interdisciplinary and creative methodological approaches.

COI Disclosure: I have/had an affiliation (financial or otherwise) with a for-profit or not-for-profit organization: Employee at Durham University

RIPPING DOWN HALF THE TREES: POETRY, HEALTH, AND EMOTIONAL LABOUR (55)

Evan J

Background/purpose:

This performance-based workshop presents selections from *Ripping Down Half the Trees* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021), a poetry collection rooted in the lived realities of northern health work, education, and community care. Drawing from over a decade of frontline experience in remote

and Indigenous communities, my poems engage with themes of addiction, grief, systemic neglect, and resilience.

Methods/process:

As a creative autoethnography, the poems explore how poetic storytelling can illuminate the emotional and ethical complexities of working in northern health contexts, particularly in adult education and with homelessness. This work functions as both upstream health interventions and, often, involves front-line emergency healthcare work.

The session will begin with a curated reading of poems that reflect the tension and tenderness of this situation. These readings will be followed by an interactive conversation inviting participants to reflect on the dual nature of health work with vulnerable populations: its profound emotional toll and its deeply rewarding human connections. The discussion will center on how art—especially poetry—can serve as both a processing tool and a positive outcome of challenging experiences.

As a PhD student in Health Sciences at UNBC, my research continues to explore northern literature as a lens for health equity. This performance bridges my academic inquiry with my creative practice, demonstrating how art can contribute to health humanities, medical education, and even policy discourse.

Artist's Statement:

My work is a response to the realities of northern life, shaped by my identity as a queer settler and community collaborator. Through poetry, I seek to honour the stories of those I've worked with, while interrogating my own positionality. In a region where identity is often shaped by survival, displacement, and resistance, poetry becomes a means of witnessing, documenting, empathizing, and imagining new futures.

Biography: Evan J (he/they) is a researcher, writer, and community collaborator whose work engages the intersections of northern literature, northern health, and socio-ecological justice. Evan holds an MA in Literary Studies from York University and has worked extensively in northern communities. Their roles have spanned from front-line social services to nonprofit managerial work. For several years, Evan managed an arts-based Indigenous literacy initiative in Northwestern Ontario, working primarily on reserve. Now a PhD student at UNBC and a researcher with the university's Health Arts Research Centre (HARC), Evan's current research explores how northern art—specifically literary fiction—can illuminate the intricacies of northern health inequities and potentially offer unexplored solutions. Their writing spans academic and literary genres, reflecting a deep commitment to ethical land relations and collaborative knowledge-making. Evan is also an experienced literary curator and workshop facilitator. From 2023 to 2024, they served as Programming Coordinator for the THIN AIR Literary Festival in Winnipeg, curating events that foreground marginalized voices and community storytelling. They have facilitated poetry and creative writing workshops in remote First Nations schools, at literary festivals, and through national arts organizations, often focusing on the therapeutic and educational power of art in health contexts. Outside of research, Evan is an avid birder with over 400 species seen, and a passionate long-distance runner who, last year, ran 484 kilometres across Manitoba in seven days.

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WORDS IN THE IN-BETWEEN, A CREATIVE SPACE (93)

Dr. Marlene Kadar

Performance Section

Writer and Patient

Marlene Kadar, Professor Emerita and Senior Scholar, York University

I propose 3 short readings from "Broken Fiction," a book of auto fictional pieces that necessarily perform the in-betweenness of compromised identities scaled by lurking compromised immunities. I like to think they negotiate between the world of the well and the world of the unwell.

My performance is based on a journey from good health to poor health, from an identity as a professor and scholar of Life Writing to a new identity as an unwell person on permanent disability. The nadir came in 2012 with a diagnosis of "suicidal itching disease," or Dermatitis Herpetiformis, a severe skin reaction to gluten—predominant in certain ethnic groups. DH is a risk factor for blood cancers.

Two blood cancers followed in 2013. Follicular Lymphoma: stage four, slow growing but incurable. Two months later: Aggressive B-Cell Lymphoma and fast-growing tumors. In half the cases it is curable.

In 2020, during the pandemic, Squamous Cell Carcinoma arrived. It stole a tear duct and later, the V2 nerve. Surgical traces now decorate a new face: multiple surgeries, chemotherapies and radiotherapies break identities even as they reinvigorate them.

In 2024, both lymphomas are in remission, and SCC is stable, but the thesis remains: memory holds and shapes the plodding rhythm of recurrence, delay and medical error in poetic terms. It moves between and in between images of illness and anguish, and back to a compromised identity that crashes while it negotiates difficult knowledge. The irony is that a patient's shifting identities cannot wait for patience.

Readings: "Ode to a Node"; "Salvage"; "Changing the Subject"

Biography: A scholar of Life Writing across the disciplines, and an auto/fiction writer and literary editor. My focus has been on global issues of trauma and violence in diverse languages in war, the Holocaust, the Porajmos and other expressions of difficult knowledge including my own troubled diagnoses and consequent health circumstance/s..

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ISLAND OF LISTENERS: STORIES OF DEATH AND DYING (109)

Dr. Carol Wiebe, Ms. Kim Kilpatrick, Rachel Gray

Professional storyteller Kim Kilpatrick will present segments of a multidisciplinary performance which traces various views and stories on death and dying.

These stories were: taken from personal experiences, folklore, and stories Kim collected and crafted from patients, caregivers, and staff. on a palliative care unit.

For this project, Kim collaborates with other artists to make a rich performance and she will talk about this process.

Kim identifies as an artist with a disability and she will explore how her blindness was part of how she approached and adapted this project accordingly.

This show places the voices of people who are experiencing death, grief, and loss at its core and respects the wisdom of voices that are closest to the most common, most feared, and most ignored of human experiences: death. In this two-part performance, Kim will present an excerpt of a stop-motion film animated with oil paints on glass, narrated by Kim, with audio descriptions for people who are

blind or partially sighted. Then, Kim will present a spoken word performance that interweaves three elements: Kim's experience co-creating stories with patients, caregivers, and staff; excerpts from the various stories; and Kim's reflection on how her blindness contributed to the process and facilitated openness, sharing, and vulnerability from participants. The film, spoken word performance, and stories invite attendees to reflect on life, death, and meaning, told through the craft of two disabled artists.

Dr. Carol Wiebe

Biography: As a family physician, chamber musician, and former hospital executive, Dr. Carol Wiebe uses her broad training and experience to design opportunities and spaces where people can find meaning and heal. Carol studied music performance (piano, flute) before becoming a family physician. Her medical career spans HIV primary care and elder care, with a gradual transition into leadership, including several years as Vice President of Medical Affairs at Bruyère, a large healthcare organization in Ottawa. Dr. Wiebe completed a Global Executive MBA in Healthcare and the Life Sciences in 2021, using the opportunity to develop and launch Radical Connections, a charity that brings together the arts and health care. She also continues to perform with the musical duo Concert Docs. Both Concert Docs and Radical Connections bring a great deal of joy to the participating artists and to people in healthcare.

COI Disclosure: Any direct financial relationships including receipt of honoraria, gifts, in kind compensation, etc.: The Ottawa Art Gallery will be hosting part of this event. My role there gives me no authority to determine who is chosen to present at Creating Space; I receive a monthly honorarium as their consultant Physician for Arts and Health from the Ottawa Art Gallery. This honorarium does not impact or influence the educational workshops I present with the Die Schone Mullerin group.

THE SILENT STRUGGLE: POETRY OF LOVE AND LOSS (133)

Mr. Matthew Wong

Background: Oftentimes, medicine is described as a science of evidence and efficiency—but beneath its surface are human identities as vivid, intricate and meaningful as our own. During my time at Sunnybrook's Summer Student Research Program, I spent many of my days in conversations with a wide range of patients—at times, older patients double or even triple my age. A prominent theme that reemerged time and time again was the quiet stories of love and loss. Through storytelling, this project seeks to highlight those silent struggles, advancing the public narrative of patient care as a collection of rich, unique experiences.

Methods: The performance currently consists of three poems, each preceded by a brief explanation and followed by a discussion segment. All of the poems in this spoken word performance are drawn from the experiences of patients I encountered while working at Sunnybrook. They are written as creative reflections, reimagining their stories through a narrative lens. While intended to be subtle and abstract, these pieces of writing are also meant to be approachable, communicating to the listener a clear emotional message. Discussion questions following each poem will invite the audience to reflect on how our unique human stories might shape our experiences within healthcare systems and in the broader world.

Connection to Theme: Ultimately, this performance explores the intersection of identity and healthcare by providing a voice for patients whose experiences are often left unheard in clinical discourse. In amplifying these quiet stories of love and loss through spoken word and discussion, it invites the audience to recognize the emotional realities behind the identity of each and every patient.

Biography: Matthew Wong is an undergraduate student and poet from Toronto, Canada. Their poems aim to advance the public narrative of medicine as a collection of unique stories and to reveal its

“humanity,” whether that be writings crafted from their own stories in healthcare or musings on the human experience in the context of medicine at large.

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