

Poem

To Heal in Place

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<https://doi.org/10.15273/hpj.v1i1.10662>

Abstract

This poem is a creative non-fiction on the emotional and personable aspects of high health-resource use in primary healthcare, which is typically called high-cost use. This work displays that there is a critical aspect of a patient lens missing from this academic discourse, especially given the context of rural inequalities of health and deeper ties to Social and Structural Determinants of Health. In this poem, I reflect on the connections with various community leaders and patients I encountered during my fieldwork in the Renfrew County of Ontario, Canada. Rural and remote population health must be understood from a sociocultural and intersectional framework given the different historical and contemporary backgrounds of these communities in Canada.

Author Biography

Lindsay J. Dorder (she/they) is an Afro-Indigenous woman from Suriname, the Dutch Caribbean. Their life honors the Arawak, Carib, and Afro-Caribbean ancestors of her heritage. She has a disability that causes her to stutter, and, from her lived experience, she advocates for the destigmatizing of mental illness in Caribbean youth. She spends most of her days on unceded Algonquin Territory, specifically, Odàwàg (Ottawa), where she is continually supporting grassroots organizations. Lindsay's current Master's of Health Sciences research applies critical spatial, social, and structural understandings to the patient journey in primary healthcare of rural and remote Canada. They aspire to continue health equity initiatives with Surinamese communities to cultivate knowledge translation, and the preservation of her tribal ancestry.



To Heal in Place

A pair of running shoes,
With white shoelaces
Two bows,
One knot

I thought, "There's no snow /
Sneakers are fine."

By the week's end,
Thick flurries and the scent of firewood
Cemented a bitter cold

My housing host laughed,
"Please use my old boots."
She said, "I think you'll need them..."

She was right

Swift snowfall,
A sudden delay
But we drove on
Through that blizzard,
Where there are few streetlights
Very few.

I then remembered someone.

We met while travelling north,
A quiet, native woman, who needed treatment
In another city
Hours away from her birth home.

Her husband,
The Caregiver
Shared her story,

You see, the city hospital has become home.
She no longer lived where the roads bend with the lakes,

Where the streetlights are few.

Instead, spends her time away,
To heal

In the next days of my journey
I met others like her,
People tackling mazes of care and healing

And between the rhythm of our words
A Fear sinks into our small space.
They confess, "When will it happen /
When will I be too sick?"

Some knew it would happen
They would have to move,
Far away
From family, from friends.
Others would decide to stay.

They ask themselves,
"Will I be back in the hospital /

Will I have to heal away?"

And it happens
It happens so suddenly

In all these lives
The tangles of care and healing
Bring a Fear
Of what might be

And where the roads bend with the lakes,

Where the streetlights are few,

This Fear waits
In the places where nature cannot fill.

White shoelaces,
Borrowed snow boots

When will Healing take them from their homes?