

Trouble starts before it begins.

The trickster was watching all this time, and no one had to call it a name it already was. Oni, Tanuki, Octopus, Hanuman, Tsesk'iye, Chthulu, Jade Fox, Raven, Napi, Sk'elep, Wisakedjak, Ananse, Nanabush, Krishna, Briar Rabbit; their stories always already a part of the world before conceptual time, acknowledging powers of human and greater-than-human collaborations. Tricksters offer an understanding of being inside and outside of bodies, and we learn from them how trouble is a generous and generative space.

The act of naming – by those who came to knowledge through a Cartesian cut between mind and body – severed the world from Land with a finite language that rejected the unknown, unfamiliar, and the in-between. Trouble was wrongly designated in projecting ‘otherness’ to forms that created boundaries, boundaries mapping a new landscape into a structured existence. These boundaries that make marks on bodies and make human Nations happen.

Trouble doesn't fit into this structured space. Trouble is the problem. Trouble is unwanted, or is declared a space to be erased, or is a body without identity – a body without land, where the space of indeterminate trickster knowledge closes and is forgotten.

Trouble is also given other names. Star seeds¹.

Star Seeds. This theory of radiation emitting from the collapse of suns into black holes suggests virtual particles dream of matter like information, seeding the universe.² Star seeds find their way in an unmappable fluidity of dreams, seeping beyond the containment of space inscribed in imagined lines. They coalesce with desire, because Trouble Makers are often working alone and yearn to touch across the void. And yet, we see each other so clearly.

Trouble is the void-not-void of emergent possibilities, a dark matter in touch with bodies yearning to connect, already embodied through knowledge, knowledge in-body, body as knowledge.³

Trouble is being present in the loss of memory tracing new paths of connection in-body, embodied, demarcated in paths towards mothers and grandmothers who lead us here.

¹ In conversation with Peter Morin: speculating on the seeding of information from the universe, Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History in Time* (1988) theorized how low levels of radiation emitted virtual particles – information - from black holes. What if the virtual particles were seeding the universe with information from all matter? For more on black holes, the Information paradox, and the seeding of the universe, see Radiolab podcast *Little Black Holes Everywhere* (McEwen).

² Some theories suggest these particles are paired with information that forms the as-yet to be determined Dark Matter – see Giddings, Steven B. *Nonviolent Nonlocality*, Phys. Rev. D 88, 064023 – Published 10 September, 2013.

³ Dr. River (Karen) Barad calls the void into question as an active and generative source of relation: “In fact, this indeterminacy not only is responsible for the void not being nothing (while not being something) but may in fact be the source of all that is, a womb that births existence.” *TransMaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings*.

Trouble is re-telling stories, re-storying, remembering projects, and re-membering⁴.

And like the paths of lightning desiring to be re-membered (Barad 2015) in the pursuit of charged bodies finding connection through the void-not-void,

bodies of work find themselves alive in a specific moment

a space and time where star seeds have come together

carrying Ancestors through a portal created from gathering

on this home/Land

unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan)

in a place charged with possibilities and desire lines

an invitation to future paths drawn in circles, intersecting lines, and words assembled into the beginnings of a re-articulation of Troubling, a glossary

Trouble is t/here. Always.



Figure 1: Trouble Making workshop by Inéz Petrazzini, on themes of rage / blackness. Detail of collective mural by Chloe Irizawa 2025.

⁴ Artist Justine Woods draws on Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *remembering* as a methodology identified in 25 Indigenous Projects.

Troublemaking is ecological knowledge.

Troublemaking is nuanced like ceremony.

Troublemaking is a multidirectional form of creation.

We are gathering troublemakers together to dream for _____ futures.

Ancient

New

Alternative

Possible

Beautiful

Harmonious

Troubling

Loving futures

Morin, Neidhardt, Woods 2024

(written on Syilx territory)

Entering into the *Troubling Times* exhibition, the stillness of space suspends the present moment like the mylar portal / basket that shimmers in light and extended shadow, hovering near the centre of the room above the floor.

Nicole Neidhardt's *Diné Basket Portal* (2019) is vibrant, as the oscillations of the sound waves of the previous days' performance continue to vibrate. This portal is made of a mirrored-mylar tapestry hung in the round from the ceiling of the gallery. At the centre of this almost complete circle is a disk of red rock sand that is the colour of the planet Mars, from Diné territory, that has traveled to Syilx territory. Nicole asks the viewer to stand in the middle, to stand on this red rock earth-disk, and allow yourself to time travel. If we could tap into the sounds captured by the red sand that lies underneath the floating portal in the same way carbon-dated machines reveal the stories of rock, we might be able to hear the drumming of ancestors of yesterday all the way through to the beginning of the first beat.

Stepping into the space surrounded by the silver portal requires a commitment. Crossing the floor onto the red terrestrial sand, one becomes aware of the textural threshold underneath the soles. At first dark, the mylar basket that carries the space around the participant and becomes illuminated by the light reflecting off the body; the body activates the basket that holds the moment. Peter's drumming begins, and the silver basket becomes an even more visible portal carrying the particle / waves of body matter into the territories of dreams. The quietude of space is seemingly a void, but this is a trickster veil: it is always full of infinite possibilities waiting to be activated.

Neidhardt asks: *how do we activate the Land as Time Machine?* What if Diné time travellers could tell the stories of the Land across many millennia, to connect with Mą'ii whose semblance is carved into the portal along with the most sacred corn and lightening, to imagine Indigenous futures that are always connected to the creation stories in the red earth right beneath your feet?



Figure 2 *Diné Basket Portal*, Nicole Neidhardt 2025. Pictured: artist Peter Morin activating the portal drumming with his working drum, with James Miller. FINA Gallery UBC Okanagan, Kelowna B.C.

Across the room, a soft composure of hands, outstretched arms awaiting, gauntlets shaped and formed after the artist's *Aabitaawikwe*⁵ the body's pattern rests on a circular pedestal. Four years before, the gauntlets were alive for the first time documenting the gathering of wood and ice fishing as depicted in the photographs behind the display. The collection of *we carry our homeland(s) close to our heart* traverses what garment artist Justine Woods refers to as

⁵ Oral Knowledge held and shared by Isaac Murdoch in a [Facebook post](#) (2018). The term *Aabitaawiziniwag* (pl.) translates to half people and was used by the Anishinaabek to call French Breeds in Ontario. *Aabitaawikwe* identifies an Indigenous woman of mixed ancestry in Anishinaabemowin. Courtesy of Justine Woods.

alternative worlds, the shaping of possibilities between worlds of ancestral ways of knowing stitched with a throughline of seed beads on warm tan deer hide. The teachings of beads are at the heart of *trouble* here, as they are not a mere aesthetic choice nor a symbolic act in a suturing of intercultural knowledge. Each bead is threaded with intentionality, in practice, with the technique of picot edging, through intergenerational conversation with a mother and daughter, in shared stories of land, and in consultation with the deer hide determining its strength and limits.

Trouble asks without asking, where do the traditions of knowledge belong in space and when is it time to share them.

When Justine declares a love unconditional

I love you as much as all the stars in the sky.

I love you as much as all the beads in the universe.

the work speaks from the imaginary place that is outside of any one terrestrial land and body, as the multiples of space and time collide and sometimes find conflict in the indeterminacy of lived knowledges being re-stitched. Re-stitching as a decolonial praxis is a grounding methodology that is – in the most troubling of ways – defying erasure of the body, identity and ancestry in conceptual and real terms. The body and identity outside of time and space are much easier to dismiss in their discrete forms when they are isolated and nonconforming, but like trouble, quantum phenomena resist a singular defined measurement and containment.

“Living in a time where we can feel our world slipping into darkness, it can seem like every thread we have stitched is now unravelling. This body of work helped me recognize the possible futures that emerge from the depths of unraveled seams, as it is with these frayed and salvaged threads that we can re-stitch more loving worlds into existence.”

Justine Woods



Figure 3 left: *we carry our homeland(s) close to our heart*, full arm length gauntlets sewn in deer hide and edged with size 11 seed beads, 2021. Photo by Lori Woods in Tiny, Ontario. Figure 3 right: *a love that creates land and shapes water* (detail), ice fishing bib pants sewn in double-faced wool and vegetable tanned deer hide, edged with size 11 seed beads, 2021. Photo by Lori Woods on the ice of Georgian Bay, Ontario. FINA Gallery UBC Okanagan, Kelowna B.C.

In its ghostly form, the gauntlets are impressed with the shape of a body held fast in tensile strength threaded with care-*full* meaning, beads holding the edges of multiple universes together in a declaration of decolonial love and building future worlds.

The scratchings, rubbings, and markings of graphite carve a contour line through the unfolding images of the 3-channel video projected onto the wall framing the gallery interior; these leavings trace the gestures of Peter Morin's 4-hour durational performance long after the 3-channel videos end. Like a documentation of a life acknowledging the ground/space it is inhabiting, the triptych of *For Grandma Louise: 1 minute equals 1 year in a 100 years of Alzheimer's (2024-2025)* is recorded through time, projected light, and embodied space, and is activated with acknowledgement of this site-specific work on the territory of Sylix through drumming and song summoning the opening of the portal in a circle. A dis/continuous storytelling of a condition some have come to know as Alzheimer's, *100 years* re-frames the epistemology of modern healthcare as audience members are observing not the slow degenerative disease that debilitates the brain and cognitive function, but how Indigenous paths of care can honour a meaningful relation to end-of-this-life care-giving as a passage into another realm.

Birth of life, and its milestones, have many celebrations. Formations of first words, grasping hands, locked gazes of recognition, laughter, and the determination to stand upright by self-determination are monitored as accretive functions to normalcy, and they are rewarded in equal measure. In the live performance and animated video landscapes we witness the trans-de-formation of the body articulated in a relentless tension between function, spirit and survivance. In the medicalized world the undoing of these milestones through Alzheimer's is received with less compassion.

Throughout Peter's performance both on screen and during the 4+ hours live engagement, audiences are transformed into caregivers, observing and holding the changes of a body that no longer remembers, unable to stand, unable to move. The bodies in the room watch the intentional lines being drawn - again and again - until they blur into a cloud of motion. Listening to the songs of car-rides sung outloud, as increasingly intermittent silences pronounce forgotten lyrics. The graphite tool slowly shrinking because of the vigorous mark making during the performance and the hand that holds it learns to adapt, is forced to adapt, contorting in discomfort, accommodating its diminishing capacity as it heats up in hand from the friction on the wall. The body learns to communicate differently. Initiating the clouds of plaque building up in the brain, the graphite smudges the space and the projected images. Later when the marks are washed with water, a washing away of the plaque within, traces of the childhood memories embedded from the Indian Residential Schools resurface. A compulsiveness exorcised in the act of ablution in washing the floors and walls of those schools, cleanliness is passed down in strict ritual like an epigenetic habit that triggers somatic trauma. Simultaneously the audience witnesses the

transformation of the artist's body – a fluid silver liquid – as the onset of Alzheimer's engenders a strange metamorphosis. The journey is familiar. The destination unknown, shimmering, alien.

There is a red line that divides and connects ancestors vibrating and intersecting this 3-channel video landscape, traveling along the demarcated body to acknowledge the 100 years of generational Alzheimer's has passed through the timespace of this generational experience. Following the line, being carved around beaded moccasin tongues, sweetgrass, beaded wear, each holding up to a hundred-years of Indigenous art history, and each drawing out a multidimensional story told in three video channels, coalescing the journey: Channel 1: *Drawing a red line to acknowledge a hundred years of Alzheimer's*; Channel 2: *Fire makes Ancestors*; Channel 3: *After 100 years of generational Alzheimer's, we become silver*.

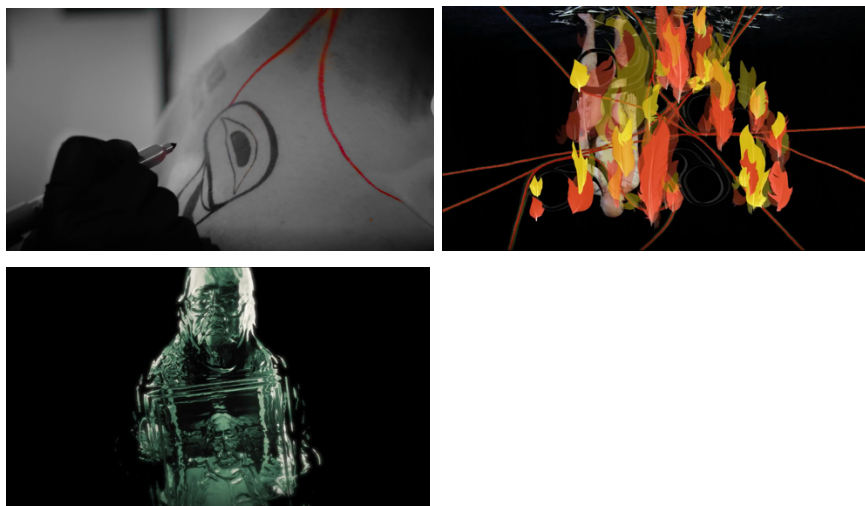


Figure 4: Screen-captures of 3-Channel video landscape projections of *For Grandma Louise: 1 minute equals 1 year in a 100 years of Alzheimer's* (2024-2025), Peter Morin with technical support from animator Isaac King, filmmaker Lu Ge, tattoo artist Vlad, and Haida artist Corey Bulpit, FINA Gallery UBC Okanagan, Kelowna B.C.

The red line, making visible the paths that so many have experienced in infinite ways, might be imagined as the tracing of a map navigating the unseen. At least, unseen in the institutional ways of care. The traces connect with nodal nerve points of memory, with material objects crossing times, delineating intimate landscapes of touch. Finding ways to heal and care through Indigenous knowledge systems, and through art that finds ways to express the impossibilities of experiencing this part of a life's journey is perhaps the most troubling of possibilities in the medicalized healthcare system. To embrace such possibilities is a step towards decolonial love, stepping into love and stepping into the generous space that trouble brings.

"We are so lucky", Janell Morin says. Edzūdzhah didenek'eh ushye. She has not forgotten, and the traces of plaque in her brain, and left on the wall during the EzekTah's duration performance are not entirely washed away. Erasure is complicated, because the body still knows even if the stories have disappeared, and erasure too becomes a part of knowing like the washed traces of graphite on the wall.

Imagine if healing could come in the form of a song, wherein everyone has a voice to carry the weight of grief and strengthen love in sharing, and if you forget the lyrics, someone else in the circle will continue to sing for you. And the last song that sings of Janell's long-ago self, Jason Molina and the Magnolia Electric Company's Whip Poor Will ends the performance. Each time, in EzekTah's mind, he changes one of the important lyrics from the Southern Cross Hotel to the Watson Lake hotel, an acknowledgment of his mom's work history. This song shifts the experience of the space and invites the caregivers in the gallery to activate the portal of care, and through this portal, the closing circle, the collective voices oscillate back to where the younger Janell is just maybe hearing these future ancestors sing the chorus for her.

On a warm day in June after the *Trouble Making Symposium* came to a close, audience/caregivers/trouble makers/Indigenous Artists in Residence were invited to offer one or two words to send through time.

Emotional, healing.

Needed.

Full. Safe.

Vibration. Water.

Grateful. Joy.

Humility. Love.

Resolve.

Love for you (...)

Stitch. Threading.

Heartfelt.

Safe Travel. Aloha.

Starseed. Expanded.

These words, once uttered, continue to reverberate in the stillness.

Trouble asks without asking, where do the traditions of knowledge belong in space, and when is it time to share them.

In *Troubling Times: Traces, Portals and Groundings*, the space between the interconnections of ancestral knowledge/s brought together by these artists are vast and intimately close. Not as a dichotomy of space. Not as an indeterminacy of life and death. Rather, a continuum of relations made possible through dreaming. Not in the manifest way of manufactured futures, no; dreaming comes with an understanding of being, of openness and responsibility, a network of divergent paths from multiple universes, in willingness to change. Each of these worlds that come to exist with each other in the gallery space demonstrate how divergent cataclysmic forces can build rather than negate energies, as Trouble comes in the seeds originating from stars of distant universes. Trouble Makers make belonging in space to share knowledge/s in complementarity, t/here, always.

Troubling Times: Traces, Portals and Groundings are works by the original Trouble Makers who started it all, dreaming at the IAI in 2024. Trouble Makers continues to expand as a collective, with workshops made possible by the IAI, UBC Okanagan, SSHRC, and OCAD University.

Nova Battacharia

Catherine Blackburn

Leah Decter

Luke Ge Lu

Jay Irizawa

Maria Mazria Katz

Thomas Kong

Jean Matthew

Ashok Mathur

James Miller

Peter Morin

Nicole Neidhardt

Archer Pechawis

Inéz Petrazzini

Kai Recollet

Jake Charles Rees

Christine Scott

Amy Spiers

Justine Woods

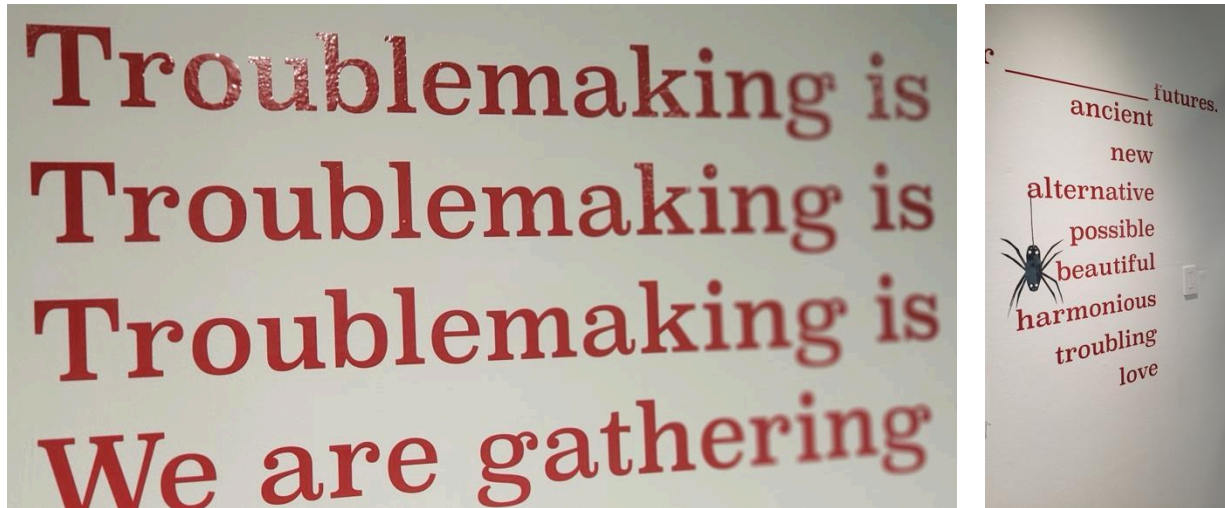


Figure 5: Exterior Gallery wall of *Troubling Time/s: Traces, Portals, and Groundings*, 2025. FINA Gallery UBC Okanagan, Kelowna B.C.

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