



WELCOME THE STRANGER WITHIN

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Celeste Nazeli Snowber PhD, is a dancer, poet, and scholar who is a professor in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. She has published and performed widely; her books include *Embodied Inquiry* (2016), and four collections of poetry. Celeste creates site-specific performances and can be found at <http://www.celestesnowber.com>

Abstract: *Welcome the stranger within* is a short video danced poem which draws on embodied and poetic ways of inquiry to express the welcoming of all parts of oneself. Integrating contemporary dance and poetry, it is a site-specific performance taken on Denman Island in British Columbia, Canada. The performer, Celeste Nazeli Snowber, explores how one can have a call and response with the earth and open an embodied understanding through cultivating a relationship with body, land, water and what it means to be human.

Keywords: site-specific; embodied; dance; poetry; performance; body

w e l c o m e

welcome all the parts of yourself
to the page, to the studio
to the home inside

so the branches of your fragility
synapses of your neurons
exaltations and wounds
can give voice to creation

befriend the stranger within
who is pleading for an audience
wants to come out and play
with all of who you are

I am grateful to have been working in the waters of arts-based research for several decades through teaching, writing, performing, and creating. I have swum in the fluid possibilities of bringing all of who I am to the research process—my mind, body, spirit, art, heart, and, always, my lived experience. From the early days of the late nineties, when I began to integrate movement/dance as method to developing embodied ways of inquiry, the gift has always been to welcome the body to writing, living, becoming, being, and researching (Snowber, 2002, 2005, 2016, 2017). What has been central, to so many different methodologies and ways of being, with various forms of arts-based research, has been connecting the personal to the universal. We are storied people and animate storied lives; by accessing and sharing the personal, we enlarge the possibility to relate to the universal. This playful dance has been at the centre of narrative, visual, performative, poetic, visual, and embodied ways of inquiry. Searching is a big part of research; we research who we are. I continue to be on a journey of discovery, and desire to integrate all aspects of myself. It is this welcoming of all of who we are that is the major gift of arts-based research methodologies, to a world that is so hungry for this kind of integration.

As a site-specific performer, I integrate dance, poetry, and spoken word between land and sea. I find myself in a call and response with the earth. I am interested in how my limbs, tissues, cells, and muscles open an embodied understanding able to shift perceptions of ecology, climate change, land, water, and ourselves. Through movement and the poetic, I am in conversation with hands, feet, and hips, with stone, sea, trees, and mud (Snowber, 2022). The invisible and visible become partners; I hear the lessons of place and am recreated in soil, sky, salt, and rain.

I offer this short, danced video-poem (Snowber, 2024), as a way to welcome all our parts to research, artmaking, and teaching. This poem is from, *Creating in Dangerous Times*, a collection of inspirational meditations on creativity. Recorded/performed at Morning Beach on Denman Island (Taystay'ich) in British Columbia, Canada. Denman Island is on the traditional unceded territory of the Pentlach people including the K'omoks, Sliammon, and Qualicum First Nations, and I give gratitude to have been a guest there, able to create.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=498VnMhDSf4>

Creating, responding, and listening to poetic ways can be a place of companioning all of who we are on the journey. As Mary Oliver says, “I learned that the poem was made not to just to exist, but to speak—to be company” (2016, p. 16). May we continue to welcome all the parts of ourselves through living artfully.

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