

Hello from the Edmonton NIDCAP Training Centre Canada, ENTCC for short! I am Julia Giesen and I had the pleasure to meet many of you in the world-spanning NIDCAP community at the NIDCAP Trainers Meeting in our fair city in 2017. That meeting inspired me to pursue NIDCAP training which I started the following spring under the direction of our trainer Juzer Tyebkhan. Initially I found the observations overwhelming. Each observation opened my eyes to something I had never seen before, much of it hard to stomach. Could our little patients really be having such a difficult time, so often, without us being aware? What must that feel like? And what does that do to them over time? I struggled to get down in words what I was seeing, to describe it accurately and in a way that families would easily understand. I spent hours picking out the words for my reports and the days were long. At the end of the day after hours at the keyboard the last thing I wanted to do was to fill out another form for the Journal Page. I couldn't think straight anymore and it felt too raw to reflect on it right away. I took the evening to let things settle in, poured myself a cup of tea, grabbed pen and paper, and wrote. I tried a number of reflection styles but what resonated most for me was to write



freely and what ensued were a series of poems. I am sharing some of my poems with you, hoping they help you see what I saw on this great NIDCAP journey.

This first poem is from an observation in January 2019 on a little boy named Alex. Alex was born at 25 weeks and was six days old. He showed me that the protective effect of the womb may indeed last for several days after birth before beginning to fade as we encounter life on our own.

“On Our Watch”

*Today you showed me something new
Could it possibly be true?*

*That when you were born you started out whole
All systems working as is our goal
To have you move between your states
With smooth transitions and no mistakes*

*No interruptions to get you there
And nothing breaking the moment where
You grow and heal and find good rest
Where your little brain can do its best*

*And here we stand at a fork in the road
An opportunity to lay down the code
For how you will do in the years ahead
Will we be with you or will you lay in your bed*

*Cycling through trying to breathe on your own
Your little struggles not being known
Will you continue to be so strong?
Or will we pick the road that is long?*

On our watch