

# Connection on Canvas

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If you've ever been to one (or several) of the Consent@Seneca art drop-ins, you've already experienced the medley of sights, sounds and stories that fill the air.

Need a reminder? Let me set the scene:

Newnham Campus, Room D2014. It's the third Tuesday of the month, and you step into a space that comes alive with chatter and colour. At the heart of the room, a table is piled with art supplies, inviting you to take a seat and pick anything that catches your eye. Across two hours, there are equal moments for conversation and for quiet; for creating, just being, and everything that exists in between.

It's been a little over a year since we started running these art drop-ins sharing the helm with Counselling Services, and each one has been a spark illuminating the ways we commune and connect with each other.

Personally, they've shaped how I approach my larger identity as an artist and the way that impacts my role as a consent ambassador.



For much of my life, I approached art through a lens of utility. I believed it needed to justify itself, whether through impact, profit, or productivity. That mindset, I think, is familiar to many folks who regularly navigate the tension between creative expression and commercial viability. After all, when your craft becomes your livelihood, it's easy to lose sight of its more intangible gifts.

This work reminded me that art doesn't always need to explain itself. Sometimes its greatest value lies in its ability to receive and hold infinite space for grief, for joy, for empowerment. It offers a still moment to feel part of something larger than yourself.

Witnessing this unfold in real time has been something else entirely.

During the art drop-ins, I've been privy to deeply affecting conversations and creativity; points of connection that jump-start reflections around navigating relationships, rewiring culture to value consent and respect, and orienting ourselves towards collective wellbeing... especially when life and/or news headlines make us feel voiceless, overwhelmed, alienated, and alone.

These reflections, big and small, remind me of the power of shared space to foster healing. They've also led me to seek out voices that continue to shape this space with their presence and intention.

*After getting more creative here in Canada and in Seneca, I realized there are a number of ways to open yourself up to be part of new experiences and communities.*

One such voice is Siddhant, an international student whose thoughtful insights have become an anchor at the art drop-ins. In our conversation, we delve into how vulnerability can be a bridge to community, and how, even in moments of uncertainty, persevering in creativity offers a path toward hope.

**Q: What drew you to this space? What keeps you coming back?**

S: I first met the community at Coffee with Residence. I live at the Seneca residence, and that's where I found out about these drop-ins. So I dropped by, and it let me, you know, bring out that creativity in me. I always knew I had a creative touch, but I just needed an avenue to bring it out. In this community, I was able to explore my creativity and express myself without judgement. That opportunity to grow is what made me want to keep returning.

**Q: How do you engage with creativity outside of this space?**

S: I take whatever opportunity I can get. So once I was downtown with a friend, and it was during the time of Diwali, the Indian Festival of Lights, and she went to a bookstore for something. Just outside, there was a small setup where they were painting diyas (earthen lamps). So I took that opportunity for the time I was waiting and painted one. I was surprised because I loved the final design I came up with. Earlier, I used to be very firm with myself, like, "Okay, you have to do these things. Not the other things". You do ABC, you don't do XYZ. But after getting more creative here in Canada and in Seneca, I realized, no, there are a number of ways to open yourself up to be part of new experiences and communities.

**Q: Would you say that creativity has now started to play a role in how you approach self-care?**

S: Definitely! I've made it a point to myself to take opportunities and find different routes to learn, unlearn and relearn stuff. I have a friend who introduced me to danceforms I had no understanding of, and I went with her to a couple of places where she taught people to dance and it was a great experience. Alongside the art drop-ins, I have learned to leave my uncertainties at the door. Vulnerability is hard, but I'm keeping my eyes, ears and heart open always, accepting everything that comes my way.

**Q: What would you tell someone who has never been in this space but may benefit from it?**

S: I've been in Canada for two years, and I believe I've been part of this community for more than one year now. This experience has taught me to be open to new opportunities, things I have not dealt with before. So for people who are curious: Come to the events, express yourself and take your time with the community. If you don't want to talk, sit, make some art. Take this opportunity to connect with yourself.

The Empowerment in Community art drop-ins aren't about perfection or performance. We honour each other's stories, celebrate small acts of courage, and find healing through the simple act of making. Whether you're picking up a paint marker for the first time or simply seeking a moment of stillness, you belong in this space.

As we continue to explore the power of creativity and connection, the invitation remains open: Come as you are.

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**Siddhi (they/them)** is a graphic design student, illustrator, and Consent Ambassador. Their goal with the work they do within and outside Seneca is to create safe and inclusive spaces for people to show up as they are and find belonging. Reach out to them on [LinkedIn](#) (For professional connections) and/or [Instagram](#) (To gab about books, art, and birds)

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