



PROTECTING OUR SPIRIT

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Indigenous Youth in Care

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Keywords: Indigenous health and wellness, Indigenous reclamation, restoring Indigenous identity and ways of being, Indigenous belonging, Indigenous resurgence

Acknowledgement: We raise our hands in deepest respect and gratitude to the ancestors and families of the ləkʷəŋən and WSÁNEĆ nations and to our own ancestors and Nations. We raise our hands to all Indigenous children and youth who have grown up in colonial systems, to those we have lost, and to those who survive, resist, and imagine justice and resurgence. INVINCIBLE is grateful for funding provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Insight grant 435-2020-1191) and the Canet Foundation.

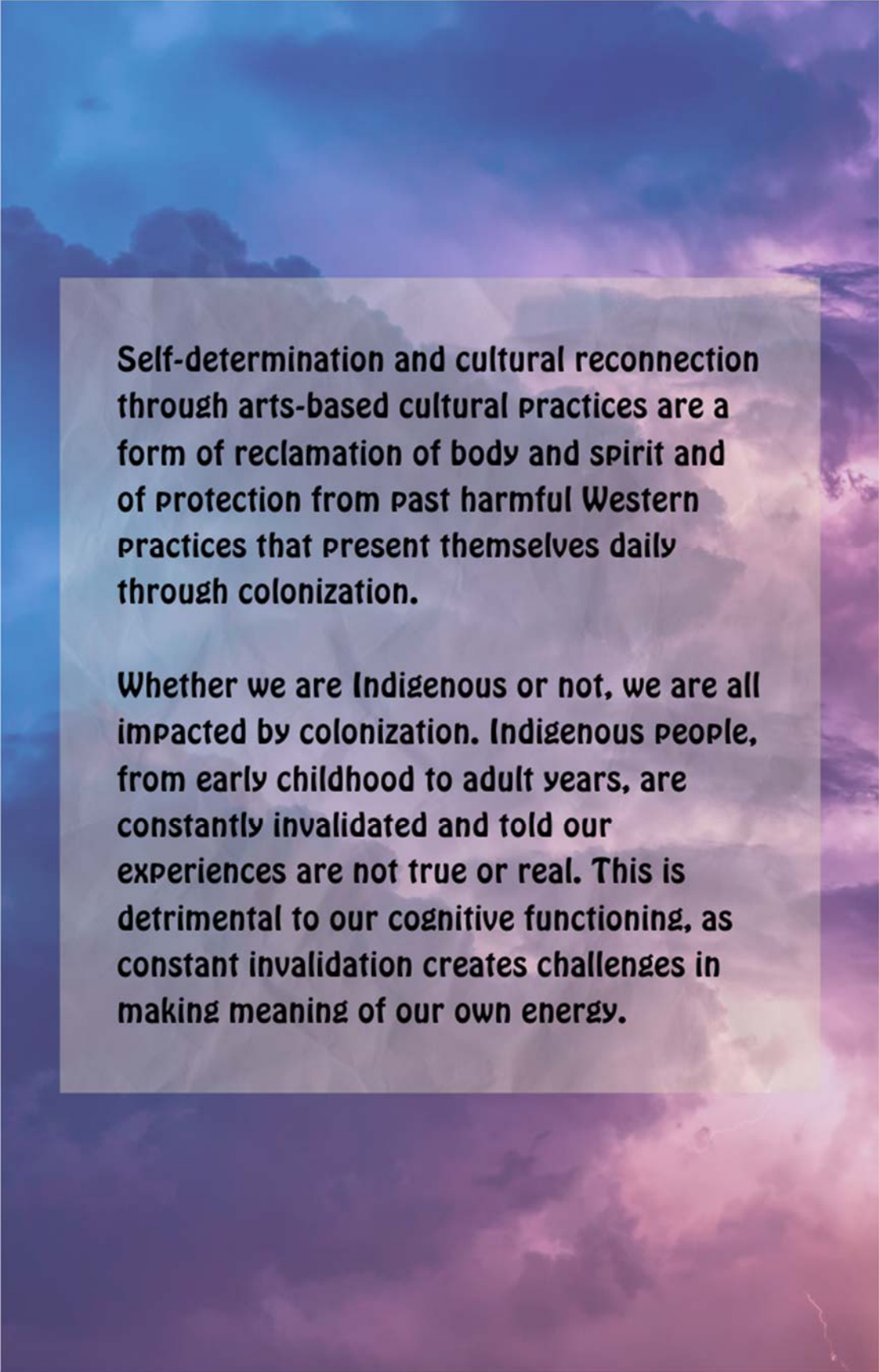
Carmin Bear-Blomberg is an Indigenous youth in care and an INVINCIBLE youth storyteller/researcher who has been working with the Kinship Rising research project at the University of Victoria since 2021.

Please contact the Kinship Rising project: kinshiprising@uvic.ca

Protecting Our Spirit



By Carmin Bear-Blomberg



Self-determination and cultural reconnection through arts-based cultural practices are a form of reclamation of body and spirit and of protection from past harmful Western practices that present themselves daily through colonization.

Whether we are Indigenous or not, we are all impacted by colonization. Indigenous people, from early childhood to adult years, are constantly invalidated and told our experiences are not true or real. This is detrimental to our cognitive functioning, as constant invalidation creates challenges in making meaning of our own energy.



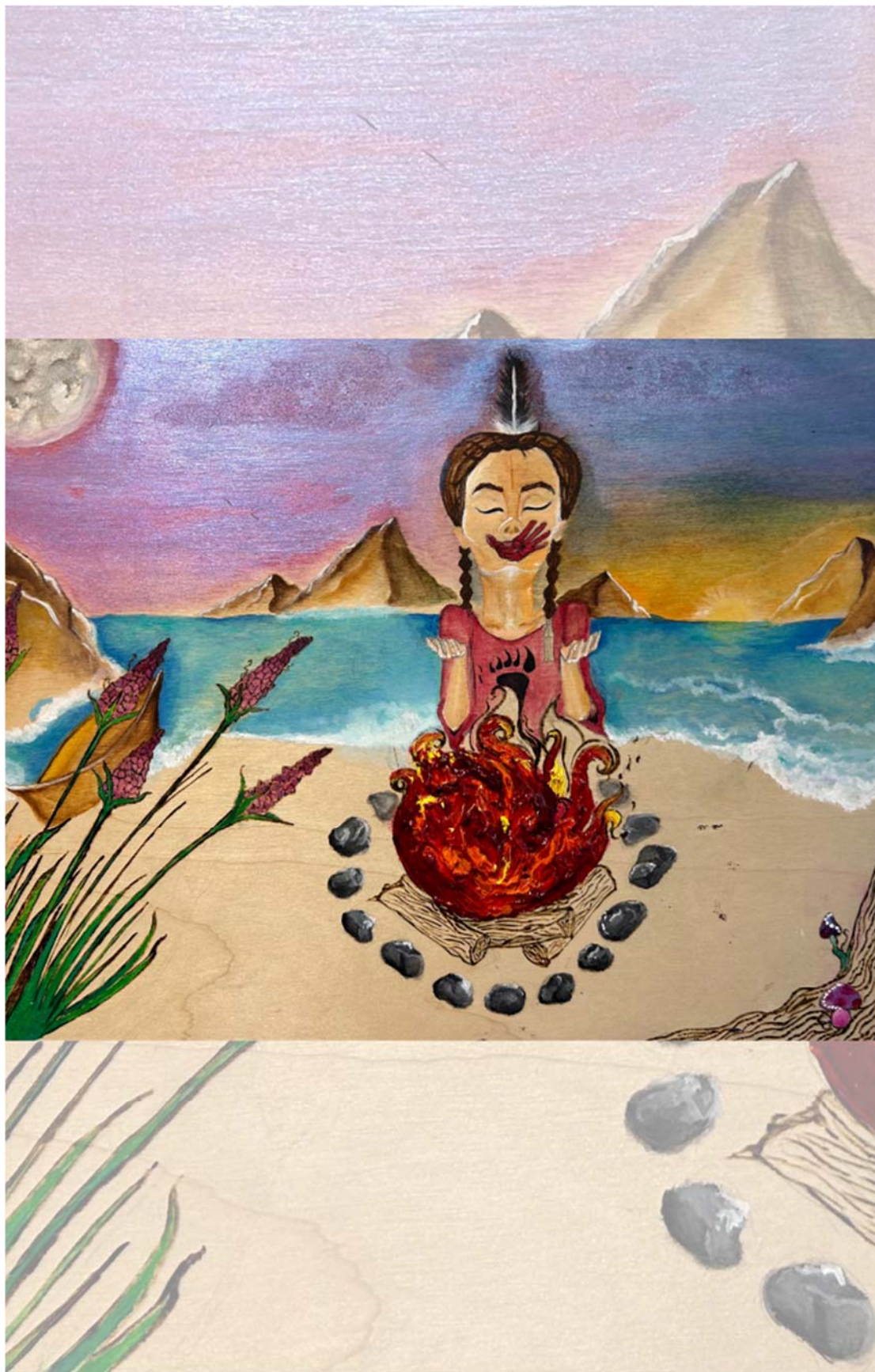
For me, when I think of making meaning of my energy, I think of how I am in relationship with my environment. I have learned to listen to my body, how I feel, how I am reacting, and to trust my gut and intuition. In unfamiliar situations or moments when I feel challenged, I take a moment to practise mindfulness and ask myself: How is my body reacting? Do I feel safe? Is this a reaction due to past experiences of unsafety? What do I need right now?

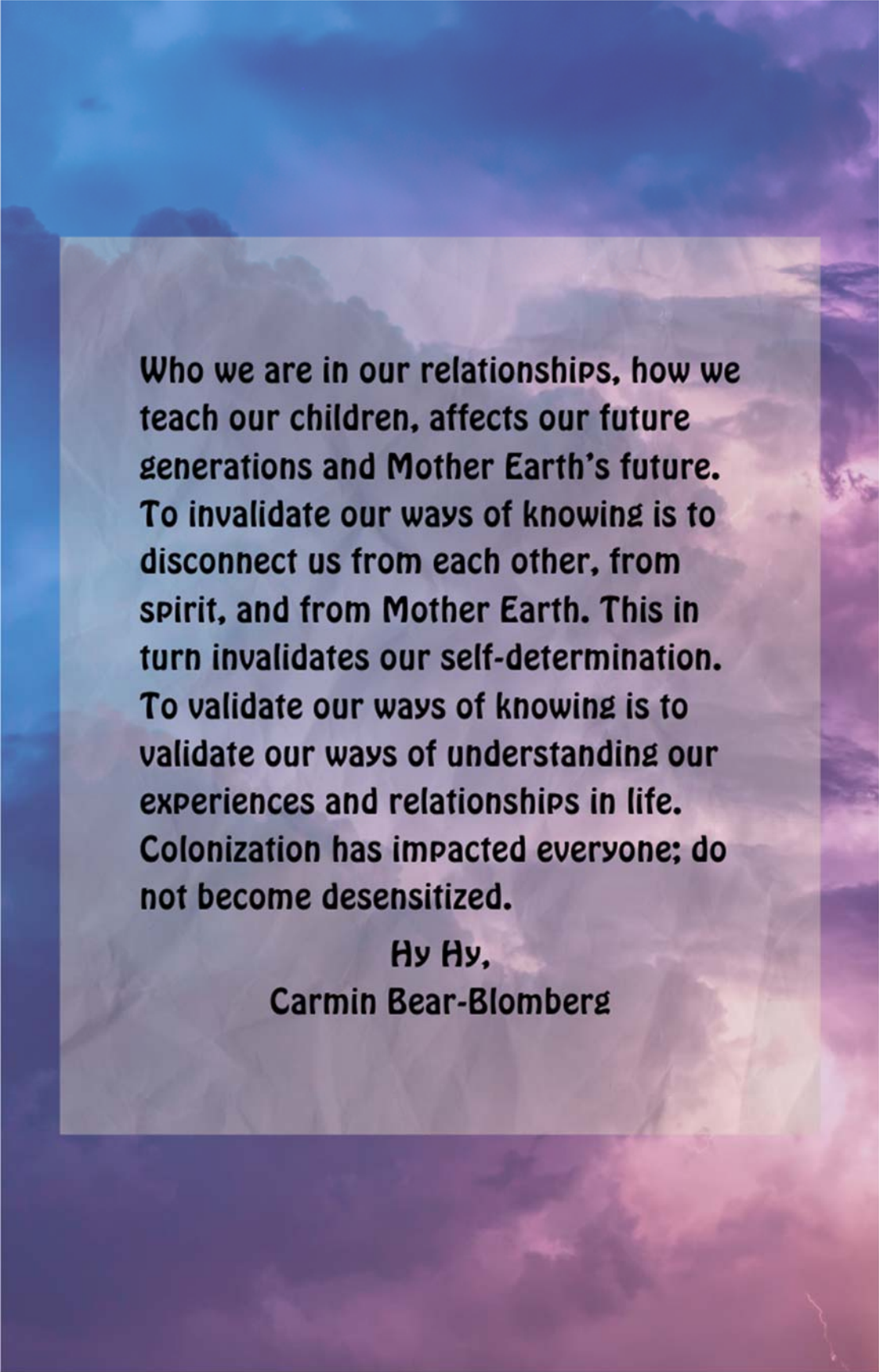
I can influence how I feel and react by drawing on my lived experiences and by choosing, when in healthy situations, to reframe and heal my trauma. Growing up, I had consistency from my mother. When she passed at a young age, I had to grow up fast. I had to learn to trust my intuition and navigate tough situations. Living with so much uncertainty about our energy can create a disconnection between our bodies and our spirits. We have a lingering knowledge of what is right, but without validation, due to disconnection from place, family, and culture, there is confusion.



Imagine a child not having the validation of knowing how to navigate or trust their own energy, or not having a safe space to speak up when they feel things are not right because they fear losing their shelter or their only chance to have a sense of belonging with a family.

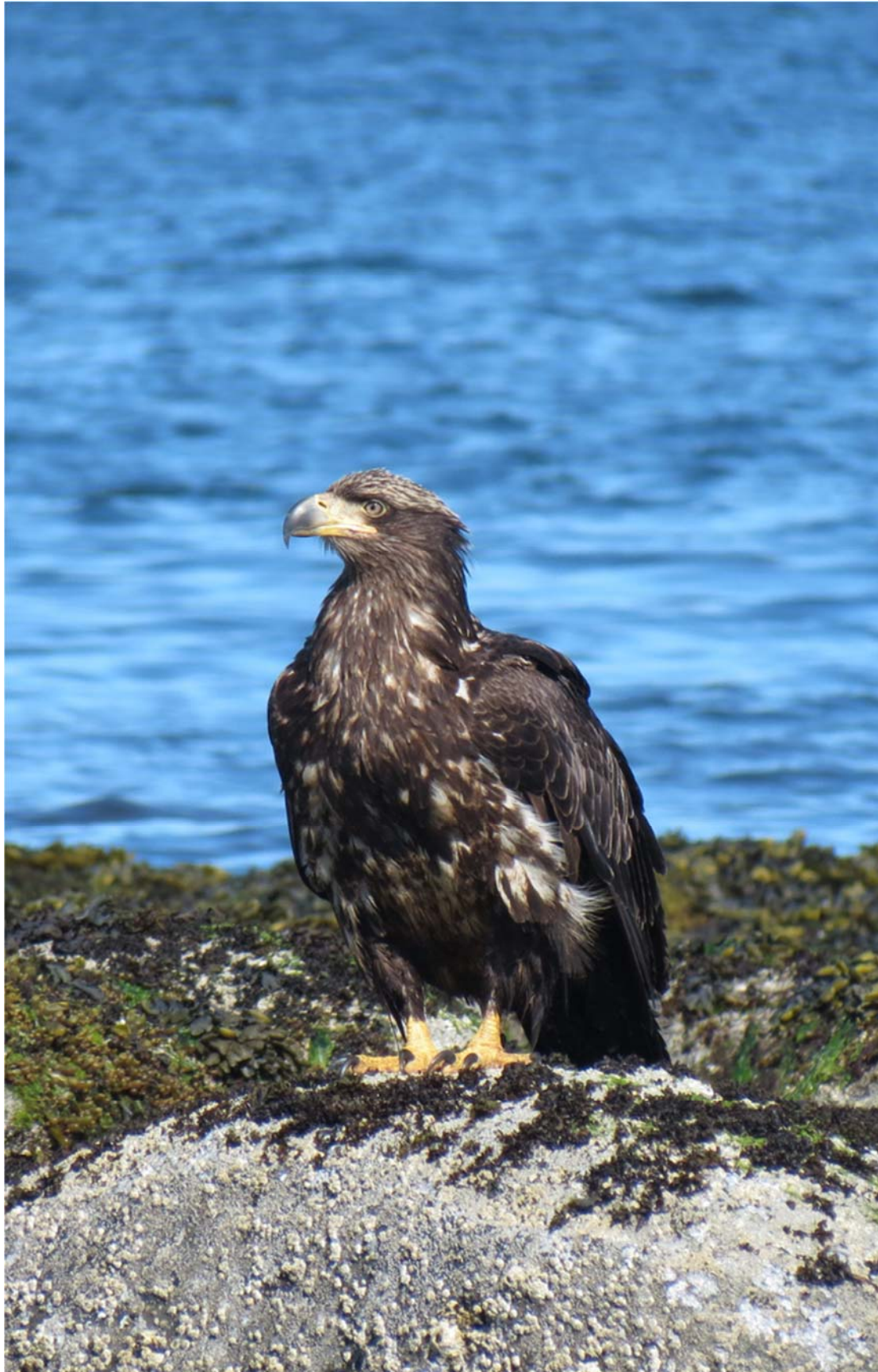
This parallels the feeling Indigenous people have had historically in relationship to Mother Earth. For generations, we have lived with the constant stress of being threatened or killed for speaking up for what we know and feel is right. This invalidation, experienced systemically and within relationships, causes cognitive dissonance in each of us—we find ourselves having to act in ways that contradict our beliefs. Collectively, as communities and as a society, we have been groomed and gentrified in order to desensitize our ways of being in relationship with, and our ways of caring for, ourselves and our environment—our Mother Earth.





Who we are in our relationships, how we teach our children, affects our future generations and Mother Earth's future. To invalidate our ways of knowing is to disconnect us from each other, from spirit, and from Mother Earth. This in turn invalidates our self-determination. To validate our ways of knowing is to validate our ways of understanding our experiences and relationships in life. Colonization has impacted everyone; do not become desensitized.

**Hy Hy,
Carmin Bear-Blomberg**



Visions in Song Circle: Recalling Generational Practice



By Carmin Bear-Blomberg



Carmin Bear-Blomberg

Tansi, Carmin Bear, nisîthikâson,
Peter Ballantyne Maskwa (Bear)
Nêhiyaw Nation, Pelican Narrows
Saskatchewan, ochi nitha.

I am a Two Spirit Nêhiyaw (Cree) and mixed European from my Father, Clifford Blomberg. I also carry teachings from my Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis family and spirit/passed mother, Qwikilag.

Life goal: Artist. Continue to be a mentor support for urban indigenous youth and families in community, supporting wellness and cultural practice reconnection through art and land methods.

Likes: Drawing, painting, composing music, dancing, longboarding.
Savoury foods and pastries.



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