



AHCAHK ISKOTÊW

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Keywords: Cree birth teachings, Indigenous rights, human development; spiritual development, Indigenous belonging, Cree language

Acknowledgement: We raise our hands in deepest respect and gratitude to the ancestors and families of the lək^wəŋən 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.

Mavis Aubichon, Sunflower Song, is connected to the Kinship Rising research project as the Youth Council Coordinator in the Fall of 2023.

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by Mavis Aubichon



Finding and winding a pathway through the constructs of our collective colonial Canadian story, I discovered ceremony.

Hidden inside Indigenous traditional teachings is the medicine that we carry as creatures who were created with a sacred profound beginning.

This beginning was described in a teaching that arrived to me by way of a book, *Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems* by Sylvia McAdam (2015), the person who began the Idle No More movement.

The book's introduction outlines Cree Indigenous birth teachings, and when I read this it explained why I am motivated to light a candle for most every circle I hold.

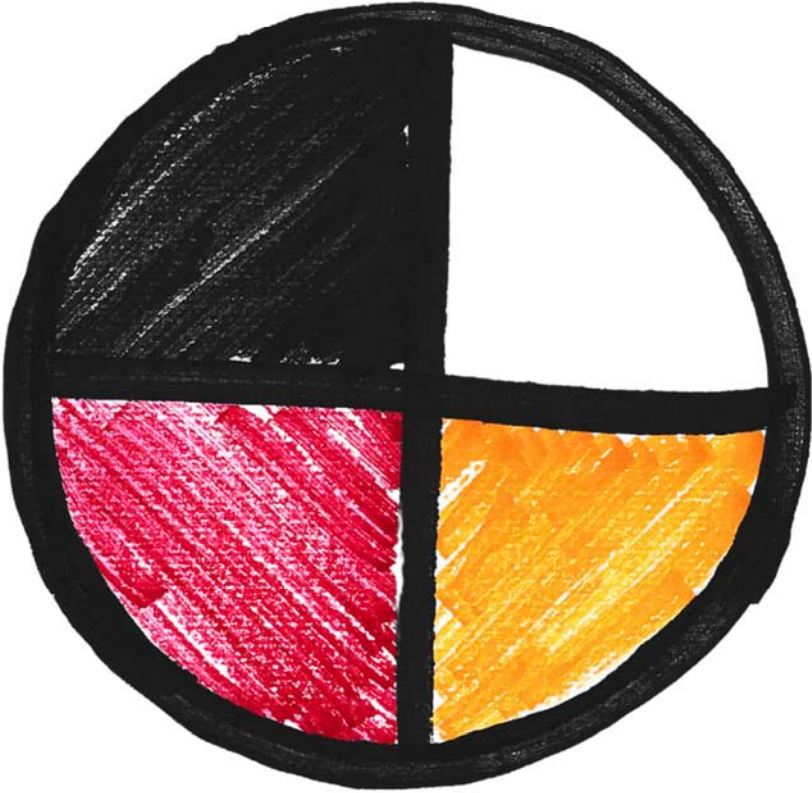
So I wrote a little story to go along with this understanding, and the idea is that it is a flip book that animates and illustrates the teaching.

Imma call this story ahcahk iskotêw, and so here we go...

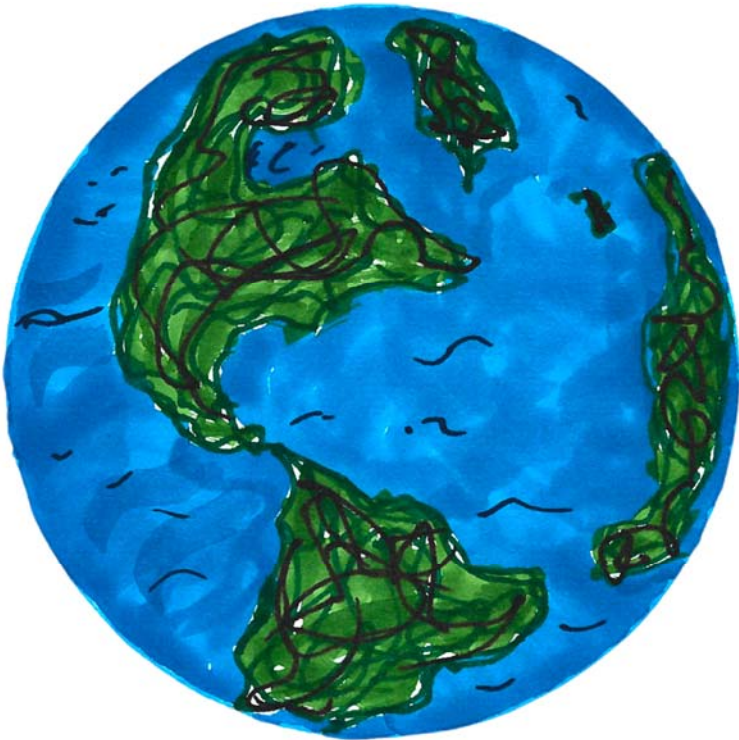
Start flipping!!



Our Cree



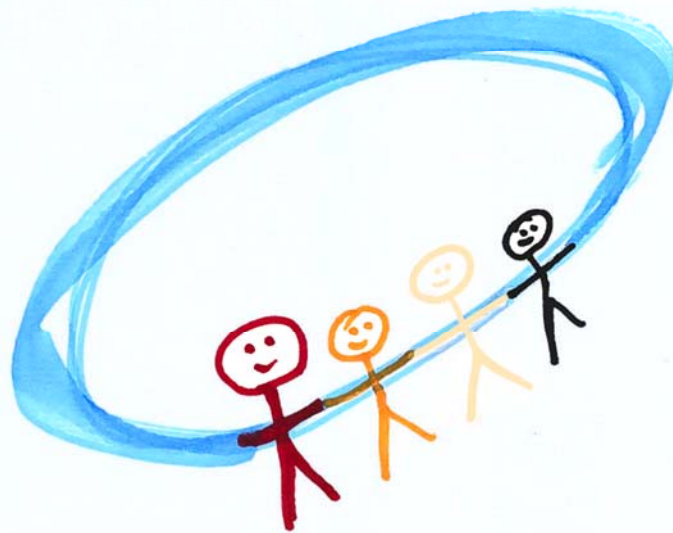
Indigenous



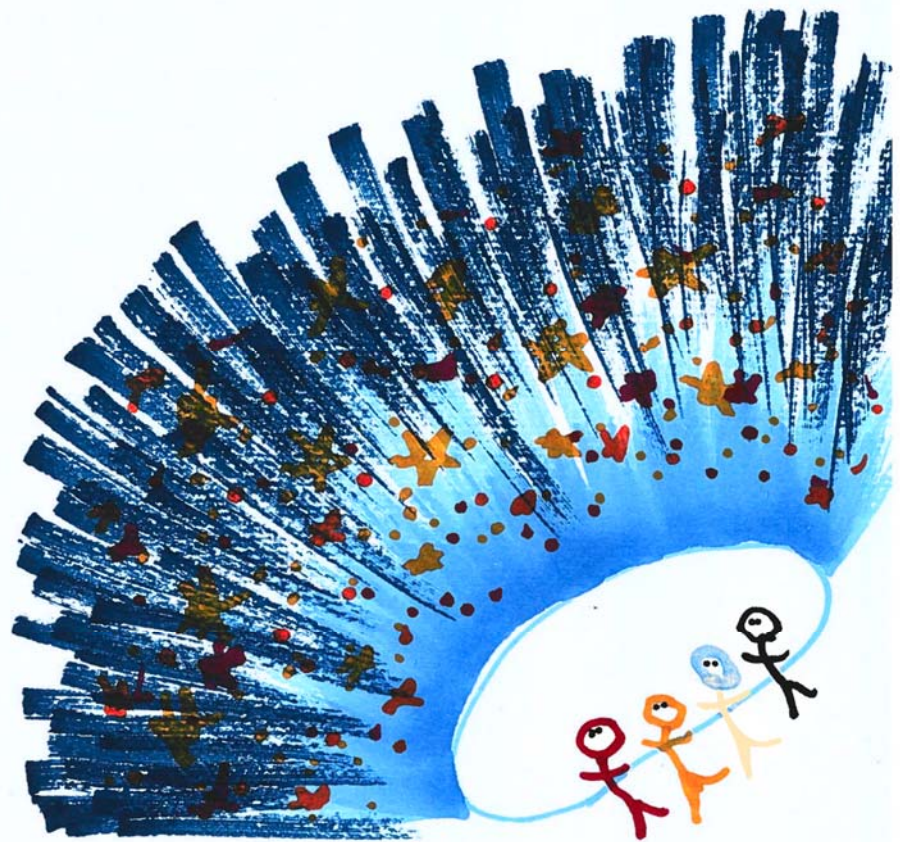
birth teachings



tell us we each have a sacred
and profound beginning.



That we come from the place of the stars,



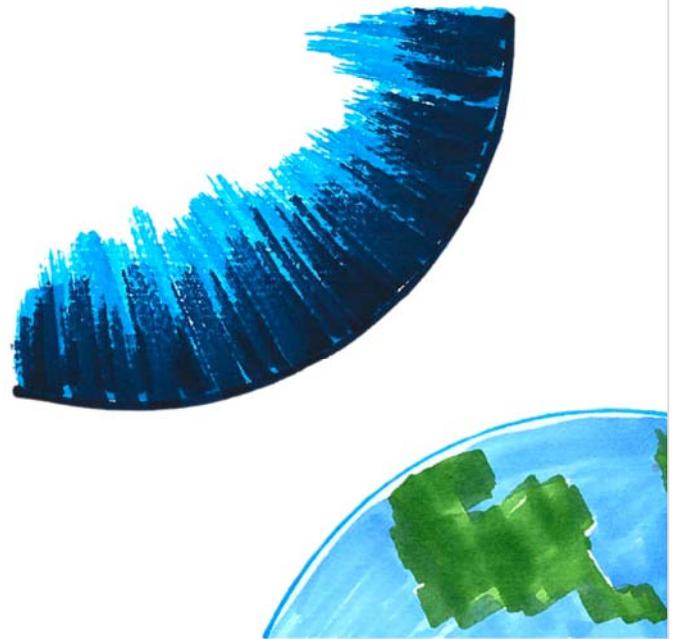
the place where the Creator resides.



And when it was time for the
arrival of humans on earth,



the Earth Mamma, together with the Creator,
designed and prepared for the arrival of this
new creature.



When all the physical earth preparations
were complete, then it was time,



and the Creator prepared in the spirit world a big
flame that I saw as blue ~ahcahk iskotêw~
translated from Cree to English as the soul flame.



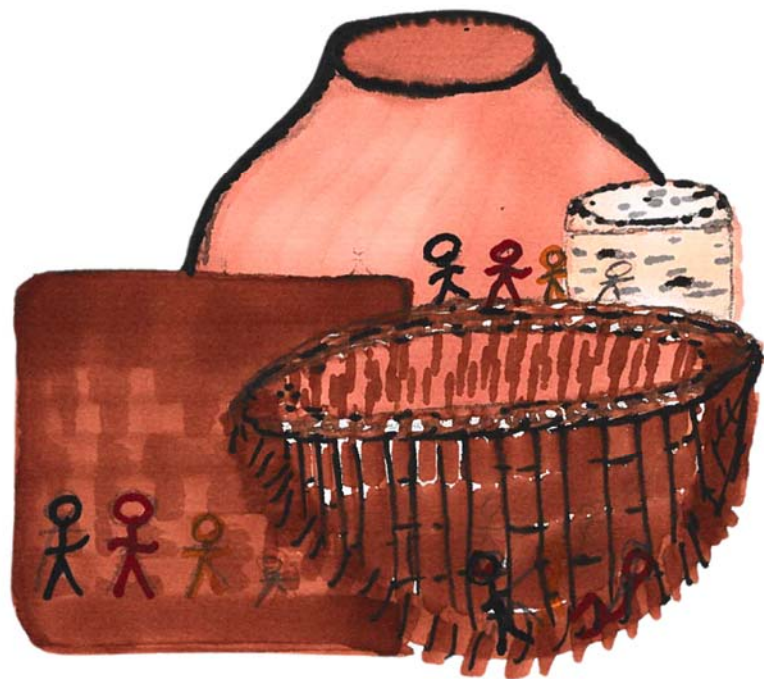
I saw each spark that rose up from this flame as
a spirit ready to take on a physical form.



Our ~ahcahk iskotêw~ carries life ~pimitisiwin~
and hidden inside is a gift from our maker to
live the good life ~ miyo pimitisiwin~, to taste
the foods of the earth, to feel the wind on our
faces, and the water tickling our toes.



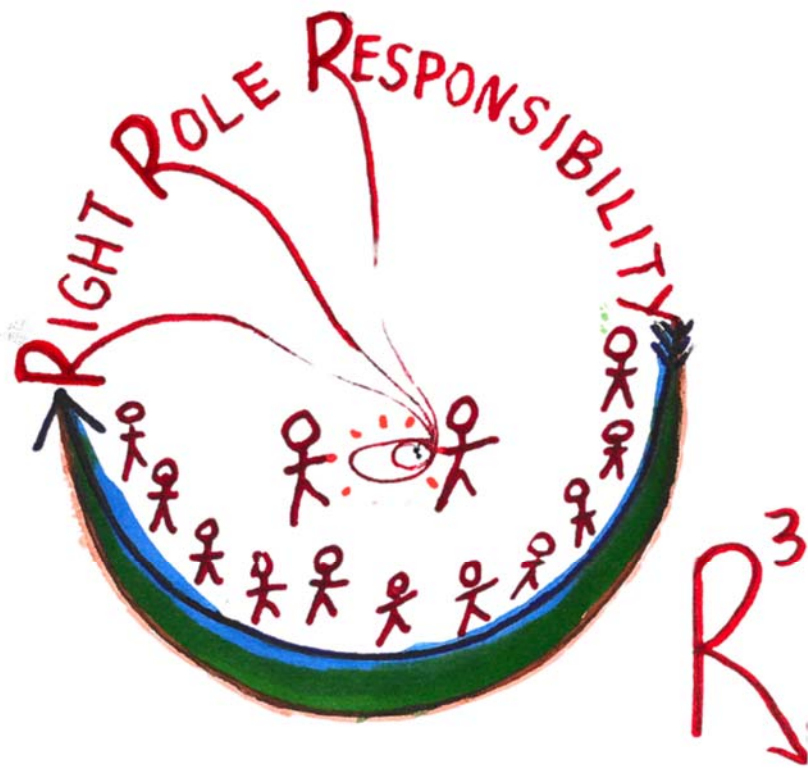
And so to experience this good life, when we are
born into our humanity, we arrive to a container
and we are born to a first nation
~our First Nation~.



And it is in and with this container that we have what I am calling R to the exponent power of 3 -- R^3 .



A Right, a Role,
and a Responsibility.



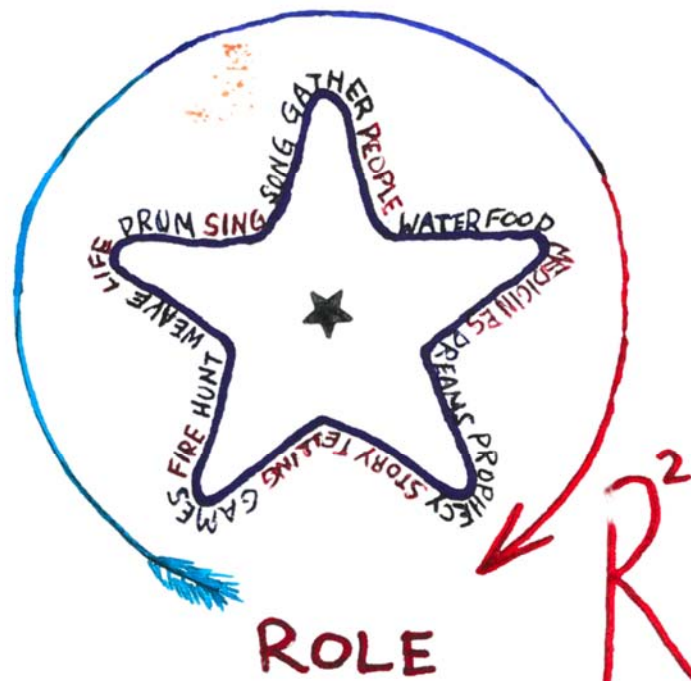
R^1 is the right to land and language.

And with this we understand that land informs the language, and that in turn, language governs our code of conduct in relationship to that living thing. And so with access to R^1 we find our role, R^2 .

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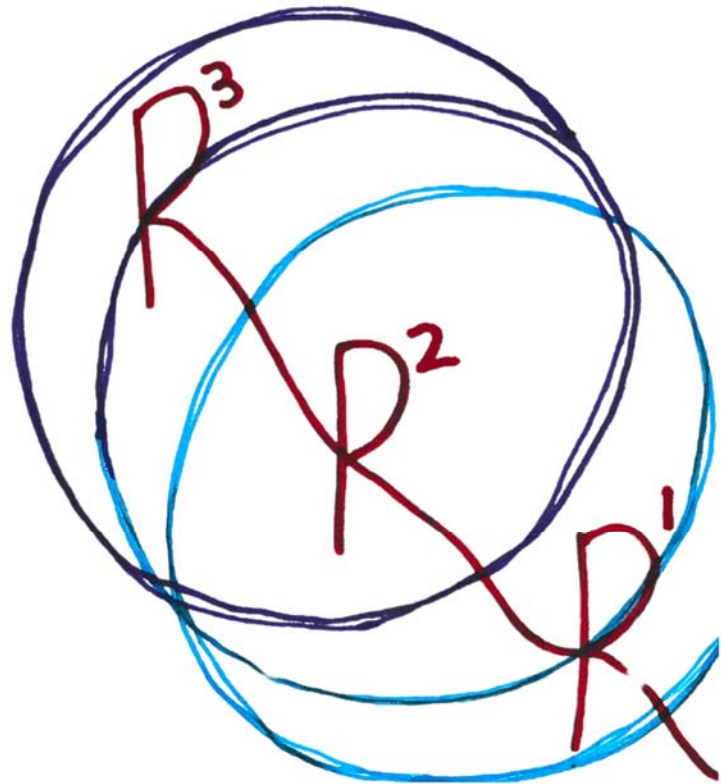
R^2 is our gift or our talent -- what we like doing and what we are good at. This is our purpose. If you have ever experienced being at work, but it did not feel like it was work -- this is R^2 .



With R^1 and R^2 in place, we come to find R^3
-- Our Responsibility -- to share our gift with our
container for the survival of our container, our
First Nation.



It would be considered a privilege to reach R^3 inside a lifetime, and especially sacred would be to dance inside the promise gifted to us by our Creator at our birth, to live the good life and honor our \sim ahcahk iskotêw \sim . Eh he.



These are our Cree Indigenous birth teachings as understood by Mavis Aubichon, in reading *Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems* by Sylvia McAdam (2015).

Eh he. Teniki. Kakithownitotemak. All my relations.





I am an Urban Indigenous and therefore
speak the languages as an urban learner.

In respect, my deepest gratitude extends to
the language warriors who continue to
teach their people the original languages.

I will continue to learn from you, Eh he.

I am Mavis Aubichon, a Cree Metis Canadian womyn originally from Buffalo Narrows in northern Saskatchewan, chiming in from the unceded, traditional territory of the K'ómoks- Puntledge, Leeksun, Sahtloot, and Sasifla -what is known today as the Comox Valley in BC, on beautiful Vancouver Island. It is a privilege that I can call this territory my home and much gratitude is given for this gift.

I was transplanted here by way of the 60's scoop and the Saskatchewan child welfare program known as AIM (the Adopt Indian Metis program), as is typewritten on my adoption records. This early childhood event interrupted the natural development of my human being journey as an Indigenous Cree Metis womyn. It also interrupted the growth potential of my twin brother, who was born half an hour before me, and who entered the world severely affected by the intake of alcohol that our biological mother consumed during her pregnancy. At the young age of 33, she passed to the other side, transitioned from life to death, from cirrhosis of the liver- collateral damage from her attendance at a residential school disguised as a convent in Isle a la Crosse, SK. She also suffered from tuberculosis that required her to stay in a TB sanatorium not once, but twice. Knowing what I know now of those involuntary stays outside of her home and family, I have compassion for her capacity and her choices. I am her daughter and a twin sister, and I am also a granddaughter of many, a mother of 3 and adopted by many, a puppy mom to a mini-dachshund, and most recently, a grandmother to a grandson. Eh he.



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