PROTECTING OUR SPIRIT

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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.

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Visions in Song Circle: 
Recalling Generational Practice

By Carmin Bear-Blomberg
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