

Volume 2: Indigenous Ecological Stewardship

BIODIVERSITY



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Introduction

This volume of BioDiversity is all about Indigenous Ecological Stewardship. These people will teach you about the interconnectedness of their worlds. Their peoples, languages, foods, lands, sea, animals, plants, and insects are all one. They work together to keep each other healthy and strong. These stories are about the problems these ecological stewards faced. They overcame these obstacles by working with community, land, animals, and science. I hope that these stories provide you with hope to overcome anything that you may face and to protect the lands and waters you live on and the animals and plants you share it with.

This project was created by the Compost Education Centre and funded by the Victoria Foundation.



How To Use This Text

Read through these stories carefully and with intention. Each of the subjects have made great impacts on our world. Beangka, Hindou, Anne, Cease, Freda, and Grandmother Josephine achieved what they did because of their connections to their lands they were on.

Key terms

Ethnobotany: The study of plants and how they are used by Indigenous peoples.

Remediation: A process that uses microorganisms, plants, water, and soil to breakdown pollutants and contaminants in the ground.

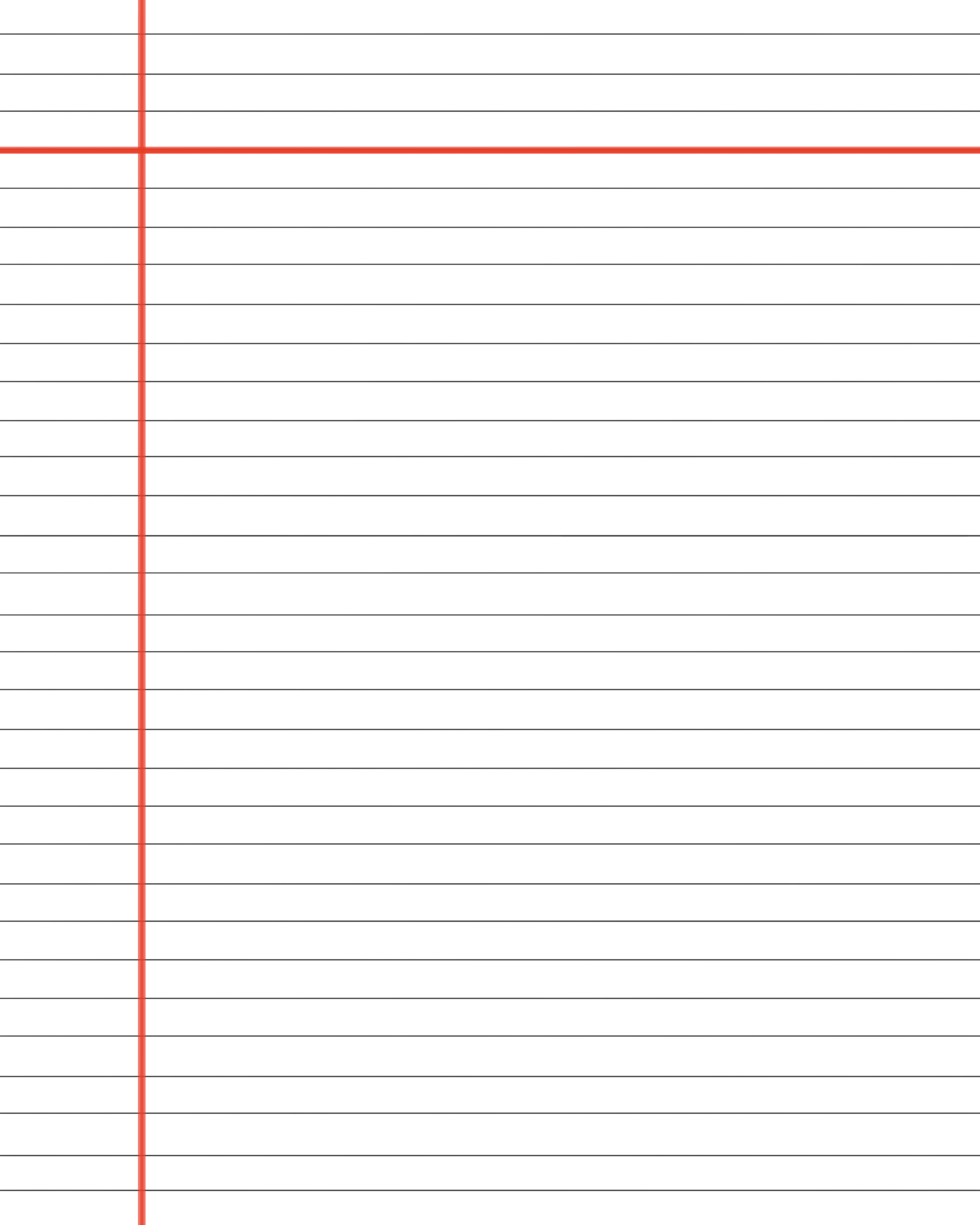
Ecological Stewardship: The act of caring for all land with respect and reciprocity for other living beings.

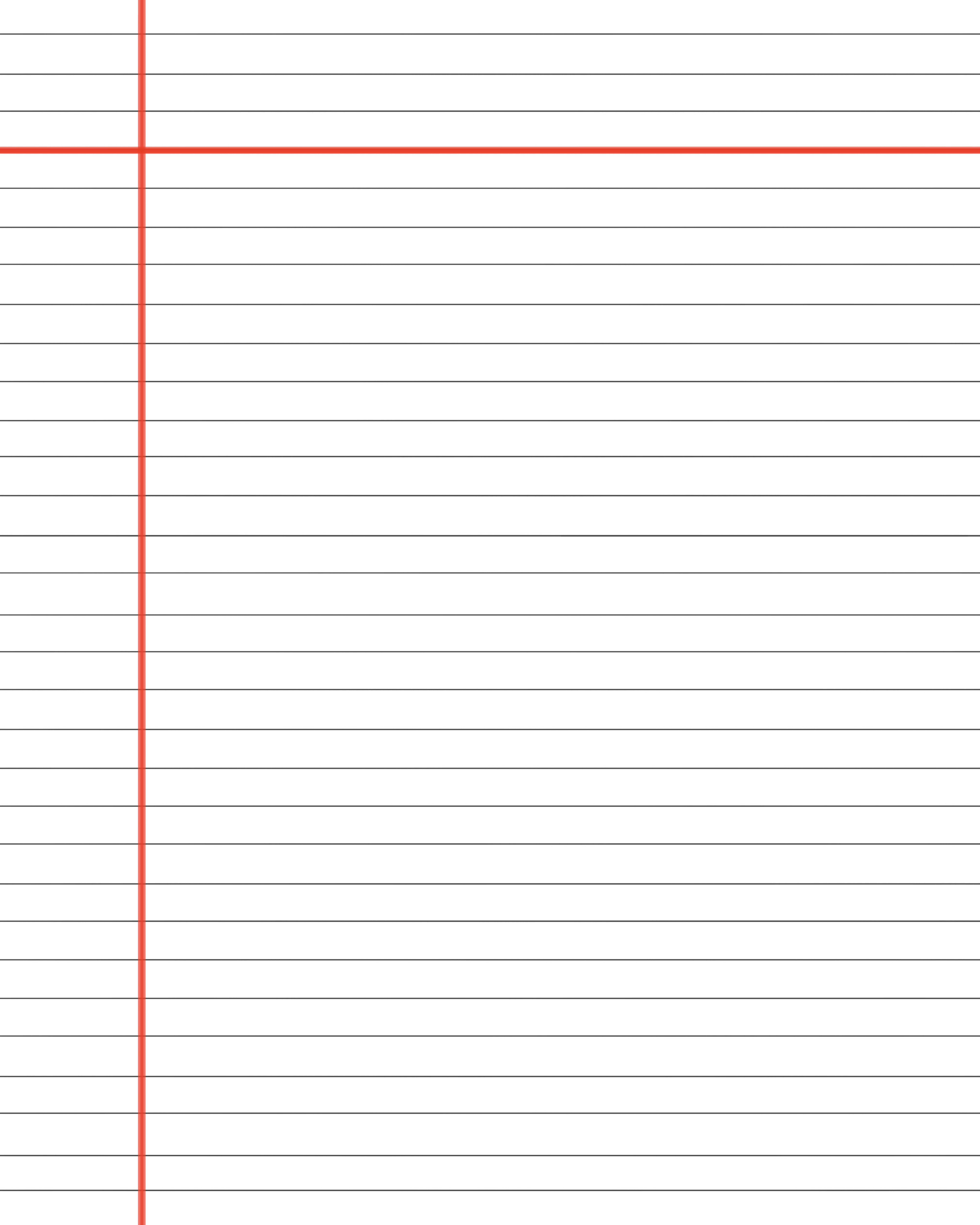
Invasive plants: A plant that is usually introduced into an ecosystem by human activity that rapidly spreads, leaving little to no space for native plants.

Native plants: A plant that has evolved naturally in certain area and has existed there for many year. These plants are important for maintaining their relationship to native animals and insects.

Guiding questions

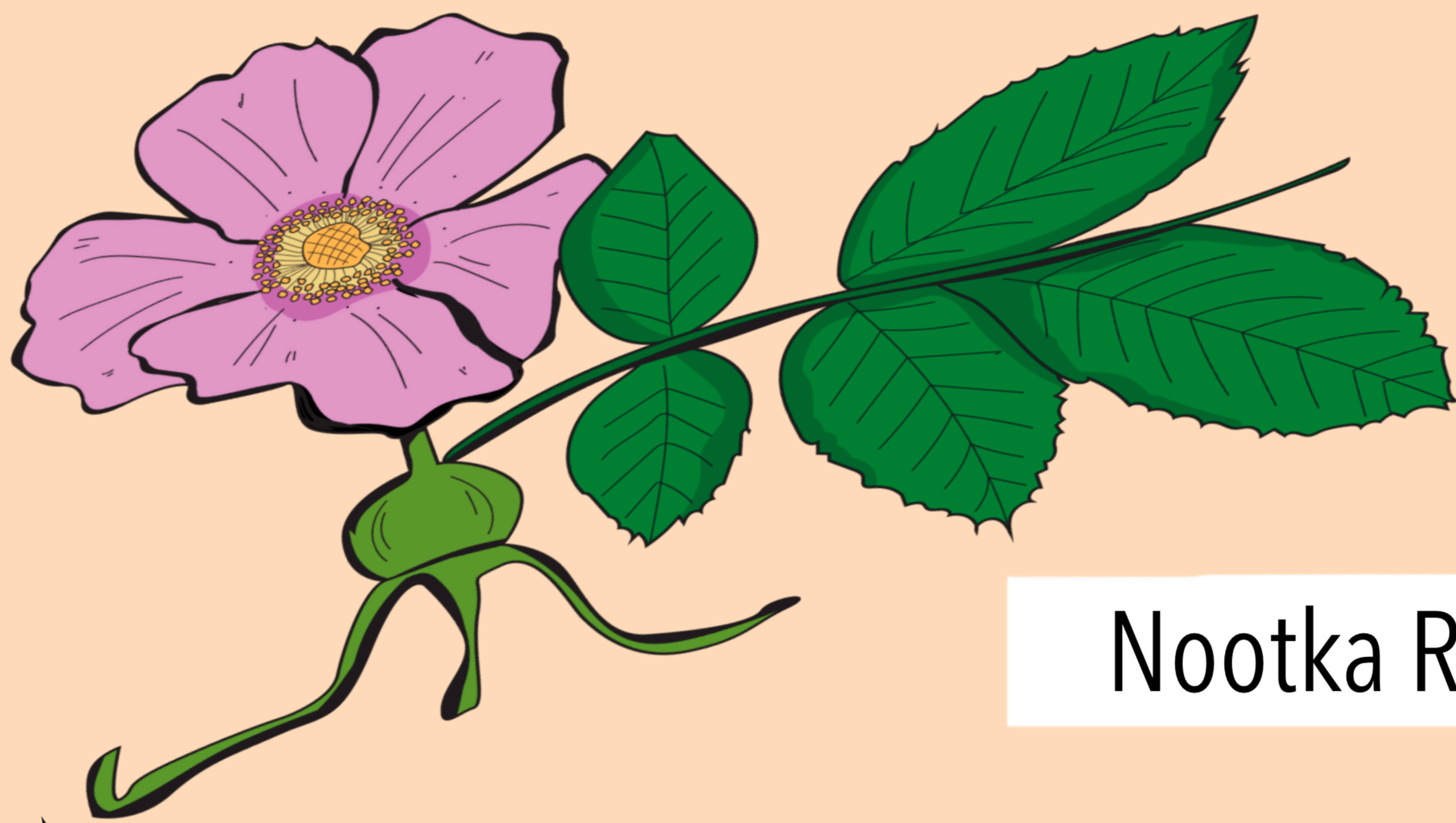
1. List three things you learned from these stories.
2. Why is Indigenous plant knowledge important?
3. Is it necessary to remove invasive plants? Why, or why not?
4. What are two changes you can make to have a better relationship with plants and animals?



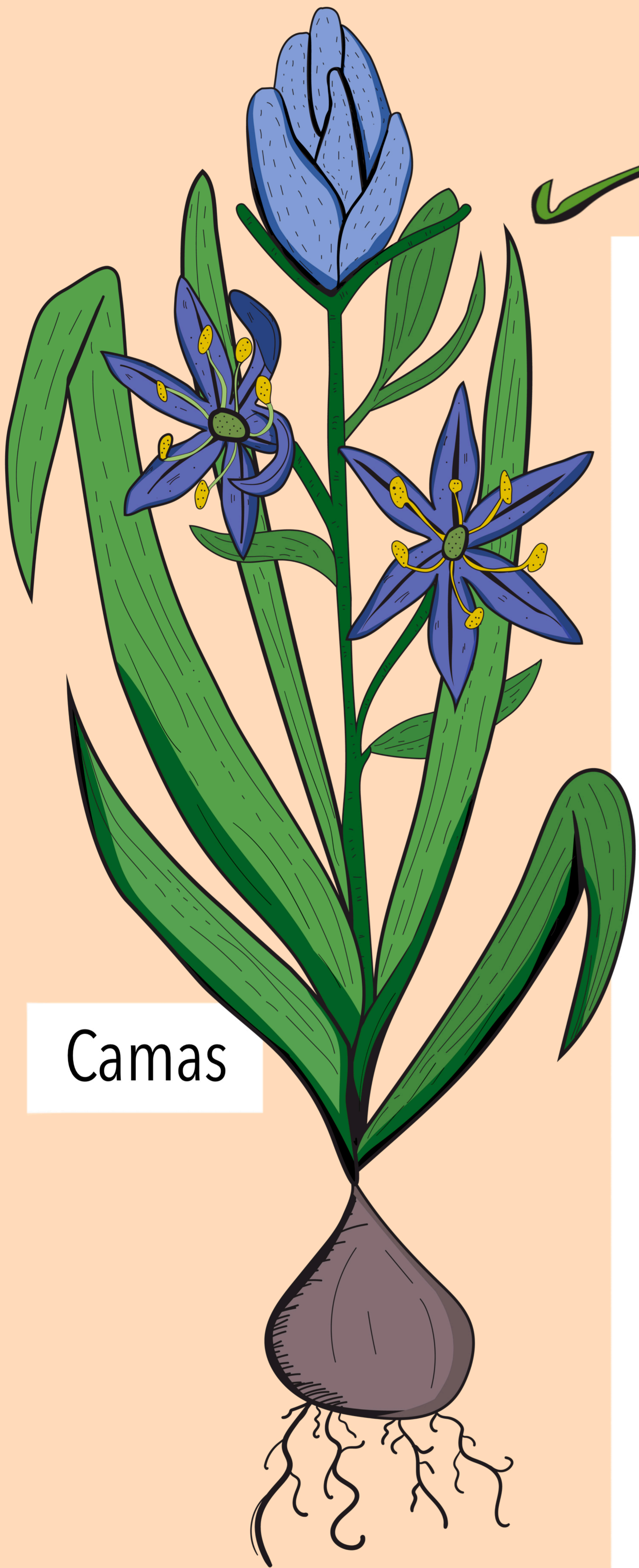


BEANGKA ELLIOTT





Nootka Rose



Camas

Beangka is a woman from Tsartlip First Nation. She has worked for the last 10 years to teach cultural knowledge and ethnobotany on her home lands. She has taught Indigenous and non-Indigenous people how to gather plants and medicines on her homelands. She teaches these lessons to others to make sure that people know how to be kind and gentle with Indigenous lands. Here are some of the lessons Beangka teaches: When you go to gather plants, go there with good feelings. You should only harvest in the daylight, because the land remembers us. Before you take a plant, you should make an offering to show thanks for what the plant gives you. Never take more than you need, and never take more than half because other people may want to harvest these plants too. Beangka's lessons about how to harvest remind us of how to show respect for the plants we interact with. Honoring the plants in these ways shows that we understand the life they had before we harvested them. This practice gives thanks to the plants for the beauty and medicine that they give to us.

HINDOU OUMAROU

IBRAHIM



Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim is from the Mbororo community in Chad. Her people are nomadic cattle herders. In 1999 Hindou founded the Association of Indigenous Peul Women and Peoples of Chad. The organization works to promote the rights of Mbororo women and girls by encouraging leadership and environmental protection. Hindou Mbororo's community has felt the effects of climate change and has seen a decrease in access to fresh water and an increase in invasive plants which their cattle cannot eat. As a geographer, Hindou learned about 3D mapping. She used this tool to show the world how climate change has changed the Mbororo's lives. She worked with cattle herders and elders to map out the history of the lands they live on. They discussed the problems they faced like the weather's extreme changes and the decrease in fresh water sources. The Mbororo's understanding of their homelands have come from generations of living off of the land. With 3D mapping they can predict what may happen in the future as the climate shifts. Hindou's work offers us an example of how Indigenous communities can use scientific tools to share what they know about their homelands and learn to survive the climate crisis.



Hanza

Zebu Cattle



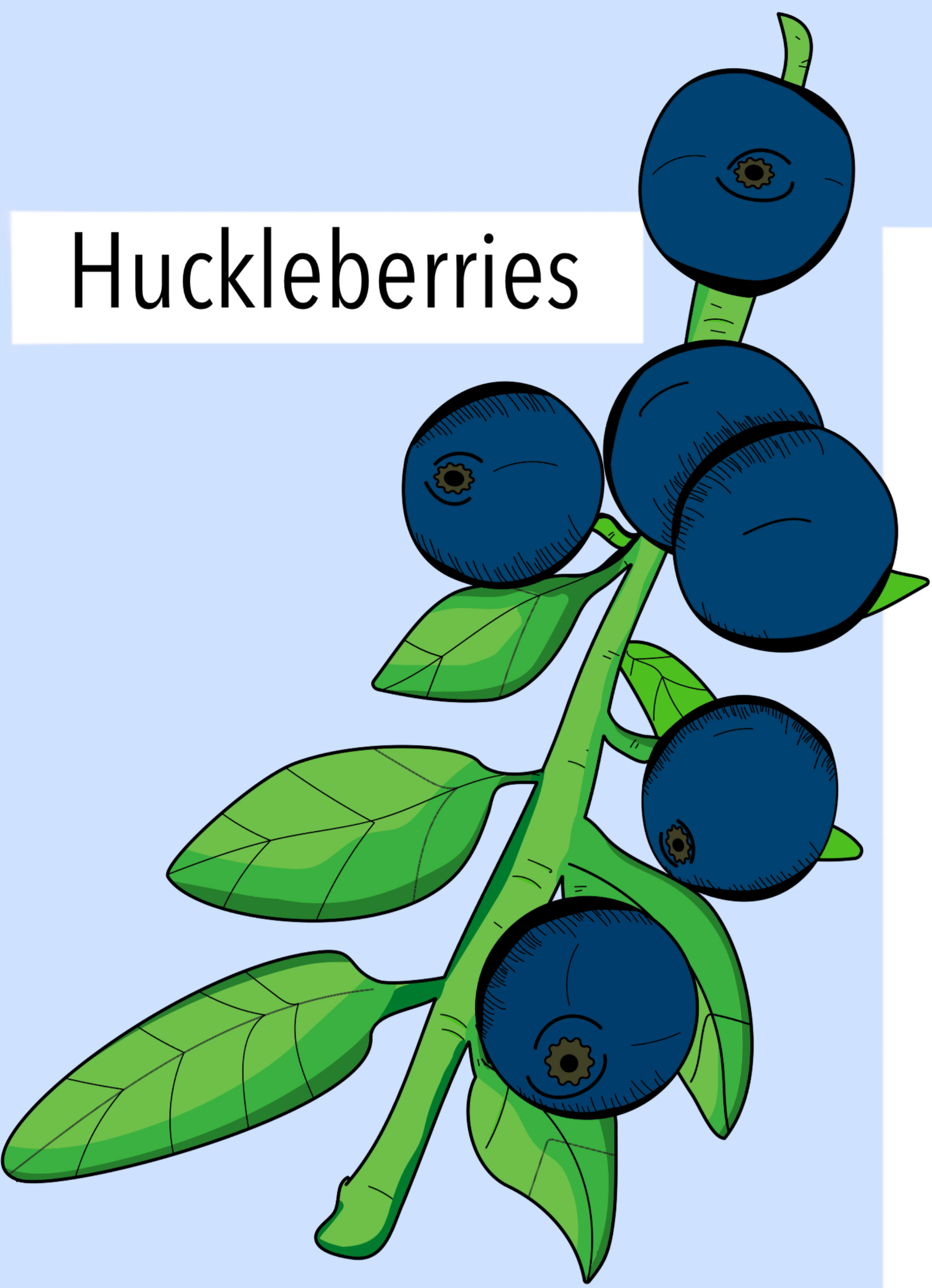
T'UY'T'TANAT CEASE WYSS

&

ANNE RILEY



Huckleberries



T'uy't'tanat- Cease Wyss is an ethnobotanist and artist of Skwxwú7mesh , Stó:lō, Irish-Metis, Hawaiian, and Swiss descent. Anne Riley is Cree and Dene from Fort Nelson First nation. Together they created a community project called Constellation of Remediation on x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqeam), səlilwətaɬ (Tseil-Waututh), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and lands in Vancouver, BC. Their project brought together Indigenous youth, Indigenous matriarchs, and other community members for activities that focused on remediation, restoration, and pollinators. Remediation works to take toxins out of the ground using plants, soil, water, and microorganisms. Anne and Cease worked with remediation plants to restore the vacant lot and to reintroduce Indigenous plant species into urban spaces. The artists planted a variety of mixed wild flower blends, mullein, sunflowers, and Indigenous tobacco plants on a busy street corner that was once a gas station. Flowers encourage birds, bees, and butterflies to visit the gardens and spread seed. They planted a food garden and an Indigenous food forest using plants like salal, red huckleberries, maple, and alder trees. Due to contamination on this site, humans cannot eat the food grown in the garden, but insects can use the plants for food and shelter. The key lesson of this project is that Indigenous knowledge can restore and remediate the land and help local wildlife. This knowledge can work to decolonize our relationship as humans and with the land, especially in urban spaces.

Mullein



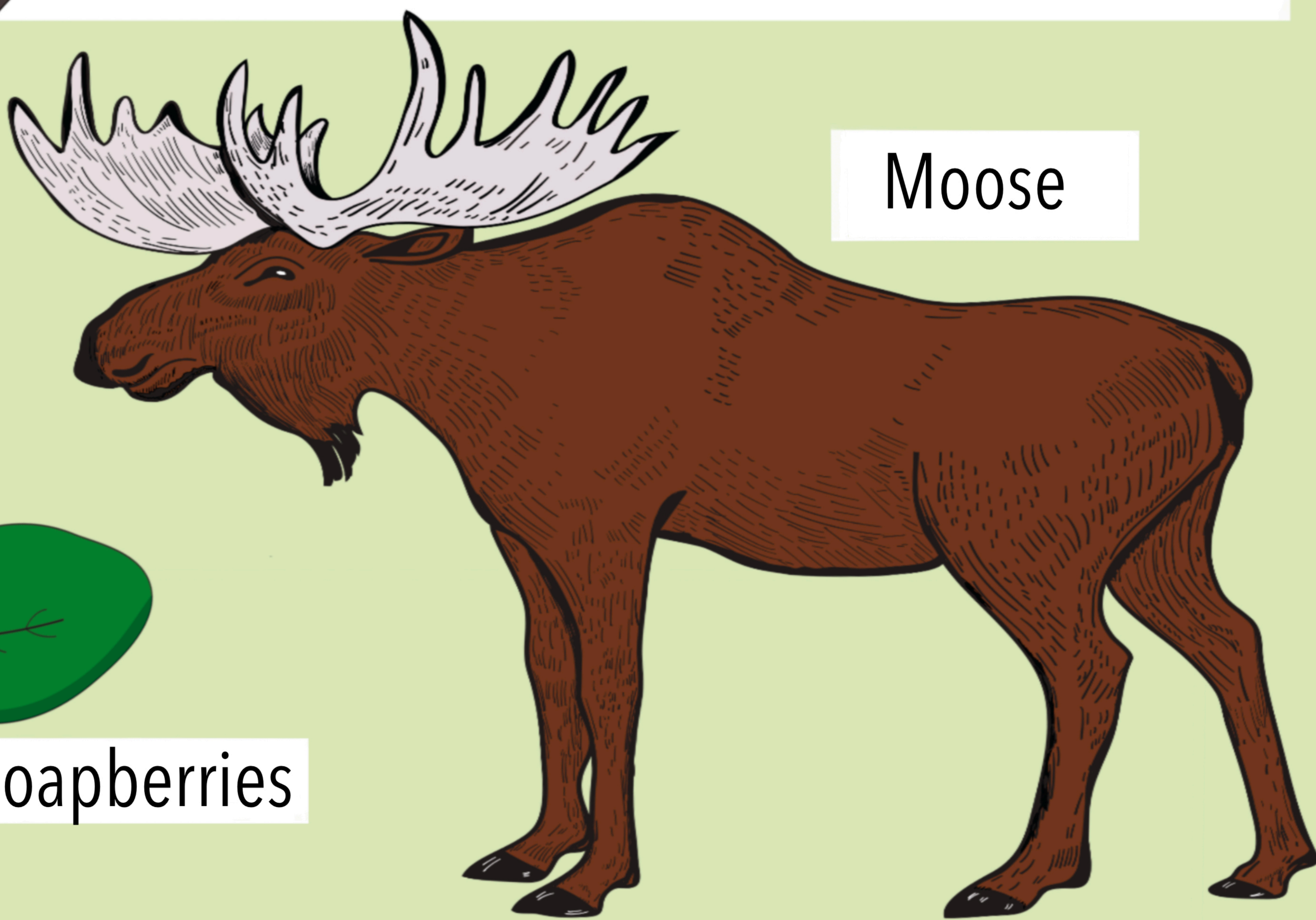
FREDA HUSON



Freda is a Wet'suwet'en (wet-SOH-ih-tin) woman from the Unist'ot'en (OO-nis-Tah-den) clan. Freda works as spokesperson on behalf of her people and her chiefs this means she protects her homelands through discussions with companies who want to do work there. Throughout her life, Freda learned to hunt, fish, and gather food and medicine. She and her family have long been able to drink water straight from the Wedzin Kwah, a river that flows nearby. Different companies have tried to build oil and gas pipelines through Unist'ot'en land without permission. These pipelines would poison the Wedzin Kwah, cutting off access to clean drinking water. The projects would also destroy forests, affecting the Wet'suwet'en ability to hunt, fish, gather medicine, and practice their culture. To make sure their people have continued access to their lands, Freda and her people built a Healing Centre for families to heal, learn their history, their songs, how to hunt and gather medicines. Freda and others in the Unist'ot'en clan are protecting the land so that they can continue the relationship they've had with it for thousands of years.



Soapberries



Moose

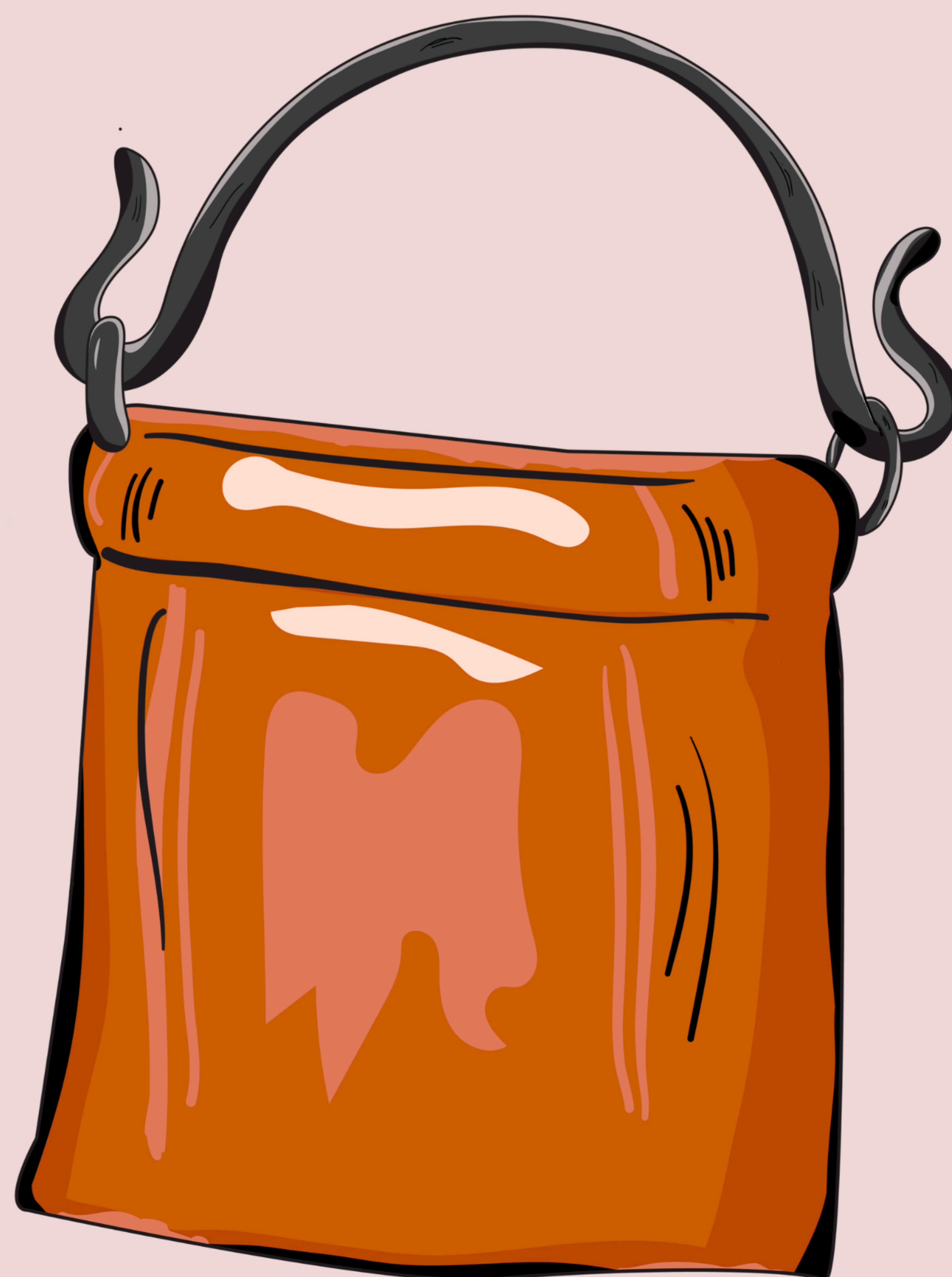
GRANDMOTHER

JOSEPHINE MANDAMIN

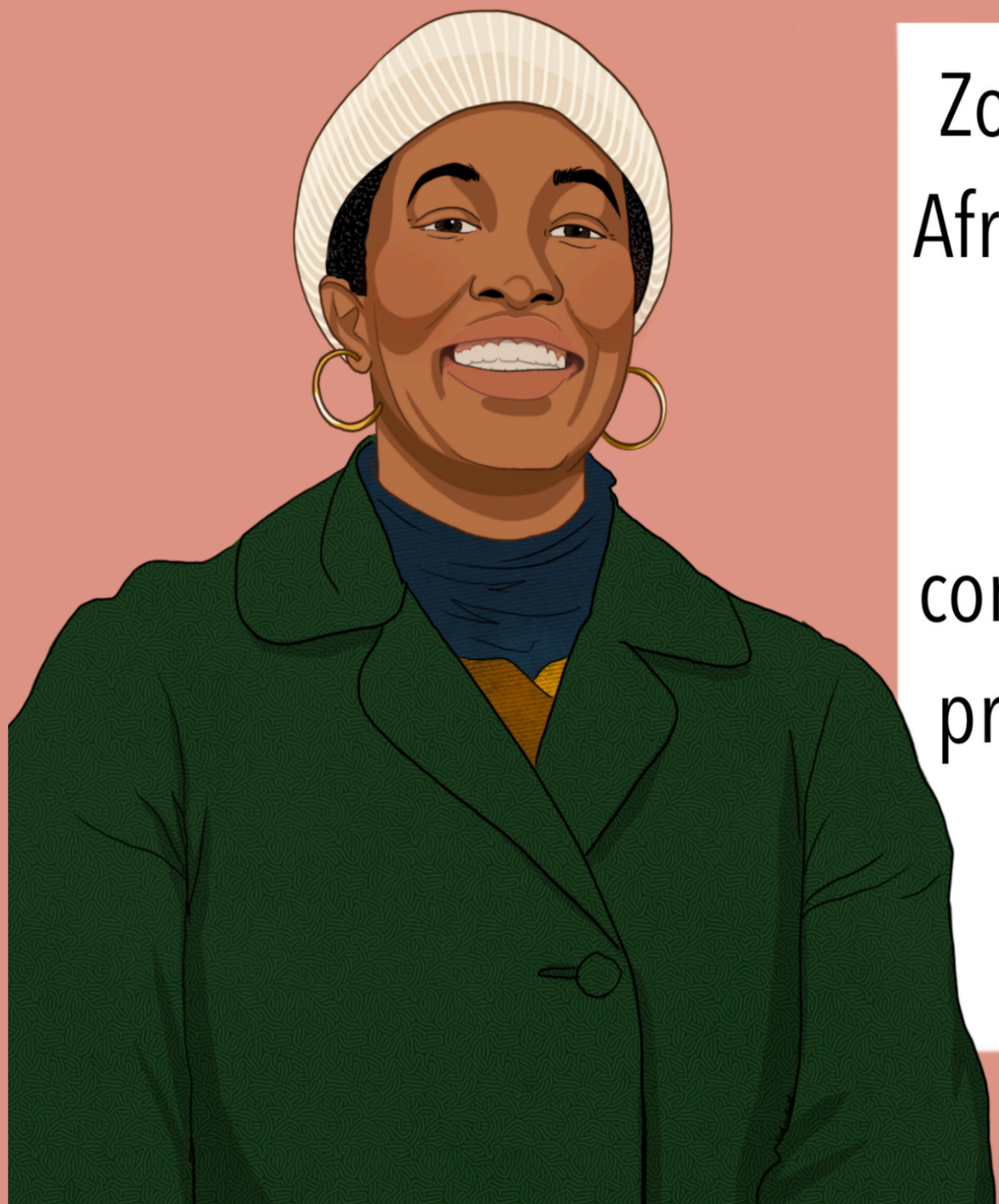


Grandmother Josephine Mandamin was an Anishinabek elder and water protector. She was born on Wikwemikong First Nation on Manitoulin Island. For many people like Grandmother Josephine, water is sacred and alive. Water gives us life from the time that we are in the womb until we die. Grandmother Josephine heard her chief say that in 2030 an ounce of water would be as expensive as an ounce of gold. She decided to do something about this prophecy to protect the health of her grandchildren and their grandchildren. She founded the Mother Earth Water Walk in 2003. The group was several grandmothers from different clans who came together to advocate for the rights of water. They discussed the negative effects of sewage disposal, agricultural pollution, and vehicle emissions. Together the group walked over 10,000 miles around the Great Lakes. The more they walked, the more people joined them. On their walks they talked about the health of the water, about how sad and polluted it was in some areas and healthy in others. Grandmother Josephine's legacy is the courage that she gave others. When you see something that isn't right, you always have the power to do something about it no matter how helpless you might feel.

Copper Pail



ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATORS



Zoë-Blue Coates is a an African American, Chinese, and Afro-Caribbean person based on Lekwungen Territories, in Victoria, B.C. She created the BioDiversity series to promote the rich histories of non-white peoples' connection to land, waters and non-human beings. Her practice is inspired by BIPOC youth who she hopes will grow up proud of their ancestors' hard work.

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Karissa Chandrakate is an Indo-Caribbean immigrant, from Trinidad and Tobago and currently residing on Lekwungen Territories (Victoria, B.C.). Her ancestry is East Indian. She is a photographer, videographer and illustrator, using the power of art to amplify voices and challenge cultural narratives.

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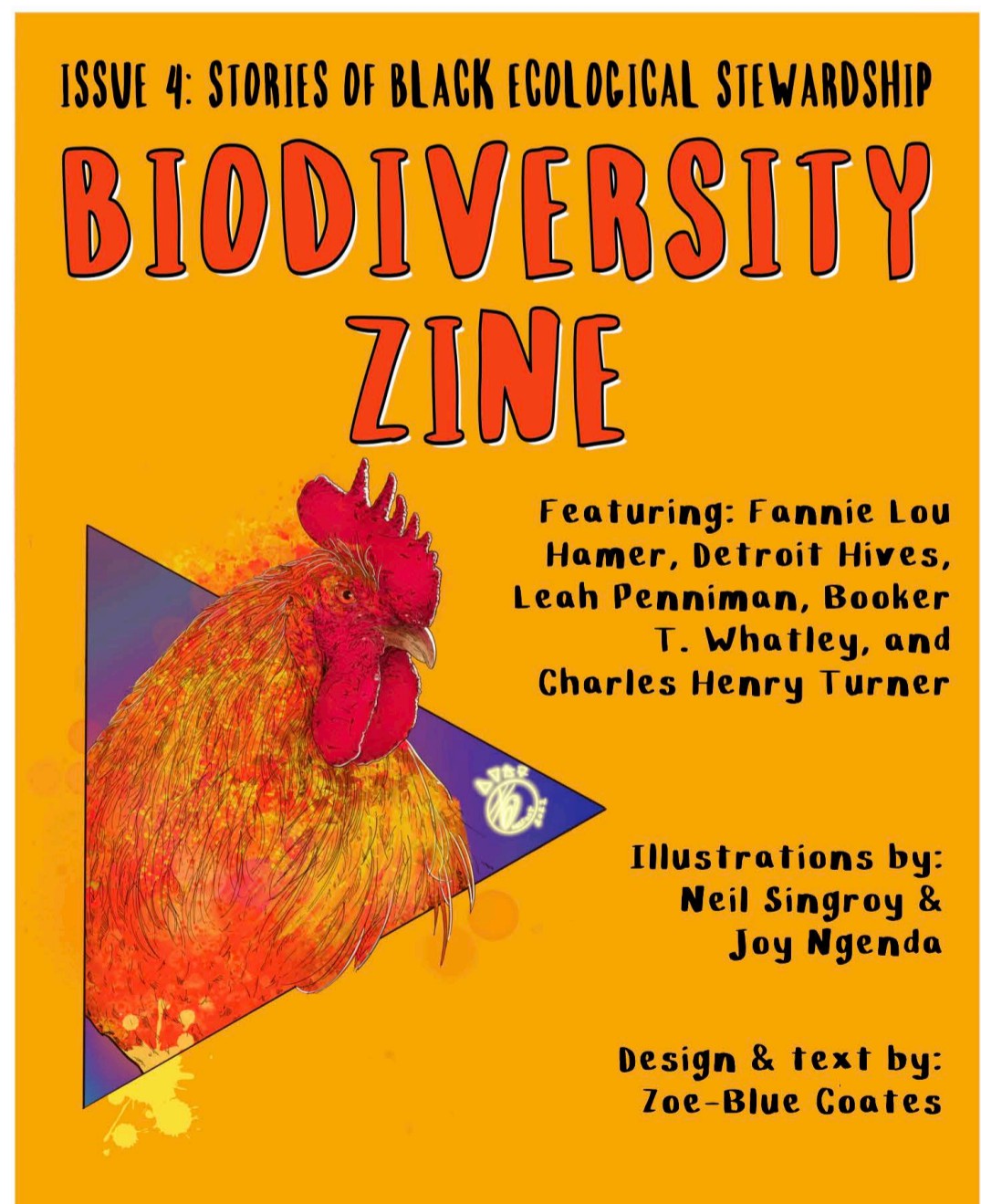
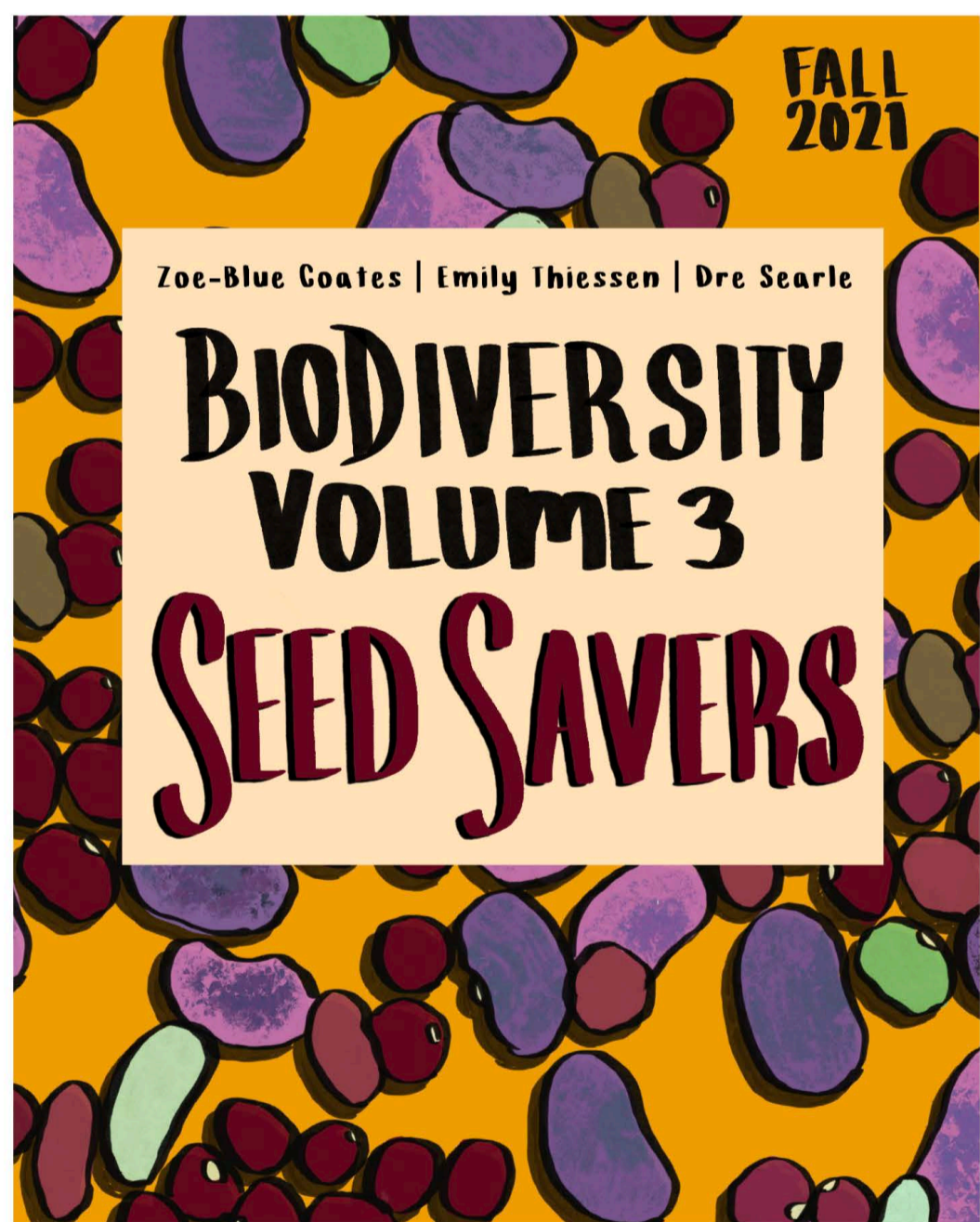
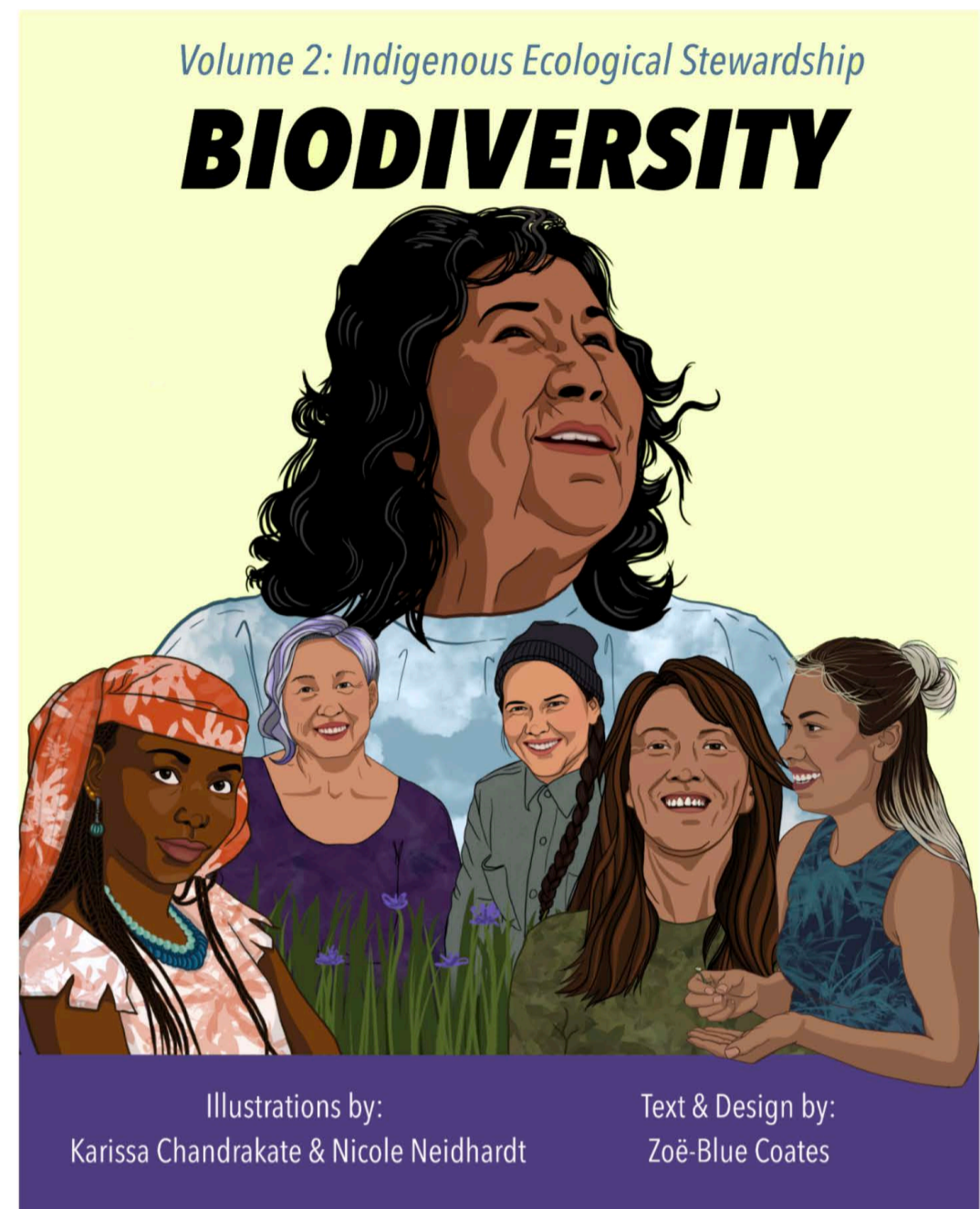
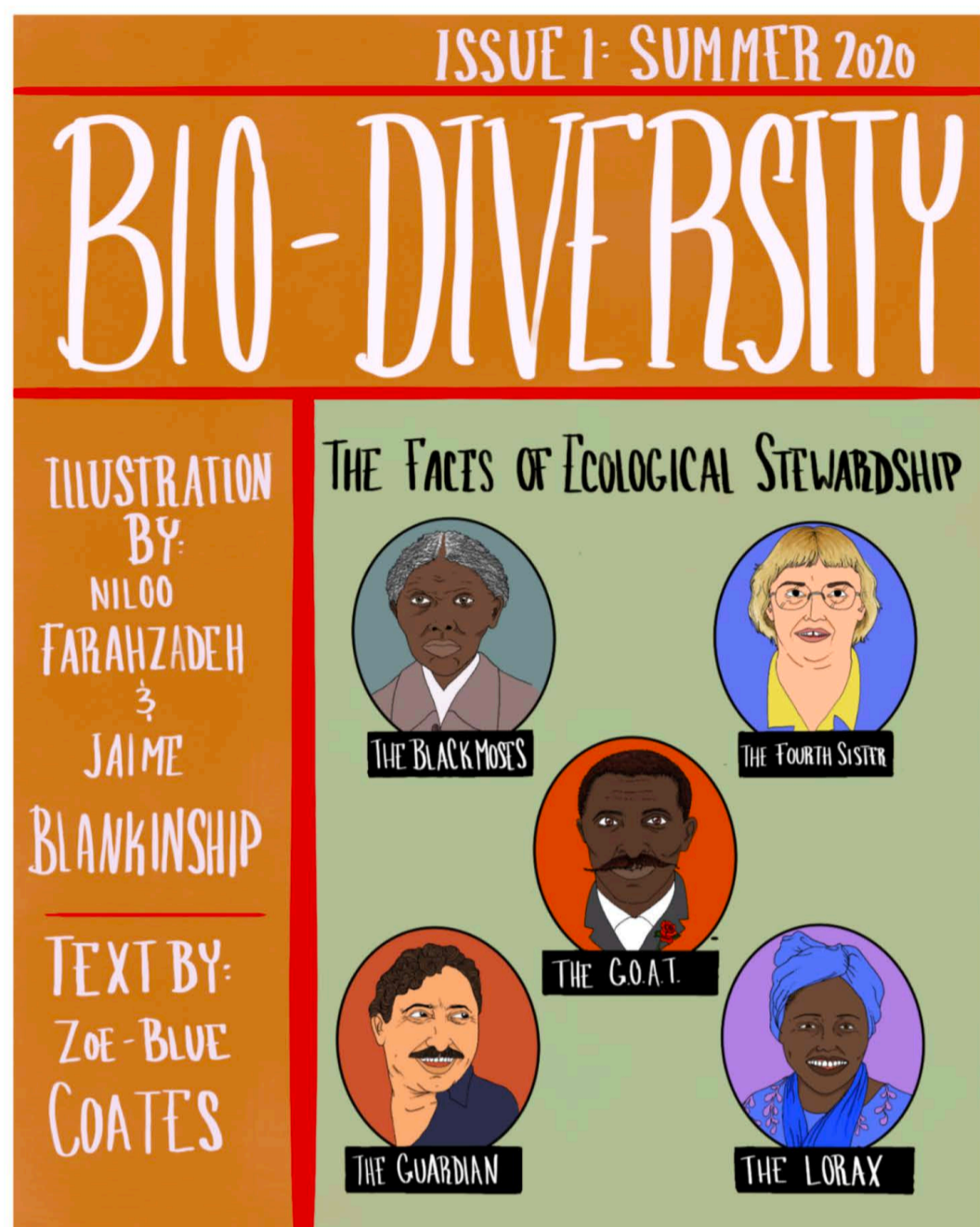


Nicole Neidhardt is Diné (Navajo) of Kiiyaa'áanii Clan on her mother's side, a blend of European ancestry on her father's side and is from Santa Fe, NM. She has a BFA from the University of Victoria and is currently working on her MFA at OCAD University in Toronto, ON. Nicole's Diné identity is the heart of her practice which encompasses Indigenous Futurisms, installation, illustration, painting and murals.

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