

BEATS

NEWCOMER YOUTH VOICE + PERSPECTIVE



FROM ME TO YOU
ISOW WE IO NOM

ISSUE 8
Fall 2016



BEATS RECOGNIZES THE UNCEDED COAST SALISH TERRITORIES OF

xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skwxwu7mesh and Tsleil-Waututh Nations

(Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations)



EDITOR'S NOTE

Jennifer Sarkar

Hello! and welcome back to our eighth issue of BEATS. It has been a privilege to be part of this publication and having the opportunity to meet amazing youth from various communities. This issue is very close to all the editorial members' hearts, as well as the hearts of those who have been supporting this process. In this issue of BEATS, editors tell stories of their experiences, struggles, break stereotypes and share traditional celebrations and ceremonies. Issue 8 is a very special collaboration between immigrant, refugee and First Nations youth communities. The editors are from Sapotaweyak Cree Nation, Afghanistan, Northwest Coast Nation, Colombia and El Salvador.

All of our communities hold stories of survival, family, pain, culture, language, success and memories which we all hold near to us. The editors came together to share their stories, culture, history and memories with each other. The editorial team worked together to learn from and about each other. There were tears and also laughter during sharing of stories and histories. In the respect of the friendships that was built during this issue, we are calling our BEATS Issue eight *From Me to You*. Through these sharing of pieces of each other, we can build a stronger community and

break all the stereotypes and assumptions about our communities and people. The cover of this issue is created by one of our editors, Allen. They are from the Nation of Northwest Coast of BC. The cover represents the land, journey and the water that connects all of us from across the ocean and through which life flows and grows.

We hope this issue encourages everyone to learn more about the land, people and the nations on whose land we live as guests, visitors and where many of us found home and safety. I hope we learn to reach out and listen and grow together and respect each other's experiences and stories and celebrate.

BEATS magazine is a program of LOVE (Leave Out Violence) BC. This is our eighth issue but the first one as the program of LOVE.

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LOVE is a youth-driven media arts-based non-profit organization that facilitates violence prevention and intervention programming to youth who face multiple barriers. LOVE youth use media arts to document their experiences and share their views of the world, and build leadership skills to break the cycle of violence in their lives and communities.

To learn more about LOVE BC's work please go to: bc.leaveoutviolence.org
or Email us at: vancouver@leaveoutviolence.org

EDITORIAL TEAM



TEYA MOORE
Editorial/Photography

Tansi! (Hello), I am Teya and I am 20 year old. I am Swampy Cree from the Sapotaweyak Cree Nation located in the province of Manitoba but I reside in Burnaby, BC. I am currently a student at Simon Fraser University working towards my degree in Sociology and First Nations Studies with the objective of helping my people within my community. In my spare time I enjoy leadership actives, being outdoors and practicing my photography skills!



NARGES
Editorial

I'm Narges, and I am from Afghanistan. I used to live in Turkey as a refugee and came to Canada 3 years ago. I like to try new things and learn through experiences. I would really like to help refugee youth to feel welcome and have a sense of belonging in Canada.



ALLEN
Editorial

My preferred name is Allen. I use they/them pronouns. I am from a Nation of Northwest Coast of BC. I identify as a First Nations leader, and use all my skills to reach out to youth who identifies as First Nations. I like to support my own community through my voice and stories.



ALLEJANDRA RODAS
Editorial

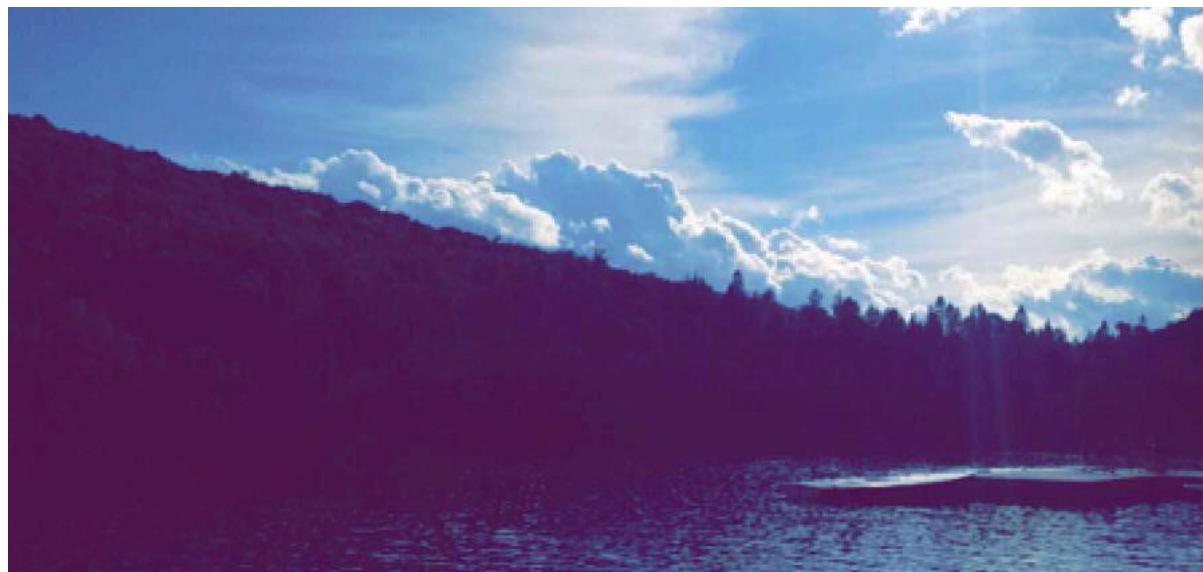
I am Alejandra Rodas and I came to Canada from Colombia two years ago. I currently study at New Westminster Secondary School and volunteer in my spare time. I love gardening, guitars, food and social justice. This is my second time being part of BEATS magazine, and I am very grateful for the new experience and connections. This issue is uniquely personal and detailed, showing a lot of our reflections of life. I encourage you to reflect with us throughout the magazine, and follow your dreams!



MARCEY AMAYA
Editorial

Hello friends! I am Marcela Guadalupe Amaya Zavala but you can call me Marcey! I am 20 years young and I've been living in Vancouver for most of my life! I like to describe myself as a melting pot of many intersections. I am bubbling and over flowing with experiences to share and knowledge to give. My passions include photography, in the form of cheeky Snapchat stories. Painting and drawing, in a sketch book that no one has seen and eventually will be thrown away. And admiring cats from a distance because I have become allergic to them.

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I AM PROUD TO BE CREE.

By: TEYA MOORE



Hello, I am Teya Moore. I have an objective to speak out on past experiences, proud moments of achievement, childhood memories and any-other subject matter that can piece together the question, "Who am I".

First off, I am Swampy Cree from the Sapotaweyak Cree Nation located in Manitoba however I was brought up in Burnaby, British Columbia, off reserve. It was different growing up away from my Indigenous community, I didn't get the same exposure and unfortunately didn't get to gain the knowledge of my traditional language. Consequently a piece of my cultural identity is absent.

I have this vivid memory from when I was very young being in my community in Manitoba, I remember the

"I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT BEING INDIGENOUS MEANT, OR HOW POLITICAL IT WAS TO BE. IT WASN'T ONLY UP TO RECENTLY I GRASPED THE IMPORTANCE OF MY CULTURAL IDENTITY."

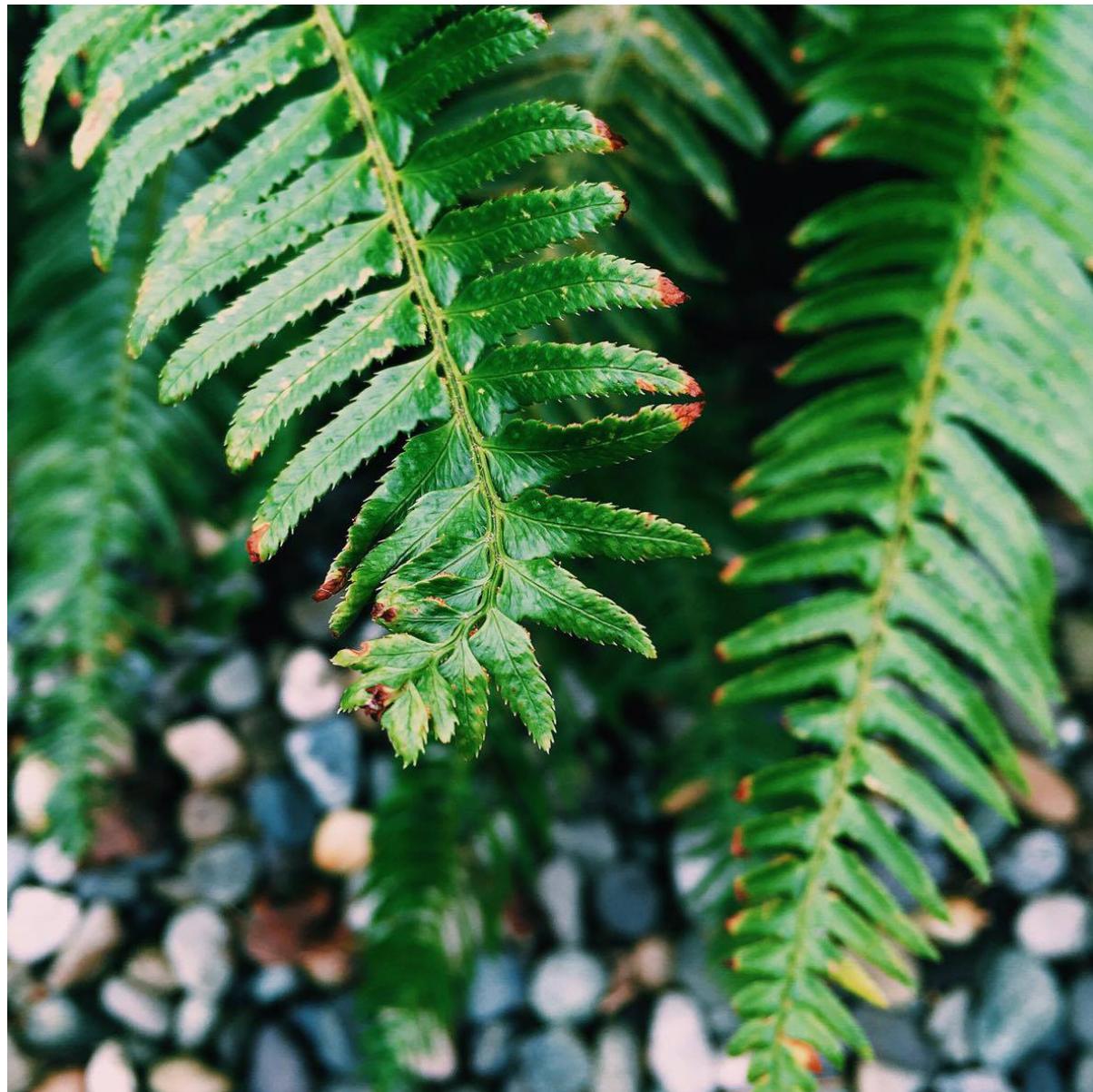
landscape itself being so level and smooth covered in snow. I would get pulled around in a box attached to a skidoo, we would also walk a long distance in the snow just to get to the "convenience" store.

As I was growing up I was extremely oblivious. I wasn't concerned. I didn't know what being Indigenous meant, or how political it was to be. It wasn't only up to recently I grasped the importance of my cultural identity. How I discovered that was through the challenges that I was constantly facing through school and how I interacted with others I knew something wasn't right. I felt lost. I knew I would have to find a way to recover.

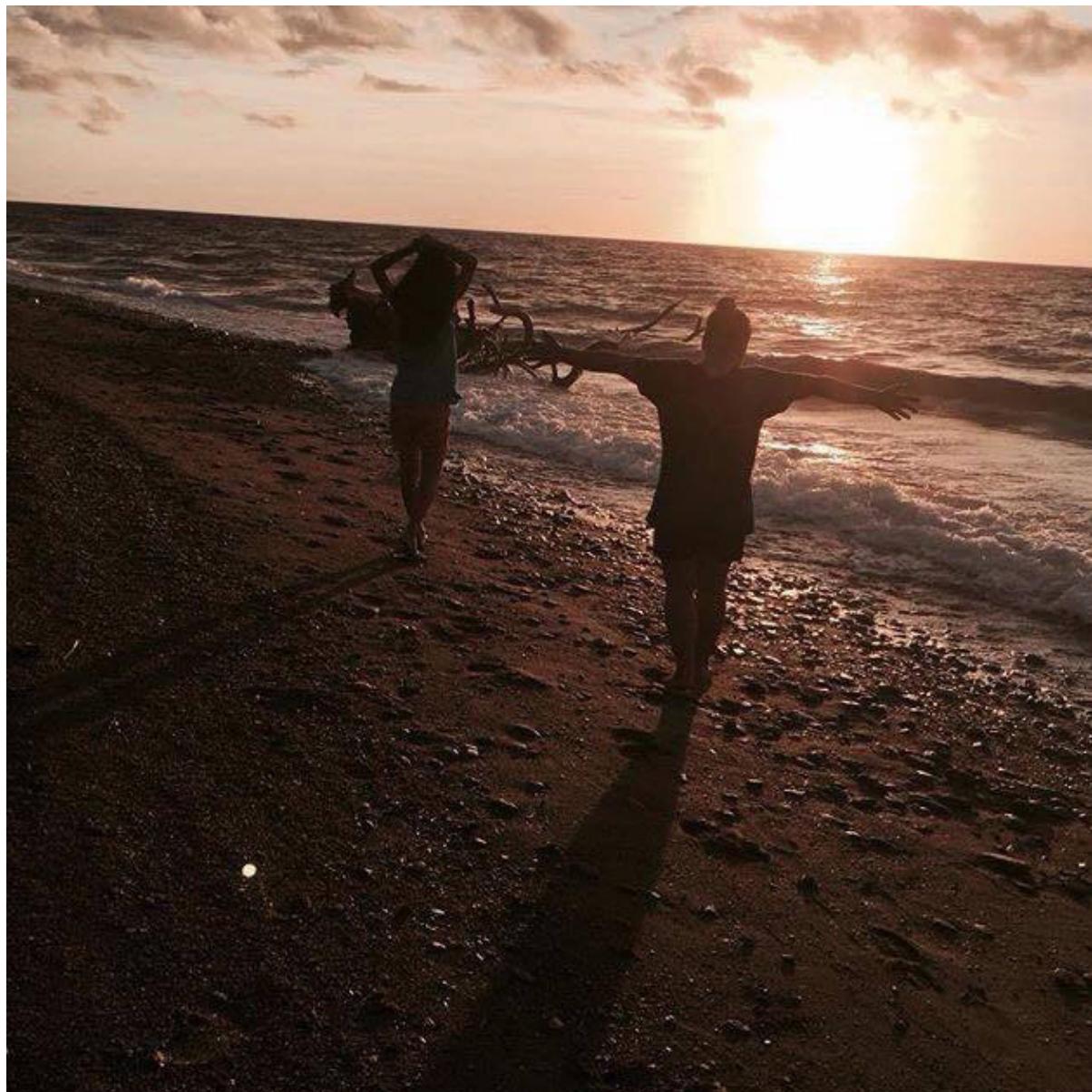
With the help of education I found my purpose to strive to reclaim my cultural identity, to get that sociology degree to heal my soul and ultimately to help the lives of Indigenous people within my community and eventually help whoever I could, however I could.

For the longest time I was so restricted and was put down and would be told, "You won't be able to graduate high school!", I am proud to say that I have officially been accepted into Simon Fraser University! I am on the path to a brighter future.

I am proud to be Cree.



Photography by: **Teya Moore**



Photography by: **Delia Relano**

THRESHOLD

POEM BY: *IVY GAILE GREGORIO*

“Let’s do the things we love
For the last time, before I go.”
Those were the words I spoke
On my last night
In the place that I love.
As the sky let the darkness
consume it’s light,
We let the silence eradicate the sadness,
in the midst of the night.

They made me promise to come back.
I didn’t even nod.
They asked me if home will still be home.
“I’m sorry, but I honestly don’t know.”
I couldn’t handle their pleas
So I let myself be devoured at the stars
To calm the thoughts who were batting a war.

The truth is I cannot promise anymore.
For I, myself, am not sure.
I know it will never be the same
No matter how many times I come back.
Three-second hugs and small talks,
They will no longer be enough.

This is an assurance through my art
That I will walk with a heavy heart.
I know that as I go
My home is already letting go.
I hope that this is not the end,
That when I come back,
It will hold me again.
For now, I really must go.
My county, I love you so.

FROM ME TO YOU,

ALEJANDRA INTERVIEWS ALLEN



Portrait photography by: MAIRI MACKIE

Who are you and how do you identify?

I identify as another human on this planet, and I believe I have a reason. I identify as a First Nations youth; I am from a nation of Northwest Coast of BC. I am proud of my identity and I don't want to let stereotypes hold me, block me from opportunities or bring me down. I want to help Native youth and tell them that stereotypes

like alcoholism, drug addiction, are only true if you make them true. I consider myself as a leader, musician, and a talented person. I am Canadian in any way as we all are.

A knowledge or /lesson from your culture/community you are proud of? Share a moment of struggle you learned from.

The knowledge that I am proud of is respect. Respect not just elders or family, respect yourself, others and the community. The community I grew up at was not respected. Our leaders did not care what environment we lived at, but respect always stayed with me. Now I respect every place, I leave it as it was before. A lesson would be love not just for my family and relatives. Love one another as you would love yourself. I loved everyone, but because I was so different I may not have received that love back. I grew up in a broken family, I saw a lot of suffering. Nevertheless, I push through even though I may be falling apart. No matter the hate, I stand up and love. Today I understand that I may not receive everything back, but I will give all of myself, all I have, all of my love to others.

“NEVERTHELESS, I PUSH THROUGH EVEN THOUGH I MAY BE FALLING APART. NO MATTER THE HATE, I STAND UP AND LOVE.”



Photography by: **ALLEN**

What is your most favourite cultural celebration or tradition from your own culture?

One of my favourite traditions is berry picking. I like picking especially salmon berries in late May- early June, when they are best. In my culture, salmonberries are a symbol that if we have a bountiful picking, there will be plenty of salmon. When they are ripe, is when the salmon will come. With my family, even though we live in the city, every year we go to a forest. Every member in my family who lives in Vancouver goes and we collect a bunch of berries. We work together and everyone participates. After, we separate them equally between everyone. There are more than 100 of us, and I love this tradition because we unite. In the reserve berry picking is very special. It is a sign for us we will have a good season, we will have food and also we will stay together as a family, as a community, despite being separated and spread across the region. It is a tradition that brings families together and creates strength, connection, closeness.

What gets you out of the house in the morning, what gives you hope?

What gets me out of bed is the need to live. To get dressed, the urge to impress and be different but be proud. What gets me out of the house is to be proud to be different, to know that I could save someone's life. Anything can happen at any time when you go out there to live. Everyday a new experience, and I want to live it. To know that I will make a change in my life and somebody else's moves me. It may be my last day and I will live it fully and responsibly so that my choices give me another day to live. What gives me hope is seeing somebody smile and that makes me smile inside. Seeing somebody smile because of me is what gives me hope on the darkest days. A smile is powerful enough to fill me inside and help me keep going. Out there in the world someone will tell me a message that I need to hear.

FROM ME TO YOU,

AILEN INTERVIEWS ALEJANDRA

Who are you and how do you identify?

I was born in Columbia, South America. My first language is Spanish. I identify as many different ways through my culture, as a Colombian and Latina. I am proud to be from Colombia, and I always like to see beyond stereotypes and misconceptions to grasp the true identity and origins of my culture. I am a youth activist and change maker. I like to see the positive or better side.

A knowledge or /lesson from your culture/community you are proud of? Share a moment of struggle you learned from.

After growing up in Colombia, living there and migrating to Canada I learned that family is important for one's well-being. Being understanding, staying united will bring happiness. Money is not worth what family is. Money is not what defines you. You need to have a rich heart to be rich. The love found in my family is something I will never forget no matter the size of my family or the amount of money we hold.

What is your most favourite cultural celebration or tradition from your own culture?

In Colombia we don't have too many different seasons. We have pretty much same weather

year around. In the city Medellin it is similar to Vancouver. Late spring flowers blossom all around. All the flower farmers harvest these flowers as a tradition. They grow fields of fields of flowers.

It is an old tradition. Farmers would create a wooden frame box and arranged all the flowers and carry them on their backs. They are called silleteros. This festival of flowers gives me a reason to love my culture, country and traditions. We have so many traditions that are uplifting and bring hope to the people. With wars going on for so long farmers would get assassinated but the only thing that remained the same is the flower festival. The flowers still blossom and the festival continues even with the drugs and violence around. The flowers in Columbia are a symbol of peace for the country and the community.

What gets you out of the house in the morning, what gives you hope?

What gets me out of my house is my Mom, not just getting mad at me for not going to school but that my mom made so many sacrifices for me and also my family sacrificed so much, that just knowing that I get out and try my best to do better for them. Every day I feel really grateful to God and the faith and motivation that he gives me through his blessings. There is a flame inside to discover new things and learn about this marvelous world.



Photography by: **Alejandra Rodas**
California with her father on her Birthday.

A WAY TO HOME

BY: MARCELA AMAYA

"They love you because you carry the same blood of our ancestors and of our people. Our history is your history." And that's when it clicked. I am still Latin American. I am El Salvadorian, no matter what language I speak. No matter how little Spanish I know. I have a rich culture and history."

I am a second generational immigrant. What that means is I was born in Canada but my mother immigrated to this country from El Salvador. It's always been a bit difficult to find my identity and to be apart of my culture. Before I entered elementary school I was fluent in Spanish. With my mom and my two older brothers, it was all we ever spoke at home. I also spoke English well because the neighborhood I was in had tons of kids to play with so I picked it up naturally! However when I entered school I slowly began to lose my knowledge of Spanish because I was socializing more and more with English speaking people. My mom would be frustrated because she felt like the school system was forcing me to change and assimilate. Some events happened later. One of my brothers and I found ourselves in the horrible colonial structure of the foster care system. This is when I truly lost my connection to my culture. The foster system, created to make children and youth feel safer, had given me a new found emotion. Shame. Shame for speaking Spanish. Every time I spoke to my brother in Spanish our foster parent would send me straight to my room. The sensitivity about not being able to understand what I was saying was also the insensitivity towards my culture. Speaking Spanish was the only connection to home, and the only connection to safety. They had cut the largest blood vessel for their own comfort. I felt so much shame. I felt shame whenever I spoke my language, and shame because I was speaking more and more

English everyday. When I was finally allowed to go back home, my mom realized what had happened. And she tried her best to make me learn again. She would say "Whenever you speak to me, you have to speak to me in Spanish." But I refused. I refused in fear that outsiders would shun me the same way my short term foster family had. For a few months my mother had shut me out as well because I refused to learn Spanish again. But eventually I told her everything that happened while I was in foster care. It was difficult for her to understand at first. But then she saw how much sadness I was in.

I lived with such a huge amount of shame as a child. I would never call myself Latin American because I felt like I had lost my connection to it. I was not proud to be El Salvadorian. Until one summer my mom took me and my brothers to visit her home. I was terrified and excited all at the same time. I couldn't speak Spanish. How was I going to communicate with my cousins, aunts, uncles, my grandpa. My seven year old hyperactive mind was more focused in the giant airplane we were about to board so I didn't have the capacity to stress much. On the plane ride my mom who I was sitting next to said "Don't worry Marcella. This is your family. They love you because you carry the same blood of our ancestors and of our people. Our history is your history." And that's when it clicked. I am still Latin American. I am El Salvadorian, no matter what language I speak. No matter how little

Spanish I know. I have a rich culture and history. And going to El Salvador reignited my pride. I had never felt so accepted. My extended family accepted me. They loved me unconditionally. They taught me so much about my ancestry. I learned so much about my culture and where I come from.

My return to Canada was difficult. I did not want to leave, partially because I didn't feel like going back to school. But mainly cause the food was so delicious! However, when we did come back I felt much more confident and grounded about my identity. This confidence only grew more and more as I got older. I believe the peak of me pride was the day my mom turned 54, her birthday. My oldest brother and I had spent a whole day preparing to make a traditional El Salvadorian dish called pupusas. Explaining pupusas is difficult because there's nothing to compare it to! Think of a corn meal tortilla stuffed with refried beans, shredded deep fried pork belly (better known as chicharon), and mozzarella cheese. Placed on a cast iron pan and heated until the cheese is gooey, stringy, and delicious. It takes hours to prepare and make. This was the first time my brother and I attempted to make it on our own. We had always watched my mom make it as kids. She would always make use help her in one way or another. This was a true test to see if we had been paying any attention to her for all those years. A few long hours later and we had finished everything. From the pupusas to the salsa and the cortido, (a type of pickled coleslaw.) My mom walked into the dinning room to see stacks of steaming pupusas waiting for her. She looked at us in disbelief. She thought there's no way we could have made this. She ate our love infused meal, and after a little criticism she said to my brother and I "I am so proud. I am so happy and proud that you are my children. The reason I made you watch me cook these all the time when you were kids, was so that you'd remember. You'd remember my home. Now



I know that our culture will continue. When I pass, I'll pass peacefully." We cried. We cried a lot. My mom doesn't always say how proud of us she is unless we do truly amazing things. I was so proud of myself, proud to be apart of this culture. Proud that I have the ability to share it with others. There will never be any award or prize that will compare to how I felt that day.

Vancouver is a bowl of salad. Layered with so many flavors, colors, textures. I've created my own community with in it. And with in that community we've created our own culture. A culture built on a foundation of pride and respect. Both for our own heritage and other peoples heritages. This culture is beautiful. This culture gives me space to be a proud Canadian born El Salvadorian woman.

FROM ME TO YOU,

TEYA INTERVIEWS NARGES



Who are you and how do you identify?

I am Narges. I am an Afghan girl who tries her best to help others and make them happy. I help people because I don't want them to face the same issue that I had to go through.

Share a moment of struggle you learned from?

Going to school has been and continues to be a struggle for me. Before coming to Canada, there were a few years where I wasn't able to attend school and this has affected my learning. It affects me emotionally when people assume the things that I should have learned already and they don't understand. They don't realize the pain I feel when I simply don't understand

something that they expect me to do and already know. It's a struggle for me and I feel that I have a lot of work ahead of me to catch up with the school years that I have missed. Despite all of this, I will not lose my passion to achieve the goals that I have. I have learned that it might take longer but I will achieve it.

What is your most favorite cultural/ or traditional ceremony/ celebration from your own culture?

My most favourite traditional ceremony is Noruz, the beginning of New Year and we celebrate it for forty days. In Noruz we visit families and friend, we dress up with traditional clothing and we make "Haft miva" a dish with seven fruits. We also do celebration for the nature on the first day of spring. We celebrate the freshness and the new clothing and nature.

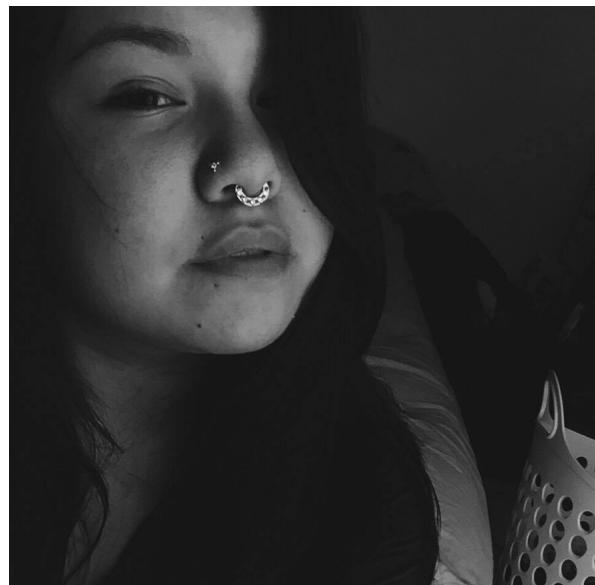
What gets you out of your house in the morning, what gives you hope?

I am a person who loves to try and learn new things. It makes me go out and learn more. I look forward to new experiences that allow me to gain knowledge. I become more passionate as I discover new things. When I get out of the house and take advantage of different opportunities, it gives me hope for the future.

"THROUGH MY EXPERIENCES I LEARNED TO BE PATIENT AND LOOK FORWARD TO THE FUTURE BECAUSE GREAT CHANCES ARE WAITING FOR ME AND I HAVE NO IDEA ABOUT IT."

FROM ME TO YOU,

NARGES INTERVIEWS TEYA



Who are you and how do you identify?

I think I wake up and ask myself the same thing, everyday. People spend their entire lives defining that very question. To put it simply, I identify as an Indigenous person of Turtle Island.

Share a moment of struggle you learned from?

Just starting off my academic career I learned many things about my culture, about the good and the bad, meaning, discovering the reasons why I felt so oppressed and lost, culturally. I learned the truth and it was hard to cope with it. But I learned that education is the key to moving forward.

What is your most favorite cultural/ or traditional ceremony/ celebration from your own culture?

It's between the sweat lodge and a Powwow! I can't choose. A sweat is performed in a hut low to the ground. You heat lava rocks in the centre and so it does get extremely hot, it's a form of purification. On the other hand, a powwow is more of a social gathering where there is lots of celebration and dancing. And food!

What gets you out of your house in the morning, what gives you hope?

Knowing what it feels to be in that dark place and knowing close friends and family have been through, mental health problems, it encourages me to get that education I need to help the community and make this world a better and safer place.

"I LEARNED THAT EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO MOVING FORWARD. THROUGH MY EXPERIENCES I LEARNED TO BE PATIENT AND LOOK FORWARD TO THE FUTURE BECAUSE GREAT CHANCES ARE WAITING FOR ME AND I HAVE NO IDEA ABOUT IT."

LIKE A NEST

BY: NARGES SAMIMI

"For me, home is where I feel acceptance and belonging. It's like a nest where I can free my mind from all the heavy thoughts. Home is a place where I can build a future and a place to just be."

The first thing that would probably come to your mind when you hear the word "home" is the place where you were born and raised or the shelter that you live in. Unfortunately for a person like me, who had to move from my country to other countries in order to be safe, home is not a place where I was born and raised or a place where I stay in. For me, home is where I feel acceptance and belonging. It's like a nest where I can free my mind from all the heavy thoughts. Home is a place where I can build a future and a place to be.

I remember when my family had to build a life from nothing. We had to start all over again, but we could only stay there for a year or so. Then, we had to move again to another city or country. Something used to always happen before we could even begin a life.

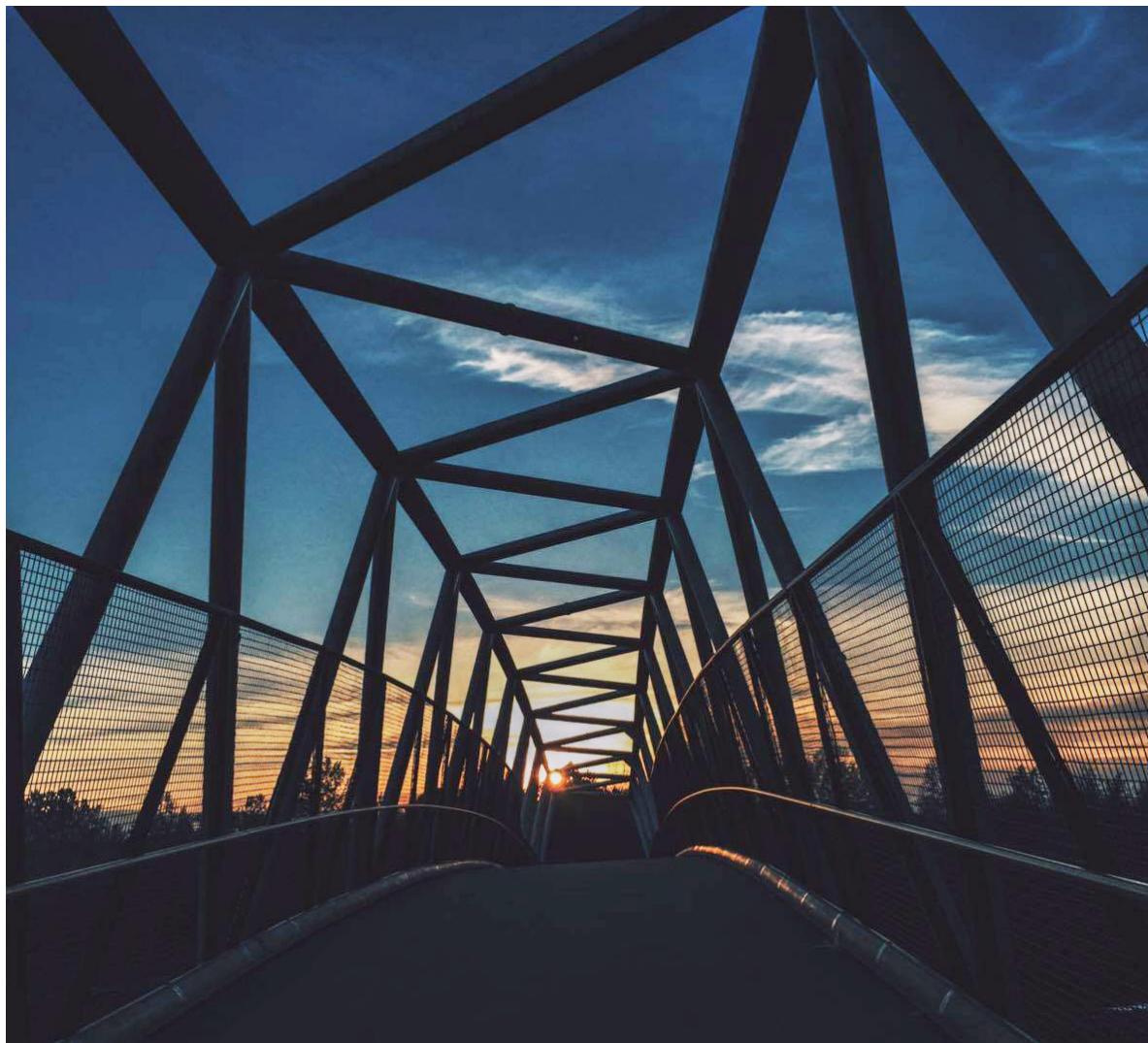
There was this time, during our first year in Turkey, when I experienced the most horrific earthquake in my life. We settled in our new house and suddenly, the earthquake shook the whole city. We were having lunch with our friends in their house when the earthquake happened. The house started shaking and everything was falling down. All of us were trying to help each other in getting out of the house. After a lot of struggle, we managed to get out. As soon as I got out, I saw elders, parents and children, screaming and running to save their lives. My ears were full of loud sounds that I couldn't properly hear a thing. I remember a teenage boy at the balcony on the fifth floor of a

hotel. He was trying to jump to save his life and nobody could do anything to help him. There was also this girl who was lost in the chaos. She couldn't find her parents. On the other side, I saw my mother with a pale face. She was so worried about my brother. She was trying to call him, but he was not answering his phone. I remember that moment when we were walking through the destroyed city. We went back to our house and all I saw was nothing. Everything was completely destroyed. Nothing was left but a ruined house. My heart ached because of the heaviness of all the emotions that I felt that day. I fell apart. I was lost in the broken pieces of the image of my supposed present and future. I did not know what to do or where to go.

These are some of the dreadful memories that I have from all the struggles I experienced. I remember all of them and I know that I will never forget them. They are carved in my mind. These memories will forever be a constant part of my life. And I will remember them every time my family and I have to leave everything behind and build a new life from nothing in other places. I will remember that kind of life, what it taught me and where it took me. That life taught me that home is not just a place but also a thing that challenges me to grow. It is where I can be who I am and who I am truly meant to be. Home is a sanctuary where I can rest my mind without the fear of rejection and prejudice, and a haven with a clear image of my future.



Photography by: **Ivy Gaile Gregorio**



Photography by: **Teya Moore**

THE COLOR OF WORDS

POEM BY: SAKINEH AHMADI

He was the innocent “Adam” of Eden
He was sacrificed for the redness of an apples’s flesh
And now, a child from his generation
Has stepped into this world unaware of the noisiness of this life
Unaware of limits and boundaries of the distance
He was born with the regular tears of every newborn
He opens his eyes to the world To the colorful valley of deception and duplicity
Without a pause or patience

Each and every day of childhood passes
He knows very well in these days
The meaning of water and the rain sky, forest, and rainbow
But meanwhile in childhood days
A strange word With a bitter taste of irony
Leaves her astonished and staggered In his painting book,
every word has a color Water and sky are blue, forest is green
His question is unanswered “What color is an Afghan child?”

Without a pause or patience each and every day of childhood passes
He knows very well now
The alienism and the roam of being away from home Still,
in the world of patterns and colors Each word has a color Because
The world is the colorful alley of deception and duplicity.



Left page and right bottom page photography by: **Teya Moore**
Top right page photography by: **Golsa Golestaneh**





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