

# Kinship Rising

UNAPOLOGETIC, RESURGENT, CONNECTED, SOVEREIGN BODIES.

## Spiritual Garden

*a mural by: Dorothy Stirling and Carmin Bear Blomberg*



*Dorothy Stirling, Lower Nicola, B.C.*

*Carmin Bear Blomberg, Peter Ballantyne (Bear) Cree Nation, Pelican Narrows Saskatchewan*

*Mediums used:*

*Glitter, acrylic, water colour, resin, and dried flowers (collected over the years, gifted out of love/gifts of love).*

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## Background

This beautiful mural, entitled Spiritual Garden, was created by Dorothy Stirling and Carmin Bear Blomberg, members of the Youth Council for Indigenous youth in care at Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services (SCCFS). Dorothy and Carmin gifted the mural to Surrounded by Cedar, where it will greet children and youth in care who visit the agency. The mural represents Dorothy and Carmin's vision for healing and reclaiming their ancestral traditions. As Urban Indigenous youth who have grown up on the traditional territory of the lək̓wəŋən speaking people, Dorothy and Carmin wanted to recognize the care this land and place (Surrounded by Cedar) gifted them in restoring their Indigenous identity. Over the years, they have gathered teachings from Elders/Knowledge Holders, Indigenous community and chosen family. The teachings they have gathered continue to teach them how to be in good relationship with the land they are visiting, while not losing sight of their own Indigenous ways of being. Dorothy and Carmin have been youth researchers with Kinship Rising since 2020.



## Our Kinship Rising Journey

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Our names are Dorothy Stirling and Carmin Bear Blomberg, we are Indigenous youth and young adult researchers with Kinship Rising. We joined Kinship Rising because while at the Surrounded by Cedar Youth Council, we had an opportunity to work on a painting with local community members. The first mural creation was inspiring and we both felt Kinship Rising advocates passionately for the Indigenous values we care about. The Kinship Rising values that speak to our spirit include Indigenous ways of self-journey, learning, reclaiming, and kinship values of community relationships through arts-based and land-based Indigenous methodologies.



## Our Process

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While on a trip to harvest Indigenous plant medicines, we spoke about having an opportunity to create a painting with Kinship Rising. Throughout our time on the Surrounded by Cedar Youth Council, we shared laughs, our life path experiences, and similar hopes of reconnecting with our Indigenous cultures. Since both of us grew up disconnected from our home territories and generational cultural practices, we bonded as good friends and allies to restore our sense of belonging as urban Indigenous youth. We are grateful for how Surrounded by Cedar and Kinship Rising brought us together to support young leaders for the Indigenous community, by healing and reconnecting urban Indigenous youth in care to Indigenous teachings and community leaders.



Together we created a plan of ideas, sketches, and a story for a painting titled Spiritual Garden. We picked out the colours and wooden panel at a local art store. We chose the wooden panel because the groves of the wood had movements like water, and it felt perfect for our ancestors to dance on. Leaving the store, we carried the wooden panel over our heads down the block in downtown Victoria (ləkʷəŋən territory), laughing and sharing our excitement to start creating.

At the time, we were creating regalia with a Surrounded by Cedar Youth Council project, so Dorothy decided she would paint the ribbon skirt she was creating. Carmin decided to paint her first purple ribbon skirt and draw flowers her great grandmother, Marie Bear, used to bead.

We met once a week over the year of 2023 to complete this creation. Each time we met, we practiced our Indigenous ways of visiting through shared laughter, food and medicine.

## Meaning

*“We joined the West coast and Midland coast together to illustrate our connection in sisterhood that we made when reconnecting to our Indigenous cultural identities/Indigeneity, through artwork and ceremony.”*



**“I did the Fan feather with most of my art, because when I was younger, I knew two girls that disappeared. The symbol in the feather fan is used to honor them and all MMIWG2S+”**





The Moon and Raven represent the West Coast, Lower Nicola valley, where Dorothy's Indigenous homelands are, with its fiery summers and freezing cold winters. The Sun above and flowing waters below represent the open skies and kisiskāciwani-sīpi (swift flowing river), in Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan, where Carmin's Indigenous homelands are. The mountains in the middle hold space in recognition of the relationship to the lək'wəŋən lands we are visiting. The medicines dancing in the wind tie our relationships to land and place together.

*"The flowers represent the innocence we have as Indigenous children. Each flower symbolizes how our roots to land and culture, although different, hold the same values for children and relationship, Wetaskowin, Wahkatowin. In Nêhiyawêwin this means, to live in harmony and respect one another."*

The mural contains medicines (flowers, sage, sweetgrass, and tobacco) that we gathered. The sage was gathered in Merritt (BC) with the Youth Council from Surrounded by Cedar. The medicines symbolize mother nature and creation.

The purple shimmer around our ancestors represents the medicine they carry around us within the spirit world. They shimmer as they watch us dance and share Indigenous ceremony together, living our inherited birthright.





We are dancing together, celebrating our reclaimed Indigenous knowledge and revitalizing our spirit. Our ancestors are watching us, happily proud for us reclaiming our teachings and sharing spirit with one another.

*Dorothy Stirling, Lower Nicola, B.C.*

*Carmin Bear Blomberg, Peter Ballantyne (Bear) Cree Nation, Pelican Narrows Saskatchewan*

*Photo credits: Dorothy Stirling and Carmin Bear Blomberg*

*Writing: Dorothy Stirling and Carmin Bear Blomberg*

*Artwork: Dorothy Stirling and Carmin Bear Blomberg*

*Graphic Design: Elika Yamauchi*



The Youth Advisory Council at Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services is a collective of youth in or formerly in care who meet regularly to learn from one another and grow leadership skills. As a way to reclaim connections with our cultures, communities and identities, we come together to uphold one another in our modern life while practicing traditional ways.



Kinship Rising is a community-led, arts-based research project based at the University of Victoria that is focused on restoring Indigenous practices of wellbeing. In response to the epidemic of colonial violence impacting Indigenous communities, our projects foster land-and arts-based research workshops with Indigenous youth, young adults, and community members on issues related to reclamation, healing, and resurgence - [kinshiprising.uvic.ca](http://kinshiprising.uvic.ca)