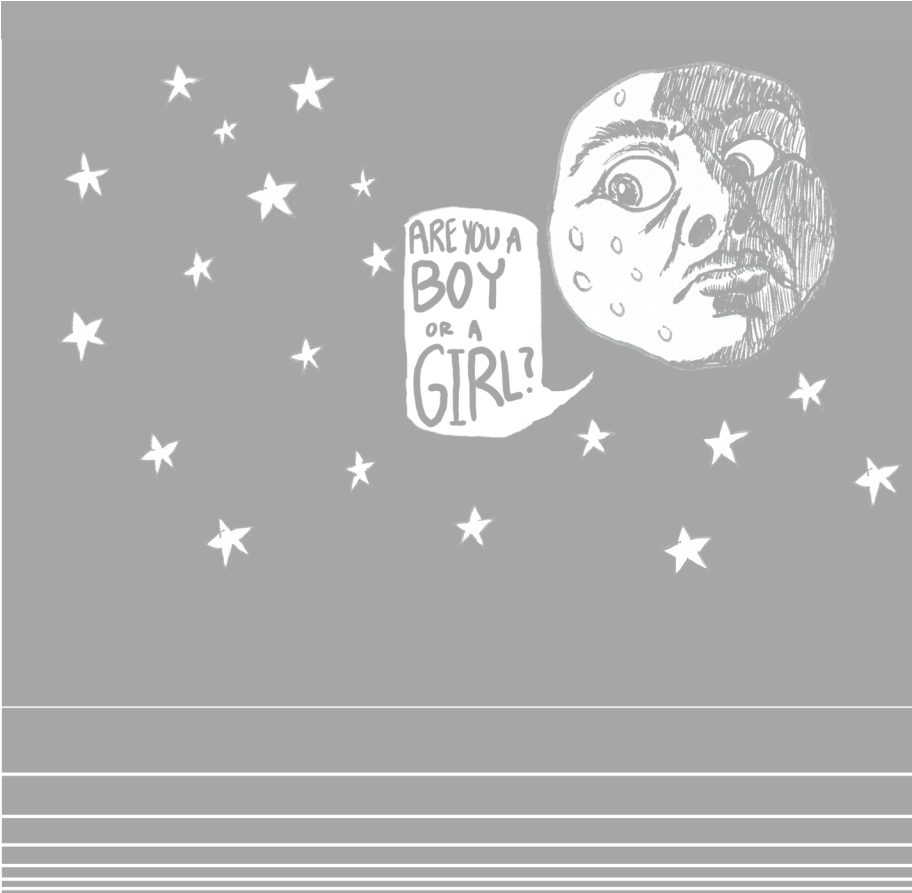




WRITTEN BY
RAVEN
TWO FEATHERS

ILLUSTRATED BY
JONNY
CECHONY



QUALIFICATIONS OF BEING

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Raven Two Feathers

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This zine was created on Coast Salish land with the help, love, encouragement, and support of my mom Dr. Ka`imi Sinclair, Itai Jeffries, Eleni Ledesma, and all our family and ancestors.

DISCLAIMER 2.0

I speak for and from the perspective of myself. I am telling these stories because it would've helped me understand who I was, when I was younger. I hope it can aid you, in whatever capacity you need it to. If it can help your family and loved ones understand the broader experiences of those outside the gender binary, then that would be a cherry on top.

We always have and always will be here.

That being said, this is just one of many stories and perspectives on being trans and being Two Spirit. If you want more information on those experiences, some resources are listed at the end. use them as a starting point for expanding your understanding.

*YOU DON'T QUITE REALIZE
HOW MUCH YOU WANT TO SLIP A T-SHIRT ON...*



...until you're told not to.

As a kid I loved being what people classified as a tomboy.



mud soups,



with grass noodles and the odd dandelion

saving a cockroach
from
drowning



me
and
dad



stuffed
animals

GI Joe



Crushes on femme
presenting people




I'm looking at YOU
Rachel Weisz
circa The Mummy

playing with "the boys"



DID I EVER THINK ABOUT MY GENDER?

Somewhat.
(I was a philosophical little shit that liked talking to adults.)



But I figured it was so far away and abstract that (hopefully) it wouldn't happen to me.



Then in 5th Grade, we were sorted into separate classes for sex ed.

I got put with the girls.



It felt very... off...

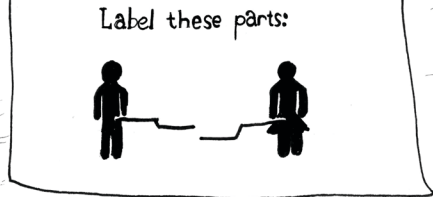
I wanted to be with the boys, or at least learn both sides.

I figured the latter would give me a broad explanation at the very least.

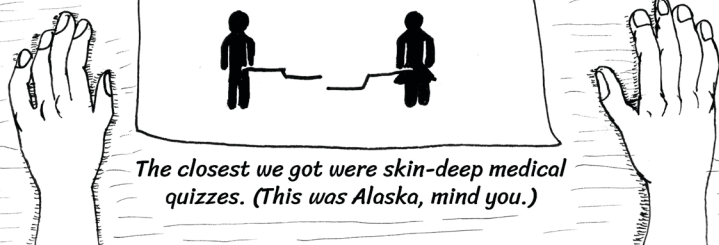
SHE

HER #JUSTGIRLYTHINGS

Label these parts:



The closest we got were skin-deep medical quizzes. (This was Alaska, mind you.)

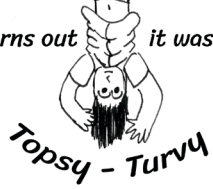


Another move and a divorce later, it was the time of reckoning.



IT'S **CRUDDY** now, but *People glamorized it as:* **IT GETS BETTER** and Middle School is a very **SOCIALLY HARD** TIME *for people.* *WHEN EVERYTHING SETTLES INTO PLACE.

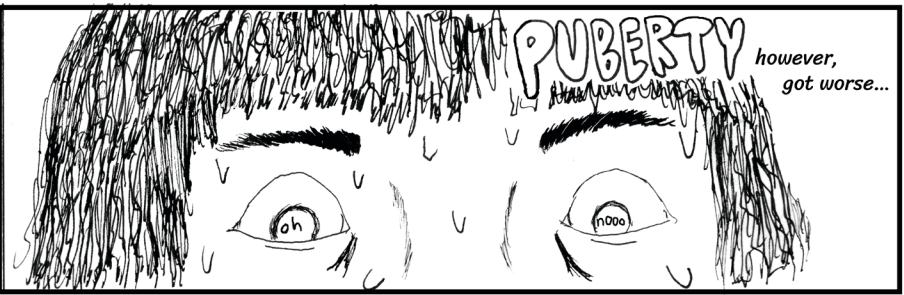
Turns out it was



Middle school, however rough, was good. My skin color was the usual at this inner city middle school, the kids treated me like family.



PUBERTY however, got worse...





Specifically, the chesticle area

I felt relegated to doing what I could to limit the visual size of my Ed, Edd n Eddy DDs,



I tried to negotiate with my body, keep them from getting larger.

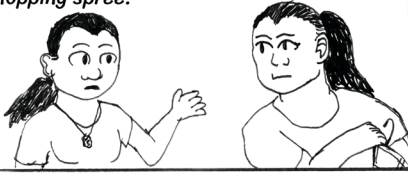
It didn't work.

I tried wearing two shirts to not have to wear a bra (not fun in Hawai'i).

It didn't work.

The only things that helped me cope were sports bras (it felt less feminine).

I even asked my mom if breast reductions were possible while on yet another bra shopping spree.



The most I got in response was that we could look for bras that did what I was already trying to do.

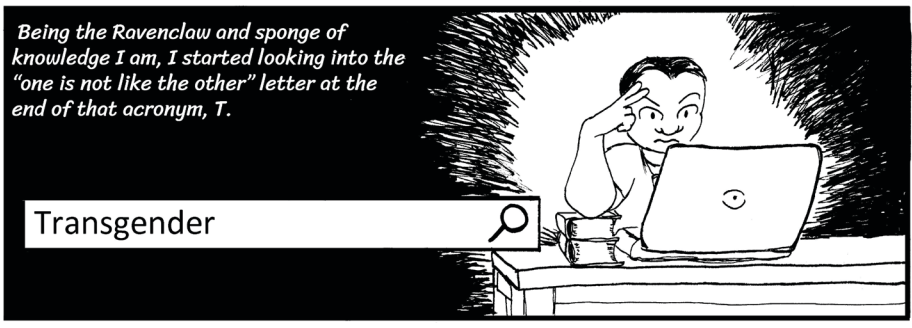
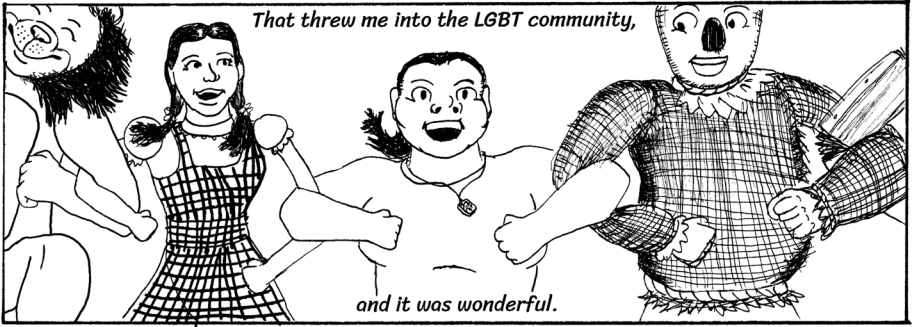
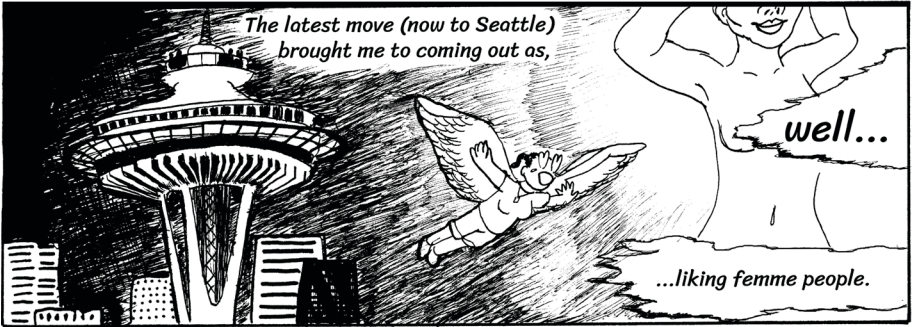


I switched to an online school

Three more days of anonymity through the internet put me at ease.

with face to face electives twice a week.





YouTube emerged with many other trans people around the world, all of which I vacuumed through my eyes and into my mind.



Binding For Beginners.
The Real Alex Bertie



I CUT OFF ALL MY HAIR
Ash Hardell



▼ why Pronouns are important to Trans people ▼
Kat Blaque



You don't need to PASS in order to be TRANS.
Aaron Ansuini

I kept chugging along in my jeans,
cargo shorts, and t-shirts through
to college,



thinking I had the basics
to be an ally, at least that's
what I would consciously
tell myself.



Something kept clicking as I grew up with Alex, Ash, and the rest of the community.



It wasn't a full click, until I was one partner deep in dating. All the focus I'd put on my romantic partner was nothing without knowing my own body.

C'mon! You get in the picture too!



I dove back into the video catalogues of trans people, watching with purpose now.



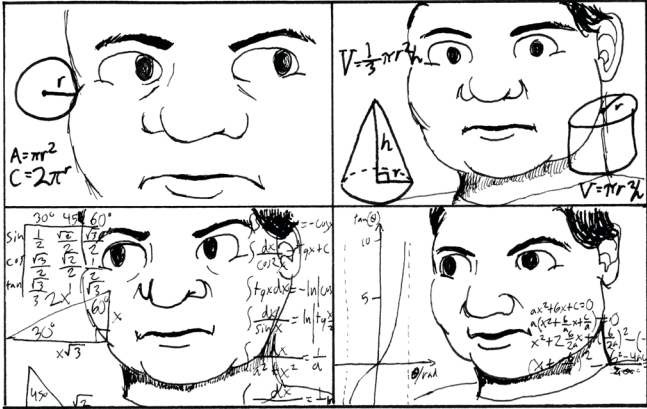
It clicked, at least enough to know what I wanted.

Then I just sat with it for two years,

formulating,

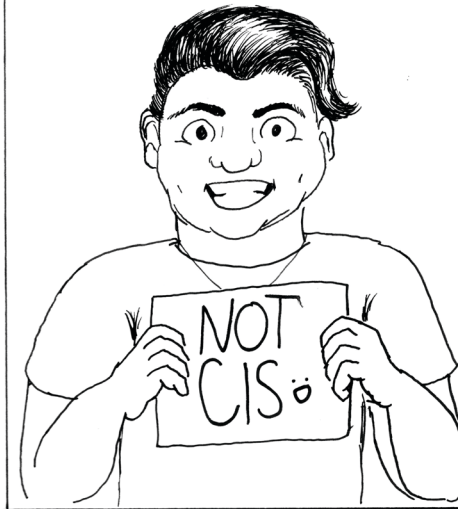
figuring out things,

being scared and nervous.



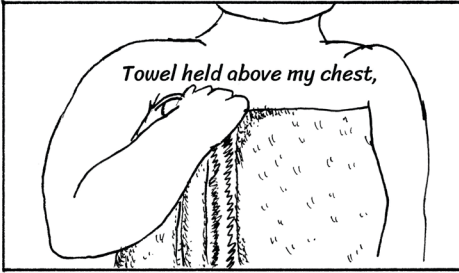
Half a year of unrelated trauma later, it was time.

I was done doubting and knew the few friends who I was out to had me 110%.

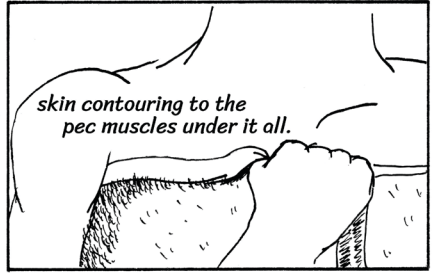


I started hormones.





Towel held above my chest,



skin contouring to the pec muscles under it all.

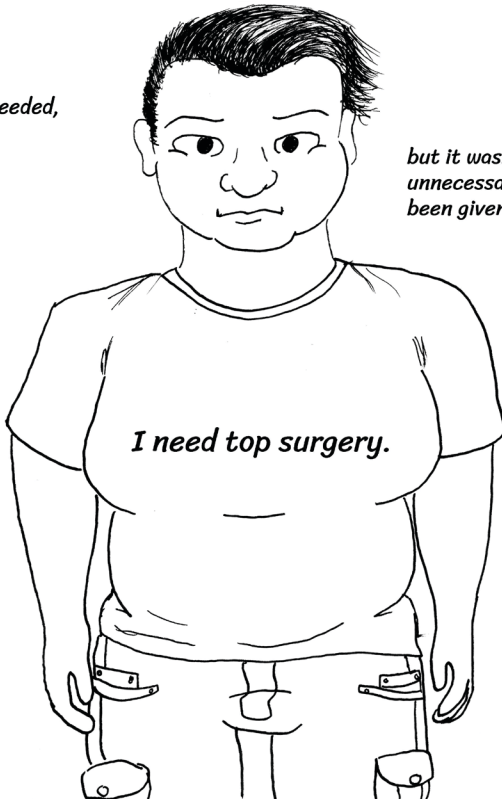


Going to put on a shirt,

only to remember it wasn't that simple.

Hormones were what I needed,

but it wasn't a cure all for the unnecessary XL fun bags I'd been given.



I need top surgery.

TRANS 101

When bodies and minds don't mesh, things can feel... off. There are enough body swap movies to attest that minds won't just acclimate to a gender that other people put on it. Transgender is a term for people whose gender identity doesn't quite click with what they were assigned at birth.

Gender refers to a person's identity and expression, which can be expressed internally and externally in numerous ways. Gender also refers to various societal roles and expectations of the dominant culture (which you totally don't have to follow, especially since a lot of them are outdated and harmful).

Sex is "defined" through numerous physical traits, including chromosomes, genitals, and various other sex characteristics. Due to the nature of these characteristics, sex isn't as simple as being male or female. Intersex people are born with characteristics that are often forced into a binary sex at birth, usually with unnecessary surgery on infants.

What an individual needs to feel content can vary socially, medically, and legally. There are many ways to affirm your identity, and others' identities.

For starters, use a person's correct name and pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, ze/zir, etc.) whether or not they are present. If you don't know, politely ask if their name or pronouns have changed, and if there are people or places it is unsafe to use their name or pronouns. Depending on how safe the environment is, experiment and present in a way that makes you feel more like your true self (clothing, makeup, mannerisms, etc.). Don't worry if it takes time to find what works. Changing names and gender markers on legal documentation is possible (though it can be a long and unnecessarily gatekeep-y process). Some countries and US states offer the gender marker X as a third option. You can also seek out resources to affirm yourself medically. Some characteristics are not set in stone, and can be changed through processes such as hormone replacement therapy and different types of surgeries. Depending on where you are, these processes could be covered by insurance.

It may be difficult or feel like it's not worth it to keep going, but I trust you will get where you need to be. Changes may take a while to settle in, but how you present is not up for debate.

Until then, be safe.

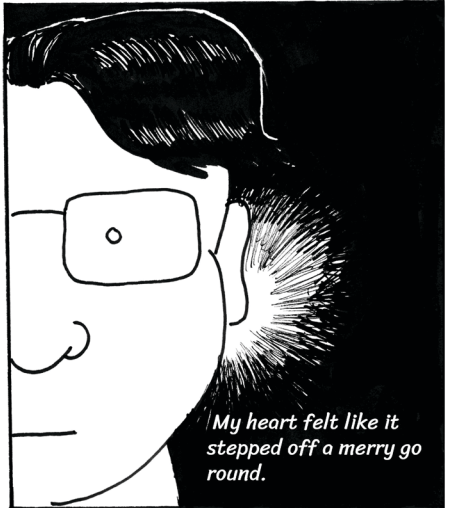
I'd officially come out as trans to most of my family at my 22nd birthday,



and (as wonderfully as always) they burst forth with immense support and enthusiasm.

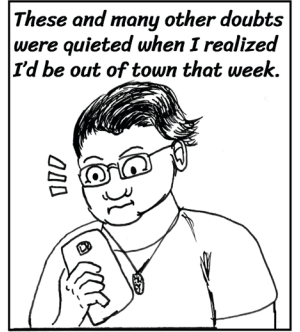
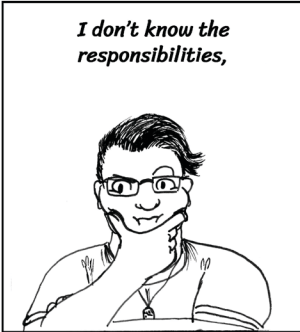


My aunt (one of many) mentioned a Two Spirit dinner one of her co-workers was putting on.



My heart felt like it stepped off a merry go round.

CAN I EVEN BE CALLED TWO SPIRIT ?

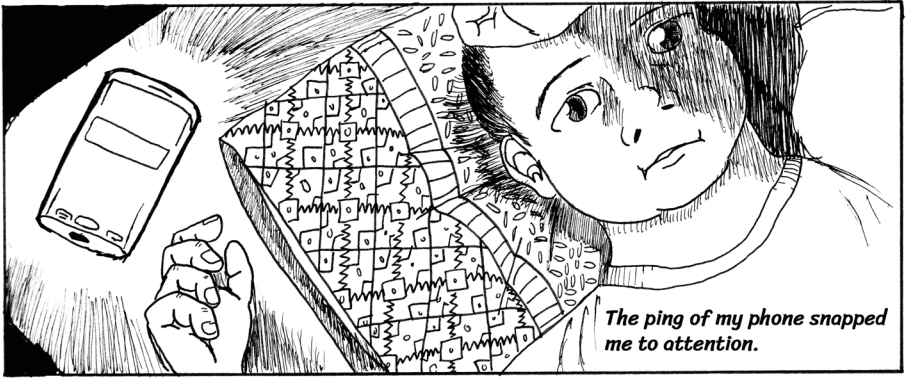


CAN YOU BE CALLED TWO SPIRIT?*

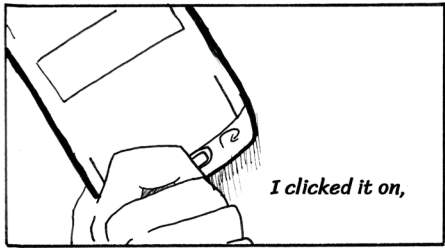
Are you:

- Living life as an Indigenous person
- Not exclusively:
 - Cis-gender
 - and/or
 - Straight/Hetero

**it helps to be part of a community who claims you as much as you claim a label.
(This is not a comprehensive checklist, but a place to begin.)*



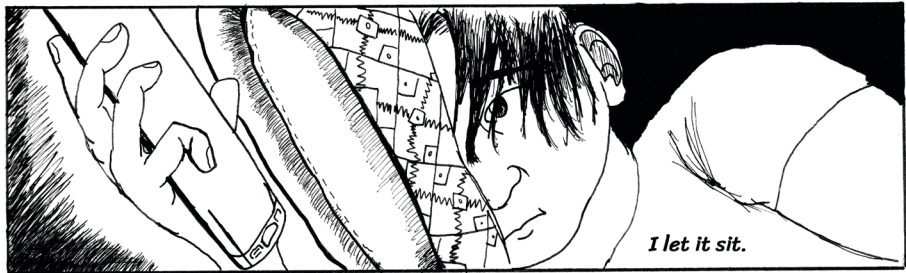
The ping of my phone snapped me to attention.



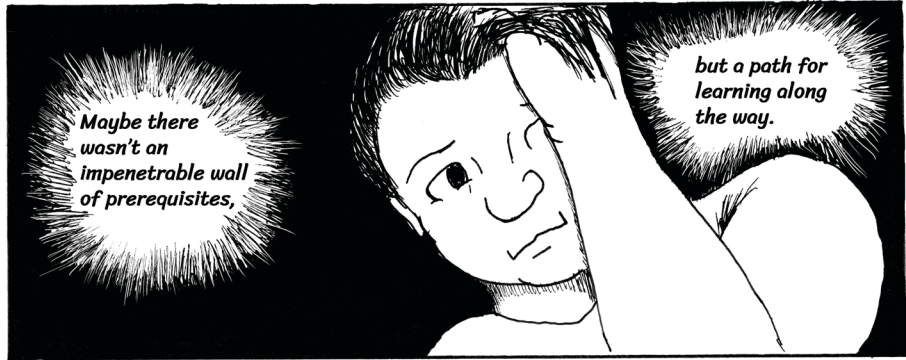
I clicked it on,



peering at the co-worker's invitation from a distance.



I let it sit.



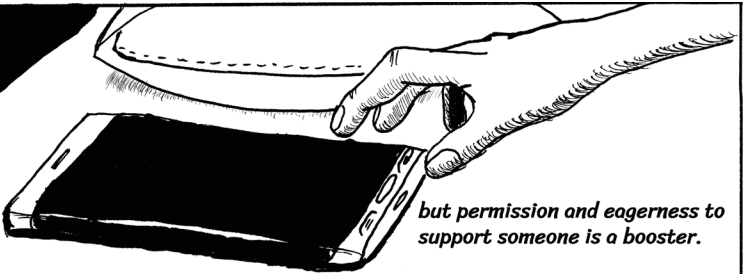
Maybe there wasn't an impenetrable wall of prerequisites,

but a path for learning along the way.

Maybe I was enough.



*Not that validation should
come from others,*



*but permission and eagerness to
support someone is a booster.*

*I responded later that night
and committed myself.*



I was going.

I pulled on a new pair of clearance dress shoes and settled in for the drive to dinner.

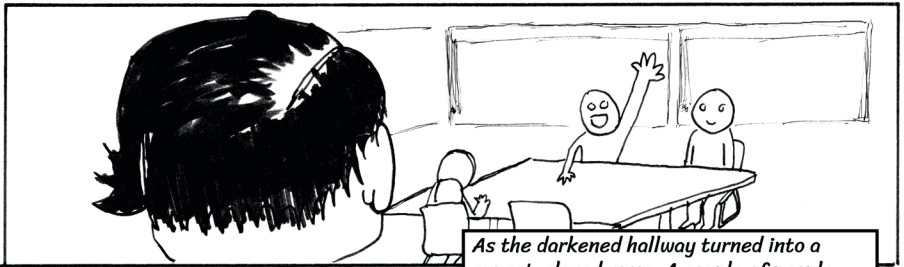
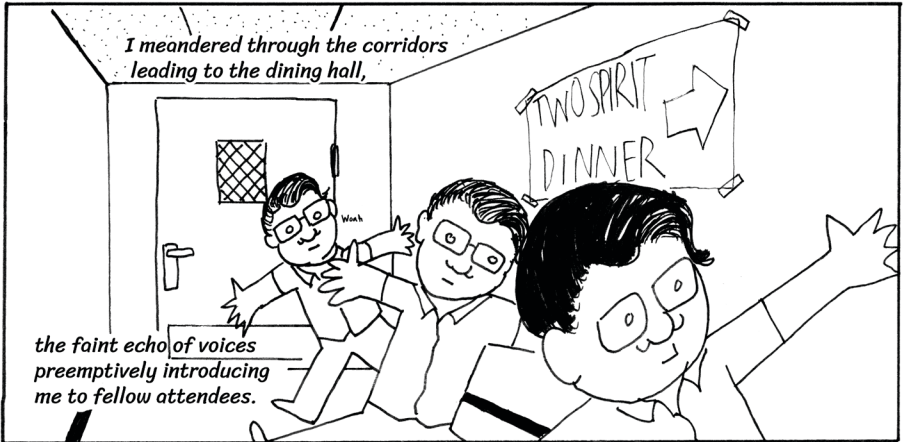
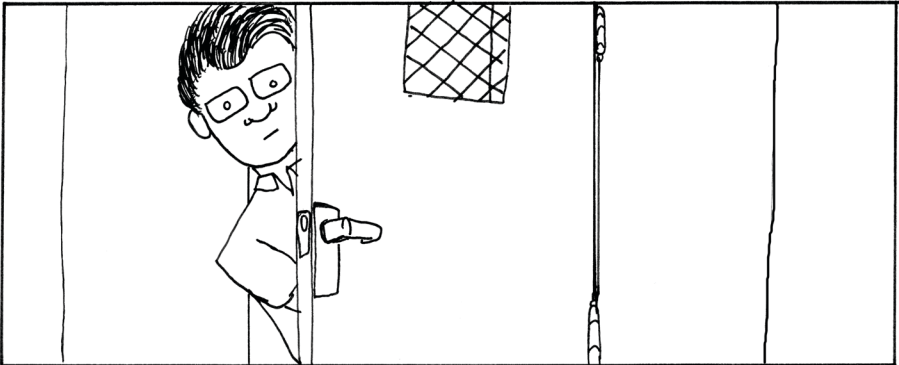
Whatever doubts still existed, flowed out as pow wow music flowed in, filling the car.

A TOTAL CALLED RED
A TRIDE CALLED RED

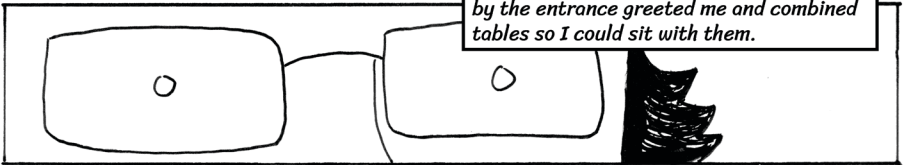
FM || CD/TAPE CHG || AM

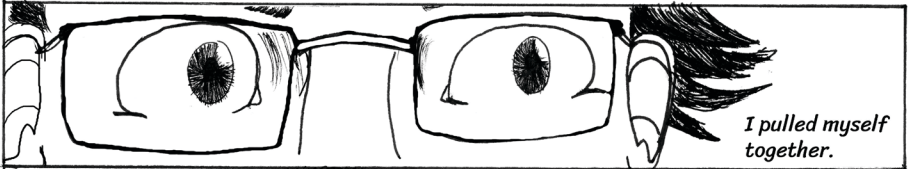
Lock!

The fears settled into the back of my mind as I locked the car.



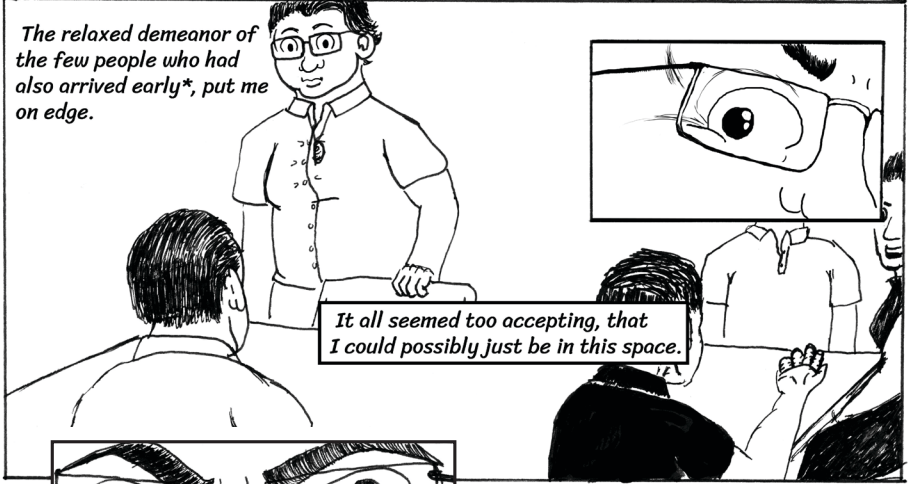
As the darkened hallway turned into a sunset-glazed room, A couple of people by the entrance greeted me and combined tables so I could sit with them.



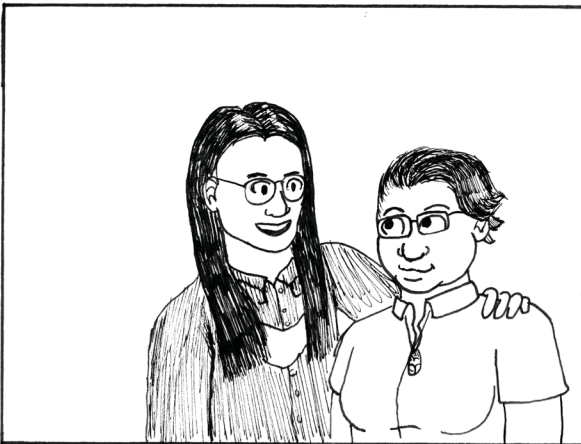
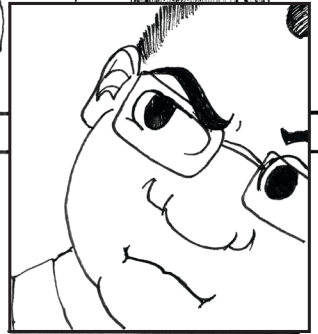


I pulled myself together.

The relaxed demeanor of the few people who had also arrived early, put me on edge.*

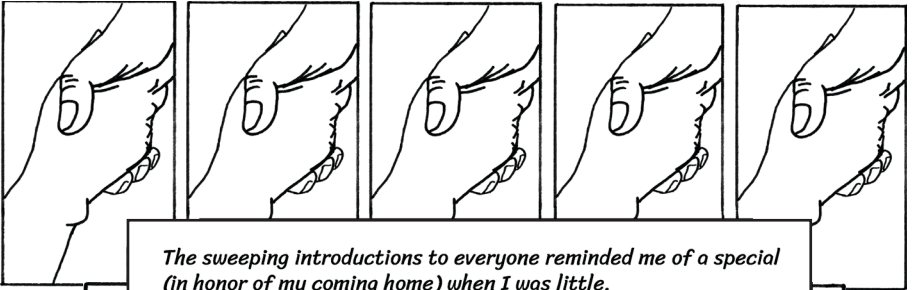


It all seemed too accepting, that I could possibly just be in this space.

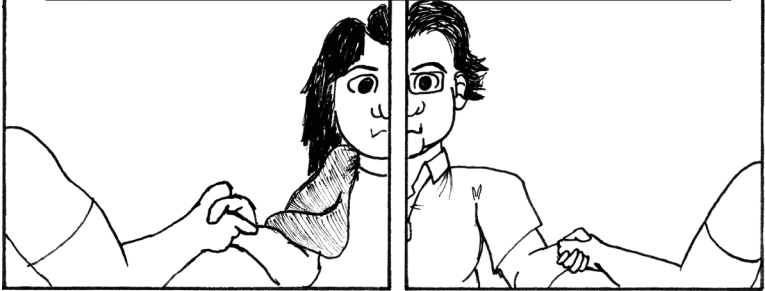


The time for me to second guess my surroundings eroded with my aunt's coworker taking me under their wing.

**Everyone else was on Indian Time*

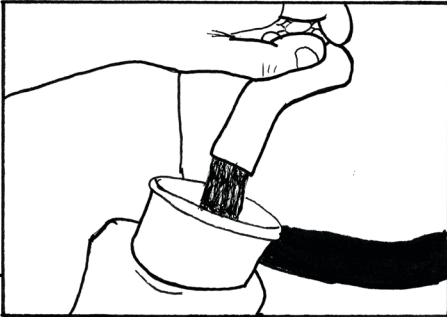


The sweeping introductions to everyone reminded me of a special (in honor of my coming home) when I was little.



I may not truly know everyone, but their hearts are there.

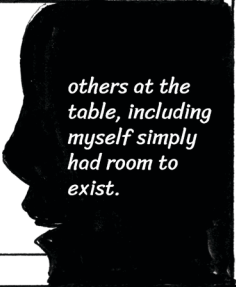
As we rounded the room, we landed at a homemade tea station,



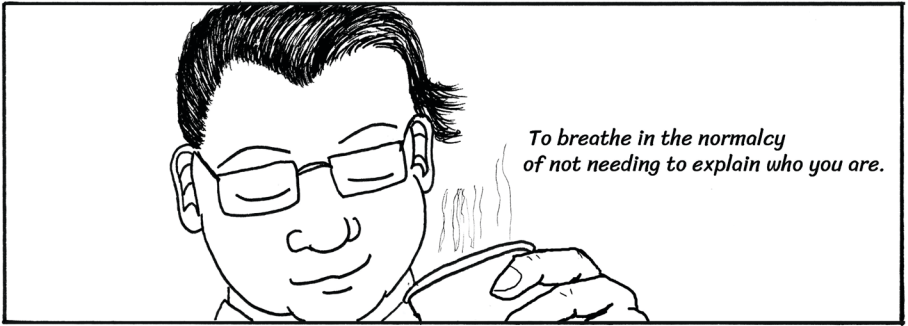
which I brought back to the table I'd been invited to join.



The two across the table were chatting away,



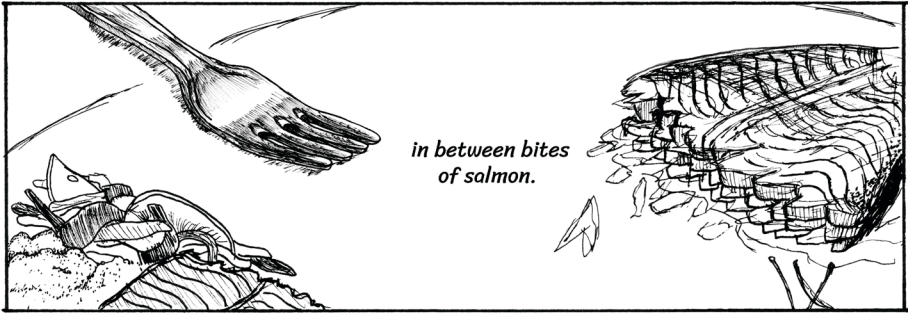
others at the table, including myself simply had room to exist.



*To breathe in the normalcy
of not needing to explain who you are.*



*Theys and thems
perforated the air,*

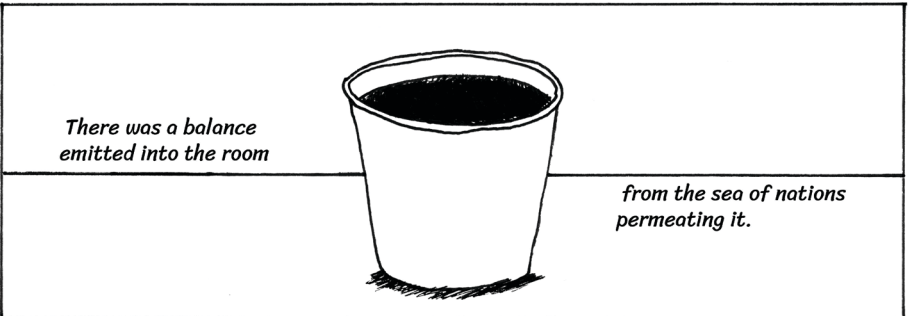
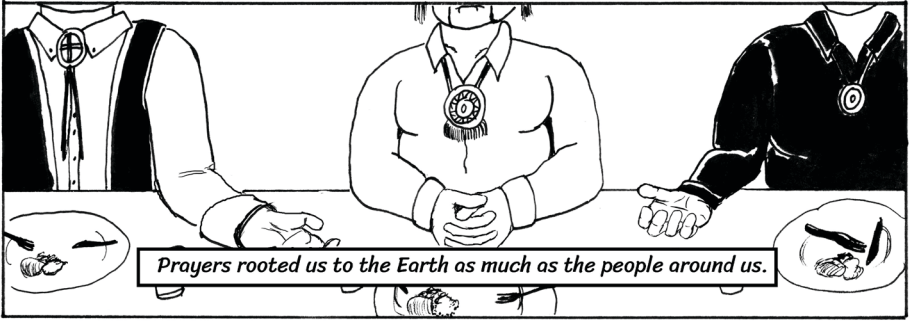


*in between bites
of salmon.*



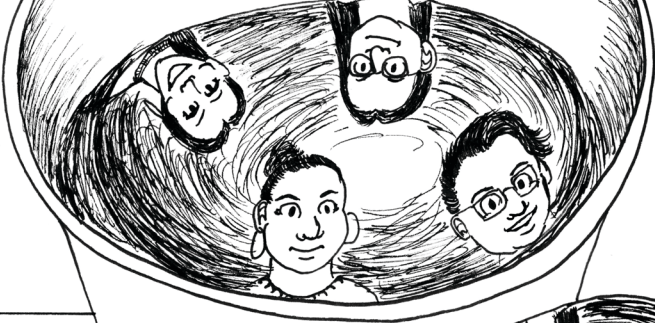
Conversations came to a halt

as speakers took to the mic.



Yes, our bodies were acknowledged,

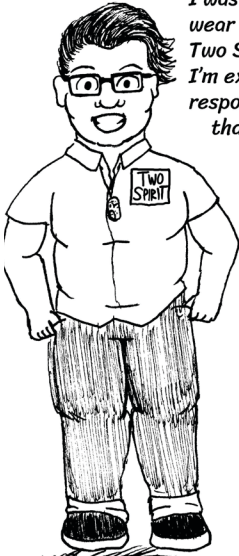
*but we cared to see what emanated
from one another's heart.*



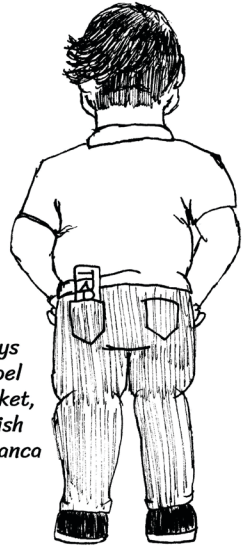
*As I dropped off newfound friends
and headed home for the night,
I realized I had come out to myself.*



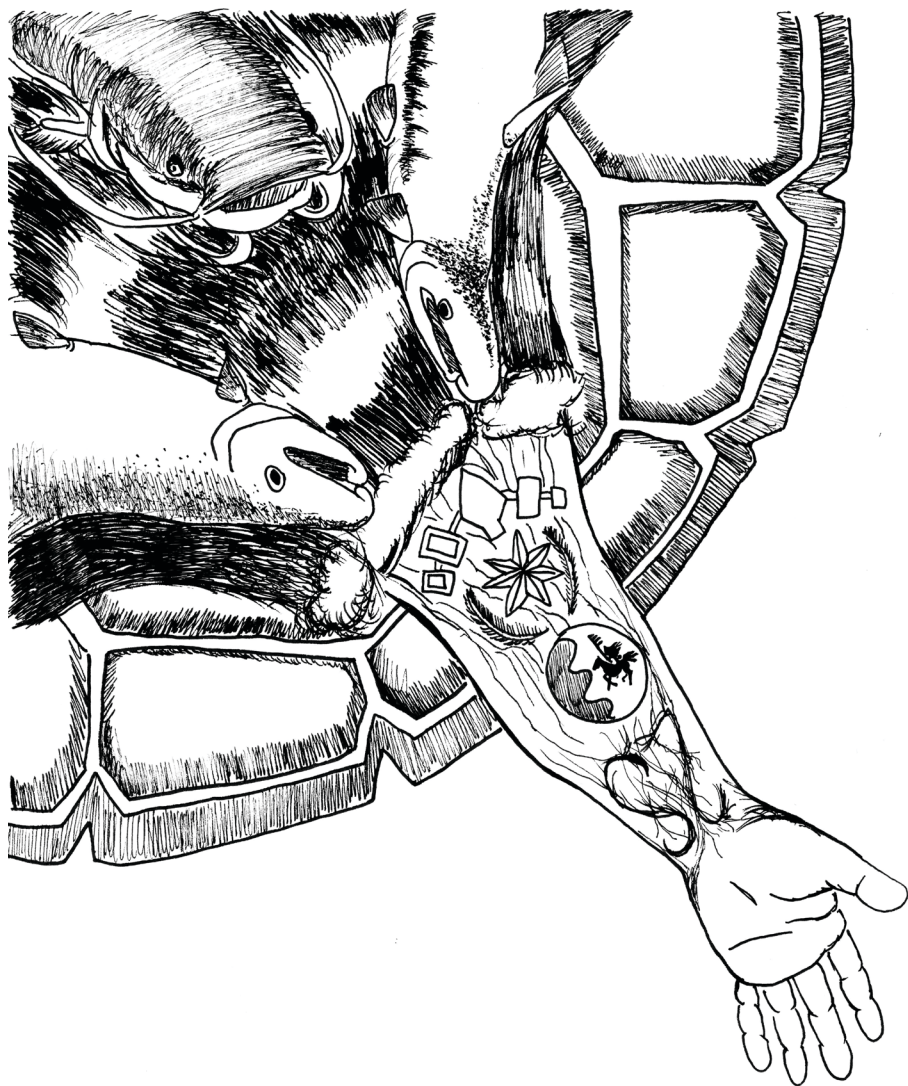
*Not just that
I was allowed to
wear this label of
Two Spirit, but that
I'm excited for the
responsibilities
that come with it.*



*Trans will always
be an initial label
in my back pocket,
so long as English
is the lingua franca
of this land.*



*Two Spirit is a return to my cultures
and rooting in who I am, the lines of intersectionality
blurring together, a starting point to better begin to describe myself to others.*



*With the mish mash of tribes that flow through my blood,
the only thing set in stone are pan Indian ideals of community and stewardship.*

From that solid footing, we will see where the world leads me.

TWO SPIRIT 101

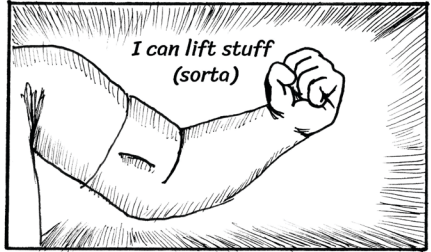
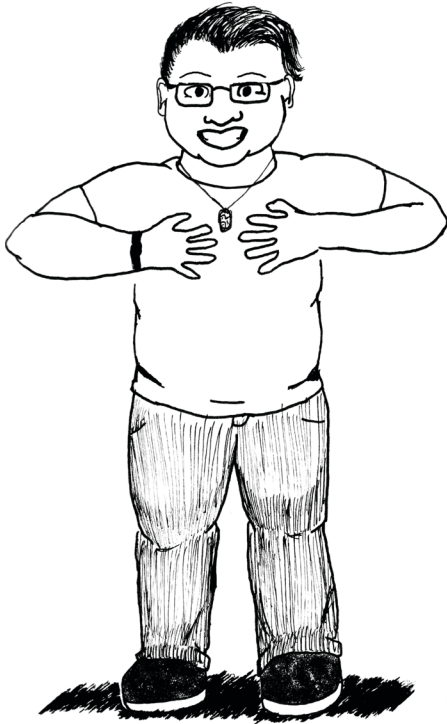
Two Spirit is a contemporary umbrella term, originating from the loose translation of an Ojibwe word for someone embodying the masculine and feminine in a particular way. It was brought into English in the late 80s to early 90s. It is used to broadly identify pre-colonial sexual and gender identities and expressions found throughout Indigenous nations across Turtle Island (the Americas).

While it may seem like a singular label, it refers to the varying traditions of hundreds of different nations. Some nations have their own specific names, roles, and ceremonies that will never be replaced by the term Two Spirit. Other nations may not have a specific word (due to colonization) or it was socially or linguistically unnecessary. Note that Two Spirit is not a catch all for queer Indigenous folks, and queer Indigenous folks don't have to identify as Two Spirit.

As we process the intergenerational traumas of genocide, we should remember how the western ideas of binary gender and heteronormativity have infected our traditional views. While the roles of men and women may seem like night and day, Two Spirit people are the many points in between which serve to complete the circle. In a time and place where we are asked who we are, we have a label we can form community around, and speak for our collective rights as Two Spirit people.

We raise our hands to our Two Spirit ancestors and elders, so we can continue to uniquely support our Indigenous communities. And to our youth, we look forward to you going further than we ever imagined.

*Nine months on t(estosterone)
and nearly 2 months post top surgery,
life has been a whirlwind.*



*I can lift stuff
(sorta)*



*I can hit notes from my favorite
geeky songs,*

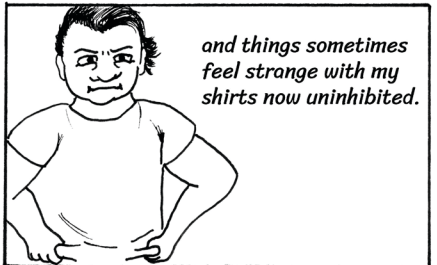
*♪ Far over
the misty mountains
Cold...♪*



*but better yet!
I can lay on my
stomach without
water balloon sized fun bags under me.*

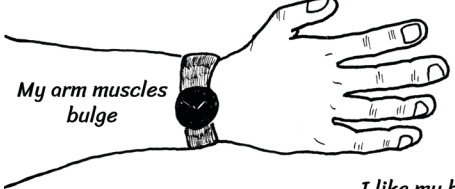


*I still have moments
where I pause,
doubling back for a binder,*



*and things sometimes
feel strange with my
shirts now uninhibited.*

I hold my hands on my chest, feeling my pecs from the pushups to prep for surgery.



*My arm muscles
bulge*



*and my legs are thinner from
fat redistribution.*

I like my body again.

And I like making people do a double take.

It's a passive way for me to get others to at least think about gender.

To think they may have caught a glimpse of all the bits of genders floating in the primordial soup that is my identity makes me light up.



However, with "passing" more, comes the ridiculousness of male privilege (now from the other side of the lens).

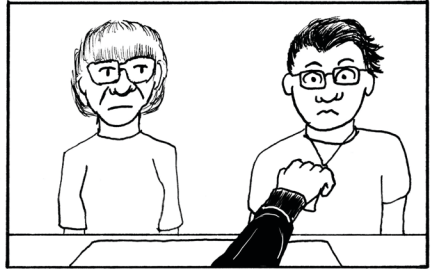
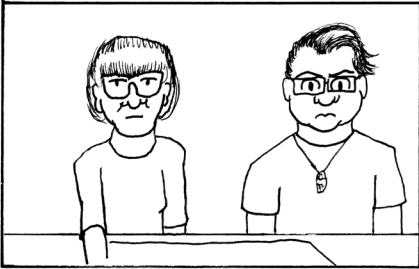
CLASSICS INCLUDE:



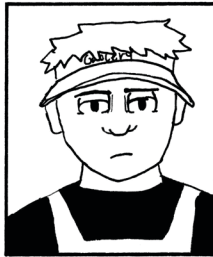
Confiding in me with some generalization about women,

Moving over for me when they won't for femme presenting people,

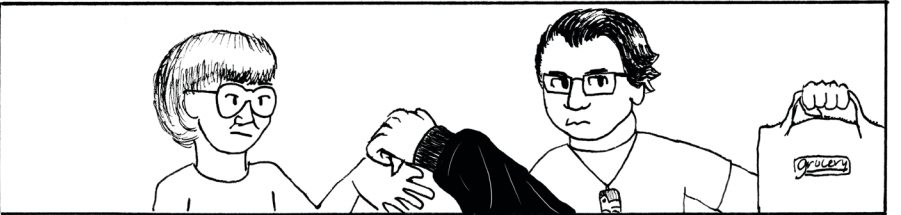
and the most infuriating of all (so far), when my grandma hands the cashier money and they start to hand the change back to me.



I understand the trope of "the man pays for things" but you know who your customer is, she just handed you the money! I just stand there looking dumbfounded (and a little pissed)

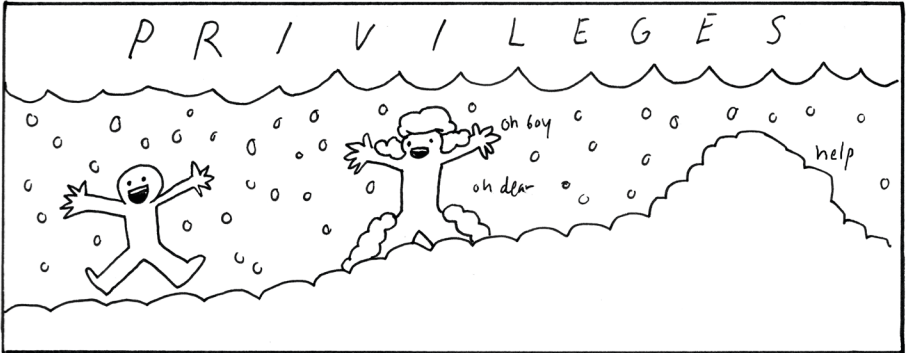


...until they snap back to reality and give her the change.

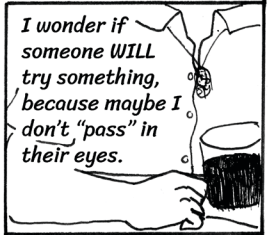
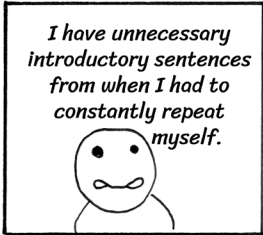
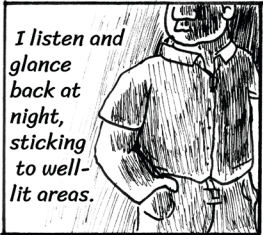


Who knew how much power a scruffy face, flat chest, and a [root] beer belly has, until you experience society's "other" side.

It feels invigorating to have privileges thrust upon me so casually, but the initial shock quickly evolves into frustration at all the things, big and small, I'm not expected to have to worry about.



But these things are all still drilled into my head.



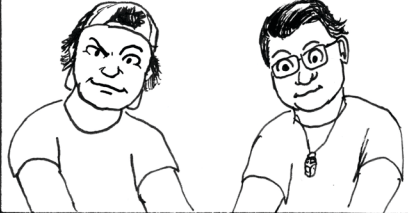
*All these things rattle around as I navigate the world in this differently perceived body with the same ol' mind as always.
(just a bit freer to be itself now).*



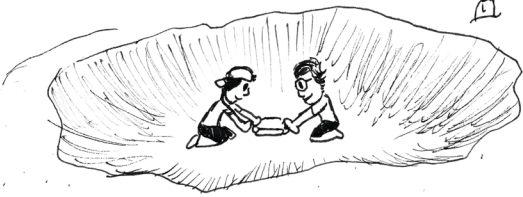
With that privilege comes responsibility to make safe room for those who need it.



I am lucky enough to be in a position where I can be out (thanks awesome friends and family), and contribute to making room.



It took so much time to dig out room simply for myself.



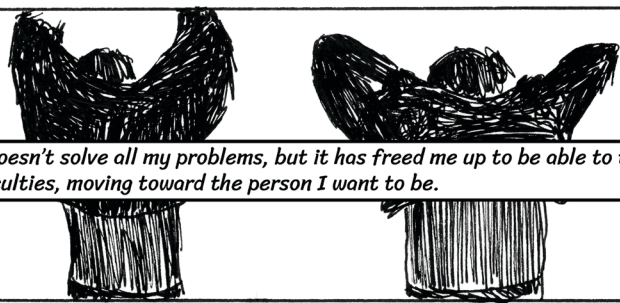
Each spoonful of work it took, passive and active,



to get to where I am is, and always will be, so worth it.

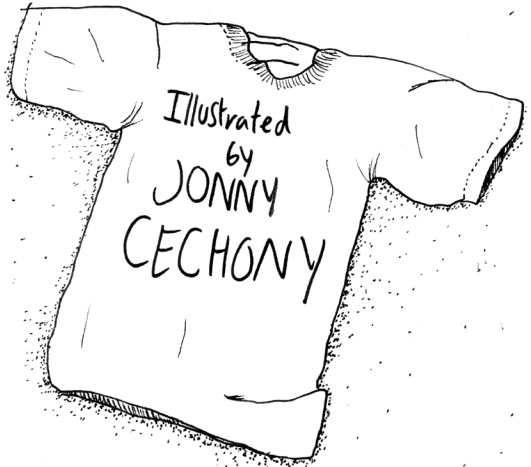


Being myself doesn't solve all my problems, but it has freed me up to be able to take on other difficulties, moving toward the person I want to be.



For now...

IT'S JUST NICE TO FEEL WHOLE AGAIN.



RESOURCES

If you or someone you know is in crisis, get help now by calling the Trevor Lifeline at 866-4-U-TREVOR (866-488-7386).

If you have a loved one who is missing, visit namus.gov or call (855) 626-7600

WEBSITES/NETWORKS

*BAAITS (Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits) - baaits.org
GLSEN (Gay & Lesbian Student Education Network) - glsen.org
Native Youth Sexual Health Network - nativeyouthsexualhealth.com
PFLAG (Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays) - pflag.org
TSER (Trans Student Educational Resources) - transstudent.org
Trevor Project - thetrevorproject.org*

VIDEOS

*"Two Spirit - Injunuity" by Vision Maker Media
"Frameline Voices: Two Spirits" by Ruth Fertig*

BOOKS

*"Top Surgery: Unbound" by Drake Cameron Sterling, MSW
"You Are Enough: love poems for the end of the world" by Smokii Sumac*

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Sdukwalbix^w (Snoqualmie Indian Tribe), Potlatch Fund,
and Indigenous Showcase

RAVEN TWO FEATHERS

writer



Raven Two Feathers (he/they) is a Two Spirit, Emmy award winning filmmaker. Being intertribal encourages their exploration of Indigenous roots, wherever they go. They have created various forms of content, flowing between fiction and non-fiction, always centering story along the way. They began writing in school, but stories were tumbling around their mind long before then. As they continued on their artistic journey, they came upon film. Once settled into the rhythm of motion pictures, they realized some of their stories wished to present themselves differently: comics. And so, they continue their growth, learning through each project, and the people they meet along the way.



JONNY CECHONY

illustrator

Jonny Cechony (He/Him) is an Emmy award winning creator. He has been drawing, filmmaking, and making music since elementary school. He met Raven during their time in the Ballard High School Digital Filmmaking Program, where he learned how to tell stories. Jonny is not Indigenous, but as a (gay) fellow member of the LGBTQIA+ community he understands the importance of spreading Raven's story. As of the publishing of this zine he is trying to figure out how to best utilize all his creative skills. This is his first published comic and he hopes that you like it.

DONATIONS

If you would like to contribute to this zine, you can do so via Paypal or check.

PayPal.Me/QualificationsOB

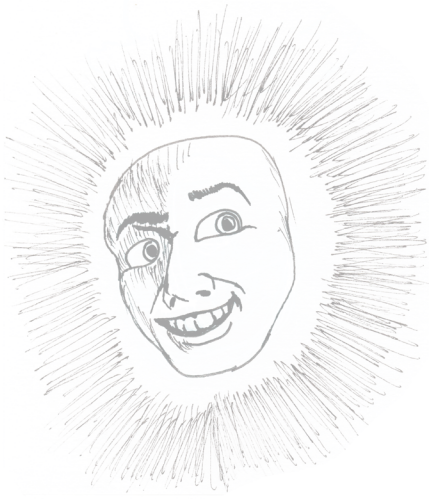
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YOU
FEELIN'
GOOD?

