

from sketch to

STORY

Stewarding Watersheds through Art

Clara Kuo, Curious by Design LLC

12:10 to 1:00, Ballroom 3rd Floor

October 27, 2025

Oakland Scottish Rite Center

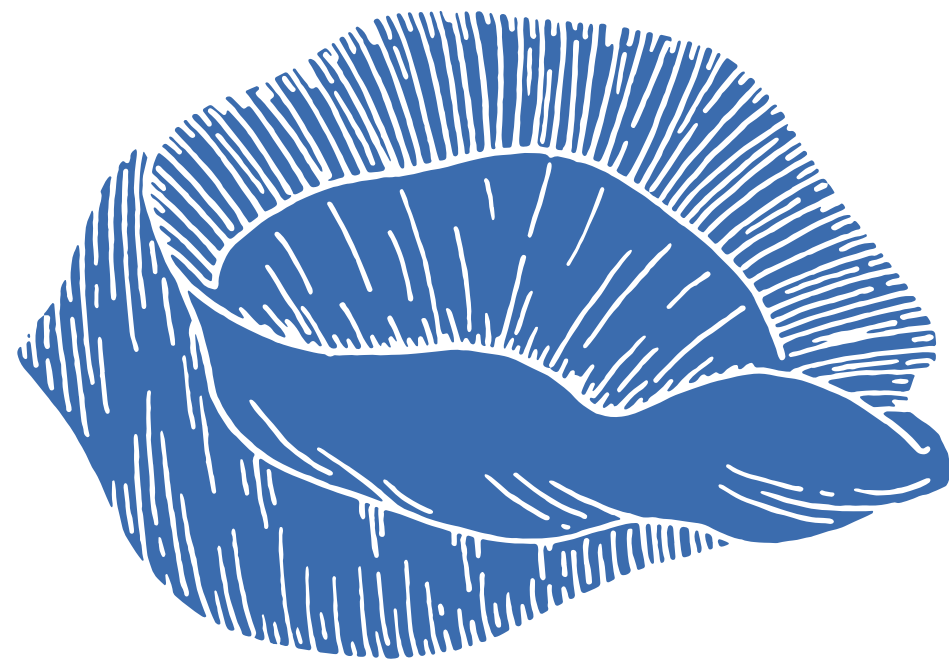


“As Gary Nabhan has written, we can’t meaningfully proceed with healing, with restoration, without *re-story-ation*.

In other words, our relationship with land cannot heal until we hear its stories. *But who will tell them?* ”

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*
“Skywoman Falling”

Learning GOALS



By the end of this workshop, we hope to have a collection of recorded stories that tells our collective story of stewardship today.

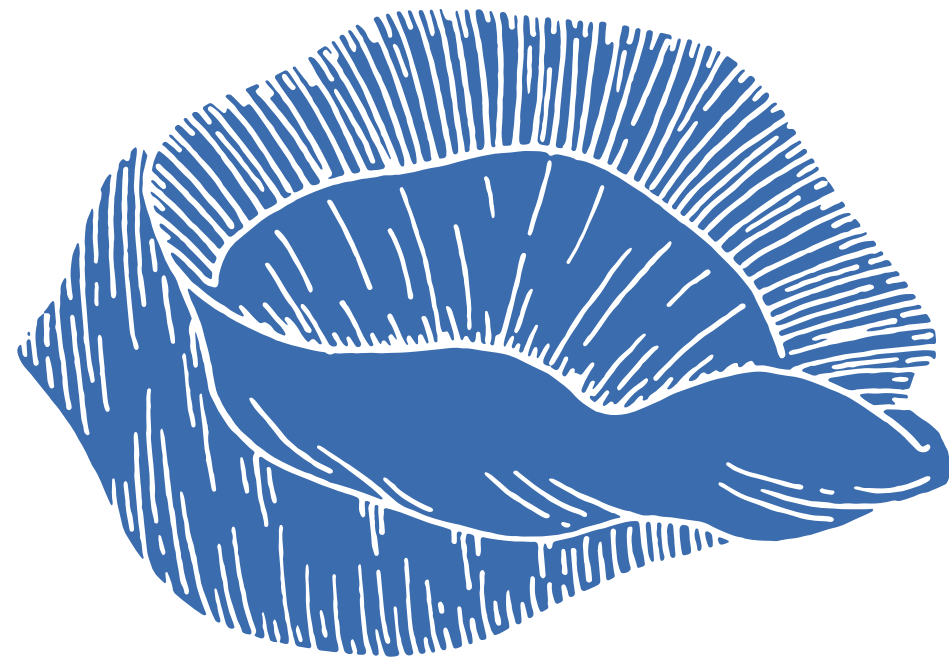
Practice slowing down by “catching” nature stories

Sketch stories in one panel

Engage in connection and extend your community

And, hopefully, all material is relatable and understandable.

Engagement RULES



Put away your phones, if possible

Honor this space you have with each other

Lead with curiosity

Ask first before giving feedback

Do not comment on people's drawings/style, focus on the content

Also helps to: pause, allow space for silence, someone may add a thought in between

In other words, *art* and *story*
is at the heart of stewardship.

How do we tell stories through *sketching*?
In what ways are we servants of nature stories?

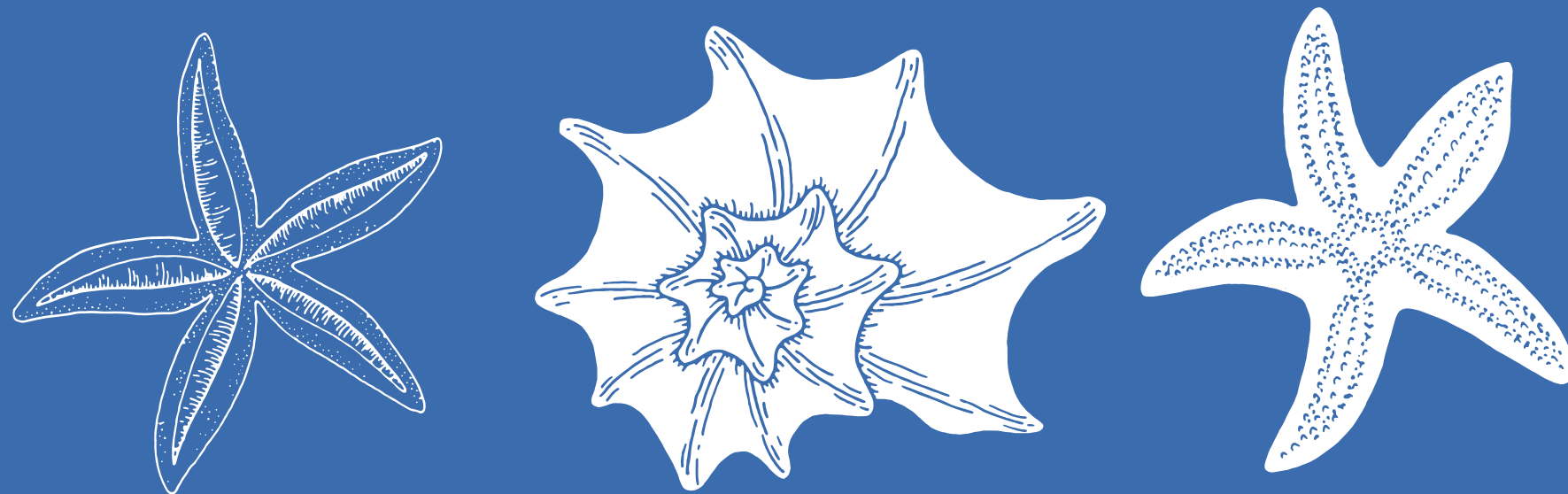
Also, why?

As a community, how might we tie this to greater
action?



While you are eating lunch...

Reflect on nature stories





Sally Mack

PICKLEWEED

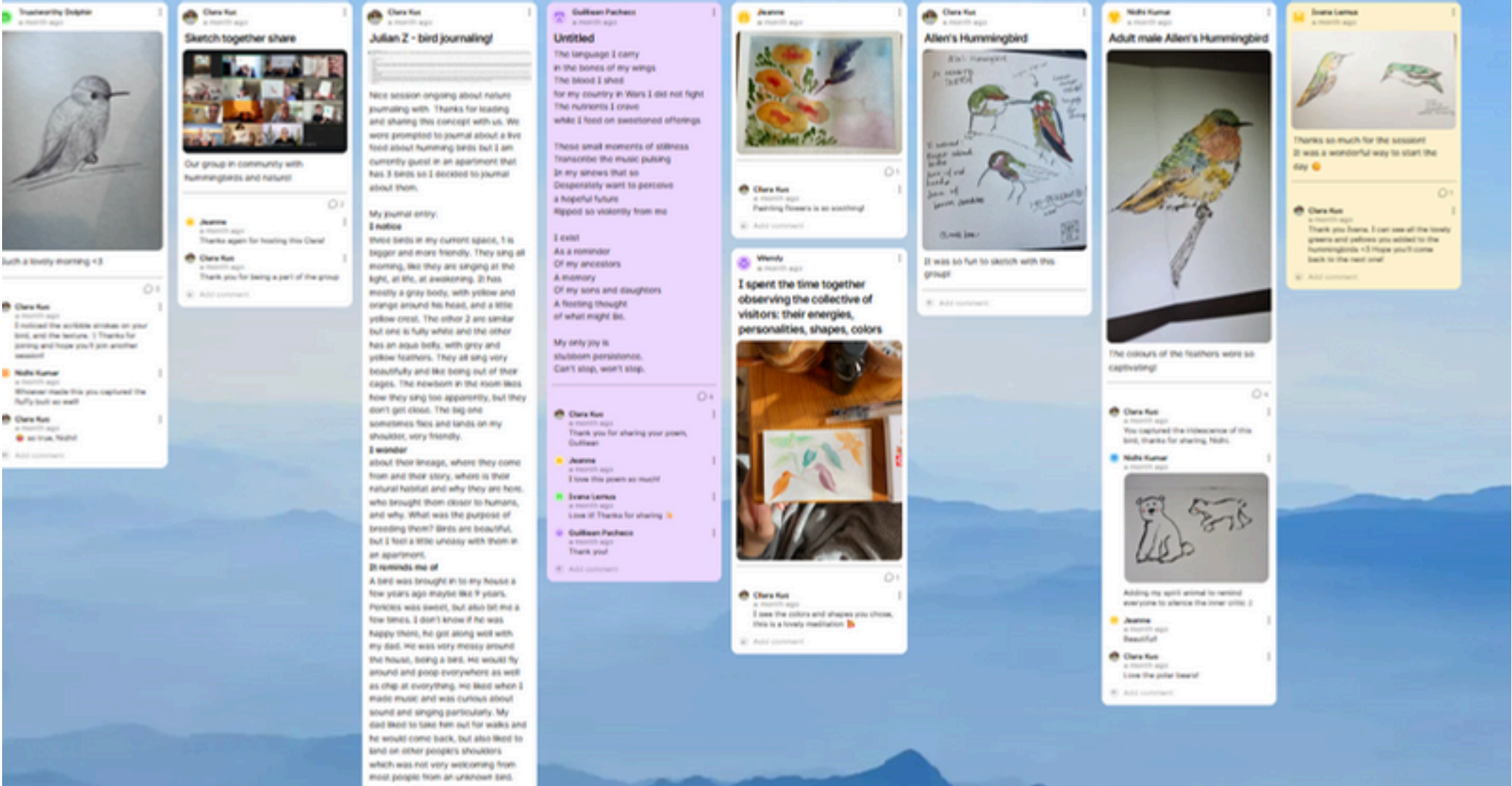
“Sea Beans” / *Salicornia Pacifica*

What's a
pickleweed?

Is it a type of
pickle? Is it
edible?

But isn't a
pickle a type of
cucumber?





Psychology of STORIES

What is the definition of a story?

What makes a “good” story?

No wrong answers



Heart-centered stories

5 senses

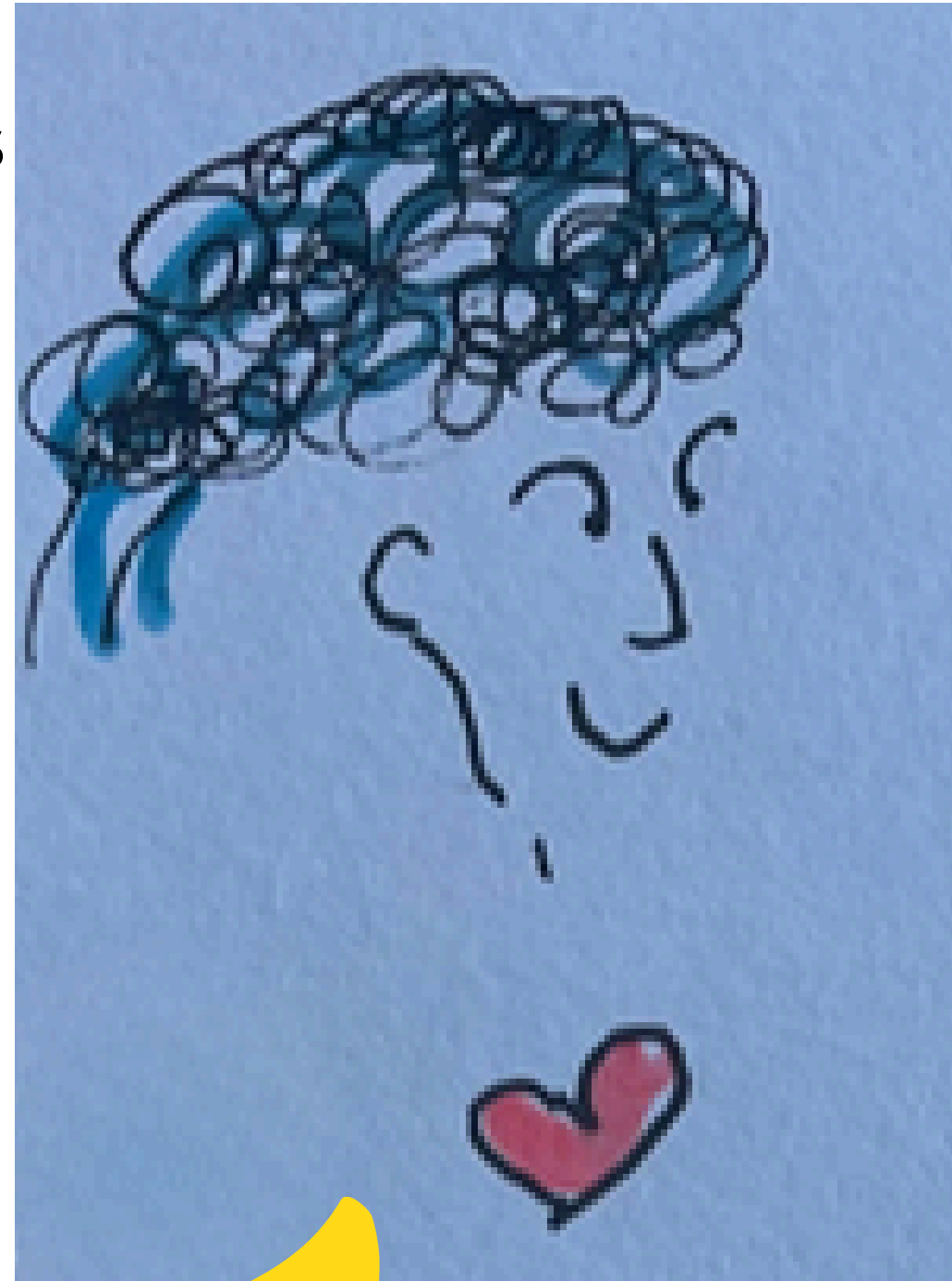
Meander / wandering

Open-ended

Recounting

Connection / listening

Slowing down to “be”



Heart-centered

Mind-led

We need both!

5 senses

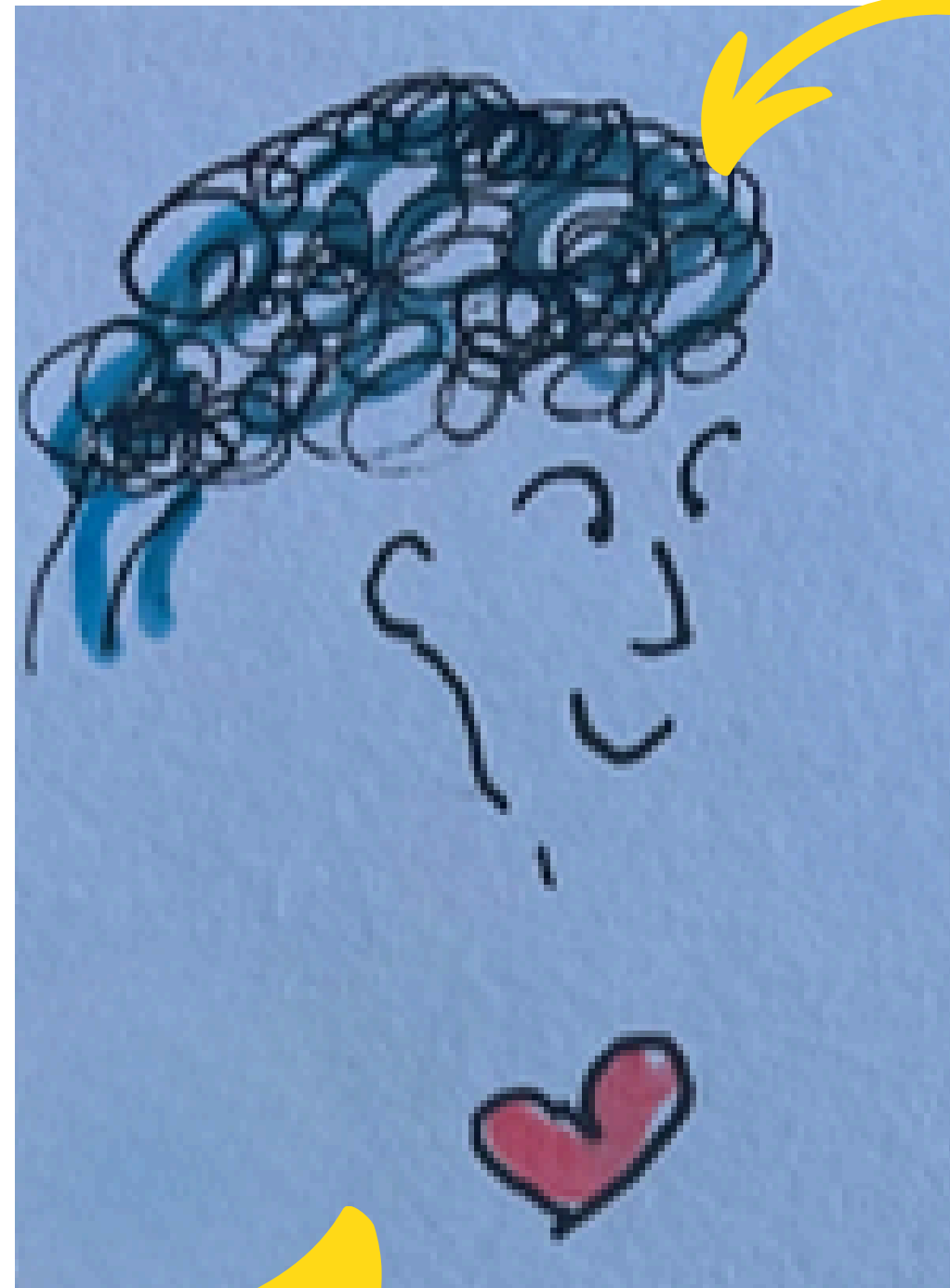
Meander / wandering

Open-ended

Recounting

Connection / listening

Slowing down to “be”



5Ws stories

Logical

Sequenced / structured

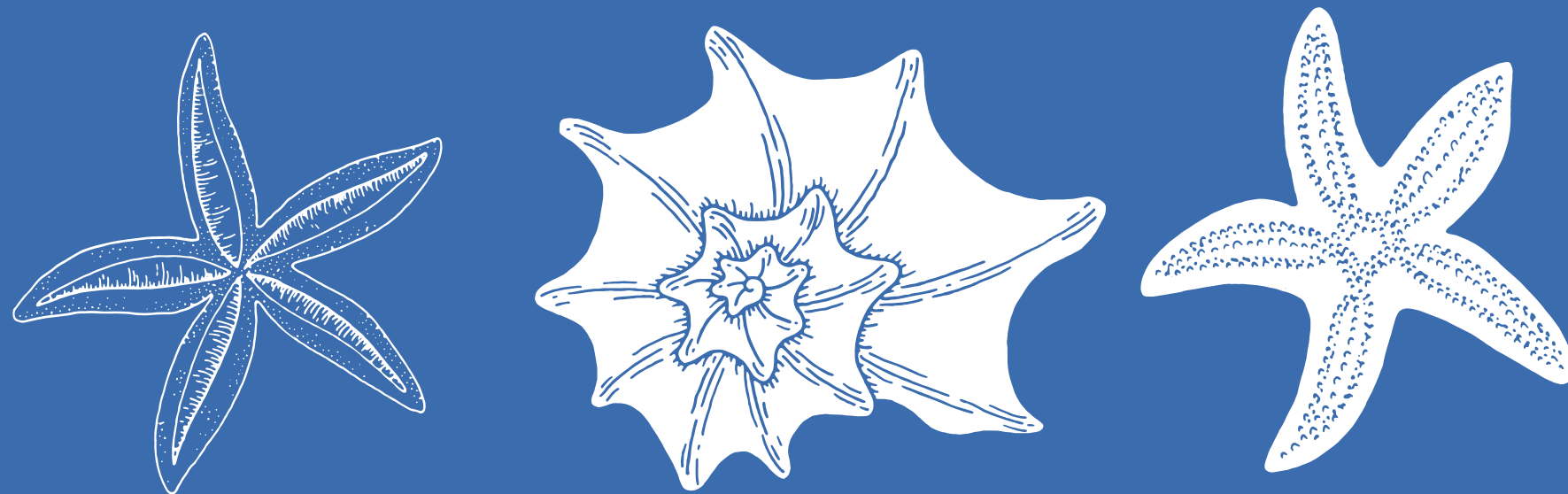
Beginning, middle, end

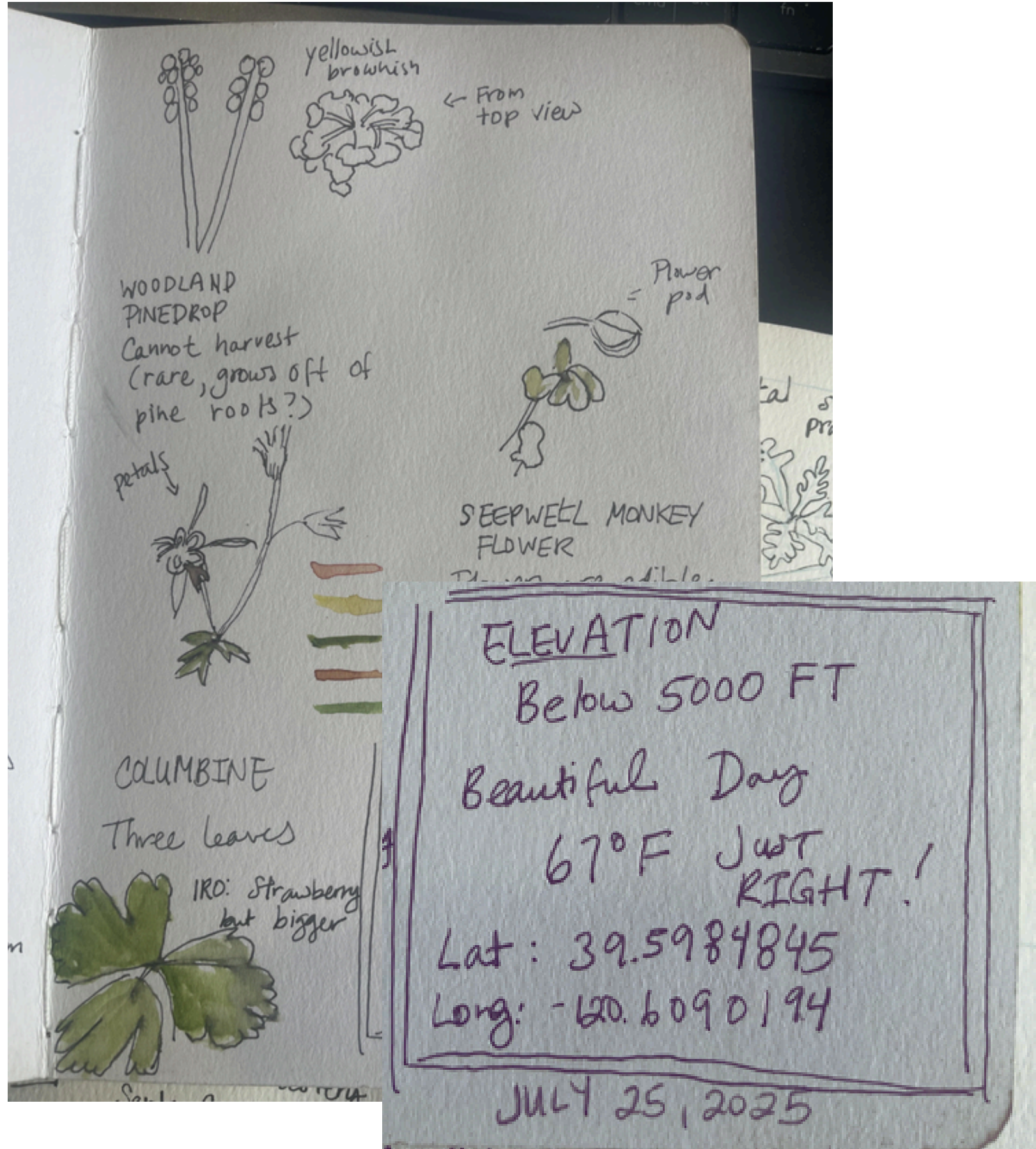
Facts

Single hero in western myths

Your turn:

Choose a nature story to sketch





Solo Activity

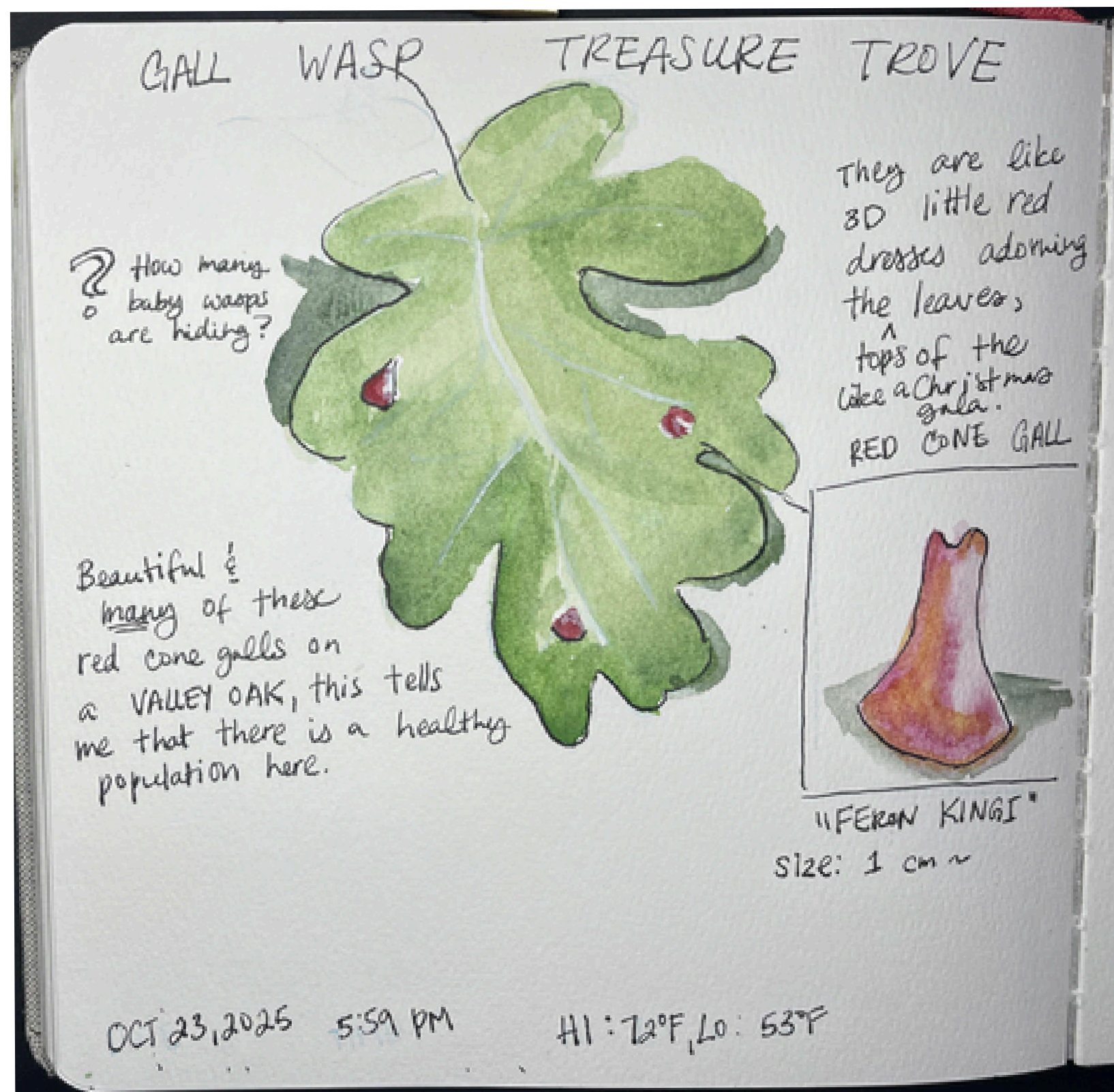
WARM-UP

(About 2 minutes)

In your accordion sketchbook on the top left or bottom right corner, write:

- Today's date (October 27, 2025)
- The place (Scottish Rite Center, Oakland, CA)
- Closest watershed (Lake Merritt)
- Lat/long (37.80308° N and -122.26276° W)
- Weather
- Elevation

Make sure to leave room for the drawing



Solo Activity

1-PANEL STORY

Creating a single picture can say a lot about your “re-story-ation”

DRAWING PROMPT (10 minutes)

What is your recent encounter with nature that you want to share?

Ideas to get this going:

1. Choose a very small moment or a very specific species
2. If you aren't a confident “draw-er”, you can draw lines to things, use stick figures, etc.
3. What is it about this moment that is special to you? (Think about Jeffrey's story)

For me every creature is a work of art; *even one more insect is quite welcome.*

Recently I had the delight of observing a freshly eclosed Viceroy butterfly (the Monarch mimic that feeds on willows) land near me in full sun; it was perfect, very beautiful.



Jeffrey Caldwell, Retired Horticulturist / Native Plant Garden Coach

Email received: October 21, 2025 13:24 PST



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“Coffee with Friends”, original art by Clara Kuo

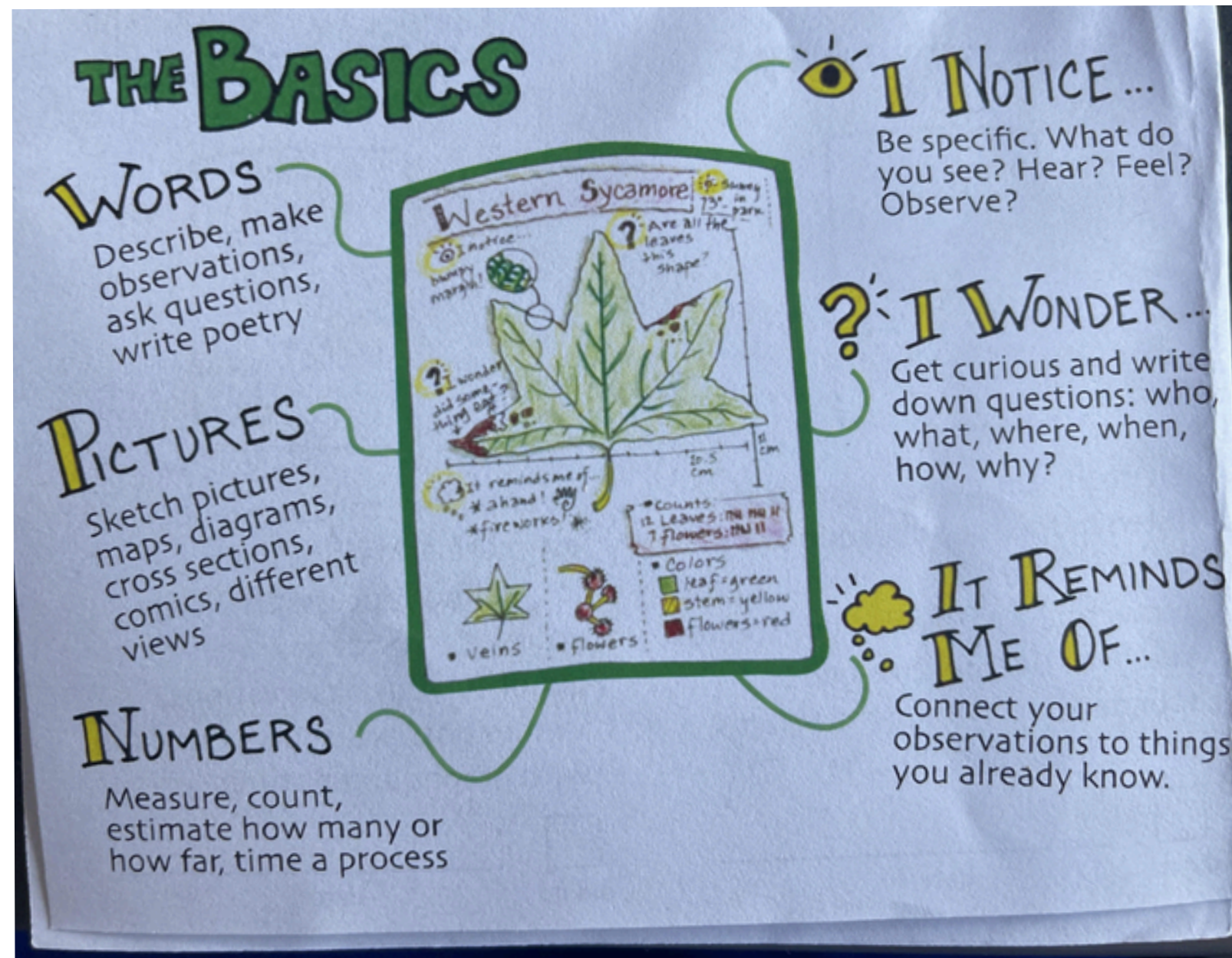
Why do humans share STORIES?

Recalling sequences, events & observations

Knowledge sharing, sense making

Connection: mindfulness / emotions / memories

With INIWIRMO, we become “storycatchers”



I notice (observations and record of facts)

I wonder (sharing questions / conversation / curiosity)

It reminds me of: (connection to known experiences, evoking of emotions, recollection of related facts)

Sketchbooking ensures that nature stories are continuous

Coming back to a sketchbook / journal to add an entry

Making a list of species for a future date

Sharing journal entries and asking questions

Story catching

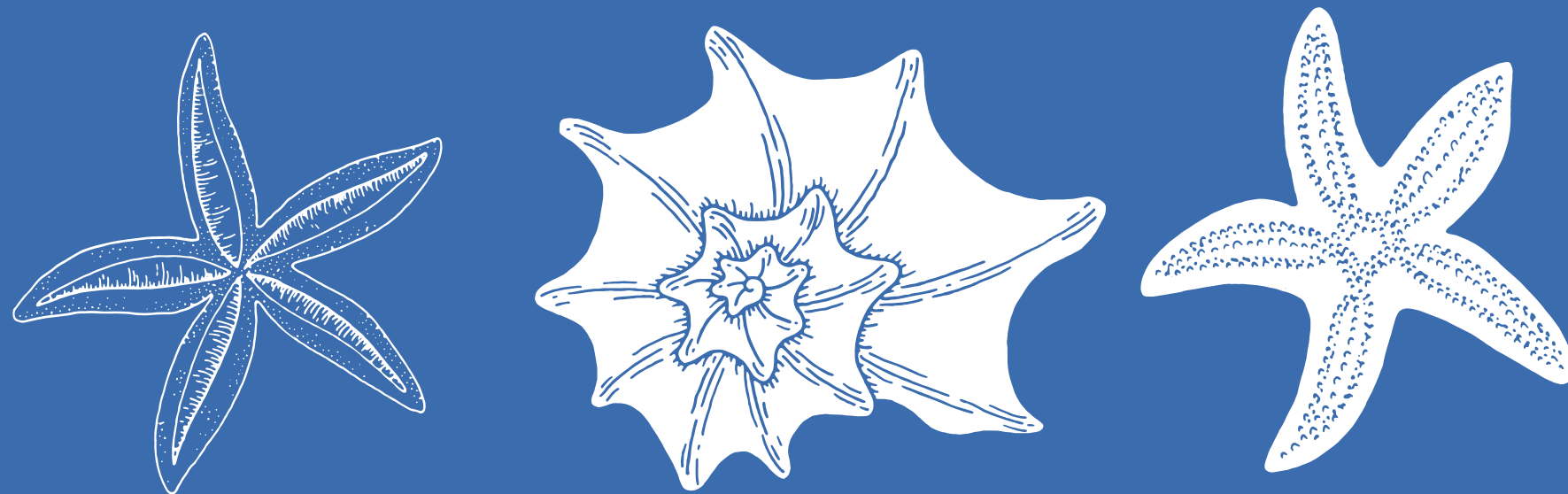
What would you add to this list?



Original photo (Clara Kuo)

Your Turn

Practice Story Catching





Pair Activity

PRACTICE STORY CATCHING

With a partner, take turns being a storyteller and a storycatcher.

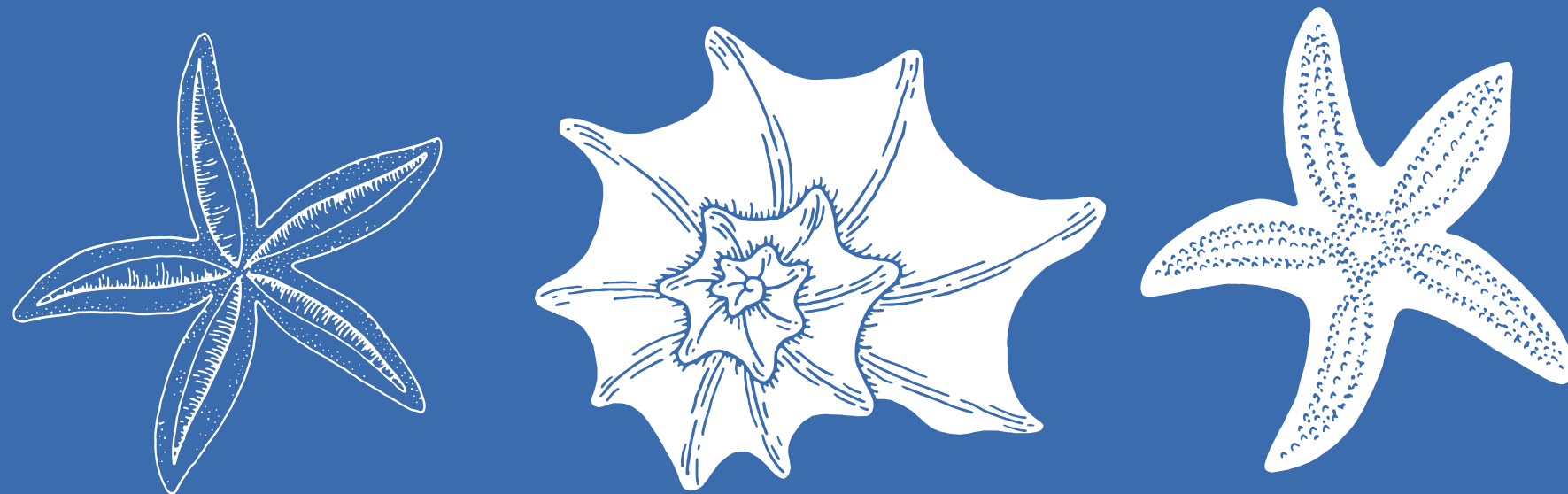
Just like a spider, story catching requires patience and waiting for the right moment before you jump in!

Storyteller: Share your 1-panel story sketch

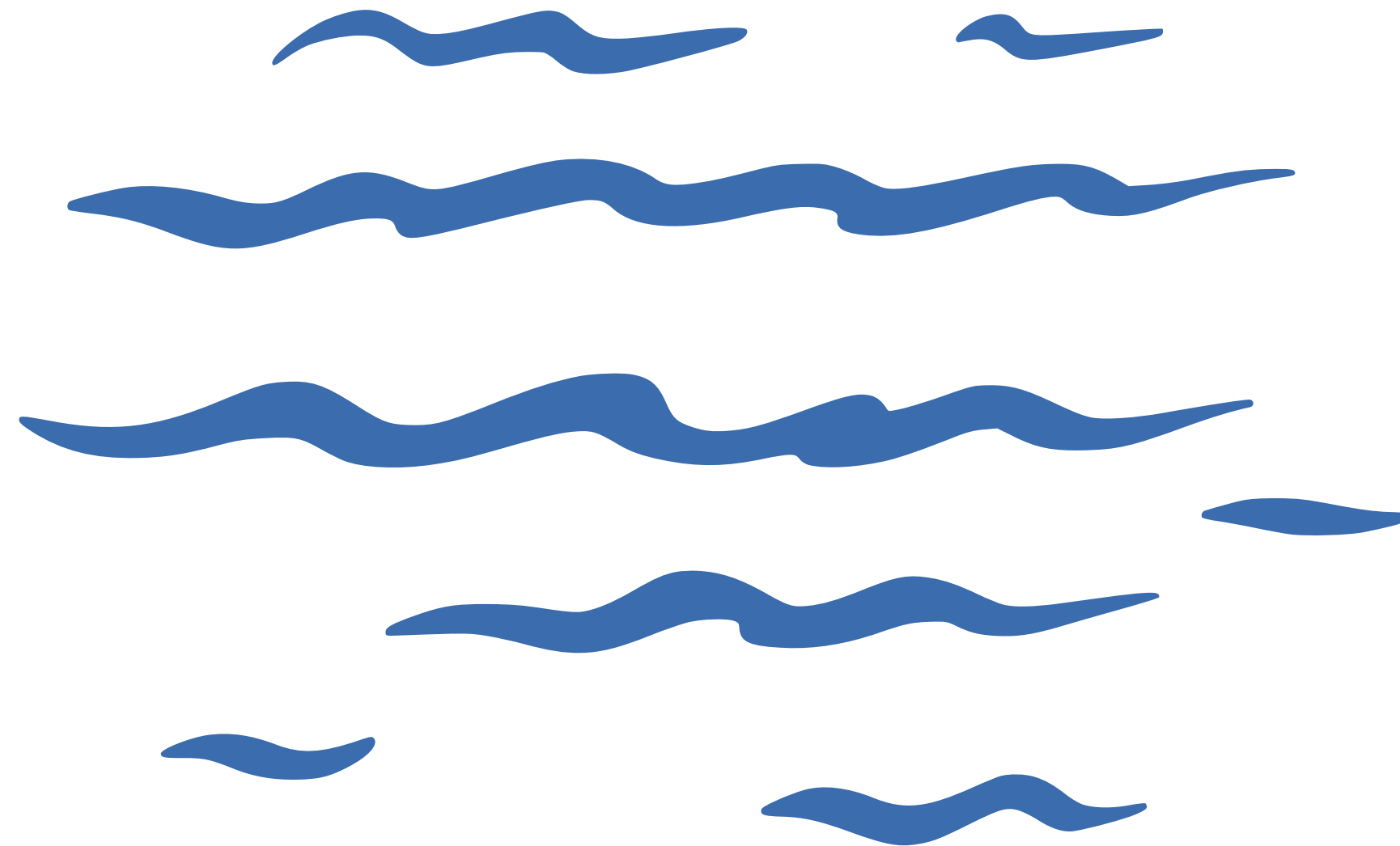
Storycatcher: Listen for the details. Ask questions. Use INIWIRMO

Reflection:

What was it like to
“catch” a story?



TAKE AWAYS



What will you take away with you from today?

How else do you think you would like to
practice sketching into stories?

How do you think you can **use it in your
community?**

Feedback: Take a 5 minute survey



Survey link

www.linkedin.com/in/clarakuo

www.instagram.com/clarakoala.sketcher

Those who take fill out the survey will receive a free ZINE today. You can participate in a a raffle to win a free subscription to my newsletter, Love Notes to Nature

We need acts of restoration, not only for polluted waters, but also for our relationship to the world.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*
“Honorable Harvest”



Student nature journaling near Lake Merritt