

EDGAR'S JOURNEY



You might be going through a lot right now. Things might feel really confusing. It's normal to have a lot of questions and different feelings about what's going on.



This book is here to help you figure some of that out. These things happen to other kids, too.



In this book you'll find some information about:

- What could happen
- People you might see or talk to
- How to notice your feelings and practice ways to feel better



You can keep this book. Read it, write in it, or do whatever you want with it. Hopefully it helps.



This is Edgar's story.



Something has happened in his family, and some adults are worried and think that his family needs help.



Edgar meets these new adults and goes to some new places. He learns about his feelings, asking for help, and some things he can do to feel better.

Some of Edgar's experiences might be different from what you're going through. Edgar might not look like you, he might not come from the same tribe as you, and he might live somewhere different than you. But some of Edgar's experiences and feelings might be similar to yours.

We hope this book can help you better understand what's going on and remind you that you are not alone.



HI! MY NAME IS EDGAR.

I LOVE DRAWING MAPS! MY GRANDPA TAUGHT ME HOW TO DRAW MAPS.

HE'S REALLY SMART.

THINGS HAVE BEEN KIND OF HARD LATELY, AND I'VE HAD TO GO ON A JOURNEY TO DIFFERENT PLACES AND TO MEET DIFFERENT PEOPLE.

SO I DREW THIS MAP TO SHARE MY STORY WITH YOU...

...AND TO HELP US UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON.

YOUR JOURNEY MIGHT LOOK DIFFERENT FROM MINE, BUT I HOPE MY MAP AND STORY CAN HELP YOU.

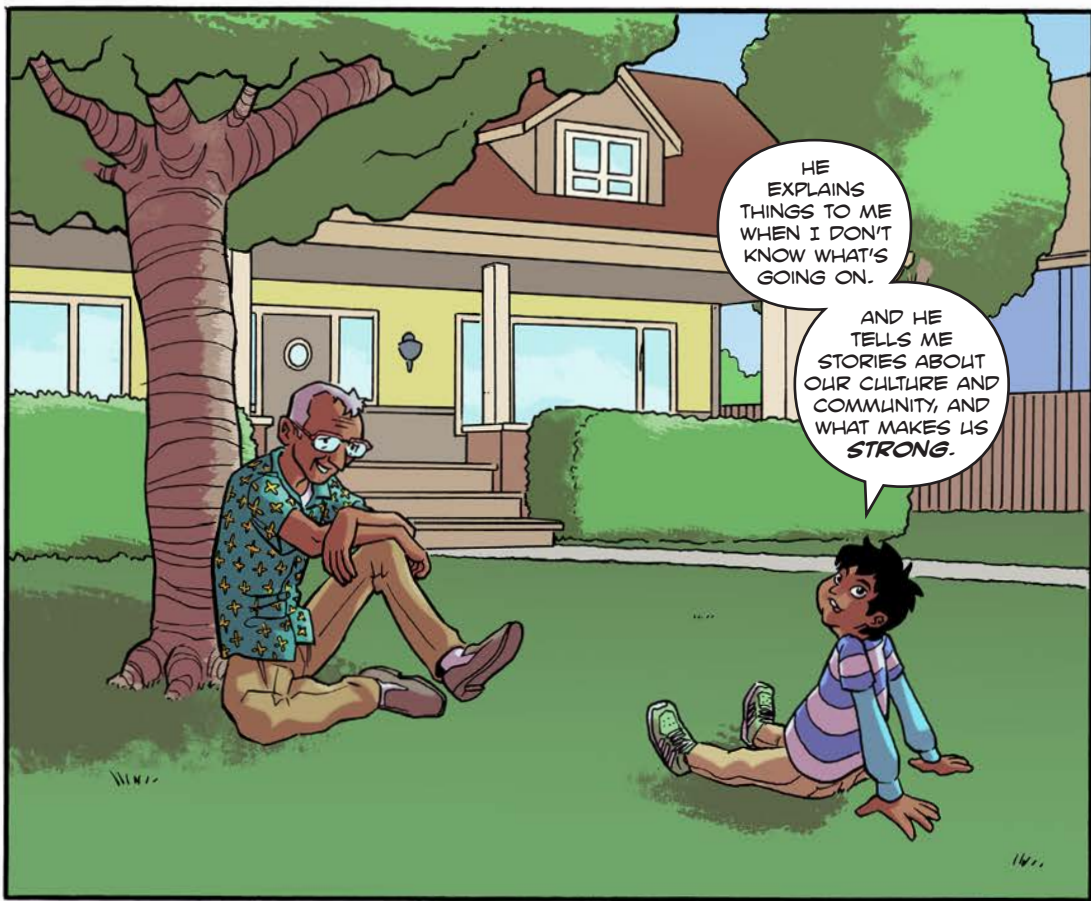


THIS IS MY HOME. THIS IS WHERE I LIVE WITH MY MOM, NEAR THE CITY.

THAT'S MY GRANDPA.

HE TAKES CARE OF ME WHEN MOM'S NOT AROUND OR NEEDS HELP.

HE'S VISITING ME TODAY. HE'S KINDA AWESOME.



HE EXPLAINS THINGS TO ME WHEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.

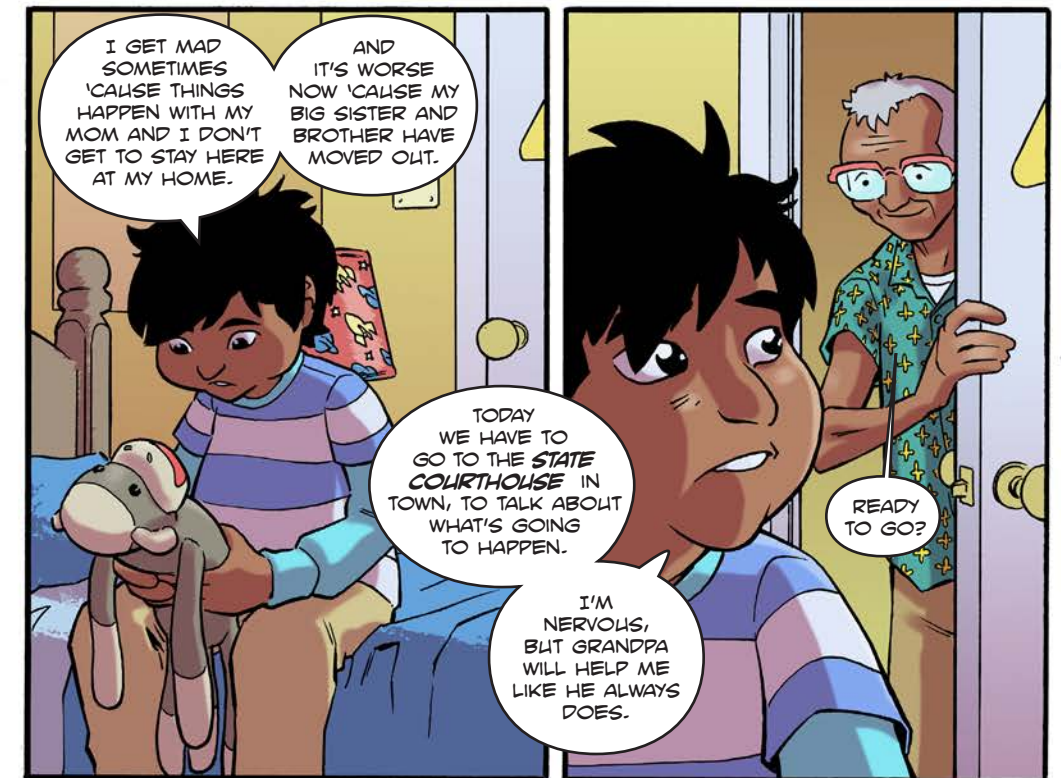
AND HE TELLS ME STORIES ABOUT OUR CULTURE AND COMMUNITY, AND WHAT MAKES US STRONG.



THIS IS MY ROOM.

IT HAS ALL MY TOYS AND MY VIDEO GAMES. GRANDPA AND I LOVE GAMES ABOUT SPORTS.

WE PLAY VIDEO GAMES TOGETHER A LOT.



I GET MAD SOMETIMES 'CAUSE THINGS HAPPEN WITH MY MOM AND I DON'T GET TO STAY HERE AT MY HOME.

AND IT'S WORSE NOW 'CAUSE MY BIG SISTER AND BROTHER HAVE MOVED OUT.

TODAY WE HAVE TO GO TO THE STATE COURTHOUSE IN TOWN, TO TALK ABOUT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.

I'M NERVOUS, BUT GRANDPA WILL HELP ME LIKE HE ALWAYS DOES.

READY TO GO?



THE STATE COURT BUILDING IS REALLY BIG.

IT GETS REALLY BUSY, TOO. THERE'S SO MANY PEOPLE HERE. GRANDPA SAYS THAT THEY'RE WORKING TO HELP FAMILIES LIKE MINE.

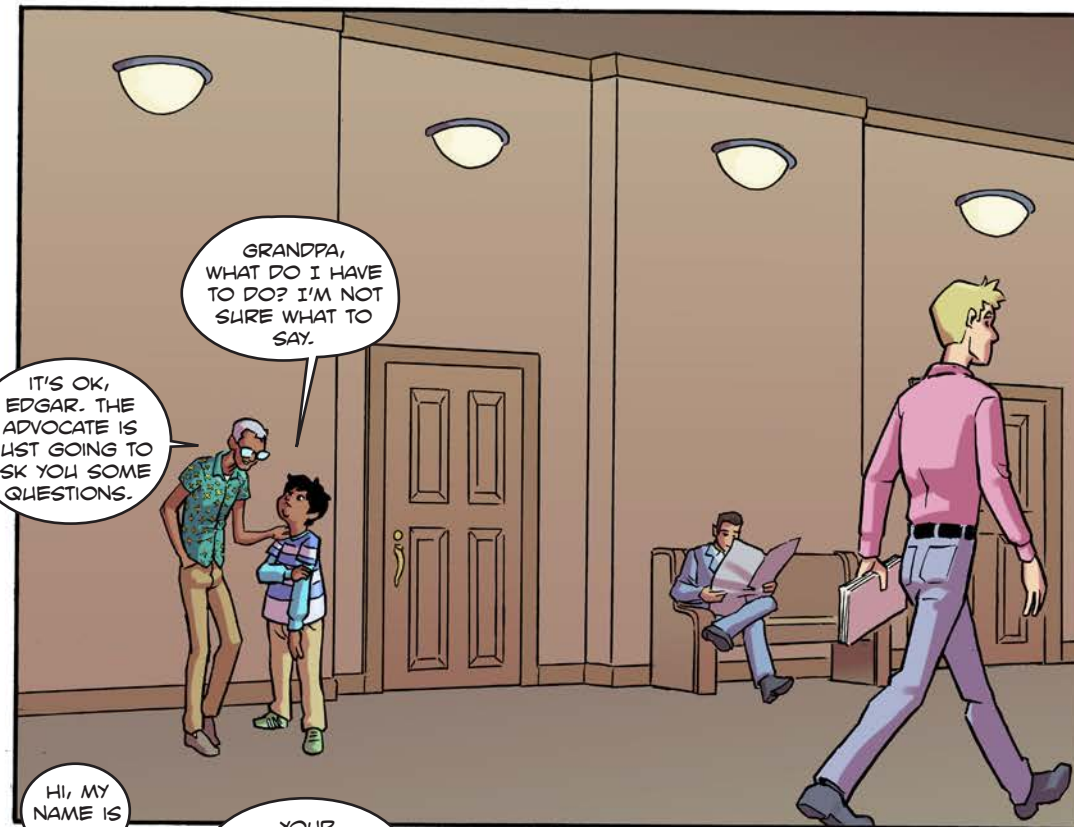
I GET NERVOUS MEETING NEW ADULTS.

OUR ADVOCATE WILL COME MEET US AND BRING ME INTO A ROOM TO TALK.

SOMETIMES I SEE THE JUDGES AND THE OTHER LAWYERS. THEY LOOK SO BUSY. I KNOW THEY ARE HELPING BUT SOMETIMES I FEEL LOST.

THE WHOLE BUILDING IS VERY SCARY.

I'M RIGHT HERE WITH YOU.



GRANDPA, WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO? I'M NOT SURE WHAT TO SAY.

IT'S OK, EDGAR. THE ADVOCATE IS JUST GOING TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS.

HI, MY NAME IS SAM!

YOUR FEELINGS ARE IMPORTANT AND YOUR WELL-BEING IS IMPORTANT.

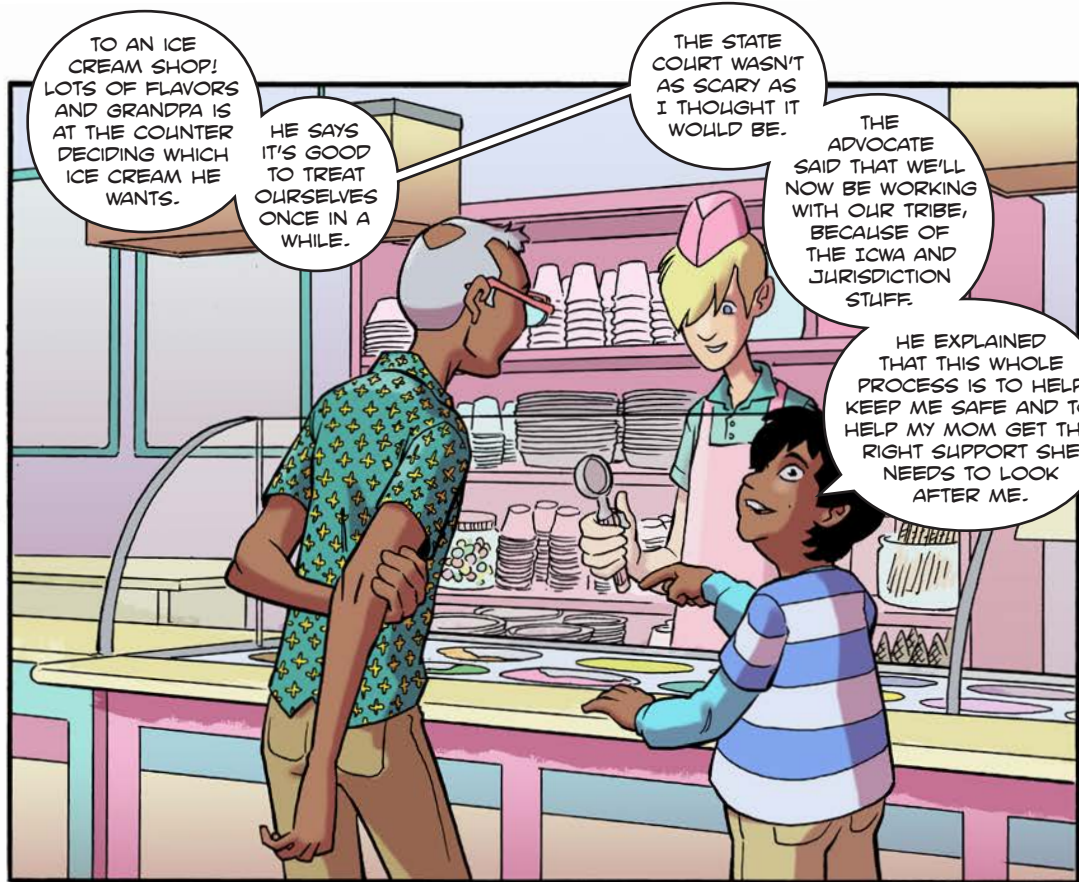
HOW ARE YOU, EDGAR? I'M HERE TO HELP AND TO LISTEN.

I MIGHT USE SOME BIG WORDS LIKE *ICWA* - THESE ARE THE LAWS THAT PROTECT YOU AND YOUR TRIBE.

AND *JURISDICTION*, WHICH DECIDES WHO GETS TO PROTECT AND HELP YOU.

I LEARNED A LOT. AND GRANDPA WAS RIGHT - HE DID ASK ME QUESTIONS, AND IT WASN'T SO BAD. I ASKED HIM SOME QUESTIONS, TOO.

BEFORE I TAKE YOU BACK TO SCHOOL, I HAVE A SURPRISE. LET'S GO...



TO AN ICE CREAM SHOP! LOTS OF FLAVORS AND GRANDPA IS AT THE COUNTER DECIDING WHICH ICE CREAM HE WANTS.

HE SAYS IT'S GOOD TO TREAT OURSELVES ONCE IN A WHILE.

THE STATE COURT WASN'T AS SCARY AS I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE.

THE ADVOCATE SAID THAT WE'LL NOW BE WORKING WITH OUR TRIBE, BECAUSE OF THE ICWA AND JURISDICTION STUFF.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THIS WHOLE PROCESS IS TO HELP KEEP ME SAFE AND TO HELP MY MOM GET THE RIGHT SUPPORT SHE NEEDS TO LOOK AFTER ME.



NOW, A QUICK BREAK BEFORE HEADING TO SCHOOL!

GRANDPA LOVES THE GOOSEBERRY. I THINK CHOCOLATE CHERRY IS THE BEST.

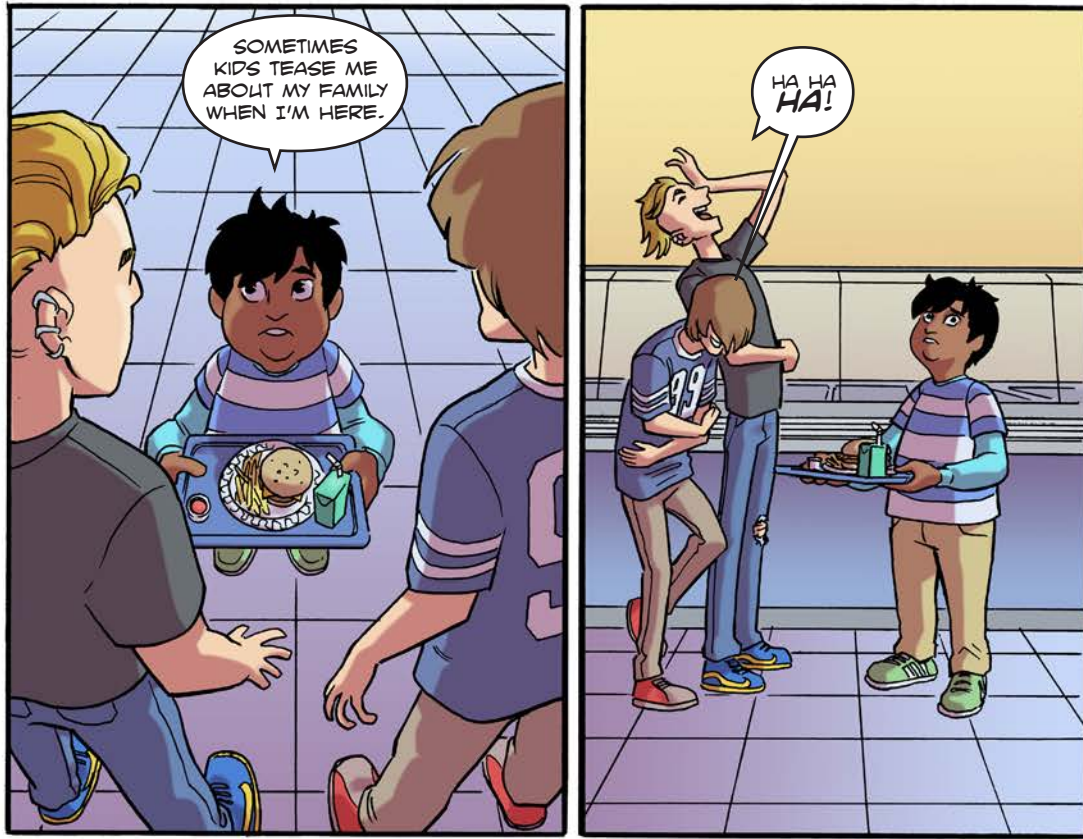


THIS IS WHERE I GO TO SCHOOL.



IT'S A PRETTY GOOD SCHOOL.

I LIKE SOME OF THE TEACHERS 'CAUSE I CAN TALK TO THEM ABOUT THINGS THAT ARE HAPPENING.



Relax BREATHING TRICK

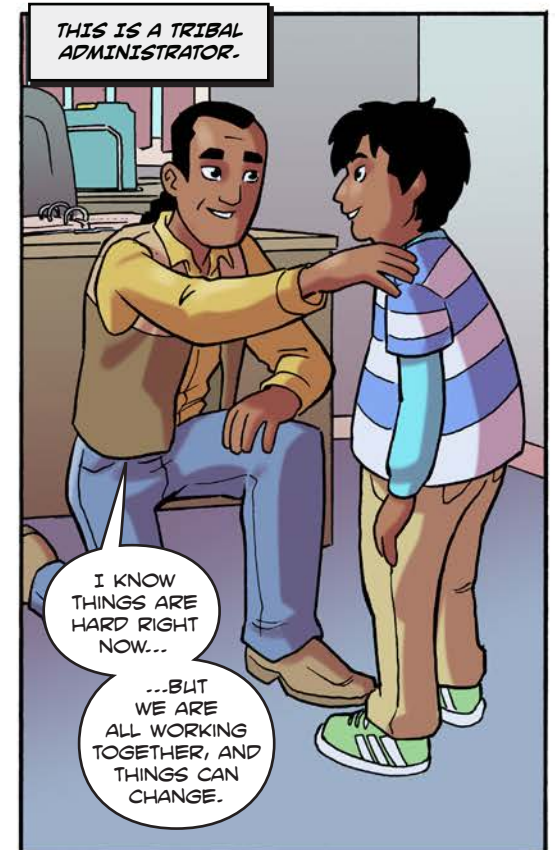
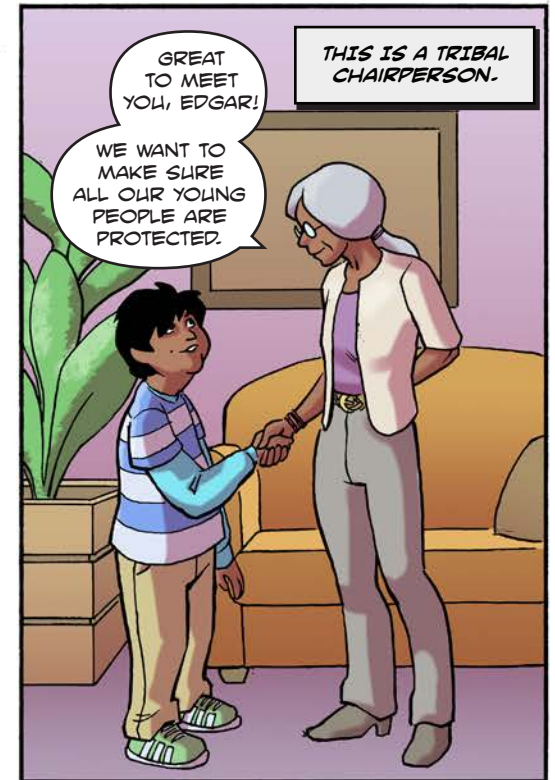
Some kids use this trick to feel calmer when they're stressed or upset. Try this either standing, sitting or lying down.

- 1 Put your hands on your stomach. Take a deep breath, slowly, counting 1-2-3 and feel your stomach rise.
- 2 Hold your breath for a count of 1-2.
- 3 Now breathe out, slowly, counting 1-2-3. Feel your stomach go down.

Try doing this a few times in a row. You can also close your eyes, if you like.

How do you feel afterward?







SOME DAYS I'LL HEAD TO THE REC CENTER.

I LOVE PLAYING BASKETBALL WITH MY FRIENDS. IT HELPS TAKE MY MIND OFF SOME OF MY PROBLEMS.

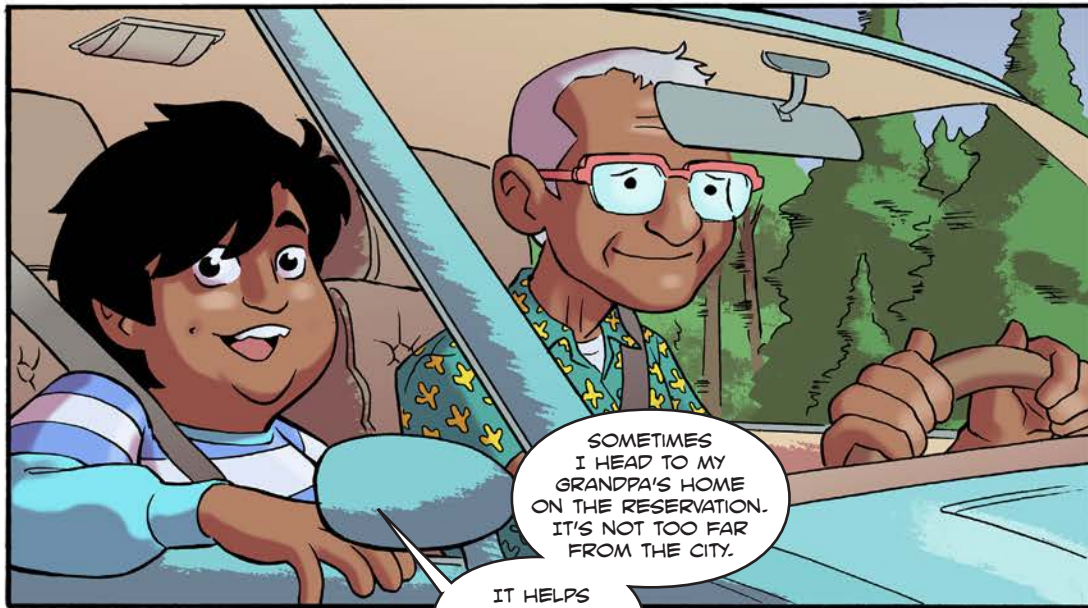


HOW ARE THINGS GOING WITH YOU, EDGAR?

ALRIGHT. IT'S HARD SOMETIMES...BUT THERE ARE LOTS OF PEOPLE TRYING TO HELP ME AND MY MOM.

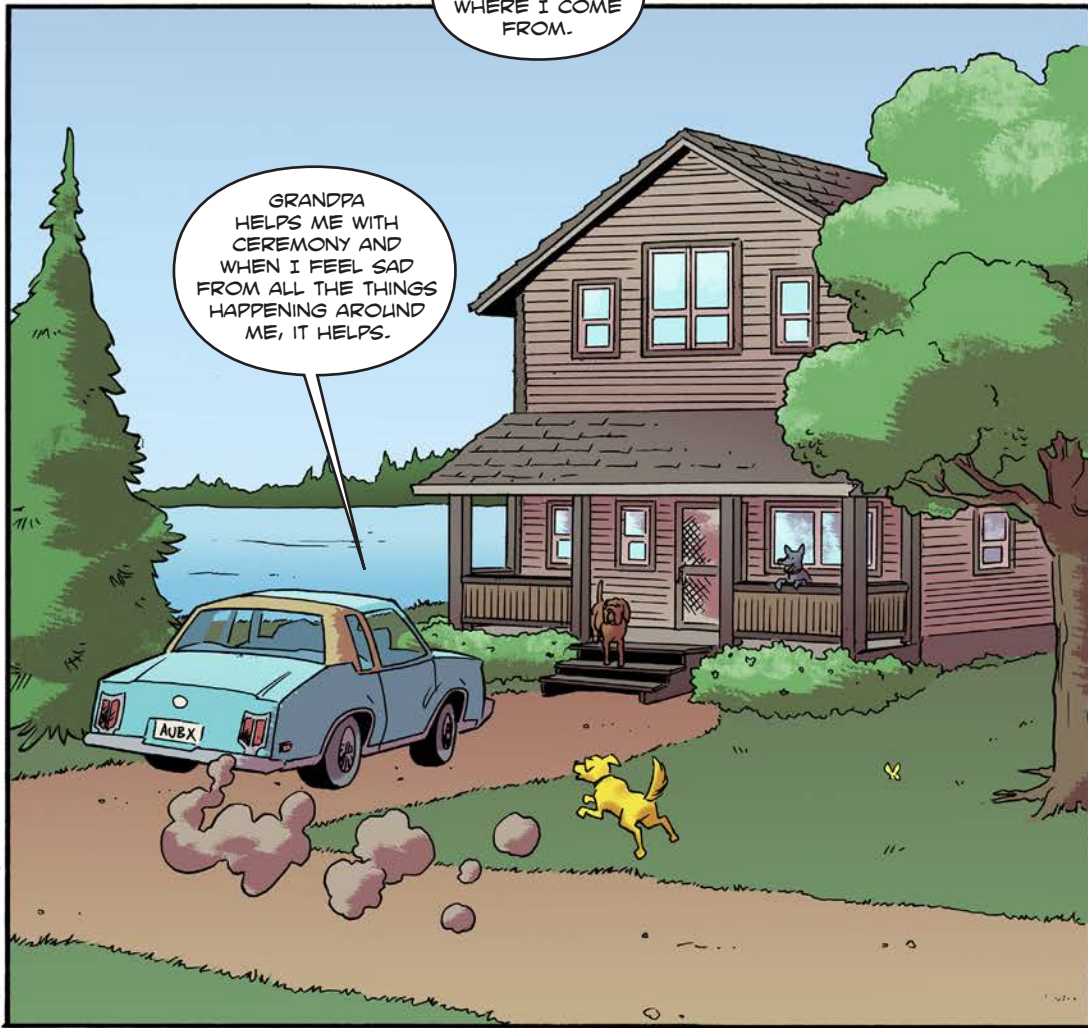
THEY SHOULD HELP YOU WITH YOUR JUMP SHOT!

HA!

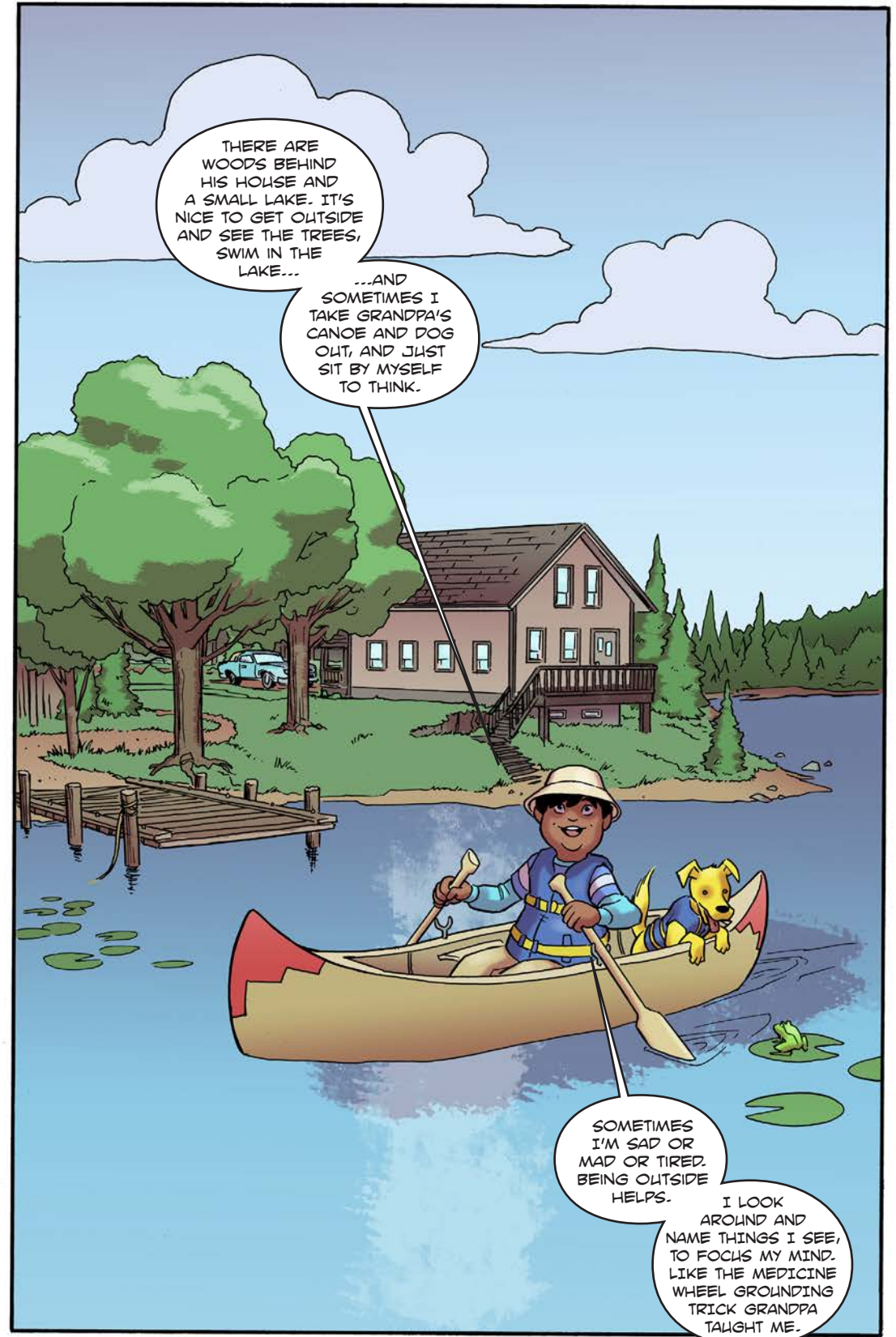


SOMETIMES I HEAD TO MY GRANDPA'S HOME ON THE RESERVATION. IT'S NOT TOO FAR FROM THE CITY.

IT HELPS ME REMEMBER WHERE I COME FROM.



GRANDPA HELPS ME WITH CEREMONY AND WHEN I FEEL SAD FROM ALL THE THINGS HAPPENING AROUND ME, IT HELPS.



THERE ARE WOODS BEHIND HIS HOUSE AND A SMALL LAKE. IT'S NICE TO GET OUTSIDE AND SEE THE TREES, SWIM IN THE LAKE...

...AND SOMETIMES I TAKE GRANDPA'S CANOE AND DOG OUT, AND JUST SIT BY MYSELF TO THINK.

SOMETIMES I'M SAD OR MAD OR TIRED. BEING OUTSIDE HELPS.

I LOOK AROUND AND NAME THINGS I SEE, TO FOCUS MY MIND. LIKE THE MEDICINE WHEEL GROUNDING TRICK GRANDPA TAUGHT ME.



DID YOU KNOW?

The medicine wheel, which has four quadrants, is traditionally used in some tribes as a guide for balance, grounding, finding your way and sometimes for healing.

The number four is also important in many Indigenous communities as it represents the four directions (North, South, East & West) and the four seasons. There are even colors associated with each of the four quadrants.

Does your tribe or community have a teaching about the medicine wheel?

Relax

4-3-2-1

GROUNDING

This calming exercise is based on the concept of the four quadrant wheel, and helped Edgar when he was feeling anxious. You can try this exercise to help you feel more calm, by focusing on four of your senses.

What are **4** things you can see?

Look for **3** things you can touch.

Listen for **2** different sounds.

What's **1** thing you can smell?

Repeat this 4-3-2-1 exercise until you feel grounded and calm.



THIS IS OUR TRIBAL COURTHOUSE.

THERE'S JUDGES AND LAWYERS. THEY GUIDE FAMILIES THROUGH THE COURT PROCESS EVERY DAY. THEY TRY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT KIDS LIKE ME ARE GOING THROUGH, AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP FAMILIES.

THEY ALSO USE THE BIG WORDS AGAIN LIKE ICWA AND JURISDICTION, AND SOVEREIGNTY.

AND BECAUSE OF ALL OF THESE THINGS, MY FAMILY IS NOW WORKING WITH OUR TRIBE INSTEAD OF THE STATE AGENCIES WE WERE WORKING WITH BEFORE.



EVERYONE HERE IS WORKING TO HELP OUR COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN LIKE YOU.



THIS IS A LAWYER.

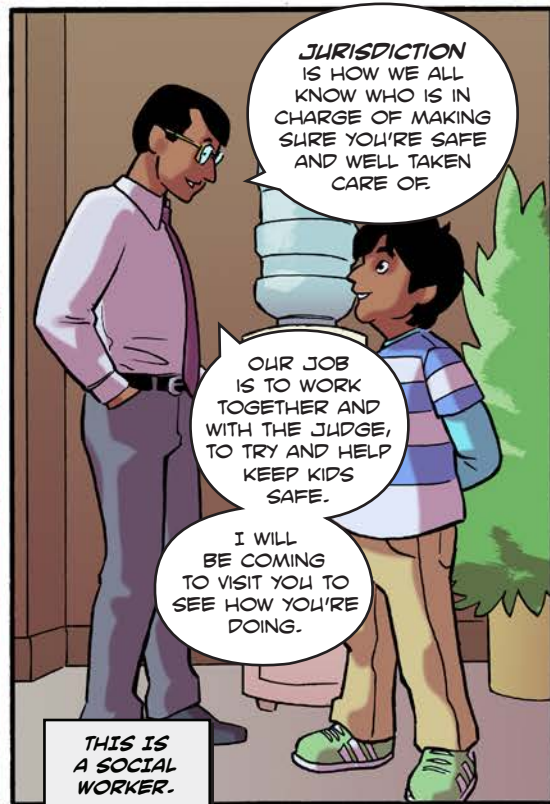
ICWA IS A LAW THAT HELPS TO PROTECT YOU AND YOUR TRIBE.



THIS IS AN ADVOCATE.

SOVEREIGNTY IS WHY OUR TRIBE CAN CREATE OUR OWN LAWS TO TAKE CARE OF OUR PEOPLE, INCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE YOU.

MY JOB IS TO REPRESENT YOU AND LET EVERYONE KNOW WHAT YOU FEEL AND WANT.

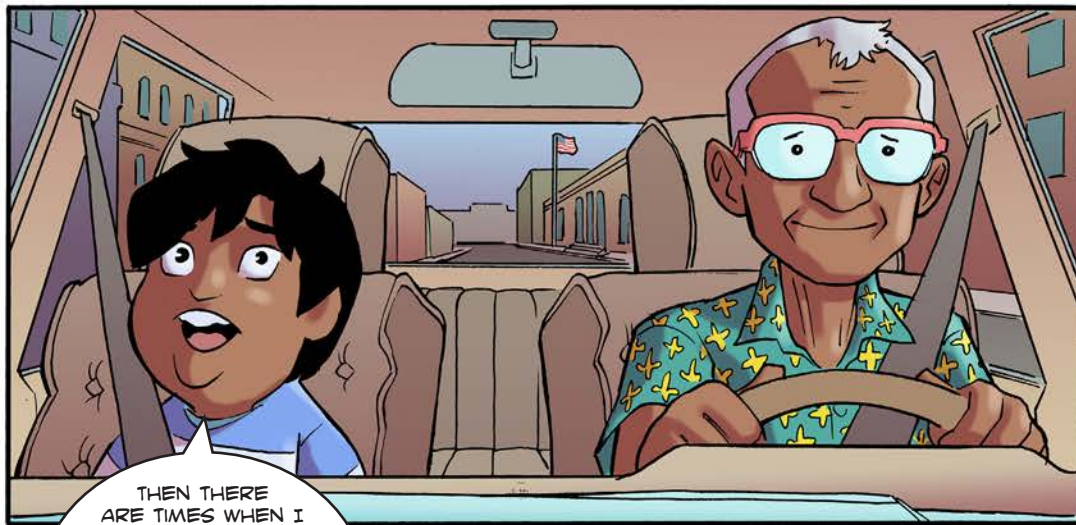


THIS IS A SOCIAL WORKER.

JURISDICTION IS HOW WE ALL KNOW WHO IS IN CHARGE OF MAKING SURE YOU'RE SAFE AND WELL TAKEN CARE OF.

OUR JOB IS TO WORK TOGETHER AND WITH THE JUDGE, TO TRY AND HELP KEEP KIDS SAFE.

I WILL BE COMING TO VISIT YOU TO SEE HOW YOU'RE DOING.



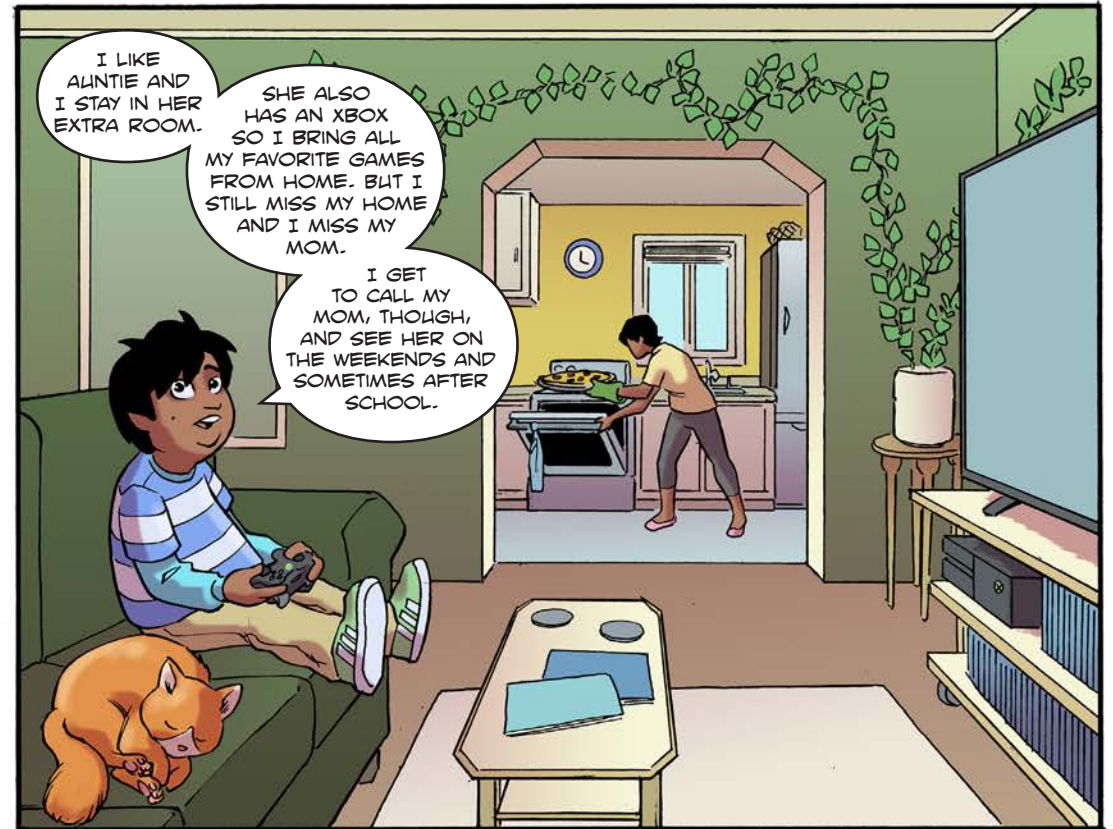
THEN THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I NEED TO STAY WITH A FAMILY MEMBER, BECAUSE MY MOM NEEDS HELP TAKING CARE OF ME AND THE ADULTS WORKING WITH US THINK IT'S NOT SAFE TO STAY AT HOME RIGHT NOW.

SO I GO STAY WITH MY AUNTIE.



EDGAR! DINNER TIME!

GRANDPA AND THE SOCIAL WORKERS SAY IT'S ONLY TEMPORARY, AND THE JUDGE WILL DECIDE LATER WHEN I CAN GO BACK HOME. BUT I'M SAD NOT TO BE AT HOME, RIGHT NOW.



I LIKE AUNTIE AND I STAY IN HER EXTRA ROOM.

SHE ALSO HAS AN XBOX SO I BRING ALL MY FAVORITE GAMES FROM HOME. BUT I STILL MISS MY HOME AND I MISS MY MOM.

I GET TO CALL MY MOM, THOUGH, AND SEE HER ON THE WEEKENDS AND SOMETIMES AFTER SCHOOL.



AUNTIE HAS LOTS OF PILLOWS AND BLANKETS, SO WE SOMETIMES BUILD A BLANKET TENT!

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN? ARE YOU DOING OKAY?



I'M OKAY, AUNTIE. I AM SAD AND A LITTLE SCARED BUT OKAY.

THAT'S ALRIGHT. IT'S OKAY TO BE SAD AND SCARED. I KNOW YOU MISS YOUR MOM AND YOU'RE SAD THAT YOU'RE NOT AT HOME.

BUT YOUR MOM IS WORKING REALLY HARD TO GET HELP, AND I'M HERE TO HELP YOU, TOO.

MAYBE WE CAN DO A LITTLE EXERCISE TO HELP YOU FEEL BETTER?

Relax MUSCLE SQUEEZE

When people are stressed, their muscles can feel really tight! Try this 4-step exercise to relax your body when feeling anxious.

- 1 Curl up and squeeze just your toes, and hold for two seconds. Then relax your toes and shake them out!
- 2 Squeeze your entire foot (both feet!) for two seconds. Then relax your feet.
- 3 Squeeze your legs for two seconds, and then relax and shake them out.
- 4 For two seconds squeeze your whole body - including your shoulders, arms, hands, stomach, legs, feet and toes! Then release and relax.

You can repeat all of the steps until you start to feel calm.



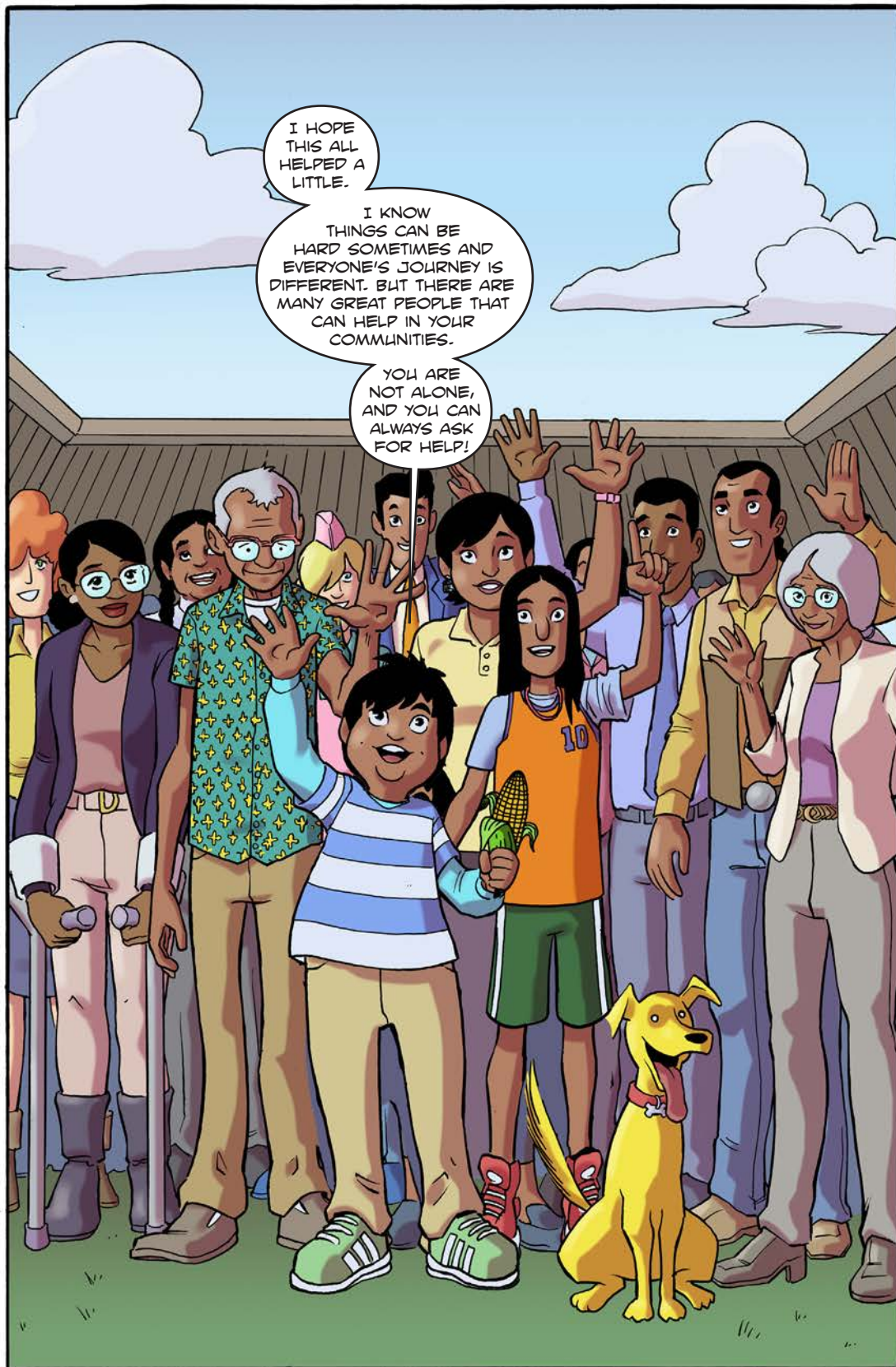


THE POW WOW WAS THE LAST STOP ON THIS MAP OF MY JOURNEY...SO FAR.

I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I'LL HAVE TO STAY AT MY AUNTIE'S HOUSE, OR HOW LONG IT'LL TAKE FOR MY MOM TO GET THE HELP SHE NEEDS, SO THAT I CAN GO BACK HOME.

BUT I KNOW I HAVE LOTS OF PEOPLE THAT I CAN TALK TO AND WHO CAN HELP ME, AND THAT MAKES ME FEEL BETTER.

AND DRAWING THIS MAP OF MY JOURNEY MAKES ME FEEL BETTER, TOO.



In Edgar's story, he met many adults such as social workers, advocates, and tribal administrators who were all working to support his family. Edgar also went to the state courthouse and then his family's case was transferred to his tribe, due to ICWA. Edgar then had to stay with his auntie while his mom receives help.



Things like this happen to other kids and families, but every situation is different. For example, not all kids go to different courthouses like Edgar did. In some cases, kids might be asked to go into the courtroom and speak with the judge. Also, not all kids stay with their auntie if they can't stay at home. Some stay with other family members and some stay with a different family that is not related to them, which is called foster care.

If you need to stay somewhere else for a while, remember that you can ask questions and ask for things to help you feel more comfortable. Edgar took his favorite video games with him to his auntie's house, and you too can ask to take some of your favorite things from home with you.

No matter what your situation, please remember that what has happened is not your fault, and you are not alone. Like Edgar, you can ask for help from the adults working with you and from your family, friends and community.

Sharing OUR FEELINGS

How do you think Edgar felt throughout his story? Did he show or talk about any feelings that you have, too? Do you have other feelings that Edgar didn't have? If so, that's ok. You're allowed to feel any way that you do.

Storytelling is an important part of Indigenous communities across North America. The sharing of stories helps people stay connected with their past, preserve their cultures and help build a positive future.

Edgar shared his feelings and was able to get help from the people around him, which made him feel better.

So if you're ready, talking about your feelings with people that you trust can be a positive thing!



There are other things you can do to feel better, too. Check out the checklist of coping skills on the next page!

Checklist COPING SKILLS

When you feel angry, worried, sad or even unfocused you can...

- Read a book (like this one!) or look at some happy pictures
- Think of a happy memory or a peaceful place
- Build something or do a puzzle
- Help someone or do a chore
- Get a drink of water or eat a healthy snack
- Draw or color
- Ask for a hug
- Hang out with friends & family
- Say a prayer or do a spiritual activity
- Ask for help
- Go outside or be in nature



What other activities make you feel good?
Is there someone in your community you can ask about other kinds of traditional coping skills?

This book is just one in a series produced by the Center for Court Innovation.



AIYANA'S JOURNEY

Aiyana is a little girl whose story is an example of a child welfare case. She meets some new grown-ups, goes to some new places and learns about things she can do to feel better.



MARVIS & ROCKEE

Marvis is a little boy who is a witness in a criminal court case. He meets with different grown-ups who ask him questions about what happened, and help him to do things to feel better.



MARVELOUS MITCH

Mitch is a school-age kid who is a witness in a criminal court case. She meets with new adults who ask her questions, teach her how the legal system works, and help her feel better.



BRANDON'S PATH

Brandon is a teen whose story is an example of a child welfare case. His story follows a 'choose your own adventure' style where he meets new adults, learns to ask for help and things he can do to feel better.



MAGGIE MERCURY: TEENAGE EXTRAORDINAIRE

Maggie is a teen who was a witness in a criminal court case. She hosts an online blog where she and her friends talk about what can happen when a young person is the victim or witness in a criminal case, which can be complicated for Native teens.

We recognize that Native children and families have diverse experiences with the child welfare and criminal legal systems, and some of these may not be positive.

While we unfortunately cannot guarantee that you will have the same experience as the characters in this story, it can be helpful to remember that you always have the right to request what you need, and that there are people working to make these systems better, who will listen and take the time to understand your situation.

EDGAR'S JOURNEY

WRITTEN BY

Dr. Lee Francis IV

Tribal Community | Pueblo of Laguna

About

Dr. Francis is an accomplished writer with numerous publications in print, ranging from poetry to academic to fiction, focusing on Indigenous community stories and pop culture. When not writing, he works with incarcerated youth in New Mexico, teaching comic book workshops to Native youths at the local detention high school.

He has written for *Deer Woman: An Anthology*; *Native Realities Anthology*; *Tales of the Mighty Code Talkers*; *Captain Paiute*; *Kau*; *Tribal Force*; *MOONSHOT: The Indigenous Collection*; and his comic book, *Sixkiller*, has been optioned for television.

ILLUSTRATED BY

David Cutler

Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation

About

David is a Newfoundland-born artist based in Toronto, Canada. He studied Illustration for The Sequential Arts, and has been working in comics for over a decade. He is a frequent special guest artist at comic book shows and events.

His comic book work has appeared in various publications, magazines, and commercial titles including *Wonderland*; *Robyn Hood vs Red Riding Hood*; *Snow White vs Snow White*; *The Secret World of Glacier Thorne*; *Hacktivist*; *Northern Guard*; *MOONSHOT: The Indigenous Comics Collection Volumes 1-3*; and the popular North American youth series, *Adventure Time*.



The Center for Court Innovation's Child Witness Materials Project is a collaborative effort between the Center for Court Innovation and Alternate History Comics, Inc. and is supported by cooperative agreement #2018-V3-CX-K069, awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The characters, names, events, and likenesses thereof are fictitious. Any relation to real events, people, or locations is unintentional and used in a fictitious manner.

The Center for Court Innovation works to create a more effective and humane justice system by performing original research and helping launch reforms around the world. www.courtinnovation.org

Alternate History Comics is a multiple award-winning publishing company that creates original graphic novels and cultural comic collections. <http://ahcomics.com>

The Center for Court Innovation is grateful to the project partners and stakeholders; justice system practitioners; and young survivors from all over the country who contributed to the development of this product.

NCJ 305307

The Office for Victims of Crime is committed to enhancing the Nation's capacity to assist crime victims and to providing leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practices to promote justice and healing for all victims of crime.

www.ovc.ojp.gov

The Office of Justice Programs is a federal agency that provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance, and other resources to improve the Nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims, and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Its six program offices—the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office for Victims of Crime, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking—support state and local crime-fighting efforts, fund thousands of victim service programs, help communities manage sex offenders, address the needs of youth in the system and children in danger, and provide vital research and data.



Office for Victims of Crime
OVC