

BRANDON'S PATH



You might be going through a lot right now, and things may feel really confusing. It's normal to have many 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 young people, too.



In this book you'll find some information about:

- What could happen next
- People you might see or talk to
- Ways to manage your feelings



You can keep this book.
Read it, write in it, ask questions,
whatever. Hopefully it helps.



This is Brandon's story.



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



In this story, which follows a 'choose your own adventure' style, Brandon makes different choices and meets new adults. He learns about his feelings, asking for help, and some things he can do to feel better.

Some of Brandon's experiences might be different from what you're going through. Brandon 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 Brandon'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.

BRANDON'S HOME,
PRESENT DAY...

"MY GRANDMA TOLD
ME ONCE, 'LIFE IS
ABOUT CHOICE..'"

ARGH!
WHY
NOW?!?

"I'M NOT REAL SURE
WHAT THAT MEANS,
EXACTLY."

"RIGHT NOW, I'M TRYING TO
MAKE THE CHOICE TO FIND
MY MEDICINE POUCH."

AH,
C'MON!

WHERE
IS IT?



"THE TIMING COULD
NOT BE WORSE."

"WE'RE HEADED TO
A FAMILY COOKOUT
AND EVERYONE IS
WAITING ON ME."



BRANDON!
LET'S GO! WE'RE
ALL WAITING ON
YOU, BOY!

BE
RIGHT
THERE,
MOM!

"WHERE DID
I PUT IT?"



"MY MEDICINE
BAG IS
IMPORTANT-
GRANDMA MADE
IT JUST FOR ME."

"AND IT'S NOT LIKE
I HAVE IT OUT. I
KEEP IT WITH ME
ALL THE TIME..."

"...EVEN WHEN
I SLEEP."

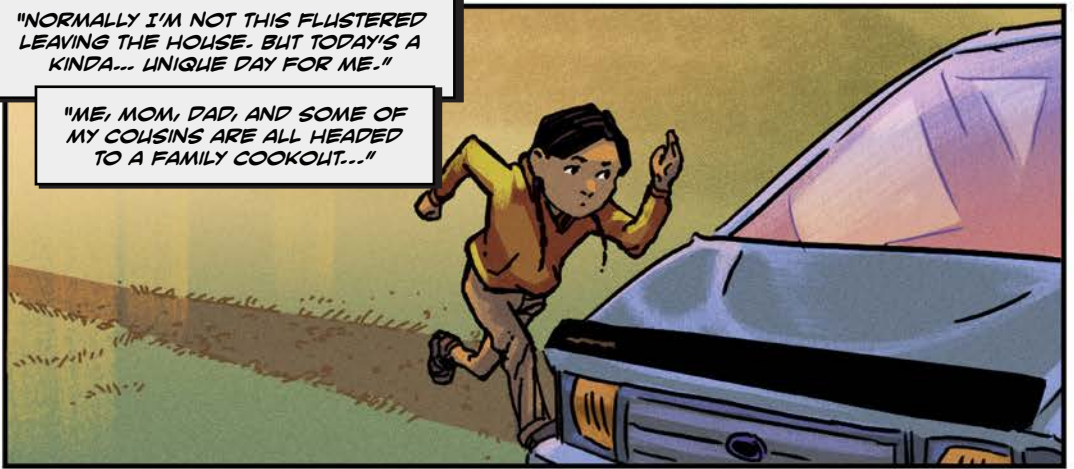
AH!
SLEEP.
GOT IT!



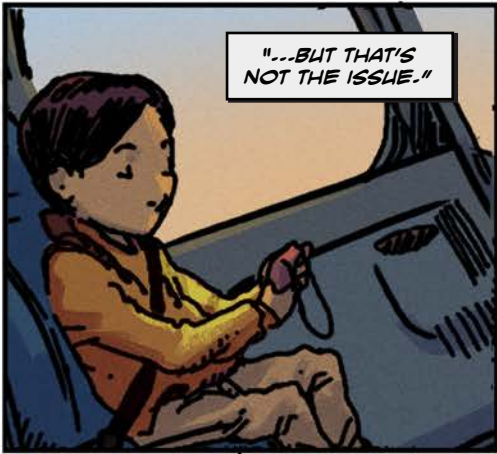
GOTCHA!
THERE
YOU ARE!

"NORMALLY I'M NOT THIS FLUSTERED LEAVING THE HOUSE. BUT TODAY'S A KINDA... UNIQUE DAY FOR ME."

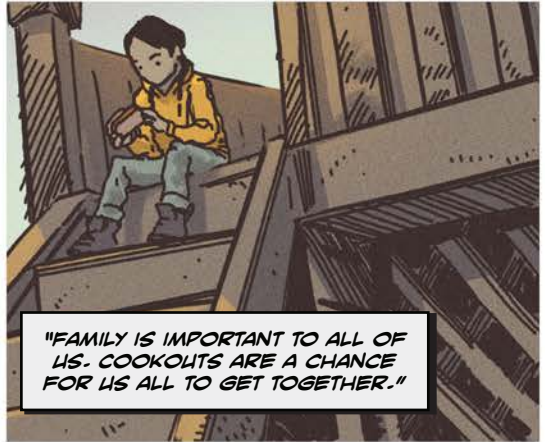
"ME, MOM, DAD, AND SOME OF MY COUSINS ARE ALL HEADED TO A FAMILY COOKOUT..."



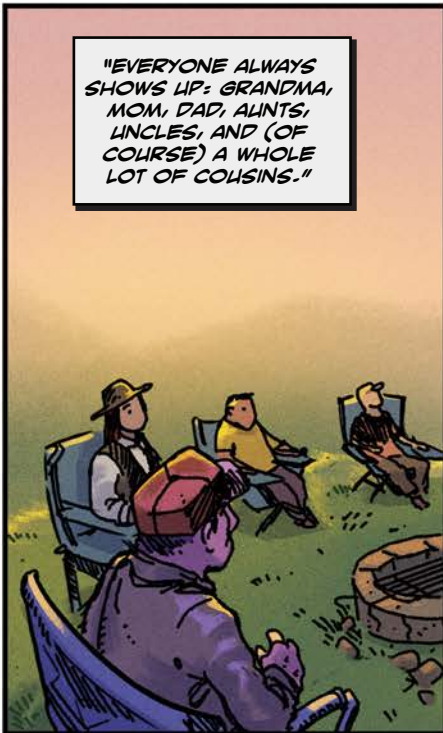
"...BUT THAT'S NOT THE ISSUE."



"FAMILY IS IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US. COOKOUTS ARE A CHANCE FOR US ALL TO GET TOGETHER."



"EVERYONE ALWAYS SHOWS UP: GRANDMA, MOM, DAD, AUNTS, UNCLSES, AND (OF COURSE) A WHOLE LOT OF COUSINS."



"I'VE ALWAYS HAD A GREAT TIME AT OUR FAMILY GATHERINGS."

"EXCEPT FOR THE LAST FAMILY COOKOUT. THAT TIME WAS DIFFERENT..."

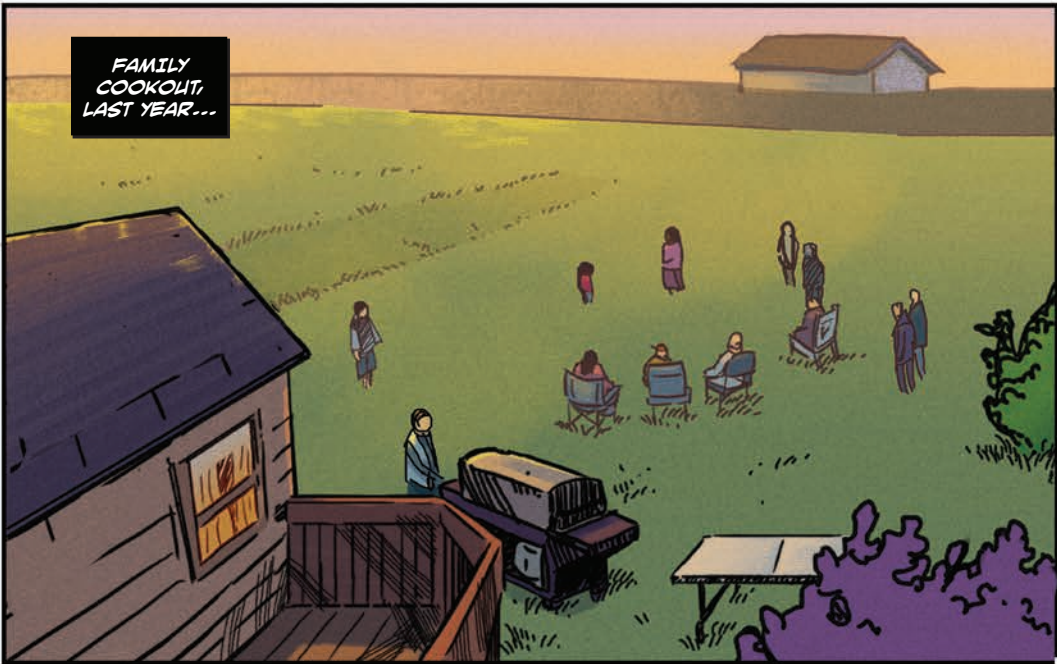
"...AND IT ALMOST MADE ME WANT TO NEVER COME BACK TO ANOTHER COOKOUT."



"EVER."

"YOU SEE, SOMETHING HAPPENED AT OUR LAST FAMILY GATHERING..."

FAMILY
COOKOUT,
LAST YEAR...



"...BUT IT DIDN'T
HAPPEN IN FRONT
OF EVERYBODY -
ONLY I SAW."



"AND IT DIDN'T FEEL
GOOD AT ALL."



Relax

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

There are moments in Brandon's story - and there will be in your life - when you feel scared, anxious, angry or sad.

This meditation exercise can help calm your thoughts, and can be done anywhere.



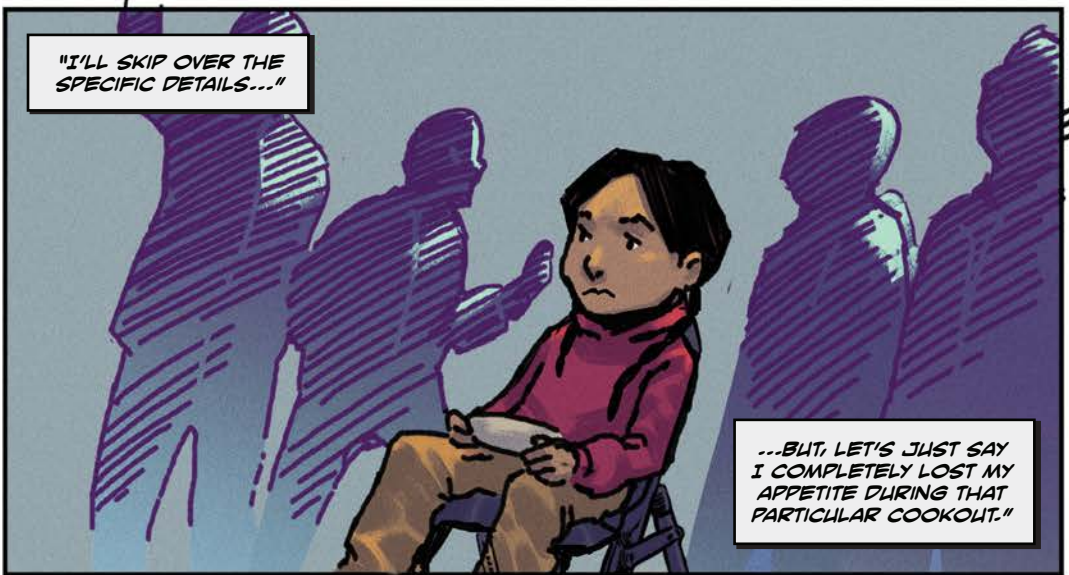
Have you ever seen the mist cover a field early in the morning? When the sun rises and the light shines, the mist calmly disappears.

If you need to feel calm at any time, close your eyes and imagine a field. That field is you, and your thoughts are the mist.

Now imagine the sun rising in your mind, and the light begins to warm up the mist and allow it to evaporate.

The mist disappears and all you can see is your peaceful field.





"I'LL SKIP OVER THE SPECIFIC DETAILS..."

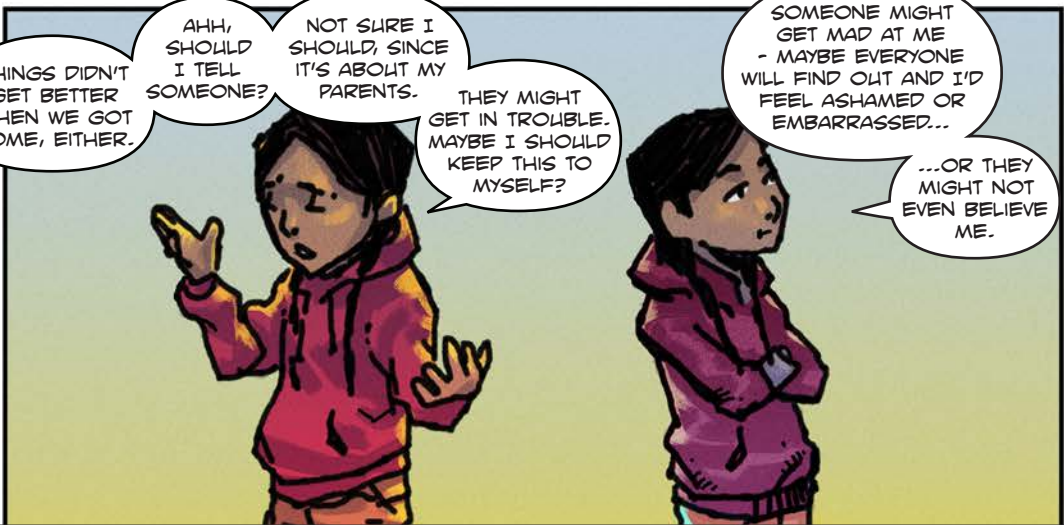
...BUT, LET'S JUST SAY I COMPLETELY LOST MY APPETITE DURING THAT PARTICULAR COOKOUT."



"THAT HARDLY EVER HAPPENS, TOO. I SEEM TO ALWAYS BE HUNGRY."



UGH. THIS SUCKS! WHAT DO I DO?



THINGS DIDN'T GET BETTER WHEN WE GOT HOME, EITHER.

AHH, SHOULD I TELL SOMEONE?

NOT SURE I SHOULD, SINCE IT'S ABOUT MY PARENTS.

THEY MIGHT GET IN TROUBLE. MAYBE I SHOULD KEEP THIS TO MYSELF?

SOMEONE MIGHT GET MAD AT ME - MAYBE EVERYONE WILL FIND OUT AND I'D FEEL ASHAMED OR EMBARRASSED...

...OR THEY MIGHT NOT EVEN BELIEVE ME.

SHOULD BRANDON TELL SOMEONE WHAT HAPPENED OR REMAIN SILENT?

IF YOU THINK HE SHOULD TELL SOMEONE ABOUT THE INCIDENT, TURN TO PAGE 11

IF YOU THINK BRANDON SHOULD KEEP QUIET ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED, READ THE NEXT PAGE...

"SIGH. AT FIRST, I THOUGHT IT'D BE BEST FOR EVERYONE IF I JUST KEPT QUIET."

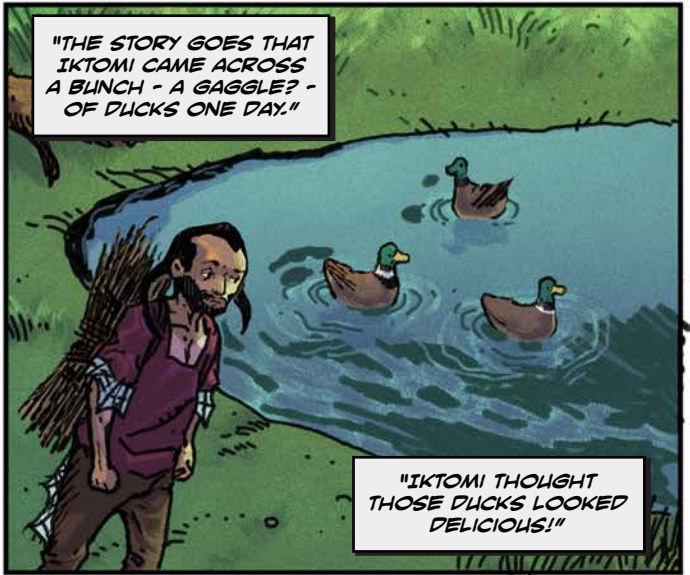
"I MEAN, IT IS A SMALL TOWN AND EVERYONE KNOWS EACH OTHER."

"BUT THEN I REMEMBERED MY GRANDMA TOLD ME HOW HARMFUL SECRETS CAN BE."



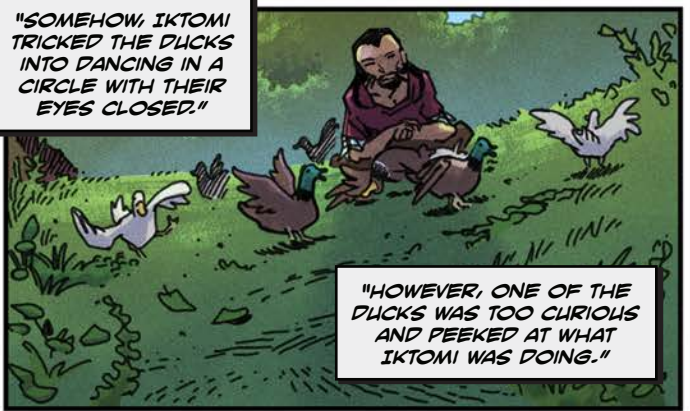
"TO PROVE HER POINT, GRANDMA TOLD ME THE STORY OF 'IKTOMI AND THE DUCKS.'"

"THE STORY GOES THAT IKTOMI CAME ACROSS A BLUNCH - A GAGGLE? - OF DUCKS ONE DAY."



"IKTOMI THOUGHT THOSE DUCKS LOOKED DELICIOUS!"

"SOMEHOW, IKTOMI TRICKED THE DUCKS INTO DANCING IN A CIRCLE WITH THEIR EYES CLOSED."



"HOWEVER, ONE OF THE DUCKS WAS TOO CURIOUS AND PEEKED AT WHAT IKTOMI WAS DOING."



"THE ONE DUCK SAW WHAT IKTOMI WAS REALLY UP TO..."



"...IKTOMI HAD THE DUCKS CLOSE THEIR EYES, SO HE COULD EASILY CATCH THEM FOR HIS DINNER."



"WHEN THAT DUCK SAW WHAT IKTOMI WAS DOING, IT YELLED OUT TO THE OTHER DUCKS, TELLING THEM TO RUN AWAY."

"THE DUCKS ALL RAN AWAY AND FOILED IKTOMI'S PLAN TO CAPTURE THEM."



"GRANDMA'S POINT WAS - HAD THE ONE DUCK KEPT QUIET ABOUT WHAT IKTOMI WAS DOING, ALL OF THE OTHER DUCKS WOULDN'T HAVE MADE IT."

"BECAUSE ONE DUCK WAS BRAVE ENOUGH TO TELL THE TRUTH, MANY OTHERS WERE SAVED."



"IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE ALL TRY TO DO THE RIGHT THING WHEN WE CAN."



GRANDMA'S RIGHT - STAYING SILENT ISN'T THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

GUESS I BETTER TELL SOMEONE WHAT HAPPENED.

"THIS SILLY DUCK REMINDS ME OF THE STORY GRANDMA TOLD ME ABOUT KEEPING SECRETS."



GRANDMA SAYS SECRETS CAN END UP HURTING OTHERS, SO I NEED TO TELL SOMEONE.



"I MADE THE DECISION TO TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED AT THE COOKOUT AND AT HOME THAT DAY."



"NOW...WHO CAN I TALK TO?"



"MAN! DECIDING WHO TO TALK TO SEEMS EVEN HARDER THAN DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO TALK TO SOMEONE!"





OK, SO WHO DO WE HAVE HERE. MOM AND DAD?

UGH, OBVIOUSLY NOT THEM. PASS.



YEAH! THERE WE GO. I'LL TALK WITH TAMMY. SHE'S GREAT.

"TAMMY IS ONE OF MY VERY GOOD FRIENDS--MAYBE EVEN MY BEST FRIEND."



"WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR A LONG TIME, EVEN THOUGH..."



"...SHE ALMOST KNOCKED ME OVER THE FIRST TIME WE MET."

COF!



"BUT TAMMY IS SOMEONE I CAN TRUST."

"I DECIDED TO TRY MY BEST FRIEND, TAMMY."

OK, HERE GOES.

TamTam

Hey! Wassup?

Hey! Wassup?

Nothing much.
Are you busy?

Hey! Wassup?

Nothing much.
Are you busy?

Ugh, kind of! I'm
studying for this big
exam tomorrow 🙄

But are you ok?

Nothing much.
Are you busy?

Ugh, kind of! I'm
studying for this big
exam tomorrow 🙄

But are you ok?

Yep I'm all good, no
worries. Good luck
for tomorrow! 🙄

Hey! Wassup?

Nothing much.
Are you busy?

Ugh, kind of! I'm
studying for this big
exam tomorrow 🙄

But are you ok?

Yep I'm all good, no
worries. Good luck
for tomorrow! 🙄

"I'M SURE TAMMY WOULD HAVE MADE TIME TO CHAT, BUT I DON'T FEEL LIKE LAYING THIS ON HER NOW. LET ME TRY SOMEONE ELSE.."



"OF COURSE: GRANDMA. WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF HER TO START WITH?"



SIGH. OK, HERE GOES.



WHOA! WEIRD.

BZZT!



HEY, GRANDMA, WHAT'S UP?

BRANDON? YOU ANSWERED REALLY QUICK!



I KNOW! I ALREADY HAD MY PHONE OUT WHEN YOU CALLED!

YOU OK? BEEN THINKING ABOUT YOU TODAY AND THOUGHT I'D CALL AND CHECK IN ON YA.



"WOW. GRANDMA FOR THE WIN.."

"I TELL HER EVERYTHING. I CAN'T STOP TALKING - IT'S LIKE SOMEONE ELSE IS CONTROLLING MY MOUTH."
"I GUESS I REALLY DID NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE.."





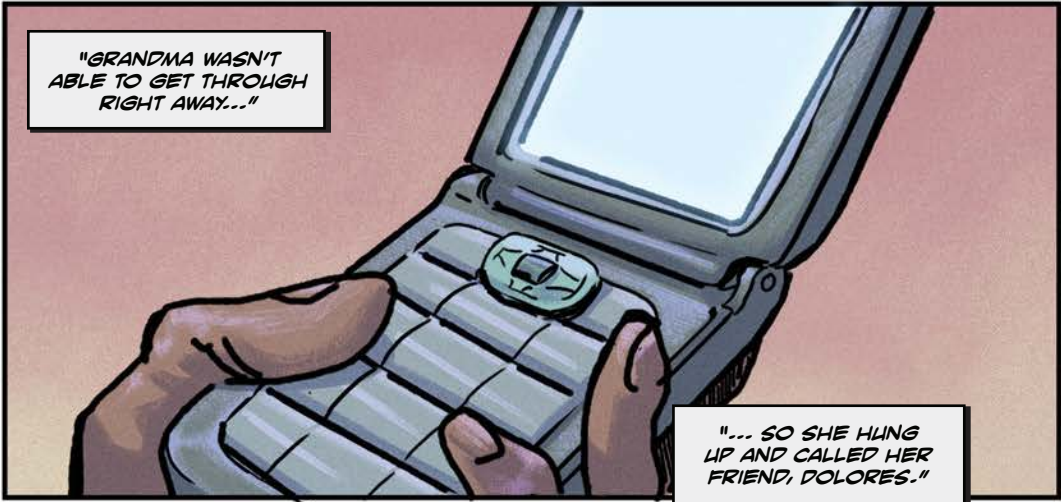
"GRANDMA SAID SHE NEEDED A LITTLE TIME TO THINK ABOUT WHAT TO DO, AND WOULD CALL ME BACK."

"SHE DECIDED TO CALL THE TRIBAL AUTHORITIES."

"I DIDN'T KNOW WHO THEY WERE, BUT GRANDMA TOLD ME THAT THEY'RE THE TRIBAL CHILD WELFARE PEOPLE, SOMETIMES CALLED SOCIAL SERVICES."

"IT'S THEIR JOB TO SUPPORT FAMILIES AND TRY TO MAKE SURE THAT KIDS ARE SAFE AT HOME."

"GRANDMA WANTED TO CALL THEM, TO HELP KEEP ME SAFE."



"GRANDMA WASN'T ABLE TO GET THROUGH RIGHT AWAY..."

"... SO SHE HUNG UP AND CALLED HER FRIEND, DOLORES."

"GRANDMA SAYS HER FRIEND DOLORES SAT ON THE TRIBAL COUNCIL AND KNOWS HOW TO DEAL WITH SITUATIONS LIKE THIS."

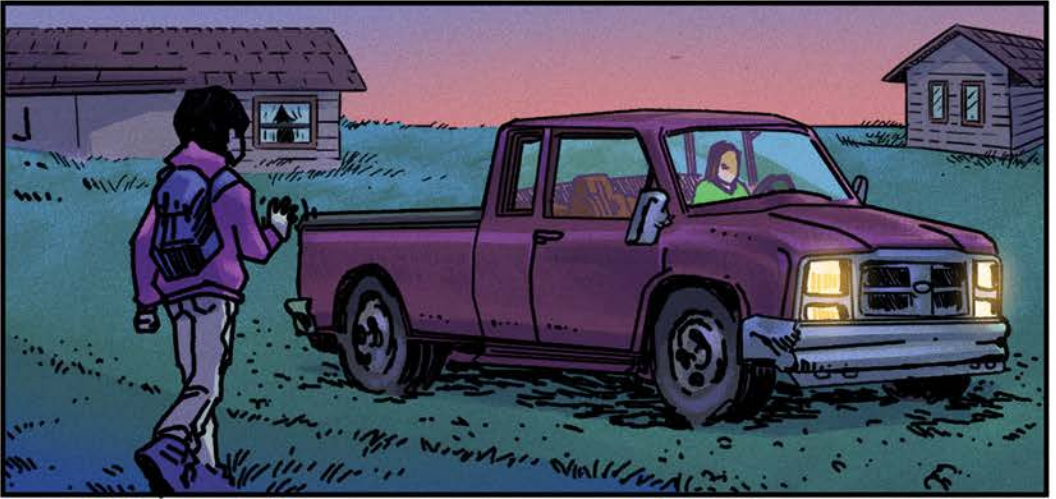


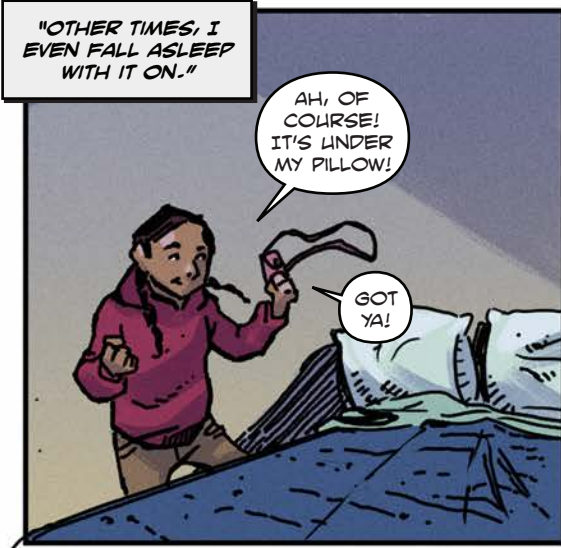
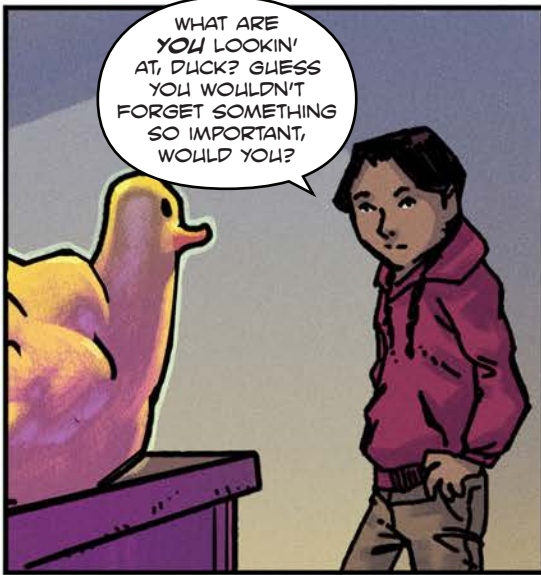
I WANT YOU TO COME STAY WITH ME JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE, TO KEEP ME COMPANY. OK?

OK SURE, GRANDMA.

I'LL GIVE YOUR PARENTS A CALL NOW AND TALK TO THEM ABOUT THIS. YOU GO GET SOME STUFF TOGETHER, THEN WE'LL HEAD OUT.



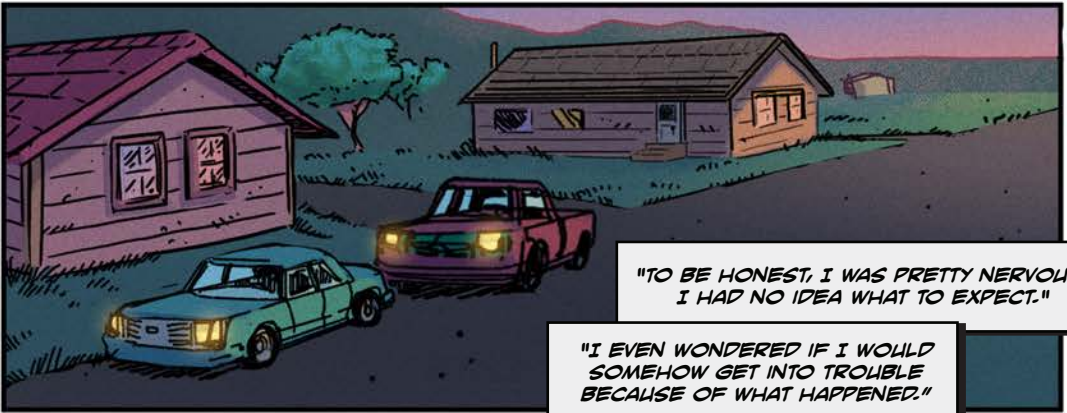






"NEXT MORNING, GRANDMA GOT ME UP AND TOOK ME BACK TO MY HOUSE."

"SHE SAID WE HAD TO MEET SOME PEOPLE THERE, SAID THEY'D WANT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED."



"TO BE HONEST, I WAS PRETTY NERVOUS. I HAD NO IDEA WHAT TO EXPECT."

"I EVEN WONDERED IF I WOULD SOMEHOW GET INTO TROUBLE BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED."



"ALSO, WHAT ABOUT MOM AND DAD? I WONDER WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT ALL THIS - DO THEY SOMEHOW BLAME ME FOR WHAT HAPPENED?"

"THE LADY FROM THE TRIBAL SOCIAL SERVICES WAS NAMED PHYLLIS AND SHE WAS ACTUALLY VERY NICE."



"SHE ASKED A LOT OF QUESTIONS AND WROTE A LOT OF THINGS DOWN."

"I WAS VERY UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT EVERYTHING, BUT I WAS GLAD I HAD GRANDMA'S SUPPORT AND MY MEDICINE POUCH WITH ME."

"IN FACT, WHEN IT CAME TO TALKING ABOUT THE INCIDENT AND WHO WAS INVOLVED, I WAS SO NERVOUS. I FELT SICK TO MY STOMACH."

"FOR REAL."



"IT'S A SMALL TOWN AND EVERYONE KNOWS EVERYONE ELSE."

"NOT ONLY WERE THE PEOPLE INVOLVED MY PARENTS, BUT THEY'RE ALSO WELL-KNOWN AROUND THE COMMUNITY."

"I'M SURE NEWS WILL TRAVEL FAST."



"I CAN FEEL MY PALMS GETTING SWEATY AND MY HANDS CLENCHING."

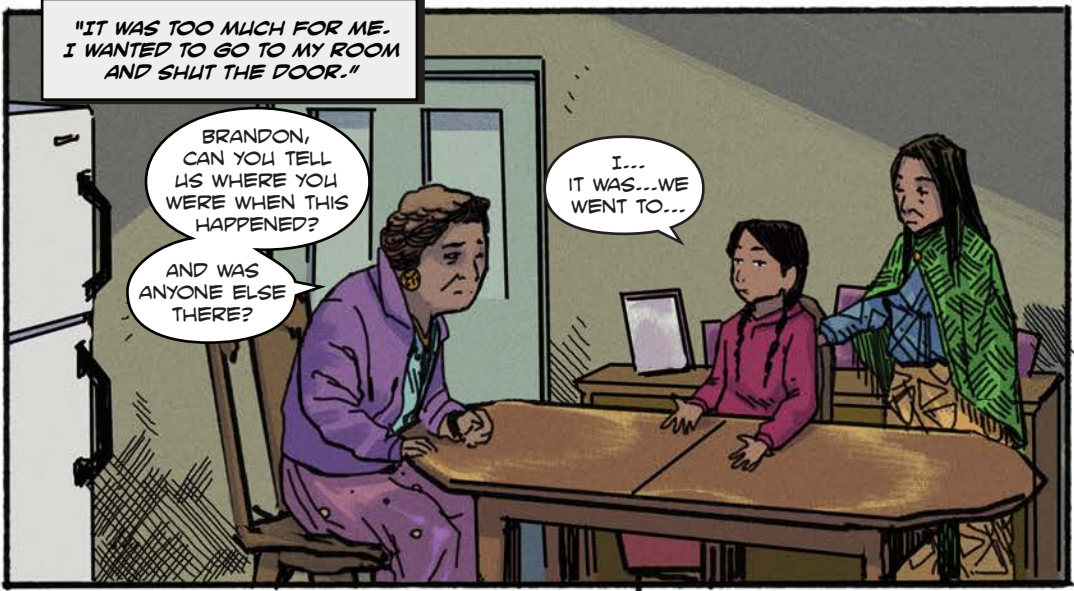
"UGH. I CAN'T DEAL WITH ALL THIS. MAYBE I SHOULD JUST FORGET THE WHOLE THING."



SHOULD BRANDON STAY QUIET TO PROTECT HIS PARENTS?

IF YOU THINK HE SHOULD TELL EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED TO THE CASE WORKER, THEN TURN TO PAGE 22

IF YOU THINK HE SHOULD STAY QUIET TO PROTECT HIS PARENTS, READ THE NEXT PAGE...



"IT WAS TOO MUCH FOR ME. I WANTED TO GO TO MY ROOM AND SHUT THE DOOR."

BRANDON, CAN YOU TELL US WHERE YOU WERE WHEN THIS HAPPENED?

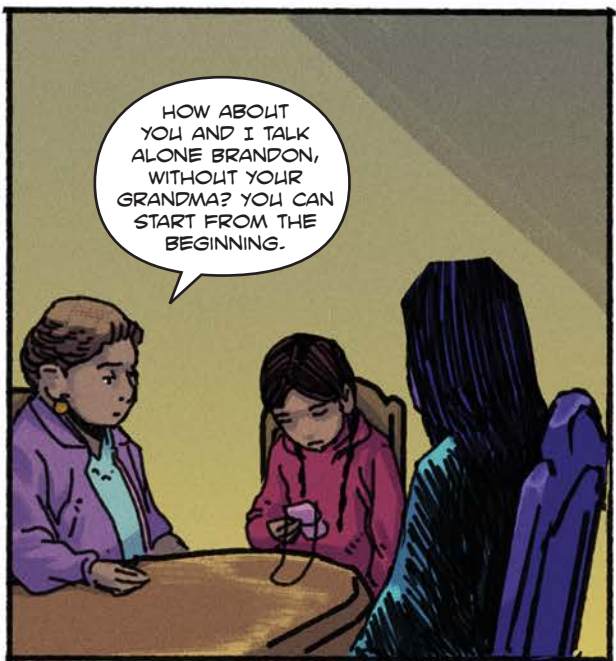
AND WAS ANYONE ELSE THERE?

I... IT WAS...WE WENT TO...



"UGH! WHY DO I HAVE TO DO THIS?!"

THAT'S OK. LET'S COME BACK TO THAT. I KNOW I'VE BEEN ASKING A LOT OF QUESTIONS.



HOW ABOUT YOU AND I TALK ALONE BRANDON, WITHOUT YOUR GRANDMA? YOU CAN START FROM THE BEGINNING.



"PART OF ME WANTS TO SHOUT AT HER TO JUST GO AWAY..."



"...BUT I KNOW I CAN'T DO THAT. I DON'T LIKE THIS FEELING."

"I'VE HAD THIS FEELING BEFORE, AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO THEN, EITHER."



I THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA FOR YOU TWO TO TALK ALONE.

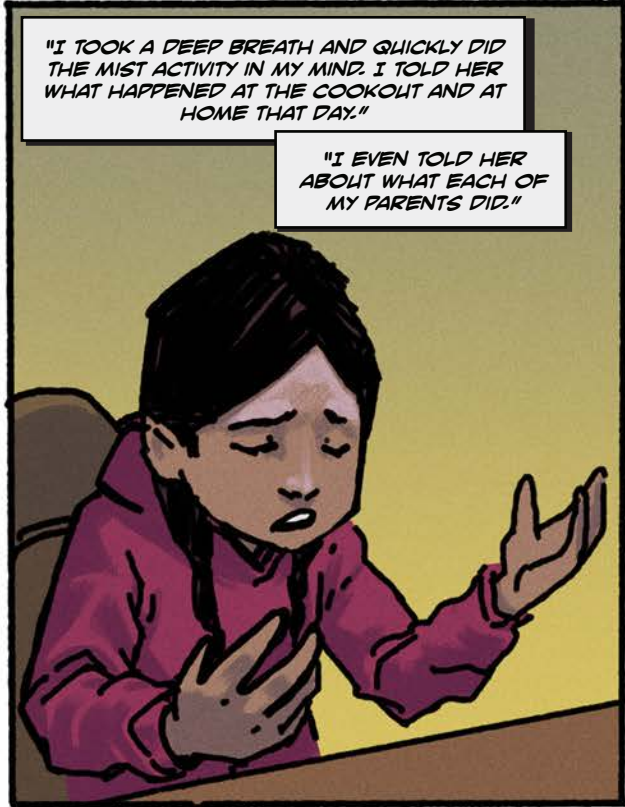
I'LL WAIT IN THE OTHER ROOM. WE KNOW THIS IS HARD BRANDON.



BUT WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY IS IMPORTANT. REMEMBER THE MIST ACTIVITY I TOLD YOU ABOUT? IT WILL HELP CALM YOUR THOUGHTS.



RIGHT, GRANDMA. THAT'S A GOOD IDEA. SIGH. OK.



"I TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND QUICKLY DID THE MIST ACTIVITY IN MY MIND. I TOLD HER WHAT HAPPENED AT THE COOKOUT AND AT HOME THAT DAY."

"I EVEN TOLD HER ABOUT WHAT EACH OF MY PARENTS DID."



"THE WOMAN FROM THE TRIBAL SOCIAL SERVICES STILL HAD A BUNCH OF QUESTIONS - BUT SHE TOLD ME THAT NONE OF THIS WAS MY FAULT."



OK, I THINK I HAVE EVERYTHING FOR NOW.

BRANDON, IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW, THAT YOU WANT TO TELL ME?

NO. THAT'S IT.



PARENTS, THANK YOU FOR WAITING PATIENTLY OUTSIDE WHILE I SPOKE TO BRANDON.

WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT BRANDON'S SAFETY AND WELLBEING AT HOME.

WE'LL NEED TO TALK ABOUT SOME NEXT STEPS.

OK. WHAT SORT OF NEXT STEPS?

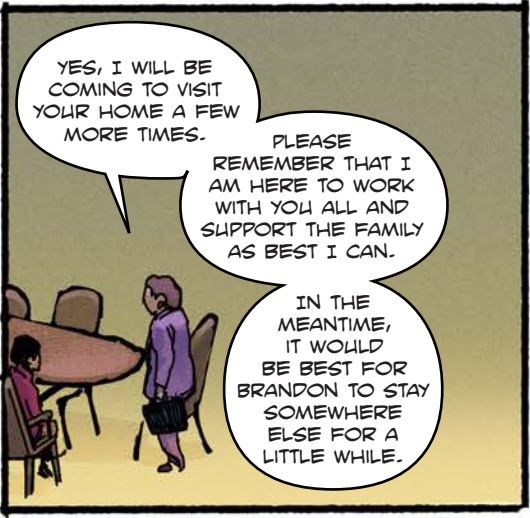


AS I MENTIONED BEFORE, WE'RE COMPLETING AN INVESTIGATION. WE MAY NEED YOU TO ATTEND A MEETING AT MY OFFICE, WITH SOME OTHER PEOPLE I WORK WITH.

WE'LL DISCUSS SOME PROGRAMS THAT YOU CAN BOTH ENGAGE IN TO HELP WITH REDUCING SAFETY RISKS AT HOME.

WE CAN DISCUSS SPECIFICS DURING MY NEXT VISIT.

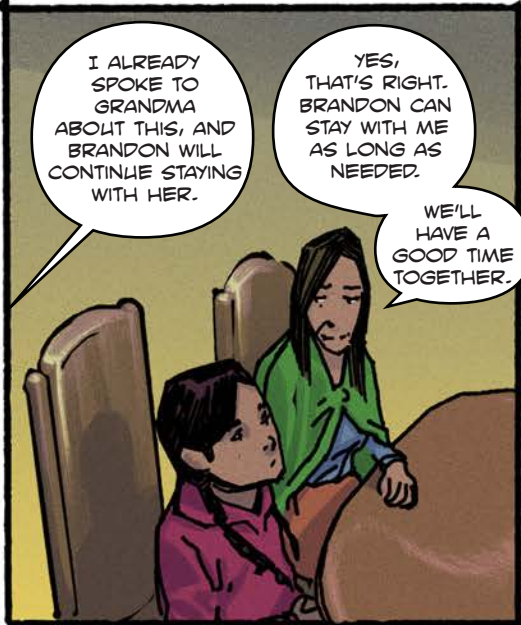
"NEXT VISIT?!"



YES, I WILL BE COMING TO VISIT YOUR HOME A FEW MORE TIMES.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT I AM HERE TO WORK WITH YOU ALL AND SUPPORT THE FAMILY AS BEST I CAN.

IN THE MEANTIME, IT WOULD BE BEST FOR BRANDON TO STAY SOMEWHERE ELSE FOR A LITTLE WHILE.



I ALREADY SPOKE TO GRANDMA ABOUT THIS, AND BRANDON WILL CONTINUE STAYING WITH HER.

YES, THAT'S RIGHT. BRANDON CAN STAY WITH ME AS LONG AS NEEDED.

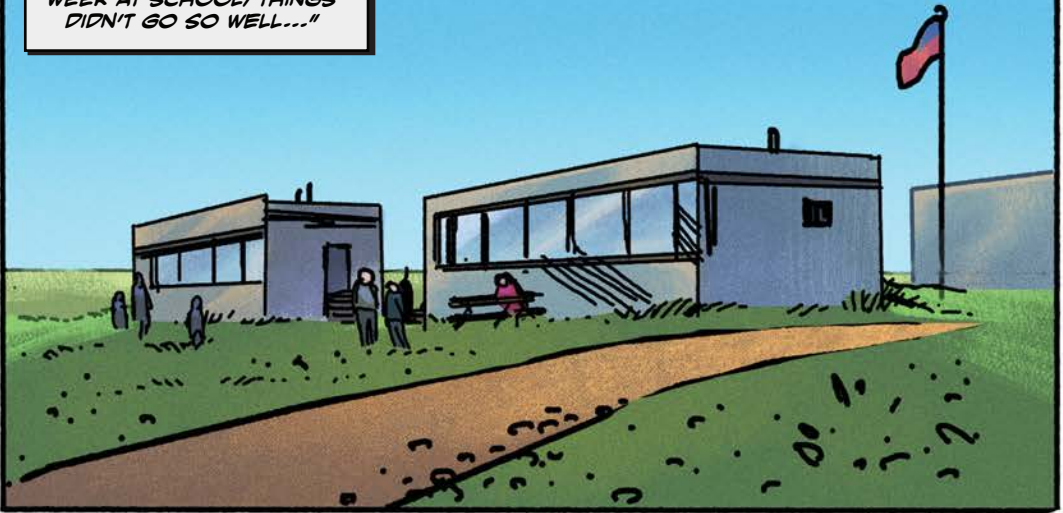
WE'LL HAVE A GOOD TIME TOGETHER.



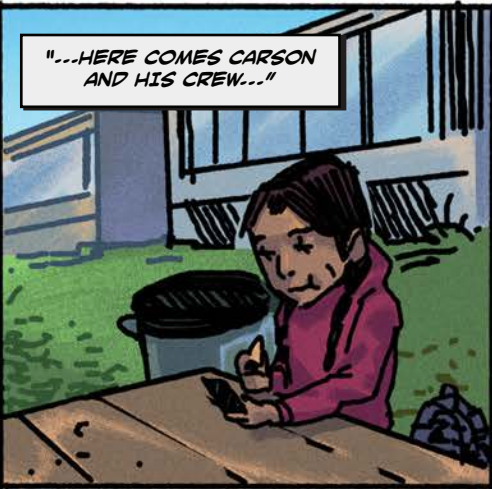
"THAT WAS NOT FUN!"

"ESPECIALLY AS MY PARENTS WEREN'T TOO HAPPY WITH PHYLLIS' VISIT AND ME STAYING WITH GRANDMA FOR A WHILE. BUT AT LEAST THEY CALMED DOWN LATER."

"UNFORTUNATELY, THE NEXT WEEK AT SCHOOL, THINGS DIDN'T GO SO WELL..."



"...HERE COMES CARSON AND HIS CREW..."



YEET! OH MAN - GUESS I MISSED THE CAN, BUT HIT THE TRASH.



HA HA!

HA!



BRUH! WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU, JERK!

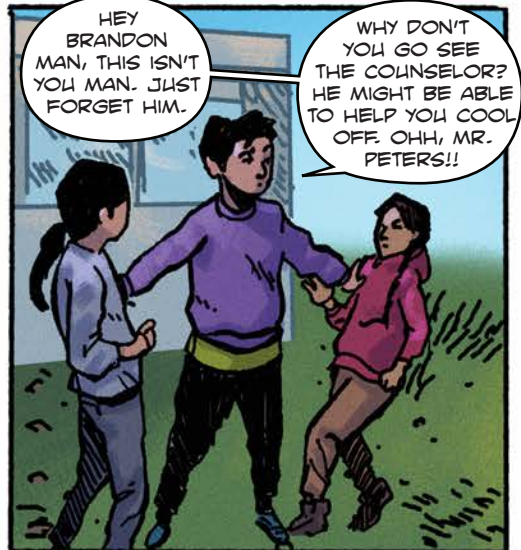
"I'M DEFINITELY NOT IN THE MOOD FOR THIS. MAYBE I SHOULD LET AN ADULT DEAL WITH THIS?"

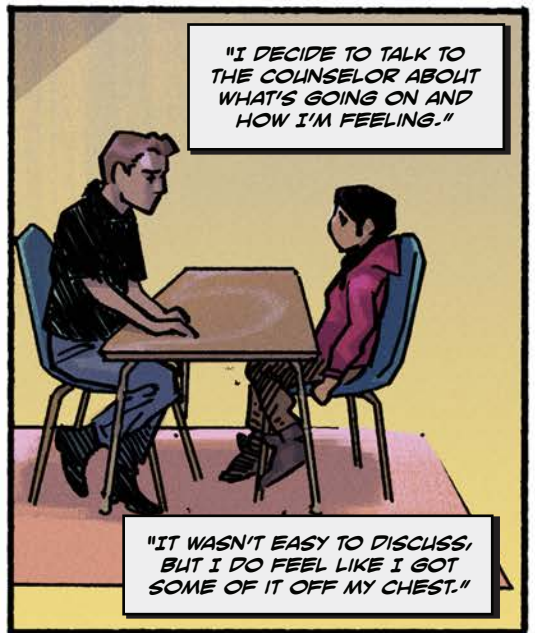
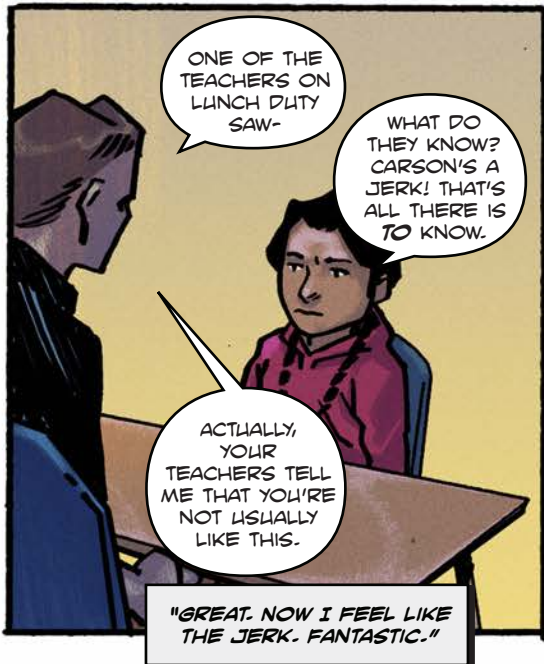
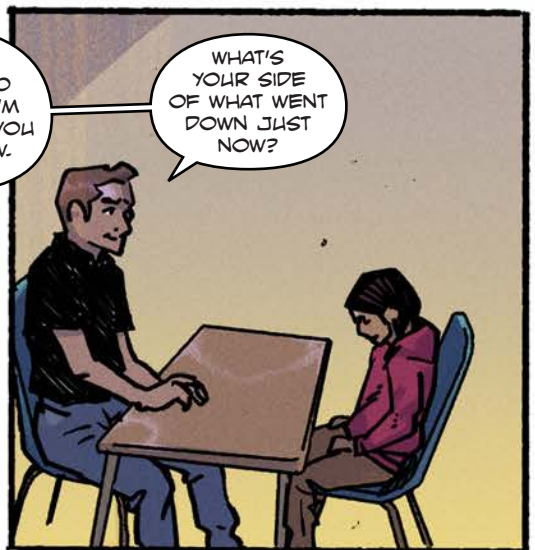
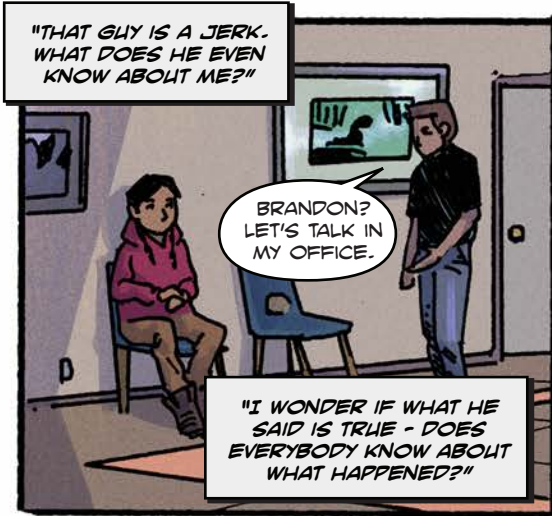


SHOULD BRANDON GO TO THE SCHOOL OFFICE OR CONFRONT THE BULLIES HERE?

IF YOU THINK HE SHOULD GO TO THE OFFICE INSTEAD OF REACTING, THEN TURN TO PAGE 26

IF YOU THINK HE SHOULD TEACH THE LOUDMOUTHS A LESSON RIGHT HERE, READ THE NEXT PAGE...





BACK AT GRANDMA'S HOUSE...

"DESPITE THE TROUBLE AT SCHOOL, THE COUNSELOR WAS NICE."

"HE SHOWED ME SOME EXERCISES I CAN DO WHEN I START TO FEEL REALLY STRESSED AND UPSET."

"HE SAID IT'S ABOUT BEING ABLE TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS IN A HEALTHY WAY, AND TOLD ME THAT A LOT OF OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE GO THROUGH THIS..."

"...AND I CAN LOOK STUFF UP ONLINE AND SEARCH FOR THINGS LIKE 'COPING ACTIVITIES' AND 'STRESS MANAGEMENT.'"

"I ACTUALLY DON'T MIND SEEING HIM AGAIN NEXT WEEK."



YOUR PARENTS ARE ON THEIR WAY OVER.

DO I HAVE TO GO BACK WITH THEM?

NO, NOT TONIGHT. THEY'RE JUST BRINGING YOU SOME MORE CLOTHES.



I KNOW THINGS ARE HARD RIGHT NOW, BUT YOUR PARENTS ARE TRYING THEIR BEST.

THEY'RE EVEN GOING TO START SOME SPECIAL CLASSES SOON...

...CLASSES THAT HELP REMIND THEM TO BE THE BEST PARENTS THEY CAN BE...

...THESE WILL HELP YOUR MOM AND DAD DEAL WITH WHAT THEY'RE GOING THROUGH...

...AND LEARN TO MANAGE THINGS.

OKAY. THERE THEY ARE.

DING DONG

"WHEN MY PARENTS GOT HERE, THEY WERE HAVING AN ARGUMENT."

"THEY'D BEEN ARGUING WITH EACH OTHER IN THE CAR..."

"...AND NOW THEY WERE HERE, YELLING AND GRIPING AT GRANDMA'S HOUSE."



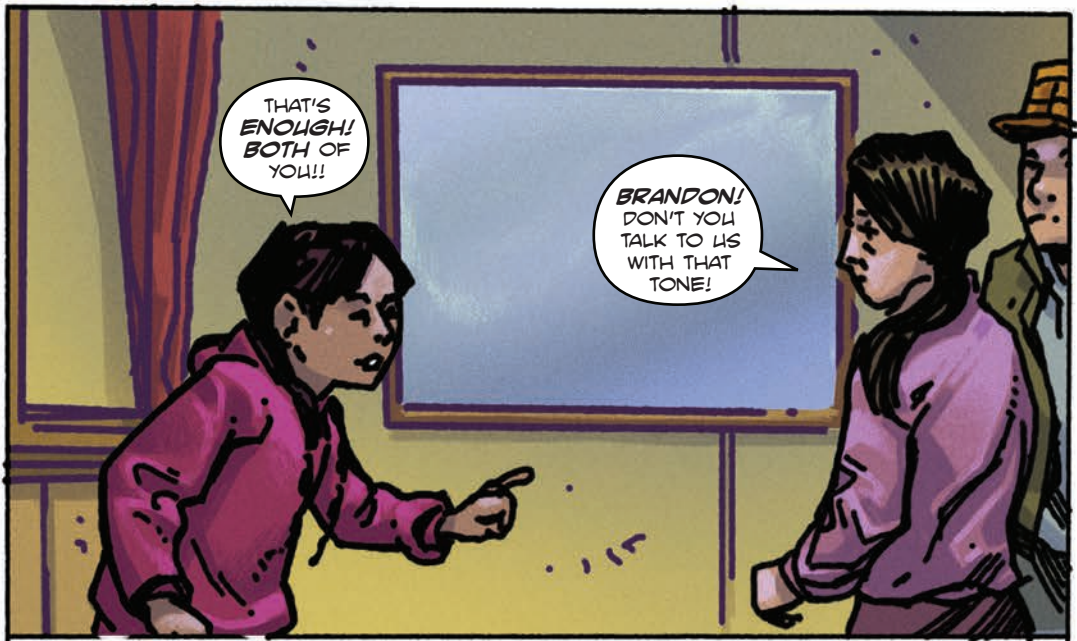
"I'M SO TIRED OF THIS. DO THEY HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH?"

"THEY MAKE ME SO ANGRY SOMETIMES. MAYBE I SHOULD REALLY LET THEM KNOW HOW I FEEL THIS TIME."

SHOULD BRANDON LET OUT HIS FRUSTRATION ON HIS PARENTS OR ASK GRANDMA FOR HELP?

IF YOU THINK HE SHOULD STAY ANGRY WITH HIS PARENTS READ THE NEXT PAGE...

IF YOU THINK HE SHOULD ASK GRANDMA FOR HELP TALKING TO HIS PARENTS, TURN TO PAGE 30



THAT'S ENOUGH! BOTH OF YOU!!

BRANDON! DON'T YOU TALK TO US WITH THAT TONE!



AND YOU! WITH EVERYTHING THAT'S GOING ON AND NOW YOU'RE PICKING FIGHTS AT SCHOOL?!?



DO EITHER OF YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH?

DO YOU EVEN CARE?!?



"I WAS SO ANGRY MY WHOLE BODY WAS TENSE."

"I NEEDED TO TRY SOMETHING TO CALM MY NERVES BEFORE TALKING MORE WITH THEM..."

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 or worked up.

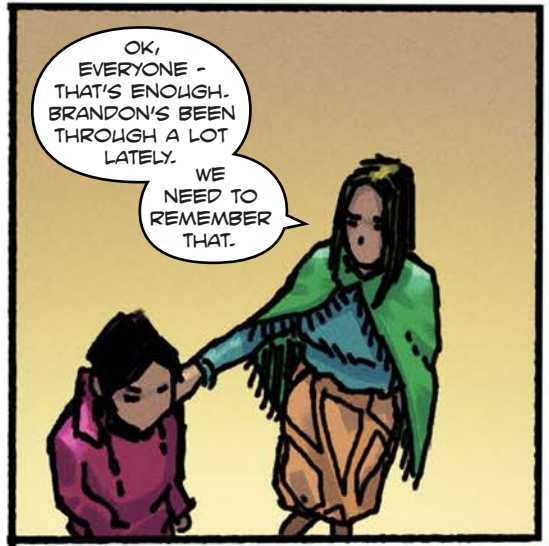
- 1 Curl up and squeeze just your toes, and hold for two seconds. Then relax your toes and shake them out!
- 2 Squeeze your entire foot (both feet!) for two seconds. Then relax your feet.
- 3 Squeeze your legs for two seconds, and then relax and shake them out.
- 4 Then for two seconds squeeze your whole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

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





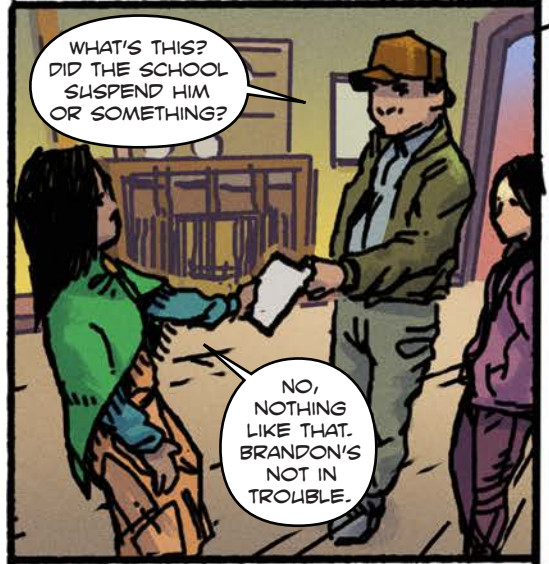
GRANDMA,
I'M UPSET.
CAN YOU
HELP ME
EXPLAIN?



OK,
EVERYONE -
THAT'S ENOUGH.
BRANDON'S BEEN
THROUGH A LOT
LATELY.
WE
NEED TO
REMEMBER
THAT.

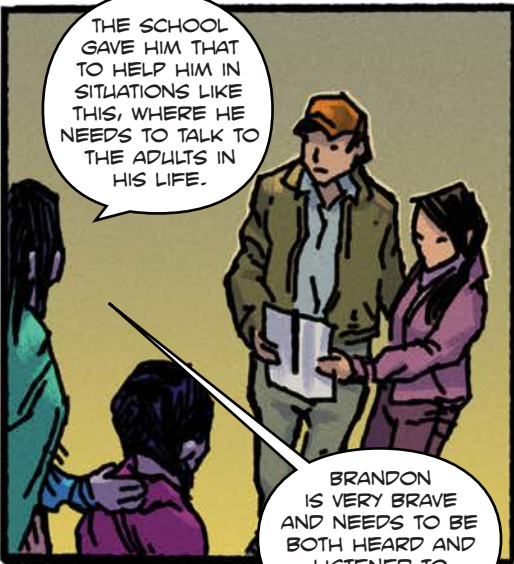


**"I LOVE MY PARENTS,
OF COURSE, BUT NOT
SURE I'LL EVER BE
ABLE TO EXPRESS
HOW IMPORTANT THE
GRANDMAS OF THE
WORLD ARE."**



WHAT'S THIS?
DID THE SCHOOL
SUSPEND HIM
OR SOMETHING?

NO,
NOTHING
LIKE THAT.
BRANDON'S
NOT IN
TROUBLE.



THE SCHOOL
GAVE HIM THAT
TO HELP HIM IN
SITUATIONS LIKE
THIS, WHERE HE
NEEDS TO TALK TO
THE ADULTS IN
HIS LIFE.

BRANDON
IS VERY BRAVE
AND NEEDS TO BE
BOTH HEARD AND
LISTENED TO
RIGHT NOW.



**"IT TOOK A LOT OF HELP FROM
GRANDMA, BUT I TOLD THEM
EVERYTHING: WHAT HAPPENED
AT SCHOOL AND ESPECIALLY
MY FEELINGS RIGHT NOW."**

**"IT WASN'T
EASY, OF
COURSE,
BUT I GOT
THROUGH IT."**

THE NEXT FAMILY
COOKOUT,
PRESENT DAY...

"IT FELT WEIRD AND
UNCOMFORTABLE AT THE TIME
TO ASK THEM FOR HELP..."

"...BUT, EVENTUALLY, I DID
FEEL BETTER, AND I'M GLAD
I TOLD THEM EVERYTHING."

"OBVIOUSLY NOT EVERYTHING'S
PERFECT, BUT IT'S A WHOLE
LOT BETTER NOW."

"I THINK IT'S 'CAUSE WE ALL GOT
THE HELP THAT WE NEEDED."

"GRANDMA ALWAYS SAYS,
'LIFE IS ABOUT CHOICE,' AND
I GUESS SHE'S RIGHT."

"WE CAN CHOOSE TO LET
THE BAD THINGS THAT
HAPPEN TO US DEFINE WHO
WE ARE, SHAPE THE PEOPLE
WE BECOME..."

"...OR WE CAN CHOOSE TO
LET FAMILY AND OTHERS
WHO CARE ABOUT US KNOW
HOW WE FEEL, AND HELP US
WHEN WE NEED IT."

"MY FAMILY GIVES ME STRENGTH AND THIS STRENGTH HELPS ME GET THROUGH THE TOUGH TIMES."

"I CHOOSE TO HEAL - TO LIVE MY LIFE."



"GRANDMA ALSO SAID SOMETHING SUPER COOL, IF YOU CAN BELIEVE IT."



"SHE TOLD ME ONE WAY TO HONOR OUR ANCESTORS IS TO SURVIVE - TO CONTINUE TO LIVE."



"SO, TO HONOR THEM, I GUESS, I CHOOSE TO SURVIVE - NO MATTER WHAT."

"I FEEL REALLY LUCKY THAT I HAD PEOPLE THAT CARE ABOUT ME TO HELP."



"THEY HELPED REMIND ME: NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, I AM NOT ALONE."

"I THINK THAT'S WHAT GRANDMA'S MEDICINE POUCH TRULY MEANS: THAT I AM NOT ALONE IN ALL OF THIS."

In Brandon's story, after an incident that happened, his grandma was worried about him and made a report to Social Services. A caseworker named Phyllis then visited the family home and started an investigation. Brandon continued to stay with his grandma while his parents received help and worked to improve Brandon's safety at home.



Things like this happen to other young people and families, but every situation is different. For example, not all young people are interviewed by caseworkers in their home. Some go to a Children's Advocacy Center (CAC), where they speak to a forensic interviewer and the conversation is recorded. In some cases, the young person might go to court, where a judge might want to speak with them. And in some cases, the young person might not stay with their grandma if they can't safely 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. And the length of time that a young person stays away from their home will be different for each case.

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



My Taking Care of Me CHECKLIST

It's good to check in with yourself and mentally scan how you're feeling. When you're feeling upset or overwhelmed, doing one or more of these activities can help you feel better.

Read a book
(like this one!)

Get a drink (water,
tea or hot chocolate)

Ask for a hug

Chat with friends in
person or online

Think of a happy
memory or a
peaceful place

Help someone
or do a chore

Write or type
in a journal

Spend time outdoors
or in nature

Say a prayer or do
a spiritual activity

Ask for help



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

DID YOU KNOW?

The medicine wheel has different forms, uses and influences from tribe to tribe.



The circular shape represents continuous connection to the stages of life and across seasons and elements of wellbeing. Different tribes use medicine wheels in different ways, with the common theme of connection and kinship.

You. Family. Friends. Community.

CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

The characters in this story had people in their lives who supported them. Their friends, family members, advocates, therapists and others helped them in different ways.

These people can make up a circle of support for you. It can be helpful to remind yourself of the people in your life who you can ask for help when you need it.

Who is in your circle of support?



AND REMEMBER

IT'S OK
TO...

Take time
for **YOU**

SAY no

CELEBRATE
the small victories

Not have **ALL**
the answers

Do what is
BEST for **YOU**



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.



EDGAR'S JOURNEY

Edgar is a school-age kid whose story is an example of a child welfare case. He meets some new adults, goes to new places, learns about asking for help, and things he can do 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.



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.

BRANDON'S PATH

WRITTEN BY

Michael Sheyahshe

Tribal Community | Caddo Nation of Oklahoma

About

As an author and creator, Michael created the popular comic book character Dark Owl for INC, and he has authored work for *What the Stars Must Think of Us*; *Illusions*; *Trauma Magazine*; *Native Peoples Magazine*; *New Plains Review*; *First American Art Magazine*; written for *MOONSHOT: The Indigenous Comics Collection Volumes 1-3* and co-edited *Volume 3*, and served as a cultural consultant for Darkhorse Comics.

His book, *Native Americans in Comic Books: A Critical Study*, takes an in-depth look at the world of comic books through the eyes of a Native American reader and offers frank commentary on the medium's cultural representation of Indigenous people.

ILLUSTRATED BY

Kyle Charles

Cree, Whitefish Lake First Nation

About

Kyle has been a comic book illustrator for some of the largest publishers in the world including Image Comics, Heavy Metal, Aftershock and Marvel. His artwork can be seen on the popular titles *Roche Limit*; *Her Infernal Descent*; *Warpath*; '68: *Hallowed Ground*, and *Marvel's Voices*.

He is also an illustration teacher to local students, and has sat on the Board of Directors for a Charter High School for at-risk youth.



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-GX-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 305311

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