

# AUNTIE'S REZ SURPRISE

WRITTEN BY HEATHER O'WATCH

ILLUSTRATED BY ELLIE ARSCOTT



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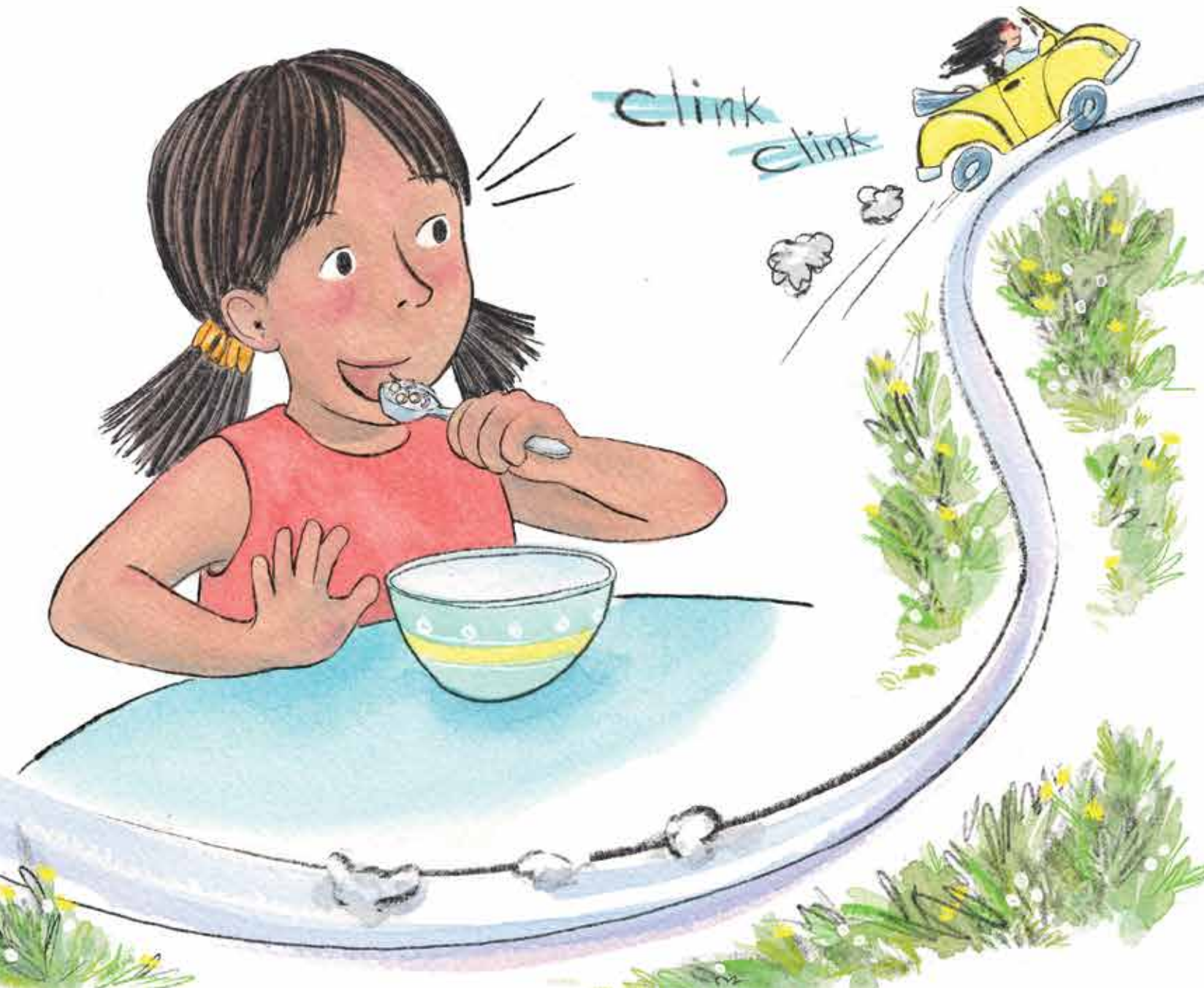


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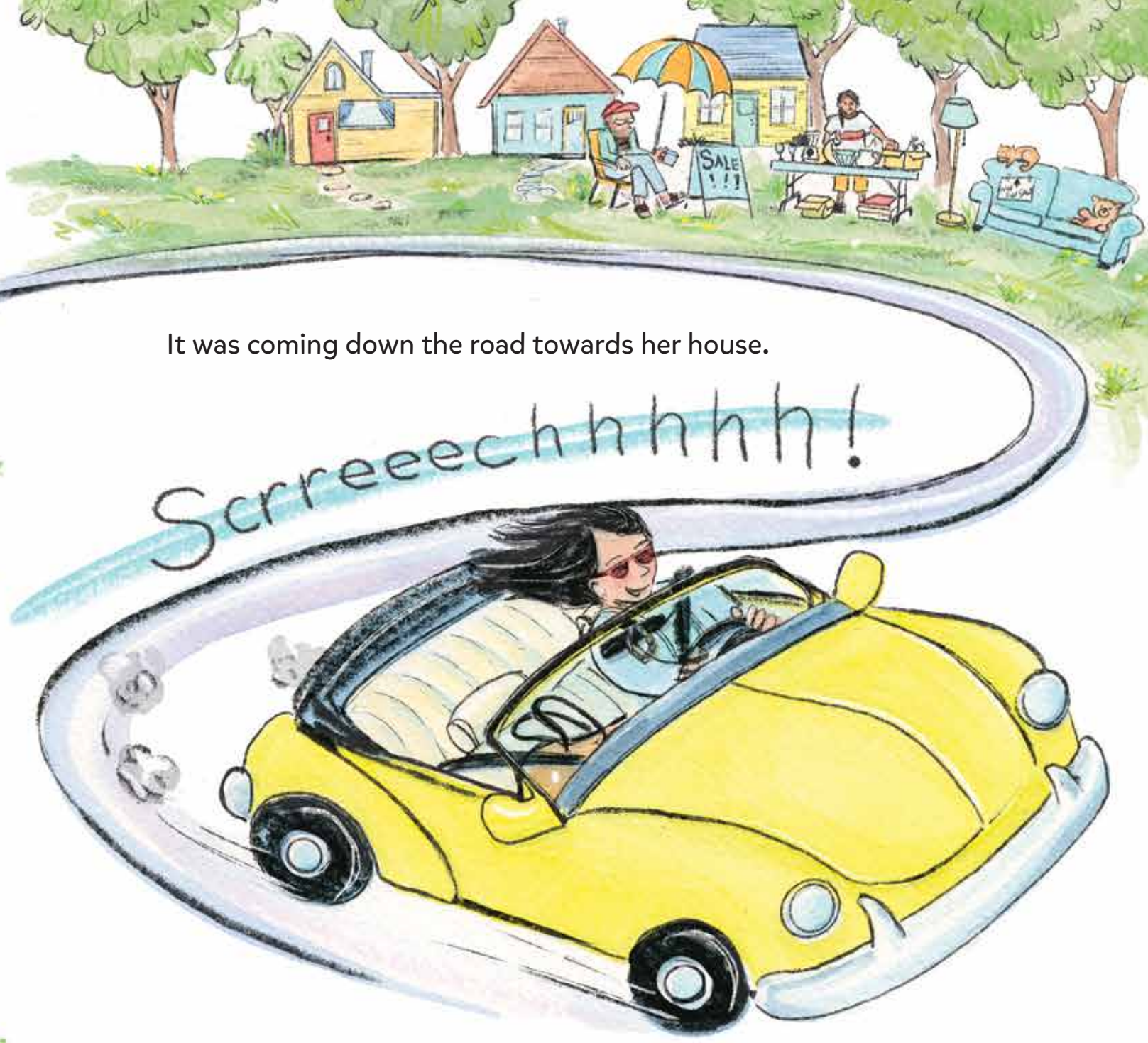
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As Cree finished her last bite of breakfast, she heard a familiar sound.



It was coming down the road towards her house.



Cree knew exactly who it was—it was Auntie!



The noisy car pulled into the driveway and a door opened and closed.



"tānisi, my little one, tānisi!? (Hello! How are you?)," Auntie shouted as she walked up the driveway.



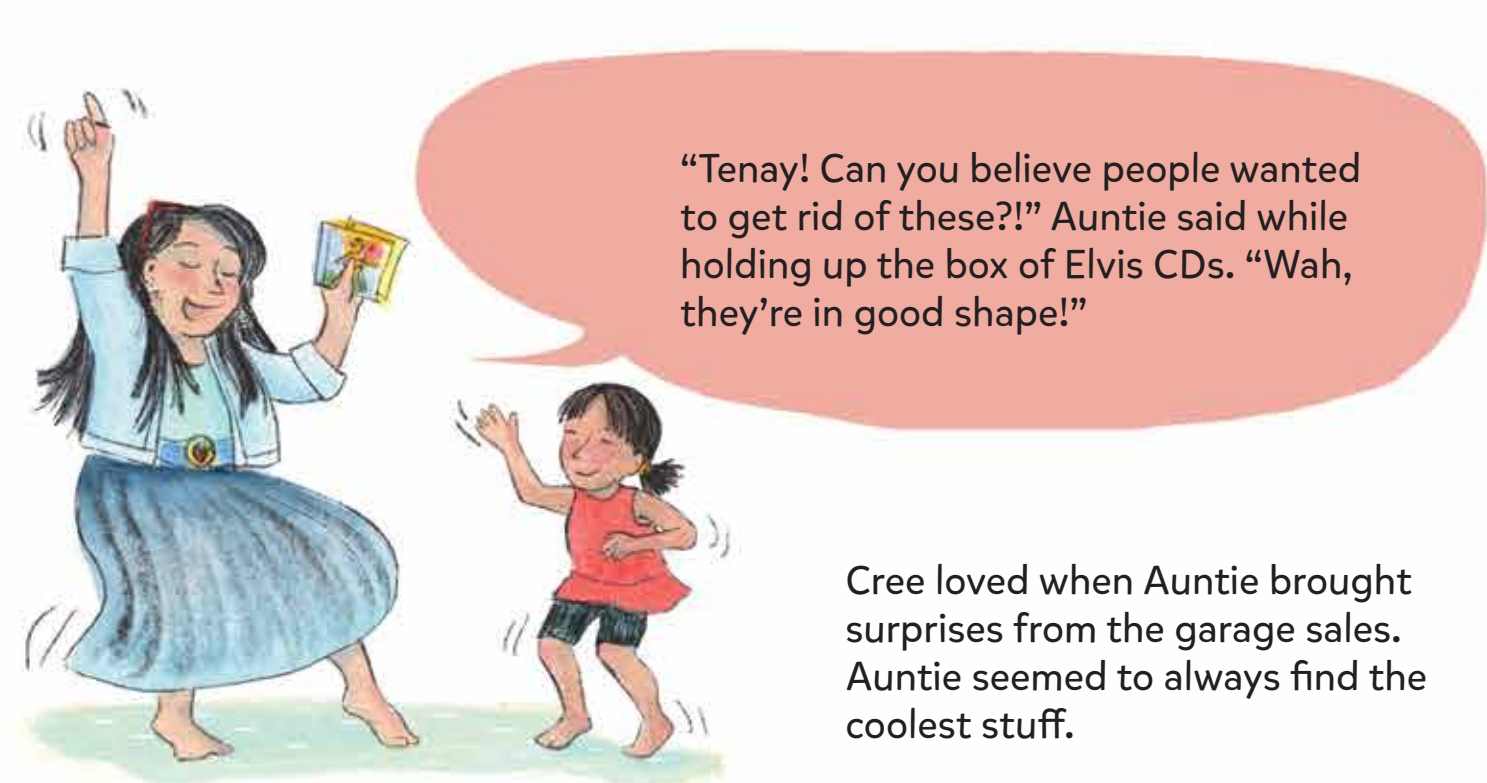
"namōya nānitaw (I am good), Auntie," Cree replied. Cree had been working on her Nehiyaw.



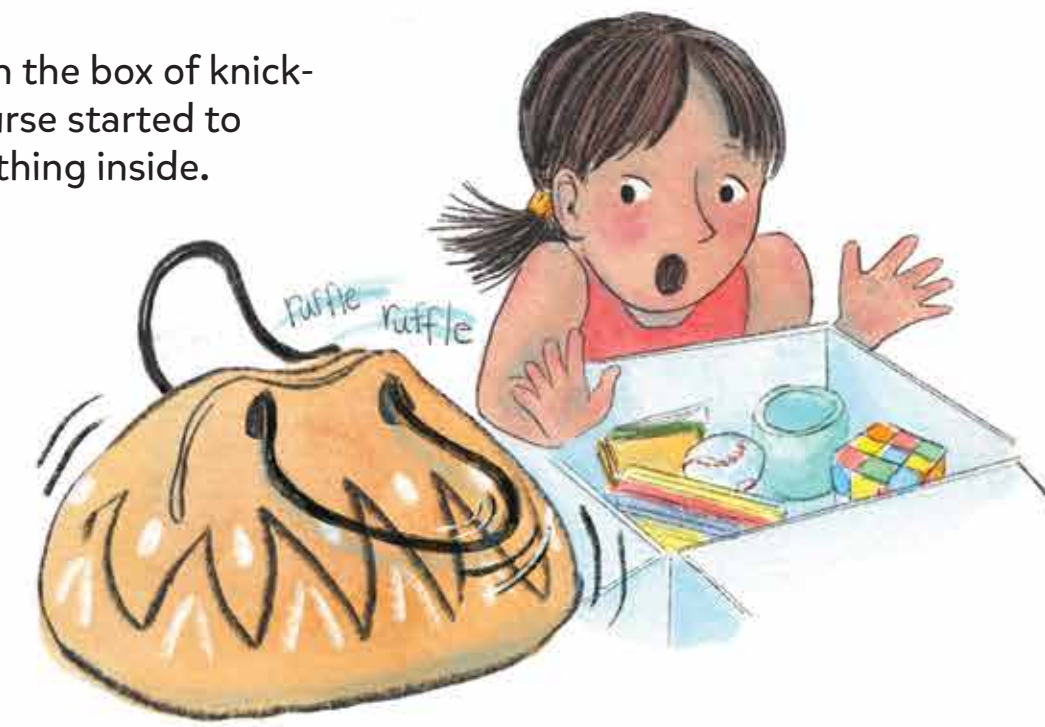
Auntie always greeted Cree in nēhiyawēwin.

Auntie carried her big purse, a second-hand jacket, and a box full of old CDs and books.





As Cree looked through the box of knick-knacks, Auntie's big purse started to move. There was something inside.







"Eeee! Auntie, your purse is moving!"

Auntie laughed and said, "Aha, yes my girl. That's my surprise... take a guess what it is."

Cree was curious.  
What could it be?

"Is it alive?"  
she asked.

"Aha," nodded Auntie.

Whatever was  
inside the purse  
moved again.



Cree asked Auntie,  
“Did you get it from  
the garage sale too?”

Auntie laughed and said, “No, my  
girl, it came from the rez.” Cree was  
even more curious now.



Whatever was in Auntie’s purse poked  
out its small, wet nose.



“Hmm...what could it  
be?” Cree scratched her  
head. “What comes from  
the rez and has a small  
wet nose?”



All of a sudden, Cree shouted,  
“I know!”



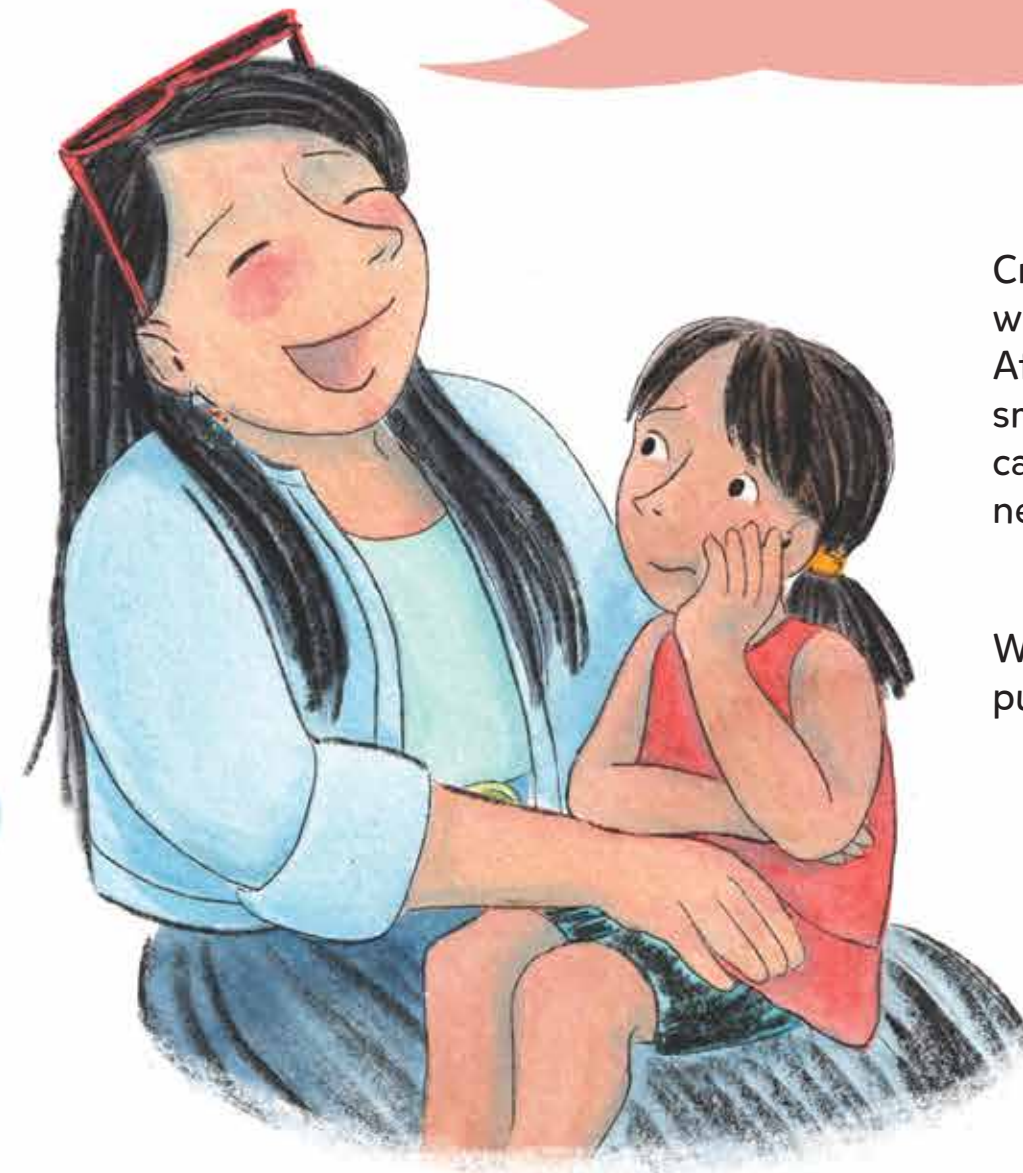
“What do you think it  
is?” Auntie asked.



“It’s a  
**beaver!**”



Auntie let out a big belly laugh. “HA-HA-HA-HA! wahwā, my girl, it’s not a beaver. Guess again.”



Cree was puzzled. She was sure it was a beaver. After all, beavers have small button noses and can be found on the rez near sloughs and rivers.

Whatever was in Auntie’s purse started to sniff.

Sniff  
Sniff



"Hmm..." Cree  
thought again.  
What sniffs,

sniff  
sniff

has a button  
nose, and is from  
the rez?



"A muskrat?" she asked.



Auntie's big belly laugh returned. "Guess  
again," she said.

From inside the purse Cree  
heard a growl.



Cree's face lit up.

"I know, Auntie, I know what it is!"  
Cree shouted and jumped in  
excitement.





"It's a rez puppy!"  
Cree said with a big grin.

"Aha, yes, my girl, it is," Auntie said as she picked up the brown puppy with its red collar from her big purse.

"But...how do you take care of a rez puppy?" Cree asked.

Auntie motioned for Cree to sit on the ground.

"āstam ōta, api.  
(Come here, sit.)"

Cree sat as the puppy nibbled at her fingers.





"These are our relatives," Auntie began. "Long ago, they helped our people get through good times and bad times."

"They helped us carry food, and they kept us safe from harm."

"Their ears and noses make them good listeners and smellers."



Auntie took a leash from her purse and attached it to the puppy's collar.









“Inside the house is the most comfy for them.

And we should always take them for walks, just like we go for walks. But we need to make sure our relatives don’t wander off and get lost,” Auntie said.

“After all, the rez is a big, beautiful place.”

Auntie looked at the rez puppy and said to Cree, “What are we going to name our new relative?”

“Hmm...how do you say dog in Nehiyaw?” Cree asked.

“atim,” Auntie replied.





Cree smiled. “atim,” she said, snuggling her new family member, “we will take care of each other.”



**Heather O’Watch** is a Nakota and Nehiyaw woman from Okanese First Nation, located in Treaty 4 Territory. She lives in Regina, Saskatchewan. Heather enjoys spending time with her family, relatives, and five dogs.

**Ellie Arscott** is a non-Indigenous illustrator who grew up in a small Ontario town with a lot of pets—birds, cats, rabbits, and dogs! Her illustration debut, *Night Walk*, was awarded an SCBWI Canada East Crystal Kite. *Auntie’s Rez Surprise* is her fourth illustrated picture book. Ellie lives in east-end Toronto (Tkaronto) with her family, including one pet, Frank the cat.



# TĀNISI! MY LITTLE ONE, TĀNISI!

Winner of the  
Second Story Press  
Indigenous Writing  
Contest

Auntie always greets Cree in Nehiyaw when she comes for a visit. When Auntie arrives with a surprise gift hidden in her bag, Cree can't wait to discover what it is. The first clue? It's from the rez. As Cree tries to figure out what it might be, the bag starts to move!

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