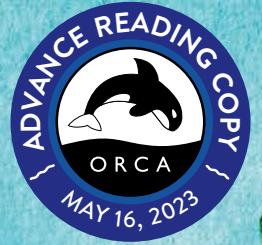


WE BELONG TO THE DRUM

mistikwaskihk
kitipêyimikonaw



In Plains Cree
and
English

Sandra Lamouche

illustrated by Azby Whitecalf

translated into Cree by Dolores Greyeyes Sand

BA-BOOM, BA-BOOM.

That is the sound of belonging.

Nikosis grew up going to powwows with his family, happily immersed in music, dance and the sounds of the drum. But when he starts going to daycare, he doesn't feel like he belongs. Nikosis cries every time his mother leaves him in the unfamiliar environment until, one day, she and the teachers use drums to help Nikosis find connection and comfort.

Inspired by her son's experience—and her family's love of powwow music and dance—Indigenous educator and champion hoop dancer Sandra Lamouche shares this uplifting true story of the transformative effects of culturally safe and inclusive early childhood education.

This picture book is a dual-language (English and Cree) edition.

Sandra Lamouche is a nêhiyaw iskwêw (Cree Woman) from the Bigstone Cree Nation in northern Alberta. She is a wife, mother of two boys with braids, champion women's hoop dancer, award-winning educator and two-time TEDx speaker. She has a bachelor of arts in Native American studies and is currently completing a thesis on Indigenous dance as a determinant of well-being. Sandra and her family live in Blackfoot Territory (Treaty 7), the heart of powwow country in southern Alberta.

Azby Whitecalf is a Plains Cree character designer and illustrator based out of North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Treaty 6 Territory. They have a bachelor's degree in visual communication (character design) from the Alberta University of the Arts. An important part of their practice is creating accurate and positive representations of Indigenous Peoples and cultures and exploring what it is to portray Indigenous people in a way that captures their multidimensional identities. They are the illustrator of *Buffalo Wild!* Azby enjoys working with bright colors, strong contrast and fun shapes.



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We Belong to the Drum / mistikwaskihk kitipêyimikonaw

Author: Sandra Lamouche

May 16, 2023

Illustrator: Azby Whitecalf

In this dual-language illustrated picture book, a child who's away from his family for the first time at daycare finds belonging through the music of the powwow drum. In English and Plains Cree.

FORMAT

8.75 × 10.75"

32 pages

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KEY SELLING POINTS

- A culturally-specific take on the universal challenge of the separation anxiety that comes with starting daycare or school.
- Showcases the power of cultural connection for the well-being of Indigenous children.
- Author Sandra Lamouche is a multidisciplinary creator and storyteller, champion hoop dancer and award-winning Indigenous educational leader. She was inspired by educator Shelley Moore, who said, "Inclusion is about responding to student need, not forcing students to respond to us."
- Includes a glossary of Plains Cree kinship terms.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



DEFINE YOURSELF PHOTOGRAPHY

SANDRA LAMOUCHE is a nêhiyaw iskwêw (Cree Woman) from the Bigstone Cree Nation in northern Alberta. She is a wife, mother of two boys with braids, champion women's hoop dancer, award-winning educator and two-time TEDx speaker. She has a bachelor of arts in Native American studies and is currently completing a thesis on Indigenous dance as a determinant of well-being. Sandra and her family live in Blackfoot Territory (Treaty 7), the heart of powwow country in southern Alberta.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



YANNICK DUPUIS

AZBY WHITECALF is a Plains Cree character designer and illustrator based out of North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Treaty 6 Territory. They have a bachelor's degree in visual communication (character design) from the Alberta University of the Arts. An important part of their practice is creating accurate and positive representations of Indigenous Peoples and cultures and exploring what it is to portray Indigenous people in a way that captures their multidimensional identities. They are the illustrator of *Buffalo Wild!* Azby enjoys working with bright colors, strong contrast and fun shapes.

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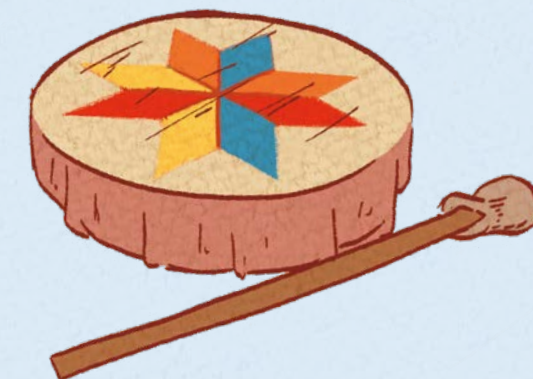
WE BELONG TO THE DRUM

mistikwaskihk kitipêyimikonaw

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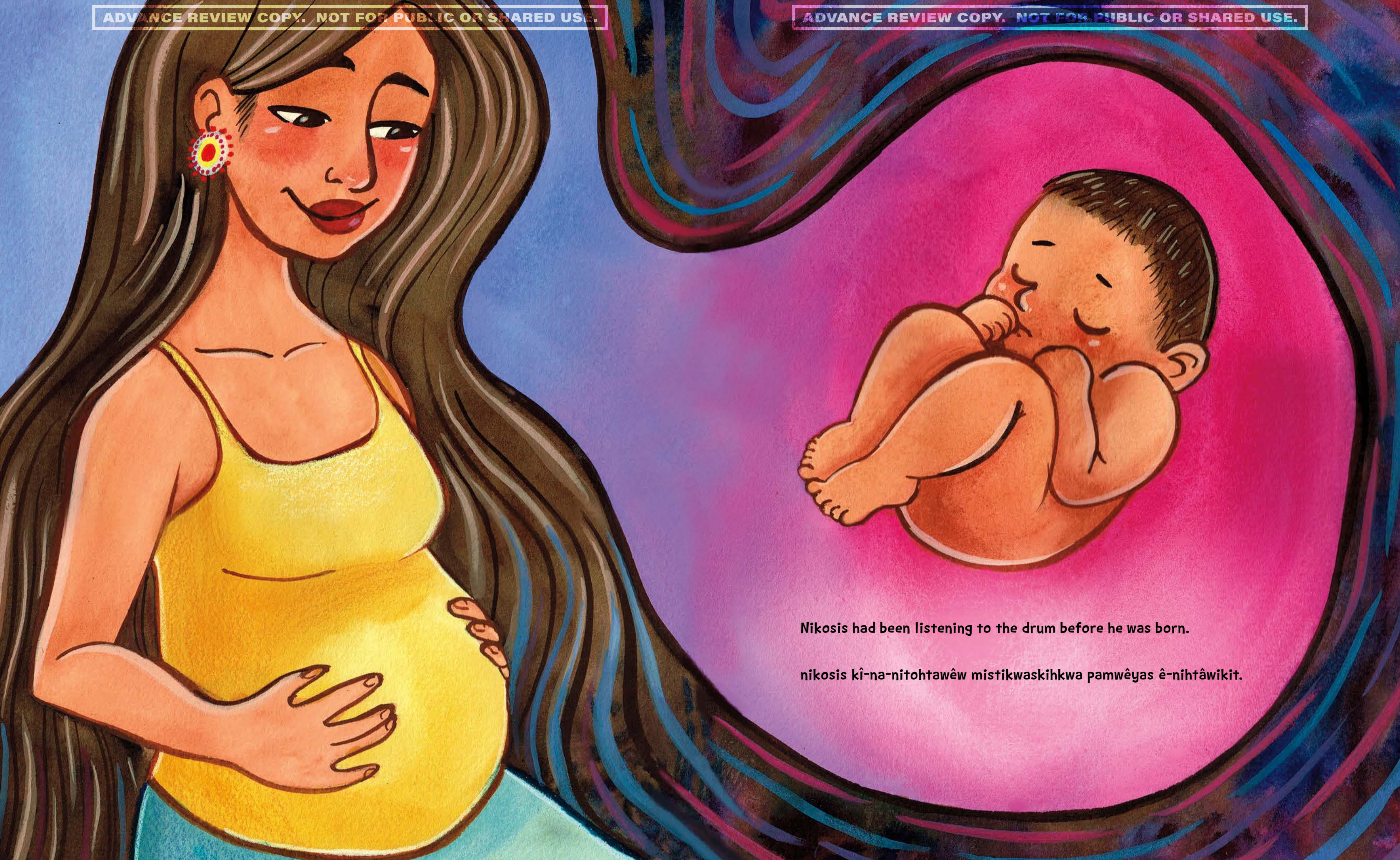


Ohkoma
his grandmother

Okâwiya
his mother

Nikosis

Ohtâwiya
his father



Nikosis had been listening to the drum before he was born.

nikosis kî-na-nitohtawêw mistikwaskihkwa pamwêyas ê-nihtâwikit.

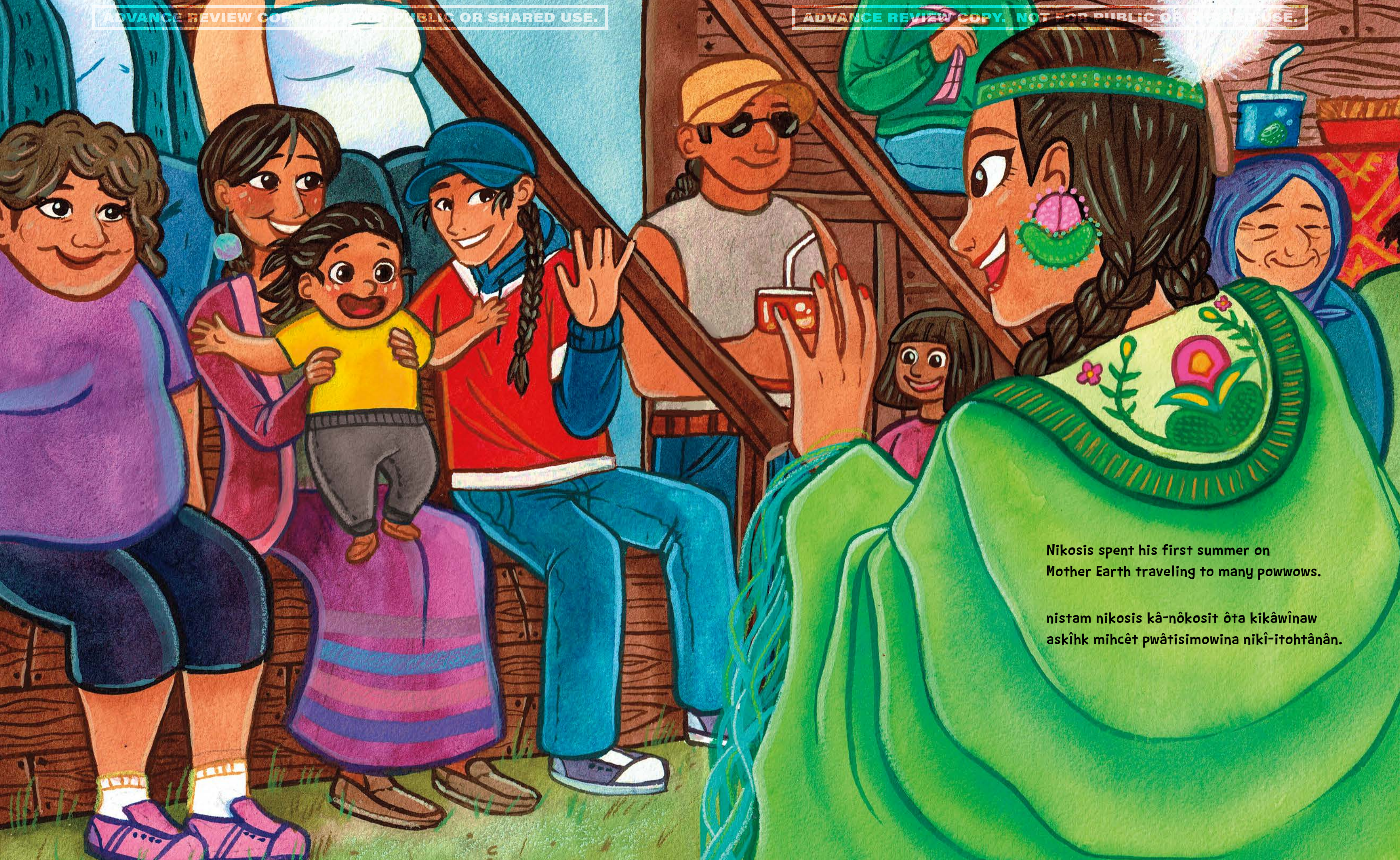
Ohkoma says this is the first sound we hear—our mother's heartbeat.

BA-BOOM,
BA-BOOM,
BA-BOOM,
BA-BOOM!

ohkoma itwêyiwa ôm ôma nistam kîkway kê-pêhtamahk—kîkâwîdaw opahkahokowin.

PA-POM,
PA-POM,
PA-POM,
PA-POM.





Nikosis spent his first summer on
Mother Earth traveling to many powwows.

nistam nikosis kê-nôkosit ôta kikâwînaw
askîhk mihcêt pwâsisimowina nikî-itohtânân.

As Nikosis grew he learned to love the movement and music of powwow.

ê-ati-ohpikit nikosis kî-pê-miywêyihitam pwâtisimowi-nîmihitowin mîna nikamowina.

Okâwiya loved to dance.

Ohtâwiya loved to sing and drum.

okâwiya miywêyihdamiyiwa ê-pwâtisimoyit.

ohtâwiya miywêyihdamiyiwa ê-nikamoyit pwâtisimowinihk.

The drum made Nikosis want to dance.

kâ-pêhtawât mistikwaskinhkwa nikosis
kî-nôhtê-nîmihitow.



The drum made him want to sing.

kâ-pêhtawât mistikwaskihkwa nikosis kî-nôhtê-nikamow.

WAAY YA
HEY YA
HO!

WÊ YÂ
HÊY YÂ
HÔ!



The drum made him want to have a nap.

kâ-pêhtawât mistikwaskihkwa, nikosis kî-nôhtê-nipâsiw.



After summer was over, Nikosis started daycare. He didn't like it very much.
He cried every time Okâwiya left.

kâ-pôni-nîpiniyik, kanawêyimâwasowikamikhk kî-itohtêw. namôya mitoni
miywêihtam. kî-mâtow mâna tahtwâw okâwiya kâ-sipwêhtêyit.





Then Okâwiya had an idea. The next day she brought in a powwow CD for everyone to listen to. The daycare staff were so excited that they started playing drum music from around the world for the children.

êkosi kî-miskwêihtamiyiwa okâwiya. kâ-kîkîsêpâyâyik
pêtâyiwa pwâtisimowi-kitohcikan piko awiya
ka-na-nitohtamiyit. okanawêyimâwasowak
mitoni môcikêihtamwak êkosi sêmâk
kitohcikêstamawêwak awâsisa
mistikwaskihko-kitohcikêwin
waskitaskamik ohci.

When Nikosis heard the powwow music, he looked over.
To him it sounded different from all the other drums.

BA-BOOM,
BA-BOOM,
BA-BOOM,
BA-BOOM!

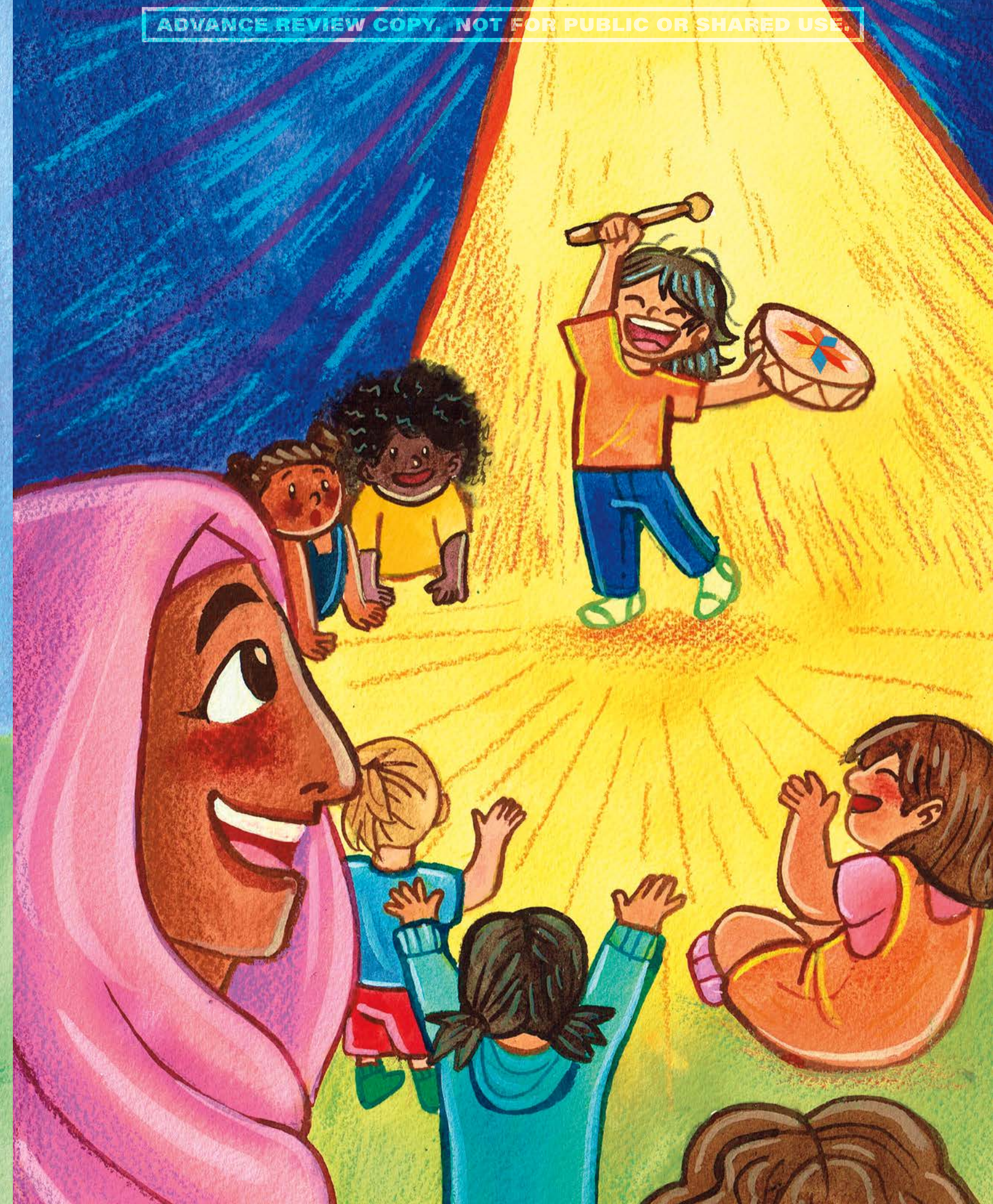
ispîhk kê-pêhtahk ôma pwâtisimowi-kitohcikêwin, sêmâk kitâpahtam.
mâka wiya ohci kê-pîtosihâtâkosiya ispihci kotak mistikwaskihkwa.

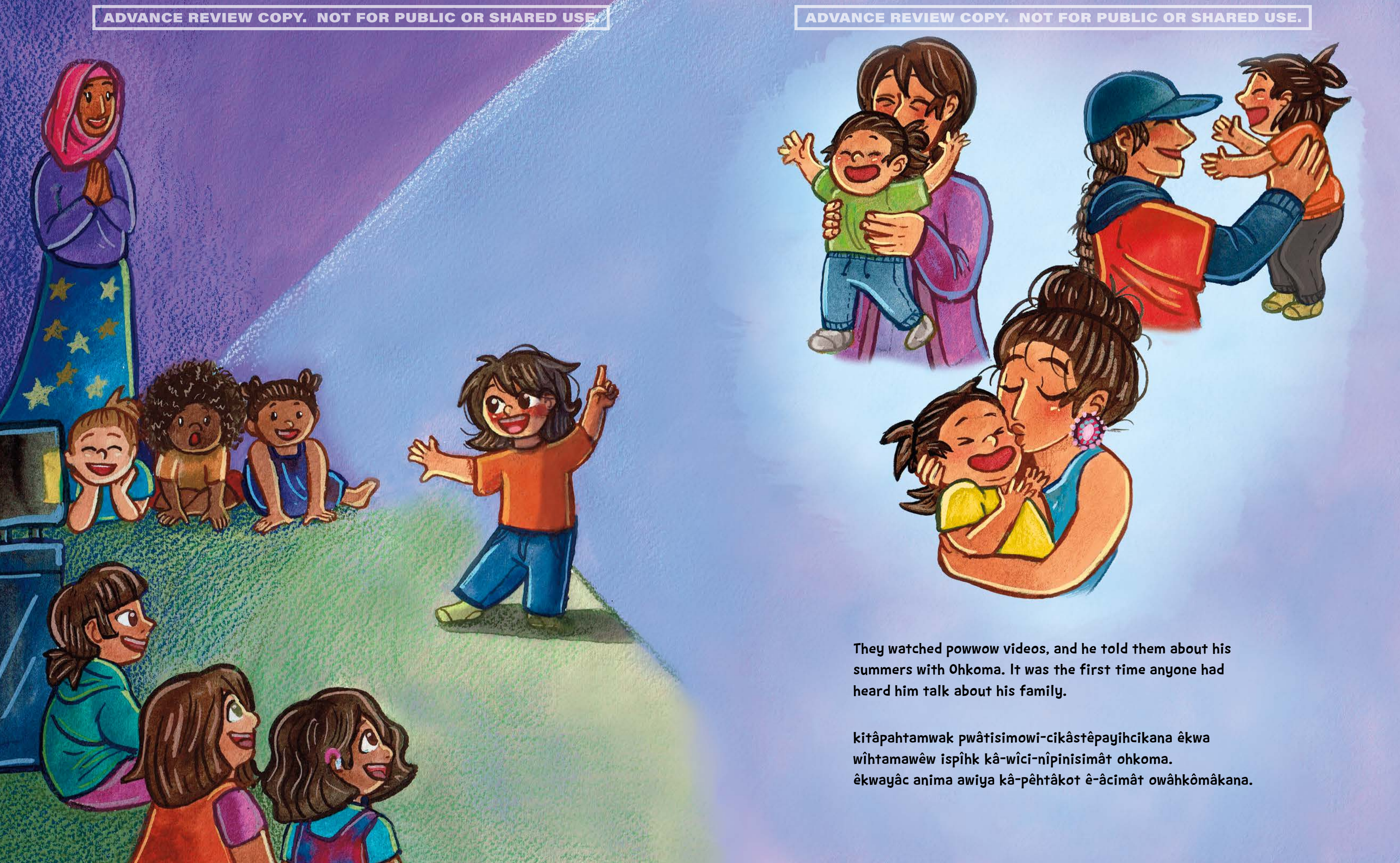
PA-POM,
PA-POM,
PA-POM,
PA-POM.



He went to a toy drum in the room, called his friends
over and showed them how to drum.

nâtêw mêtawêwi-mistikwaskihkwa êkota, êkwa natomêw
otôtêma ê-kiskinwahamawât tânisi ka-isi-kitohcikêhk
mistikwaskihkohk.





They watched powwow videos, and he told them about his summers with Ohkoma. It was the first time anyone had heard him talk about his family.

kitâpahtamwak pwâtisimowi-cikâstêpayihcikana êkwa
wîhtamawêw ispîhk kê-wîci-nîpinisimât ohkoma.
êkwayâc anima awiya kê-pêhtâkot ê-âcimât owâhkômâkana.

The next morning Nikosis grabbed his own shoes and coat and went to the door. Okâwiya didn't have to fight with him to get him dressed.

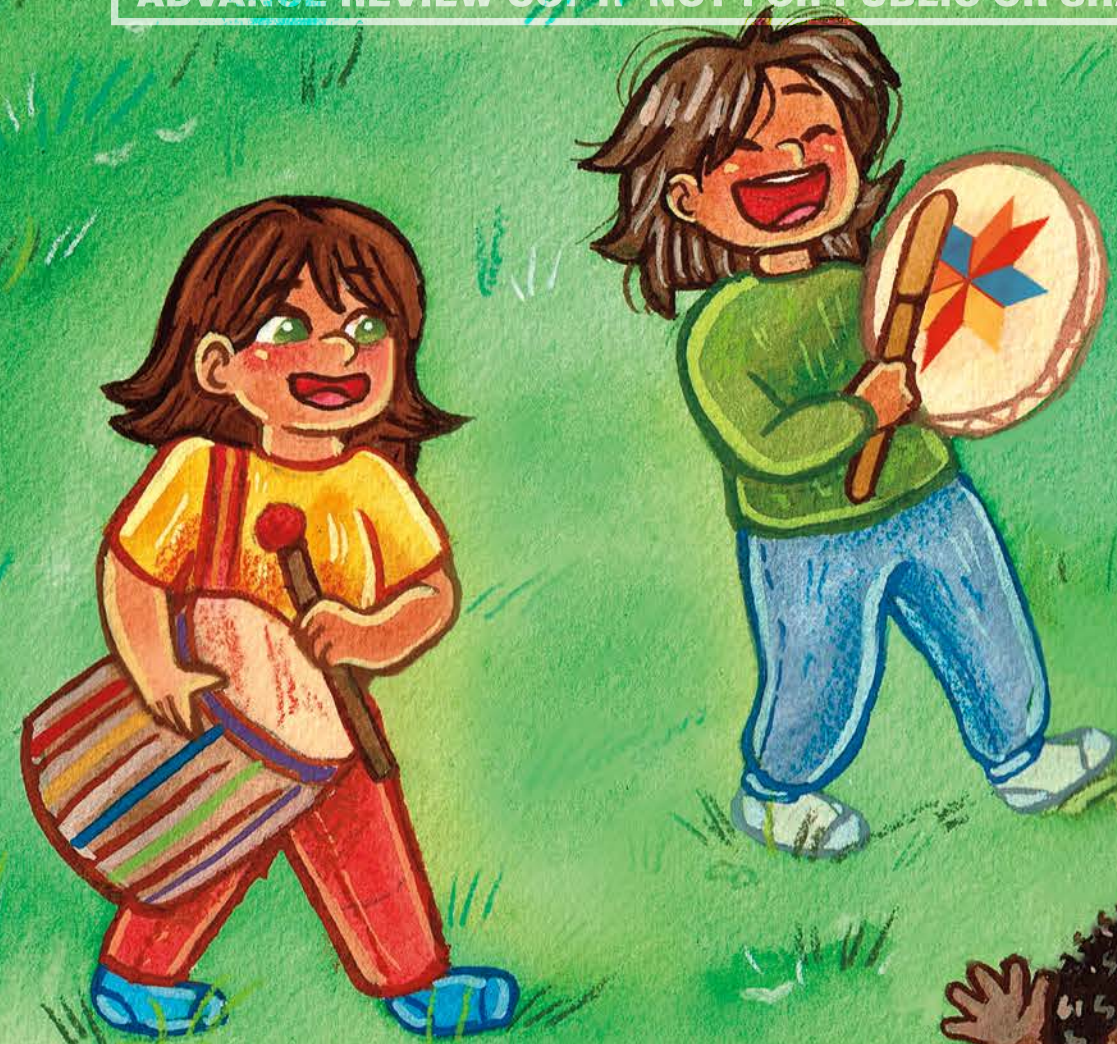
kâ-kîkisêpâyâyik nikosis otinam omaskisina mîna oskotâkay
êkwa iskwâhtêmihk itohtêw. namôya katâc ka-mâsîhikot okâwiya
ka-postayiwinisahikot.





When Nikosis went to daycare, he no longer cried. He felt safe and happy. He belonged at daycare with his friends.

ispîhk nikosis kâ-itohtêt kanawêyimâwasowikamikohk namôya êkwa mâtow. kî-miywêyhtam kwayask ê-kanawêyimiht. êkota ta-kî-ayât asici otôtêma.



The drum represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth. We all belong to the earth, and we all belong to the drum.

mistikwaskihk tâpiskôc kikâwînaw askiy
opahkahokowin. kahkiyaw kiyânaw
kikâwînaw askiy kitipêyimikonaw,
mîna mistikwaskihk kitipêyimikonaw.

PLAINS CREE WORDS FOR FAMILY

In English, we use the words *my*, *your*, *his*, *her* or *their* to show how people in a family are related. In Cree, those family words have the “possessive” built right in. In the English version of this story, the Cree words are treated like proper names. When speaking Cree, those same words change their form, depending on who is speaking and how people are related.



niya *me*
kiya *you*
wiya *him/her/their*
kiyânaw *us*



nôhkom *my grandmother*
kôhkom *your grandmother*
ohkoma *his/her/their grandmother*



nimosôm *my grandfather*
kimosôm *your grandfather*
omosôma *his/her/their grandfather*

nikâwiy *my mother*
kikâwiy *your mother*
okâwiya *his/her/their mother*

nôhtâwiy *my father*
kôhtâwiy *your father*
ohtâwiya *his/her/their father*

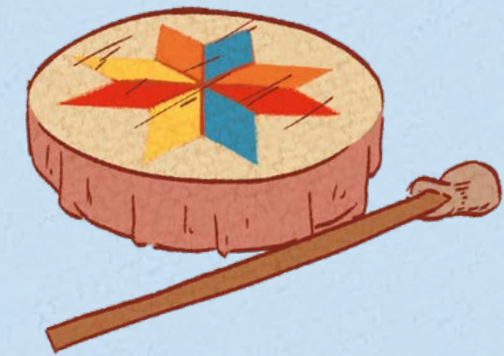


nitânis *my daughter*
kitânis *your daughter*
otânisa *his/her/their daughter*

nikosis *my son*
kikosis *your son*
okosisa *his/her/their son*



Nikosis



It is important to me that my children are raised knowing their culture and identity. My oldest son was born in 2008, and this story is based on his experience at daycare. The drum music was so important to his feeling of belonging, of being accepted for who he was and not changing himself to fit into the group. If he could be so affected at such a young age just by having his culture and identity acknowledged, what could this do for other children—older ones too? This experience became my inspiration in my work in education, where I find myself continually advocating for inclusion of Indigenous students' culture and identity. It's important that Nikosis's daycare providers were interested in and took the time to value his Indigenous culture. It sends the message to caregivers and educators that they can make a huge difference by using inclusive practices and resources. In the encouraging words of Brené Brown, “True belonging doesn't require you to change who you are; it requires you to be who you are.”

nicîhkêyîhtên nitawâsimisak ka-kiki-ohpikicik
 nêhiyawisîhcikêwina mîna ka-kiskêyîhtahkik
 ê-nêhiyâwicik. ninistamokosisân kî-nihtâwikiw 2008
 êkwa ôma âcimowinis wiya ohci tânisi ê-kî-ay-ispayit
 kanawêyimâwasowikamikohk. mistikwaskihk
 kâ-kitohcikêhk mâna kî-cîhkêyîhtam ayisk
 ê-kiskêyîhtamihikot êkota ta-kî-ayât, ê-miyo-otiniht wiya
 ohci êkwa namôya katâc pîtos ka-isi-ayât. kîspin êkoyikohk
 ê-isi-miyoskâkot ê-awâsisîwit kâ-nisitawinamâht
 onêhiyawisîhcikêwina mîna awîna wiya tâpwê, matwân
 cî pêyakwan ka-itiskâkoyit kotaka nêhiyâsisa, ahpô mîna
 osk-âya? kâ-kî-ispayik ôma, nisîhkêyîhtamihikon êwako
 kâ-mêkwâ-atoskêyân. ê-atoskâtamân kiskinwahamâtowin,
 pisisik nisâh-sîhkihkêmon ê-asitakihtamihk
 iyiniw-kiskinwahamawâkanak otisîhcikêwiniwâw
 êkwa otiyinito-ayisiyiniwiniwâw. cîhkêyîhtâkwan
 anihi kâ-kanawêyimikot nikosis ê-kî-nâkatohkâtamiyit
 êkwa mîna ê-kî-kistêyîhtamiyit onêhiyawisîhcikêwin.
 êwako wîhtamâkowak okanawêyimâwasowak êkwa
 okiskinwahamâkêwak ê-kaskihtâcik nawac kwayask
 ta-tôhtahkik kîspin âh-âpacihtâtâwî isîhcikêwina
 kâ-mâwawinitohk. ê-isi-sîhkimiwê *Brené Brown*: “tâpwê
 ta-tipiyawêyîhtâkosiyan, namôya kâkatâc ta-kwêskâtisiyan;
 sôskwâc piko ta-itâtisiyan awîna tâpwê kiya.”

—Sandra Lamouche

To nikosisak, my sons, and my family for being an inspiration! —S.L.
nikosisak nikî-masinahamawâwak, êkwa niwâhkômâkanak ê-sâh-sîhkiskawicik. —S.L.

To all the little dancers, singers, drummers and everyone else on the powwow trail.
Thank you for keeping our culture alive. —A.W.

kahkiyaw apisci-nîmihicôsak, onikamowak, otêwêhikêwak êkwa kahkiyaw pwâtisimowi-mêskanâhk.
kinanâskomitinâwâw ê-pimâcihtâyêk kinêhiyawâtisiwininaw. —A.W.

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Summary: In this dual-language illustrated picture book, a child who's away from his family for the first time at daycare finds belonging through the music of the powwow drum. In English and Plains Cree.

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 Translated by Dolores Greyeyes Sand
 Edited by the Cree Literacy Network

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Sandra Lamouche is a nêhiyaw iskwêw (Cree Woman) from the Bigstone Cree Nation in northern Alberta. She is a wife, mother of two boys with braids, champion women's hoop dancer, award-winning educator and two-time TEDx speaker. She has a bachelor of arts in Native American studies and is currently completing a thesis on Indigenous dance as a determinant of well-being. Sandra and her family live in Blackfoot Territory (Treaty 7), the heart of powwow country in southern Alberta.

nêhiyawiskwêwiw awa ***Sandra Lamouche*** êkwa mîna mistasinîwiyinînâhk ohcîw, kîwêtinohk *Alberta*. awa *Sandra* wîkihtow, ayâwêw nîso nâpêsisâ ê-sêkipatwâyit, wâh-otahowêw kâ-nîmihtât wawiyâkana, okiskinwahamâkêw kâ-kîspinamâkosit êkwa mîna nîswâw kî-nitawi-kakêskimiwêw *TEDx* itê. kîsihtâw *Native American Studies BA*, êkwa mîna mêkwâc êwako ma-masinahikêw ta-wîhtahk tânisi ê-isi-miyoskâkoyahk iyiniw-nîmihitowin. misiwê kiskinwahamâtowinihk kî-atoskêw, kanawêyimâwasowikamikohk ohci isko kihci-kiskinwahamâtowikamikohk êkota ka-wîcihtâsot. Sandra êkwa opêyakôskâna wîkiwak ayahciyinînâhk, pwâtisimowaskîhk, sâwanohk *Alberta*.

Azby Whitecalf is a Plains Cree character designer and illustrator based out of North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Treaty 6 Territory. They have a bachelor's degree in visual communication (character design) from the Alberta University of the Arts. An important part of their practice is creating accurate and positive representations of Indigenous Peoples and cultures and exploring what it is to portray Indigenous people in a way that captures their multidimensional identities. They are the illustrator of *Buffalo Wild!* Azby enjoys working with bright colors, strong contrast and fun shapes.

nêhiyaw awa wiya ***Azby Whitecalf*** kâ-tâpasinahwât anihi kâ-âcimimiht mîna kâ-wâpamimiht, êkwa wîkiw nôtinitowi-sîpîhk, kisiskâciwan, nikotwâsik-tipahamâtowaskiy. kîsi-kiskinwahamâkosiw *visual communication (character design) B.A.* nêtê ohci *Alberta University of the Arts*. cîhkêyihtâkwan anita kâ-atoskâtahk ta-miyo-nôkohât iyinito-ayisiyiniwa êkwa isîhcikêwina, êkwa mîna ê-kakwê-nâh-nitonahk tânisi kâ-isi-nôkohât iyinito-ayisiyiniwa êkosi ê-wî-wâpahtahimiht pâh-pîtos kâ-itâtisiyit. kî-tâpasinaham “*Buffalo Wild!*” cîhkêyihtam *Azby* ta-atoskâkêt pakaskâsowina, mitoni kâ-pîtos-âyiwaniiyiki, êkwa mîna oyahikêwina kâ-môcikêyihtâkwaniyiki.

