

# AIYANA'S JOURNEY



This book is about  
a kid named  
Aiyana!



It has a story, activities, and  
information about different  
people you might meet.



This book is yours. You can  
draw, color and write in it.  
And you can keep it.



This is Aiyana's story.



Something happened in her  
family, and some grown-ups  
are worried and think that  
her family needs help.



Aiyana meets these new grown-ups and  
goes to some new places. She learns about  
her feelings and things she can do to feel  
better.

Some of what happens in Aiyana's story  
might not be the same as what's  
happening to you. Aiyana might not look  
like you, or come from the same tribe as  
you, or live in the same place as you.

But some of these things might be the  
same, and you and Aiyana might have  
some of the same feelings, too.

**We hope this book can help you and  
remind you that you are not alone.**



Hi, my name is Aiyana!

I live with my mom on the reservation. I'm going to share my story with you.

Things have been kind of hard at home with my mom.



Some grown-ups came to my home. They asked us lots of questions and said my mom needs help looking after me.



So I have to stay somewhere else, while my mom gets help. But how do I get there?

I know, Gabi and Eddie said they can help me!



That's right,  
Aiyana! I'm  
Gabi and this  
is Eddie.

We work with the  
tribe. We are your  
social workers  
and we help lots  
of other kids and  
families, too.

We'll bring you  
to a place to  
stay while  
your mom  
gets help.

And we'll  
help you  
along your  
journey.



At first, I was scared to talk to the new grown-ups. But they are nice, and when things are scary and sad, I'm glad I have people who can help.



We're on our way to the new house. I'm scared. What if I don't like staying there?

It's ok to be scared. You'll be staying with Ms. Maya, she's a very nice auntie in our community. But we'll see what it's like and we can help if you have any problems.

That's right!



I still feel scared. And it's a long drive to Ms. Maya's house.

That's ok, Aiyana. And yes, it is a long drive! I have a fun activity we can do together. It might help you feel better.

# Activity

## ANIMAL DRAWING

Do you ever feel scared or sad when you have to do something new, or talk to new grown-ups about something?

In some cultures, like Aiyana's and other Native American communities, there is a strong connection between people and animals.

Aiyana thought about an animal that she would like to be, and then drew this animal to show how strong she is. This helped her feel better when she was feeling scared.



Can you think of an animal you would like to see yourself being, to help with your situation? If you like, draw it here. You can also do this activity with someone else and talk about why you chose the animal and how it makes you feel.



DRAW ON THIS PAGE!



We're here!

It's very nice, I like the trees and flowers!

Come on, let's go in, Aiyana!



Hi, welcome!  
I'm Ms. Maya.  
Come in, Aiyana.  
I have a room  
set up for you  
with some toys.

Toys!



Is this my room?

Yes it is, until you can go back home.

I can't wait to play with my toys from home and these new toys!



It is nice here,  
but will I still  
get to see my  
mom, now that  
I'm staying with  
Ms. Maya?

I'm sorry, I know  
you miss your mom.  
You will still get to  
see and call her, and  
we'll be seeing her at  
the Tribal Center,  
tomorrow. We'll also  
meet some other  
grown-ups there,  
too.

And how will  
I get to sleep?  
My mom tells  
me bedtime  
stories. I miss  
her.

Let's do the Tree  
and Wind activity  
together, it might  
help you feel  
better. Then you  
can tell me your  
favorite bedtime  
story!

# Relax

## THE TREE & THE WIND

Trees have long, strong roots that grow deep into the ground. You may not be able to see their roots, but even the smallest, thinnest and most flexible trees have them.

- 1** Stand up straight like a tree with your hands at your sides.
- 2** Take a deep breath and hold it for 2 seconds.
- 3** Breathe out slowly and imagine a gentle wind is blowing your tree body.
- 4** Wiggle your body like a tree in the wind a few times.



# Falling Asleep

## THE EAGLE

Aiyana practiced The Tree and The Wind a few times that night to help her relax.

When she laid down to sleep, Aiyana thought about the story her mom told her about a great eagle who would close its wings in the sky to create the night and reveal the stars. Remembering the story helped Aiyana fall asleep.

**Do you know any other stories that can help you fall asleep? Is there anyone from your family, tribe, or community, that you could ask?**



THE NEXT DAY...

This is the Tribal Center. Lots of people work here. They help our Tribe and our people.





This is Michelle. She's an advocate.

What's an advocate?

It's someone who helps kids and families get the things they need.



You and your mom will meet many helpful grown-ups on your journey. Let's go see your mom now.

It was so good seeing my mom.

We got to play and draw together. I miss her so much.

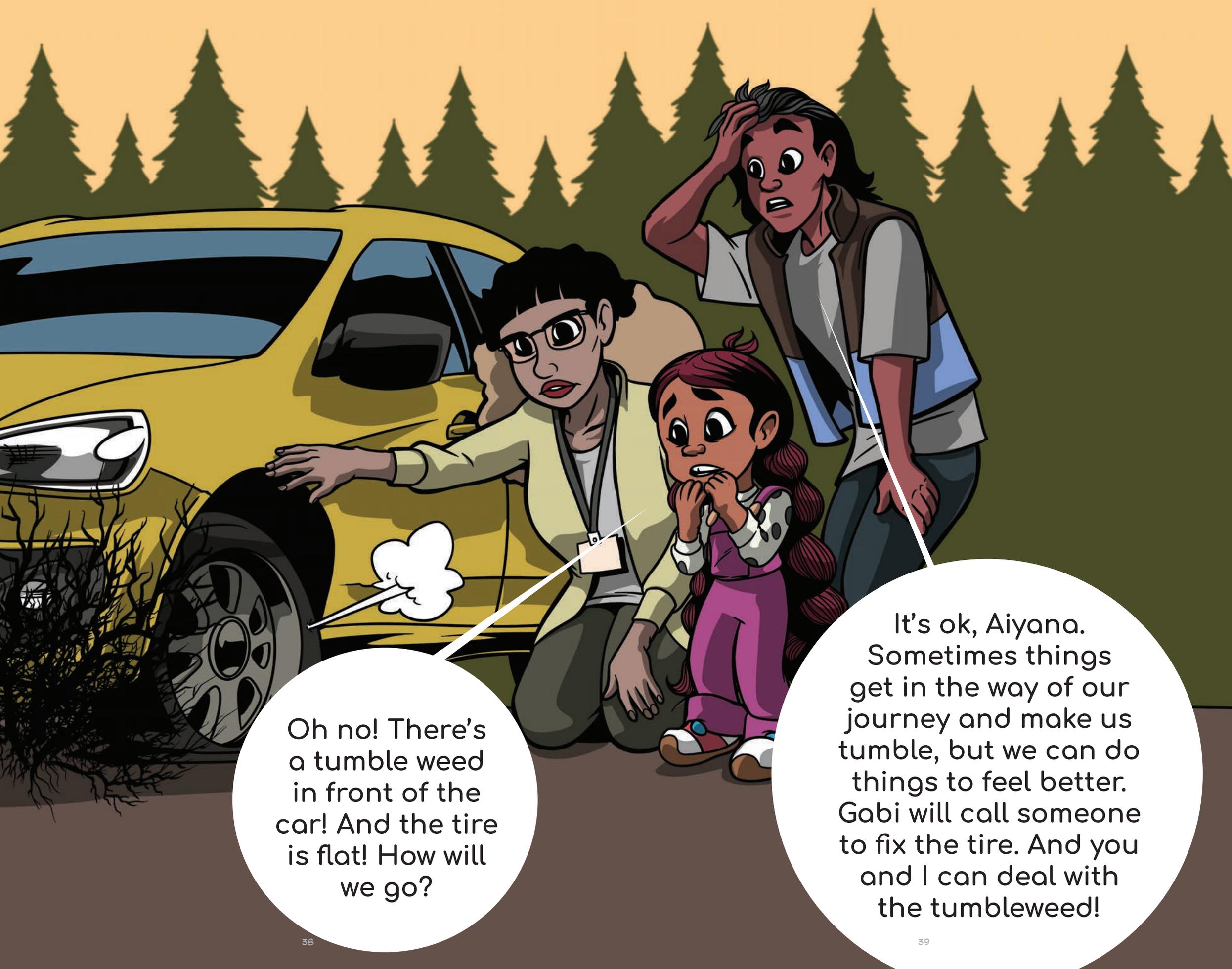


Sounds like a good visit. Your mom is working really hard to get the help she needs.



Are we going back to your house now, Ms. Maya?

Yes, let's go home and get some good rest and dinner. You'll be seeing your mom again tomorrow at the pow wow!



Oh no! There's a tumble weed in front of the car! And the tire is flat! How will we go?

It's ok, Aiyana. Sometimes things get in the way of our journey and make us tumble, but we can do things to feel better. Gabi will call someone to fix the tire. And you and I can deal with the tumbleweed!

Remember our breathing? Let's take really deep breaths together, side by side, and maybe we can blow the tumbleweed away.



Yay, it worked!  
We did it!

One.  
Two.  
Three...



# Relax

## TUMMY BREATHING

Do you ever get worried or scared? You can try this special kind of breathing activity!

- 1** You can be standing, sitting or lying down. You can close your eyes or keep them open.
- 2** Imagine you are smelling a flower and take a deep breath, slowly, counting 1-2-3 and feel your tummy get bigger.
- 3** Slowly breathe out, like you're trying to blow a dandelion, counting 1-2-3. Feel your tummy go down.



Try doing this a few times in a row, and then think about how you are feeling.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Many families, tribes, and communities have stories and traditions that have been shared for many years.

As Aiyana was breathing, she noticed the strength of her wind. It reminded her of a special story in her tribe that she heard many times. The story is about a spirit bird that flaps its wings to create the wind. Thinking of the story and all the storytellers made Aiyana feel happy and peaceful.

Do you know any stories or traditions that make you feel happy or peaceful? Do any of these come from your family, tribe, or community?



THE NEXT DAY AT THE POW WOW...



This is my special jingle dress that I wear to the pow wow. My mom made it for me, but I got to pick out the colors.

I love seeing my family and friends at the pow wow.

Here we celebrate being together with songs and dancing!



Thanks for hearing my story. Sometimes things can be hard, and we don't know what's going to happen or how long things will take.

But I'm happy I have lots of people who can help me and my mom on our journey. And that makes me feel better!



In Aiyana's story, Gabi and Eddie visited her home because they were worried about her. Aiyana then had to stay with Ms. Maya while her mom got help. This is called foster care.



Things like this happen to other kids and families, but every situation is different. For one thing, not all kids live with their mom. Some kids live with their dad, grandparents, or other grown-ups. And if they can't stay at home, some kids stay with other family members. Or some stay with a different family or person, like Aiyana staying with Ms. Maya. And sometimes families have to go to court, which is a place where grown-ups talk about how to keep a child safe at home.

No matter what, please remember that what happened is not your fault, and you are not alone. Like Aiyana, you can ask for help from the grown-ups working with you and from your family, friends and community.

# Sharing Our Feelings

Aiyana shared her story and how she felt along the way. Did she show or talk about any feelings that you have, too? Sometimes it's hard to know how we feel. But our body can sometimes show us when we don't feel good, like if we have an ache in our head, tummy, or chest. It can help to talk to someone about how these might be part of our feelings.



Storytelling can help us in lots of ways. For generations, Indigenous communities have used storytelling to connect to the past, present, and future.



In Aiyana's story, she had some big feelings and needed help. People around her helped her learn ways to feel better.

So if you feel ready, talking about how you feel with someone you trust, might help you feel better.



There are other things you can do when you are not feeling good to help you feel better. Check out the list of activities on the next page!



# ✓ My Checklist TO HELP ME FEEL BETTER!

When you feel angry, worried,  
sad or even confused 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
- Ask for help
- Play with friends & family
- Go outside or be in nature
- Sing an honor or prayer song



What are some other things that you like to do to feel better?

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



## 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.



## 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.

# AIYANA'S JOURNEY

WRITTEN BY

**Dr. Lee Francis IV**

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## 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

**Dale Ray Deforest**

Tribal Community | Navajo Nation

## About

Dale is an award-winning illustrator and designer. He was born on the Navajo Reservation in Tuba City, Arizona, and grew up in the Farmington and Shiprock area of New Mexico.

Titles include *The Hero Twins*; *MOONSHOT: The Indigenous Comics Collection Volume 3*; the children's book series, *Powwow Mysteries*; *Race to the Sun* written by Indigenous author and Nebula Award Winner Rebecca Roanhorse; and is a featured artist on the upcoming all-Indigenous comic book series *A Howl*.



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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](http://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.

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