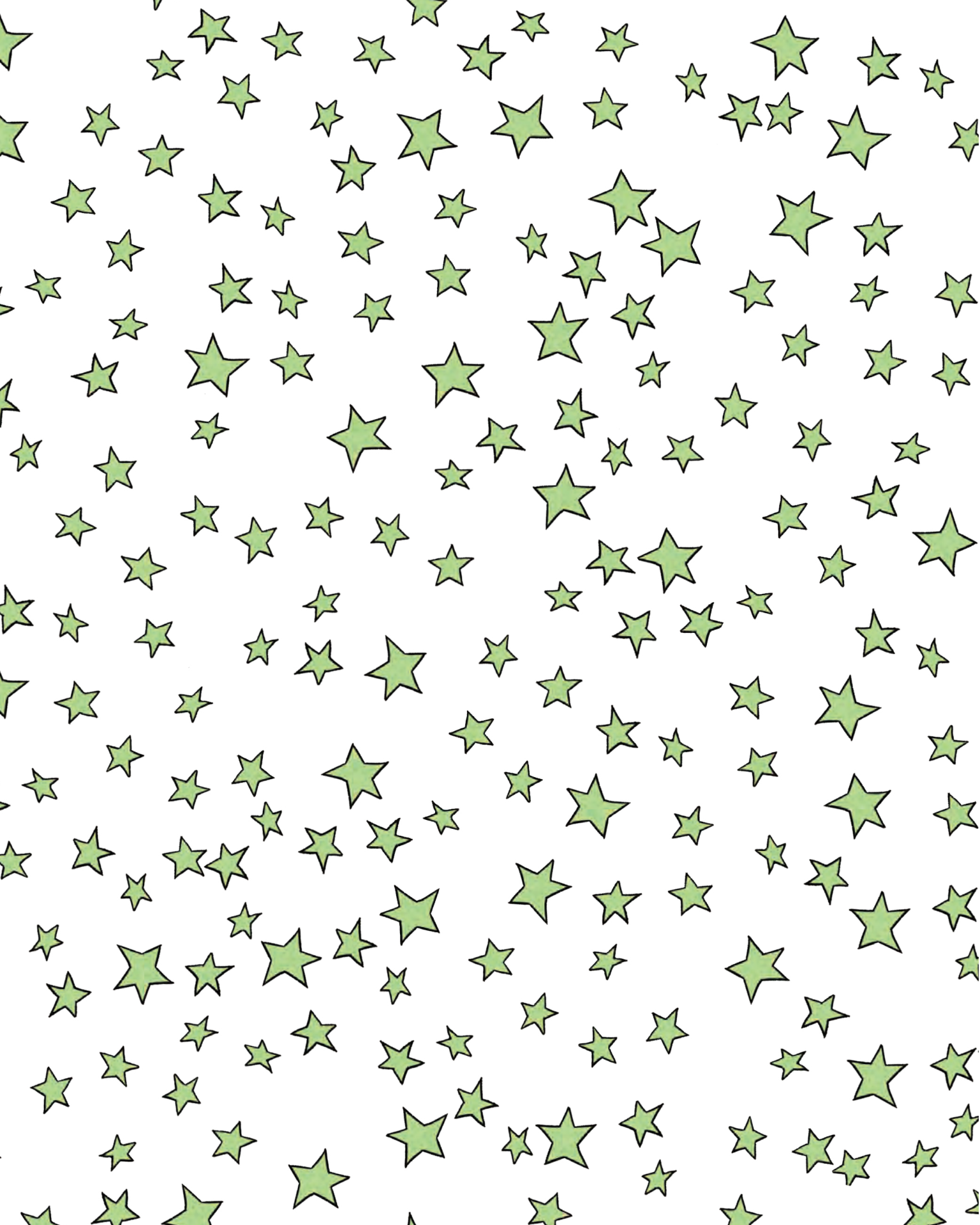


# Stars that Connect Us



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# Introduction

***Stars that Connect Us*** is part of the Star Collection developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control for young American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) readers. The Star Collection features and celebrates factors, such as feeling connected to culture and community and having positive relationships with others, that help create safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for AI/AN children.

We recognize that AI/AN communities are diverse. ***Stars that Connect Us*** utilizes that diversity to incorporate varying cultures, traditions, and customs within the story. This book aims to respectfully reflect, honor, and celebrate some of the shared characteristics across many AI/AN communities and allow opportunities for conversation about a child's specific tribal traditions. We hope children will be able to see themselves and their tribal community reflected in the story and illustrations. We also encourage parents, caregivers, and educators to help children further connect the story to their own tribal culture. We have included a short guide at the end (see pages 32-34) with ideas for educators, parents, and caregivers to help children talk about and learn from this book.

Marisa Erven (Siren Cove Studios), a member of the Coquille Tribe of Oregon, wrote and illustrated ***Stars that Connect Us***. She is an artist and author with over a decade of experience in storytelling. Her experience includes creating illustrations and cover art for books, as well as designing company visuals for AI/AN businesses. She also brings story into focus with her art direction of emergent cinematic-driven technologies, including contributions to award-winning and narrative-focused videogames.

Representatives from tribal nations across the United States, including tribal leaders, Elders, parents, teachers and others, also provided input during the development of this book to help make it relevant and engaging to diverse young AI/AN readers. We would like to express our gratitude to all the individuals and groups who contributed to the development of this book, with special acknowledgment to the CDC/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's Tribal Advisory Committee.

Many thanks also go to the Indian Health Service (IHS) for their partnership and support. We would also like to express our gratitude to Dr. Vivian García López, from the Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona, for her contributions to the development of the educator's guide for this book. Last, we acknowledge our great partners on this project: FHI 360 and Siren Cove Studios.

We hope you enjoy the book and will share it with others!

The Star Collection Team

# Stars that Connect Us

## NAVAJO LANGUAGE VERSION

This e-book version has select words translated in Navajo language. **Click on the underlined words throughout the e-book to see their translation.** If a direct translation of a word was not available, similar alternatives have been included.

We would like to thank Lamont Yazzie, Ed.D., from the Navajo Nation for providing the translations.



Click on the word “stars” above to see an example of this e-book’s interactive features.

*Stars that Connect Us* was inspired by the Eagle Books, a series of books for young AI/AN readers that highlight the wisdom of healthy eating, physical activity, and diabetes awareness. CDC, IHS, and the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee debuted the Eagle Books for K–4th readers in 2006—*Through the Eyes of the Eagle*, *Knees Lifted High*, *Plate Full of Color*, and *Tricky Treats*. Georgia Perez, the Community Health Representative for Nambe Pueblo for 19 years, wrote the Eagle Books, and Patrick Rollo (Bad River Band of Ojibwe, Wisconsin) and Lisa A. Fifield (Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin, Black Bear Clan) illustrated them. The series now includes a trilogy of youth novels and a graphic novel for readers in grades 5–9.

You can download or order the free Eagle Books at:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/ndwp/eagle-books>

## Siren Cove Studios

Written and Illustrated by  
Marisa Erven

Naa 'adahalyá

A **Bright One** is a person who is there for you. They care about you.  
They are connected to you. **Bright Ones** are a part of your community.  
They are a part of your life.

nit dah nidahaz'ánéęgi

Who is a **Bright One** to you?

# Moon



bik'is

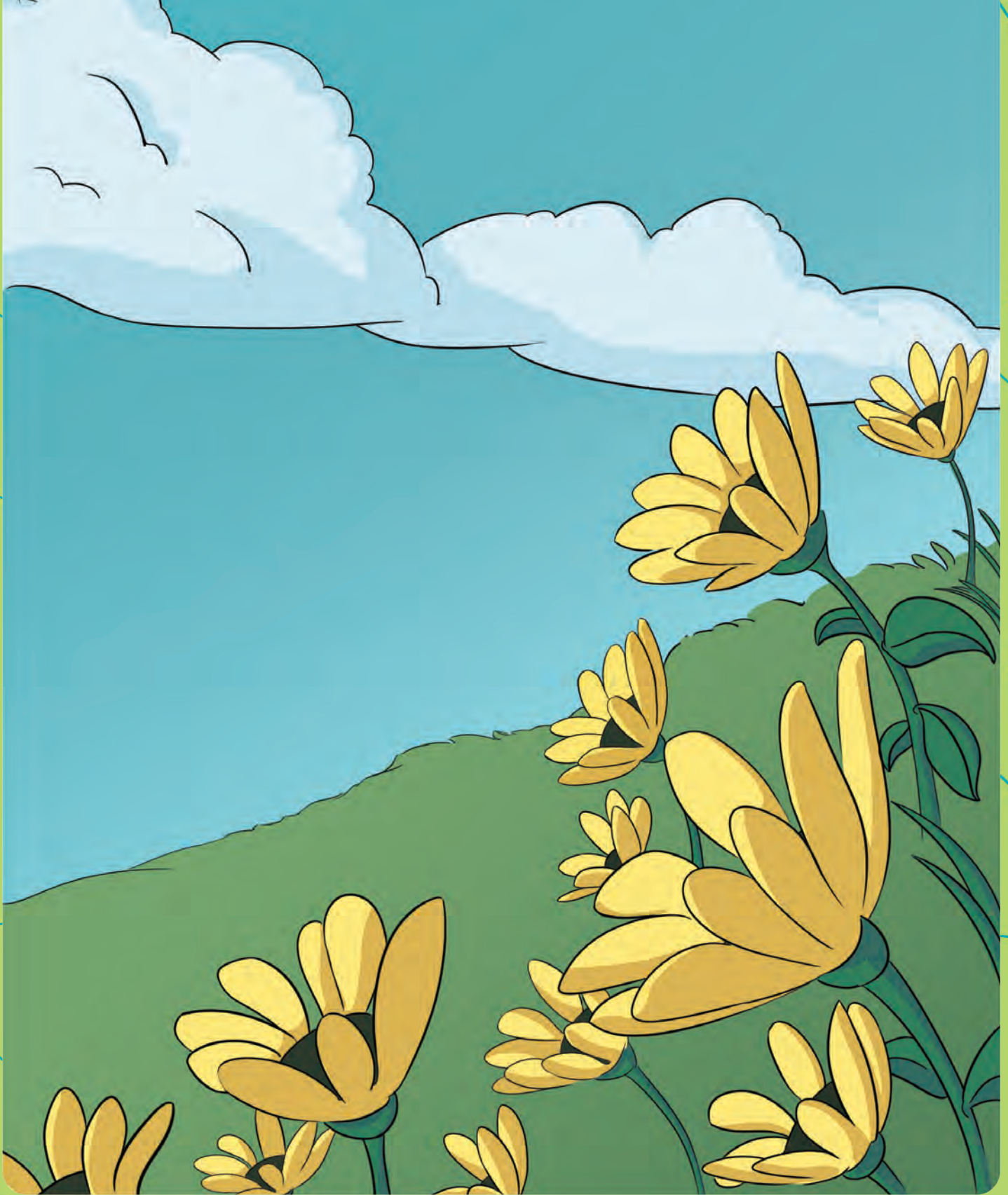
Lisa's best friend Tommy moved away today. Tonight, Lisa's **Bright One** tells her favorite story of the bear.

hani'



She says to Lisa, "You miss Tommy. Every so often, people must move away. Life changes. Day turns to night. But we stay connected."





"We continue to grow. As the flowers grow together in grass,  
and corn in fields."



t' áá 'attso bich'j nihidziil

"We are **resilient** like the flowers and plants that return each spring."



sq'

"Our connections to one another shine bright. Just as the stars weave into the night and brighten the sky."



"I make baskets for everyone I love. This one is for you!  
Each basket is **special**, like you are."

Íloo baa nitsískees

# Stars



Lisa looks at her **Bright One** and smiles. She holds her basket tightly.



"The bear is a reminder of your connection to the community. Of your connection to your **Bright Ones**."

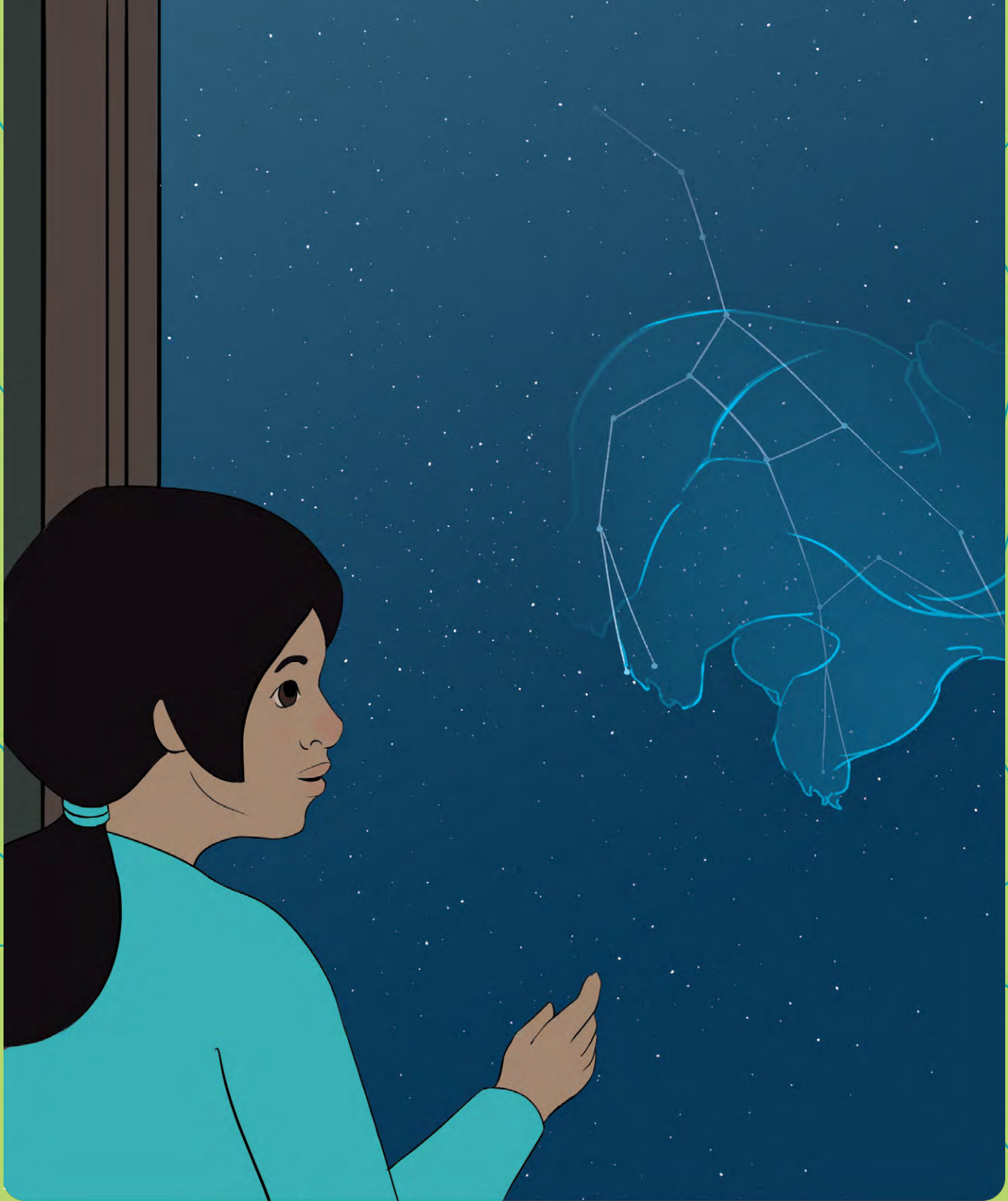
nit dah nidahaz'ánéęgi



nihich' ááh nidaakai

Nihaa 'ádahalyá

"Our **Bright Ones** protect us, as bears protect their cubs. They care for us. as I care for you. Do you know the bear in the sky?"



Lisa says "Yes," and points to it outside.





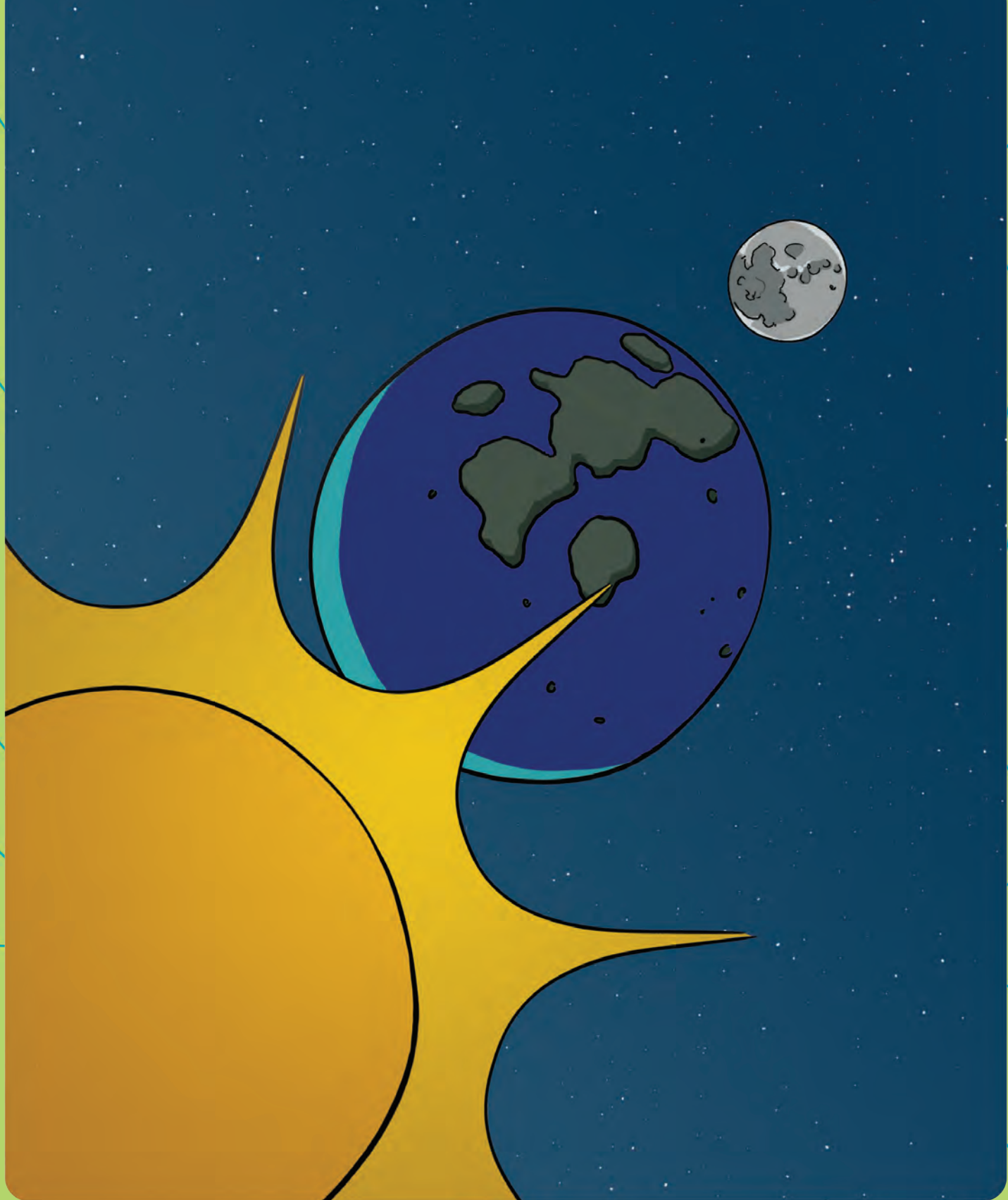
The spirit of the bear comes to life. It moves across the starry sky.



Lisa says, "I see it. The bear is there!" Her **Bright One** smiles.

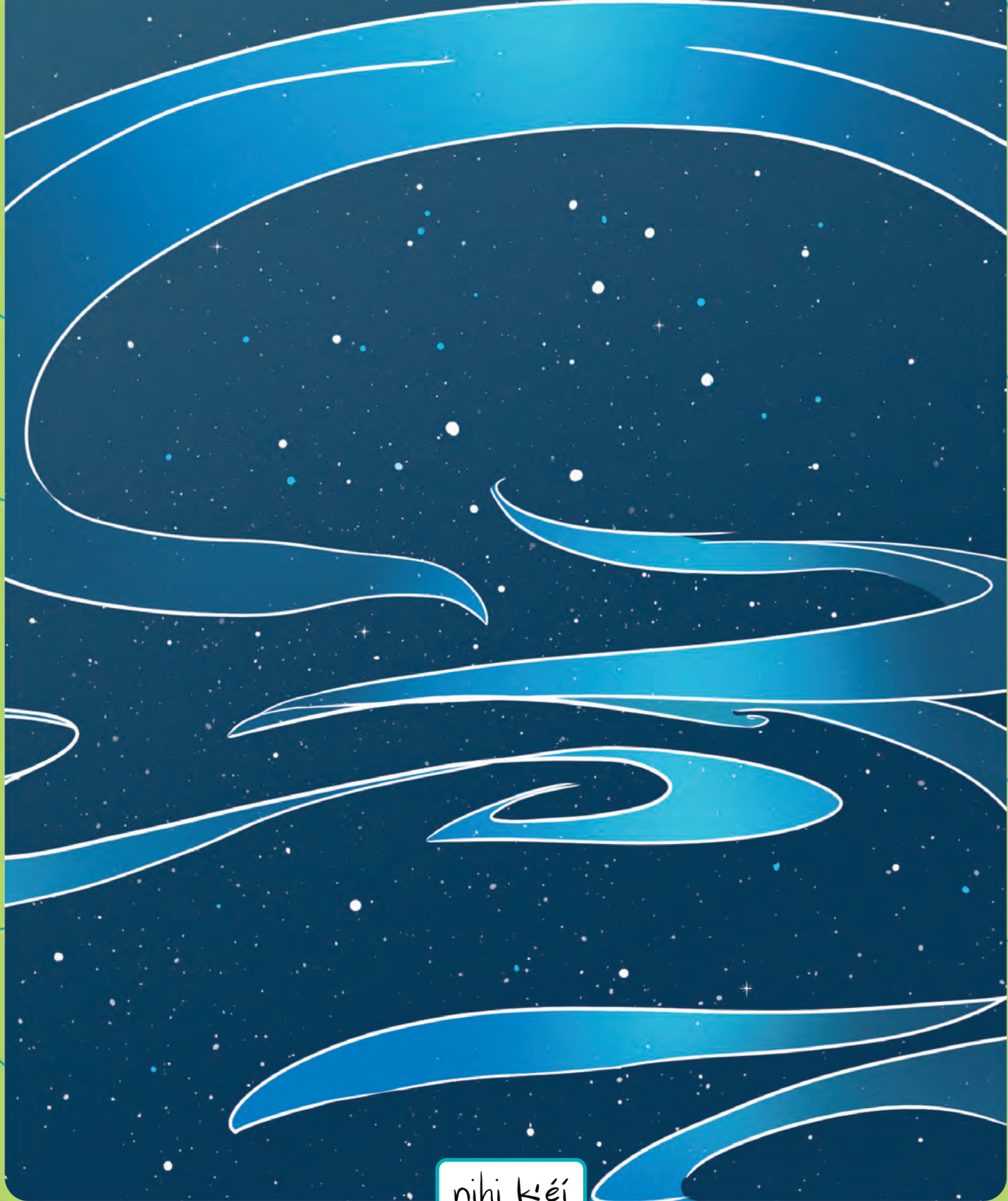


Her **Bright One** asks, "Tommy lives far away now, doesn't he?" Lisa nods. "Tommy sees the same stars that you do in his new home."



"We are all connected. We see the same moon, stars, and sun."





nihí k'íí

"Not just Tommy, but our friends, family, and ancestors too."

nihí k'is

nihizázi

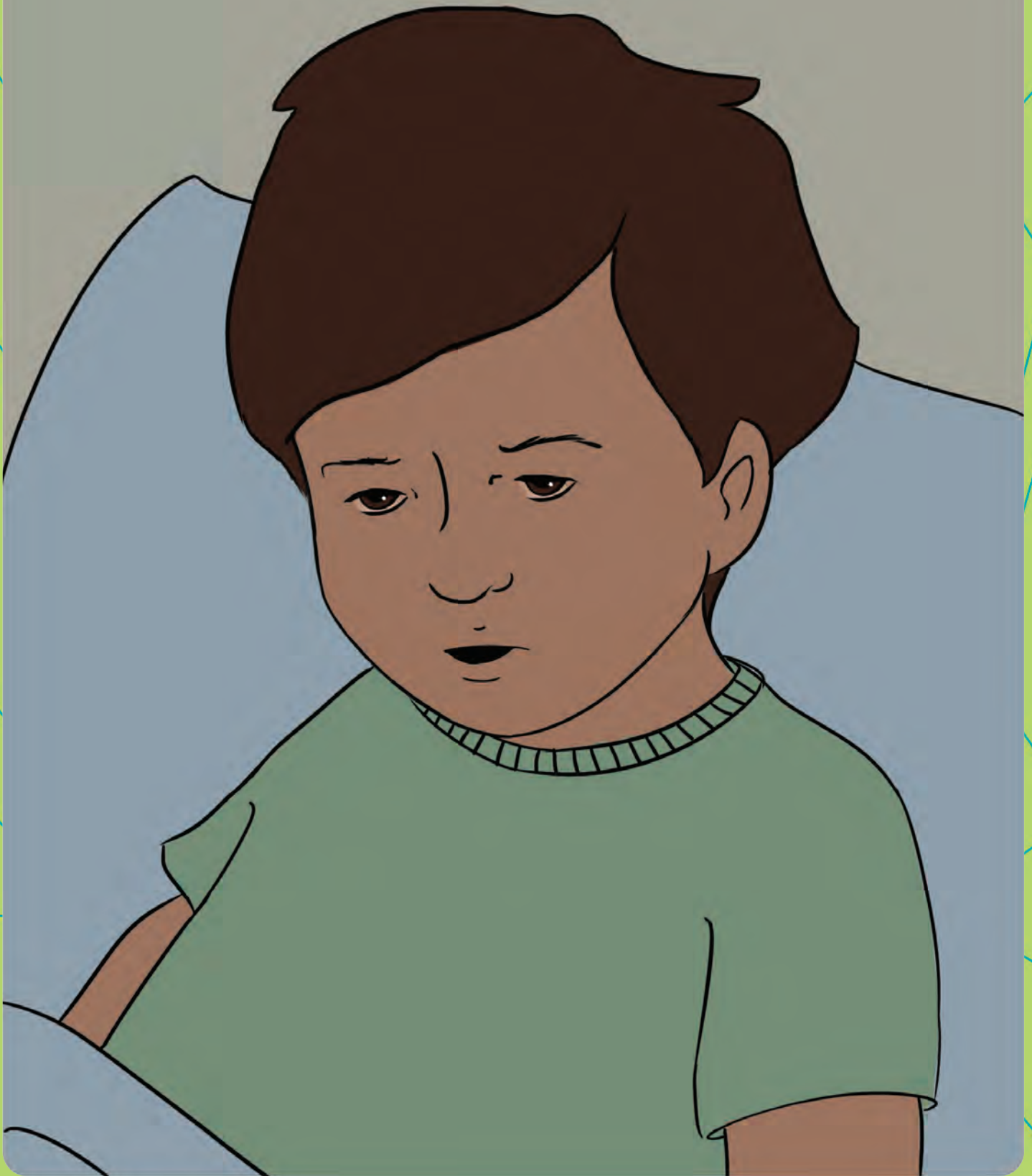
# Sun



The next morning, Tommy wakes in his new bedroom. He worries about making **friends** at the local community center. He moved here yesterday.



His **Bright One** walks into his room. She asks, "Are you ready for your first day?"



Tommy quietly says, "Yes."





"But what if the other kids don't like me?"



hani'

His **Bright One** asks, "Do you know the story of the bear?" Tommy nods and says, "Yes, they told it to Lisa and me at the community center."



nihit dah nidahaz'ánéęgi

nihí k'is

"Even if far away, we are connected to **our friends**. To all of **our community**. **Your friend** Lisa can also see the bear in the sky."

ni k'is



nihich' áǵh nidaakai

"Bright Ones protect us. Like the bears protect their cubs."



nihi k'éí

nihizázi

"Our **Bright Ones**, family, community, and ancestors are all connected to us. They give us strength."

nit dah nidahaz'ánéęgi



Tommy thanks his **Bright One**. He places the bear in his bag and leaves for his first day.



Tommy is grateful and happy to know he is not alone.  
That others are there for him.

# Let's Connect!



**LISA**

What is your favorite Bright One story?



**TOMMY**

How do you show care for others?



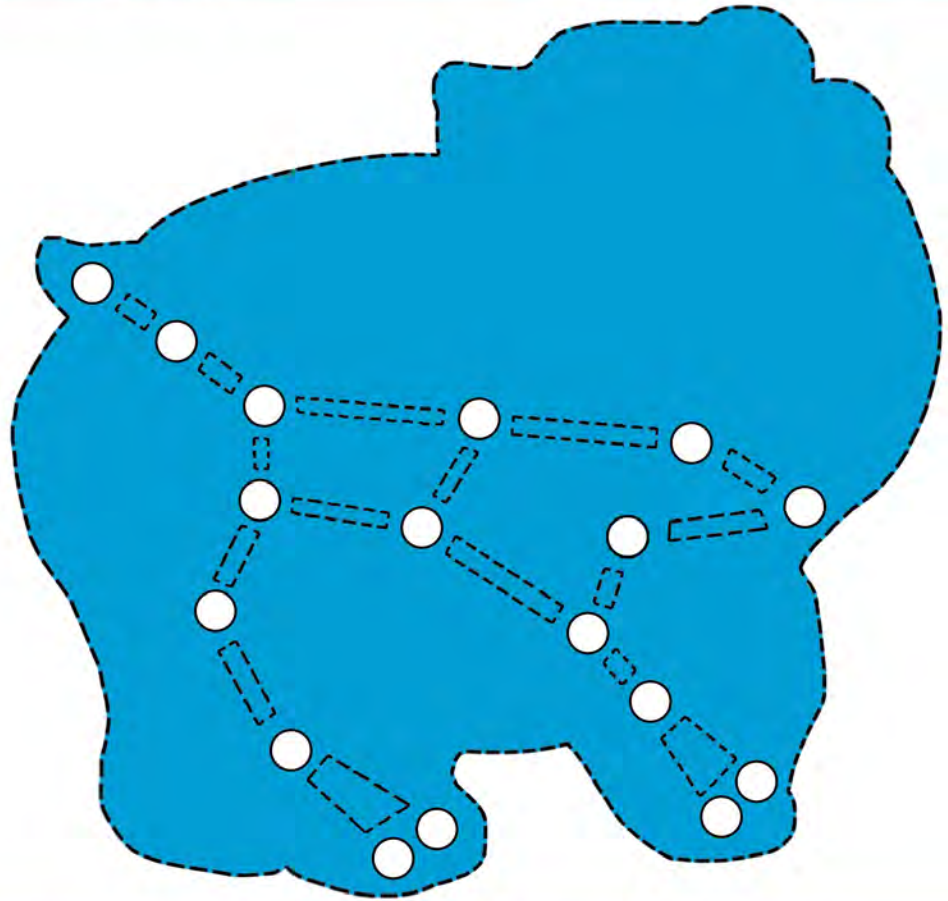


# Starlight

**Supplies:** Paper, Pencil or Pen, Flashlight or Lamp, Hole Punch (optional)

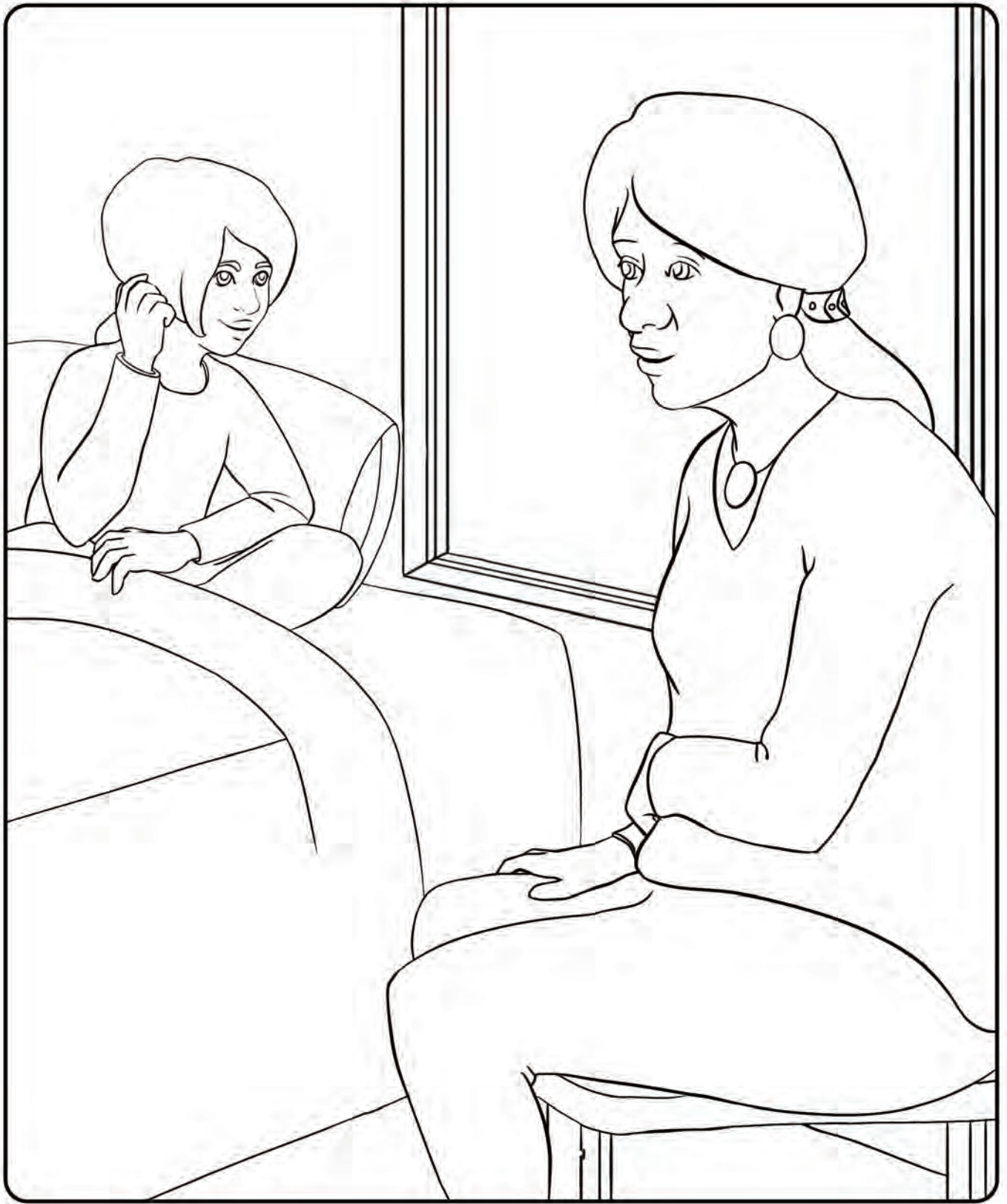
**TO MAKE:**

1. Cut out bear shape
2. Poke or punch dots
3. Cut out constellation lines (optional)



**TO VIEW:**

1. Get a flashlight and turn it on. Don't have one near you? A lamp will also do!
2. Aim the light at a wall or ceiling.
3. Hold the bear in front of the light. Move the shape over the light, until you see the shape clearly on the wall or ceiling.
4. Enjoy looking at the starry sky you made!



Color along with, or for, your **Bright One!**

# Stars that Connect Us

This guide offers ideas and suggestions to begin a dialogue with children about the story. We recognize the diversity among American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) cultures, traditions, and understandings. We encourage you to modify or expand on these ideas based on the children's specific AI/AN culture, lived experiences, and age group.

## Overview of Cultural Protective Factors in the Book

*Stars that Connect Us* highlights and celebrates cultural factors among AI/AN children and their communities which may protect them from violence and injury and promote their health and well-being, like:

- **Feeling connected to their culture**, such as through shared tribal knowledge and history, cultural values and practices, and traditional activities and ceremonies.
- **Experiencing positive social norms**, such as those that support positive parenting/ caregiving and that nurture self-efficacy, self-esteem, and identity.
- **Having positive relationships and interactions with others**, such as with family, peers, mentors, community members, spiritual/medicine leaders, natural living beings, and others.
- **Feeling supported and nurtured**, such as having community and school support, receiving affection and appreciation, and having access to spaces that provide a sense of belonging, nurturing, and safety.

## General Tips for Educators

- Prepare to share additional culturally relevant tribal stories, songs, language, and activities as you discuss the book with children. Use the ideas in this guide to help you get started. Consider checking with cultural knowledge holders from the local community about appropriate and relevant information to share with the children. You could also invite cultural knowledge holders to talk with the children and share traditional stories, items, songs, and other cultural experiences with them. Also offer opportunities to celebrate the diversity of AI/AN cultures, traditions, and practices. Share

resources that celebrate and educate on cultural diversity such as books, comics, and online resources.

- Prepare to discuss emotions children might express—either verbally or non-verbally—when reading or talking about the book. Help children discuss and identify feelings such as:
  - happiness
  - humor
  - love/care for someone
  - empathy
  - safety
  - comfort
  - strength
  - hope
  - sense of belonging
  - self-worth
  - cultural pride
  - sadness
  - missing someone
  - anger
  - danger
  - fear or worry

## LEARNING AND BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

After reading this book and taking part in supplemental discussion and activities, children will be able to:

- **Identify cultural protective factors** in their own lives and tribal communities.
- **Identify at least one *Bright One*** in their life.
- **Engage in activities that celebrate and honor their culture** and, at the same time, protect and promote their health and well-being.
- **Gain confidence to discuss and ask questions about their culture** to an Elder, friend, family, teacher, or a *Bright One*.
- **Share what they have learned** about their culture with others.

- Identify and share local resources with parent/caregivers that reflect and promote cultural protective factors and can help promote children’s safety and wellness (such as school resources, counselors, AI/AN health services, AI/AN social services, spiritual/medicine leaders, clans, Elders, or cultural knowledge holders).
- Develop a plan of action in the event a child discloses information indicating her/his well-being and safety have been compromised. Identify and implement your facility’s policies and procedures to respond to such disclosures, including mandatory reporting.

### Sample Discussion Topics

Use the sample topics and questions below to help you talk about the book with children. Connect the discussion back to specific moments in the story and to the children’s own AI/AN culture and experiences.

- **TOPIC 1: Healthy/Protective Relationships.** Discuss people in their life who make them feel cared for and safe, and to whom they can turn for help and comfort, like a *Bright One*.
- **TOPIC 2: Cultural Connectedness.** Discuss cultural beliefs, traditions, and practices, such as:
  - The meaning of the bear in the sky, stars, and moon in the book, and similar or related beliefs in their AI/AN culture.

- Tribal ceremonies, activities, storytelling, crafts, language, and other traditions from their tribe.
- **TOPIC 3: Resilience.** Resiliency is bouncing back from a hard time or after bad things that happen.
  - Talk about and share examples of personal strengths, self-confidence, cultural pride, identity, and/or situations when people live through something difficult, or a change, or when things do not go as planned.
  - Talk about how they learn and grow from those experiences and how that makes them stronger to deal with other hard moments in their life.

### SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BY TOPIC

#### Healthy/Protective Relationships

1. Why did Lisa’s *Bright One* give her the basket with the bear (pg. 9)? How do you think Lisa felt when her *Bright One* gave her this gift?
2. How do you think Tommy felt when his *Bright One* spoke to him about his feelings about his first day (pg. 20)?
3. Who is a *Bright One* in your life? Who is there for you and cares for you? Which people or things in your life make you feel safe and protected like the cubs in the story that are protected by the bear (pg. 25)?
4. What kind of things do you do with your *Bright One*?

5. What kind of things does your *Bright One* do for you?
6. How does your *Bright One* make you feel?

#### Cultural Connectedness

1. Lisa’s and Tommy’s *Bright Ones* talk to them about bears (such as the bear in the sky or bear in the basket). What do the bears mean in the story?
2. What are some ways in which Lisa and Tommy stay connected to each other, their ancestors and their community? (For example, they see the same moon and stars; Creation stories or traditional stories).
3. What are some things that make you feel connected to, or a part of, your tribe and tribal family?
4. What are some traditions from your tribe that you like and make you feel proud about being part of your community? Some examples might be cultural ceremonies, feasts, gatherings, pow wows, festivities, or other events that bring your tribal community together; crafts; storytelling; gift-giving; language; traditional foods; and respect for tribal Elders.
5. Lisa’s *Bright One* tells her a bedtime story (pg. 4). What is a favorite cultural story that you have heard? What do you like about that story? How does it make you feel about your connections to your tribe and tribal family?

## Resilience

1. The book talks about being “resilient,” like how the flowers grow and plants return every spring (pgs. 6-7). What do you think that means?
2. When Tommy moved away, he was worried about his first day. Why was he worried (pg. 22)?
3. While change can be hard, like moving to a new city, some good things can also come from changes in our lives. What are some good things that Tommy might experience from his move?
4. Some people sing, drum, dance, paint, draw, or talk to others to help them feel better and happier. What are some things you do that make you feel happy, confident, or good about yourself?
5. What can friends do to help others when they are worried or sad? How can *Bright Ones* or other adults in the community help children when they are worried or sad?
6. When we are worried or sad, our thoughts can help us feel better too. What was Tommy thinking about as he left for his first day at the community center that made him feel better (pg. 28)? What did Lisa’s *Bright One* tell her to think about to help her feel better about Tommy moving away (pgs. 16–18)?
7. What things do you think about when you are worried or sad that help you feel better? How does a *Bright One* help you feel better?

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

Here are some activities you can consider to help children better understand and learn from the story.

Resources may include other asynchronous activities like books, comics, and online resources (e.g., many Tribes have online curricula and videos).

### ACTIVITY IDEA: Teach words from the heritage language(s)

- Identify some key words in the book and discuss similar ideas, perspectives, practices, or cultural understandings in the children’s heritage language(s). Sample key words from the book may include *resilient*, *community*, *connection*, *protect*, and *strength*.

### ACTIVITY IDEA: Have storytelling gatherings/activities

- Invite AI/AN cultural knowledge holders to share traditional stories with the children.
- Have children draw a picture that makes them feel connected to their culture.

### ACTIVITY IDEA: Learn about traditional dances and songs

- Invite cultural knowledge holders or cultural leaders who can present tribal-specific history, traditions, cultural dances and songs that highlight resilience, etc.

### ACTIVITY IDEA: Do cultural art/craft projects

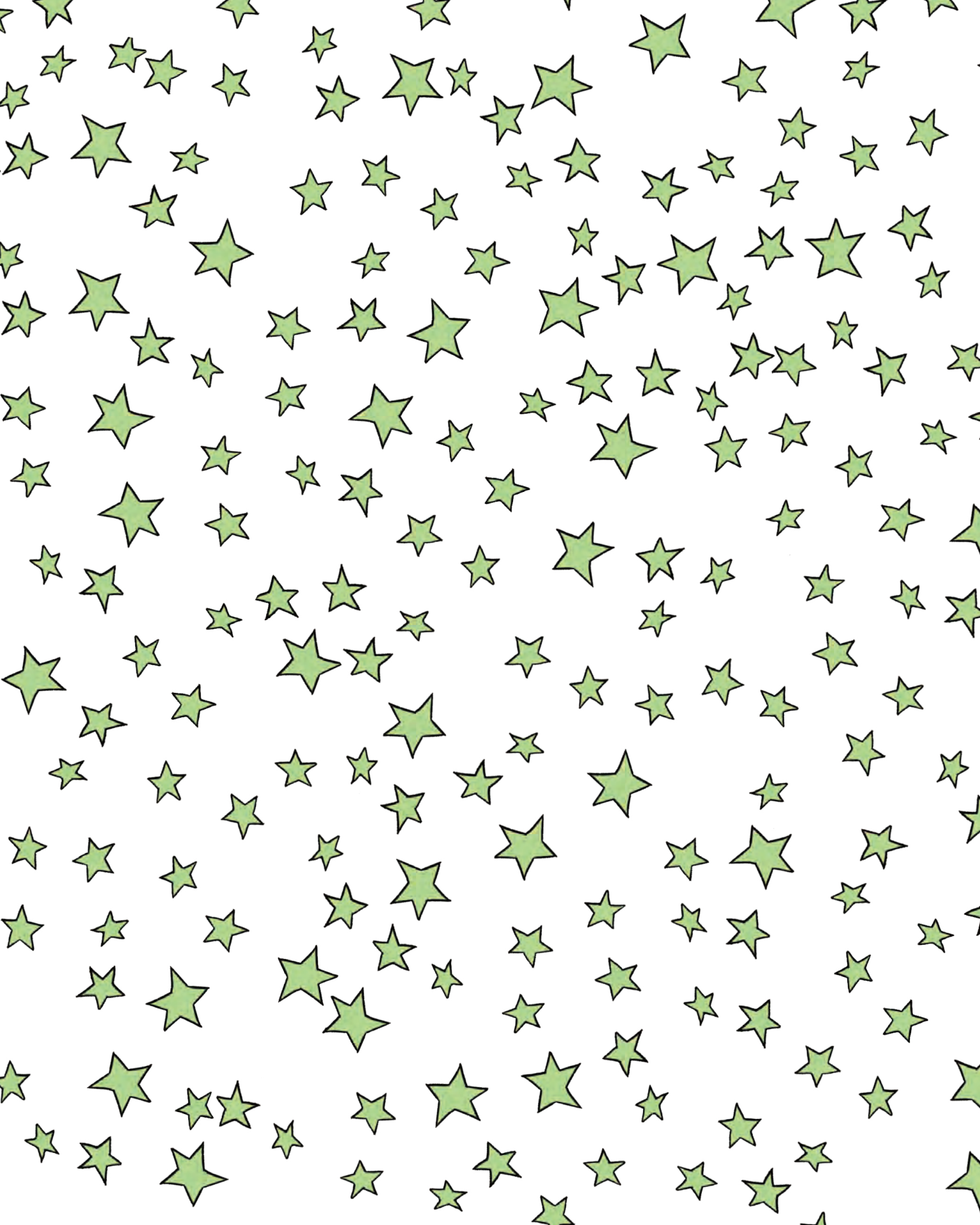
- Weave baskets from paper, straw or other materials.
- Craft bear mosaics or star and moon mobiles.
- Create a class mural that reflects resilience/strength.
- Create a drawing that shows the life cycle of flowers and plants to reflect resilience/strength, etc.

### ACTIVITY IDEA: Create story or picture books

- Have children create a story or picture book to explore feelings and relationships with their *Bright Ones* (such as writing/drawing a story of their favorite memory with their *Bright Ones* or other related story topics).
- Create a timeline for children to learn about their tribal history.

For more information go to

<https://www.cdc.gov/injury/tribal/starcollection/>



# Stars that Connect Us

Get to know Lisa and Tommy in *Stars that Connect Us*, the first book in the Star Collection.

They are great friends who have always lived next to each other.  
Lisa and Tommy's world changes the day he moves away.

They miss each other and look to their Bright Ones for support.  
***A Bright One is there for you, a positive light in your life.***

Lisa and Tommy listen as their Bright Ones share stories with them,  
like the story of the bear in the sky to give hope.

A reminder that strength and connections to your  
community exists, even when far away.

***We are all connected.  
We all see the same moon, stars, and sun.***

*Stars that Connect Us* is a contemporary story for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children that celebrates some of the shared values and traditions across many AI/AN communities which help create safe, stable, and nurturing environments and relationships for AI/AN children.

For more information on the Star Collection, please visit  
<https://www.cdc.gov/injury/tribal/starcollection/>

A short educator's guide is included at the end of the book.

