

the First Day

A Story of Courage



Katherena Vermette
Irene Kuziw

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the Seven
Teachings Stories

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Illustrated by Irene Kuziwo


HIGHWATER
PRESS

Makwa has to go
to a new school.



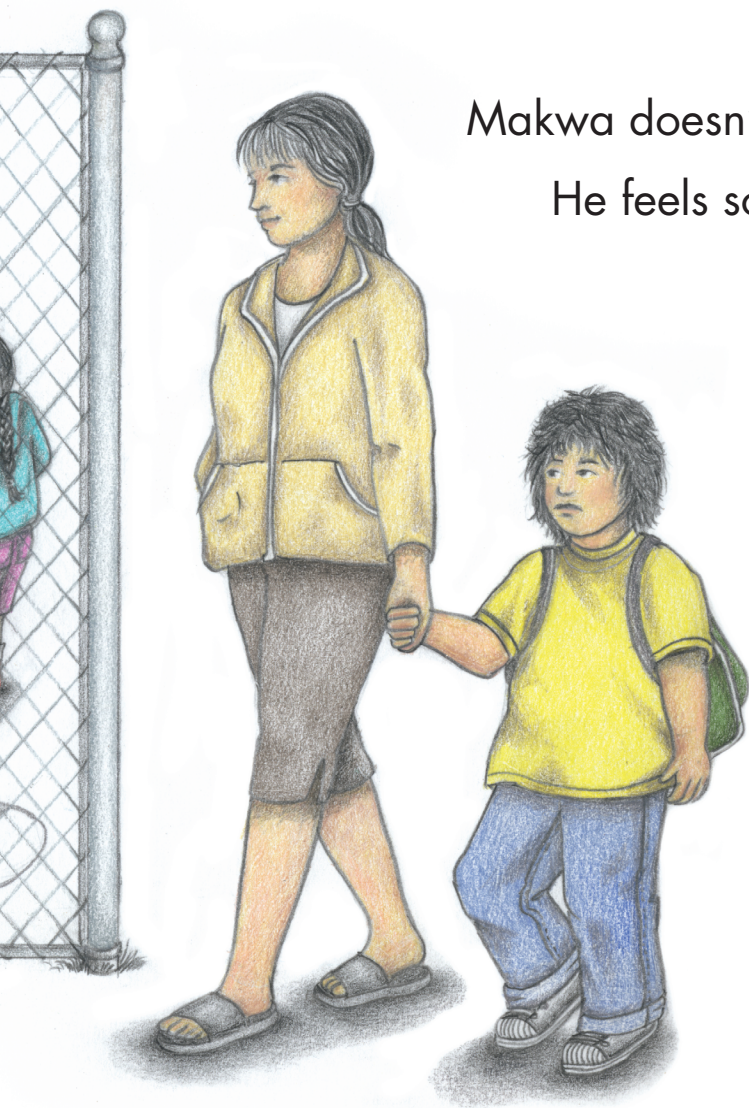
He doesn't want to.



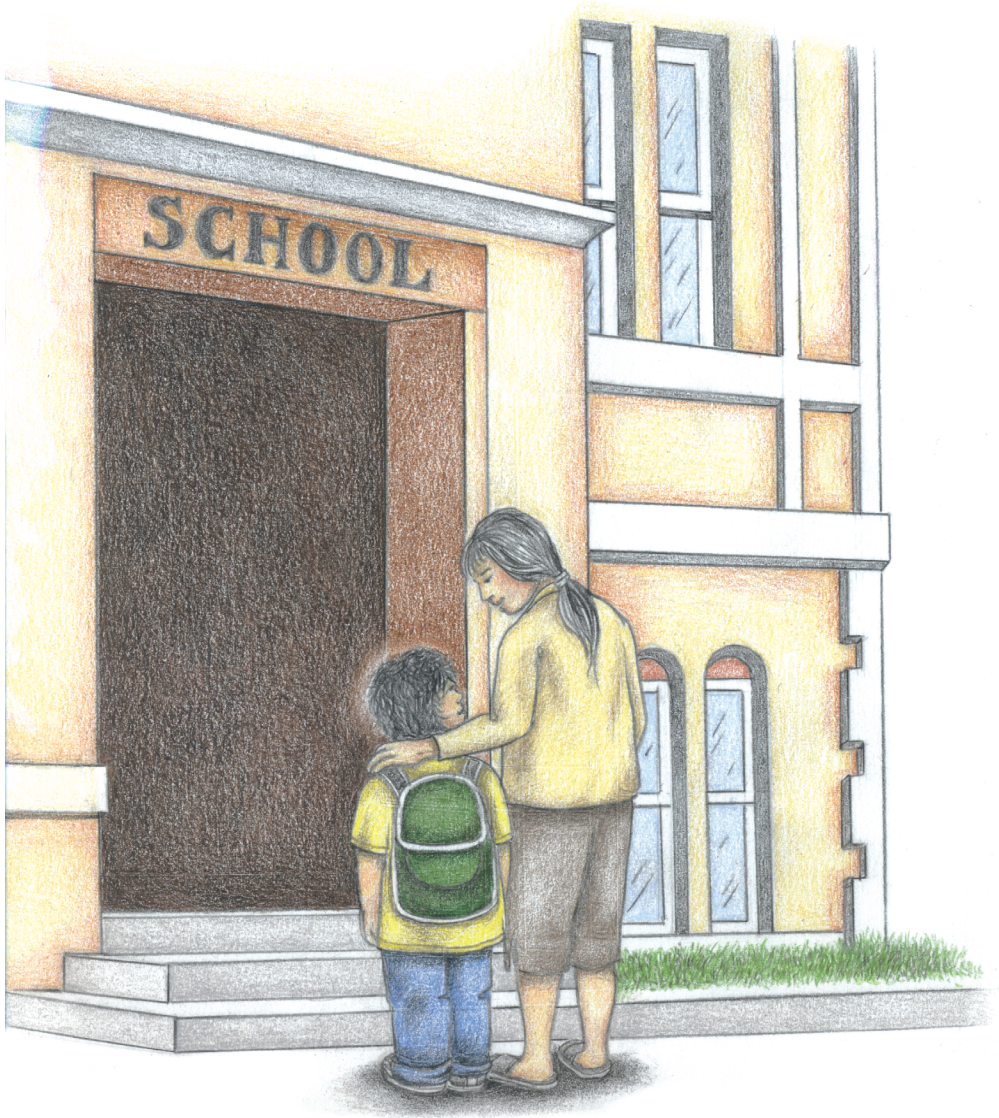
He holds on to his mama.

"You're going to be fine," she tells him.

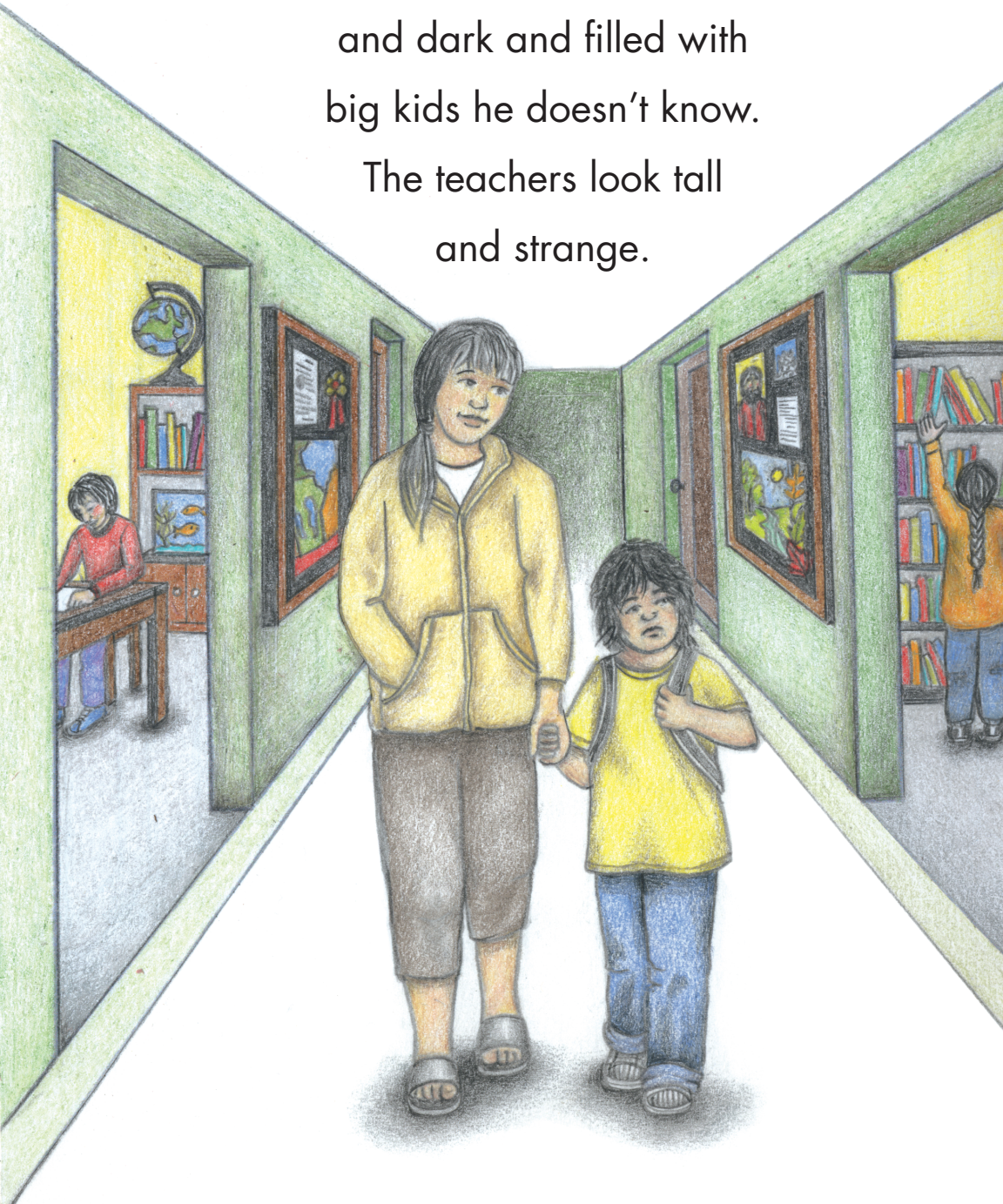
Makwa doesn't feel fine.
He feels scared.

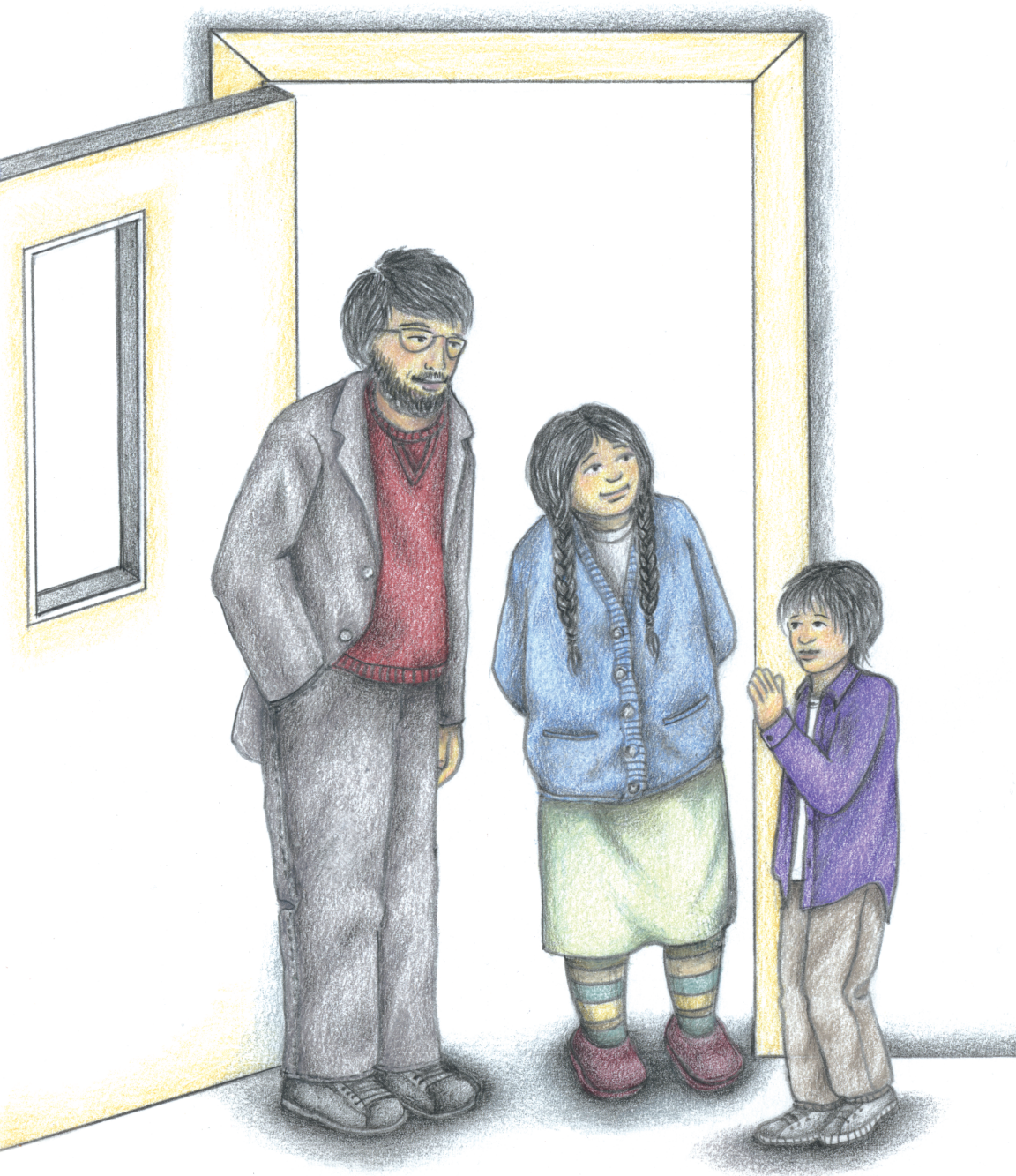


The school is so big.
It has dark brick walls and a huge door
Makwa can barely pull open.



The hallways are long
and dark and filled with
big kids he doesn't know.
The teachers look tall
and strange.





"You're going to be okay," his mama says.
Makwa doesn't feel okay. He feels scared.

He doesn't let go
of his mama.
He doesn't want to.

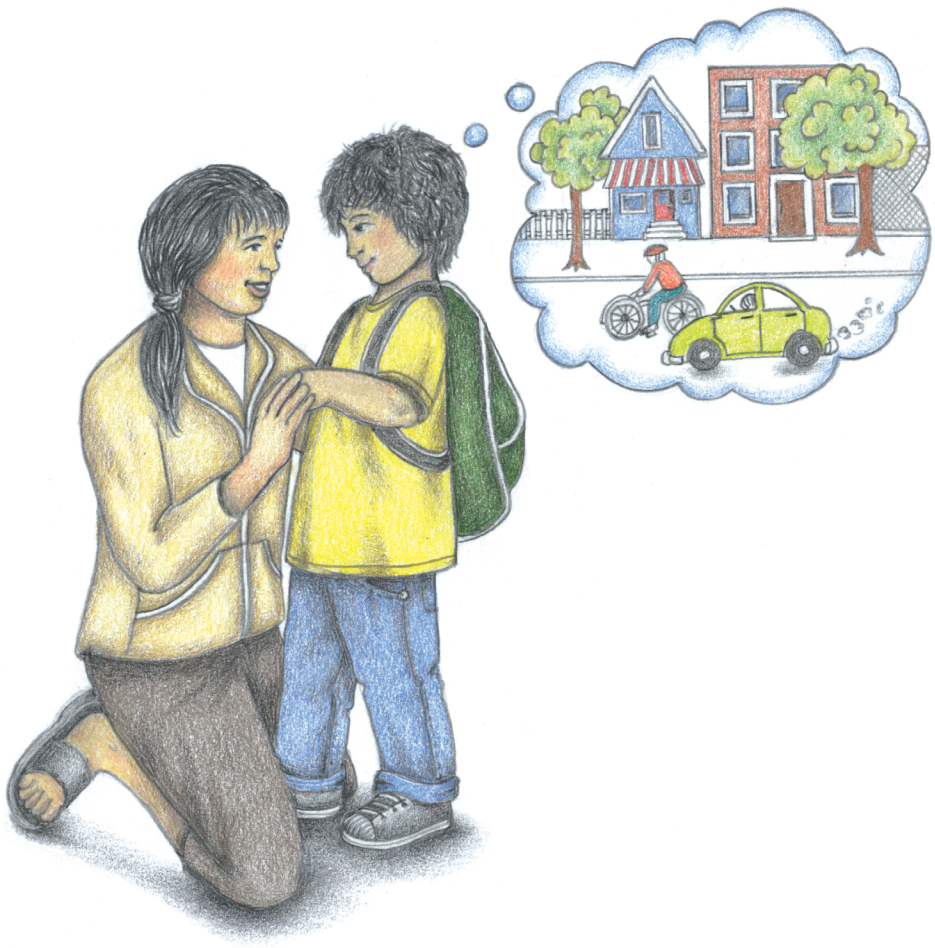




She kneels down
and looks him straight in the eye.
“Remember when we moved
to the city?” she asks.
Makwa nods.



"And the buildings were tall,
the streets were noisy,
and all the kids were strangers?"
Makwa nods and nods.



"Well, now the buildings are normal sized, and all those kids are your friends, right?" she asks.

"The streets are still noisy," Makwa whispers.

"Yes, they are." Mama smiles.



"But after a while, you felt better
about being here, right?"
Makwa nods, but he doesn't let go.

Pronunciation of Anishnaabemowin words

Short Vowels: *i* as in *pit*, *o* as in *book*, *a* as in *cup*, *e* as in *bed*

Long Vowels: *ii* as in *peek*, *oo* is between *soup* and *soap*,
aa as in “open up and say *ahhhh*”

g, *b*, *j*, *d*, *h* are softer than their English equivalents; *g* sounds very much like *k* and sometimes *k*, *p*, *t* are aspirated, as if an *h* was in front of them.

m, *n*, *y*, *h*, *w* are very similar in sound to their English equivalents.

Apostrophes are used to separate vowels (with distinct sound for each).

Acknowledgments

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I would also like to acknowledge Little Red Spirit Aboriginal Head Start program and all my fabulous former workmates, parents, and students. Inspired by my young friends and the work I was privileged to do, these books are dedicated to my former students, as well as all my beautiful nieces and nephews.

— K.V.

I would like to thank Katherena for entrusting me with her stories. This has truly been an adventure and an experience in getting to know all the kids and helping them come to life. I would also like to thank Annalee and Cathie from HighWater Press for giving me this opportunity. I dedicate these stories to little JayJay.

— I.K.

Makwa has to go to a new school ...
and he doesn't want to. How will
he face his first day?



The Seven Teachings of the Anishinaabe—love, wisdom, humility, courage, respect, honesty, and truth—are revealed in these seven stories for children. Set in an urban landscape with

Indigenous children as the central characters, these stories about home and family will look familiar to all young readers.

Katherena Vermette is a Métis writer from Treaty 1 territory, the heart of the Métis nation, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Her first book, *North End Love Songs* (The Muses Company) won the Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry and her novel, *The Break* (House of Anansi), won the 2017 Amazon.ca First Novel Award. She is also the author of HighWater Press's *A Girl Called Echo* (2017).

Irene Kuziw has worked in galleries, museums, and schools. Her artwork has been featured in many shows. Irene now devotes her time to doing what she loves – drawing and exploring the abstraction of reality, whether it be the human face or the animal spirit. A graduate of the University of Manitoba School of Art, she lives in the Interlake region of Manitoba.