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SIHA TOOSKIN KNOWS

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# The Best Medicine



Charlene Bearhead

Wilson Bearhead

Chloe Bluebird Mustoach



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# The Best Medicine

By Charlene Bearhead and Wilson Bearhead  
Illustrated by Chloe Bluebird Mustooch

HIGHWATER  
PRESS 

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*I dedicate Siha Tooskin Knows the Best Medicine to the late Paul Crowe from whom Paul Wahasaypa gets his English name. An angel in the spirit world just as he was on earth, Paul smiles down on us all, as children learn about his grandmother's people through the stories in this series.*

—CHARLENE BEARHEAD

*We dedicate the Siha Tooskin Knows series to the storytellers who taught us. To those who guided us and shared their knowledge so that we might pass along what we have learned from them to teach children. Their stories are a gentle way of guiding us all along the journey of life.*

*In that way we tell these stories for our children and grandchildren, and for all children. May they guide you in the way that we have been guided as these stories become part of your story.*

—CHARLENE BEARHEAD AND WILSON BEARHEAD



*Watch for this little plant!  
It will grow as you read, and if you need a break,  
it marks a good spot for a rest.*



**I**t was a cold and snowy winter day, but Paul Wahasaypa didn't even notice the weather. Paul didn't notice much of anything as he slipped in and out of sleep. He was in the hospital and not feeling well at all. Paul had started to feel sick a few days ago so his mom took him to the clinic. The doctor told Paul to stay home from school until he was feeling better. Though he didn't start to feel better. In fact, he just kept feeling weaker and weaker, so after a couple of days his mom and dad took him to the hospital.

The doctor was still doing some tests to see what was wrong with Paul. Ade had stayed all night with him while Ena went home to take care of Danny and Baby Laura. The whole family was very concerned about Paul. Ade had even taken a few days off work until the situation improved. He also had protocols in mind that he knew would help his son. Ade told Paul that he had to head home to do a few things and that Ena would be coming over soon. He wanted Paul to try to eat some breakfast and rest a bit more while he was gone.

Soon after the food service staff had taken Paul's tray away the door to his room opened again. In walked Mugoshin and Ena, smiling at Paul. Paul tried to put on a brave front and look as though he was doing better so his mom and grandmother wouldn't worry. The truth was that Paul was as happy to see Ena and Mugoshin as they were to see him.

"Aba washdinno Mitowjin." Mugoshin greeted her grandson with a kiss on his cheek. Ena also



came over to give Paul a hug. She placed her hand on his forehead to check his temperature. “How are you feeling, Michish?” Ena asked. Paul just shrugged. He didn’t feel much better but he kept hoping that would happen soon.



Mugoshin had set her bag down on the little table beside Paul’s bed. She sat down in the chair beside

the bed and took his hand in her hands. Mugoshin examined Paul's face thoroughly, looking to see what might be draining his energy. She stroked his hair gently for a while as she listened to his description of how he was feeling and what he was experiencing.

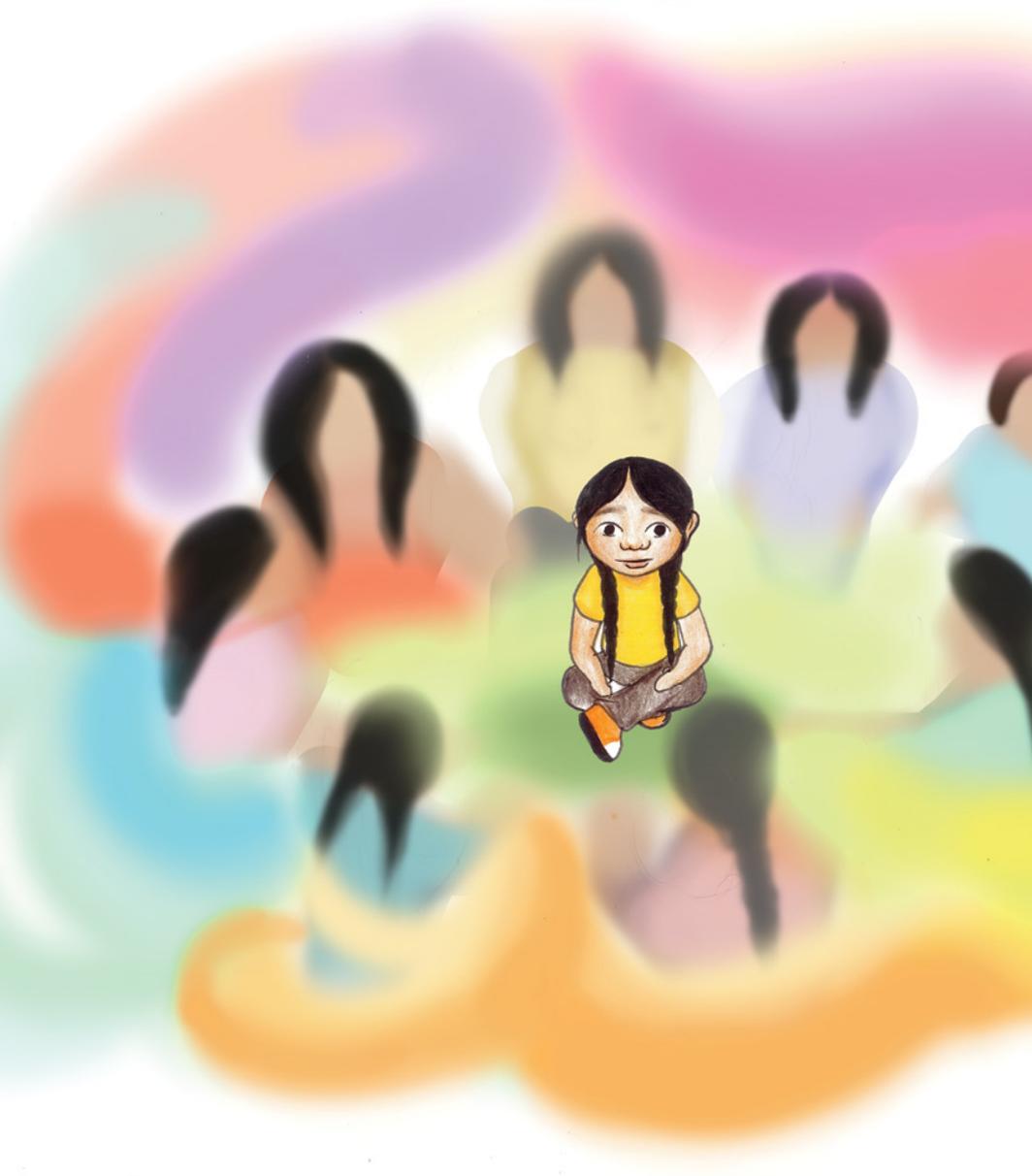
“Your mom called us yesterday, Siha Tooskin. She was very worried. She told us that the doctors are trying to help you, but your parents also know that our own healing ways are important. Your mom told us how much difficulty the doctors are having in trying to diagnose what is wrong, so she and your dad thought the doctors might need some help from us as well.”

“Nitoshin is at home doing ceremony for you right now. He and your uncles will prepare the grandfather rocks and ask the Creator to help bring you back to good health. I know you are growing up and are on the path to becoming a strong young man, Siha Tooskin. Yet in some



ways, you are still a child, Mitowjin, and you need the healing medicine that comes from the grandmothers.”

“I have boiled some medicine for you from the plants that I gather each summer and fall. I gather these plants to take care of my children





and grandchildren. I do this so that I can make this medicine even in the time of the snow when I cannot get to these plants. When you drink this remember that your belief and gratitude, along with the medicine itself, will help your body to heal itself. Before there were settler doctors like the ones you see in the clinic and hospitals today, the pediatricians were the women: the mothers, grandmothers, and aunties in our communities. Your dad stayed with the little ones this morning so your mom and I could come here to give you medicine. He is doing his part at home as well.

# Glossary

Ade	Dad or father
Ade Waka	Spirit Father or Creator
Aba washdinno	Good day
Ena	Mom or mother
Ena Makoochay	Mother Earth
Michish	My son
Mitoshin	My grandfather
Mitowjin	My grandchild
Mugoshin	My grandmother
Nitoshin	Your grandfather
Nigoshin	Your grandmother
Siha Tooskin	Little foot
Waka	Spirit or Creator
Wayasaypa	Bear head

*A note on use of the Nakota language in this book series from Wilson Bearhead:*

The Nakota dialect used in this series is the Nakota language as taught to Wilson by his grandmother Annie Bearhead and used in Wabamun Lake First Nation. Wilson and Charlene have chosen to spell the Nakota words in this series phonetically as Nakota was never a written language. Any form of written Nakota language that currently exists has been developed in conjunction with linguists who use a Eurocentric construct.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

**Charlene Bearhead** is an educator and Indigenous education advocate. She was the first Education Lead for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and the Education Coordinator for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. She is a mother and a grandmother who began writing stories to teach her own children as she raised them. Charlene lives near Edmonton, Alberta with her husband Wilson.

**Wilson Bearhead**, a Nakota Elder and Wabamun Lake First Nation community member in central Alberta (Treaty 6 territory), is the recent recipient of the Canadian Teachers' Federation Indigenous Elder Award. Wilson's grandmother Annie was a powerful, positive influence in his young life, teaching him all of the lessons that gave him the strength, knowledge, and skills to overcome difficult times and embrace the gifts of life.

## **ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR**

**Chloe Bluebird Mustooch** is from the Alexis Nakoda Sioux Nation of central Alberta, and is a recent graduate of the Emily Carr University of Art & Design. She is a seamstress, beadworker, illustrator, painter, and sculptor. She was raised on the reservation, and was immersed in hunting, gathering, and traditional rituals, and has also lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico, an area rich in art and urbanity.

# Antibiotics, bandages, cough syrup, ointment, pills...modern medicine has so much to offer when we become ill. But is it actually modern?

When Siha Tooskin—Paul Wahasaypa—finds himself not feeling at all well he learns that there are answers for him from the healing practices of his own people and from Western medicine. Pay a hospital visit to Paul as he learns more about where “modern medicine” really comes from and how we can all benefit from Indigenous and Western healers as Paul seeks the best medicine for his own wellness.

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## SIHA TOOSKIN KNOWS

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*Siha Tooskin Knows the Gifts of His People*  
*Siha Tooskin Knows the Sacred Eagle Feather*  
*Siha Tooskin Knows the Strength of His Hair*  
*Siha Tooskin Knows the Catcher of Dreams*  
*Siha Tooskin Knows the Nature of Life*  
*Siha Tooskin Knows the Best Medicine*  
*Siha Tooskin Knows the Offering of Tobacco*  
*Siha Tooskin Knows the Love of the Dance*

The Siha Tooskin Knows series uses vivid narratives and dazzling illustrations in contemporary settings to share stories about an 11-year-old Nakota boy.

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