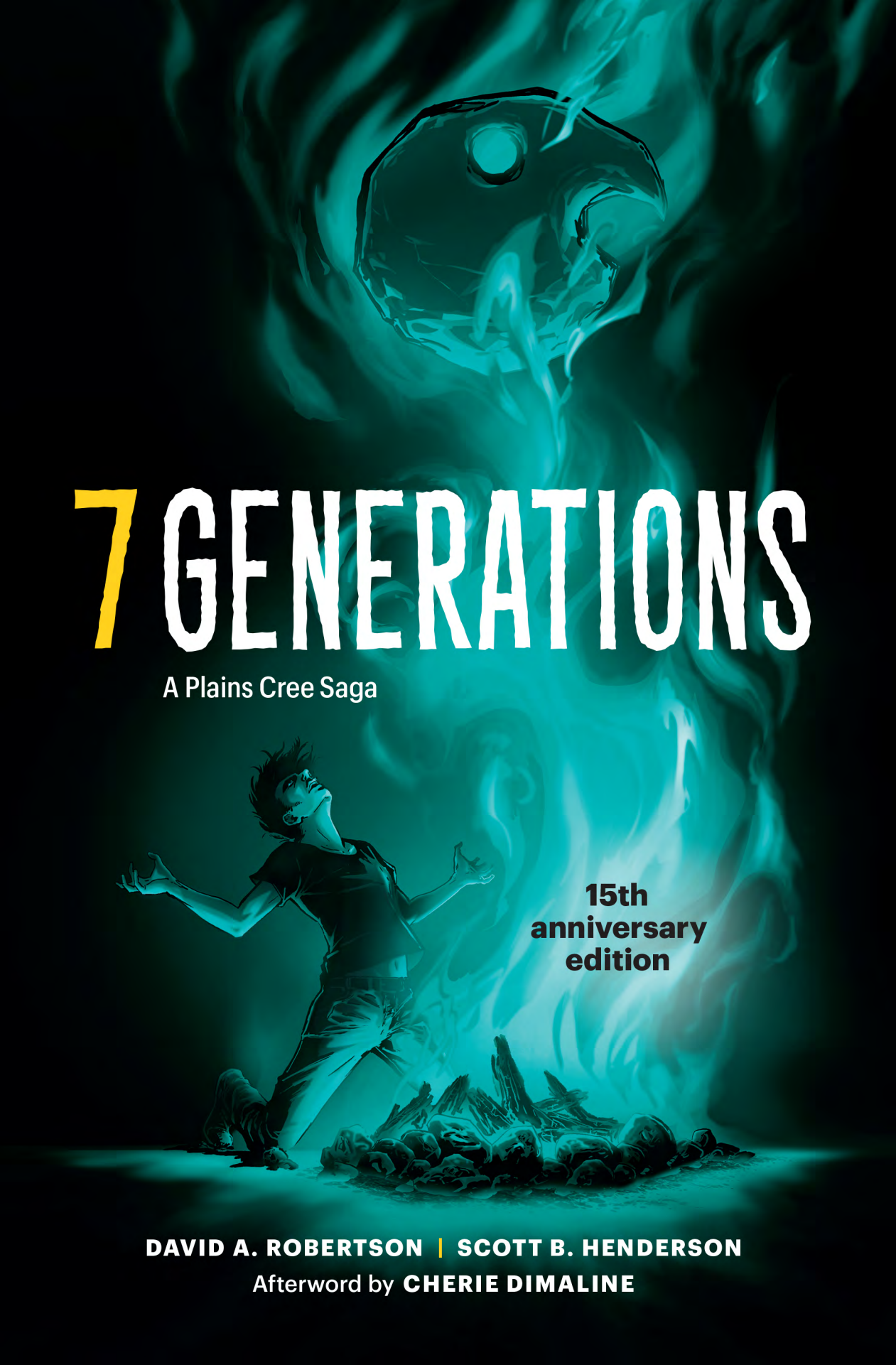

7 GENERATIONS
A Plains Cree Saga
15th anniversary edition
DAVID A. ROBERTSON | SCOTT B. HENDERSON
Afterword by CHERIE DIMALINE

7 GENERATIONS

A Plains Cree Saga



15th anniversary edition

DAVID A. ROBERTSON | **SCOTT B. HENDERSON**

Afterword by **CHERIE DIMALINE**

HIGHWATER PRESS

© 2010, 2011, 2012, 2025 David A. Robertson Inc. (text)
© 2010, 2011, 2012, 2025 Scott B. Henderson (illustrations)
© 2025 Cherie Dimaline (afterword)

Excerpts from this publication may be reproduced with the prior written permission of Portage & Main Press Limited or under a licence from the Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency, Access Copyright.

All rights are reserved. This publication may not, in whole or in part, be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—or used to train any artificial intelligence device or software or otherwise incorporated or inputted in any artificial intelligence device or software.

HighWater Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada and Canada Council for the Arts as well as the Province of Manitoba through the Department of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism and the Manitoba Book Publishing Tax Credit for our publishing activities.

Funded by the Government of Canada
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada
Canada
Canada Council for the Arts
Conseil des arts du Canada

HighWater Press is an imprint of Portage & Main Press.
Cover and interior design by Jennifer Lum
Cover art, colouring, and lettering by Scott B. Henderson
Printed and bound in Canada by Friesens

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication
Title: 7 generations : a Plains Cree saga / David A. Robertson ; Scott B. Henderson ; afterword by Cherie Dimaline.
Other titles: Seven generations
Names: Robertson, David, 1977– author | Container of (work): Robertson, David, 1977– Stone. | Container of (work): Robertson, David, 1977– Scars. | Container of (work): Robertson, David, 1977– Ends/begins. | Container of (work): Robertson, David, 1977– The Pact. | Henderson, Scott B., artist | Dimaline, Cherie, 1975– writer of afterword
Description: 15th anniversary edition.
Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20250175290 | Canadiana (ebook) 20250175460 | ISBN 9781774920619 (softcover) | ISBN 9781774921654 (EPUB) | ISBN 9781774921661 (PDF)
Subjects: CSH: Cree—Comic books, strips, etc. | CSH: Cree—Juvenile fiction. | LCGFT: Graphic novels.
Classification: LCC PN6733.R63 A615 2025 | DDC j741.5/971—dc23

28 27 26 25 1 2 3 4 5

This book is printed on FSC®-certified paper using vegetable-based inks and alcohol-free blanket wash. It was printed in Canada by Friesens. With operations powered by wind and hydroelectricity, Friesens is 100% employee-owned and is committed to minimizing its ecological footprint.

MIX
Paper | Supporting responsible forestry
FSC® C016245
www.fsc.org

HIGHWATER PRESS
www.highwaterpress.com
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Treaty 1 Territory and homeland of the Métis Nation

For the generations that came before us,
the generations that are here now,
and the generations still to come.
—DAVID A. ROBERTSON

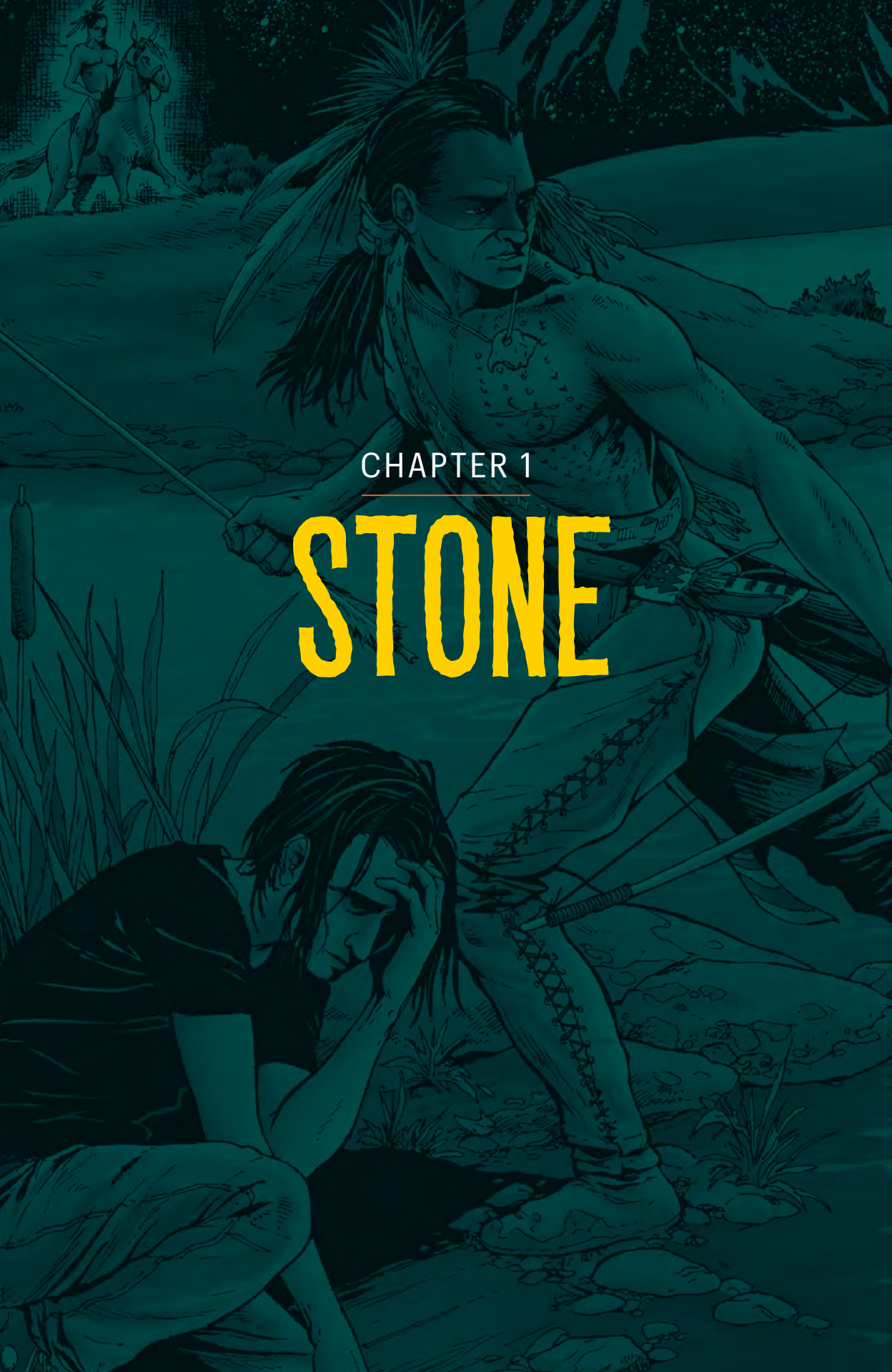
This book includes scenes related to suicide, self-harm, child abuse, and residential schools. These scenes could be triggering for residential school Survivors and Intergenerational Survivors. Emotional and crisis referral services are available through the 24-Hour National Indian Residential School Survivors and Family Crisis Line at 1 (866) 925-4419.



PREFACE

I had developed the concept for *7 Generations* long before it was published between 2009 and 2010, with the complete omnibus released in 2012. The genesis of the graphic novel was a culmination of decades of lived experience. I've always been a fan of comics. Like many kids, I gravitated toward them. I was, and am, a visual learner. Most of us are. Comics, a type of sequential art, is one of the oldest forms of communication. Before we used written words, we told stories through pictures by painting images on walls. The artwork of our ancestors gives us a glimpse into how they walked through the world. The term "blood memory" is not exclusively Indigenous; the lives of those who came before us are woven into the fabric of our DNA. And so, visual storytelling speaks to something innate in all of us. That's what makes comics so effective as an educational tool; they reach a wide demographic, and the images and words create an environment where readers can draw significant meaning from a page full of panels, images, speech balloons, and captions.

Comics can be a force for good, or they can be destructive. When I was a kid, while I consumed comic after comic along with my brother, I was also inundated with tired stereotypes of Indigenous characters—and through those characters, I saw Indigenous cultures and histories depicted from a false and negative colonial perspective. As a result, I believed that I fit into these stereotypes, and my self-esteem plummeted. Healing from that experience and perception created through the stories I was reading in juxtaposed pictures took years. Becoming a comics writer allowed me to break down the walls erected on a shaky foundation of lies and ignorance and then lay a new foundation upon which something better could be built.



CHAPTER 1

STONE




MARCH 25, 2010
COME ON, PICK UP.
Dear Mom...
I'm so tired of hoping.
I'm so tired of waiting.
BWE 741
I think this way I just won't know anymore.
I won't know to be sad or how to be let down.
I'll just sleep.
No waiting or hoping. Hope is never realized.
The phone never rings...


..and I don't want this anymore.
I had a dream last night where I was walking in the woods until there were trees everywhere, towering over me, and I was lost. I realize now that I'll never wake from that dream. I don't want to be lost anymore or waiting for somebody to find me.




Please forgive me.


EMERGENCY


Love, Edwin.


MOM?
HI, MY BOY.
I FOUND YOUR LETTER.
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO. AT LEAST I GOT SOMETHING RIGHT.
YOU HAVE SO MUCH TO LIVE FOR.
I WISH YOU COULD SEE THAT.
OUR PAST HAS SHAPED US ALL. YOU, ME...
...ALL OF US.
THE PAST ISN'T AN EXCUSE.
NO, IT ISN'T...


"...BUT KNOWING WHERE YOU CAME FROM HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND WHERE YOU ARE."


EARLY 1800S.
TANSI, ASINÎ.*
*HELLO, STONE.
TANSI, MUSKWA.* YOU'RE HOME.
*HELLO, BEAR.
I ALWAYS RETURN, BROTHER.
I WANT TO COME WITH YOU ONE DAY.
YOU'RE READY TO BE A MAN, LITTLE BROTHER?
YES.
WELL, YOU MAY BE ONE OF US AFTER ALL.
AND YOU WILL RIDE WITH US WARRIORS.
IF YOU CAN KEEP UP, THAT IS.
YOU'RE GETTING OLD, BEAR!
JUST WAIT AND SEE.


"SOON AFTER, STONE EMBARKED ON A VISION QUEST."
ASINÎ...
"...WE SWEAT TO CLEANSE YOUR BODY AND MIND.
"YOU NEED THIS FOR YOUR TASK AHEAD.
"AFTER YOUR VISION, ITEMS WILL REMIND YOU OF IT... FEATHERS, AMULETS.
"KEEP THEM.
"THEY WILL BRING YOU GOOD FORTUNE.
"YOU ARE NOT TO EAT OR DRINK.
"GO TO THE WOODS."

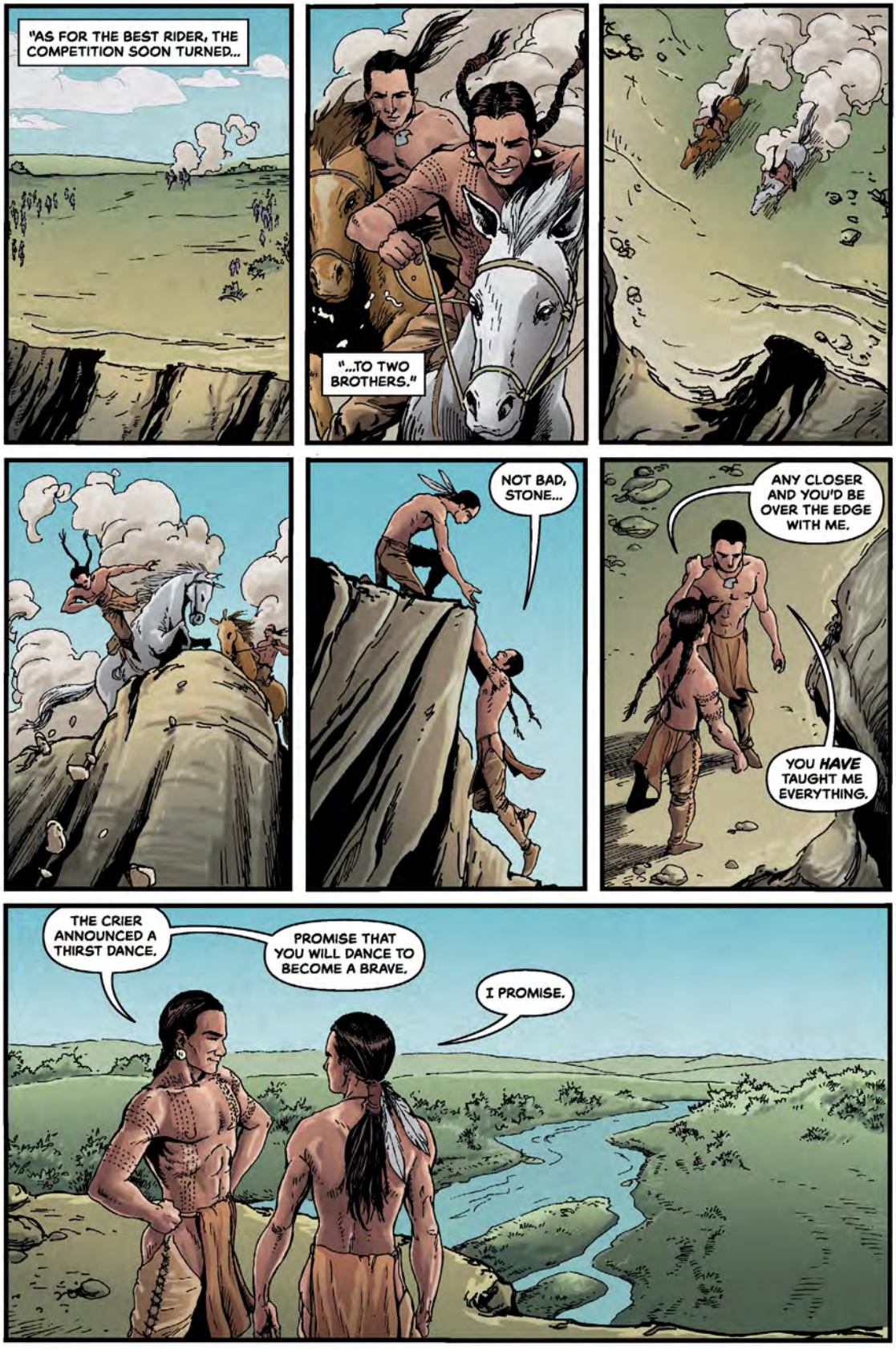

"FIND A QUIET PLACE, FAR AWAY FROM ANY NOISE EXCEPT FOR THOSE BROUGHT BY MOTHER EARTH.
"IN THAT PLACE, PRAY TO THE CREATOR...
"...FOR THE STRENGTH OF YOUR NAMESAKE, THE STOIC BEAUTY OF IT.
"...TAKE HEART THOUGH, STONE.
"THIS IS WHEN THE VISION COMES."
"AND, IN TIME...
"...YOU WILL FEEL YOUR MIND BEGIN TO SLIP...


THE EAGLE...


"THERE ARE NO ACCIDENTS, STONE.
"THE VISION WAS YOUR PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE."
THIS AMULET WILL REMIND YOU OF YOUR VISION AND WHAT YOU NEED TO DO.
DAYS LATER...
MMMM...
WELCOME, NAHOWAY.*
*DISTANT SONG.


EKOSANI.*
*THANK YOU.
"STONE'S MARRIAGE TO NAHOWAY STRENGTHENED THE BOND BETWEEN TWO FAMILIES."


"SOON AFTER, ANOTHER CAMP SETTLED NEARBY.
CREATOR, GUIDE ME.
FWSSHH!
THUNK!
"THEY MET IN COMPETITION.
"ONE OF THE GAMES THEY PLAYED WAS THE HOOP GAME.
"A TEST OF ACCURACY THAT STONE ALWAYS WON."


"AS FOR THE BEST RIDER, THE COMPETITION SOON TURNED...
"...TO TWO BROTHERS."
NOT BAD, STONE...
ANY CLOSER AND YOU'D BE OVER THE EDGE WITH ME.
YOU *HAVE* TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING.
THE CRIER ANNOUNCED A THIRST DANCE.
PROMISE THAT YOU WILL DANCE TO BECOME A BRAVE.
I PROMISE.


"BROTHER."
PERHAPS NEXT TIME YOU'LL COME, BUT THE BLACKFOOT ARE DANGEROUS.
SO NOT TONIGHT.
CREATOR, LET ME BE STRONG AND UNYIELDING. PROTECT ME.
BEAR?


"MY SON."
HANG ON, STAY WITH ME.
SLEEP WELL...
I WISH I COULD SLEEP TOO. BUT NOT TONIGHT.
CREATOR BE WITH ME. LET ME BE STRONG THROUGH THIS FOR BOTH OF US, UNTIL HE FINDS STRENGTH OF HIS OWN.
MOM?


I'M STILL SURPRISED WHEN I WAKE UP.
I THINK I'M FREE THEN I'M DISAPPOINTED.
I'M NOT AFRAID OF IT, YOU KNOW...
...DYING.
WHEN I WAKE UP...
...I TRICK MYSELF THAT THE DOORWAY IS THE LIGHT AT THE END.
BUT THEN YOU COME.
LIKE AN ANGEL TELLING ME IT'S NOT MY TIME.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WANT.
I'M CONFUSED. THIS IS PAIN.


CREATOR, CARRY HIM TO THE HUNTING GROUNDS...
MOMENTS EARLIER...
NO.
HE WAS KILLED BY THE BLACKFOOT.
MY SON.
STONE, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?



DAVID A. ROBERTSON (he/him/his) is a two-time winner of the Governor General's Literary Award, has won the TD Canadian Children's Literature Award, as well as the Writers' Union of Canada Freedom to Read Award. He has received several other accolades for his work as a writer for children and adults, podcaster, public speaker, and social advocate. He was honoured with a Doctor of Letters by the University of Manitoba for outstanding contributions in the arts and distinguished achievements in 2023. He is a member of Norway House Cree Nation and lives in Winnipeg.

SCOTT B. HENDERSON (he/him/his) is a freelance illustrator, whose reputation for cultural sensitivity and an openness to listen and learn has garnered a large body of work in collaboration with Indigenous and LGBTQIA+ communities. His work spans several critically acclaimed graphic novels, including *7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga* (Indigenous history & residential schools); A Girl Called Echo series (Métis history); *A Blanket of Butterflies* (2016 Eisner Award nominee); a short story in *Marvel Voices: Pride #1* (2022); and the post-apocalypse graphic novel, *Last Breeds* (fall 2024). Scott is a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. He resides in Winnipeg with his partner.