

# Knees Lifted High

written by Georgia Perez

illustrated by Patrick Rolo & Lisa A. Fifield





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Georgia Perez has specialized in diabetes education with the Native American Diabetes Project, University of New Mexico, since 1994. From 1975 to 1994, she was the Community Health Representative for Nambe Pueblo.

Ms. Perez calls her series of children's stories the "Eagle Books." In these stories, a wise eagle assumes the role of Tribal Elder in the time-honored Native American tradition of using storytelling to pass on tribal culture and to teach lessons of life.

The author was inspired, in part, by telling stories to her three grandsons. She lives with her husband, Edward Perez, in Nambe Pueblo, New Mexico, a small federally recognized tribe of 600 people.

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## The Story of the Eagle Books

### Diabetes Prevention Stories for Native American Children

*Stories can allow the positive power of words to create a new empowering vision of the future and reshape the way one thinks about disease.*

Janette Carter, Georgia Perez, Susan Gilliland (1999).

Communicating through stories: Experience of the Native American Diabetes Project. *Diabetes Educator*, 25, 179-187.

*Traditionally, stories were told in winter by Native Americans to pass on their history, traditions, and culture to future generations because Native languages were only spoken, not written. The stories in the Eagle Books came from a recurring dream I had and from the dreams of many Native Indian communities whose members wanted to make life better for people dealing with diabetes.*

*In 1989, I met a wonderful physician, Dr. Janette Carter. In 1994, I started to work with her to develop a diabetes education curriculum funded by the National Institutes of Health. During the development of the curriculum, I dreamed of being visited by an eagle. The eagle was showing me how life for Native Americans used to be and what Native people can do to prevent type 2 diabetes now.*

*Dr. Carter expressed a need for the diabetes curriculum to be more culturally tailored for the population that we were trying to reach. I told her about the dream that I had been having. It was then that the original story, "Through the Eyes of the Eagle," was written and woven throughout our first curriculum.*



*The story broke down barriers that people had about health and diabetes. When we began with the story and then talked about diabetes, we found that the children listened intently. They were eager to take the information back to their parents and talk about what they had learned in school that day. It became a future dream to write a series of children's books to help them learn how important it is to have healthy eating and physical activity in their lives. In July 2001, Janette Carter passed away and never had an opportunity to see this dream become reality. But it did. She would be glad.*

*In 2002, the Native Diabetes Wellness Program (formerly the National Diabetes Prevention Center), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, formed partnerships with the New Mexico State Diabetes Prevention and Control Program and the Office of Native American Diabetes Program at the University of New Mexico to plan for the series of children's books. These books would contain healthy lifestyle messages to help children as well as family and community members begin making positive changes in their lives. The underlying messages would be to prevent obesity and type 2 diabetes.*

*The partnerships have expanded even more broadly to include book illustrators Patrick Rolo and Lisa A. Fifield, Native Americans from Minnetonka, Minnesota; Westat, in Atlanta, Georgia; the Indian Health Service, Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention, based in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee, represented by leaders across the country. Partners and communities are involved from all directions: north, south, east, and west.*

*"Knees Lifted High," the second story in the four-book set builds on the health message of the introductory story "Through the Eyes of the Eagle." This story gives children fun ideas for active outdoor play.*

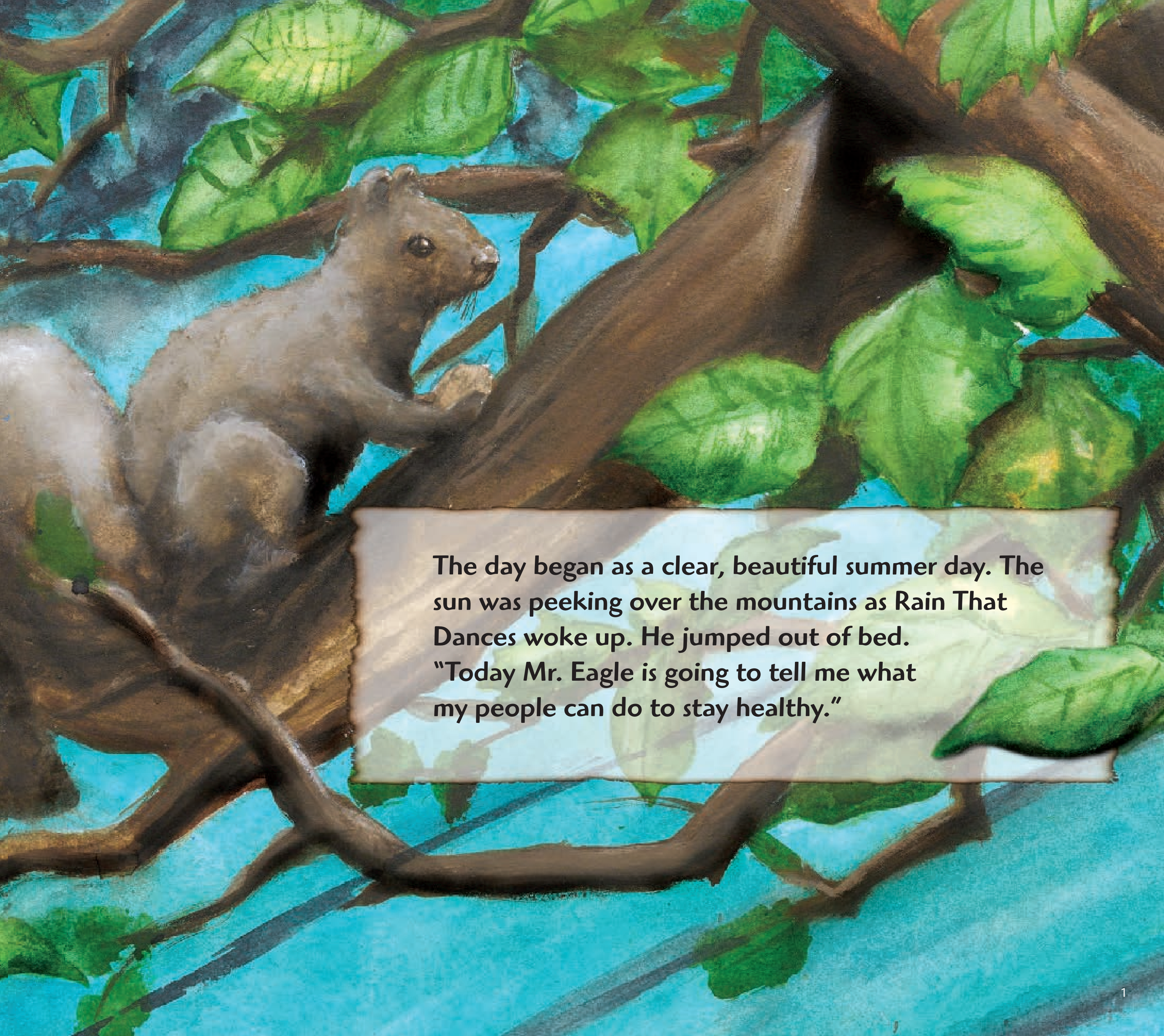
**-Georgia Perez**





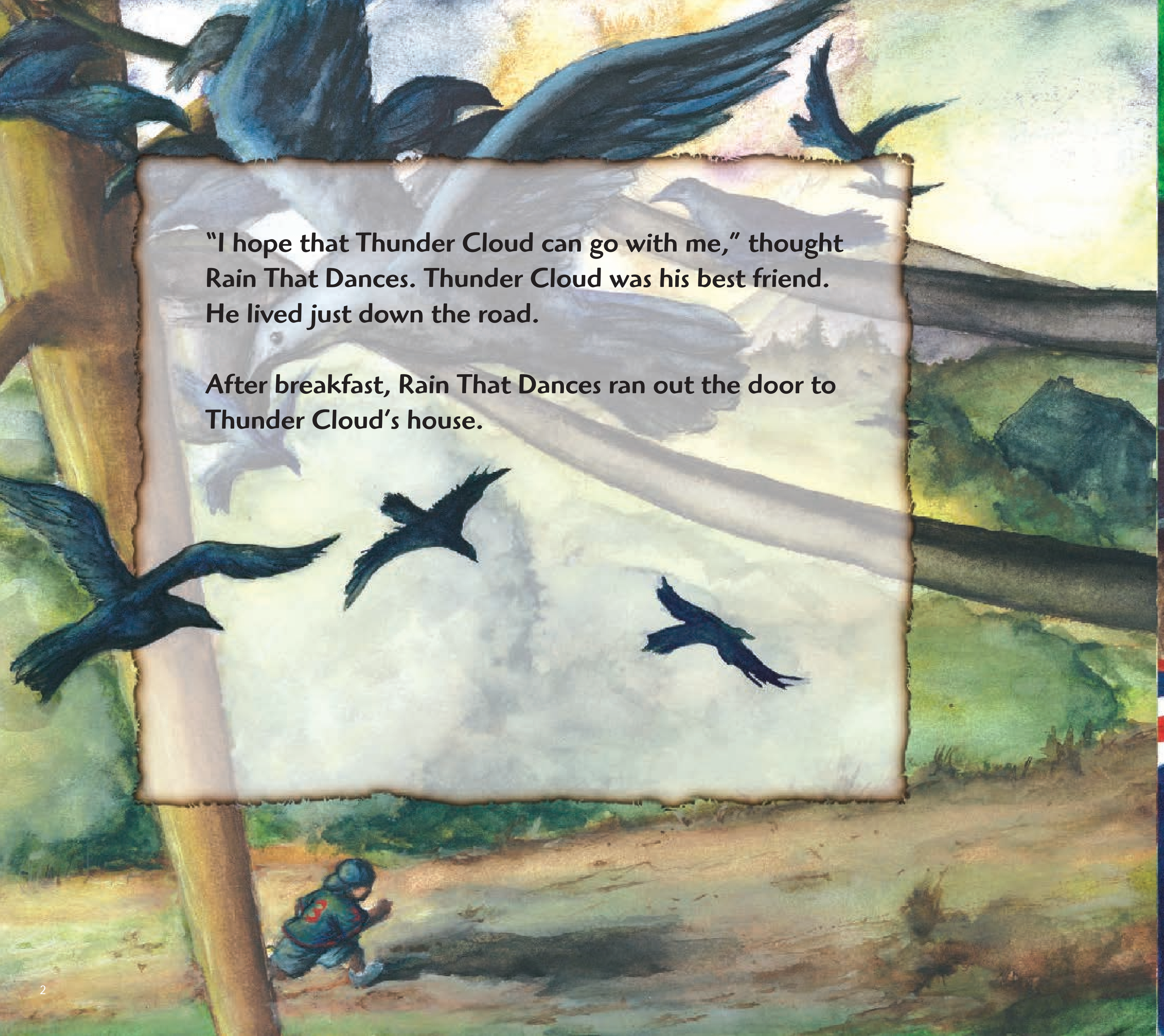




A watercolor illustration of a squirrel with grey and brown fur perched on a thick, dark brown tree branch. The squirrel is facing right, looking towards the viewer. The background is filled with vibrant green leaves of various shapes and sizes, and a bright blue sky is visible through the branches. A semi-transparent white text box with a slightly distressed, torn-edge border is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the image, containing the text.

The day began as a clear, beautiful summer day. The sun was peeking over the mountains as Rain That Dances woke up. He jumped out of bed. "Today Mr. Eagle is going to tell me what my people can do to stay healthy."

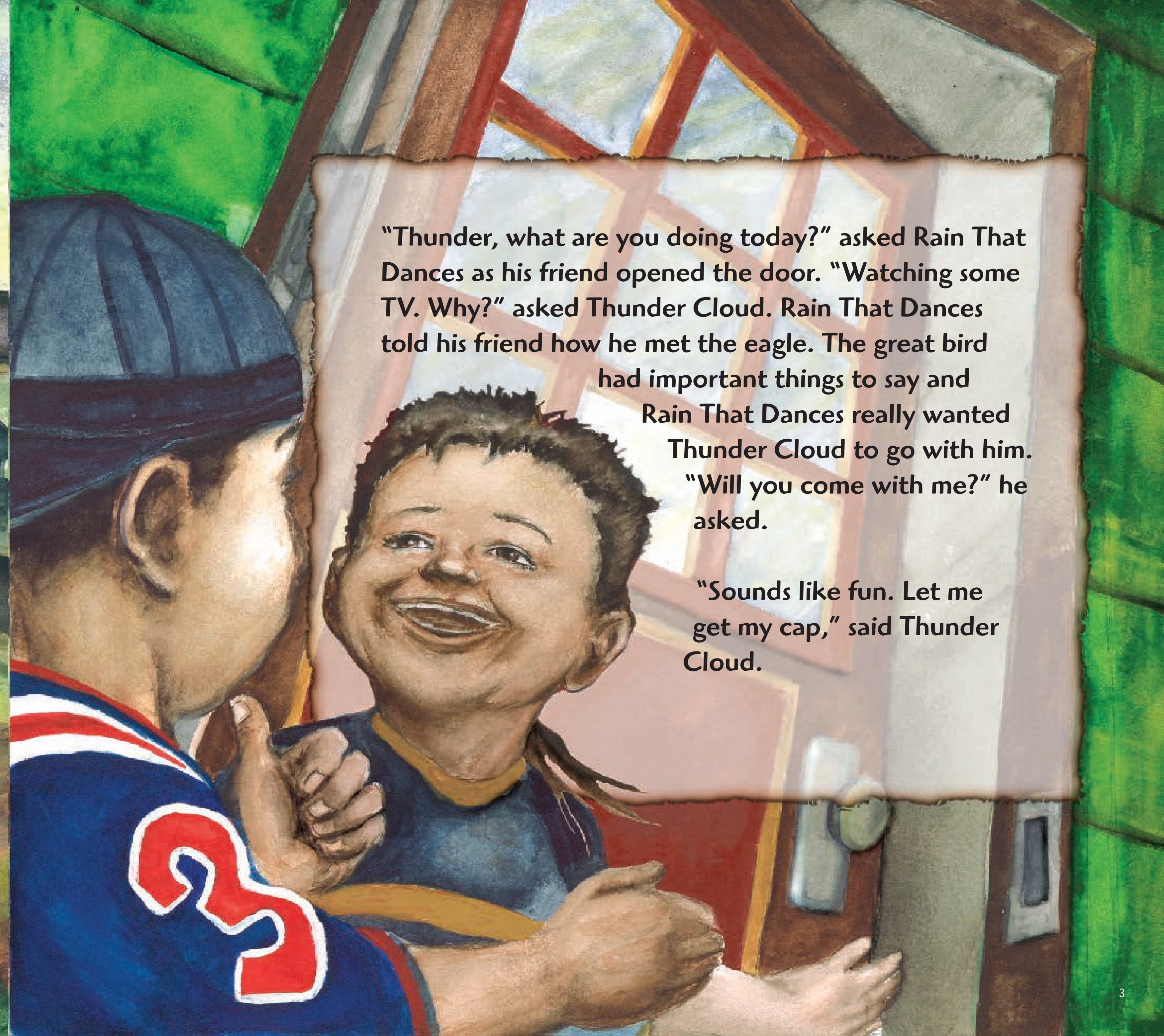




"I hope that Thunder Cloud can go with me," thought Rain That Dances. Thunder Cloud was his best friend. He lived just down the road.

After breakfast, Rain That Dances ran out the door to Thunder Cloud's house.



An illustration of two young boys. The boy on the left is seen from the side, wearing a blue cap and a blue jersey with a large red number '2'. He is looking towards the other boy. The boy on the right is facing him, smiling, and has a small feather in his hair. They are standing in front of a wooden door with a window showing a green landscape. A white rectangular box with a torn edge contains text.

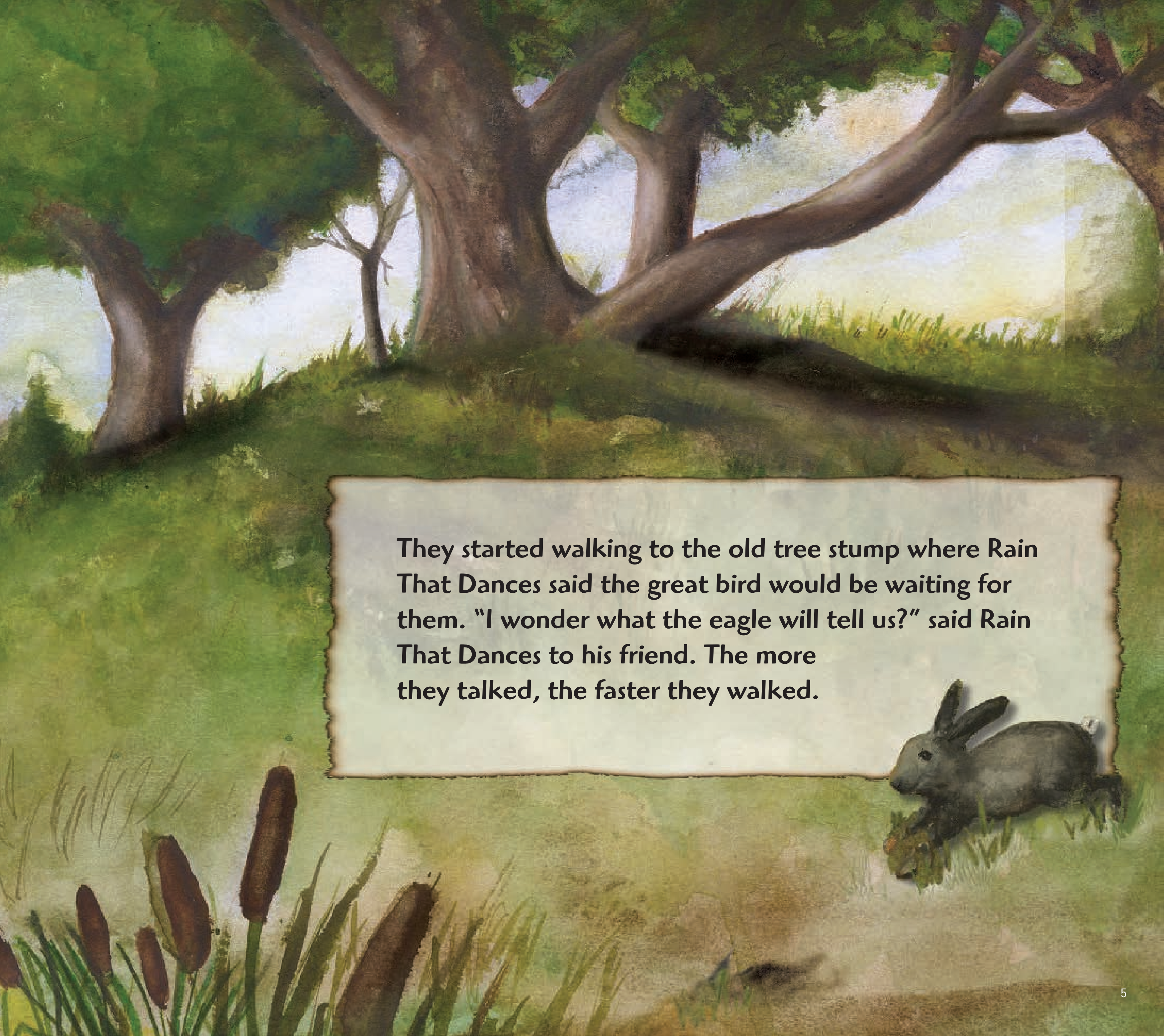
"Thunder, what are you doing today?" asked Rain That Dances as his friend opened the door. "Watching some TV. Why?" asked Thunder Cloud. Rain That Dances told his friend how he met the eagle. The great bird had important things to say and Rain That Dances really wanted Thunder Cloud to go with him. "Will you come with me?" he asked.

"Sounds like fun. Let me get my cap," said Thunder Cloud.









They started walking to the old tree stump where Rain That Dances said the great bird would be waiting for them. "I wonder what the eagle will tell us?" said Rain That Dances to his friend. The more they talked, the faster they walked.

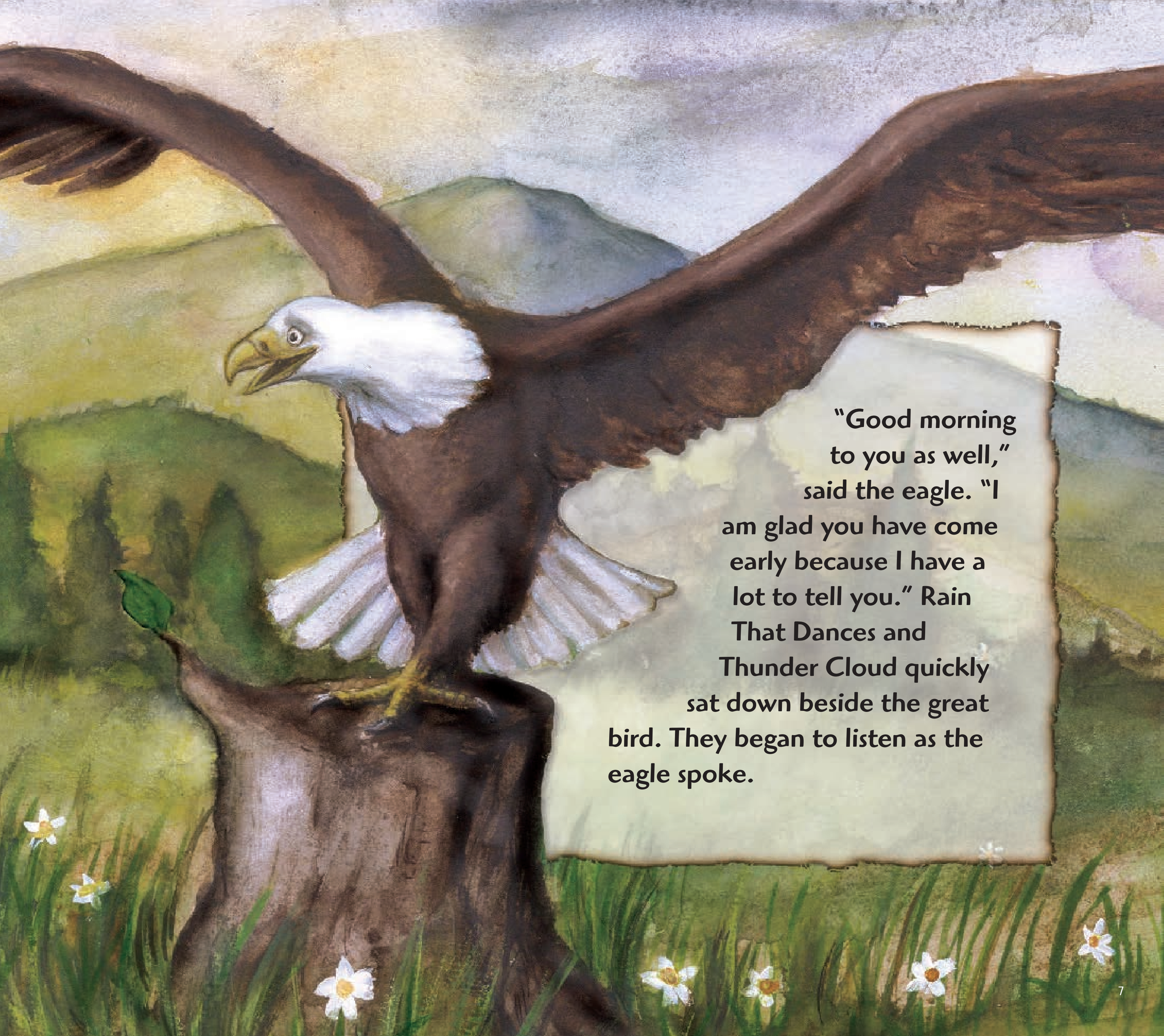




Rain That Dances and Thunder Cloud finally reached the old tree stump. The great bird was waiting for them.

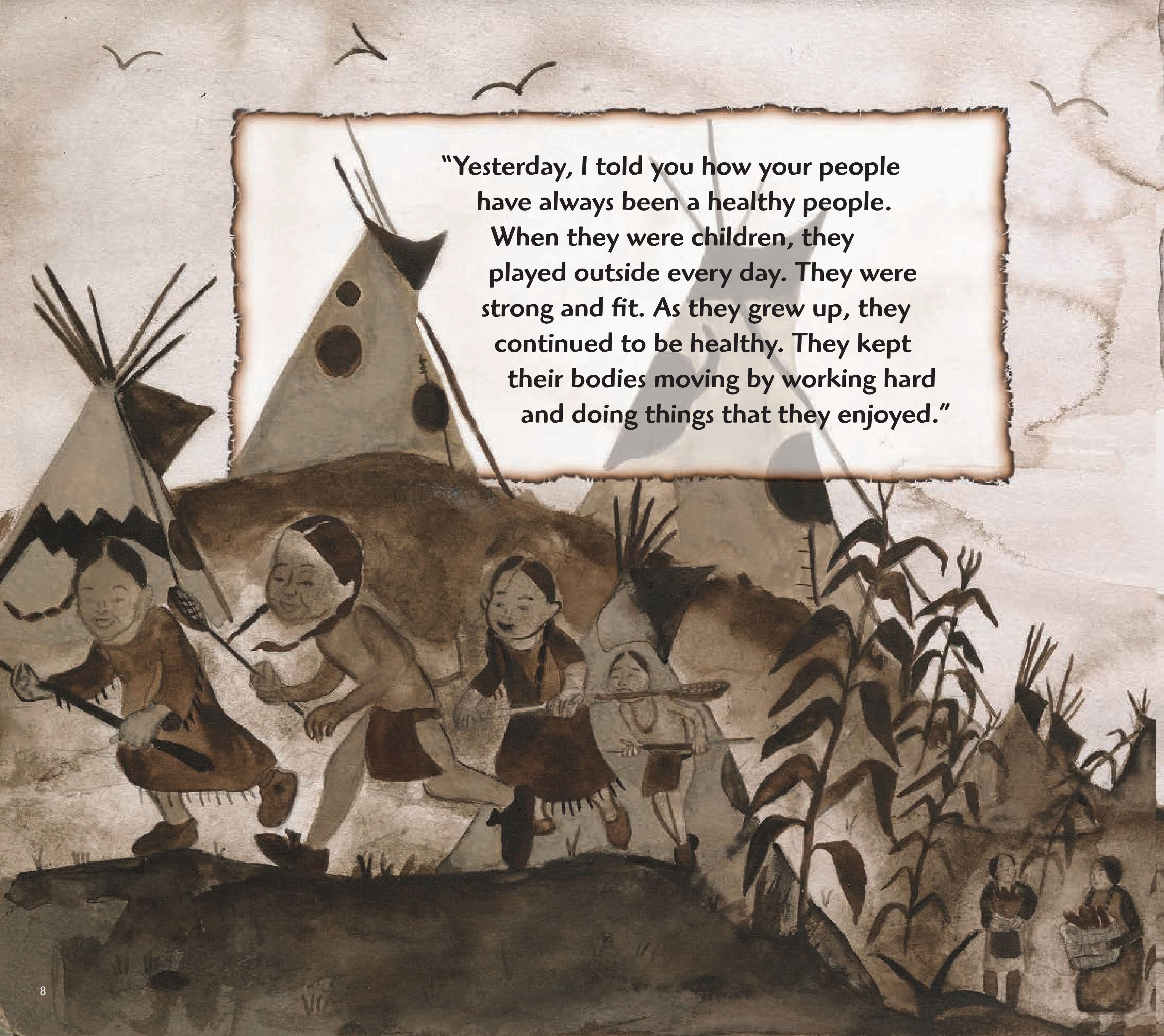
"Good morning, Mr. Eagle," said Rain That Dances. "This is my best friend, Thunder Cloud. I wanted him to come with me so we can both hear what you have to say."





“Good morning  
to you as well,”  
said the eagle. “I  
am glad you have come  
early because I have a  
lot to tell you.” Rain  
That Dances and  
Thunder Cloud quickly  
sat down beside the great  
bird. They began to listen as the  
eagle spoke.



An illustration in a folk-art style showing a group of Native American children playing in a field. In the background, there are several teepees. The children are dressed in traditional clothing, including tunics and leggings. Some are holding sticks or spears. To the right, there are tall, leafy plants, possibly corn. In the bottom right corner, two more children are visible, one holding a basket. The overall scene depicts a healthy, active lifestyle. The text is presented in a white, torn-edge rectangular box in the upper center of the image.

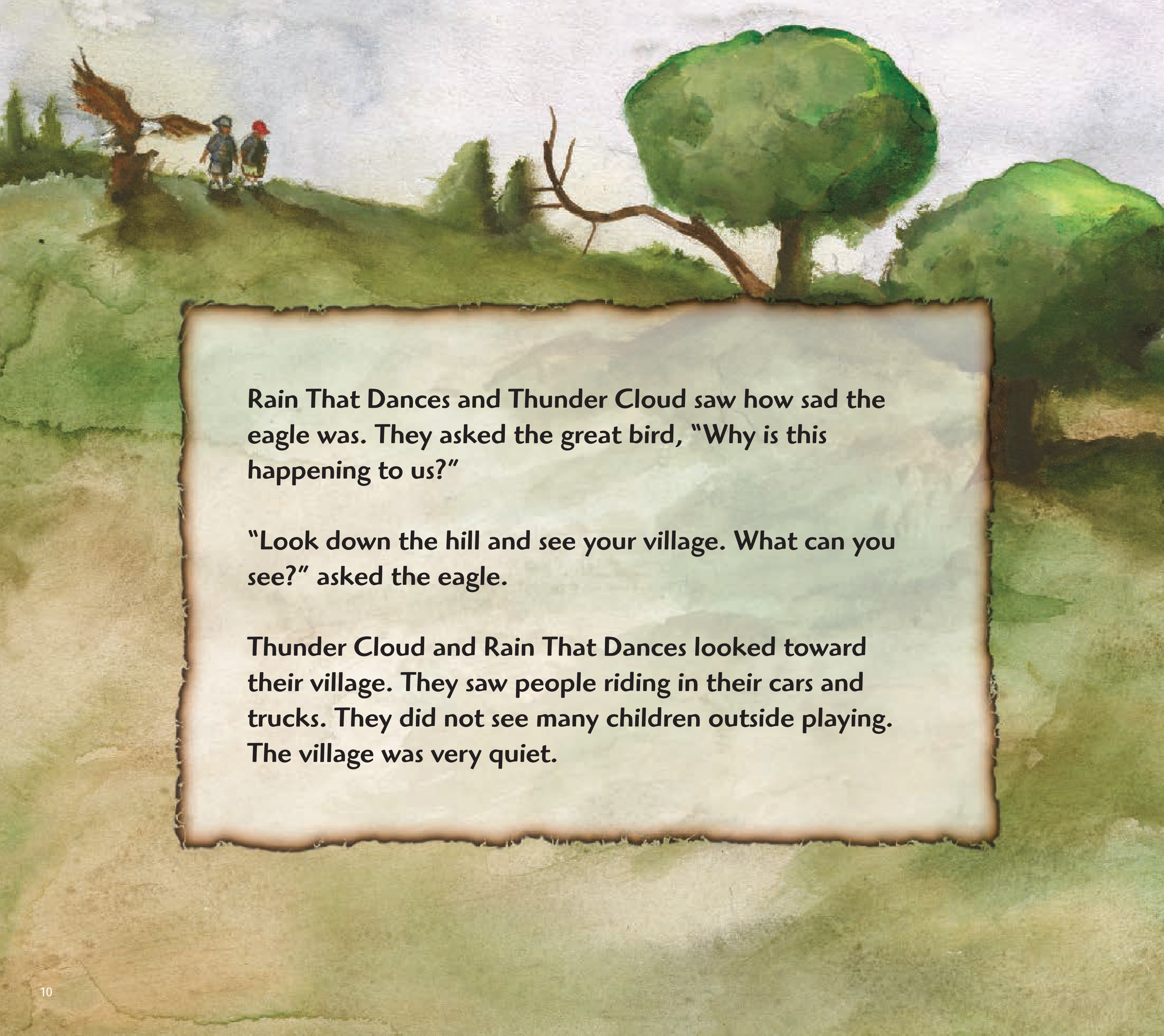
**"Yesterday, I told you how your people  
have always been a healthy people.  
When they were children, they  
played outside every day. They were  
strong and fit. As they grew up, they  
continued to be healthy. They kept  
their bodies moving by working hard  
and doing things that they enjoyed."**



Looking at Rain That Dances and Thunder Cloud, the eagle sadly said, "Now I do not see children playing outside and keeping strong and fit as often as I used to. I see some children who cannot run or jump and play because their bodies are not used to moving every day. This makes me very sad. Children should be moving their bodies because this is a healthy thing."





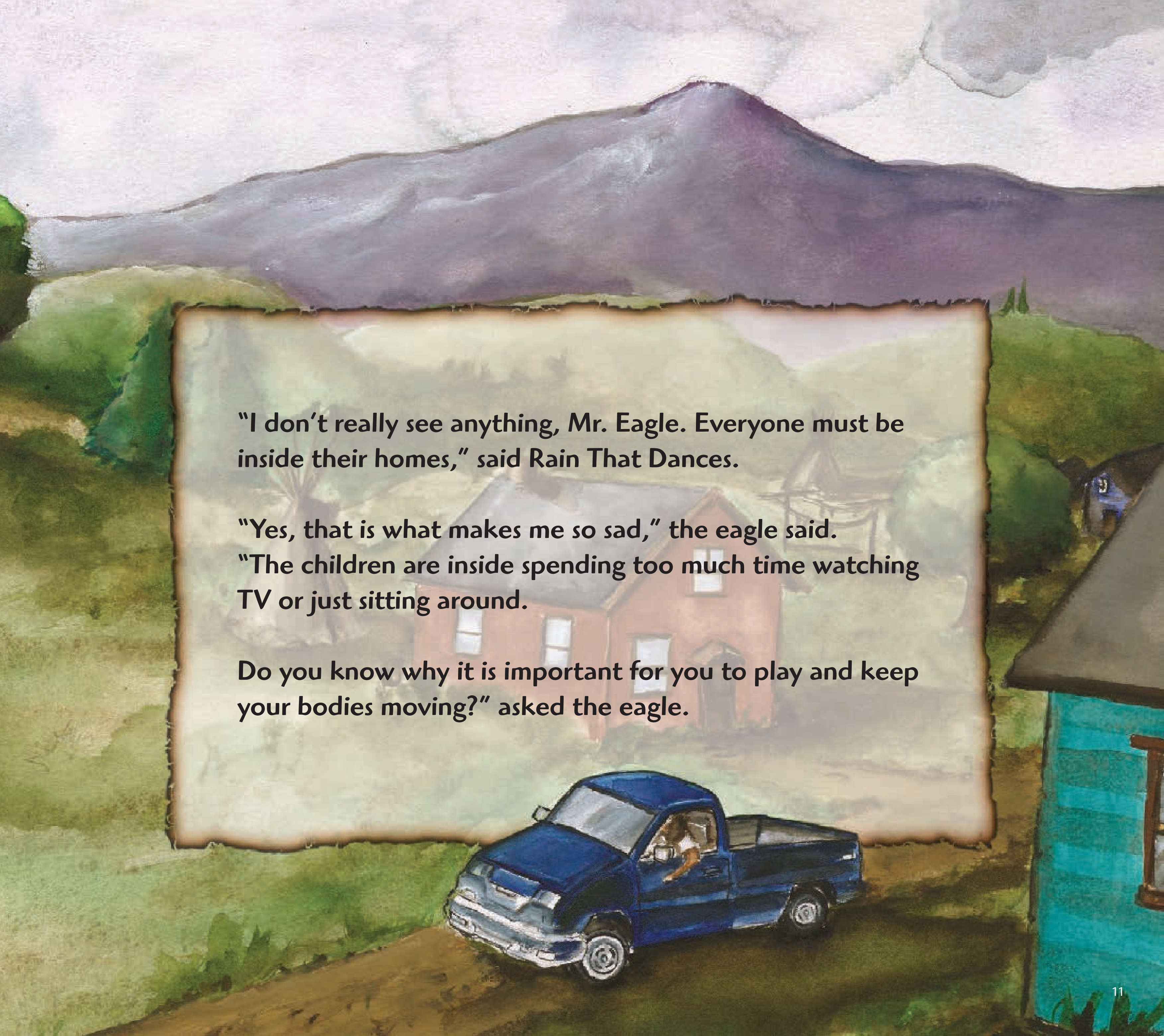


Rain That Dances and Thunder Cloud saw how sad the eagle was. They asked the great bird, "Why is this happening to us?"

"Look down the hill and see your village. What can you see?" asked the eagle.

Thunder Cloud and Rain That Dances looked toward their village. They saw people riding in their cars and trucks. They did not see many children outside playing. The village was very quiet.





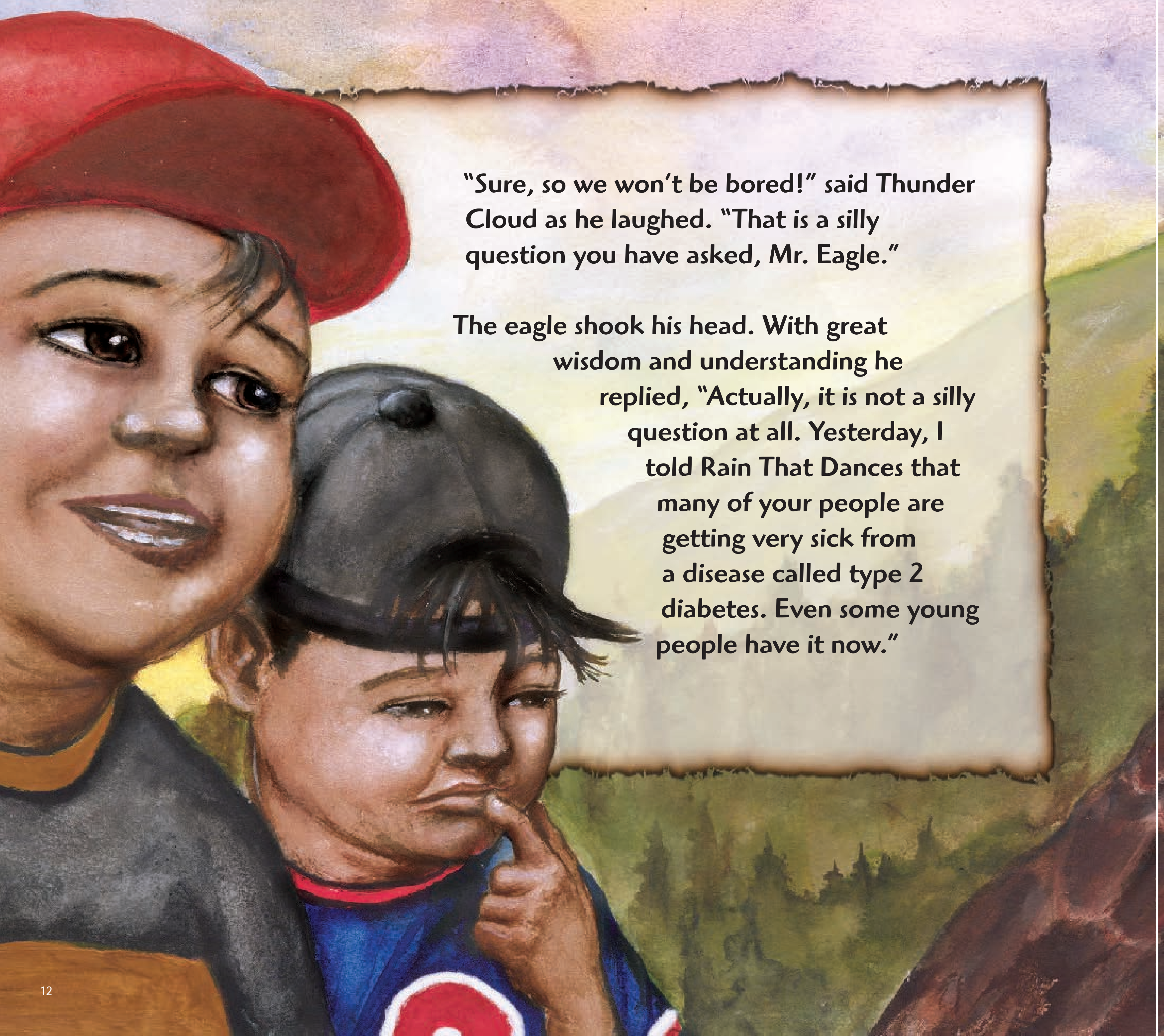
**"I don't really see anything, Mr. Eagle. Everyone must be inside their homes," said Rain That Dances.**

**"Yes, that is what makes me so sad," the eagle said.**

**"The children are inside spending too much time watching TV or just sitting around.**

**Do you know why it is important for you to play and keep your bodies moving?" asked the eagle.**





"Sure, so we won't be bored!" said Thunder Cloud as he laughed. "That is a silly question you have asked, Mr. Eagle."

The eagle shook his head. With great wisdom and understanding he replied, "Actually, it is not a silly question at all. Yesterday, I told Rain That Dances that many of your people are getting very sick from a disease called type 2 diabetes. Even some young people have it now."







"What is di-uh-bee-tees?" asked Thunder Cloud as he struggled to say the word.

"Diabetes is when your body does not use the food you eat the right way – so there is too much sugar, or glucose, in the blood. It can make people sick if it is not in balance.

Just as your tummy is in balance when you eat the right amount of food – not too much, not too little, but just right – your body needs to have just the right balance of sugar in your blood.





But someone who has diabetes can learn to take care of it – and stay healthy. And you can do things to keep from getting this disease. One very good way is to do something every day to get your body moving,” said the eagle.

“Oh, so diabetes is not a good thing. And we may not have to get it?” said Thunder Cloud. “That’s right,” said Mr. Eagle. “So how can you get your body moving?”





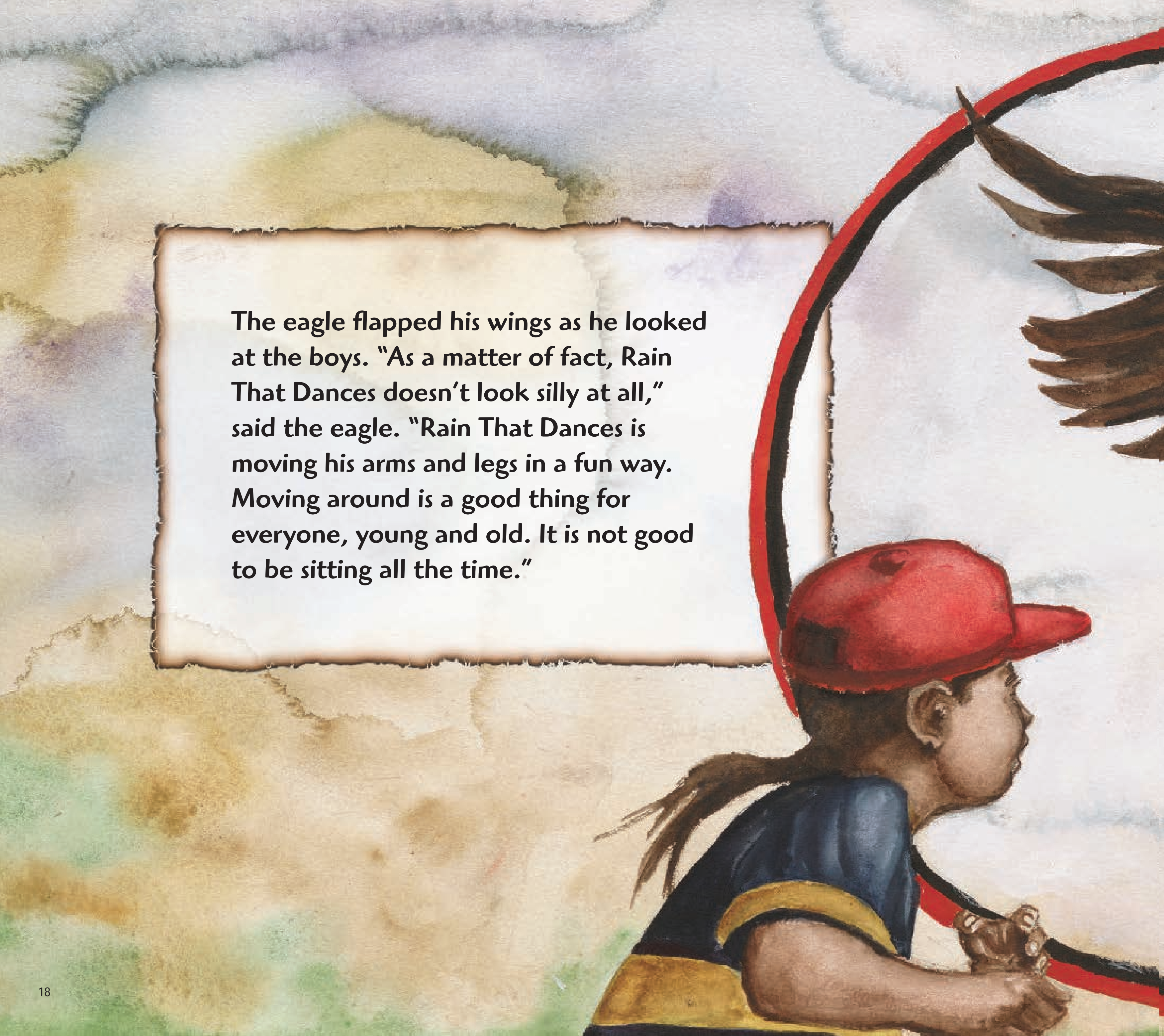




"Like this!" replied Rain That Dances as he began to jump up and down. Thunder Cloud laughed and laughed as he saw his friend jumping. "You look pretty silly," said Thunder Cloud.





A watercolor illustration of a young boy with dark skin, wearing a red baseball cap and a blue shirt with yellow trim. He is looking upwards and to the right. In the upper right corner, a large eagle's wing with brown feathers is visible. A red and black striped ribbon or streamer curves from the eagle's wing down towards the boy. The background is a soft, abstract wash of colors including yellow, green, and purple.

The eagle flapped his wings as he looked at the boys. "As a matter of fact, Rain That Dances doesn't look silly at all," said the eagle. "Rain That Dances is moving his arms and legs in a fun way. Moving around is a good thing for everyone, young and old. It is not good to be sitting all the time."







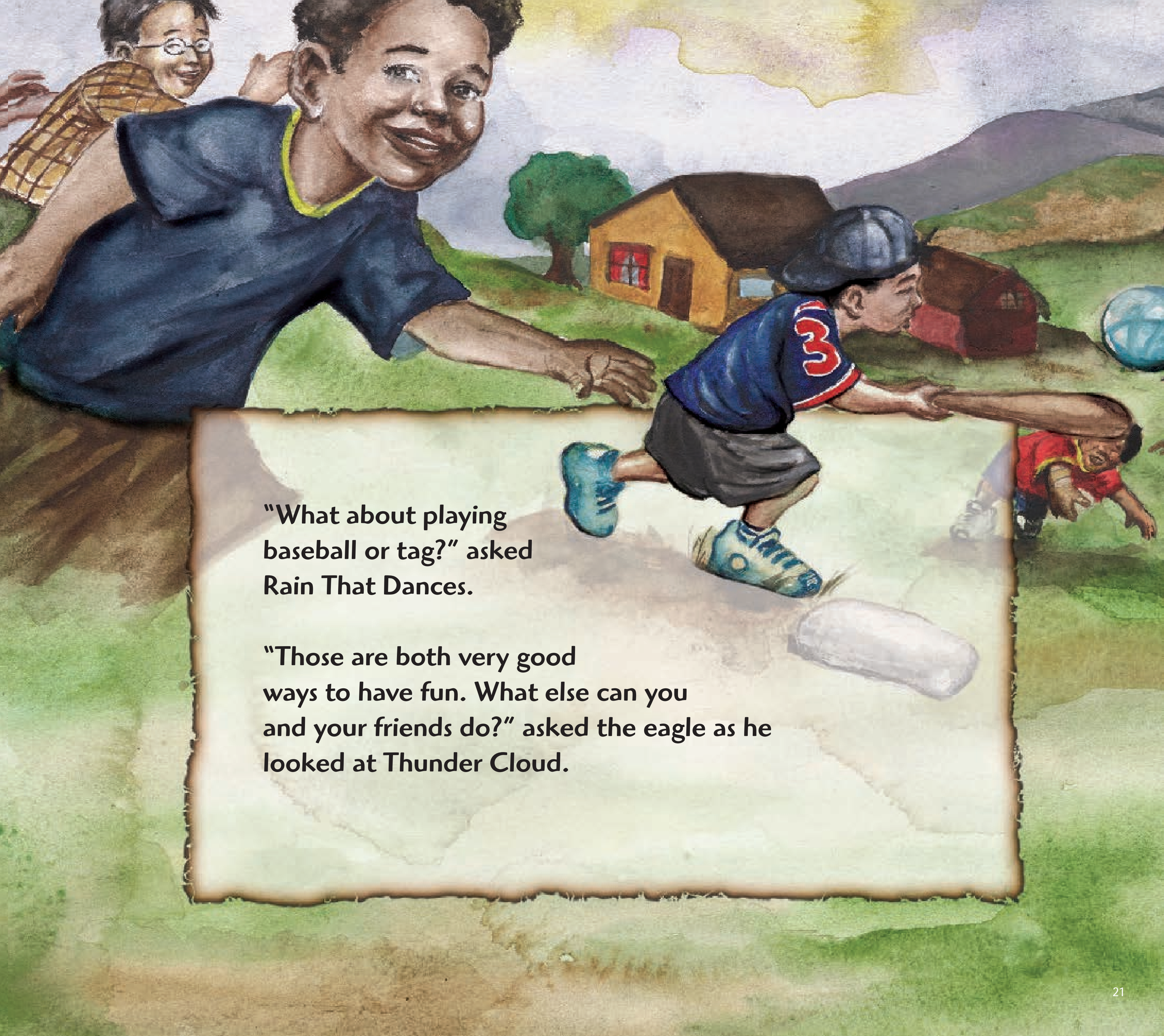


Thunder Cloud looked at the eagle and asked, "Can you tell me what else I can do to get my body moving? I want to stay strong and healthy."

"Me, too!" said Rain That Dances.

"You can do many fun things like riding your bike," said the eagle.





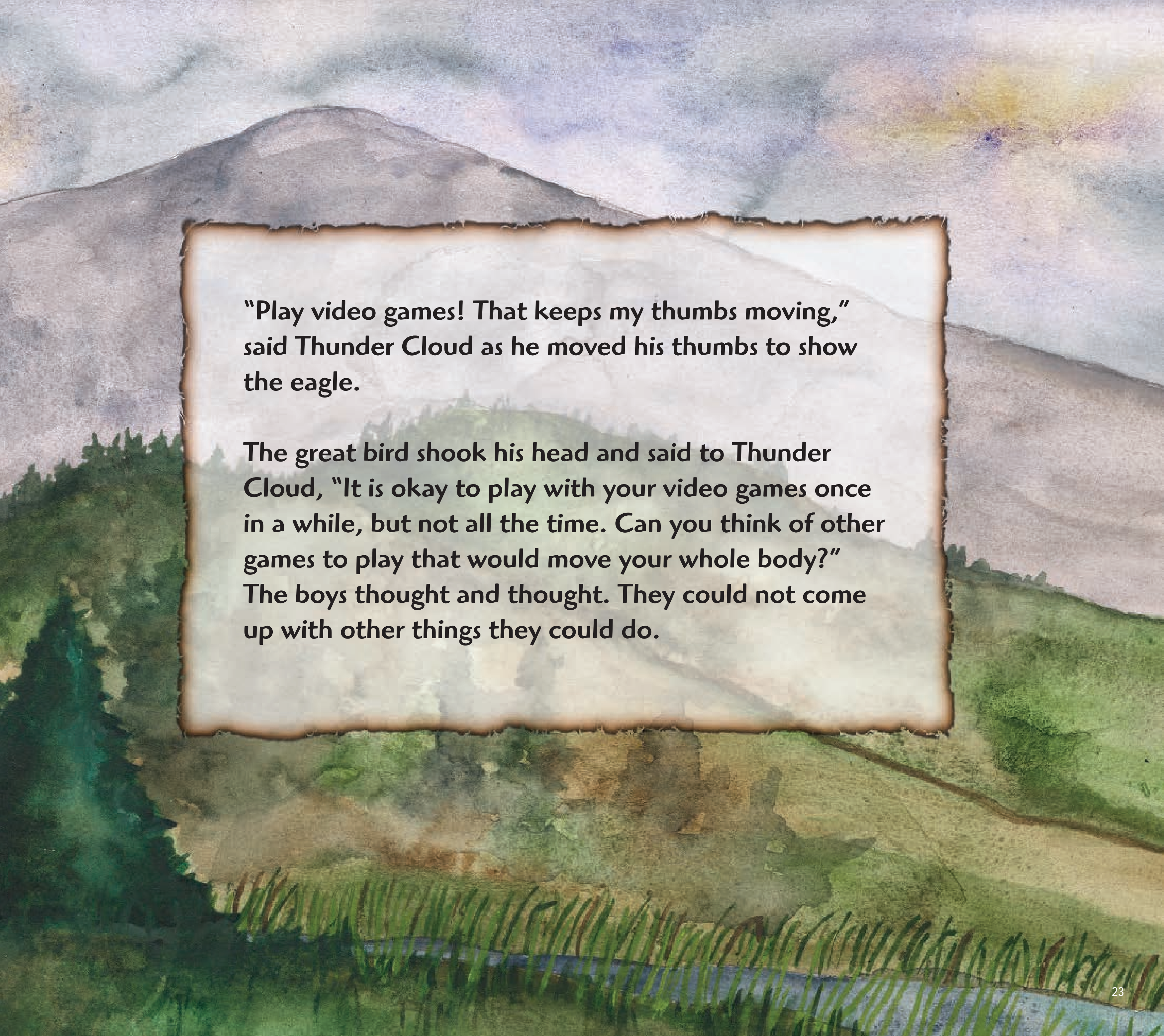
"What about playing baseball or tag?" asked Rain That Dances.

"Those are both very good ways to have fun. What else can you and your friends do?" asked the eagle as he looked at Thunder Cloud.





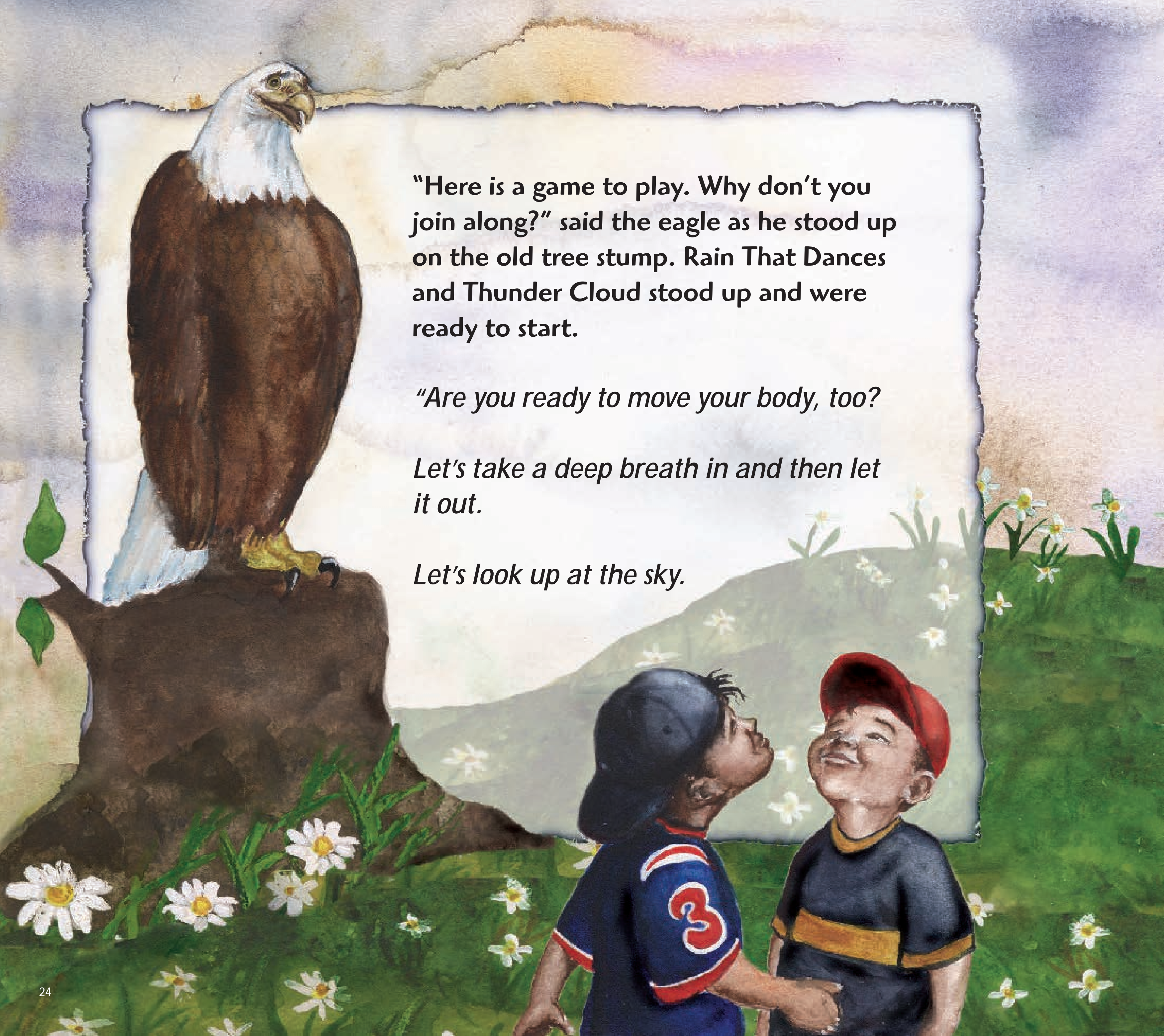




**"Play video games! That keeps my thumbs moving,"  
said Thunder Cloud as he moved his thumbs to show  
the eagle.**

**The great bird shook his head and said to Thunder  
Cloud, "It is okay to play with your video games once  
in a while, but not all the time. Can you think of other  
games to play that would move your whole body?"  
The boys thought and thought. They could not come  
up with other things they could do.**





"Here is a game to play. Why don't you join along?" said the eagle as he stood up on the old tree stump. Rain That Dances and Thunder Cloud stood up and were ready to start.

*"Are you ready to move your body, too?"*

*Let's take a deep breath in and then let it out.*

*Let's look up at the sky.*





*Look down at the ground.*

*Look side to side and see what we can see.*

*Let's touch our nose, first with one hand and then the other.*

*Let's touch our toes and then stand up straight.*





*Let's tap our feet on the ground. Left foot first, and then right foot next.*

*Let's clap our hands and march around with our knees lifted high as they leave the ground.*



*Let's flap our arms and pretend we can fly.*

*Let's all be eagles flying high in the sky.*

*Let's jump like a kangaroo and see how high we can go.*





*Let's hop on one  
foot and then  
hop on the  
other. And see  
if we can go  
a little bit  
further.*



*East or west or  
up and down, we'll start again and  
go round and round.*

*We jump and jump —  
we're having fun!*


*This is one way to stay  
healthy, one way to  
stay strong."*











The great bird flapped his wings. He laughed when the boys jumped like a kangaroo. Thunder Cloud, still clapping, shouted and said, "This is fun! Now I know what you mean about moving my body. I am going to tell my family and friends what you have told us, Mr. Eagle. I want them to start moving their bodies to be strong. Maybe they can play this game with me."

"Me, too!" said Rain That Dances.






"Thank you for taking the time to talk to us, Mr. Eagle. Will you be here tomorrow?" asked the boys.

"Of course I will be here," said the eagle.


"I will also bring a friend who wants to tell you what else you can do to stay healthy and strong."





*Please come back and join us  
to hear from the eagle and his  
friends in "Plate Full of Color."*





*This book is the second in a four book series developed by the CDC's Native Diabetes Wellness Program. We are hoping that, with the support of tribes and organizations, these books can be made available to every American Indian and Alaska Native child as a tool to be integrated with other dedicated efforts at tribal, state, and national levels to prevent type 2 diabetes for future generations. If you would like more information or are interested in being one of the sponsors of the book series, please contact the CDC at:*

**Phone: Toll free**

**1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)**

**TTY: 1-888-232-6348**

**In English/en Español - 24/7**

**E-Mail: [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov)**

**Website: [www.cdc.gov/diabetes](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes)**

*Other books in this series:*

*Book 1: "Through the Eyes of the Eagle"*

*Book 3: "Plate Full of Color"*

*Book 4: "Tricky Treats"*





**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Division of Diabetes Translation  
Native Diabetes Wellness Program

Indian Health Service  
Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention



## GLOSSARY

**Diabetes** means that sugar in the blood, or glucose, is too high. There are two main types of diabetes: type 1 and type 2. You can learn more about diabetes on the internet sites listed below.

**Glucose** is another word for sugar. Glucose comes from the food we eat and also is made in our liver and muscles. Our blood always has some glucose in it because it is needed for energy. But too much glucose in the blood is not good for the body. If diabetes is not kept in balance, over time, high blood glucose can damage the heart, eyes, kidneys, and nerves.

**Healthy** means the condition of being sound in body, mind, and spirit.

*To learn more about diabetes, visit these internet sites:*

- National Diabetes Education Program  
[www.ndep.nih.gov](http://www.ndep.nih.gov) or call 1-800-438-5383.
- CDC Division of Diabetes Translation.  
<http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes>.
- Indian Health Service Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention  
[www.ihs.gov/medicalprograms/diabetes](http://www.ihs.gov/medicalprograms/diabetes),  
"Resources."

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATORS

Patrick Rolo, Bad River Band of Ojibwe, draws from his rich Native American heritage to co-illustrate the Eagle Books. Mr. Rolo's career includes newspaper, magazine, comic book, and court room illustrations. Also a painter, his works in oil hang in galleries in Minnesota and Washington.

Lisa A. Fifield, Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin, Black Bear Clan, uses time-honored Native American tales and beliefs as the inspiration for her work. Her color palette is unique, as she mixes paint to her own aesthetic. Ms. Fifield's art has been exhibited in numerous museums in the Western U.S.

Both illustrators live in Minnetonka, Minnesota.