



Little Reah

A Culturally Relevant Vaccination Story

Hi!
My name is Reah!



**In a few days,
I have to get my
vaccination...**



**Yucky! I do not like getting needles at all.
I hate, hate, hate them!
It just sucks!
I'm afraid of needles.**

**My older cousin said when they got their
vaccination, it hurt a lot! I don't want to get it!**


I just want to play hockey
or baseball with my
friends, go to ceremony,
and spend time with my
cousins and friends.



Like always, Nikawi (Mom) and Nôhkom (Grandma) knew exactly what to say to help me feel calm. Nôhkom told me that I am brave and facing our fears makes us stronger. Nikawi talked about how the vaccine will keep me and my community safe.



This makes me feel like a superhero because facing your fears to help others is exactly what heroes do! When our community is safe, it means **we get to have fun together!**

A young girl with dark hair is depicted as a superhero, flying through a blue sky with white clouds. She wears a green mask with yellow eye cutouts, a green long-sleeved shirt, a red cape, and a dark blue skirt. She is smiling and has her arms outstretched. In the background, there are stylized green and pink shapes. At the bottom right, there are several green diagonal lines suggesting motion or speed.

**If everyone faces
their fears like me,
we can all be
together safely.**


**I want everyone to
know that if they
get their
vaccinations...**

they'll be a hero like me!





Before the big day, Nôhkom, Nikawi, and Nikawis (Aunty) talk about what will happen when I protect my community.

They tell me what getting a vaccine is like, how it feels, and what I can do to make sure everything goes well.



They ask me if
there is a
special person I
would like to be
there with me.
This makes me
laugh. What a
silly question!



**Nôhkom, Nimôsom
[Grandpa], Nikawi,
you are my special
people!** 

Nôhkom and Nikawi really helped me feel better but I am still a bit nervous. Nôhkom and Nikawi came up with a super cool idea.

They told me we were going to make a mini me - out of paper!

How is that gonna make it better to get a needle?



So, Nikawi showed me a piece of thicker paper that was cut out like a person. She explained that we would make a paper **ME** by drawing and colouring it to make it look exactly like me. **What a great idea!**



Nikawi told me that I could take mini Reah with me to get my needle. She said she would ask the doctor if mini Reah could get her needle first to show me how easy it would be.



We had so much fun making mini Reah. I drew my hair first. Nôhkom helped me colour my face before we drew the shirt and pants. I didn't think she looked like me that much, so Nikawi drew my favourite moccasins that Nôhkom gave me on my birthday.



Now she started to look a lot like me. While I was colouring her, my friend came to visit.



My friend Louis had told us about his paper friend, 'Little Louis,' that he took with him for his needle.

After making Little Reah, I got all ready for bed and put Little Reah on my pillow beside me.

Before I knew it, I was dreaming of berry picking with Little Reah in the bush of the Qu'Appelle Valley. It was our job to pick berries for my family's berry soup.



Grrrr!!! I heard a grizzly growling noise. What's this?
A giant needle came out of the trees!

This might have scared some other kids, but not Little Reah and me! We took some deep breaths, faced the needle calmly and... Poof!



It turned into a full basket of berries! We had enough to feed the whole community!

When I woke up in the morning, I told Nikawi and Nôhkom about the dream. They told me that facing the needle was like facing my fears and that facing our fears makes them less scary.



They said the needle turned into a basket of berries because, even though the vaccine may seem scary, it actually helps our communities - just like a basket of berries! They said that the dream meant I was brave and would do what I needed to for my family.

It was nice to hear them say this, but Little Reah and I already know how brave we are. We were in the dream after all!



The day has finally come. It was time to start getting ready. Before leaving home, I grabbed my favorite distraction, my Nimôsom!



When Nimôsom and I got to the doctor's office, I tried to think about what I had been taught: to be polite and listen to my Elders.

I looked over at Nimôsom and he told me to stay calm and be brave. When I looked at Little Reah, she was as calm as I had ever seen her!

Stay calm and be brave, my girl!

YOU'RE GOOD



Right then, I knew I had nothing to worry about!
While waiting, Nikawi and I filled out a booklet that
tells the doctor how they can help me be brave.



MY FAVOURITE...

Toy:

TV Show or Movie:

Book:

App:

People I like to be around:
.....
.....

Things that I brought to help me feel comfortable are:
.....
.....

This is my first time at the health clinic/lab

I have been to the health clinic/lab many times

I have had many needles, broken bones or surgeries

When I get a needle, I want:
(please circle)

- Less pain (numb the area)
- To count or sing
- To breathe calmly
- To not look or close my eyes
- To look or watch
- To use a tablet, phone or game
- A special toy or comfort item with me
- Fun bandages or stickers
- To sit with someone I like to be around
- Other:

MY JOB IS:
Keep my arm still - I may need help with this

HELPFUL HINT
Plan to do something special after the needle to recognize how brave you are.
What special thing would you do?

As we walked into the office, Nimôsom held one of my hands and Little Reah held the other. The office was just like Nikawi had described. The room had a chair, a small table, some medical stuff, and a kind nurse.



I thought that those doctors and nurses are heroes too, just like me! As the nurse looked over my booklet, Nôhkom offered to help me sit up straight. She said that if I sat on her lap, she could give me a big hug! Wow, that does sound nice.

I know I am ready for the needle. I want to be brave so badly but my heart is pounding like a drum and my stomach is dancing to the beat. All of a sudden, the kind doctor, with smiling eyes, leans forward and asks me for something. Of course! Little Reah is supposed to get her needle first!



So I hand Little Reah to the doctor, she holds her arm, and puts the needle in. Next, she pulls the needle out, puts a cotton ball where it used to be, and gives Little Reah a fun band-aid.




Just like that, Little Reah is safe and she did not even flinch! If she can do it, I know I can too! All of a sudden, the drum-like pounding in my heart didn't make me nervous, it just reminded me of all Pow Wows I've ever attended!

It is time to be brave and trust Nôhkom and Nikawi.

Together, we say a prayer because the vaccine is here to help and that is worth praying over! After the prayer, I remain calm, stay as still as possible, and hum while Nôhkom sings a beautiful song that reminds me of home.



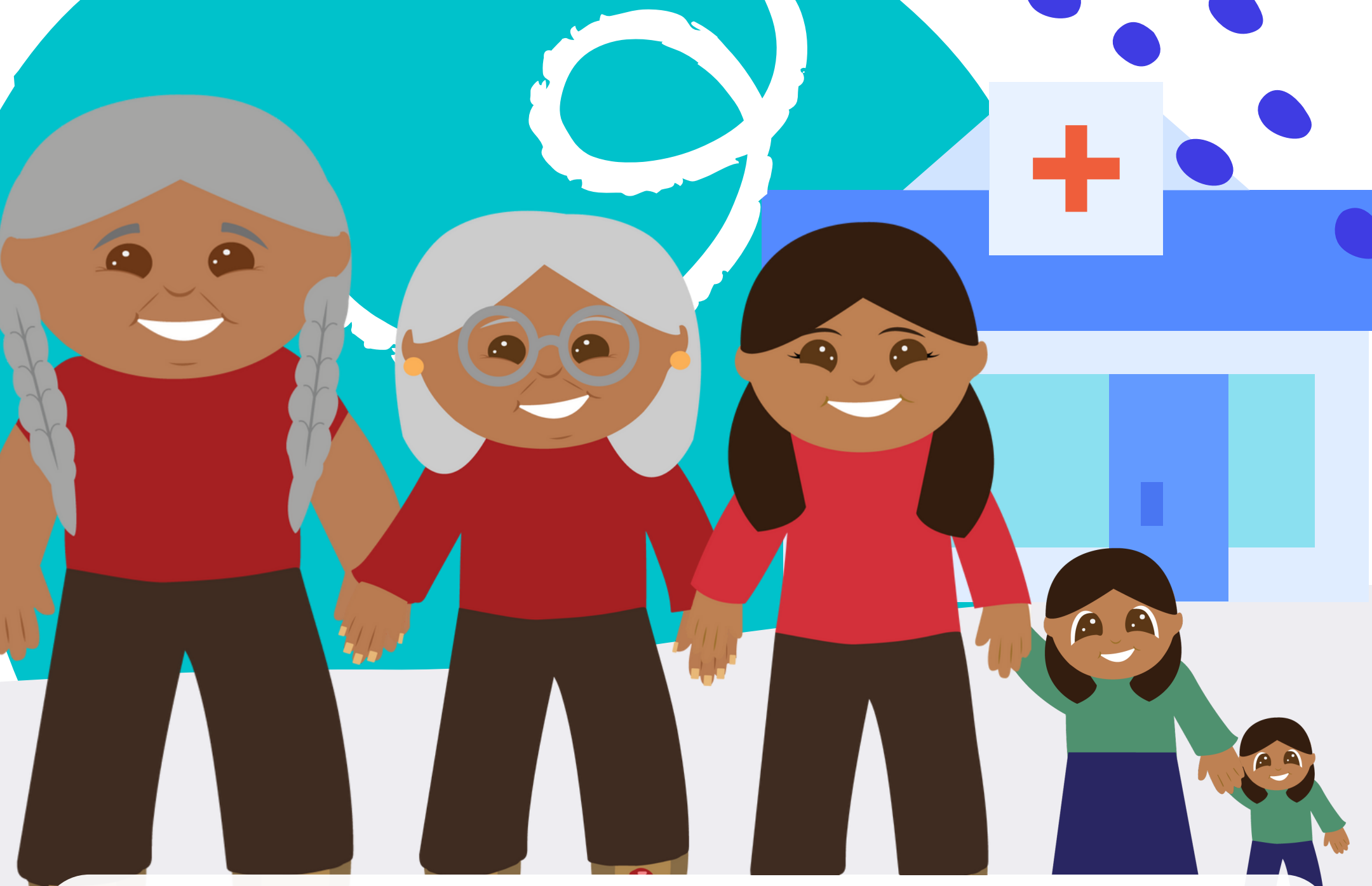
Before I know what has happened, it is already over!
I guess it stung a little, but was that really what everyone was fussing about? That needle was as harmless as the one in my dream! Nikawi asks me how I am feeling. Hmm, how am I feeling?



I feel great! I helped protect myself, you, and everyone else in our community. I feel brave. **I AM brave!**



Just like that, I am safe. I protected myself and my community. Now I really can't wait for everyone else to get vaccinated so we can play together like we used to! I close my eyes and can hear my cousins laughing and smell burgers on the BBQ!



Until everyone else shows how brave they are, I am just thankful to have a Nikawi, Nôhkom, and Nimôsom that make me feel strong and safe. As we all walk out of the clinic, Nôhkom surprises me with some freshly picked berries and her specialty bannock made with an extra dash of love! How lucky can one kid get?!



Little Reah and Little Louis emerged from a partnership involving members of Star Blanket Cree Nation, Morning Star Lodge (MSL), and MSL's partners.

Members of the Star Blanket Cree Nation that contributed include Elders Ethel Dubois and Lindsay Starr, Victor Starr, & Reah Starr. The Knowledge you bring to our work adds depth and relevance to all of our projects. Thank you (kinanâskomitin).

Shawna LaRocque-Desjarlais provided manuscript suggestions that could have only come from her unique experiences as a parent, Métis woman, and experienced educator. Nicole Crimi, a medical school student, gave generously while sharing the lessons she learned while publishing her own children's book which can be found at pattyandthepandemic.org.

All of the staff at the MSL contributed to this project. Special thanks go to MSL's leadership for the culture they have created and partnerships they have fostered. Heather O'Watch and Shayla Desjarlais deserve special recognition for their efforts to promote and illustrate Little Louis and Little Rhea.

**Patrick Sullivan,
Project Coordinator**



**Little
Reah**

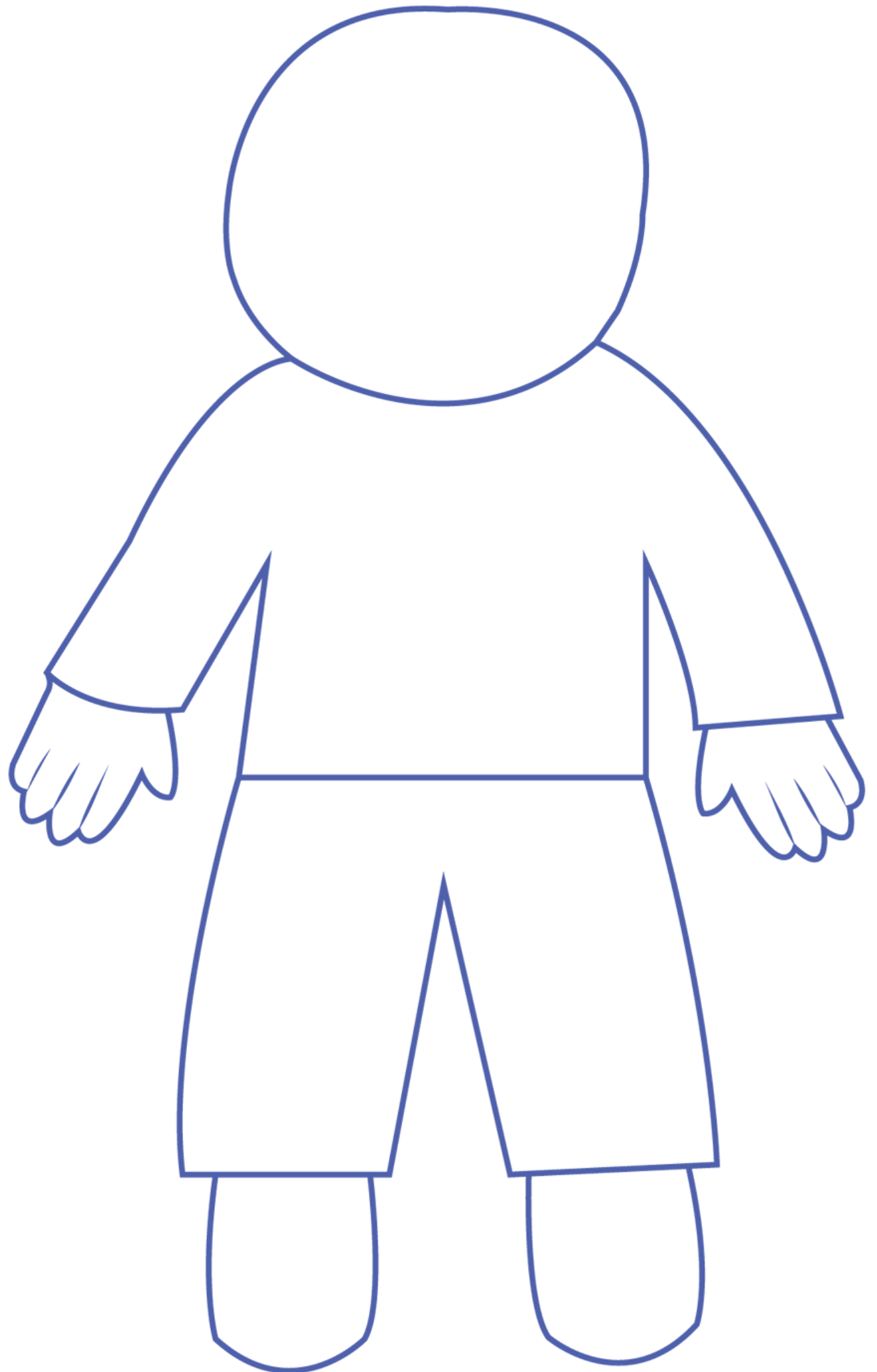
Head to
www.indigenoushealthlab.com/littlepeople
to download more paper doll templates and
other resources.

Have fun and get creative!

**The paper doll can accompany your child as a
support when they get vaccinated.**

**If they are becoming anxious you can remind
them about the story of Reah getting vaccinated
and how she overcame her fears. Feel free to
take pictures and save them as a keepsake to
document when your child was being extremely
brave, just like Reah!**

Template that
can be copied
and cut out to
create your
child's own
personalized
paper doll.



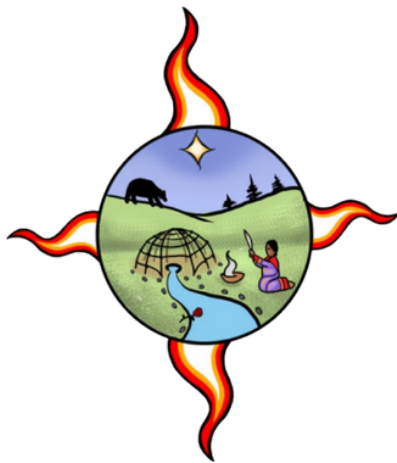


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STAR BLANKET
CREE NATION



MORNING STAR LODGE
AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTH RESEARCH LAB