

Tasha Comes Home

TASHA COMES HOME

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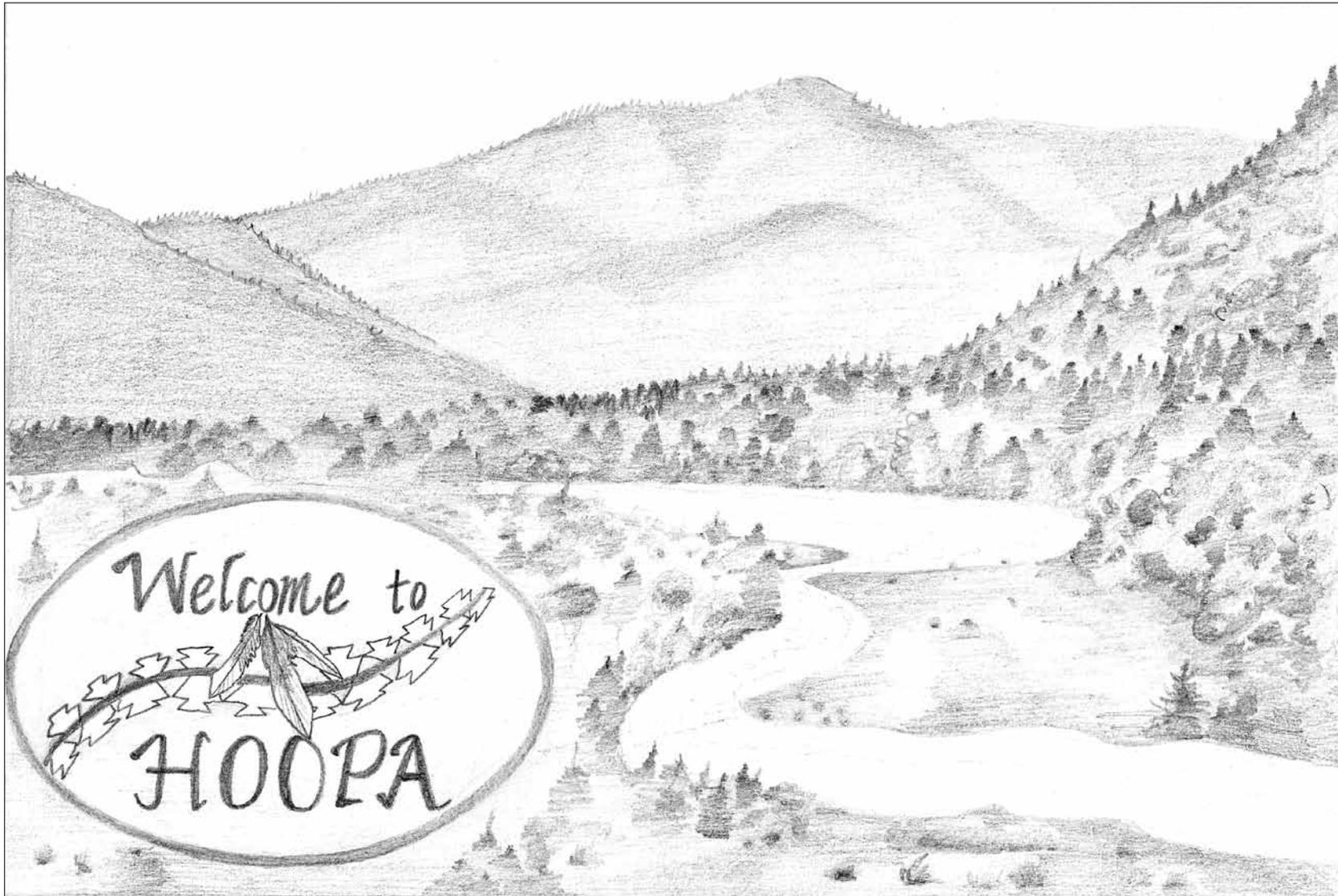
Collaborator: Melodie George-Moore

This book is dedicated to all the hard-working, devoted teachers of the Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District, both Native and non-native. True teachers know the job is not about earning a paycheck, but about valuing, loving, and supporting our students on their journey to live in balance.

It is also dedicated to Marcellene Norton and Laura Lee George who have committed their professional lives to the educational needs of the students of the Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District.

May we all live “K’winya’nya:nma-awhiniw—The Human Way.”

Special thanks to Margo Robbins, Melodie George-Moore, Lois Risling, and Cathleen Rafferty for their guidance, feedback, and ideas.



Tasha is a young Native woman from the Hoopa Valley. She grew up knowing who she was and where she was from. She participated in the ceremonial dances and learned how to balance being Native and living in the non-native world.

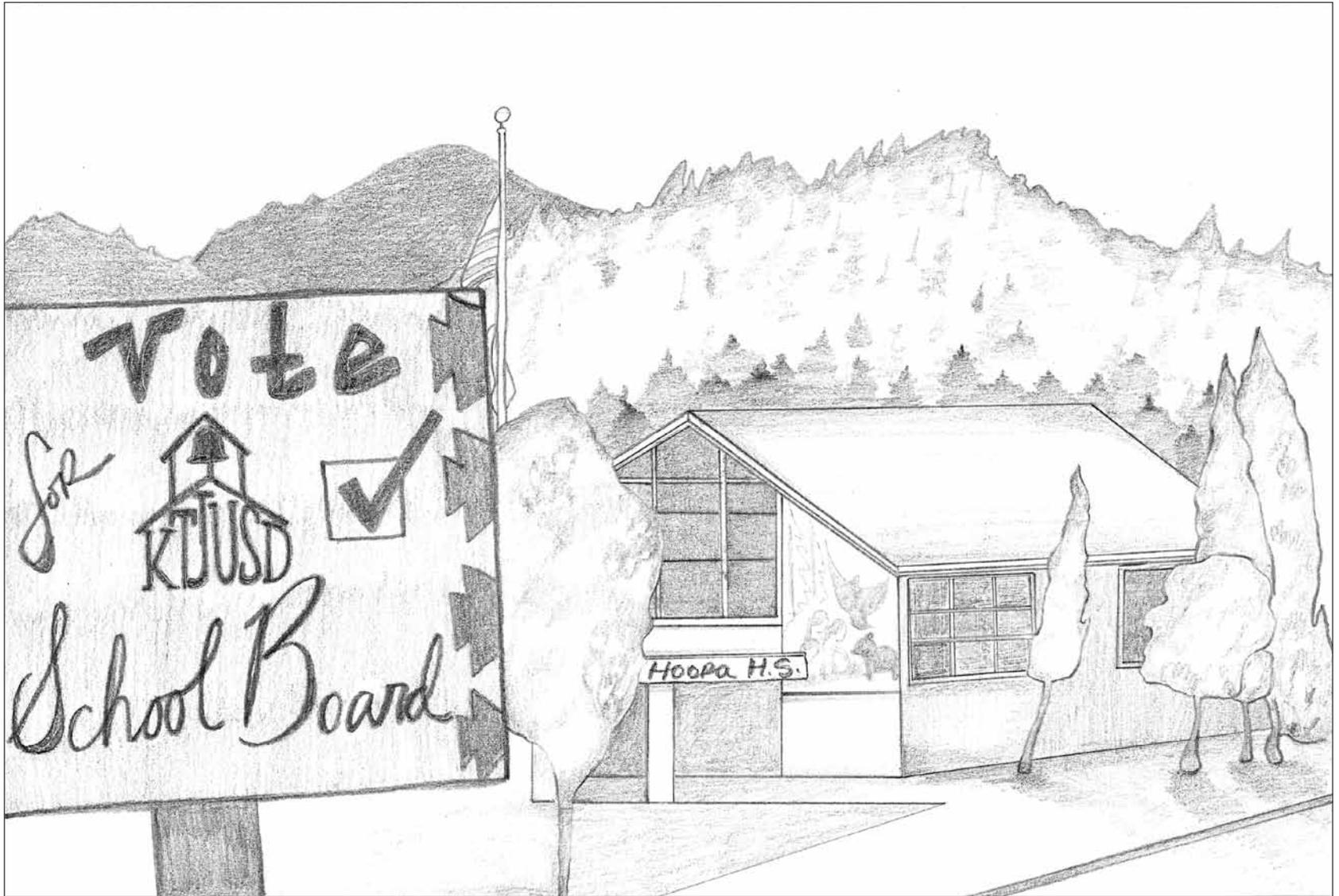
She went from preschool to high school graduation in schools of the Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District with her cousins and best friends. Her grandma taught her that education was very important.



Tasha went to university after high school. She has been away from home for four years. She is a senior this year.



After her first year in college, she had to choose a major that would fit into her talents, as well as a way to make a living after college. It was hard and a little scary to decide what she wanted to do for the rest of her life.



When she went home for holidays and summer, Tasha saw many young people working with their Tribes in various ways: through fisheries, forestry, politics, as well as in the business office or through Native-owned businesses. But what she focused on were the Native counselors, psychologists, and teachers in the school district who were concentrating on encouraging and guiding students toward educational success.



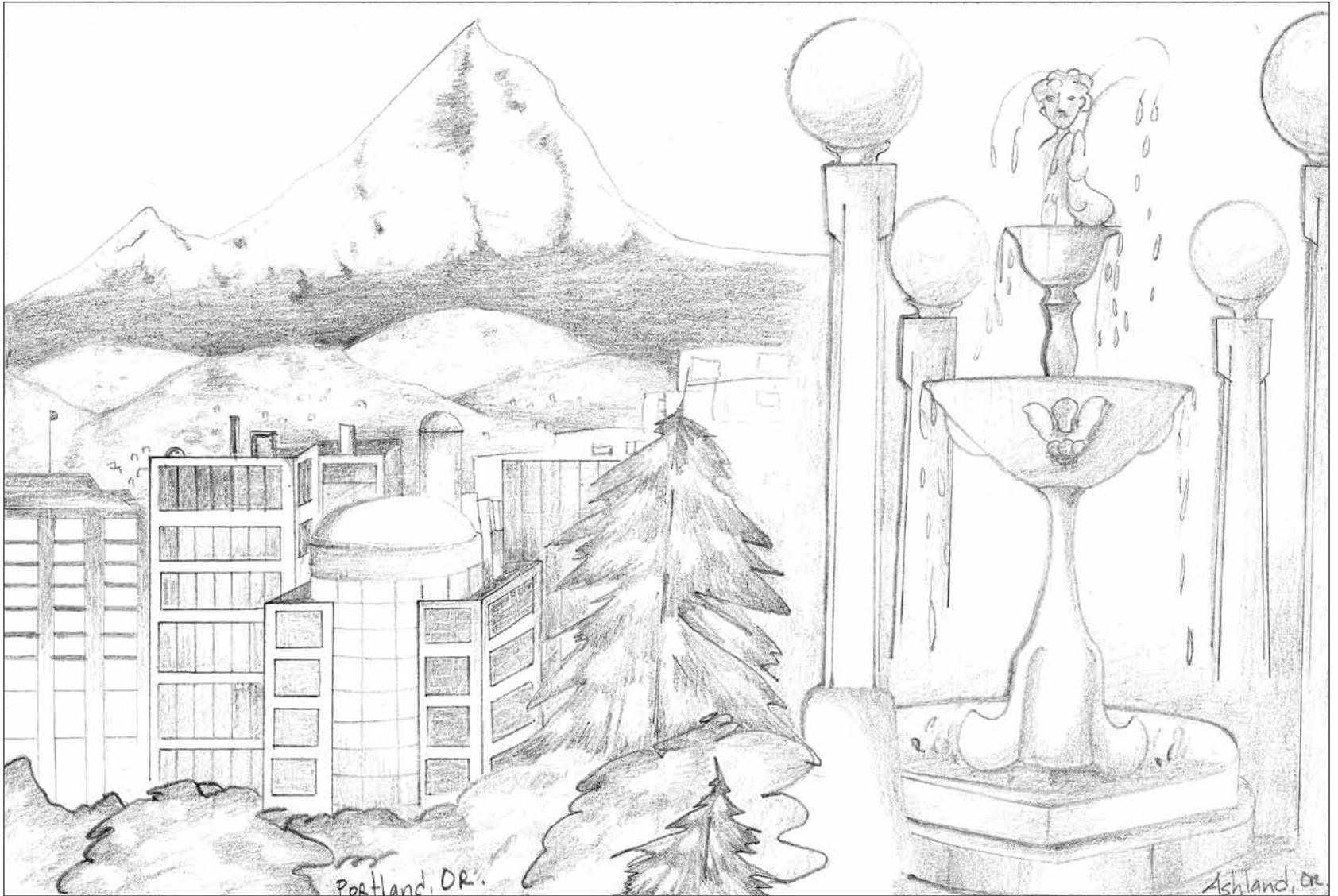
She remembered the old Boarding School stories when students were forced to cut their hair and weren't allowed to use their Native language. She was happy so much had changed. She wanted to be part of this educational movement to help students secure a healthy, balanced future.



After changing her major a few times, Tasha finally decided she would be a teacher. Especially since her grandma was active in Tribal Education and was on the school board, she had always known she wanted to be involved in education.



When she looked around, she saw many Hoopa Valley High School graduates returning home with college degrees promoting education for the young people of their respective Tribes.



College is not just about school work; after being away from home for a couple of years, Tasha was comfortable living on a university campus and was completely settled. She started branching out more and exploring nearby cities.



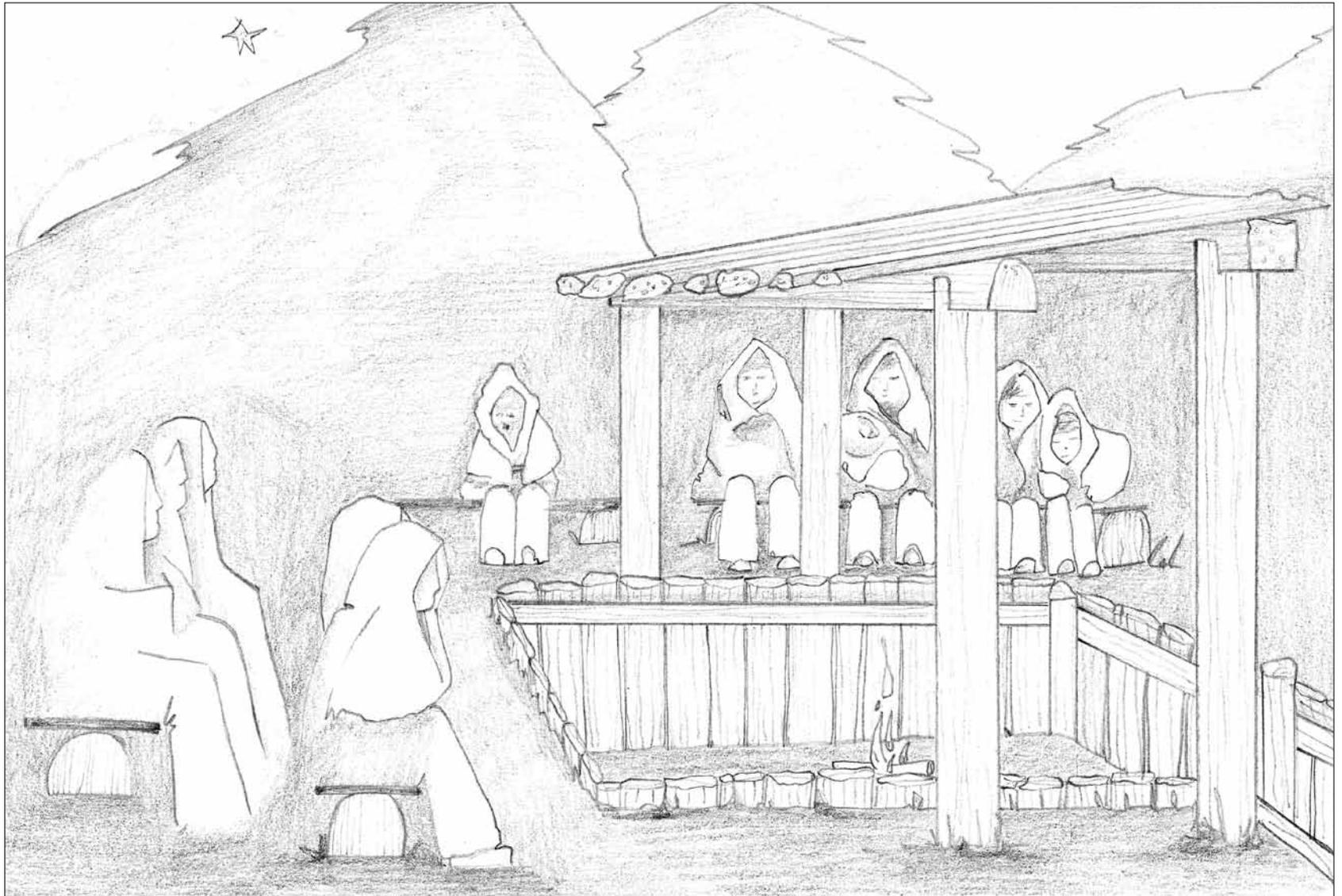
She learned how to play tennis and racquetball; she and her friends went to the movies, went dancing, and played all night games of spoons. She brought friends home to the rez and showed them around the special places she had told them about.



She had made many friends over the years and some of her best friends were Hawaiian Natives she met in the Native American Student Union (NASU). She had even flown home with them and met their families.



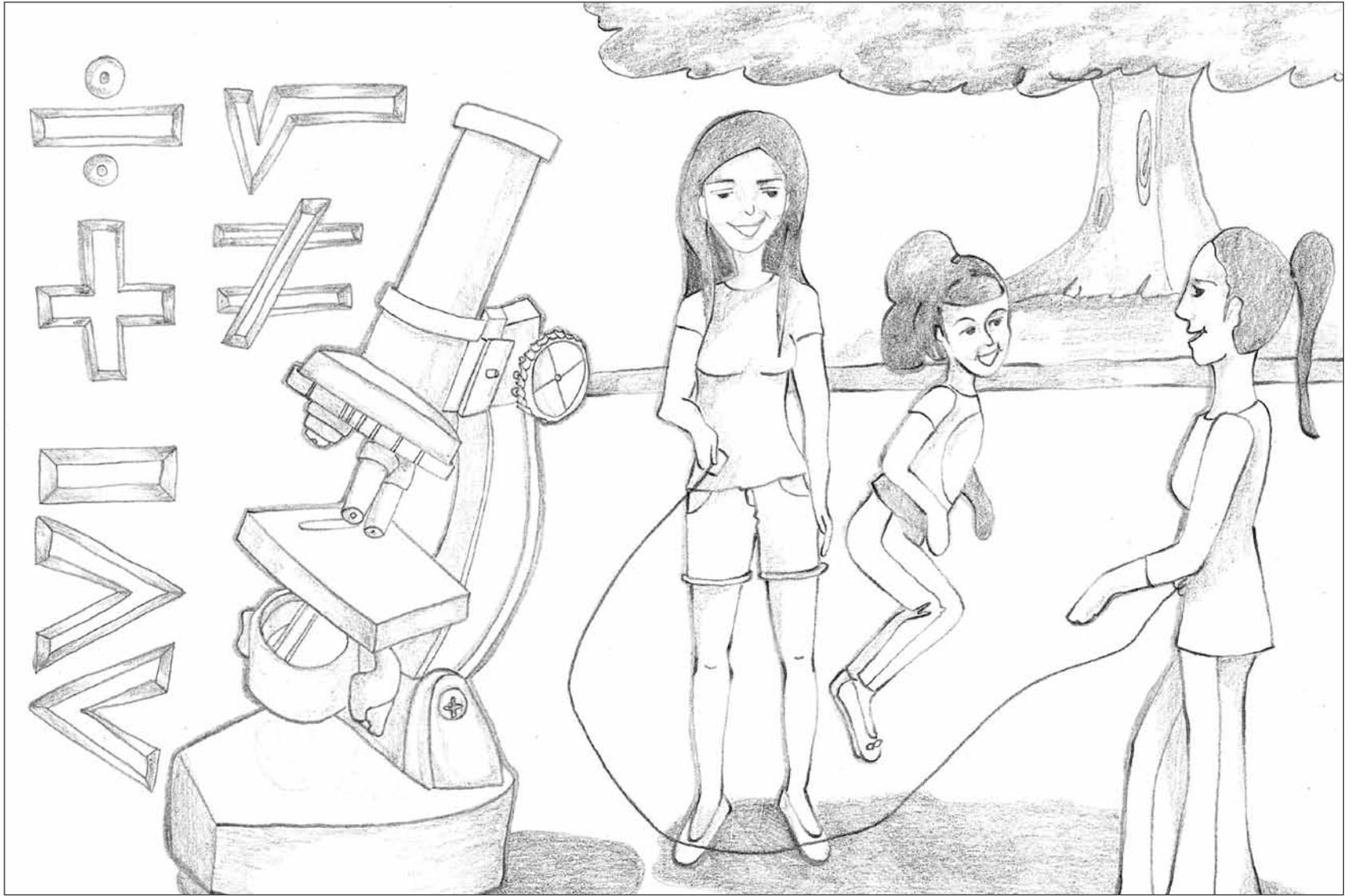
As a junior, she also began to take on more leadership roles and responsibility in NASU. She wanted to make sure all the new Native students were comfortable coming to university too.



The summer after her junior year, Tasha made another decision; although she hadn't borne children and still had older women cousins and friends still dancing, she decided it would be her last year to dance at the Brush Dances. She knew it was not the end of being involved—she would always be there to help dress and prepare other girls for the Dance.



For the last dance of the summer, she was honored to be selected as Medicine Girl. She sang and made good medicine through her prayers for the baby. She felt proud to see her little cousins dancing next to their elders. It was a good way to start her last year of college as a senior.

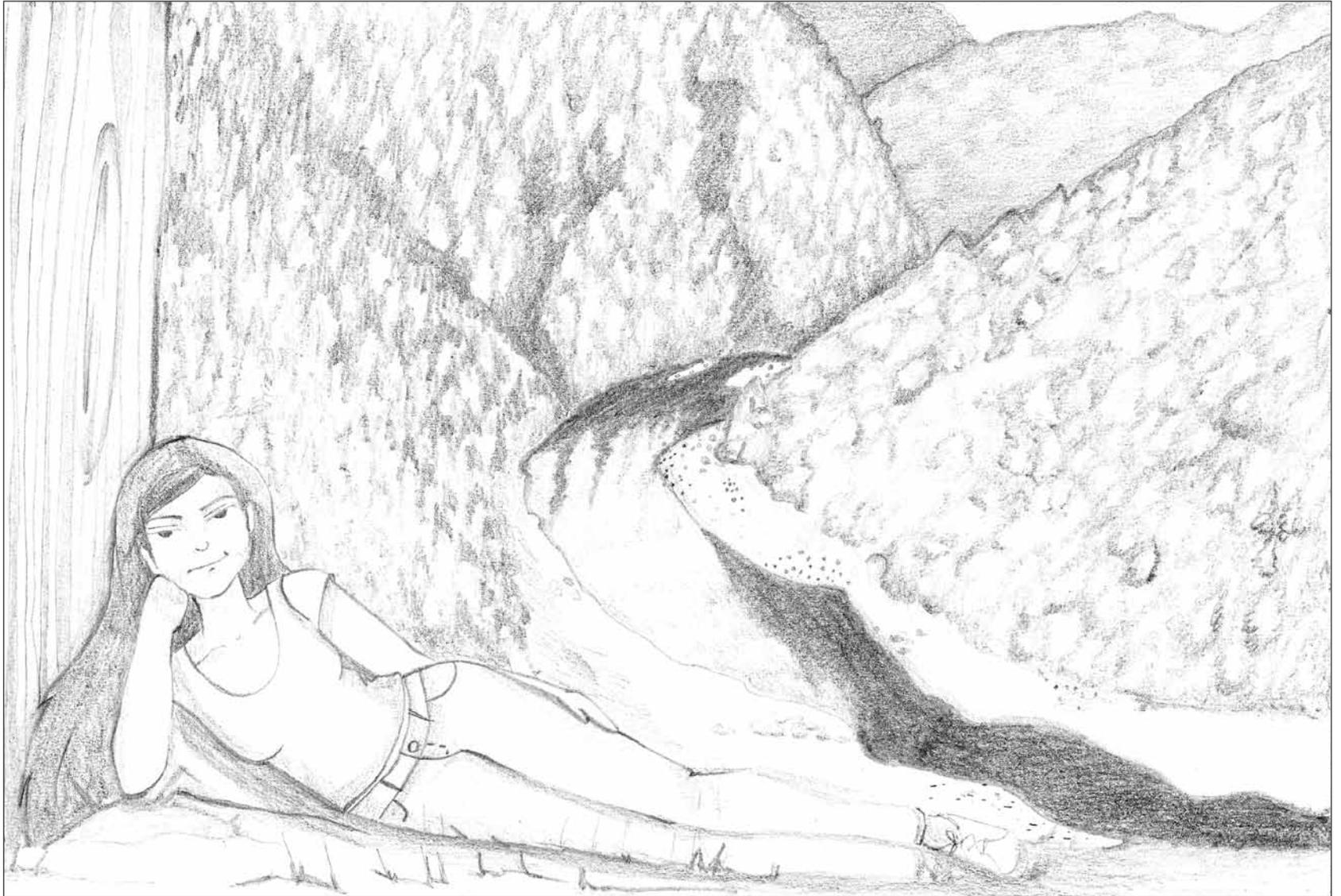


Her senior year, Tasha's classes were about teaching modalities and learning styles. To teach elementary school, she had to be knowledgeable in English, math, science, social studies, and physical education.



In addition, she spent lots of time on the phone with her grandma because being a senior means not only completing the academic work, but going to graduation meetings and getting graduation supplies like a cap and gown ordered and filling out invitations.

After a stressful year of fulfilling all the required course work and planning out her student teaching year to follow, Tasha graduated. Many of her proud relations came to support her.



That summer, Tasha helped dress and prepare the girls for dancing. She gently reminded them of their responsibilities and encouraged the singers to be confident and offer up their songs in prayer. It felt good to be at the dances—once again surrounded by family and friends. The feeling of peace and well-being made Tasha feel ready to take on whatever life threw at her.



Next Tasha has to do her student teaching; Mrs. George-Moore teaches fifth grade at Hoopa Elementary School. It is a good placement for Tasha. She can come home and learn how to be a teacher with someone she knows really well.



As Tasha practiced teaching, she also was involved with the Title VII Indian Education Program. Together they created an after-school program where students created dance necklaces and regalia, learned proper dance protocol, and listened to songs. Tasha noticed the more students learned about their culture, the more respectful and confident they became in other aspects of their lives.



Tasha wrote a second language acquisition grant with the Title VII Indian Education Program director for funding to pay for her to go to Hawaii over winter vacation. Because Hawaiian educators have taught the children to be fluent in their native language from an early age, many core classes are taught in their native language. Since Tasha was going to be teaching high school Yurok I classes, she attended a workshop in Hawaii to learn some of their techniques.



As the school year came to a close, Tasha bid a bittersweet farewell to her students. She knew she would see them again—at the ceremonial dances, around town, and maybe even in another one of her classes—but it would never be exactly the same again. At the same time, Tasha felt good about coming home. It would be gratifying to watch these young students grow up and take on more responsible roles in their culture as they continue their journey toward living life in balance.



Being a teacher is a rewarding and fun job. Tasha knows she can make a difference in the lives of students who live both on and off the reservation. She can be a role model and help students to know that going to university is not as scary as it seems. She can live out her life here at home—balancing her culture and being successful as a teacher.

Glossary

Aspects: features, parts, pieces

Fluent: able to speak or write smoothly, easily, or readily

Grant: something granted, a sum of money

Gratifying: giving or causing satisfaction; pleasing

Learning styles: the ways that people learn best. Some learn by listening (auditory) others by doing (kinesthetic) others by watching (visual). When evaluating the impact of a site, it may be important to understand an individuals learning style.

Modalities: instructional methods for teaching students that meet their learning style

Native American Student Union (NASU): is a student organization that strives to provide social and educational support to Native American Students, to raise awareness of contemporary Native American cultures and issues, and to sponsor educational and cultural programs for the campus and community.

Major: the field of academic study in which one concentrates or specializes

Regalia: articles used in ceremonies

Second language acquisition: the process by which people learn a second language in addition to their first language(s)

Student teaching: the common term for time spent teaching in a real classroom under the general supervision of an experienced teacher as part of a teacher certification program

Successors: the girls who follow behind her; one that succeeds another (as in a position, title, office, or estate)

Title VII Indian Education Program: a program designed to determine, assess, and address the culturally related academic needs of the American Indian/Alaska Native student populations

Credits

Humboldt State University's Cathleen Rafferty and Alice Kawazoe of the California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP) are two important people who provided financial and moral support to make this book possible.

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