

# Pathways To Belonging

A story for and about young adults with  
intellectual and developmental disabilities



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# About the Comic Book

Please read this page before you start reading the comic book.

## **About the Comic Book.**

This comic book was made to show what young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities we interviewed told us about how they find belonging in their communities and lives.

The characters are fictional (made up) and they do not look like any of the young adults we interviewed for the research project. So, these characters are not meant be any of the real young adults we interviewed. We did this to make sure not to identify any of the young adults we interviewed.

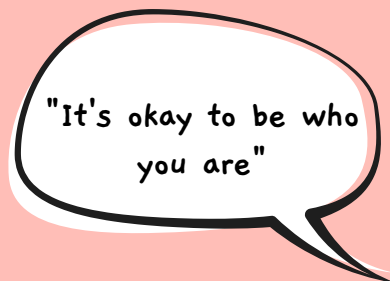
The story about the community clean up is fictional, but the stories the characters experience and even some of the words the characters say are from young adults we interviewed.

## Reading the Words in “Quotations.”

When you read the comic book, you will see quotation marks “that look like this.”

These marks mean that the words the character is saying are words that a young adult with intellectual and developmental disabilities said about belonging when we interviewed them.

This is an example of what these will look like in the comic book:



# About the Pathways to Belonging Project

This comic book is based on a research project done through the University of Toronto. It is called the Pathways to Belonging project or P2B for short.

## What was the P2B project about?

We wanted to learn how young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities find belonging. We did that through our research called the P2B research project.

## Who was on the P2B research team?

We had young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, family members, service providers, students, and researchers on the team.

## Who participated in the project?

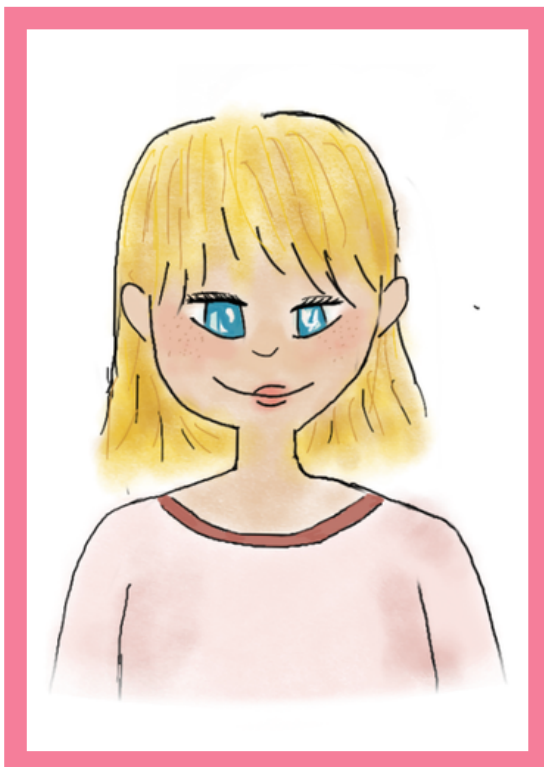
We interviewed nine young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who were 18 to 35 years old, and living in the Greater Toronto Area. We interviewed each young adult two times.

**For more information about our project, visit:**  
**<https://pathwaystobelonging.ca/>**

Meet the four friends this comic is about.



This is Joy. She is 30 years old. Her friends say that she is a natural leader. She enjoys going camping every summer.



This is Kai. They are 25 years old. Their friends say that they are curious and love learning. They enjoy bird watching.



This is Li. He is 19 years old. His friends say that he is the best swimmer they know. He loves to play board games.



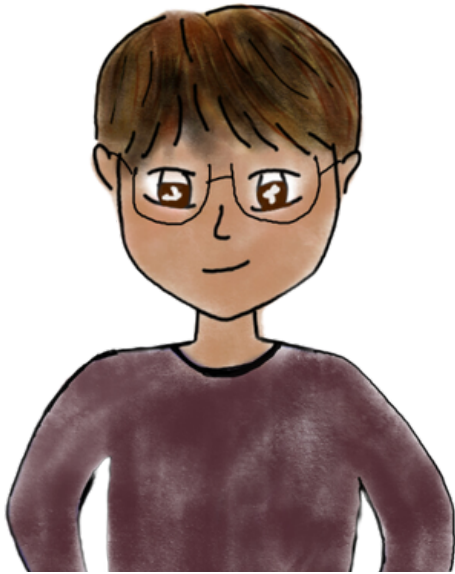
This is Rory. He is 28 years old. His friends say that he has the cutest dog. He loves Star Wars.

Now that you've met the four main characters, let's meet their loved ones. You'll get to know more about them as you read this comic.



This is Chewie the Corgi. She is Rory's service dog. She is 3 years old. When she's not working, she loves to cuddle and play fetch.

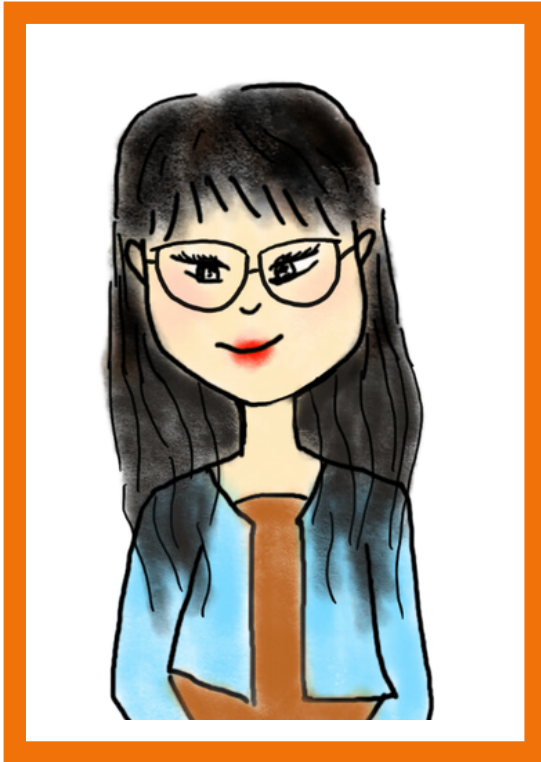




This is Jared, Joy's brother. He is 35 years old. He spends a lot of time camping with Joy and her friends.



This is Alex, Kai's girlfriend. She is 26 years old. Kai and Alex love doing outdoor activities together like going on walks and bird watching.



This is Mei, Li's mom. She is 49 years old. Mei volunteers as a coach on Li's swim team and loves to play cards with him.



This is Richard, Rory's dad. He is 52 years old. Richard loves to do pottery and made Chewie a doggy bowl.

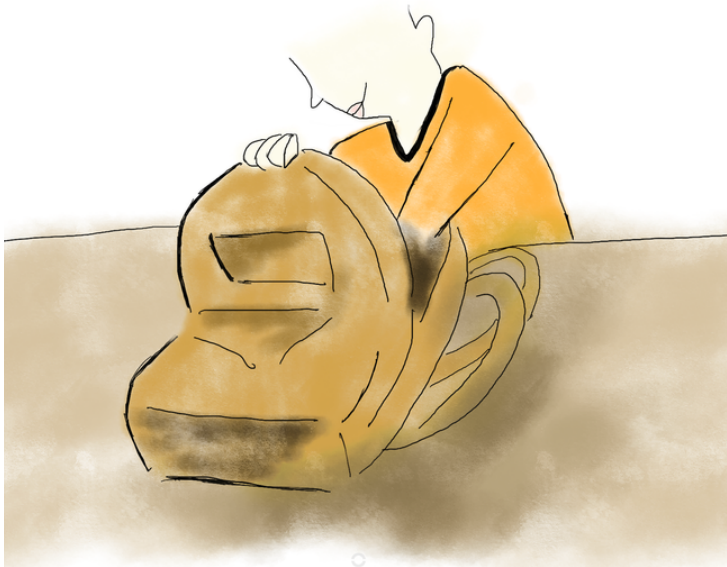
On a bright morning in the city...



The four friends: Li, Joy, Rory, and Kai all have different morning activities at 9:00 am

1

Li is grabbing his backpack



2

Joy is texting Kai



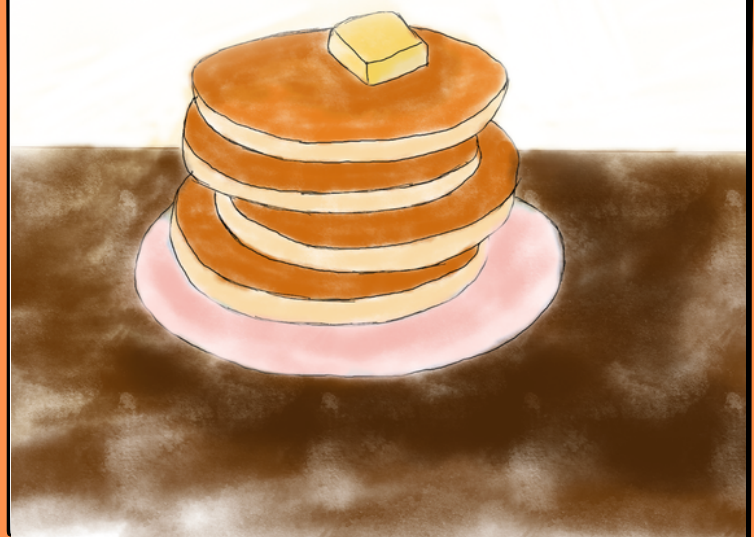
3

Rory is sleeping



4

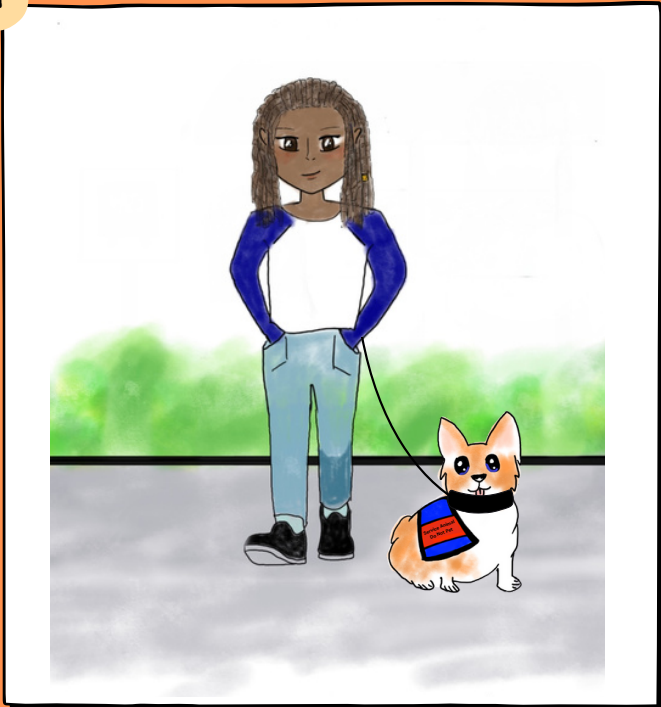
Kai is eating breakfast





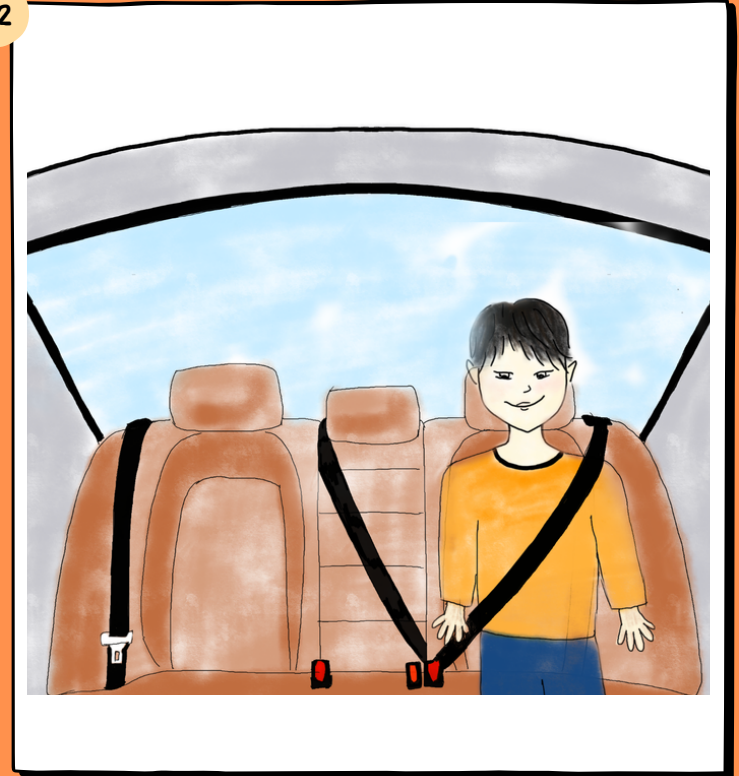
They go to the library to meet each other

1



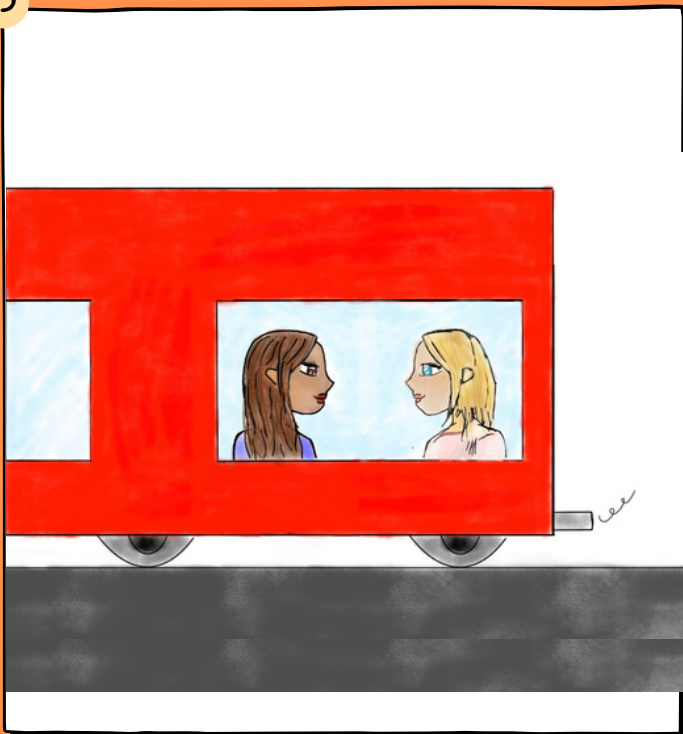
Rory is walking to the library with his service dog, Chewie.

2



Li is getting a ride to the library from his parents.

3

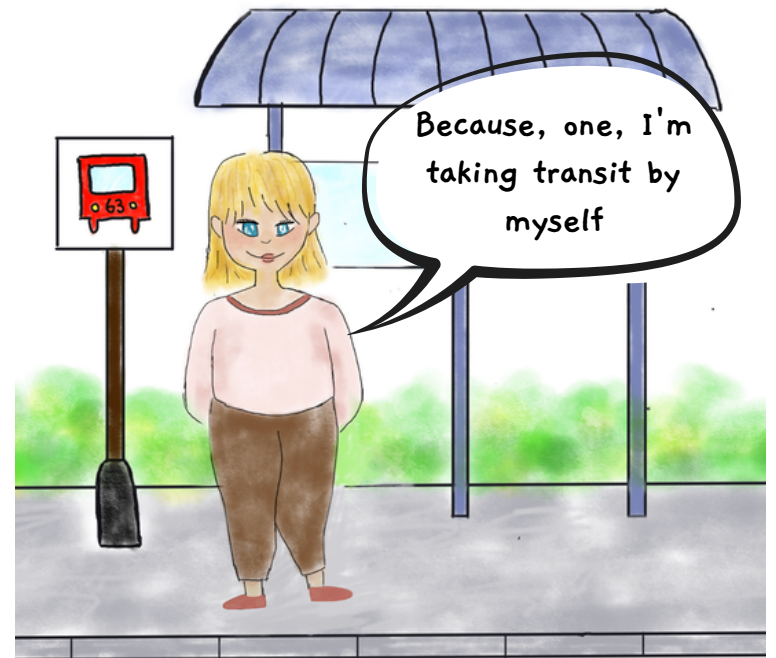


Kai and Joy are taking the bus to the library.

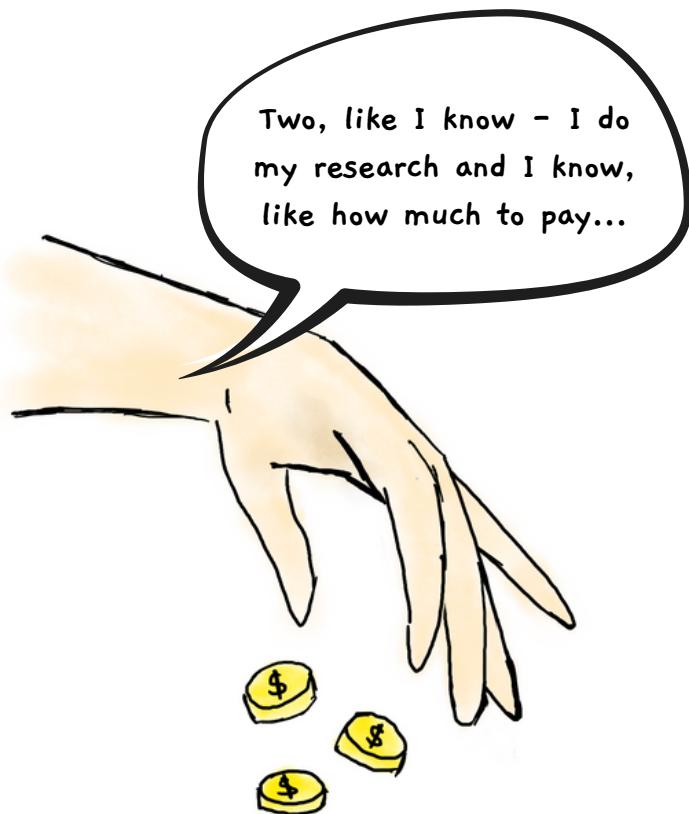
1



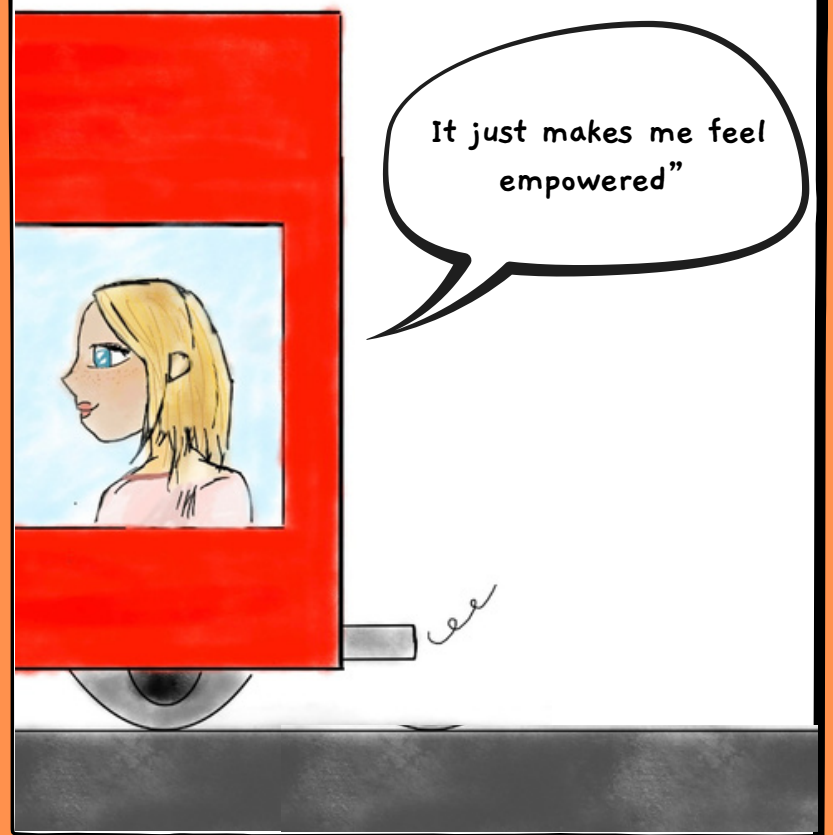
2



3



4





Joy, Kai, Li, and Rory meet at the library...



They talk about being a part of a  
community clean up.

---





1



2



3

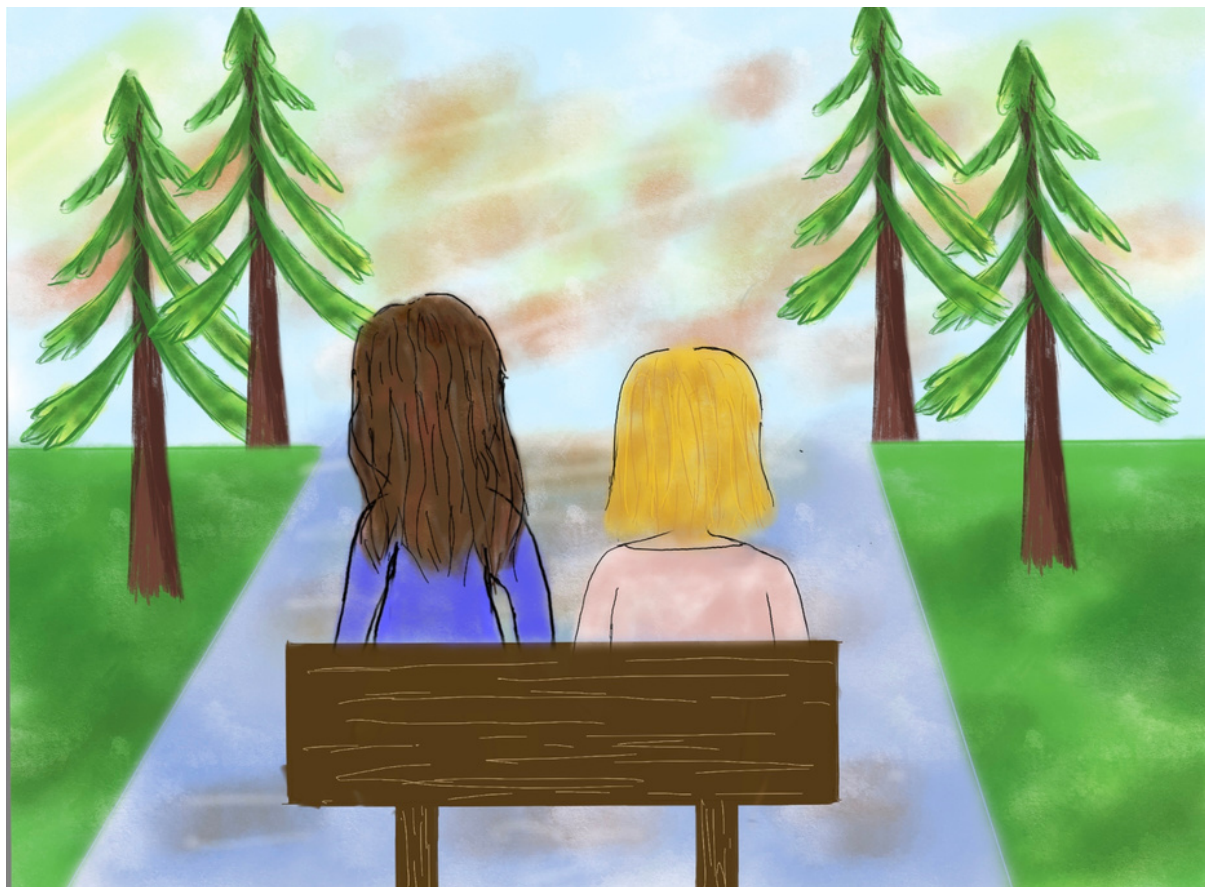


Joy tells Li that she heard about this event from Kai's girlfriend

Meanwhile, Kai tells Rory that they went camping with Joy on the weekend.



2





Joy and Kai go camping with Joy's brother Jared. When they were younger, they went camping with a community group.

1









# Kai's Camping Scrapbook



Kai and Joy camping  
as children



Kai and Joy camping  
this weekend



FRIEND

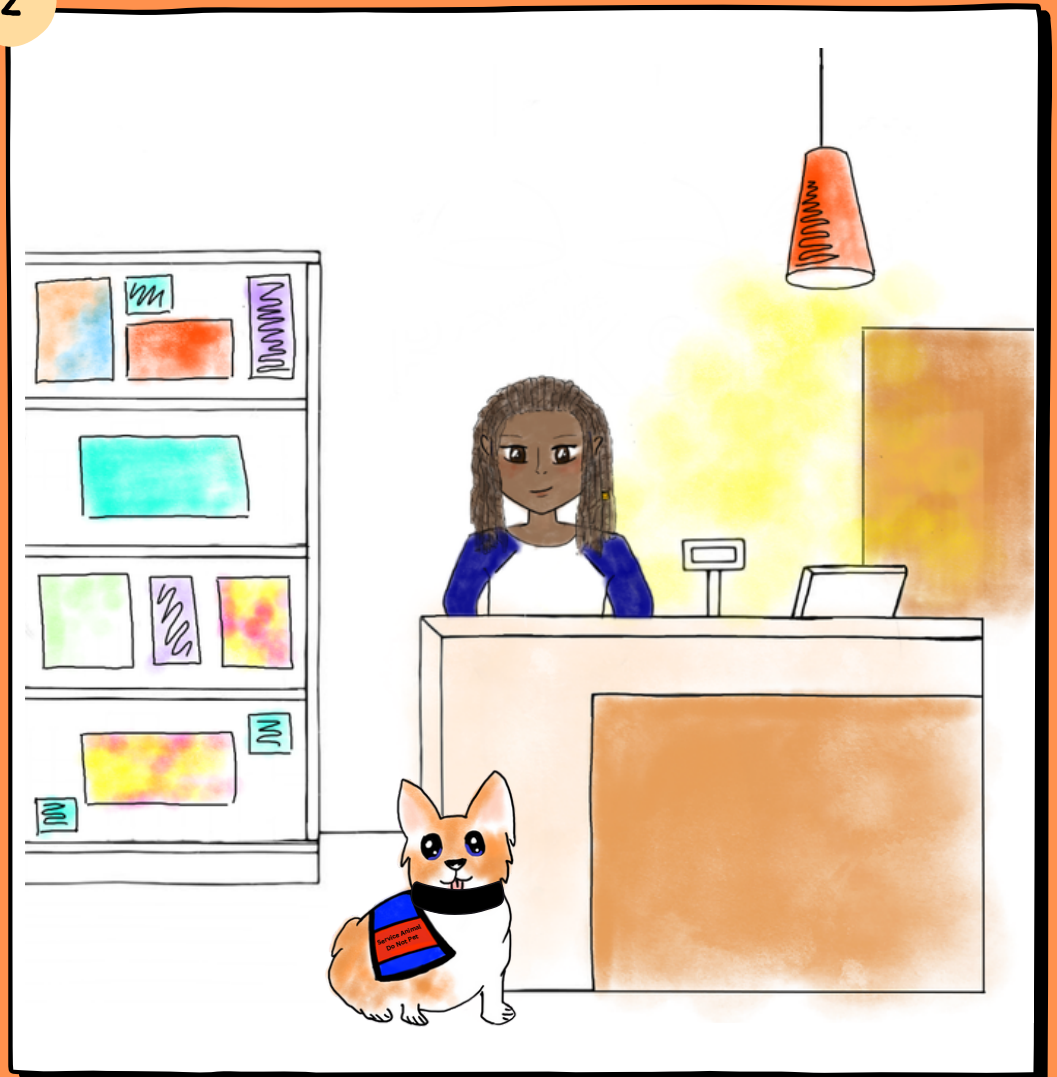
1



Rory tells Kai that his weekend was not great. Something happened to him at work that made him feel bad.

2

Rory usually loves his job at the comic book store. He likes meeting new customers and arranging the comics on the shelf.





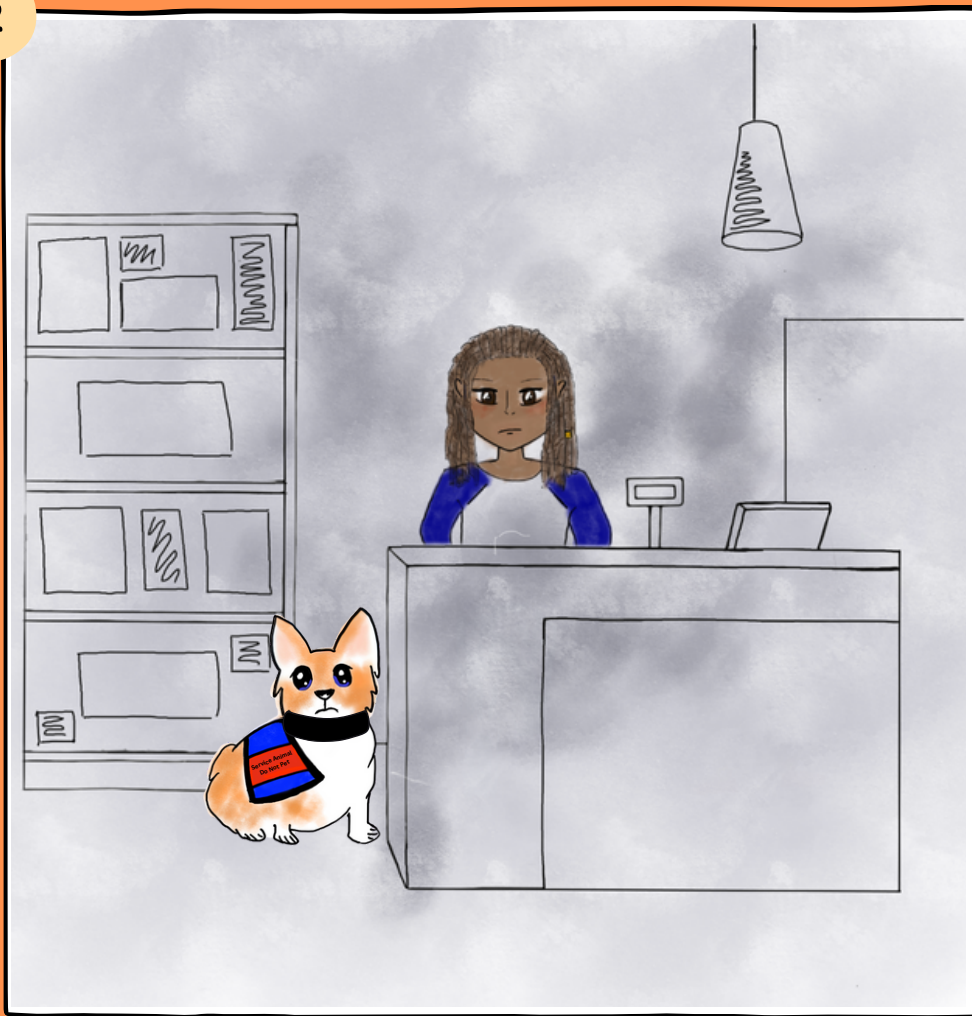
Over the weekend, Rory was working at the store.

When Rory went to the back of the store to help two customers find a book, he heard them say hurtful things about his disability.

1



2



This made Rory feel very sad and angry for the rest of his shift.

On his way home from work, Rory thinks about his Dad, and the love and acceptance his dad has for him. He feels better knowing he can talk with his dad about the mean comments customers made about his disability



"I'm feeling like I'm not a burden to them, that [my family] understand. I do feel good because I know they accept I learn different..."

"But I feel good because I know that I'm not gonna have to act like somebody else and not be myself."

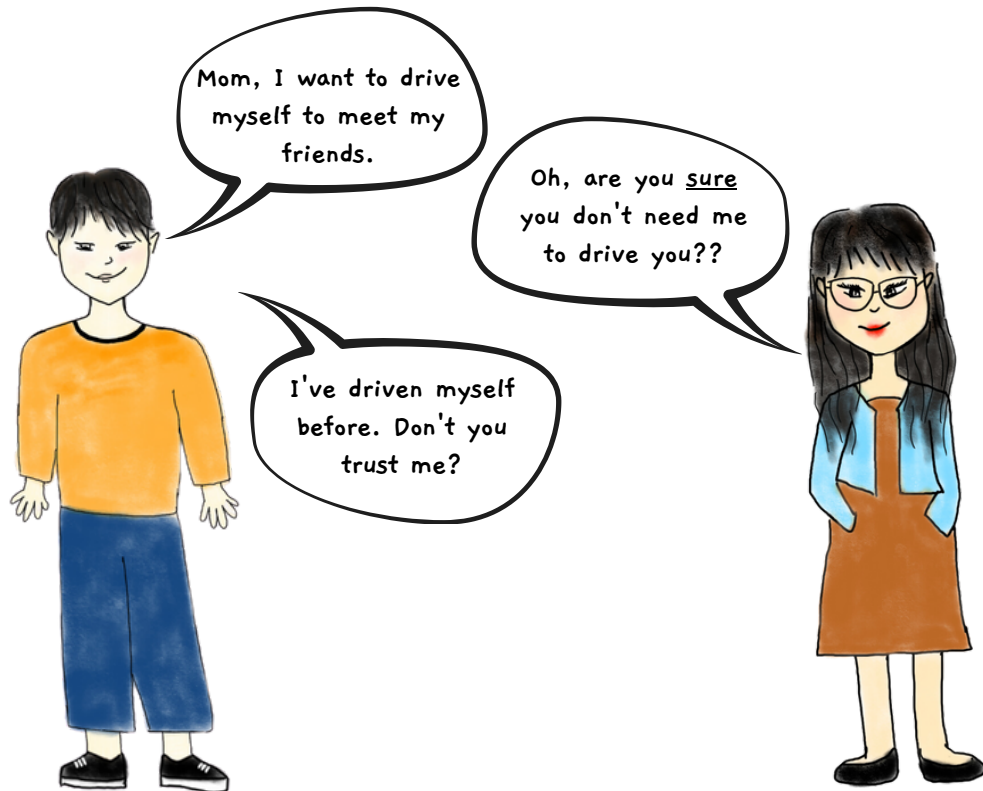
After Li, Joy, Rory, and Kai were done at the library,  
they make plans to go to the community clean up at  
Pathways Park on their own



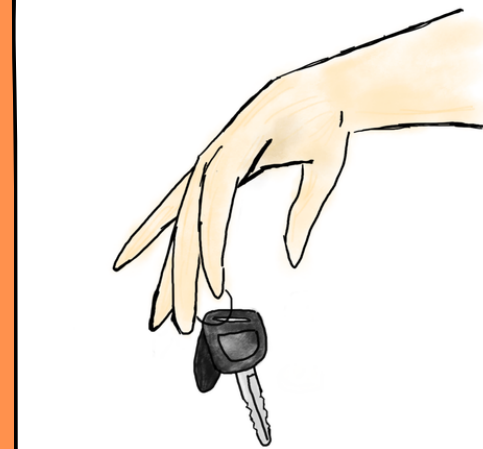


Li is excited to drive on his own to the community clean up. He remembers the conversation he had with his mom.

1

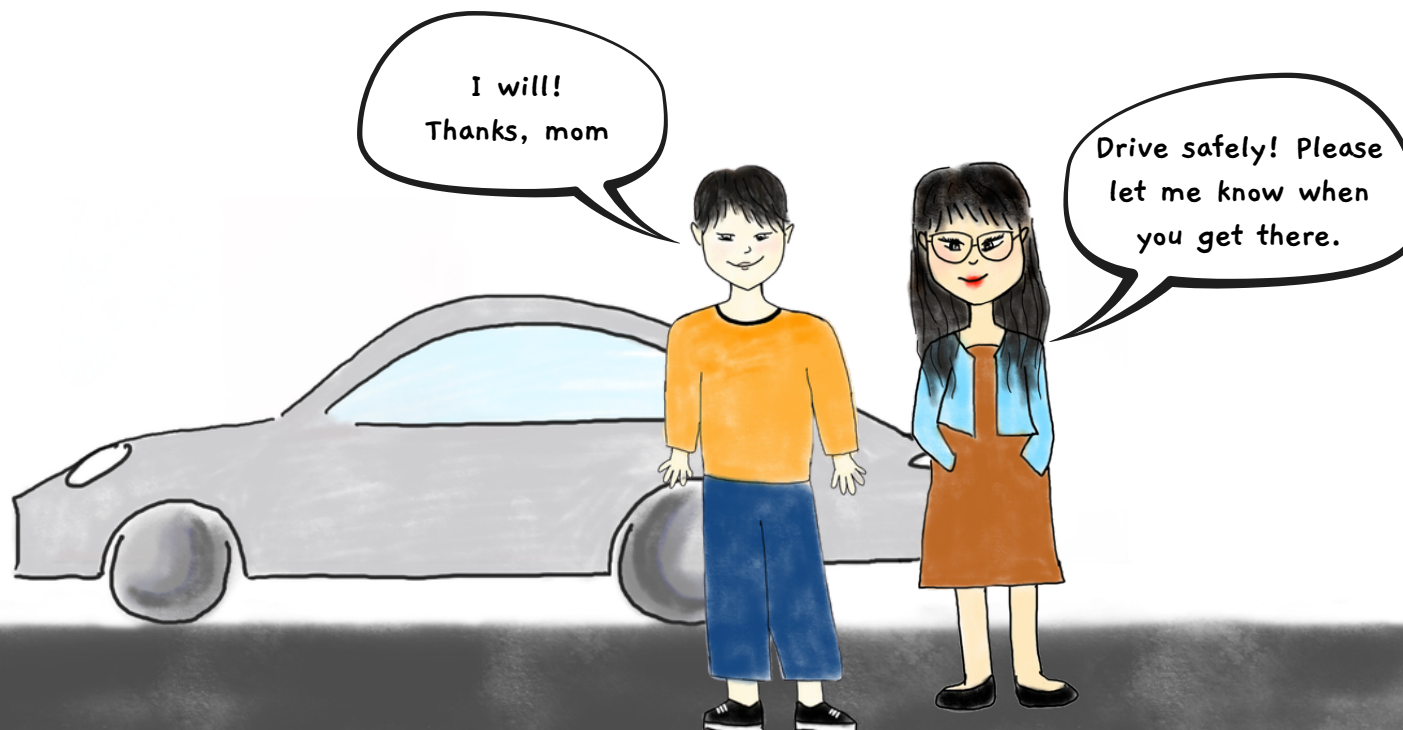


2



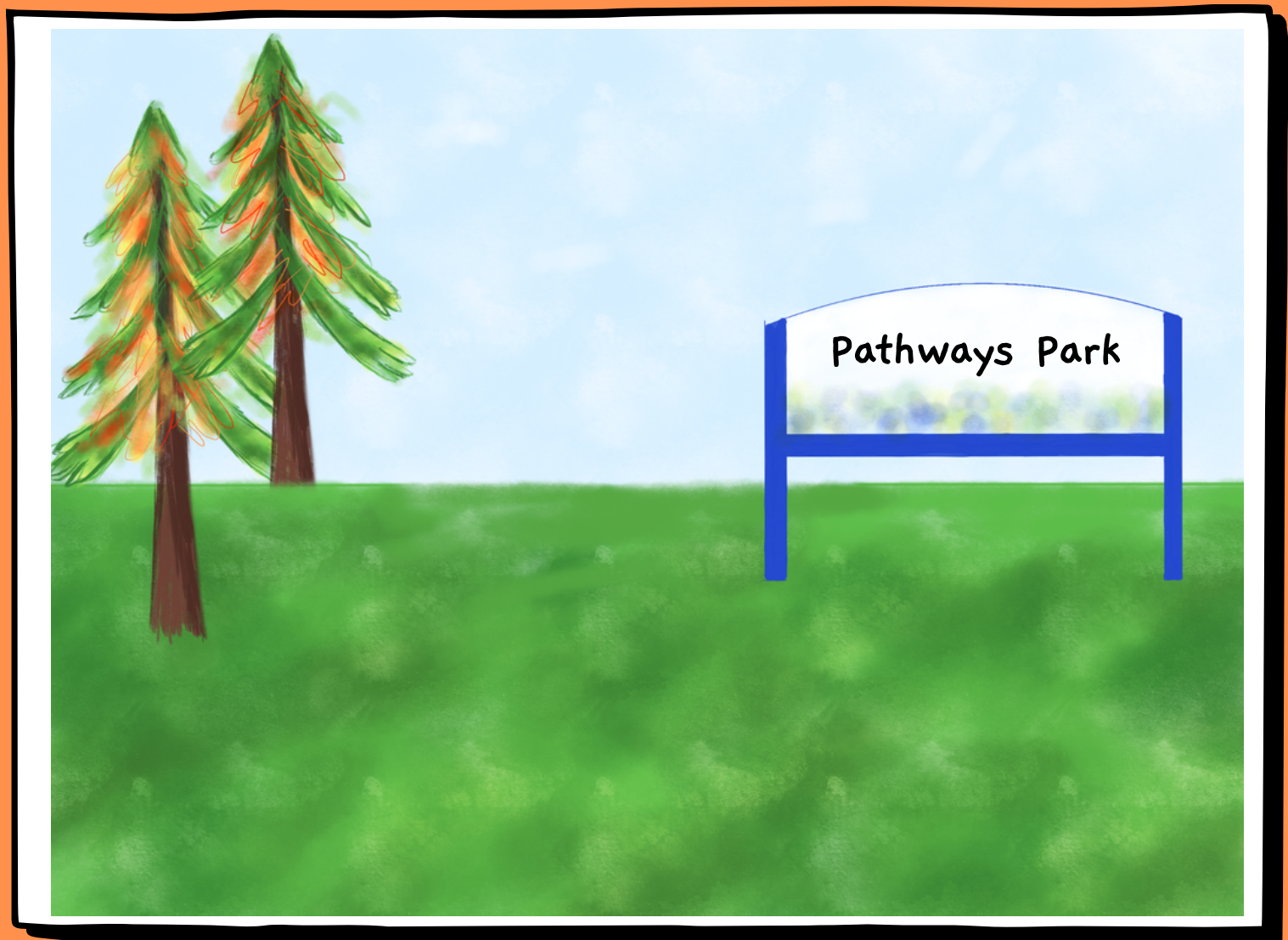
I do trust you, Li. I just worry sometimes. Here are the car keys, have fun with your friends!

3



Now Li, Joy, Rory, and Kai are at the community clean up...

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Li, Joy, Rory, and Kai talk about why they want be a part of the community clean up.

Li and Joy like making new connections.

1

"Yeah [I enjoy meeting new people]. I'm a social butterfly."



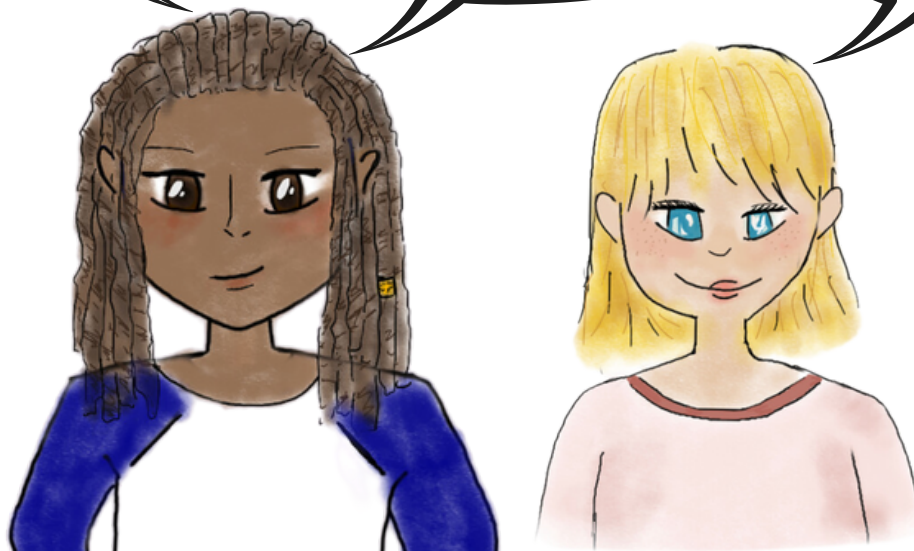
Rory and Kai feel empowered to be themselves when they help their community.

2

"It's okay to be who you are"

"Let me be who I want to be"

"Accept me for what I am"





Joy tells her friends about how she advocates for her community. She's happy when she does meaningful work with them.



At the end of the community clean up, Li, Joy, Rory,  
and Kai take a group picture for Kai's scrapbook!  
They had a great time volunteering and helping their  
community.







## Kai's Community Clean Up Day Scrapbook

Kai and Alex at the  
community clean up

I feel like I belong  
when I'm with my  
friends ♡

Best Day



Li, Joy, Kai, and Rory at the  
community clean up

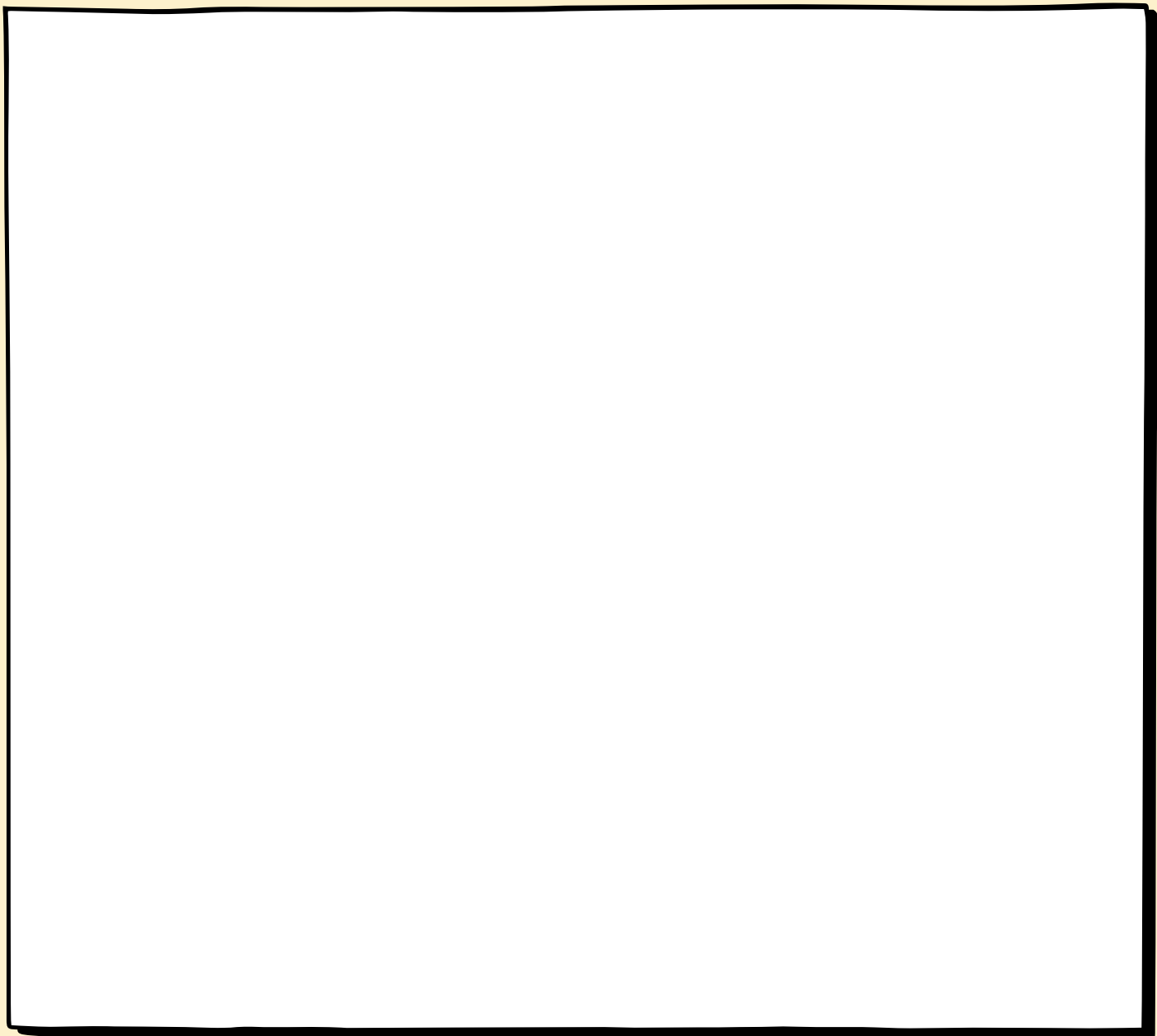
The End



## ACTIVITY:

When do you feel like you belong?

Write some words in the box about when  
you feel like you belong.





## ACTIVITY:

Put a photo of where you feel you belong  
in the frame.



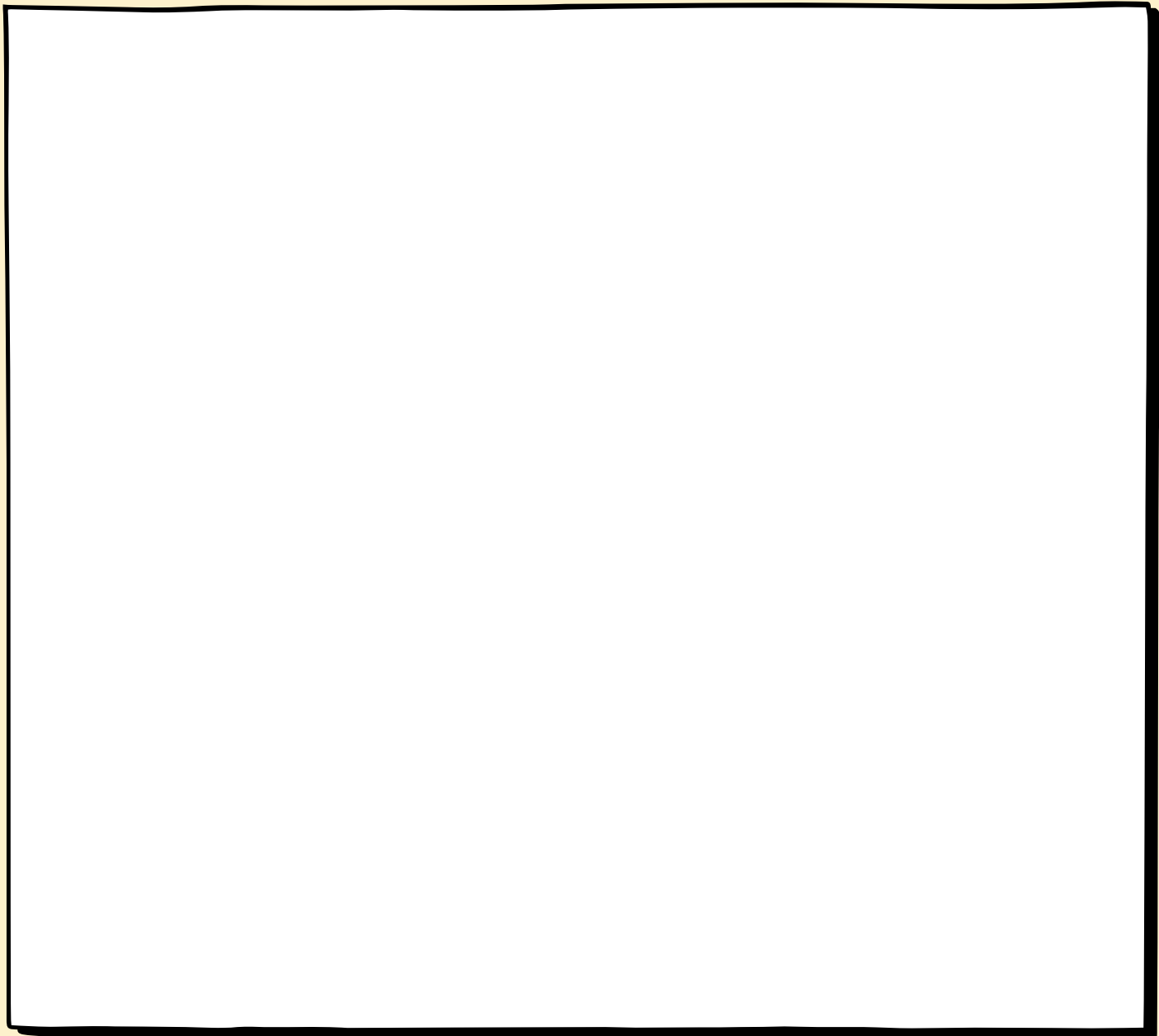
I feel like I belong:

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## ACTIVITY:

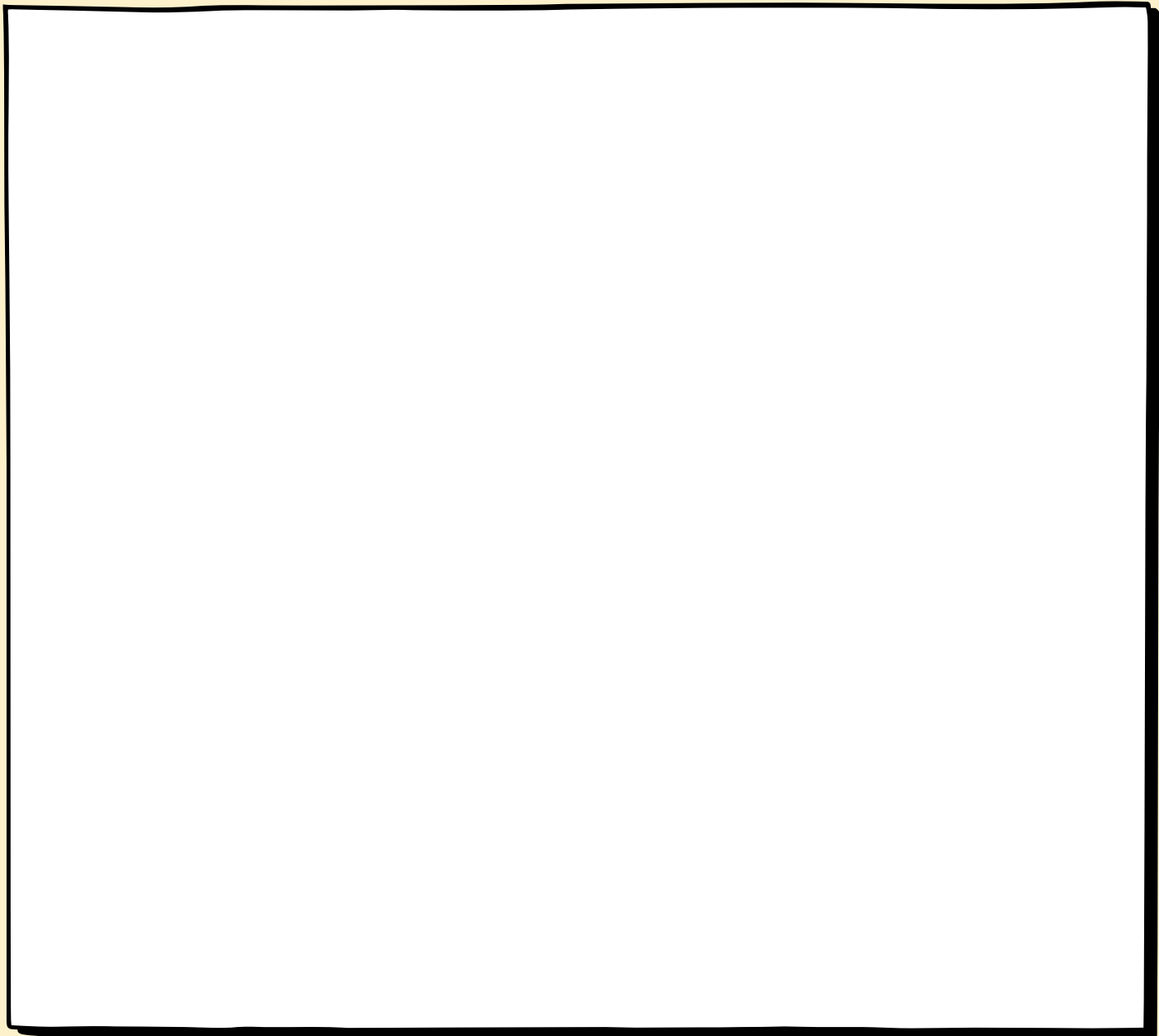
Who do you feel belonging with?

Draw or write some words in the box  
about who you feel belonging with.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for drawing or writing. The box is white and occupies the lower half of the page.

## ACTIVITY:

In the box below, draw or write a time where you felt like you really belonged.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for drawing or writing. The box is white and occupies the lower half of the page.

Thank you for reading our comic book!  
We want to thank our participants, team members, and funders.

## Creation, Production, and Editing Team

Runqun Helen Zheng (illustrator) and Francis Routledge (writer)

Rebecca Renwick, Runqun Helen Zheng, Francis Routledge,  
Maria Jennifer Estrella, Mushfika Chowdhury

This comic was co-created with the members of the Pathways to Belonging research team.

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- Vita Community Living Services

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Canada