The story begins with shape-shifters, four birds - Eagle, Raven, Hawk, and Owl - perched on telephone lines on the outskirts of the Native community. They are spiritual helpers to a group of teens - Shining Star, Theresa, Ranger, and Jay. These young teens learn financial resources as they embark on many adventures, and encounter intrigue in the process!

Journey of Trade introduces the four shape-shifters as well as the main characters of Shining Star; her father, Bear; and her grandmother, Light Woman. The story moves back and forth in time, showing readers how the past influences the present.

**Eagle**
Eagle is an ancient spirit: all knowing, all seeing. As a human, he transforms into a strong leader who guides others through their journeys. He wears a medicine bag.

**Owl**
Owl is a wise one, and beyond. As a human, she conveys wisdom to others about their life situations. Owl always carries her fringed purse.

**Raven**
Raven is the one who brings balance; all-encompassing of all the attributes of life. In human form, she evokes reasonable consideration of all facts. Raven wears a turquoise ring.

**Hawk**
Hawk is a hunter and a messenger, a patient observer with a quirky sense of humor. In human form, he is always physically fit and active. He constantly wears his bead and bone choker.
SOMEBODY IN AMERICA, A SMALL RESERVATION IS WATCHED BY A GROUP OF SHAPE-SHIFTING SPIRITS

THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A LOT GOING ON IN THIS SLEEPY RESERVATION... NOT A LOT OF PEOPLE BUYING.

NO! WELL AT ONE TIME THIS AREA WAS FULL OF PEOPLE, COMING AND GOING. THEY WOULD TRADE THEIR GOODS FOR THINGS THEY DIDN'T HAVE.

REALLY, EAGLE? THEY DIDN'T USE MONEY?

HELLO? THAT WAS BACK IN THE DAY, RAVEN! THEY DIDN'T USE MONEY.

WHAT DID THEY USE TO TRADE, THEN?

THEIR HUNTING GAVE THEM FURS AND TRACKING SKILLS.

THE ANGLOS HAD STEEL, GUNPOWDER, BEADS...

THE THINGS THAT THE NATIVE PEOPLE DIDN'T HAVE.

I BET THEY USED BASEBALL CARDS TO TRADE!

HAWK, YOU ARE A DORK.

I'M WONDERING WHAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE TO BE THERE DURING THAT TIME.

ME TOO, OWL. IF WE WERE THERE, WHAT WOULD WE TRADE?

BASEBALL CARDS!
WE SHOULD DO SOME TRADING.
HAWK, DON'T FORGET TO BRING
THINGS TO TRADE.

LIKE WHAT?

I'M SURE YOU'LL
THINK OF SOMETHING.

WE NOW,
ISN'T THAT EXCITING?
I GUESS PEOPLE ARE
THE SAME IN EVERY
CENTURY.

LOOKS THAT WAY.
YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME!

YOU SAID I SHOULD THINK OF SOMETHING, I'M JUST WORKING WITH WHAT I HAVE.

PRICELESS, YOU ARE A PIECE OF WORK!

JEANS AND JORDANS, HUH?

OH MY GOSH! YOU DID NOT BRING THOSE BASEBALL CARDS!

WHAT IS SO FUNNY?

I WILL TRADE YOUR BLANKETS, SKILLET, KNIVES AND BEANS FOR TEN PAIR OF JEANS AND TWO PAIR OF SHOES.

UNBELIEVABLE

BESIDES, WHAT DID YOU ALL BRING?
Also, this buffalo book with paper pictures. My people will need these tools for the winter and your people can sell our goods in your markets back East.

It's a deal, but...

What kind of shoes are these exactly, and where did you get these strange pictures?

I found them...

Down the long trail toward where the wagons with the big wheels travel.

Your trades are welcome here.

Spreading his mighty wings, Eagle transports the group back to the present time with the experience fresh in their minds.
Once the dust clears, the shapeshifters find themselves back in our present time in the same sleepy reservation. A red light blinks on the town’s only stoplight to an empty street.

In the humble dwelling on the reservation, a young girl, Shining Star, helps her grandmother, Light Woman, clean while her father, Bear, desperately searches through his documents for a very important list. This list is one he had made last month at a tribal meeting to help the whole reservation.

What are you looking for?

My notes from last month’s tribal council meeting. The meeting is today and I’ve got to find them!
WERE THEY IN YOUR NOTEBOOK?

THEY WERE! WE ARE TRYING TO COME UP WITH IDEAS THAT WILL HELP OUR RESERVATION GROW.

WE NEED TO DEVELOP MORE NATIVE BUSINESSES AND THOSE NOTES HAD SOME OF OUR SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW BUSINESSES.

NOW, WHAT DID I DO WITH THEM?

I FOUND IT, DAD!

THANK YOU, MY GIRL!

DOES THIS MEAN WE HAVE TO GO TO THE STORE?

THIS ISN'T PICKING UP ANYTHING.

WE NEED TO GET MORE VACUUM BAGS.

YES, GET IN THE CAR.
CANNON DRIVE GRANDMA? IT IS JUST A FEW MILES AND I NEED THE PRACTICE.

WELL OK... JUST BE CAREFUL WITH MY CAR.

GENERAL STORE
I need vacuum bags. Do you have any in stock?

We are all out. I can order them and they will be here in a week.

Better do it then. You'll call me when they're in?

You got it.

Grandma, why do only white people own the businesses in our town?

I don't know, my girl.

I think maybe because no one knows how to run a business. Or maybe they don't know how to ask the right questions. Or maybe they just aren't ambitious enough.

Well, grandma. What if we had lots of businesses on the reservation that were owned by our people?
My goodness my girl. What a wonderful thing that would be.

Everyone from all around would benefit as a whole. Would prosper if we kept the money within our reservation.

How can we?

Let's hurry home.

I have to meet Bear at the council meeting. Maybe the presentation we've put together will help him encourage more Native people to open businesses.

Well I think I will have my own business one day and I hear Dad talking about starting his own.

Cutting stars together. If her tribe were the business owners and they could sell to their people and everyone could help the tribe.
AT THE TRIBAL CENTER, BEAR PREPARES HIS PRESENTATION AS THE PEOPLE TRICKLE IN AND FILL THE SEATS.

I COULD START A BUSINESS YOU KNOW.

YEAH, DOING WHAT?

SELLING BASEBALL CARDS?

SELLING NATIVE-DESIGN BACKPACKS MADE WITH LEATHER AND FRINGE.

FOR ONCE, YOU HAVE A GOOD IDEA.
WE GOT BACK FROM THE STORE AND SHENING STAR NOTICED THAT ONLY ANGLO OWN AND OPERATE THE BUSINESSES IN TOWN.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT SHE SAID? SHE SAID SOME DAY SHE WOULD OWN HER OWN.

THAT’S TRUE.

YOU KNOW, THERE WAS A TIME WHEN MY UNCLE OWNED A HIDE-TANNING SHOP.

YOU’VE TOLD ME THAT BEFORE.

OH YES, I REMEMBER THAT. SURE.

WHAT HAPPENED?
He was the best tanner anywhere around, there should have been enough business in this part of the country. You know if we had more Native-owned businesses, we could keep more of our tribal money within the community. We could grow and make a profit.

But they need good planning.

He didn't have enough business to stay afloat. I don't know if he really thought it through enough. You know? He didn't make a plan.

Yes! I know that Tom Brings Eagle has great handyman skills. I often think he should start his own business. He is the best home-repairman around.

But he will need a plan.

That's right. We've got to support each other with the business part, and share knowledge among ourselves like our ancestors did.

With everything that's new in the world, some things never change.

Like helping our neighbors. You know, I make beaded jewelry. I've been doing it for 30 years so maybe I could start selling my work.

Yes, there are so many good and talented people here that have wonderful skills. My grandmother said the women in the old days would work days on end tanning and preparing the hides of the hunters. Maybe someone should open a tanning place and do advertising like the white people do.

Yes, this would be a good thing for us.

Maybe someone could start a consignment shop for local crafts.

We need a place to skateboard. Someone should open a skate park.

I better let you get to the meeting.

I found this outside on the porch. Thought it might belong to Shining Star.

Shining Star, Sara said this belongs to you.
WHAT DOES THIS COIN MEAN?

THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING - IT IS GOOD TO SEE SO MANY OF YOU HERE.

BY NOW YOU HAVE HEARD - AND PROBABLY FELT - THAT WE NEED TO START PUTTING OUR TALENTS AND RESOURCES TOGETHER TO GROW THE GARDEN OF OUR OWN COMMUNITY, OUR FAMILY, OUR NEIGHBORS.

WE CAN FLOURISH IF WE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF WHAT'S AVAILABLE TO US, TRIBAL LOANS IN BOTH THE PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENT SECTORS, THE UNIQUE NECESSARY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT WE CAN OFFER AND OUR HERITAGE OF COMMUNITY.
Let me ask you to take a few minutes and make three separate columns.

Write down your hobby in column one, what you do now for work in the next, and in the third, what you would really love to do if you had the opportunity.

What is this supposed to do? I thought we were meeting about businesses!

Now look at what you have written.

I bet some of you have incredible skills. Why not use those talents and skills to start building new businesses within our reservation?

Now look, your mind is a garden; if we water it, if we plan what we want to plant, if we care for it and love it, it will keep growing, and we will continue to reap the harvest. But if we do nothing, we will reap nothing. Change takes planning and it takes time, and it will not happen without us.

Our reservation is like a garden; if we water it, if we plan what we want to plant, if we care for it and love it, it will keep growing, and we will continue to reap the harvest. But if we do nothing, we will reap nothing. Change takes planning and it takes time, and it will not happen without us.

We are a proud and gifted people, and we have been dormant long enough! The beauty of creating our own businesses gives us a unique gift to the public, whether it be goods or services.

My mother, light woman, used this exercise to help me uncover what kind of talents I have and what I could contribute.
WE NEED TO CHANGE THE WAY THE OUTSIDE WORLD SEES US.

BUT I DON’T KNOW HOW TO GO ABOUT STARTING A BUSINESS.

WELL, WE CAN HELP - WE HAVE TO HELP EACH OTHER, AND THERE ARE RESOURCES FOR US TOO, BUT I WANTED YOU TO UNCOVER WHAT YOUR TALENTS AND ASPIRATIONS ARE.

FIRST WE NEED THE WHAT. LET’S MEET AGAIN NEXT WEEK AND DISCUSS THE HOW.

THAT WAS A GOOD MEETING, AND A GOOD START.

YES IT WAS. IT WOULD BE GOOD TO HAVE MORE OF OUR OWN OPENING UP THEIR OWN BUSINESSES.

I LIKED WHAT BEAR SAID ABOUT CHANGING, LIKE GROWING A GARDEN, CHANGE WILL TAKE TIME, BUT IT CAN’T BEGIN UNTIL YOU PLANT THE SEEDS.
I think we planted some seeds today. Did you see some of the great ideas people were writing down?

It's still beneath the surface but our garden is growing already.

The four great birds join together, shooting like arrows straight upward, rising toward the heavens. In a flash, each soars and separates to the four directions - north, south, east, and west.
Rose Red Elk (Sioux/Assiniboine)

Author of the Empowerment Saga series of stories, Rose is an international performing arts entertainer, also known by her Native American traditional and stage name, Red Feather Woman. An accomplished award winning recording artist, storyteller, singer, songwriter and author from the Fort Peck Reservation in Poplar, Montana, and an enrolled member of the Sioux/Assiniboine Tribes, Rose continues to discover the realms of spiritual awareness through the gift of storytelling, in written, oral and musical forms. Her fiction is themed with traditional values, blended with ancient stories from the past.

www.redfeatherwoman.com

Matthew Barkhausen

Matthew worked with the Native American and woman owned small business Circuit Media as an illustrator for the Empowerment Saga series of stories. His artwork for this and other projects focuses on Native American culture. He has provided artwork to the Rocky Mountain Indian Chamber of Commerce and other Native American organizations. Matthew is of Cherokee and Tuscarora heritage. He has a B.A. in interactive media design from the Art Institute of Colorado.

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Other Circuit Media illustrators who contributed greatly to the project were Jon Hormachea, creative design director, Abby McMillen, illustrator, and Ali Bibbo, graphic designer.

Joseph Arnold

Working as a freelancer for a Denver based company, Joe created the original images of the characters. His artwork reflects his philosophy that dedication and practice are critical aspects of being an artist. After serving five years active duty with the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne and three years with the Colorado National Guard, Joe completed his education in June 2002 at The Art Institute of Colorado with a bachelor’s degree in media arts and animation. He has worked for Disney Online Studios Boulder and 12-6 Studios in Denver.

Original concept by J.P. Barham
Creating the Empowerment $aga

The Empowerment $aga is a series of stories to engage youth 14-18 years of age in developing basic financial skills so they will learn how to build and preserve their own financial wealth. These stories, offered in colorful comic-style graphics, are reservation-based in order to bring “home” to Native youth the message of handling their finances from an early age.

Recognizing the importance of financial knowledge to IIM account holders, the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) has been working for years to bring financial skills training to account holders of all ages. OST has partnered with other government agencies, Native community development financial institutions, Native organizations, and others to offer culturally sensitive financial education.

The Empowerment $aga is another opportunity to expand financial skills training in Indian Country by encouraging youth-to-youth and multi-generational discussions about this topic. The stories highlight the value of knowing these financial skills, and illustrate the challenging consequences when this knowledge is not known or used properly.

The characters and stories of the Empowerment $aga series are wholly-owned by the government of the United States and cannot be used without the written consent of the government. For more information regarding financial education opportunities in Indian Country, please contact:

OST’s Director of Financial Education
brian_ross@ost.doi.gov

or

Trust Beneficiary Call Center
1-888-678-6836

To contact your Fiduciary Trust Officer please visit:
http://www.doi.gov/ost/fto

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