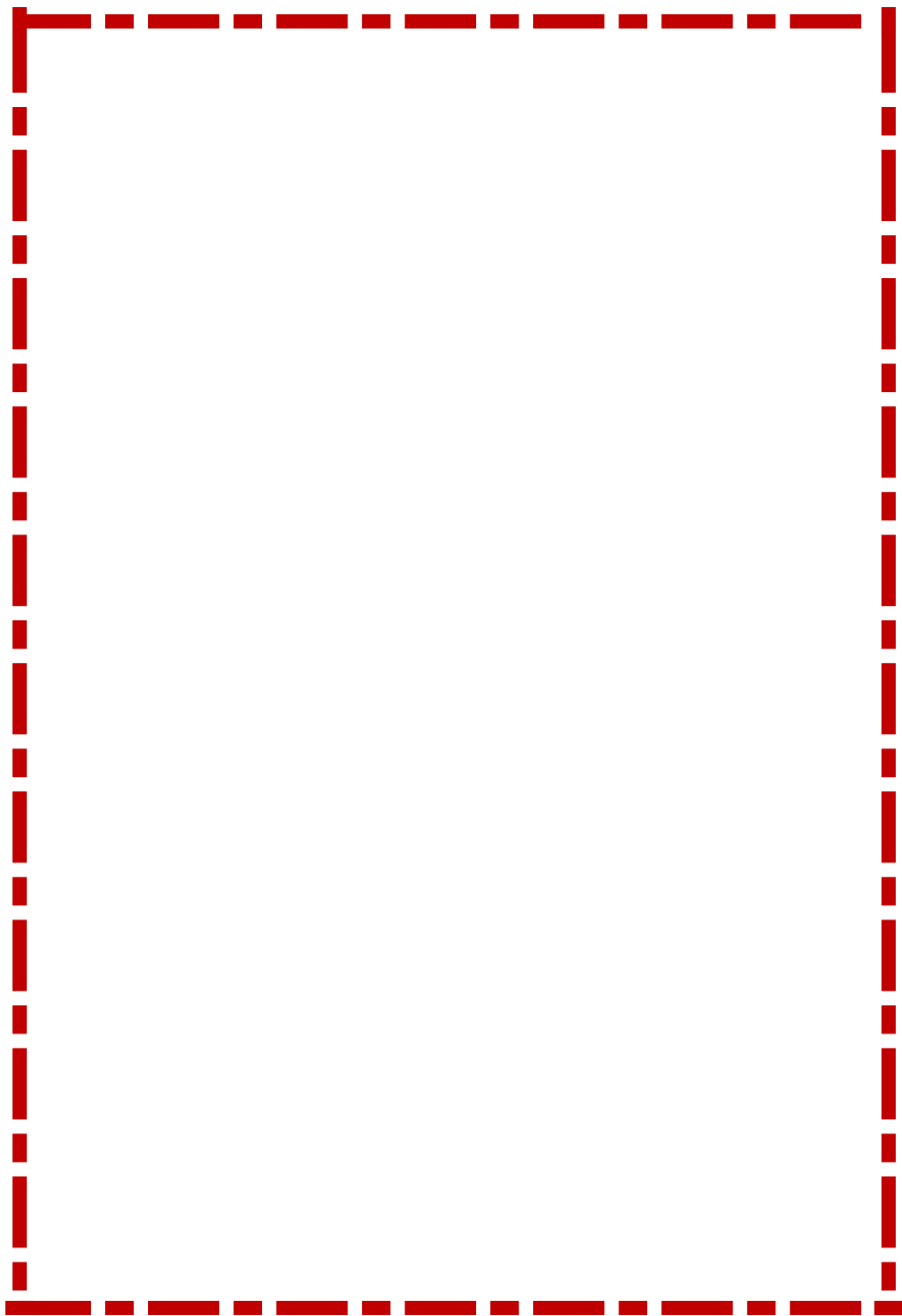


# Back When I Was Young

A story written by  
Traveller Women in Donegal





This story was written by a group of Traveller women in Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal to capture their lived experience as a Traveller.

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You can listen to the audio of this book by opening your camera on your smart phone and holding it in front of this QR code. It will give you the option to open the link, which will take you to the recording of the story.



## Acknowledgements

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This project would not have been possible without the collective hard work, creativity and dedication of the Traveller women who wrote these stories.

## Back When I Was Young

Back when I was young, we used to  
camp at the side of the road.

We travelled from town to town.

A good few families would travel along  
with us, with our horses and our carts.  
We had our own little goat for the milk.



We put up our tents when we would get to the camp. It could be beside the farmer's house.

We'd go to the farmer and get our vegetables and the farmers looked after us very well.

We had very poorly times, but we were all happy just the same.

We had cans of water and we washed ourselves outside.

Mammy would comb all the girls' hair. We washed our hair on Saturdays and left it down for Sunday. It would be plaited on Monday morning for the rest of the week.

The boys would be sent for firewood, and they'd get turf in the houses. Then we'd light a fire, and my mother would bake the bread and cook in a skilly pot hung from an iron bar over the fire.



We'd all sit down and watch Mammy baking the cakes of bread. Back then we had the bacon and the cabbage and the spuds for the dinner.

After dinner, we'd sit down and watch Daddy make the tin cans, the buckets, and the saucepans for the farmers.

Mammy would make paper flowers and she'd fill a basket with them for the morning. She'd sell them, or sometimes she'd swap them for food.





Mammy taught me to cook, clean, and to hand wash the clothes in a tin bath.

In the morning, we'd get up with Mammy and we'd go into the town and beg. When we got enough money, we'd go to the butchers, the vegetable shop and the bakers.

We'd come home happy with a nice bit of food for the dinner.

Then we'd plan for the evening to call back to the houses of the people that promised us food and clothes.

Once a week we'd go into town to the second-hand shop for clothes and toys and we'd meet up with cousins and friends.

We played hopscotch and skipping, or we would make a bobby house. We'd build a house out of sticks and boards that we'd find and we had a stone wrapped in a bit of cloth for a doll.

At Christmas time, we'd get a bit of holly and sell it down the town.



Mammy would get us up in the morning and get us ready for school. We'd go off ourselves to school, happy as the flowers of May.

After my communion we moved into a house.



My wedding day was the best day of my life. I was so happy in my beautiful white dress with my family all around.

Now I have my own family, I love to take my son to the park to play. We love to sing and dance and spend time together.



Our faith has always been very important to us, and it helps us through if times are hard. When Our Lady blessed me with my baby boy, I dressed him in blue and white for 3 years to thank her.

Our favourite time of year is Christmas; decorating the house, waiting for Santa, and spending time with family.

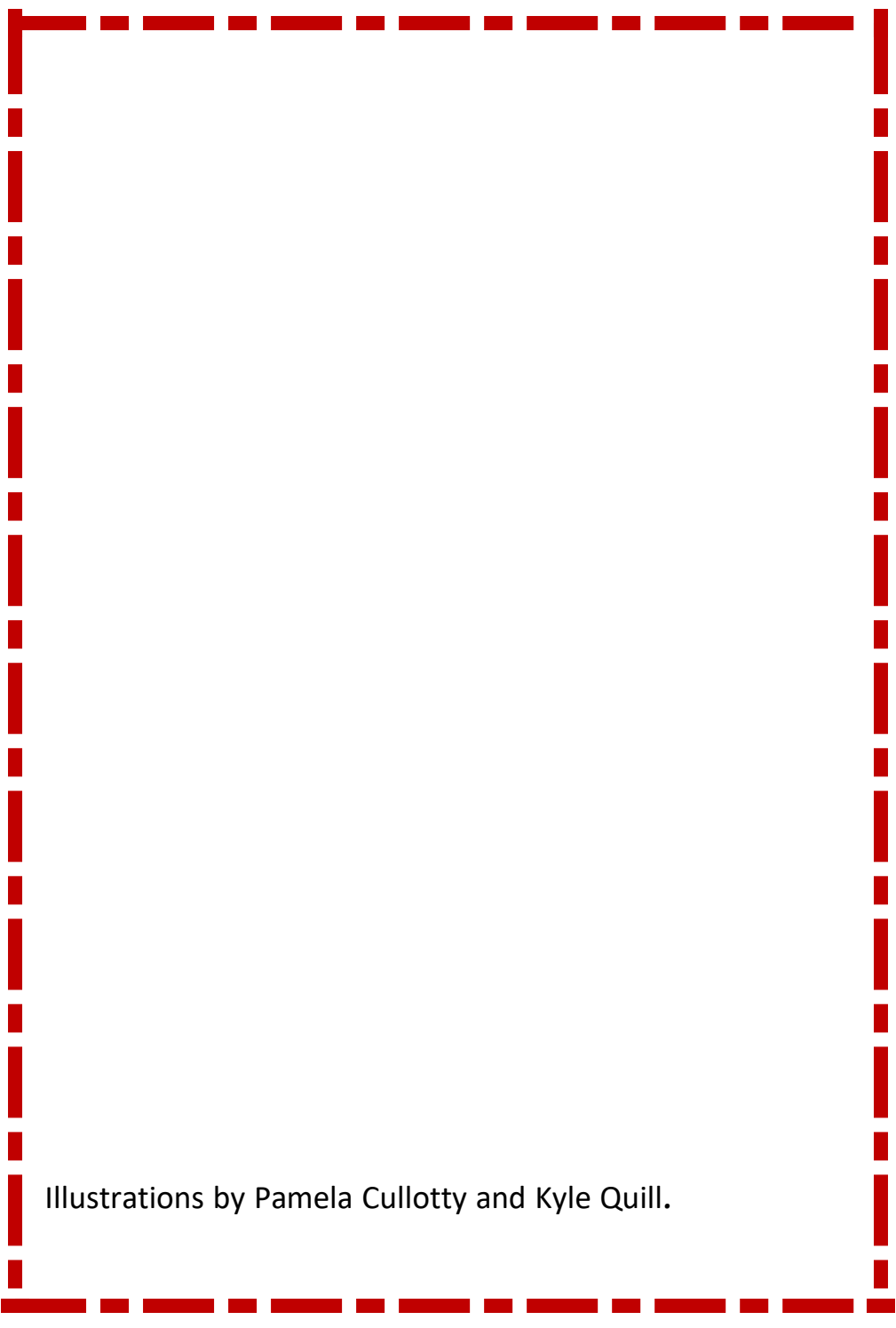


We love to speak in Cant, which is a traditional Traveller language.

The kids love to go to school and education is very important to us.

We are very proud of our Traveller history, culture and traditions.





Illustrations by Pamela Cullotty and Kyle Quill.

# DTP



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