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Thompson Simpson School

Grade 10, Age 16

Good Child

The year was 1921 and summer was here. Geese were in. The Little Indian boy lived in Old Fort Rae with his family, and he had a Grandfather, a Mother and a drum. The Little Indian boy's name was Chekoa Neze meaning "good child".

His Grandfather was old and wise and his name was Big Pierre. He was tall with big whiskers. He was born in this land in 1883. He had been here a very long time. He had very bad hearing, so bad that sometimes he couldn't even hear what the Chekoa Neze was saying.

Chekoa Neze rarely saw his Grandfather, because his Grandfather worked a lot out on the trap line at Trout Rock. When the Chekoa Neze came home from school for lunch, his Mother had caribou all boiled up for him. And when he came home after school his Mother had dried meat all ready for him. When his Grandfather came back from the bush he was tired and went right to bed.

His Mother was a special person. She was someone with whom he was always safe, especially when he was scared or hurt. Chekoa Neze loved her very much, but sometimes he would forget to tell her and when he realized it, he used to run and find her and give her a kiss on the cheek. "What a loving boy he is?" said Grandfather.

Chekoa Neze love to play outside with his drum made out of caribou skin. In the winter, Grandfather made the drum with his big hands and showed Chekoa Neze how to play it. This made Grandfather very happy.

One day Grandfather said to him, "Big meeting coming tomorrow, I want you to come with me Chekoa Neze." He was happy. Holding Grandfather's big hand and going to this big event was a special time for him.

Chekoa Neze ran to his Mother and told her the good news. Mother told him to take his drum too.

The Chekoa Neze went in his room and started cleaning his drum with caribou fat to make it shiny for the big day. He took out his church clothes and laid them on his wooden chair by his bed so when he got up in the morning it would be all ready for him. He was happy because he could play his drum at the big meeting with his Grandfather. Chekoa Neze wanted to sing and play the drum like his Grandfather.

Grandfather had a good life in the bush. His father taught him to live good and how to survive in the bush. His Mother taught him to cook and respect the land of the Dene People. And Grandfather wanted the same good life for Chekoa Neze.

After Chekoa Neze finished with his drum, he went outside to help Grandfather carry the wood inside. Grandfather stopped and looked at Chekoa Neze and told him, "Tomorrow special men are coming to our village to talk about land and then we are going to sign our names on the paper so our children can have a good life". Chekoa Neze did not understand why special men wanted to talk about this land when it was already ours. He was thinking how the old Grandfathers used to talk about how they needed to take care of their land and pass it on to their children to take care of. Chekoa Neze wanted to learn the more about land.

The next morning the sun shone brightly with clear blue skies. Grandfather came into Chekoa Neze's room and gently woke him up whispering softly into his ear that it was time to go. Chekoa Neze jumped out of bed and changed into his church clothes ready for the big day. He ran to his mother, held her for a long time and said, "Mother, today is a big day for me and time for me to go".

Grandfather and Chekoa Neze ate rabbit soup for breakfast with fish egg bannock that mother made before she went to bed. It was good and tasty, grandfather's favourite soup.

Grandfather grabbed Chekoa Neze's hand and went out the door to the big meeting, which was held in a big white tent by the lake. As they were walking to the big tent, Grandfather's old friends and family were walking the same way. There were lots of people. Chekoa Neze saw many of his friends too.

The white tent seemed so big. He saw four men wearing red, black and yellow clothes waiting outside the tent. They each carried a gun. Inside he saw an old man with white skin sitting behind a table. He had on a black coat and in his hand was a small skinny black stick. He had white paper in front of them on the table. Beside him sat two younger men with white skin wearing black. Behind them was Bishop Breynant from Fort Providence. "I remembered him how he would sometimes come to our school and talk about God in our language. I was so happy to see him," thought Chekoa Neze.

Chekoa Neze tugged on the Grand Father's hand because he wanted to know who those special men were. Grandfather looked down at Chekoa Neze and said, "Yes, my Chekoa Neze?" Chekoa Neze said, "Who are these men, Grandfather?" Grandfather stroked his big whiskers and smiled and said, "the old, white man sitting down and the holding the pen is the Treaty Inspector Conroy and the two men are his assistants. And of course, behind is the Bishop Breynant with some of his missionary friends. Finally, the four holding guns are the North-West Mounted police who travel everywhere with them. They are here to help with our land for hunting and trapping. They are here to help protect what is ours. These are called treaty rights, my son".

The Chekoa Neze shrugged and looked around. He saw many Indian people sitting on the grass waiting for their turn to sign their name on the big white paper. On the other side of the tent, the Chekoa Neze could hear drumming and laughing. He let go

of Grandfather's hand and ran towards the sound of the drumming and laughing. He let go of Grandfather's hand and ran towards the sound of the drumming and laughing. He let go of Grandfather's hand and ran towards the sound of the drumming. As he got closer he could see there was a big gathering of white people and Indian people around. The old and the young were playing hand games. This was a funny game. It was like playing hide-and-go-seek with singing and laughing. The drums started rolling and the old chanting song began. The song they were singing was of their land and animals. The men started hiding their sticks under the caribou hide and singing and drumming at the same time. The game could last for a short time or a long time. I looked around and the people were happy and laughing. I was happy.

I ran back to Grandfather and he was signing his name on the white paper. I stood beside him as I watched the special men smiling and thanking Grandfather for signing the paper. As we slowly made our way from the table, I grabbed my drum from Grandfather's belt and started softly drumming the land song. I knew at that moment that this day was the day of sorrow and happiness. I knew my Grandfather was happy but was quiet for he knew this was the start of new beginnings for me. This land was ours and would always be ours. I ended the song and then my Grandfather picked up his drum and joined the other Grandfathers singing in victory and triumph over this land!