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Grade 10, Age 16

A Lost Generation: Dedicated to the Elders of Sandy Bay

Sunday, a bright day, also warm to go hunting. I was in the tee-pee with Granny smoking moose-meat for breakfast. Tomone was still sleeping. As the sun shone, the water was flowing, and the birds sang a heavenly song into my ears. My Mom Kathy had been gone for two weeks to work and settle her case with the social workers. They claimed “kids should be in school, not sitting around the bush, messing around doing nothing.” To us we had a teacher and a classroom and a teacher- our Granny, named Caroline, was our teacher and our tee-pee was our class, since that’s where we spend most of our time.

Mom was coming home that night with bad news that Tomone and I would never expected from our own mom. That evening she walked into our cabin with a sad grin on her face, and she smiled and said “Hi my son, where’s your brother?” I replied “He’s out in the back with Granny getting supper ready.” At supper time mom told us the breaking news. She got up and said in Cree “My boys, I’ve tried my best to keep you here safe and sound with your granny, but I lost my case and Tee-Mok, you and brother will attend residential school in two weeks. I love both of you and I want you to be strong and succeed no matter what happens.” Obviously it was hard for Mom to say that, since she was crying in her speech. By the time Tomone and I had cleaned up and got water for the morning, Mom and granny were sleeping. Tomone and I washed up and went to bed thinking about our last two weeks with our family and our home.

Only three days remained before we were gone. Tomone was always asking me “what is it like to fly in a plane?” My reply was “It’s loud and very high in the sky.” I helped Tomone pack his clothes and tried to calm him down because he never wanted to leave.

The next day, David, a friend of my mom, drove us into town. Our flight was on Saturday. We had time to run around because it was only Friday. Tomone and I dropped in to see our dad “John”. This would only be the fifth time seeing my Dad in my whole life. That day we went hunting- Tomone, John, and I. To me dad wasn’t meant to be called John. Maybe it was hate; maybe he just couldn’t accept the fact that he had two kids. It was getting late so we called Uncle Curtis, and he drove us home.

Saturday morning, 7:30am, I was up bright and early to go to the river and sit on the rocks- get a last taste of home before I got put in a cage for the next year or so. By the time I went to the pump house and back it was time to leave. Mom escorted us to the plane. Through out the whole time we were going down to the dock mom never said anything. As we were getting there she burst out crying and asking the Lord for mercy for her 13 and 16-year-old sons to return home in the summer. As we were taking off Mom waved bye, Tomone was crying, and I was dying inside. Tomone was constantly repeating “why we have to go?”

They say the first day of school is all fun and games, but to us it was more like ducking and dodging. I think for one full month my brother Tomone had the same black eye on his right eye. Just because he wasn’t talking, I thought it was crazy. Why punish someone that you wouldn’t understand anyway; it’s like trying to eat frozen rock-solid moose-meat, you’d have to wait for a while for it to cook.

Well, my school life wasn’t perfect. I like to draw and I kept drawing eagles and animals that represent our culture. Every time I drew that art I got strapped, and the teacher always told me “That is fake!” That night Tomone and I were talking in our dorm. I questioned him “who is always hitting you bro?” With the expression of a sad cub that has lost its momma bear and the urge to cry... he finally blurted out “three white boys in my gyms class.” Tomone wasn’t use to the big city and bright lights. He wasn’t eating; he was losing weight, because he didn’t like the food, it not being moose meat or

duck soup. I could see that Tomone was on the verge of “losing control”, so I helped him keep his sanity.

The next day I skipped school to keep an eye on my brother. After his gym class when he had recess, three white kids went up to him and called him a “freak”. Without hesitation I ran up to them and continually hit the boy who was putting my brother through hell. The other guy I threw down and jumped on him. Billy ran away and told someone, I knew him from my math class. After it was set and done I went to class. Upon my arrival, my teacher looked at me with wolverine eyes and said, “Tee-Mok, you can’t start skipping; you’re a good student, so get here on time.” To me that was shocking. No one ever encouraged me to do anything besides Mom and Granny. The thing most shocking was she was white, and her name was Miss Hunter.

That night Father Gary came in our room and asked me what had happened that morning, and he’d slap me for every word I’d say. He said with anger “I am going to punish you kids of Satan.” As he continued slapping me, Tomone kicked him in the leg and Father Gary turned shifty and elbowed Tomone in the nose. My brother flew back and hit the back of his head on the dresser. He landed on his side and I checked to see if he was ok. He wasn’t breathing and the priest ran out of our room. Within minutes a doctor arrived, he was checking Tomone. I was outside of the room. Then the doctor came out and told me “Son, your brother didn’t make it.” I told the doctor “I need the wash room.” As I walked my legs were getting weak, my head felt like a feather, and after five to seven steps I fainted.

On the day of my brother’s funeral, a different priest named Father Peter and I were the only two that attended my brother’s funeral, not including the cops that had to watch me. All that day I never said a word to anyone. I wanted to at least tell my mom what happened to her son. Not once did they let the students use the phone. I had lost my brother to a bonehead who didn’t like the colour brown. I didn’t know what to do, or who to turn to. I didn’t talk. I couldn’t trust anyone at that point. I started to only talk Cree. Trying to be clever led me to more and more scars. I had to go to court and I was being

charged for my brother's death. I couldn't say anything, because no one would believe me. It would just lead me to more punishment. I only had one thing to settle with three boys, who had made this a problem, and the priest who had made it worse. I knew none of my problems were ever going to be solved, because nothing was going to bring back my brother.

I began looking at things differently, because it was getting out of control- young ladies were getting raped, young men getting abused, and the suicide percentage went up. So I had to be prepared for whatever came my way. Every time I'd get hit from the priest that's how much times I'd beat up those three white kids. After a week of physically abusing those boys, I was getting charged for assault. I was also getting charged for my brother's murder, I took the blame. I couldn't find a way on how I was going to reform myself. For two days I was thinking and thinking. The only way out was to take myself out. So I assembled a get-a-way plan for Friday, I'd run because that's when the gates are open. That's also when Father Gary goes home for the weekend. This was personal, plus revenge for my Brother Tomone, and a great sacrifice for it to be successful.

Friday came and the minute I walked out I was spotted. As I ran approaching my destination, the priest had already pulled out of the driveway. The four cops were flashing their lights around, trying to find me in the darkness of the forest. The priest was driving towards me and I ran into the middle of the road. Then it happened....

The priest, who not only had taken my life, but the life of my Brother Tomone, had hit me. The priest didn't even stop, after he had hit me with his truck. One cop had seen me get hit and ran towards me with the speed of light. As he tried desperately to save me, he saw a note in my hand and it read:

"I wish I had got the chance to say good bye to you Mom and to you Granny. I love you both. I wish I had never come here. I had never killed my brother. Father Gary did, just like he hit me with his truck. I love my brother. Why can't people let people just live their own life. Bro, I am coming home for good now."