

The Boy with the Braid



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For Darian



When *Niimomma and Niibaba* were expecting, they were very thankful to the creator for blessing them with a *Neegosis*.



An Ojibway medicine man in the community found the *biinoojing*'s spirit name; Smiling Wolf.



The medicine man said Smiling Wolf would be a grass dancer. *Niimomma* kept him in a *dikkinagun* to observe and learn his Ojibway culture.



As Smiling Wolf grew, so did his hair.



Soon, Smiling Wolf's *weenessisee* reached the bottom of his back.



Niimomma and Niibaba were very proud of their young boy.



Soon came time for Smiling Wolf to attend school.



On his first day of school, some students laughed at Smiling Wolf having a braid. This made Smiling Wolf *mahwee*. He began to question the Ojibway teaching that said he were to only cut it every 7 years or during a time of mourning.



At recess, more students noticed his long hair and they *bapeewug*, too. They said his hair made him look like a girl. It was a long day for Smiling Wolf.



At home, *Niimomma* comforted her *Neegosis* by reminding him that his hair was given to him by the creator in the womb.



Niimomma explained to him that his braid is meant to represent his cultural unity to the mind, body and spirit. In his culture, sweet grass is said to represent such unity.



The next day, Smiling Wolf wore a powerful t-shirt. It read "Bullying Stops Here". His long weenessisee had been teased and he does not want any other child, boys in particular, to be ashamed of having long hair.



Smiling Wolf was invited to share his culture with the class. He adorned his Grass Dancer regalia and proudly showed his classmates the beauty of his Ojibway culture.



His classmates listened with respect and grew to admire Smiling Wolf's Ojibway culture.



Since then, not only did his classmates learn to accept Smiling Wolf, the boy with the braid, but Smiling Wolf also learnt the value of embracing his culture while sharing it with others.

Word Translations

Ojibway:	English:
<i>Niimomma and Niibaba</i>	Mother and Father
<i>Neegosis</i>	Son
<i>Biinoojing</i>	Baby
<i>Dikkinagun</i>	Cradleboard
<i>Weenessisee</i>	Hair
<i>Mahwee</i>	Cry
<i>Bapeewug</i>	Laugh

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see as a benefit to Smiling Wolf openly sharing his Ojibway culture with his peers?
2. How might you implement a no bullying rule in your school?
3. What would happen if Smiling Wolf didn't share his culture with the class?
4. How would you have handled the students' teasing reaction to Smiling Wolf's hair?
5. Could this of happened in your school?
6. How was this story an example of culture appropriation?