

Aftermath: 3rd generation

My Ngi'its (grandma) was a survivor of residential school. I didn't know her because she died of cancer before I was born but I hear her sometimes in my mom, or I like to think I do. My niyaayu (grandpa) has always told me my mom was just like her mother, the way she looks and speaks.

"Ama'pasa"

he would say,

(which means "beautiful")

" strong but angry from her past that haunts her"

I fell once,

when I was five I fell off of my Barbie bike and I scratched my knee and my mom said to me (not for the first time)

" quit your crying, or I'll give you something to cry about. "

So I did, every time.

And it might seem like a small -maybe even common thing- but to a young me dredging up that amount of self-control to appease my mother and stifle the pain, whatever it was, was always a traumatic event.

I'm 20 now and my best friend points out that she's never before seen me cry.

" I just don't like crying in front of people."

"Why is that?" she asked.

I shrugged, uncomfortable.

"It's ok to cry you know, it's a release of something so that there's room for healing " she smiled.

" Ok, wise guy " I laughed,
and that was that.

But with age comes new perspectives, along with a drive for understanding, and ignorance will not escape it's fatal fate of discussion.

So I asked my mom about it, having noticed that I've never seen her cry before either. I asked her why we are like that and she tells me " there could be lots of reasons, but your grandmother used to say to me;

'quit your crying or I'll give you something to cry about.'

and I think hearing her say it to me every time I was hurt or upset really ruined my ability to express my pain in front of others...she wasn't an empathetic woman, your grandmother, and she didn't make idle threats. It wasn't her fault though; they used to hurt her in residential school. Really bad, and every time she cried that's what they would say to her,

'Quit your crying or I'll give you something to cry about.'

they would beat her regardless of if she cried or not. I guess it's just something that got passed down, I didn't realise.

I'm sorry for saying it to you"

I felt the age old anger my niyaayu referred too, I heard the ghosts of the men and woman who beat the joy, culture, and power out of the children two generations before,

Quit your crying.

After that day and conversation, (more or less the same conversation held by my mother with her mother) I will always wonder what else in my life is a result of my grandmothers abusers and the abuse she suffered that lead to things like alcoholism, drug addiction and poverty. All of these things my mom has witnessed and now I too have struggled with. Will my children be consequenced and affected by the white men who raped, pillaged and murdered their ancestors. Will they hear their voices too?

"I'll give you something to cry about.

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I'll give you something to cry about."

No, it ends with me.