

## David's World

### Cam Gauthier

I am an Indian Man

He stood there and felt the wind blowing against his skin and moving gently through his hair, caressing him. It was a familiar sensation and he knew that his ancestors stood here centuries before at this very spot to give thanks to mother earth for the abundance and love she gave to them. He could almost smell the fresh smell of the land and the animals that were grazing miles from where he stood. That smell now was replaced by one far more alien. A smell that brought fear in his heart that worked its way up to his belly and his temple. He clutched his head in pain and looked out and saw the slaughter of thousands of animals; Machines destroying the land that he held so dear and soon he would perish as well. He passed out and was woken roughly by a pair of hands that grabbed his hair and arm tightly.

“There you are you dirty little wagon burner, you won’t leave next time.”

The voice said. David opened his eyes to see his aggressor and was met with a slap. He winced in pain, but did not make a sound. It was the grounds keeper. He continued to hit David until blood poured from his veins and onto the ground. He felt calm now and he knew that if the groundskeeper continued, he would be free of his body and free to float in the wind of everlasting peace. It didn’t happen and it would be a long time before he felt that peace of his spirit ready to take flight. He had to endure the painful rapture of the new and ugly world that befell him.

What happened next?”

The Man across from him said. He was in a hospital and was in so much pain from the disease that ravaged his body that he had to close his eyes to keep from passing out. He never made a sound just like that day when he was a child. He opened his eyes slowly and had to ask for a tissue to wipe the tears that were streaming down his face. David was recounting the stories from his time at Residential school that he was forced to attend as a child. He was in his mind most of the time because he was always being strapped or abused in other ways. He couldn’t remember a day that he wasn’t and he had very few days when he was happy. He told the writer these stories of when he was imagining his people that were once free and then were enslaved and made to serve a new God and masters. He told him of the confusion because his world was so liberated and prosperous. He wanted to tell the nuns and priests to feel the freedom of the land and the animals and plants that lived within it. He couldn’t understand why people had to shelter themselves from this and destroy to put up buildings. They were caging themselves; they were slaves to their system. He didn’t, he couldn’t and soon the dream of freedom was

replaced by fear and he was lost to the system. He was enslaved and it is only now that he had come out of his dream.

“Sorry,”

He said and the man nodded pen to paper ready to write. He was so used to being subservient that it came out naturally. He laughed at that. They can’t take my heart away from me. He thought.

“What happened after? After you got out.” The man asked, his eyes gleaming.

“Well I became an alcoholic. I got a wife and married her. I beat her like my masters beat me. I treated my kids like dogs like my masters did to me. I worked very little and contributed nothing but the pain that was afflicted on me and now I am going to die and rot and my spirit will join mother earth.” The writer faked concern and David laughed. He got his books and smiled; shook David’s hand and left. Some story. David sighed and sat there for a long time looking at the ceiling. His past was fresh in his mind and he wanted to deal with it now. He wanted to set it free. He remembered once a nun took pity on him and told him that she wrote a letter to God when she was in pain. He remembered her sweet face and wondered what kept her in the bonds of unhappiness of that religion. What was it the Man told him that he did when he was faced with life’s perils’ and nothing seemed to work. He wrote. He laughed. He wanted to write a letter to his kids and his wife. He knew that he could never look at their faces because he was too ashamed and he didn’t know where they were anyway. He ran from them long ago because he couldn’t stand himself and the fact he was like his masters. He didn’t know if they would get it but he was sure that they would eventually. He was sure of that. He took out a pad of paper and a pen and with a shaky hand he began to write.

My wife and my children,

I failed in providing you the joys of Mother Earth and all her glory. I failed as a Native man in showing you love and the safeness that you should have felt with me. I became your punisher when you didn’t need punishing. I became your abuser when I should have protected you from harm. I showed you a path of deceitfulness, greed, and selfishness when I should have showed you the way to oneness with Mother Earth. I failed and I feel so much pain and I pray to mother earth that I may take your pain with me. I didn’t teach you how to be an Indian, because I had no idea what it meant to be one. I lived what I was taught and I knew that it was not my way but it was force in me that continued this act of horror on you. Cancer has ravaged my body but my hearts ache is so much more. I walk outside and see all these things and people and they have no idea what it is that they want. I knew what I wanted when I was a child and growing up. I wanted to feel the wind against my skin and the sun warming my belly after I swam in the stream. I wanted to feel the power of the hunt and the joy of the feast. I wanted to feel the pride of the people and the pride that they felt about me. I wanted to pray to

mother earth and she may sprout out plants and animals that would make me better and to show you this so you may show your children. To wake up under the stars and see the wondrous other worlds that were out there and the softness of the rain that washed your body in its purity of Mother Earth. I am begging your forgiveness and ask that you may seek out these old ways before they die out and you are caught in the trap of these people. Take the good from them and make a new one for yourselves. Teach your children the ways of the old world and how to function in this one so they may grow to love each other and one day we will have what is ours again. The plants will come back, the animals and we will be happy and free once again. I love you.

David sighed and it was a sigh of happiness. His weary hand dropped the pen, but he was too tired to notice.

“This is what it feels to get it out.”

He said to no one and laughed a long throaty laugh. Tears streamed down his face and he didn't feel any pain; of any kind. He lie down and fell asleep with a smile on his face and dreamed that he was back at a time where he was one with Mother Earth. He was free.

### **Author's Statement.**

#### **Cam Gauthier**

I am writing about the infamous era of the Native Residential Schools. It doesn't have a time or a place and is at the reader's discretion and imagination to where and when this takes place. The important thing that I wanted to bring out is a Native man and men all over the country that went through the tragedy that befell the Population. I focused on this man and the sorrow and pain that he must feel and all the Native men that feel today. The pride and true nature of the native man was almost wiped out over the millennium and can only be gotten back by a newer breed of Native man that will not let this happen again. Generations of Native men have to grow up and realize the important factor that befell them. They trusted the men that came over to share with them the land that was abundant in life. We have on our shoulders the lives of millions that were lost and the lives that are being lost today. The residential school system and the sixties scoop was the last ditch effort by the majority government to integrate the Native people's by force and by making them a servant to their system of living. It of course was a harsh task and they put the church in charge. We all know who the God was supposed to represent and the Native man was resilient enough to keep intact the mind of the old ways. This man represents me and the thousands of other native men that have to soldier on and pick up the pieces and try to build a new nation that must live and integrate with others. It is hard to turn back time and show our children the true nature of the Native man when we are continually pushed down into submission. Drinking and drugs has a firm grasp on the



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native man and this is when the most damage is done to the women and children. It is hope that keeps us going and the knowledge that the true Native man is like no other man on this planet. Our hearts are far more important than money and we are at an exciting time of renewal within the Native race.