**My Journey Towards Truth and Reconciliation**

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This journey begins way before I was born, on a little farm between Kendal Saskatchewan and Indian Head. My grandfather grew up on a farm right beside Carry the Kettle First Nation reserve. He has told me story’s over the years of First Nations people coming to the farm yard, offering trades for things that they needed; such as gas or diesel to run their tractors. The problem with this is which really bothers me (and him), is my grandfather had no clue that there was anything such as awful as the residential schools, and it was practically happening in his back yard! This has seemed to be the problem with the stigma surrounding Indigenous people, nobody seems educated on what has actually been happening over the years to Indigenous communities, and their people.

 Throughout my journey thus far, I always keep coming across the statistics that are very scary. According to *The Canadian Press Global News* the high school graduation rate is 44.5% compared to the rest of the students is 86.5% (2019). It is basically half of the Saskatchewan average. This is a direct result of intergenerational trauma. Schools have not been a safe place historically for Indigenous people, so how are these students supposed to feel safe in a class environment, where they have been striped of there own beliefs, language, values and culture. According the Member of the Legislative Assembly in Nunavut George H. Hicks “The average child in Nunavut has missed three years of schooling” (Prohibition in Northern Canada, 2015, 3:38). George then goes on to say “How are these students suppose to achieve success when they miss a quarter of their schooling” (3:45). With students not going to school it leaves them isolated and stuck in a cycle, that being the poverty cycle. The results of residential schools show a direct impact on the First Nation communities.

The poverty cycle has created many problems within First Nation communities. Crime rates continue to grow within these communities. According to Statista Research Department, “Aboriginal people are twice as likely to be physically assaulted and almost three times as likely to be victims of robbery and sexual assault” (2020). The problem also seems to be just more then crime. Within the court systems in Canada it is not hard to look and see racial injustice within the system itself. Also, according to Statista Research Department, you can see that Aboriginal people are twice as likely to be incarcerated compared to Caucasian people (2020), “over the last decade administrative segregation of Caucasian inmates has gone up 12%, while for Aboriginal inmates it has gone up 31%” (Statista Research Department, 2020). This is just a small sample of racism towards Aboriginal people. Racism is all around us, we hear stories everyday, such as the Black Life’s Matter movement currently happening in the USA. This has allowed me to sit back at realize how I am part of the problem.

As a learning teacher, I have realized that racism is a topic that needs to be discussed. These discussions can challenge people’s views, bring awareness to racism, and create a more inclusive environment. In English 30 last year I read the book “Indian Horse” by Richard Wagamese. The book is about a young boy named Saul, who is taken away from his family, and forced into residential school. At the school Saul is sexually assaulted, and his only way to cope with it is through playing hockey, which he is really good at. Saul finds a way to survive residential school and get a tryout with the Toronto Marlboros, where he receives racist remarks from players and fans, which leads to him quitting hockey. Saul during his time at residential school, sees many children die, lots where from suicide. “Suicide rates in Nunavut are 10 times higher than the national average” (Prohibition in Northern Canada, 2015, 1:45). Suicide continues to be a huge problem within First Nation communities. Eric Sober from Global news said “Suicide rates amongst First Nation People are three times higher than the non-Indigenous rate” (2019), Sober also says “For Inuit people it is nine times higher” (2019). Clearly this problem needs to be talked about to bring awareness towards suicide prevention, amongst Indigenous communities.

During this journey towards finding the “Truth” I have found myself realizing how privileged I really am. I do not have a worry in the world, my parents have basically done everything for me and I am truly grateful for everything they have done for me. My Dad has always helped coach me in sports. During one season we had a couple players on my team with First Nation backgrounds. The one boy lived in three to four different homes and could never get a ride to hockey because his mom had to work three jobs to support her family. My Dad always picked him up, and at the time, I never really understood why? My original thought process was “Why do we have to always pick him up?”, “Why can’t other people pick him up?” and I soon realized that if we did not pick him up for hockey, he would never make it, and I would be part of the problem instead of being a solution. Playing hockey has always been a privileged I enjoyed over the years, and if we do not include everyone in the sport, we will keep seeing racism occur not just in sport, but in life.

My journey has allowed me to continue to reflect and challenge my beliefs, and values. Throughout my life time I have witnessed racism, and never have done anything to help the situation. The issue seems to me more of a stigmatism towards First Nation’s people and racist stereotypes have led society to label Indigenous communities and people. My new I believe statement, is “I believe that every student deserves to be treated equally, no matter what”. I also believe that it is part of my job to help end racism, and help put a end towards intergeneration trauma, and allow First Nation students to feel safe when they come to school, and be in a classroom I teach. Once we create a safe environment where everyone feels included, stereotypes, racism, and racial separation, will all become a story of the past, and the future will be full of unity, and together as one we will be a strong nation. These are all things I have included in my aesthetic response. I wrote a poem based off society’s views on First Nation people and recognize it is a “we problem” not just “their problem”. The poem also talks about the disturbing facts, I referenced earlier on. The poem is a reflection on the problems I see within society today, and how as one nation we can come together and make a change.

References

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