



THE GIFT



the Healthy Aboriginal Network
non-profit promotion of health, literacy & wellness

THE GIVE FT

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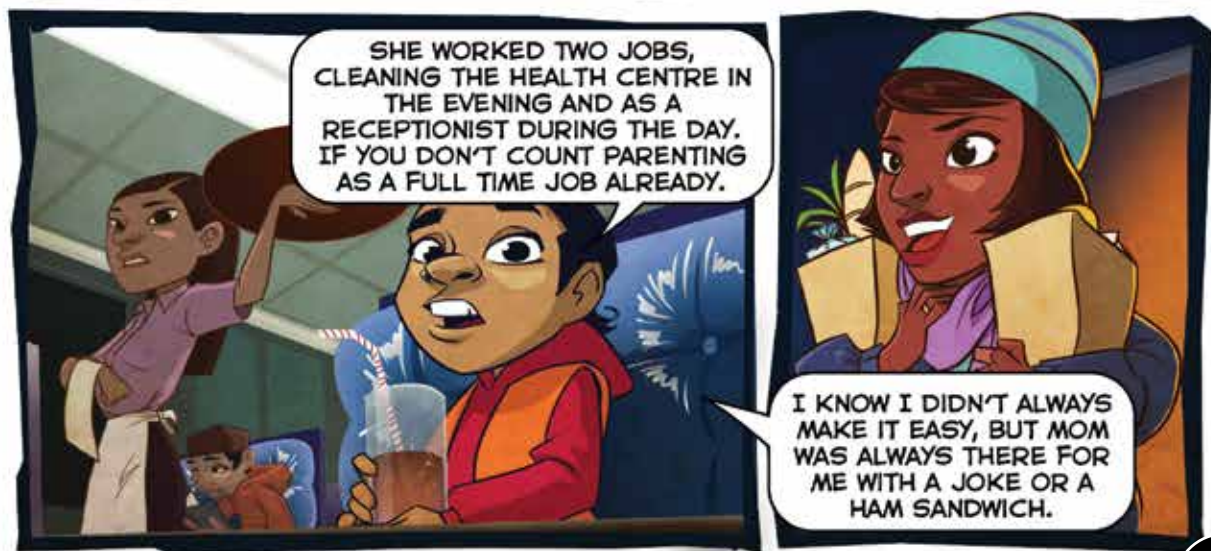
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LIKE A LOT OF KIDS I KNOW, I'M INTO SKATEBOARDING. BUT IT'S PRETTY TOUGH TO BOARD ON THE REZ WITH NO PAVEMENT.



MY DAD SPLIT WHEN I WAS A KID. AFTER THAT IT WAS JUST MY MOM AND ME.



SHE WORKED TWO JOBS, CLEANING THE HEALTH CENTRE IN THE EVENING AND AS A RECEPTIONIST DURING THE DAY. IF YOU DON'T COUNT PARENTING AS A FULL TIME JOB ALREADY.

I KNOW I DIDN'T ALWAYS MAKE IT EASY, BUT MOM WAS ALWAYS THERE FOR ME WITH A JOKE OR A HAM SANDWICH.



STILL, MY MOM HAD A LOT ON HER MIND. SHE WASHED DISHES WHEN SHE WAS THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING.



I HAVE SOME NEWS.



WHAT IS IT, MOM?



BACK TO SCHOOL?

I'VE DECIDED TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL.

YES. AND DO YOU KNOW WHY, KRUIZE?



IT'S BECAUSE I'M SO PROUD OF YOU. I HAD YOU WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG. IT WAS A LOT OF WORK AND SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY I FORGOT HOW MUCH I LOVE TO LEARN.



I FORGOT HOW MUCH I LOVE NEW IDEAS AND NEW EXPERIENCES - AND YOU REMIND ME OF THAT. I OWE IT TO YOU.



MOM, YOU DON'T OWE ME ANYTHING.



NOT JUST YOU, MY BOY.



WHEN YOUR GRANNY WAS A GIRL SHE HAD TO TRAVEL TO THE CITY AND STAY WITH ANOTHER FAMILY TO ATTEND HIGH SCHOOL.



SHE WORKED AND SACRIFICED...



...AND SHE GRADUATED.



AND BECAUSE YOUR GRANNY WAS SO BRAVE, I FEEL LIKE I HAVE THE COURAGE TO GO TO UNIVERSITY. I'M GOING TO BECOME A TEACHER AND GIVE BACK TO OUR COMMUNITY.



THAT'S OUR WAY.

DOES THIS MEAN THAT I HAVE TO GET A DEGREE, TOO?



I WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY AND HAVE A GOOD LIFE AND EDUCATION MAKES EVERY PART OF LIFE MORE FUN.



THAT'S AWESOME THAT YOU'RE GOING BACK TO SCHOOL. I'M PROUD OF YOU.



THANK YOU, KRUZE. BUT THERE ARE GOING TO BE SOME CHANGES.





THIS SUCKS.



I KNOW, MY BOY. I'M SORRY. CHANGE CAN BE HARD AND IT'S OKAY TO BE A LITTLE AFRAID. THAT'S NORMAL.



I'M ALSO AFRAID. I'M GOING TO A NEW CITY BY MYSELF. AWAY FROM MY BOY. I'M NOT GOING TO KNOW ANYONE THERE, AND I'M GOING TO BE A STUDENT.



I HAVEN'T BEEN A STUDENT IN...



I'M SORRY, MOM.



IT'S OKAY. COME ON, LET'S GO LOOK AT CELL PHONES ONLINE. I HAVE A FEELING WE'RE GOING TO BE TEXTING A LOT THIS YEAR. LOL!



GRANNY AND GRANDPA'S HOUSE ALWAYS SMELLED LIKE COOKIES AND SAGE. NO ONE EVER LEFT MY GRANNY'S HOUSE WITHOUT BEING FED.



WE THOUGHT WE WERE FINISHED RAISING KIDS. WE USED TO SAY: SOMETIMES YOU THINK ONE THING AND THEN THE OPPOSITE HAPPENS.



SMILE LINES, THEY'RE CALLED. EVERYBODY GETS OLD AND WRINKLED.

BUT SOME PEOPLE HAVE UPTURNED SMILE WRINKLES AND SOME PEOPLE HAVE DOWNTURNED FROWN WRINKLES.




AH HAH! GRANDCHILD! HOW WERE THE POTHOLES AFTER THE RAIN?

BIG ENOUGH TO DRIVE DOWN ONE SIDE AND BACK UP THE OTHER, GRANDPA.

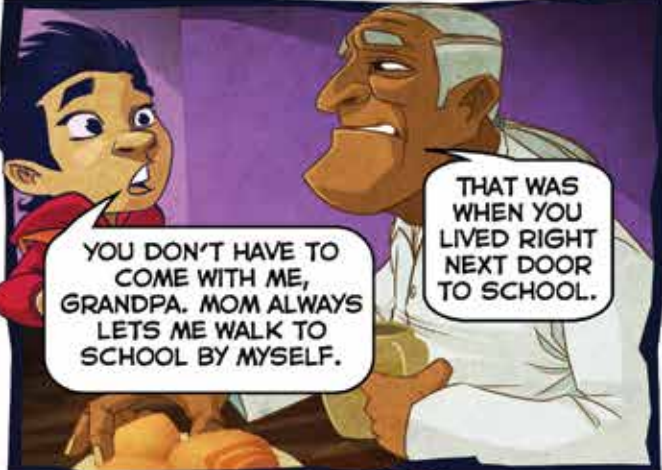


HA! THAT'S RIGHT, YOU REMEMBER!





TOMORROW MORNING YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO WAKE UP A LITTLE EARLIER TO GET TO SCHOOL. AND I'LL COME WITH YOU.



YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME WITH ME, GRANDPA. MOM ALWAYS LETS ME WALK TO SCHOOL BY MYSELF.

THAT WAS WHEN YOU LIVED RIGHT NEXT DOOR TO SCHOOL.




BUT, THE GUYS...



KRUZE, IT'S NOT SAFE.



WHY NOT?



BECAUSE IT'S A LOT FARTHER TO WALK NOW AND THAT LITTLE GIRL GOT ATTACKED BY DOGS LAST YEAR. DO YOU KNOW HER?



CARISSA? SHE'S IN GRADE FIVE.

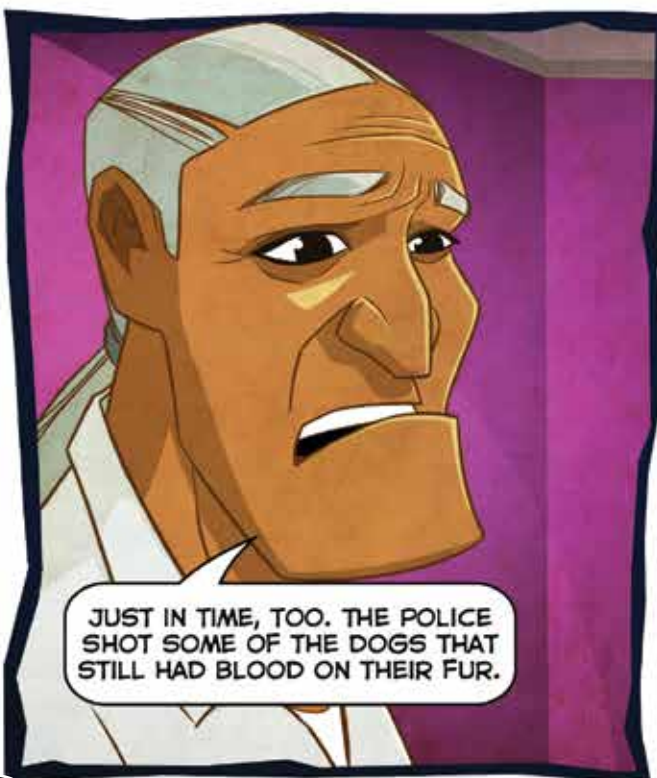


THEN YOU KNOW SHE'S OKAY NOW, BUT SHE GOT CUT UP PRETTY BAD BY THE DOGS.



WHAT HAPPENED?

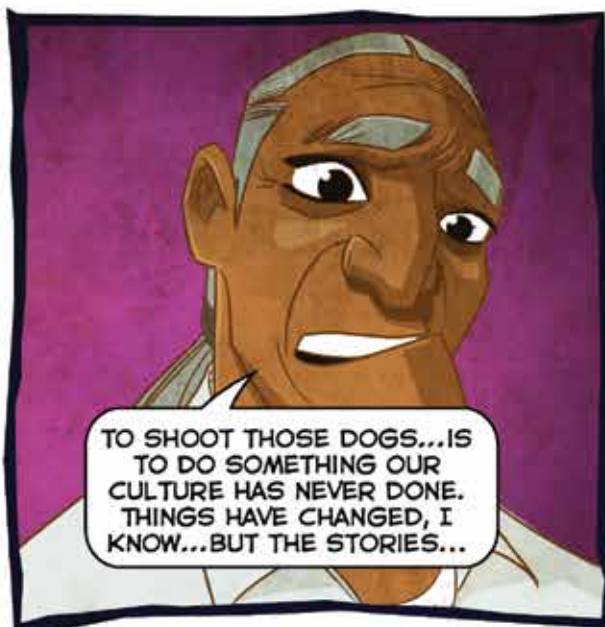
DON'T KNOW. ALL I KNOW IS THAT HER COUSINS FOUND HER IN A BLOODY SNOW BANK.



JUST IN TIME, TOO. THE POLICE SHOT SOME OF THE DOGS THAT STILL HAD BLOOD ON THEIR FUR.



THE DOGS WERE JUST LOOKING FOR FOOD. MIGHT AS WELL SHOOT A WHALE FOR DRINKING WATER, OR A SNAIL FOR BEING SLIMY.



TO SHOOT THOSE DOGS...IS TO DO SOMETHING OUR CULTURE HAS NEVER DONE. THINGS HAVE CHANGED, I KNOW...BUT THE STORIES...



OKAY, OKAY. WHY DON'T YOU TELL US?



I WILL.

I KNOW YOU WILL. HERE IT COMES...



THE DOGS OUT HERE...THEY ROAMED ONCE; BUT NOW THEY DON'T.




IT'S BECAUSE THE DOGS MADE A PROMISE WITH OUR PEOPLE. NOW, WE DON'T TALK ABOUT THIS MUCH ANYMORE, BUT THIS IS PART OF OUR STORY.

A woman in a yellow garment is feeding a baby with a spoon. A man in a grey tunic and feathered headdress stands to the right, holding a wooden staff. The background shows other people in a dimly lit setting.

IT WAS A LONG
TIME AGO.


IT WAS THE COLDEST WINTER
OUR PEOPLE HAD EVER
EXPERIENCED. THERE WAS
NO GAME. THEIR BONES
GREW WEARY.

A close-up of a baby crying in a woman's arms. The woman's hands are visible, holding the baby. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting night.

THE CHIEF WAS DESPERATE.
THE BABIES CRIED AT NIGHT IN
HUNGER. A BABY'S CRY IS
HIGH-PITCHED - SO THAT THEIR
MOTHER'S CAN HEAR THEM.

A close-up of the man's face, showing a look of concern and determination. He has a feather in his hair and a white earring.

IT'S THE ONLY WAY A
BABY CAN DEFEND
ITSELF.

A man in a grey tunic and feathered headdress is talking to a large grey dog and a smaller brown dog. In the background, a village with a large tent is visible under a sunset sky.

IT'S A TRICKSTER,
THOUGH. WHEN THE
BABY CRIES NOT
ONLY CAN HER
MOTHER HEAR;

THE CHIEF COULD
HEAR THE DOGS,
RESTLESS IN THE
NIGHT. HE WENT
OUT TO SPEAK
WITH THEM.

BUT SO CAN
PREDATORS. THE
DOGS WERE ALSO
HUNGRY.

HE LAY OUT
TOBACCO AND
SANG A SONG
AND ASKED THE
DOG-SPIRITS FOR
GUIDANCE TO
FIND FOOD.

THE DOGS KNEW IF THEY HELPED THE CHIEF, SHOWED MERCY, AND TOOK A ROLE IN MAN'S CULTURE, THEY COULD NEVER GO BACK.

DESPERATE, THE CHIEF VOWED ON BEHALF OF HIS PEOPLE, THAT IF THE DOGS HELPED THEM THIS NIGHT,

AS ONE WITH US.

DOGS WOULD ALWAYS HAVE AN HONOURED PLACE WITHIN OUR SOCIETY FOR ALL TIME: AS MESSENGERS, COMPANIONS AND PROTECTORS.

THAT NIGHT THE CHIEF LAID HIS HEAD DOWN AND HEARD THE HUNGRY CRIES OF THE BABIES FOR THE LAST TIME.

IN THE MORNING, TWO DOGS CAME TO THE CHIEF, A MALE AND A FEMALE. A SACRED GIFT.

THE MALE DOG WAS ABLE TO RUN AHEAD A GREAT DISTANCE, GUIDED BY HIS NOSE, TO FIND A HERD OF BISON.

HE BARKED THE MESSAGE
BACK TO THE FEMALE WHO
GUIDED OUR PEOPLE FOR A
HUNT THAT SAVED OUR LIVES.



NOW, FOREVER, DOGS
AND OUR PEOPLE WALK
TOGETHER.



BUT OVER TIME, A CHANGE
SWEEPED OVER THE LAND
AND WE'VE FORGOTTEN
OUR FRIENDS, OUR WAYS
AND OURSELVES.



BUT THE DOGS NEVER
FORGOT US. THEY'RE
STILL OUT THERE.



WAITING FOR US TO COME
BACK AND HONOUR OUR
COMMITMENT TO THEM: TO
TAKE CARE OF THEM AS
THEY'VE TAKEN CARE OF US.
TO RESPECT WHAT THEY
GAVE UP.





SHOOTING THEM DOESN'T SOLVE ANYTHING - IT'S JUST A QUICK FIX TO MAKE US FEEL LIKE WE'RE DOING SOMETHING. PEOPLE NEED TO DO MORE.

LIKE WHAT?



WELL, FOR ONE THING THEY HAVE TO GET THEIR DOGS FIXED. TWO DOGS AND THEIR OFFSPRING CAN MAKE DOZENS OF PUPPIES IN JUST A FEW YEARS.



THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO HUNDRED DOGS RUNNING AROUND THIS RESERVE RIGHT NOW.



IT'S EXPENSIVE. NOT EVERYBODY HAS A COUPLE HUNDRED EXTRA DOLLARS TO GET THEIR DOGS FIXED.



THEN THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE DOGS.



YES, YES. AND RAINY DAYS SHOULDN'T GET YOU WET.

ANYWAY, I'M WALKING OUR KRUZE TO SCHOOL 'TIL THINGS GET BETTER AROUND HERE.



MY GRANDPA WALKED ME TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY. AND THAT'S HOW WE GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER SO WELL.









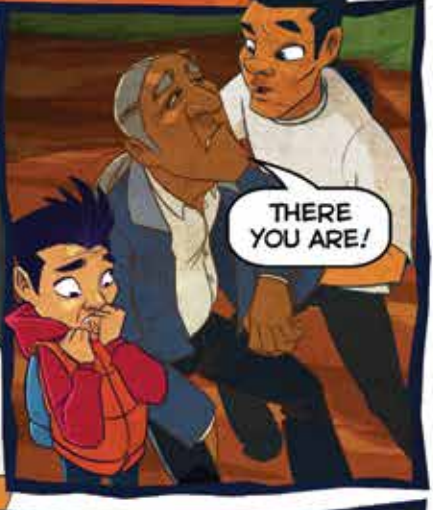
HELP!



UNCLE RANDY!



GET IN THE TRUCK!



THERE YOU ARE!

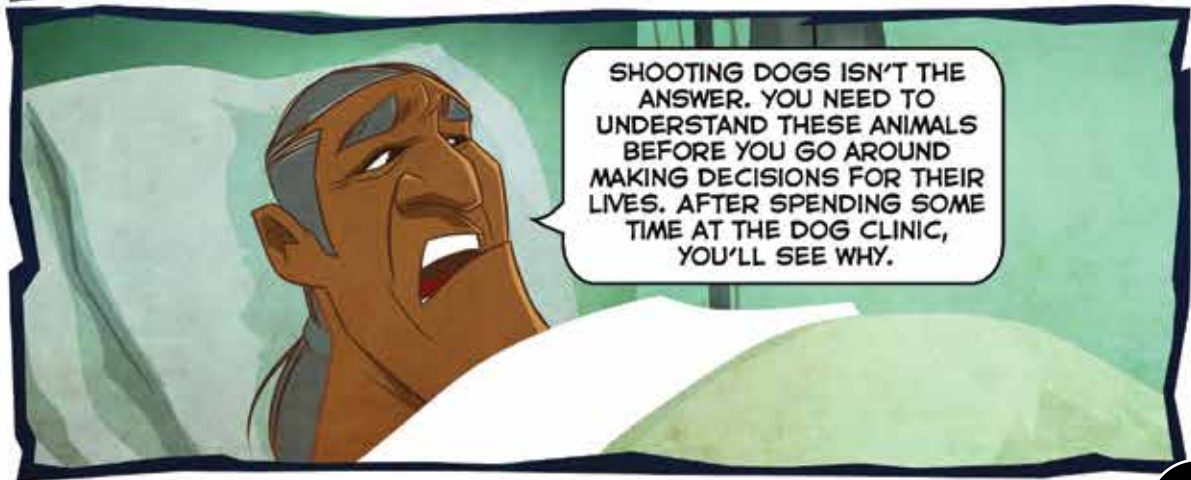


YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TO A COUNCIL MEETING IN A MONTH.



NICE TO SEE YOU TOO, DAD.









IF YOU LIKE THE STORY SO FAR AND
WANT TO SEE THE REST, PLEASE
SEND AN EMAIL TO

SEAN@THEHEALTHYABORIGINAL.NET

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