Lost innocence

Brandon Mitchell

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“I WANT TO GET RID OF THE INDIAN PROBLEM.”

“OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO CONTINUE UNTIL THERE IS NOT A SINGLE INDIAN IN CANADA THAT HAS NOT BEEN ABSORBED INTO THE BODY POLITIC, AND THERE IS NO INDIAN QUESTION, AND NO INDIAN DEPARTMENT.”

- MINISTER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS HON. DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT, 1920.
Canada was in its infancy; there was a national cry on unity among its settlers. There was no longer the need for them to rely on First Nations for knowledge of the untamed lands. Industry now dominated the culture like it had in so many regions of the globe.

There was no room in a new Canada for old ways.
The Indian Act would be the government’s solution to the ‘Indian Problem’.

They brought the Act before a Parliamentary vote.

It was then written into law.

The Act defined a people; it also provided a means for swift assimilation.
The government was not satisfied with the minimal progress made by the act. The culture and language would persevere.

First nations still had their identity. The government had to give them a new identity.

If youth are the future, then the government had control over the kind of future first nations would have.
They were promised a better life. What parent doesn’t want the best for their child? Who doesn’t want their child to succeed in this brave new world?

The children would be reshaped into the image that Canada wanted. There was no room for another nation of people in this Canada.

They took away more than a culture and a nation; they took away generations of innocence.
The land can be an unforgiving place if you do not respect it.
I knew you’d find me.

Sure you did! I’m getting better at figuring you out.

Soon you’ll be reading my signs!
WATCH THIS, SIS.
YOU'RE GONNA GET IT FOR THAT ONE!

JUST BE CAREFUL... MALTASESS!

ARE YOU OKAY? LET ME TAKE A LOOK AT IT.

OH, IT'S JUST ON THE SURFACE. YOUR BIG BROTHER WILL FIX YOU UP. YOU'LL BE OKAY.

THERE YOU GO, GOOD AS NEW. IT'S A GOOD THING YOU'VE GOT ME AROUND.

THANKS...
BUT YOU STILL GOT ME WET.

IT'S GETTING LATE. MAYBE WE SHOULD HEAD BACK.
WE NEED TO HELP BRING IN THE WOOD ANYWAYS.

RACE YOU.

WITH YOUR SHORT LEGS - NO PROBLEM.
WHAT'S GOING ON FATHER? WHY IS HE HERE?

YOU KNOW, THESE TIMES ARE CHANGING. EVERYTHING IS NOT AS IT USED TO BE. I REMEMBER WHEN WE USED TO BE ABLE TO DANCE AND SHARE OUR STORIES WITH OTHERS.

IT'S GETTING HARDER FOR US TO SHARE OUR VOICE. I WANT YOU TO LEARN WHAT YOU CAN FROM THESE PEOPLE AND BE ABLE TO SHARE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED WITH US, SO WE CAN BETTER UNDERSTAND THEM.
THEIR KNOWLEDGE COULD HELP US ALL BETTER THIS PLACE. EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT, AND WE CAN ONLY TEACH YOU SO MUCH. LEARN THEIR WAYS OF THINKING, BUT NEVER FORGET WHAT WE’VE TAUGHT YOU ABOUT THIS LAND. SHE WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU.

UMQUI!

SON, YOU ARE STRONG IN MIND AND SPIRIT. I’VE HEARD STORIES ABOUT THESE PLACES. THEY WANT YOU TO FORGET WHERE YOUCOME FROM. DON’T LET THEM BREAK YOUR SPIRIT. BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE AND DO NOT FORGET US. I WANT YOU TO PROTECT YOUR SISTER. DO NOT LET ANY HARM COME TO HER.
THIS WILL HELP PROTECT THE BOTH OF YOU. KEEP IT WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES.
EVER RIDDEN IN A CAR BEFORE?

BAH, YOU DON’T EVEN KNOW WHAT I’M SAYING, DO YOU? DON’T WORRY, THAT SCHOOL’S GONNA HELP GET THE RED OUT OF YOU.
GOT A COUPLE MORE SOULS FOR YOU TO SAVE, FATHER.

THEY'LL MAKE A FINE ADDITION TO THE FLOCK. THIS SHOULD HELP OUR QUOTA FOR THE YEAR.
WELL, GET THEM REGISTERED RIGHT AWAY. I'LL FILE THE PAPERS FOR ANY OTHERS YOU HAVE, TO GET THE MONEY ROLLING IN.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

WHAT ABOUT THOSE EXTRA TEACHERS?

SISTER, CAN YOU PLEASE ASSIST ME IN THIS MATTER? THEIR RAGS NEED TO BE THROWN AWAY AND BRING IN SOME FRESH GARMENTS.
I baptize you David, in the name of the Holy Ghost.

I baptize you Mary, in the name of the Holy Ghost.
LET GO OF HIM! BOYS ARE NOT ALLOWED WHERE YOU'RE GOING.
DON'T LEAVE ME!

MALTALESS!

BE STRONG, SISTER. DON'T LET THEM BREAK YOUR SPIRIT.

WORRY NOT, SISTER. I'LL BRING THIS ONE TO HIS QUARTERS.
FRET NOT MY CHILD, YOU ARE IN GOD'S HOUSE NOW. THE LORD WILL LOOK AFTER YOU AND YOUR SISTER NOW.

DAVID, YOU'RE IN BED NUMBER 27. DO NOT WAKE THE OTHERS. WE HAVE A BIG DAY AHEAD OF US TOMORROW.
NEXT DAY: DAWN

RISE, CHILDREN. YOU ALL HAVE 20 MINUTES TO PREPARE BEFORE YOUR CHORES.

HEY... HEY, NEW KID. WAKE UP! WANNA GET US ALL IN TROUBLE HERE?

TRUST ME; YOU WANT TO GET OUT OF BED NOW. THIS ONE HERE, SHE'S REALLY MEAN. YOU DON'T WANT HER CATCHING YOU SLEEPIN' IN.

HUH? HEY, COME ON. THE SUN JUST CAME UP.
WHAT'S THIS? YOU WET THE BED AGAIN!

CLEAN UP THIS MESS AT ONCE!

GET IN LINE TO DO YOUR CHORES.
“BLESSED IS HE WHO
SERVES THE LORD...”

OFF THE REZ FOR A DAY AND
YOU ALREADY FORGET HOW TO
GREET A FRIEND? NAME’S
MUIN. WHAT’S YOURS?

OH YEAH? SO
WHAT DID THEY
NAME YOU?

UH, I THINK
THEY CALLED ME
DAVID.

UMQUISAWA.

WELL AT LEAST THEY DIDN’T CALL YOU
JOSEPH. YOU KNOW HOW MANY ARE NAMED
THAT ALREADY? I THINK YOU’RE THE 3RD
DAVID, SO CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY.

OH YEAH, THEY CALLED ME
PETER. IT’S LIKE THEY
RAN OUT OF IDEAS FOR
NAMES OR SOMETHING.
WHEN DO WE GET TO EAT? I'M SO HUNGRY. HOW DO THEY EXPECT US TO DO ANYTHING ON AN EMPTY STOMACH?

YOU GET USED TO IT. I KNOW, IT'S NOT LIKE HOME.

BY THE WAY, WHERE YOU FROM ANYWAY?

OVER THERE.

OH YEAH? THEN YOU MUST BE CLOSE TO THE GREAT RIVER. GOOD SALMON UP THERE.

THE BEST!
LORD, WE ASK YOU TO BLESS THIS OFFERING YOU HAVE GIVEN US.

WELL, THIS IS NOTHING LIKE THE LOOOGIGININ, BUT IT COULD BE WORSE. AT LEAST IT'S FRESH TODAY.
Is this some kind of joke? How can you eat this? I don't think my dog would eat it.

Ha! He would if it was the only thing to eat.

Better finish it up though; it's a long time before lunch.
SO, WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND ANYWAYS? I KNOW THE FOOD IS BAD, BUT IT DOESN'T MAKE YOU MUTE.

WHERE ARE THE GIRLS?

Girls, eh? Yeah, they don't stay with us; nuns told us it wasn't God's will or something. Already looking for a sweetheart?

No... my sister...

Oh, I don't know what to tell you. We barely see girls around, but we know they're here. We see them in passing sometimes.
PETE, I NEED TO KNOW WHERE SHE IS.

IF YOU GET CAUGHT...
JUST TELL ME WHERE.
IF YOU LIKE THE STORY SO FAR AND WANT TO SEE THE REST, PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL TO

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