

DAD, I MISS YOU



BY NADIA SAMMUR TOK

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I really want to show you how I caught the fish we ate for supper yesterday, Dad. I didn't even need anybody's help! You would be so proud of me.

You taught me so well that day we went out fishing as a family. You are such a good teacher and I learned so much that day. Thank you, Dad.



I wish I could take you out fishing with me today, my son, but they will be here any minute. . . . I was so proud of you for feeding the family yesterday. You will be a great provider when you have a family of your own, my son.



Oh no, I can hear the airplane approaching.
I don't want to go back there, Dad.



It'll all be over soon. Before you know it,
they'll let us have you home with us again.
Just do as they say, my son.

They say it will be better this way.



Dad, don't let them take me. Please, Dad.
I want to stay here with you, mom, and my
baby sister.

My baby sister . . . please don't let them take
her too, Dad. I couldn't protect her there.



I hope they don't take my baby girl away too.
I should have hidden her. It's too late now.
They've already seen her.



Dad, please. Why aren't you telling them to stop? Why aren't you fighting for me? I belong with you, Dad! Not them!



Please don't cry, my son. Just go so they won't hurt us. They said it will be better this way.

Goodbye, my son. I'll see you soon.
Remember to always think of us, your grandparents, and your home. Think about the things we taught you. Think about your language, and where you come from.

Before you know it, you'll be back home, with us, your family.





I hate it here, Dad. It's always so cold. It smells, and the people are scary. I can't speak my own language. They said I'll be punished if I do. I barely remember how to speak our language anyway.



I hope you're doing okay, my son. I hope you know we are thinking of you. Your sister cries for you. I'm relieved they did not take her. Not yet anyway. She is only two years old, after all. They wouldn't do that . . . they couldn't, could they? She's home with us, at least for another year.

I feel guilty for allowing them to take you, but I couldn't fight them off on my own. There's too many of them.

They said it will be better this way.



I'm tired of hurting here, Dad. I want to
come home.



My son, you'll be home soon. I hope you're keeping warm. I hope they're feeding you well. We ate your favourite meal yesterday, fish and rice. We thought of you the entire time.

Do you remember that day you caught the fish we had for supper? I was so proud of you. You will be a great provider one day.



I can't do this anymore. I'm so hungry, Dad. I need you.



We miss you a lot, but you're learning to read
in English and count numbers.

They said it would be better that way.





It feels good to be home, Dad. I sure missed you all, but I feel so lost here. I don't remember how to speak our language. I can barely understand what anybody is saying to me. I don't remember how to hunt or how to build things.

I don't know what to do here.

I don't belong here anymore.



It's good to have you back home, my son. I know you've forgotten some parts of yourself, but after some time, you'll find yourself again. I missed you.

Welcome home, son.



AFTERWORD

This story is written in the form of a conversation through thoughts between a father and his son. The characters are not speaking to each other, but are communicating with each other in their minds. The reason for this is because many residential school survivors who experienced abuse kept their experiences to themselves. Many felt ashamed and did not open up about the abuse they experienced. In this story, the son did not tell his father that he had experienced abuse at residential school prior to being sent away for the last time. Upon returning home, the son feels a sense of disconnect with his cultural identity, but in the end, his father believes that in time, his son will reconnect with his identity again.