

By Angelica Casimer

My father was the first person in many generations to raise his own children. Crazy right? This is a common story among First Nations people. Most of our parents, grandparents were kidnapped and raised in residential schools. Yes, I said kidnapped because they were forcefully taken, and torn from their families at a young age to be "assimilated." These innocent and vulnerable young children were hunted by the Indian agents and RCMP, handcuffed and transported to residential schools like cattle.

So when you read about the alcohol and drug abuse, the unemployment rate, poverty, the depression, the utter hopelessness, and finally the suicide rate in First Nations communities. It all makes sense now. This is a learned behaviour. The only thing our residential school survivors know is what they were taught in the government funded residential schools. They didn't know how to raise children because generations of First Nations children were effectively removed from their families and homes. With that in mind, do you think they knew how to show love? Or, use positive reinforcement? Do you think they had anything to offer? Because all they knew was the abuse and evil they suffered in residential school. For many survivors, this is how they raised their kids because they didn't know any better. The same abuse carried on through the generations and ravaged our communities. It even has a name, it's called intergenerational trauma.

If, you didn't already know, those schools were cesspools for pedophiles and abusers. These evil people were paid to "care" for these young children, babies as young as the age of 3 or 4!! Can you imagine? It's easy if you have children. Imagine, your baby was forcefully taken, ripped from your arms and now is being sexually, physically, mentally, and spiritually abused and you know exactly what's happening and there is absolutely nothing you can do about it. How do you deal with that? How do you reconcile that?

Do you expect kids who have been steadily abused to bounce back and become active members of society? Or, would you assume that they were handed a life sentence of never being the same, of being damaged goods? I can guarantee that if a non-Native child suffered the same abuse, everyone would cater to him, and as we should! That's what you're supposed to do. You do whatever is in your power to protect and help that child heal and feel safe. You make sure with all your might that their abusers are held accountable for what they have done. That's what we should do, but we don't. We blame the victim and make sure they carry the stigma like a scarlet A and their stories were swept under the rug.

Our First Nations people are still reeling in pain! Memories of what they've been through are still fresh in their hearts and engraved on their minds. They are still fighting with their demons and for many it's a losing fight. It comes through by drinking away the pain or substance abuse. Pure hatred. Pure devastation. Pure hopelessness. A hole so deep, that you can't climb out of.

How do you expect anyone to raise healthy children with a legacy like that? People say to let it go! Why should I be held accountable for the actions of my ancestors? Stop blaming the white man. All they want is more money... Tax dollars. How about offering the respect and empathy you would offer any other human who have suffered such atrocities, instead of blaming the "Indian" for not pulling himself together.