

Meeting Chief Crowfoot, My Grandfather



By Samiyah Crowfoot

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It was just a normal day in my Grade 4 class. I was sitting at my desk in school reading Blackfoot legends during our social studies class. I noticed lights flickering in the small tipi we had set up at the back of the room.

“What is making those lights?” I quietly whispered to myself. I decided to investigate. I asked my teacher if I could go into the mini tipi to read. She excused me to the back of the room. While I crawled towards the opening I paused, a person inside was motioning me to come in. As I started going into the opening I recognized that the person was from a picture I had seen in my legend readings. It was Chief Crowfoot, my Grandfather.

I heard him say, “Pohsapota sopoyaapistsiyiita,” (which means come here listen carefully in Blackfoot.) “I am Chief Crowfoot, your seven times Great Grandfather.”

I was so shocked I couldn't even speak, could this really be happening? Was I dreaming? I crawled closer to him. The lights started flashing brighter but I didn't feel scared at all. When I peeked back the classroom started to fade away. I crawled in deeper and that small tipi kept getting bigger and bigger inside just like a full-sized one. When I turned and looked out the doorway I recognized exactly where we were, Blackfoot Crossing. I pinched myself just to make sure I wasn't dreaming.

My Grandfather spoke, “In 1877 this is where me and our people signed Treaty 7 with the Canadian Government,” he continued, “If we didn't sign Treaty 7 you and a lot of people in Canada would not be here today.”

“What do you mean by that?” I questioned.

“Treaty 7 gave every Indigenous family of five about 6 square km of land from the Rocky Mountains to the West, and we all had the right to hunt and live on the land there. We just wanted peace for everyone in the area. We wanted to live in harmony with the others that had arrived from other lands. I also helped to make sure other chiefs understood what they were signing before we agreed to put our names on Treaty 7” he answered.

This made me feel proud of what he did and I realized that I am a leader too. I set a good example for kids at my school by being kind and helpful. I include everyone so no one feels left out.

Next I asked, “How did you become a Chief?”

“It was all because of the smallpox pandemic. About seventy chiefs died and our people wanted me to be in charge. I was friendly with Colonel McLeod, who was the leader of the Northwest Mounted Police, and my people thought I would be able to help negotiate for us.” he said proudly.

I questioned, “Were you ever married?”

“I had 10 wives! I had a favorite wife too, but I can’t remember her name anymore,” he laughed.

“Did you have any children?” I asked.

“Yes, but only four survived the smallpox,” he cried with a tear rolling down his cheek.

“How about no sad questions for now,” Grandfather requested with a sigh.

“Deal,” I agreed.

“Let’s go to the next place,” he suggested.

“Of course!” I agreed happily and followed him into the tipi.

In the tipi the colorful lights started to flash again and the door flung wide open within a few seconds! We were at a different place that I didn't recognize this time.

“We are at Rupert's Land where I was born in 1830,” Grandfather exclaimed happily.

“What were you known for in your life?” I wondered.

“I was known for my courage, success, and wisdom, and that's why our people wanted me to become Chief and help negotiate for them.” he said proudly.

Wow, I hope when I grow up, I will be brave and stand up for what's right for myself and help people that can't do it for themselves just as my Grandfather did,

“Were you involved in any raids or battles?” I questioned.

“Yes, my first battle was when I was 13. Before I was 20 I had been in 19 battles fighting for my peoples’ rights and freedom.” grandfather remarked.

He was so young and made a huge difference for a lot of people. I am going to be a difference maker too. At school, we have been sending notes for different occasions, to people that live at a nursing home to make them feel happy and loved during the Covid pandemic. They don't get to see many people. It makes me feel great knowing I am making someone I don't even know feel good and important.

“What age were you when you died?” I buzzed.

“I was only 60 years old,” he replied.

We walked back into the tipi and the bright lights started to shine just like before. In a blink of an eye the door opened for the last time. We were in a place I recognized this time. I was back in the classroom and the tipi was back to its same small size it had always been.

“It was an honor to share my story with you, Granddaughter. I wish I could share more but you were gone long enough and you need to get back to your schoolwork, good-bye.” my Grandfather said as he hugged me.

“Good-bye,” I squeezed him back.

As I was crawling out of the mini tipi I turned just in time to see Grandfather disappear. I felt so grateful to have met him and I returned quietly to my desk with a huge smile on my face! I couldn't wait to share with my friends what I had just experienced.

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