

Good morning, everyone,

I wasn't sure how I was going to start this. So, I thought, id start off by giving Lorraine some Flowers.

I want to thank you/her, for always treating me with kindness, and warmth. For seeing and accepting me for who I am. You always provided a safe, and loving space to either be silly in, or to give an Honest response to the question, how are you doing? Thank you for being a friend and thank you for allowing me to share in this space, and this experience with you and your Church Family.

I know that some of what I share this morning, may be heavy. I know that its not always easy to open-up with some of this subject matter. However, I believe, sharing can be healing. I think sharing provides a space or an experience, where we can feel, that were not alone. Everyone has a story, and this is just a bit of mine.

One of the reasons I am here this morning, is due to some mail I received about a month ago. 2 very large boxes arrived, in my name, and of course, I was both excited and confused. I had no idea what they were, so I placed them aside for a

bit. When I decided to open them, I was even more confused. Inside were these gorgeous quilts. I sat down and read the letter and poem attached. I was overwhelmed with a bundle of emotions, then immediately filled with guilt, and the feeling of not being worthy enough, to receive them. I thought, oh nooo, these aren't for me, they must have sent them to the wrong person, so I quickly placed them back in their boxes, and tucked them away to deal with later. About week went by, I ran into Lorraine, and I shared with her, what I received. As I was talking, the words "bigger than me" kept coming up. She had a couple ideas, but ultimately advised me to pray on it, and see what we could do with them. So that's what I did, took a few days, reflected on the "Mission" of this group, and what they were doing. That's when a light went on in my head. Quilts for Survivors, emphasises on Survivors. To bring warmth, and healing, and to let ones know that they are not alone.

So, I pulled the quilts back out, and really took the time to reflect on this beautiful gift, I had received. I wrapped myself in 1 of them. This is when I realised the impact of these quilts, and the meaning it took on for me.

(This is where I may get a bit emotional, so please bare with me. I wont be sharing specific details, of each event I bring up, due to my healing Journey is still a work in progress)

I may not be a Residential School survivor myself, but I am a descendent of many residential school survivors. My story is not meant to compare or take away, from those experiences and stories, but to stand with them, in both love and compassion

I am 1 of 14 kids, I know that sounds like a lot, but it is split between 2 families. I have my bio-family, and my adoptive family, seven kids in each. My bio-family is from the Enoch Cree Nation, and my adoptive family is a white European home. Throughout my life, at different stages, Mental, Physical and Sexual abuse, have all affected me at some point. I was in the foster care system, prior to my adoption, and many of those homes were not good placements. I am a 60s Scoop Survivor, which is where it was legal for the Child Welfare system to intentionally take or "Scoop up" Indigenous children, and place them in White homes. Even though I won't deny that my adoptive family, had their ways of showing love, there was also a lot of Neglect, and many things where not addressed, or properly cared for. 1: Due to the amount people in the home, 2: there was a sentiment,

that no one child in the home, would receive any special treatment (even if that treatment was to help) They wanted us to all feel equal, but as time has proven too me, that wasn't a successful approach.

I was born with FAS. (Fetal alcohol syndrome) both my bio parents were alcoholic's and drugs users. The results manifested in both mental, and physical challenges for me as a child, and it will throughout my entire life.

In my adoptive family, I grew up in the church. My father was a minister of a very conservative Denomination. We were taught, to be seen and not heard. Part of my schooling growing up, I had to attend a non-boarding, Private Christian school, with intensely strict rules, that school did allow for physical punishment.

A few years Later, I was put through, Conversion Therapy and Spiritual Warfare Counselling, all because signs of the possibility of me being "Gay" were starting to show, through my personality. This therapy devastated/damaged my way of thinking, it was a shock to my whole self, and it scarred me deeply. Unfortunately, that did lead me down the road to unsuccessful suicide attempts. To this day I am still in some form of recovery from that treatment. Shockingly, just as of this past January 2022, a law (bill c 4) was finally passed, were conversion therapy, is now illegal and banned in Canada.

Around that same time, I had a sister “Delores,” who went missing. I say her name out loud, because she is 1 of the thousands of the MMIW across Canada. About a decade later, her remains were found, and we had the blessing of laying her to rest.

As I grew older, I became more aware of “Racial Prejudices” that were directed towards me, just due to the way I looked, color of my skin, the way I sounded, and even moved in the world. Everything from microaggressions, to full on Verbal/Physical assaults, including those whom I had admired, to those who were in Authority. It was like the message I kept receiving in life, was “you not suppose to exist”!

I struggled to find my place in this world. I realized I didn’t fit any single mold of “person”. It’s like I had been wiped clean, of ALL or Any culture connections I had with my Indigenous roots. I struggled to connect to any form of the Gay community, due to “Conversion Therapy” I went through. Over the years, I lost many Church friends/family, because I was two spirited. I just couldn’t find my place, let alone knowing what, “having a purpose” meant.

I know this all sounds grim, and “yes” it can still trigger me sometimes. But, just a few years ago, I was faced with a choice, again, I thought, do I continue, or do I

just end this, struggle permanently? For some reason, I chose to continue, my journey, here on earth. However, I knew I couldn't do it alone. So, I started to reach out for help. Eventually got into therapy, which helped create new and healthier "tools" of survival, that I have to use daily. It helped in me, making Peace with my past, the Grace to forgive myself, and others. But ultimately the feeling of Hopelessness, was gone.

These Quilts have given me more than just warmth. They have given me a new perspective, and acknowledge of my past, an ability to look back and see just how far I come, and what I have survived. Where my healing journey in this life will take me, I have no idea, but I am grateful, at this moment, its here. Thank you for letting me share.

I am donating 1 of these quilts to the Little Red Church, in honor of my indigenous brothers and sisters, who we have lost, and didn't survive. My hope is that it may provide healing to both indigenous and non-indigenous, peoples. To show that we are not alone, and there are others out there, that want to help, and can help.

*my understanding is there is a young man here today, that the Little Red Church would like to Gift this Quilt too? Lorainne...

“I had partnered with a local loving progressive church, to donate 1 of the quilts too a young Cree Boy, being raised in a local non-indigenous home. It was an honor to gift it forward to 1 of our future generations.”