

A Good Day with Grandma (Kye7e) & Me

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AND SECWEREMC NATION ELDERS





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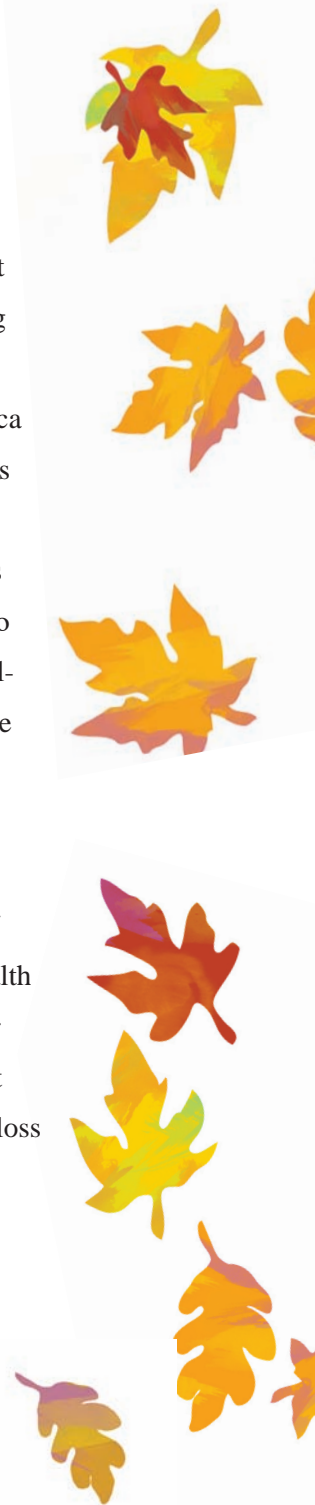
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A Good Day With

Grandma (Kyé7e) & Me

Grandma (Kyé7e) lives at our house. She used to live at her house on the reserve but my sister, Lisa, says that Kyé7e needs to be close to her family now. Lisa says that sometimes Kyé7e forgets things.

"I forget things," I tell Lisa.

"Like what?" She asks.

"I forgot to do my homework. I forgot to clean my room. I forgot to feed Jojo."

Jojo is our dog, she is furry and slobbery and my best friend.

Lisa ruffles my hair.

"It's not like that, kiddo", she says, "Now let's go eat breakfast."



Every day, we eat together as a family. My mom says that we must always share food with one another.

At breakfast, Kyé7e speaks Secwepemctsin. I tell my mom, "I want to speak our native language."

"Oh?" She says.

"Yup," I say, "Because I want to speak with Kyé7e."

My mom smiles at me, she can only speak a few words. She says, "Grandmother in Secwepemctsin is Kyé7e, mother is Kí7ce, little brother is Síntse and big sister is Kekec. But I can't remember that much more."

"Did you forget your language like how Kyé7e forgets things?" I ask.

My mom smiles and ruffles my hair.

"No, honey, it's different", she says, "Now, remember to eat all of your cereal."



Kyé7e likes to sit near the window. She plays cards with Kekec, sometimes. I want to play but I don't know how.

Kyé7e doesn't talk a lot and when she does it's usually in Secwepmectsin. She will ask me for things and I won't know what she's saying. I have to tell her, "Kyé7e, I don't know what you mean." Sometimes more than once. Then she will point at what she wants and will say, "Water", or "Cards", or "Blanket". Some days, Kyé7e is happy and some days she is in a bad mood. I ask Lisa why.

"Kyé7e has dementia," Lisa says, "She can't remember things and it makes her confused sometimes. This makes her mad or upset. Just be patient with her and that will help her feel calm and safe."





Sometimes I get mad or upset. When I am mad, I go down to the river and throw rocks into the water. Or I slam my bedroom door. Or I yell at my mom. I always feel bad afterwards and I have to say “sorry”.

When Kyé7e gets upset, she sometimes talks loud and angry. She pushes her dinner plate away, or she gets mad at Jojo and makes her go outside, or she won't talk to anyone. I don't like it when she gets mad at Jojo.

Lisa tells me that Kyé7e didn't always have memory loss.

“What was she like,” I ask.

“Oh. She was a real strong lady and she would throw her head back when she laughed. She took me berry picking when I was your age. She taught me how to bead. She tried to teach me how to make bannock.”

“I want to do those things with Kyé7e!” I say.

My sister says, “She needs help to do those things now, Síntse. Maybe one day, Mom and Kyé7e can show you how to make bannock.”

“Can we go for a walk with Kyé7e?” I ask.

“Let's walk with Kyé7e down to the river!” Says Lisa.



We help Kyé7e bundle up so that she doesn't get cold. I get her scarf and my sister helps her put on her jacket.

“Where are you going?” asks mom.

“On a walk with Kyé7e!” I tell her.

“Good grandchildren!” My mom smiles and she gives us dried salmon as a snack. Jojo loves to eat dried salmon, I always share mine with her.

We walk by the river.

Kyé7e holds Lisa's hand so she doesn't trip or fall. She has to walk careful.

The leaves are orange and yellow. The wind is cool and makes my nose cold.



“What is your name?” Asks Kyé7e to Lisa, “Are you Angela?”

“No, Kyé7e,” says Lisa, “Angela is my mom. I’m Lisa, your granddaughter!”

Kyé7e nods. “What is his name?” Kyé7e asks and points to me.

“My name is...” I say.

“She can’t hear you, little brother,” Lisa says, “You have to stand closer to her so she can see and hear you. Talk loudly but remember not to shout.”

I stand in front of Kyé7e and I say, “My name is Ben, Kyé7e!”

Kyé7e holds my hand. She looks at me and smiles very big.



When we walk home, Lisa points to the sky and sees two eagles. They are flying in circles over the river. We can see their white heads and black wings.

Lisa says, "Look, Kyé7e! It's good luck."

The eagles fly in circles and get closer and closer to the ground until they swoop and fly upwards, again. We stand together looking up at the sky for a very long time. Even Jojo looks up at the sky.

"Spelwéqs", Kyé7e says.

"What's that?" I ask Kyé7e. I have to ask her that three times before she says anything.

"Eagles," Kyé7e points up at them.



We go home. I tell Lisa that I wish that I knew Kyé7e before she had dementia.

My sister looks at me and says, "'You did! You just don't remember!"

"What do you mean?" I ask.

Kyé7e, my mom and my Kekec, Lisa, sit at the table. Lisa opens up a photo album and starts showing me photographs.

"Kyé7e, lots of these photos are of you."

Kyé7e drinks her tea.



Lisa says, "Here's Kyé7e when you were born. She loved to hold you."

"Here's us berry picking, Kyé7e carried you in a cradleboard out in the woods. You'd laugh all day long."

"Here's Kyé7e breaking up bannock into little pieces for you to eat."

"Kyé7e," I say loudly, "This is me and you!"

Kyé7e looks at the photo. She has to bring it closer to her eyes. She looks at the photos very carefully. Then she looks over at Lisa and says, "Who's this?"

"Your grandson," smiles Lisa.

Kyé7e nods and then smiles at me. She ruffles my hair. "Imts", she says.

"That means, grandchild, Ben," says my mom. I smile.

I give Kyé7e a big kiss on the cheek.





“Go play outside,” laughs Lisa, “Kyé7e will watch you from the window.”

Jojo yips and jumps around happily.

“C'mon JoJo,” I yell, “Bye bye, Kyé7e!”
I look back to Kyé7e at the window and I wave.
Kyé7e and Lisa smile and wave back at me.

Today was a good day.

A day I will remember for Kyé7e and me.



The End

A special thank you to the Culturally Safe Dementia Care Research Team

Secwepemcūl'ecw (Secwepemc land)

COURTESY OF SECWEPEMC CULTURAL EDUCATION SOCIETY



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Tk'emlūps te Secwepēm̓c, Skeetchestn, Adams Lake, Xatsūll, T'exelcemc, and Stswēcemc/Xgat'temc.

A HEARTWARMING STORY OF A SECWEPENC BOY LEARNING HOW TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HIS KYÉTE (GRANDMOTHER) AS SHE EXPERIENCES THE BEGINNING STAGES OF MEMORY LOSS.

About the Author & Illustrator:

Karlene Harvey (Tsilhqot'in, Carrier, and Okanagan) is an illustrator and writer living in Vancouver, BC. She received a degree in Visual Arts from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2007. Karlene's professional career spans between health- and arts-related organizations, her main passion is to facilitate connections, creativity, and engagement at the community level.

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