

THE FIRE STILL
burns

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Your Name Is Tseatsultux

WHEN WE WERE growing up, my Ta'ah (grandmother), my Papa (grandfather), and other Elders taught us the history of our Sk̓w̓wú7mesh (Squamish) People. They were always telling stories to the younger generations. We have had three Hereditary Chiefs in our family, which is pretty big business. My grandfather George Johnny was Chief of the former False Creek Reserve, which was located in an area of Vancouver now known as Kitsilano. He was a brother of Chief Khatsahlano. Another one of my Ancestors was a Chief back in Upper Squamish, which is the whole area around where the town of Squamish is today.

Right where Kitsilano is, right where the Burrard Street Bridge is, the settlers forced my people to leave their Traditional Territory because they were going to occupy the land. My people also had Traditional Territory in what is now called New Westminster. At Kitsilano, they put my people on a barge, floated them out into the deep waters, then cut them loose. The settlers made them drift for a long time, until they came across some paddlers who helped them reach safety. My great-grandfather and my grandfather were part of that group stranded on the barge. My great-great-great-grandfather had offered to buy the land from the settlers but

was denied. Indians weren't allowed to buy land. So, the story goes, the settlers forced the Squamish People onto a boat and drifted them away from their own land.

My name is Sam, Samuel George. I was born in June 1944 and have lived most of my life on Eslhá7an.¹ Our reserve is located in North Vancouver, by the water, and when I think about home, this is what I think of. I was born and raised there. The colonized name is Mission Reserve because it has a church on it. I was named after my uncle, who was overseas fighting in the Second World War; he was my mother's brother. There was about a two-year difference between each of my siblings and me. My brother Ross, who has passed on, was the oldest, then Margaret, who is about four years older than me. Next is Andy, who is two years older than I am, then me and my baby sister, Beatrice, or Honey Bee. I don't know – nobody seems to know – but I think it was one of our aunts who called her Honey Bee. We were all very close in early life. We took care of each other. When Mom had to go to Vancouver, Dad was working, or our parents were gone all day, Ross and Margaret would cook for us. They'd make sandwiches for us younger kids. Andy took especially good care of me.

Ross was really level-headed and protective. He always reminded us that if we were in trouble, or if we needed help, to get him. I only have one memory of him getting mad at me. Margaret was more the motherly type. She was constantly caring for us. My brother Andy and I were close. Whatever he was doing, I was right there with him. Beatrice, my baby sister, was my agitator, I guess. We became good friends. We would go to the movies or just do stuff together, until I got mixed up with all the guys. When I started

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¹ Pronounced [*Ut-sla-han*].

going with the guys, I'd get mad at her when she tried to tag along.

Dad – Stephen, or Flossie they called him – was a long-shoreman, a hunter and fisherman too. My dad's nickname was Flossie because he had a girlfriend when he was really young, and her name was Flossie. He had five brothers, so they gave him the nickname. For the rest of his life, everyone called him Flossie. My dad was quite a bit older than my mom. I think he had about twenty years on her. I know he was born in the early 1900s. I know this because he was too young for the First World War, but too old for the Second World War. My mom's name was Josephine, and my Ta'ah's English name was Margaret. She was born in the 1800s and got married when she was only twelve. She had sixteen children, though they didn't all survive. My Papa was tall – at least six feet. I don't remember his traditional name, but we just called him Papa. His English name was Willie. They didn't call each other that, though. They had their traditional names, and I remember them calling each other by their traditional names. My traditional name is Tseatsultux,² and it goes back five generations that we know of. It was my dad's grandfather's (also named George Johnny) traditional name. My Ta'ah told me, "Your name is Tseatsultux," and she made me repeat it about four or five times to remember it.

I always had a crewcut back then. My hair was always cut short. My brother Ross was like that too. It was the fashion in them days. Whenever he went for a haircut, he'd bring me. I usually wore hand-me-down clothes as well. I got Andy's clothes. If I got anything new, it would be shoes or socks, but the other clothes were hand-me-downs.

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² Pronounced [*Tse-at-sul-tux*].

Dad was quite short. He got my Ta'ah's height, that's for sure. He was sort of a tough guy. We always viewed him that way. He used to be a boxer. He also had short black hair, and he combed it straight back every morning, and he had a really thick beard. He'd shave once in the morning and then once more before he went to bed. He dressed like a long-shoreman – you know, jeans, workboots, and a jacket with a hat. My mom was heavy, and she liked to dress up. She liked to put makeup on and do her hair. Mom had long silky hair, but she didn't go to the hairdresser or anything. Her sisters or cousins would visit, and they would do each other's hair and share makeup.

My oldest memory is of my first Christmas tree, from when I was quite young, at just over a year old. I know this because I could hardly walk, and back then Margaret packed me around a lot. We had a wood stove, and my mom put us kids around it, and my dad filled it up with wood to make sure we were kept warm all night. We lived in a very old house and it smelled like old wood. It had old wooden floors, old paint, and sometimes you could smell the windows. They were just single-pane, so the house was either too hot or too cold. My siblings and I used to sleep around the wood stove, but once my parents built the upstairs, it became our bedroom. It was one open room, which was the whole length of the upstairs.

I guess while we were all sleeping, Mom and Dad brought the Christmas tree, decorated it, and lit it up. I remember waking up one morning to really excited voices. I remember crawling on my bed, looking over, and there was this beautiful tree. I didn't understand the meaning yet, but I remember looking at it, just staring at it. When Margaret glanced over, she saw me kneeling on the bed and she came running over, picked me up, and carried me over to the tree. She sat me down in front of it, and I remember looking at it in awe. It

was sparkling, bubbling, and flashing off and on. In them days, they would decorate it with candy. Little strings of candy went from the top to the bottom. I remember my sister breaking off some candy and putting it in my mouth. That's my first recollection of sweets.

Supper time was a big time. While Dad was working, I remember my grandmother, his mother, coming over with my Papa. All the women would be sitting at the table chopping up the meat and the veggies, or potatoes, or making the rice. While they were getting the supper ready, they would all be talking. Maybe three or four of them, not a whole bunch, but the thing about them talking was that they were speaking the Squamish language. My parents mostly spoke to us in English but they were fluent in Squamish, and all of the adults, including our grandparents, spoke to each other in it. Growing up, there was a mixture of English and Squamish spoken in our house. In them days I could understand the Squamish language, though I couldn't speak it fluently because I was too young. We would just listen whenever the adults were speaking among themselves. You know, my grandparents, my Papa and Ta'ah, barely spoke English. They spoke broken English, but they used to talk to us in Squamish. They would mostly say stuff like, "Be careful. Watch out. Don't do that." I can still understand some words.

When the women were cooking, my Papa would be outside chopping away and keeping the cookstove burning. I remember going out there with him, thinking I was helping, but he'd be telling me, "Watch your fingers. Keep your fingers away." He'd be chopping wood, then we'd load it all up and he'd give me one piece. We'd both walk in and keep the fire going. Finally, when the supper came, my dad would arrive home from work and we'd all run to meet him. I would be going for his hand to hold, and my older siblings

went for his lunch bucket. When they opened up his lunch bucket, there were always cookies or fruit in there: an apple, orange, or whatever. He would always have enough for us, you know – just part of the game he played, I guess. After that, we'd all sit down for supper. Everyone would be around the table talking, gossiping, joking, teasing – and all in the Squamish language. When we finished eating, the grandmothers and the women would clean the dishes, and Dad and Papa would go sit in the living room and just talk. Sometimes Ross would sit with them too.

Back then, my Ta'ah was the most important person to me. Ta'ah was very short – probably not even five feet, and heavy. I remember she smelled either like soap from cleaning or like frybread from cooking, and she always wore a bandana. I had never seen her hair because she always had that bandana on. Ta'ah also wore a long flowery dress and really thick socks. It didn't matter what the weather was like. If it was raining or snowing, she always wore a little thin sweater that she couldn't button up. She was always telling us stories and legends, and pointing out who our relatives were. I remember we would take frequent walks through the reserve. She'd say, "Let's go for a walk." We'd walk and talk, and I'd ask, "Who's that?" and she'd always say, "That's your relation." If it were a girl, I would look at her and ask, "Who is that?" and she'd without a doubt respond, "That's your *close* relation."

My Ta'ah visited all the time. She would cook for us, do our dishes and laundry. She really took care of me. Took care of us. I remember her hauling all of our laundry down the street to her place. When my Ta'ah used to comb my hair, she would spit on her hands and rub it on my head to comb the hair wet. That's just the way it was. I'd never allow anybody to do that except Ta'ah. I used to sit beside her when we ate because she would cut up my food and feed me. She

also gave me the most hugs. When I was sick, if I had the flu or didn't feel well, I always went to her house. She would put me right to bed, or any one of us kids. We'd stay at her house until we got better.

My Ta'ah taught my two sisters how to weave cedar hats and cedar capes, and how to make rugs out of cloth. She was always busy doing something or cooking. Whenever it was the season to fish for salmon, we would make a big fire and Ta'ah would cook the salmon. She would cut it in a special way and tie the salmon onto pieces of wood, then hang it over the fire to barbecue it.

It was my Papa who taught me how to smoke salmon. I remember asking my Papa to read to me once. I brought him over a comic, probably Superman or Batman, and he didn't know how to read. He'd just explain to me what they were doing, as best he could. I knew that he didn't know how to read, and he would say, "Oh, this guy's doing this, and this guy's doing that," and then I'd say, "Thank you, Papa." Ta'ah was the matriarch; she made the decisions.

My grandmother, on my mom's side, lived about two doors down from an Indian Shaker Church, and she used to bring us to that. The Indian Shaker Churches were created because Indigenous beliefs were banned, so they combined those beliefs with Christianity. But my Ta'ah used to bring us to the Longhouse, which is still in the same place – on the Capilano Reserve, right by Lions Gate Bridge. Back then, when we'd visit the Longhouse, she'd pack a bunch of blankets and pillows and make a bed for us behind her because we'd go there for two to three days. We really loved it because a lot of people would come to the Longhouse. About four or five hundred folks, with about three or four hundred drums, and they would all be drumming. I remember the Longhouse just vibrating and the vibrations going right through me. It was the same thing with the Shaker Churches.

In them days, the Longhouse was quite old. I remember sitting in it, looking around at all the wall expansions. It had a lot of cedar shakes for the walls, and benches. The Longhouse was probably 120 feet long, and maybe 100 feet wide, and it could seat the crowds. The benches were stacked five high, and they went all the way around the building. There was a door in the front, and a side door leading into the kitchen. When people came to visit, the Squamish People always made sure the visitors would eat first and that we were the last to eat. There was always something to eat, and the adults made sure us kids and the Elders ate. Indigenous Peoples from down in the United States, like the Lummi, would come to the Longhouse. Even nations on Vancouver Island or from Chilliwack would come visit. People from nations all over would join.

If I am not mistaken, there have been three different Longhouses in my lifetime. Two burned down. In one instance, some bikers were seen leaving, so everyone believes they destroyed it. The other instance was accidental. I believe someone was cooking in the Longhouse and, since it was made with old dry wood, it went up like a matchbox. Once the fire started, the firemen were there to make sure it didn't spread.

Ta'ah was married twice. Her first husband was my dad's father. He passed away as a Medicine Man. He picked everything from herbs to plants and mixed them up to become medicines. She gained her knowledge about medicines from him. I remember that every so often she'd say, "I want to go for a walk now. I need medicine." All of us kids would get up and go along with her.

In them days, there were a lot of bushes and trails on the North Shore. We could walk all the way to the Lions Gate Bridge just through the trails. We'd walk along the trails and she'd say, "Oh, I want some of those," but she wouldn't pick

the medicines herself – we’d go pick them. This was her way of passing knowledge on to us. We’d give them to her, and she’d say, “Taste it.” Some of it tasted good and other things were kind of icky. She’d say, “Don’t pick it all. We might need some later, or somebody else is going to need some.” We’d bring the medicines to her, and she’d smell them. Then she’d explain to us, “This is for if your head hurts, you know, like if you’ve got a headache,” then she’d put it in a basket, and we’d go pick some more. She’d say, “This is for if your tummy hurts,” or “This is for if you’ve got a cut or a sore.” She’d show us how to use the medicines. When she said, “Okay, I have enough now,” we would make our way home.

Once we were home, Ta’ah would dump everything on the table, and tell my brother or sister to fill up a pot of water, half-full or full. Ta’ah would grab her plants, sort them out, and throw some into the pot. She then instructed my brother or sister to put it on the stove and let it boil. She was making medicine, and she was teaching us. She was teaching us all the time, sharing knowledge. “This is for when you can’t sleep. Take this and it’ll put you to sleep,” Ta’ah would say.

The only one I remember is the mint because you could smell and taste it. Even stinging nettles were good. We called one plant skunk cabbage because it smelled like skunk. There was a big plant she used that I can’t really remember the name of. I hardly ever see that plant anymore. I don’t even see the same plants on the reserve these days. There are too many houses, too much cement, and too much pollution.

Back then, when the tide came in, it came all the way up to our reserve. When the tide went out, it went way out and left muddy sand with puddles about two to three inches deep. The tide went so far out it seemed like you could almost go to Vancouver – just jump in and swim across.

At times when the tide was out, my Ta'ah would make an announcement, and everyone would show up at the beach with big sticks or poles. The men would take off their shoes and roll up their pants, then we'd all line up and walk in one direction. Some of the guys would stick their poles in the big puddles, wiggle them, flip them, and a fish would go flying up. Then all of us little kids would run over, grab it, and chase it around while it was flopping. Some of the other Elders would stick their poles in the puddles, wiggle the pole around, and pull out a nice big crab. In no time, the aunties would shout to us, "Okay, we've got enough now." That meant we had enough fish or crab to feed everybody, so we'd go back up to shore and sit by the fire.

Around the fire, people would brush their feet off, then they'd put on their socks and shoes again. At this time, one of the Ta'ahs or aunties would pull out a big metal pot with a spout and handle, fill it halfway with water, and push it against the fire to boil. Then they would tell the Firekeepers – usually uncles, older men, or my brothers – to dig a hole about three or four inches deep in the sand. The Firekeepers put the crabs, clams, and fish in the hole and covered them with leaves, or sand and ash. Then they pulled the fire over top of it all, to cook the seafood. Eventually, everybody would be sitting, and the ladies would always miraculously pull out tea bags, sugar, and their cups. They put the tea bags in the hot water, then someone would go around pouring the tea.

While our catch was cooking, we would go to the cedar tree and cut bark, maybe four inches wide and about a foot long. We'd use the cedar bark as plates. The Ta'ahs would say, "Okay, it's ready," and the guys would go dig out the catch. We'd pile the food on our cedar bark. We didn't use forks or spoons to eat, either. We only needed a spoon to stir the tea. We always made sure there was something left over

that we would offer to the Grandmothers and Grandfathers, and to Mother Earth. There would be two plates of food. One would be placed in the fire for our Ancestors, and one would be placed in the creek to flow away with the water, or in a tree for Mother Earth. Once we had nice full tummies, we'd all go home. There were always quite a few people at these gatherings. Sometimes it would be four or six of us, and other times about eighteen or twenty. It was a family thing.

In them days, our reserve was lush with plants and trees. There were a lot of trees – and fruit, such as salmonberries, salmonberry shoots, and blackberries, of course. In the backyard of the house where I lived with Mom and Dad, we had plum, pear, cherry, and apple trees. All of them were my favourite berries and fruit. From our windows, you could see the water. Back then, the ocean was different. It looked a lot cleaner. It looked blue or green, with white rocks and sand. We would also get about three or four feet of snow every year. I don't know, but everything seemed much cleaner. Probably because there weren't as many vehicles.

A lot of the houses were very old. They were all constructed on stilts and logs. They were built right by the water, and we used outhouses. They were built to be truly sturdy. I remember we had to walk about half a block down to get water from a little creek that no longer exists. Someone, I guess the band, hooked up a tap in the creek and we got our water there. We'd fill up a couple of buckets, or however much we needed, and bring it back home for Mom to use for cooking and cleaning. In them days, there were a lot of creeks on the reserve. We even had a creek going right beside our house.

Back then, we ate a lot of fish, chicken, and game, like deer and mountain goat. We ate quite a bit of stew, rice, potatoes and, of course, frybread or baked bread. My favourites, though, were smoked salmon, trout, and frybread. Plus, we consumed a lot of tea and homemade jams

from Ta'ah's medicine trades. My Ta'ah had a whole cupboard that was filled with medicines. They had no labels on them. Visitors would go over to her house to talk. Sometimes their husbands or children were sick, and my Ta'ah would get up, open the cupboard, grab some medicine, and tell them what to do with it. The visitors would dig in their bags and give her jam or some bread, fried bread, or smoked salmon. That's how they paid. When she was teaching us, she'd say, "I'm showing you what your grandfather taught me. He told me to teach this to you kids. If you go to someone's house and they give you tea and bread, you sit down and drink the tea or eat the bread. Maybe that's all they got. And don't ever ask for anything. Don't ask for money. Just take what they give you. Sometimes they'll give you fish, maybe even half a fish, but they're sharing, they're paying. That's how some people give thanks." That's what Ta'ah taught us.

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In Them Days

ASIDE FROM MY Ta'ah's lessons, my favourite memories from childhood are probably the meals and hanging around with friends. Going down to the beach, getting food, spending summers going anywhere and everywhere. A bunch of the kids from First Street would walk down to catch the old ferry to Vancouver, and then we'd go to the movies. There were four movie theatres that we'd go to. We'd watch whatever there was, since it was only about ten cents to get admitted. We'd each bring fifty cents, which was enough for popcorn and pop. The movies were always loaded with kids because they showed matinees. I remember we watched Roy Rogers and everybody's favourite, Superman. The movies typically had cowboys-versus-Indians plots, and because of this, I always felt that the Indians were bad. In those movies, the Indians were killing people in massacres. I didn't like it. I felt guilty because I was an Indian. It wasn't the same in Roy Rogers and Gene Autry movies. They never really killed anybody, like in the other kind of movies. Instead, they always shot the gun out of their enemy's hand rather than kill them. So those were good movies.

During the summertime, us kids would stay outside until the sun went down, or until we could hear our parents calling

us in. We would go catch salmon or trout, or pick clams and crabs, then cook them. I would go around with Rick, who was my age, and my older brother Andy. I called Rick my brother because he lived right next door to us. When we weren't at his house, he was always at our house. There was also Patty – he was my age – a guy named Harold – we called him Cookie – who was about the same age as my brother Andy, a guy called Big Brian, and Louie Miranda. That's the thing; we travelled around a lot together, in a little gang of all the guys around our age. We went swimming and fishing, and walked downtown. We frequented the ocean because when the tide went out, there was a big area we could use to swim. We'd walk along the train tracks and go down to Mosquito Creek to swim and fish, but most of the time we stayed below the church and swam there because we loved the sand. We used a hook and string to fish. We used what we called seaworms as bait, tied a rock around the string to use as a sinker, then dropped the line in. We caught sockeye salmon, spring salmon, and some dogfish in Mosquito Creek. Maybe somebody had a nickel or dime and we'd get a pop, go sit in a bush or on a chair, and share it. Also, there was a mill right beside the reserve and we knew the guys who worked there. We'd go talk to them sometimes. They knew us by name, and we knew them by name. As kids, we always found things to do or play with, you know?

I remember we had this dog, this rez dog. His name was Prince. I think he was the last dog that the people used to make wool from. People on the rez had dogs that they used to cut the fur of to make wool. Prince used to follow us kids around. He was part of our gang. As soon as we got up in the morning, he'd be sitting outside waiting for us. We'd sit outside, eating whatever we had, and give him toast or whatever.

Our family had a dog too. She was a water spaniel and her name was Sugar. She was born around the same time as

me. She passed away when she was about fifteen. She was a part of the family. One time, she had puppies and Mom put them outside on the back porch. We were all in bed one particular night when we heard Sugar growling and fighting. Mom bolted outside to see what was going on. There were about four rats trying to get the newborn pups, and Sugar was fending them off. So Mom, Dad, and Ross started clubbing away the rats. My dad had said he wanted to get rid of the puppies, but he still went out there with a stick to fend off the rats. Thankfully, they never got any puppies, and Mom moved the puppies inside. We always had a cat or a dog to keep the rats out of the house.

Another time when I was a kid, our cat had kittens on my brother Andy's pillow – right by his head. Me and my brother used to sleep together, and I woke up one morning and the cat – we called her Topsy – had given birth to four tiny kittens. There was blood and afterbirth everywhere, including on my brother's head, and all the kittens were mewling. I yelled for my mom and she got a box and a blanket and put them in there. Topsy was a tabby cat and this was one of her first litters. She kept having kittens, and her later litters were more like eight or nine kittens. Eventually, we just had a box under the stove; it was the kitten box.

Once in a while we helped Mom with chores. It was mostly our mess, I guess. We'd tidy up our toys and our clothes, and she'd do the laundry. Sometimes my sister and I would go out to help Mom hang clothes on the clothesline. We'd stand beside her and hand her the clothespins. Dad, on the other hand, if he was ever building something, we could only pretend we were helping.

I remember that every Friday, Dad got paid, so that was a big thing. My mom and all my aunties would meet at our house, and one auntie would stay home with all of us kids. Usually one or two aunties would stay home to watch about

ten of us kids. There was Auntie Micky, Auntie Dorothy, Auntie Mabel, and Auntie Bunny. My mom and aunts would get ready, put their makeup on. They'd go meet my dad and their husbands. Their husbands were longshoremen, too, and had the same payday. Mom would come home with these little cardboard wax boxes, and they were always filled with Chinese food. Everyone was always so happy because we'd all be sitting around eating Chinese food. After supper, Mom would put a blanket on the floor and dump all the toys she bought us. I think the ladies would go to second-hand stores. They'd leave at about seven in the morning and be gone all day. When they got home, they would have a whole bunch of shopping bags. Mom would buy whatever anybody needed. They weren't new toys, but we would pick whatever we wanted. I remember I had an old brown teddy bear with one eye. I'm sure Mom got it from a second-hand store because it was pretty beat-up when I got it. I didn't care, though. It was my buddy, and I slept with it.

I seemed to get sick a lot as a kid. Whenever pneumonia was going around, I got it. When the flu was going around, I got flu. I also had an ear problem, a mastoid, that bothered me until it was operated on. I can recall my mom getting me dressed early one morning when I was about four and taking me on the bus to St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. At the time, I didn't have a clue where we were going. Before we got to the hospital, she brought me into a grocery store and bought me a pop. After that, she walked me to the hospital and left me there. The hospital had a detergent smell to it. The nurses led me up to my room, and of course I was terrified. I cried a lot, and the doctors took quite a bit of blood. A couple days later, on the day of the operation, I remember trying to fight them off when they were putting me to sleep. The hospital staff had to hold me down, and I was even

trying to hold my breath. They finally put me to sleep once they got the mask on and completed the operation on my ear. I don't know how long it was, but I seemed to stay in the hospital for a long time. Thankfully, the nurses were pleasant and nice. They were there to take care of me. I had no fear of them, even though they were nuns. Back then, I just knew that they were Christian or something.

I was quite happy back then, you know? Being young, I didn't know whether it was Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. I would just go to bed, wake up when the sun was shining, and carry on. I didn't know any days, but I remember enjoying things because I'd get up with my siblings, sometimes even my dad. Mom would be cooking breakfast, mostly eggs, bacon, and toast, or just eggs and toast with a bottle of milk. In addition, at that time, there were only two TVs on the reserve that I knew of. One of them was at my Ta'ah's house and we used to go over there to watch. There would be a whole bunch of us, the whole family. There were about two channels. We watched shows like *Howdy Doody*.

In them days, I didn't really have a sense of the world outside of the reserve and North Vancouver because I was mostly hanging around with a crowd from the reserve. We stuck with each other, and at the time there were probably about two hundred people living on the rez. We didn't really communicate with people off the reserve, unless we gave them money or we bought something. When I think about it, we didn't really have many interactions with white people. I think I must have been pretty well protected because I didn't know about the outside world. It didn't really concern me. It wasn't until I went to residential school that I was taught that we were different. Residential school taught me that the priests, the RCMP, and the nuns were number one. They were the rule. The boss.

But it wasn't like that prior to residential school. Before residential school, I never felt unsafe around white people. They had grocery stores, corner stores. We just went to the store, and if they were there, they were there. They drove the taxis and ran the ferries. They seemed to all be in service work. We never went out of our way to connect with white people, unless they talked to us. I remember my dad took us to the movies on Saturdays, and he would talk to the white guys. When we were on the ferry, the guys would say, "Hey, hi," and he'd go over to talk to them.

But there was one time when I learned something about the difference between white people and us. When I was about four or five years old, I was playing outside, and I walked away from our yard toward a shingle mill where some other boys were playing. They climbed the boxcars – the ones that carried shingles – and then they started jumping from the boxcars to the mill, which was about three feet away. At first, I was too scared to jump, but the other boys urged me on, so I took a little run and jumped. I was surprised how easy it was, so I jumped back onto the boxcar and back to the mill and I kept going back and forth. It seemed easy, so I got careless, and then I jumped back to the boxcar from the mill without taking a run and I didn't make it. I hit the ground hard. I lay there dazed. When I got up, my chin was bleeding and my arm just hung there. I started walking toward home. I must have been in shock. As I walked, I seen my mom and dad and my whole family running toward me. My mom got to me first and then my dad scooped me up. I thought I'd get spanked, so I tried to blame my brother, who wasn't even there when I fell. They carried me home and they must have called a taxi to rush me to Lions Gate Hospital.

In them days, Lions Gate couldn't or wouldn't help Natives. I lay there on a bed, bleeding and crying, with my

arm broken. Three doctors stood by the door and did nothing but watch me. My dad got angry and yelled, “What kind of doctors are you?” But they just stood there. Finally, a nurse came rushing forward. She said she didn’t care about the rules, and she poked me with a painkiller. One of the doctors yelled at her, but she glared back and left the room. My pain started to go away and then an ambulance took me to Vancouver to St. Paul’s Hospital – the Indian hospital. I remember the siren and that the ambulance seemed to go very fast. My mom kept telling me to lie down. The next thing I remember was waking up with my arm in a cast and my mom and dad standing by my bed and looking worried. Then a nurse came and gave me another needle and I fell back to sleep. Even today, my right arm is still bent at the elbow. The surgeons did the best they could, but it’s never been the same.

Even though our parents worried about us, they weren’t really affectionate while we were growing up. I’m a second-generation residential school Survivor, so there wasn’t much physical or verbal affection in our house. No one ever said “I love you” and I don’t think me and my siblings bonded that much, even though we loved each other. We still do. When I was a kid, my mom didn’t pick me up much, but I do have some memories of her packing me around when I was very young. We never got any hugs from Dad either – except sometimes when he drank, he would hug us. My parents never talked about their lives, and when I went off to residential school, even though they’d gone, we never talked about it. When I was at the school, we were occasionally allowed to come home for the weekends, and once, when my dad brought us back to the school on Sunday evening, he asked, “How do they treat you there?” I said it was okay and that was it. I was afraid to tell him about the abuse because

if ever we complained about it, and the nuns found out, we'd get slapped or get the strap. If my dad didn't believe what I said, he didn't say anything about it.

As a family, we did take a couple of trips that I can recall. We went to Upper Squamish, because Dad had family up there. We also went deer hunting with our dad in Upper Squamish. He always shot the deer and we didn't actually do anything. Us kids always stayed behind him. We'd follow his lead, watch his moves, and learn how to be quick and quiet. Another time, we attended canoe races down in the United States. The races took place in Lummi, Washington, or a little bit farther south. We got a motel for the night. All the canoe racers from across the Lower Mainland competed there in six-man races. It was a big occasion. Of course, there was plenty of salmon, crabs, and clams to go around.

Before all the kids in my age group went to residential school, there wasn't a lot of alcohol use on the rez, but the adults did occasionally party. I remember my uncles and aunties would come over and the adults would drink or go out. It was once we went away to the school that there was a surge in alcohol use on the reserve among my parents' generation. I believe it was because they no longer had children to take care of.

Before residential school, I didn't know much about Christianity. I think we went to church once in a while. We usually went on occasions like Easter and Christmas. We'd go with my parents or my grandmother. Christmas was a big time because the church had midnight Mass, and we'd go as a family. I do remember that the priest had a sort of bank for the kids to save money in. If we had a quarter, we'd give him the quarter, and he'd put a little stamp in a book we had to log our savings. I also remember going to the church graveyard. That was when we sort of experienced Christianity. The cemetery had a section right at the end of the graveyard

reserved for the deceased that weren't baptized. They had to be buried by themselves because they weren't Christian. I knew that my siblings and I were baptized.

Before I went to the school, I didn't know much about it. I have memories of kids disappearing, like Patty, Cookie, and Louie. I remember my brother telling me that they were gone to the school. I'd ask my mom about what happened to my friends, and she wouldn't say they went to residential school. She'd just say, "They're gone to school." I knew that meant they went to live there. It was as if people were saying that the kids went to a bad place without saying those exact words. Even my dad – once in a while he would say, "I went to residential school," but he never elaborated on what that meant. Maybe my parents never talked about it because they had a bad experience or maybe they didn't want to scare us. It wasn't until my siblings and I went that we would see everyone who disappeared.

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St. Paul's Indian Residential School class photo with a young Sam George sitting on the newel post at the foot of the stairs, c. 1952. Located in North Vancouver, St. Paul's began operations in 1899 and closed on September 1, 1959.

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