

The Plane Truth

Bush plane circled remote village
One fall morning
Dogs barked and howled
No one had seen an airplane before.
Elders watched as it landed on the lake, and
Came to shore, a priest and an Indian Agent,
Villagers were out
Standing, looking, touching,
At this strange flying machine, except
Grandfather, he had spiritual connections.
They walked to the band office, and said:
They were here for five children,
They had to go to mission school, it is the law!

The stern priest called their names.
The little ones were brought out of hiding.
They clung to each other.
The Indian Agent and priest,
Forced them onto the cold plane,
Kicking, screaming, and crying,
Near death from fear of leaving,
Flying, the unknown, and loss of family,
In their language, they called for their parents, but
Pleas were drowned out by starting motor.
The machine came alive, and
Started across the lake, soon
The motor roared, as it raced across the water, and
Took off into Father Sky,

The children wet themselves from fright.
One never spoke again.
Their fear was unimaginable.
The oldest boy bravely peaked outside the little window,
He saw his village slowly disappearing.
He would battle alcohol his whole life.
The pilot made unnecessary maneuvers
Designed to further scare the children,
Who huddled in fear,
Crying, staring into each other's eyes.
They saw grandfather, saying you are not alone.
The holy men laughed at the sight of them.

Soon they landed on another lake.
Priests and Nuns met them, to

Take prisoners to the concentration camp.
The plane continued its journey,
It roared indignantly across the lake,
Disrupting peace and tranquility of ancestors,
The flying machine circled, and
Headed towards the mountains,
The plane began sputtering, lost its thrust,
Became deathly silent, and crashed into the mountain.
Both men perished in a fiery death.

The children were separated, deloused,
Showered, given a number, and
Sacred hair cut short.
Traditional clothes discarded,
Exchanged for European ones,
Grandfather's protective necklace
Cast into the fire and cursed.
They were punished for speaking their language.
Trying to stay together,
They planned to meet by the lake
After lights out, this place was evil, and
A priest was coming for the youngest.

The Canadian Geese had begun arriving.
It was cold, snow was starting to fall.
Soon the children were huddled on shore.
They could hear yelling from camp,
The priest came early, and found boy not there.
Boy said we must follow the railroad tracks.
It is far brother; others tried and froze to death.
Dogs barking and people yelling obscenities,
We can't go back; grandfather came to me in a dream.
I am following his instructions.

An old gander appeared saying:
Children mount us, hold our necks,
Burrow deep into our feathers.
We will take you home, grandfather is waiting.
The geese flew information, circling the evil below.
Wood stoves burning, smoke drifting above,
Tea and bannock awaiting their arrival,
Taken on medal wings, returned on feathered ones,
To awaiting arms of clan members,
Grandfather waved and sang an ancient chant.
They honked and flew away, a flight of angels!

