

# Conquering Residential School Memories

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## The Crying Warrior

*“You were chosen by God the Father  
long ago. He knew you  
were to become His children. You were  
set apart for holy  
living by the Holy Spirit. May you obey  
Jesus Christ and  
be made clean by His blood. May you be  
full of His  
loving-favor and peace.”*

**1 Peter 1:2 NLV**

When I was born they gave me a number. I was 643. That means I was the 643<sup>rd</sup> child born on Walpole Island Reserve in Ontario, Canada.

I don't remember much about my early childhood. The only thing I do

remember is that I lived with my mother, but she left us alone for most of the time. It got so bad that finally my grandfather found me and took me to live with him. When it was time to go to school, I was put on a boat and then they walked me to school in Sault Sainte Marie.

The first time I spoke in my Native language at the school (I couldn't speak English then), I was slapped. I remember saying something again and I was slapped again. I tried a third time and the same thing happened. So I kept quiet from then on.

What I remember is that the world was at war with Germany and we were in a residential school—a prison-type school. If we misbehaved, we got a big stick across our hands or our behinds.

I didn't realize it then, but I found myself in a battle. Hatred started to grow real slowly. I began to receive abuse from the older boys. They took out their frustrations on the little ones.

They would hang you on a ladder and punch your stomach. If you cried, they

would keep going. So you learned not to cry and it toughened you.

From the time I was six, I was sexually abused. I blocked this out, but a lot of times it hurt me so badly, the anger just built up more and more.

For several of the summers we were able to go home where my sister and I faced more punishment. Whippings.

Finally, when I was about ten, I decided I'd had enough and ran away. I got up, grabbed my younger sister and walked to where my dad's side of the family lived. When I got there my grandmother was mad.

"You're not going back there. You're staying right here," she stated.

I knew there was going to be a knock on the door. Sure enough, it wasn't long before my grandfather was standing outside.

Grandmother was a small lady, but she stood up to him and told him we weren't going back to live with them. We didn't. For the first time in my life,

my sister and I had a real good summer—the best we ever had.

Over the years, the anger continued to build. I realized I had to get out of there (the residential school).

It got to the point whenever there was a problem, they would blame it on me. Finally they called my mother and told her they were sending me home. After ten years in the boarding school, they kicked me out. I was 14.

I went to Detroit, Michigan. It was good for a while but there was no bond between my mother and me. She had a drinking problem. More or less I lived on my own, going back to the reservation a few times.

I started drinking when I was about twelve and got into trouble, ending up in jail the first time when I was almost 16.

Somebody suggested going into the service, so I joined the United States Navy. But I couldn't handle it because I was unable to take orders. I rebelled and took off going AWOL. When I turned myself in, they gave me six months in

Fort Smith asking if I wanted to be released from the Navy.

“We’ll give you general discharge under honorable conditions if you want to be released.”

I grabbed it. Now, at 19 years of age, what was I going to do?

Moving to Chicago, I found work but soon was on the streets. I’d work sometimes mostly hustling, shooting pool and surviving. For thirteen years, I lived on the streets.

I met a girl and moved in with her. I felt a lot of pain relieved when I had somebody to cling to and she clung to me. Yet my old ways were still the same.

I never got into heavy drugs because I believe my body was healthy and I wanted to keep it that way. I loved to drink and I drank a lot of beer. I didn’t bring myself down to a physical wreck but the fighting was there.

As I lived on the streets there was a lot of fighting—knife fights. The goal was to be king of the street. I was fast with my hands. It was a good thing too.

I hated white people and found them. When I whipped them, I got this beautiful feeling inside. Any time they'd open their mouth, I'd crack 'em one. It made me feel so good. I hated them because of what they did to me in the boarding school.

After seven years, I finally married my girlfriend. I thought it was the right thing to do. We had two daughters together. All the times I ran out on this girl, she stuck like glue. All the beatings I gave her meant nothing to her. I felt the Lord was telling me to go home. So we packed up and I moved my wife and family back to my reserve in Canada.

Now that I was back on the reserve, I was back to the old stuff again. At 33, I began to ask myself what I was to do. All of a sudden, it seemed that I was just existing.

My wife and I were having a real difficult time living together. Before long, I left my wife and daughters and went back to the first girlfriend I had on the reserve when I was still a teenager.

My wife and family packed up and went back to Chicago.

One day after years of drinking, I was fed up with life, abuse, and being an alcoholic. I was plain drunk and getting dirty. So I called my mother up, “Mom, that guy you want me to meet, what’s his name?”

“His name is Grant Ward.”

I replied, “Maybe you better send him to me and let me talk to him.” Later Grant called and said he would be right over. I was just starting on another beer when he walked through the door.

“Put that down. You aren’t going to need it anymore.” He started to tell me about Jesus and how He loved me. “All you have to do is accept Him into your heart.”

“OK,” I replied.

“You want to go to church?” he asked.

“OK.”

We went to the church and walked up to the altar. Grant explained how to

accept Christ as my personal Savior. Then he asked me to pray.

“Jesus, if You’re real, I want You to come into my life. I accept You as my personal Savior.”

I looked around. Nothing. I didn’t feel anything.

“You have to accept Him by faith,” Grant said.

“If He’s such a good Jesus, I’ve got a hangover. Ask Him to take it away.”

So the preacher prayed, “Take the hangover away from Jack.”

It cleared up but I was not quite convinced yet. I said, “Lord, if You’re real, send my wife home. I won’t call her.”

A week went by. The phone rang.

“Hello,” I answered.

“Jack,” my wife pleaded from Chicago, “come and get me.”

I went to the band office, got some money and then jumped in the car and went to Chicago and moved her back.

The Holy Spirit began to work in me. I saw things that only a guy who has confidence in Christ would understand.

I twisted my ankle and it swelled up like a cantaloupe. My wife said, “Jack, why don’t you go see a doctor?”

“No. My God said He could heal me. I’m going to ask for healing. “God, if You’re real, I want healing in my leg.” So I started walking. My wife looked at me in amazement. I walked normal, but my leg was still big. An hour or so later, the swelling went down. This is the way I started to believe.

Then in 1975, my wife died. She was only 31 years old. Again I cursed God. “You gave me something and You take it away.”

I started to drift away. I watched TV and I’d see the foam running down from these beer commercials. I just loved beer.

One day I had a welfare meeting up north and I figured no one would see me. I started drinking again and got drunk. Finally, I went back home. I was so

ashamed but I didn't care. I continued drinking.

Several months later, I was once again sitting in a bar having a round of beer. All my drinking buddies were there. All of a sudden I felt the Holy Spirit's touch. It was as if Jesus took me by the hand and led me into a place of darkness.

“No, I don't want it,” I said to myself.

I looked up at my friends, got up and headed for the door. “This is not for me, guys, I'm going back to the Lord.” I walked out and was healed instantly from drinking booze.

A year or two later, I had a job with the American Indian Health Center in Chicago and I was also going to the Moody Bible Institute, studying the Word, trying to get my life back together.

One day this little nurse walked in. I sat down and looked over towards her. A little voice inside me said, “Jack, this is going to be your wife.”

A couple months later, I got up the courage to ask her out. A year-and-a-half later, we were married and moved back to the reserve.

The final phase of this healing was when I heard a white man ask for forgiveness for what he had done to us. I cried like a baby.

The Lord said, “Jack, I’ve given you the gift of prayer. I’ve given your language back to you when you asked. You speak your language fluently because you asked for it. From now on you will be called “Crying Warrior.” You will go and preach My Word.

God said to me, “I’m not through with you yet, I’m just starting.” And He has.