



**A PERSONAL
RECONCILIATION
JOURNEY**

**MEET MY UNCLE,
RICKY PATRICK
MCDONNELL,
BORN MARCH 21, 1963 ON A
RESERVE IN WETASKIWIN**



THE ADOPTION STORY

- In early 1964, Ricky, as a baby, became a foster child to my grandparents, James and Margaret McDonnell.
- They were told he was “rescued” from an indigenous family on a nearby reserve in Wetaskiwin, due to concerns of neglect. My family openly welcomed him into their home.
- Child Welfare indicated they would search for another family on the reserve to be his forever home.
- A few years went by and Ricky became part of the family, despite knowing another family was being sought out.
- The dreaded day finally came when Social Services came by to say they found a home for Ricky. They were devastated until they were informed that the agency could not find a suitable home on the reserve and thought they were the best option for Ricky. My family was ecstatic.
- Ricky was then adopted and officially became a McDonnell.



Ricky was a very active boy who loved being outside, riding his bicycle, playing with marbles, as well as sling shots. When I grew up, we still had my granddad's old TV stereo (visible in photo below) that bore the mark from when he played with said sling shot in the house.



TRAGEDY STRIKES



- ON JULY 8, 1969, RICKY, NOW 6 YEARS OLD, WAS ENJOYING A SUNNY DAY AT THE PLAYGROUND IN WETASKIWIN
- HE AND A FRIEND DECIDED TO TRADE BIKES BUT HIS FRIEND'S BIKE WAS TOO BIG FOR LITTLE RICKY
- BUT HE HOPPED ON THE TOO LARGE BIKE ANYWAY TO HEAD BACK HOME.
- HE SOON DISCOVERED THAT HE COULD NOT USE THE BRAKES AND CAME RACING ONTO THE ROAD IN FRONT OF A LARGE TRUCK
- RICKY WAS NOT ABLE TO BE SAVED AND HE PASSED AWAY, DEVASTATING MY MOTHER AND THE REST OF THE FAMILY

CRASHES KILL WETASKIWIN BOY, MAN

A Wetaskiwin man was killed Tuesday near Strome. RCMP said Alexander McBain, 43, died when his car was in collision with another car on Highway 13.

In another accident Tuesday, Ricky Patrick MacDonnell, 6, died after his bicycle was struck by a truck in Wetaskiwin.

Truck Driver Cleared in Cyclist Fatality

A coroner's jury last Wednesday completely exonerated City of Wetaskiwin truck driver Frank Russell of blame in an accident Tuesday, July 8, which took the life of six year old cyclist Ricky MacDonnell.

The boy died enroute to the University Hospital shortly after he was hit by the truck as he rode his bicycle from an alley at the west end of the 47A Avenue playground. The accident occurred about 75 yards east of highway 2A.

Coroner Dr. I. Panchbhaya conducted the inquest, with several witnesses giving evidence.

The boy apparently had left the playground, which is supervised until 4:30 p.m., with a companion Craig Wolda, 11. The boys had swapped bikes for the short ride to the Wolda home.

A witness, who was servicing the propane supply at a mobile home in the trailer court, told the jury he saw the actual im-

operator at a city road project on 47 avenue.

The jury saw pictures taken at the scene, and during a requested adjournment were taken by police to view the actual scene of the accident in order to gain a first hand picture. The bicycle, only slightly damaged, was also exhibited in court.

A mobile home in the trailer court at the north boundary projects over the boulevard, and obscures vision from the alley.

In its findings, the jury gave the opinion that if the trailer had not been in that location, the accident might never have occurred. While attaching blame to any person, the jury made recommendation that the City of Wetaskiwin immediately undertake a study in regard safe access and exits to playgrounds, and to remove shrubs and trees or objects which might impede vision of pedestrians and drivers in playground areas.

THE FUNERAL

Funeral Mass for Ricky McDonnell : Saturday July 12, 1969

- 1) Prayer at Entrance of the church.
- 2) Hymn: God the Father hear our prayer, hear us God the Son. Holy Spirit hear our prayer. Mercy on your people Lord.
- 3) Say: Priest: Lord Have mercy Lord have mercy Christ have mercy Lord have m.
People: Lord have mercy Christ have mercy Christ have mercy Lord have m.
Priest - Lord have mercy
- 4) Prayer, Epistle (Luke 9, 46- 48)
- 5) Gradual Sing: Glory to God, glory, O praise His, allalulia! Glory to God, Glory, O praise the name of the Lord.
- 6) Gospel (John 11, 21-27) & Homily.
- 7) Responses to the Prayer of the Faithful - after each petition- we pray to the Lord.
- 8) Hymn: 1) Of my hands I give to you O Lord, Of my hands I give to you. I give to you as you gave to me. Of my hands I give to you.
2) Of my heart I give to you O Lord, Of my heart I give to you. I give to you as you gave to me. Of my heart I give to you.
3) Of my life I give to you O Lord, Of my life I give to you. I give to you as you gave to me. Of my life I give to you.
- 9) Say together: Holy, Holy, holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are filled with your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.
- 10) Say together: Our Father & Lamb of God
Lamb of God who take away the sins of the world, grant him rest
Lamb of God who take away the sins of the world, grant him rest
Lamb of God who take away the sins of the world, grant him eternal rest.
- 11) Hymn: God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him.
- 12) Prayer, Blessing, Commendation & Farewell (Responses: Receive his soul and present it in the sight of the most high)
- 13) Hymn: Hear O Lord the sound of my call (Refrain)
Hear O Lord and have mercy.
My soul is longing for the glory of you
O hear O Lord and answer me.

In you O Lord, I place my cares and all my troubles too.
O grant, dear Lord, that some day soon I'll live in me with you.
- 14) Station at the grave: Blessing of the grave
Response: We beg you hear us.
Final prayer.

- ON JULY 12TH, A CATHOLIC MASS WAS HELD AND RICKY WAS LAID TO REST IN THE OLD WETASKIWIN CEMETERY
- EXACTLY, TO THAT DAY, ONE YEAR LATER, I WAS BORN.
- MY MOM WOULD HAVE NAMED ME SHANE RICK AFTER MY UNCLE, IF I WERE A BOY.



THE STORIES



- I grew up hearing many Ricky stories, about his adoption, and how energetic and rambunctious he was.
- We even visited his grave on occasion and brought him flowers.
- One story that stuck with me was when my mom would take him to the store. She mentioned the looks she would get from others, especially other indigenous community members, but she was so proud that they were able to help Ricky that she didn't mind
- I recall most of my lifetime of feeling proud as well



REFLECTIONS

- Over the years, I often spoke about Ricky, almost bragging about the fact that I had an Indigenous Uncle.
- This sparked a deep interest in the culture and I often gravitated toward Indigenous art and educational opportunities
- This is why I enrolled in the Indigenous Canada Course at the University of Alberta.
- It was at this course where I first heard about Residential Schools and the 60s scoop. Well ahead of hearing about it in the media.

THE SIXTIES SCOOP

- Where an estimated 20,000 Indigenous Children were taken away from their families and fostered or adopted out to primarily white families during the 60s
- Tragic atrocities, I thought, but at least my family's story was different... But was it?

The “Sixties Scoop”, which took children from their families and communities and placed them in boarding schools or adopted them into non-Indigenous families, is “cultural genocide” under the UN Convention of Genocide (1948.)



WAKE UP CALL



- I spent years reflecting on the media stories and still did not see what was right in front of me
- We hear so many tales of the cultural genocide that Indigenous Peoples endured but to me it always was what happened to an illusive “them”
- It was only very recently that I woke up and started to question the stories passed down from my family
- What if the Child Welfare Agency was not telling the truth about the situation Ricky was in prior to being removed?
- What if he was taken from a family did not deserve it?
- Does his family know what ever happened to him, that he has passed on? Who is his birth family?
- Did the Catholic Funeral Service and burial meet any cultural considerations his birth family would have wanted?
- All of a sudden, the 60s Scoop history became personal and I no longer felt a distance empathy but rather anguish for those that suffered

MY CALL TO ACTION

- I searched through my late mother's personal affects to try and find records of his adoption to no avail
- I reached out to relatives looking for answers
- I searched archives, looking for victims of the 60s Scoop in the Wetaskiwin area
- All searches failed to find out the true story as I do not know Ricky's birth or family name
- So what can I do?
 - I can acknowledge
 - I can be an ally
 - I can share my story in the hopes of making it personal for others too
 - My call to action has begun, and my journey for personal reconciliation continues



**THANK YOU FOR LISTENING
TO MY JOURNEY**

