

## **Three poems and a letter to my 16-year-old self**

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### **Abstract**

*A personal reflection in the form of poetry as part of an assignment from course EDUC 470-Issues and Perspectives on Young Children, Families & ECCE (with professor, Annabella Cant).*

*In the process of sharing struggles and a piece of myself, I hope to promote healing, and further understanding. Here is my story.*

## ***To The Child In My Care***

I smile at you as you walk through my door  
Not because I have to, but because your presence brings me joy  
Our eyes meet and give a High five hug or handshake  
Keeping connected we touch everyday

I refuse to acknowledge your class as boys and girls,  
I will use children - knowing some are in between  
Because I was you once, not falling into predefined roles, so  
I give you the space to find yourself

Every problem you face will find a solution,  
Let's work together through the navigation  
Expose the class and the world to your creative thinking  
I promise to document and share it with your permission

You will use power tools, paintbrushes, and sewing machines  
As we must learn to do while we learn to think  
There are no limitations in the classroom  
I desire a place where children can do it all

Now, the long adventures will tire you out,  
Pushing your body to the limits  
I will be there to help and guide you through the trails  
And over the hurdles until you accomplish your own victory

As you leave you will know that your voice was heard  
Your actions responded to and your thoughts released,  
And if all of your needs weren't met  
You and I know, the teacher was trying their best.

## **White Sorry**

Beauty and strength in the fear of the darkest hours

I am the enemy unbeknownst of my action

The stripping of your power and existence

I take all that is not mine

Walking with dignity into your home like walking onto your skin

I slighted your actions and words to mere whispers

My excitement and appreciation torn away by my predecessor's deceit

You tolerate the generations to come but cannot accept me

Proud of my love for your granddaughter I want to recognize you

Slowly the impression digs deep into my soul

My respect misunderstood because of lives- changed forever

To the words we cannot heal with, the white sorry

Rolling off my tongue like a blade into your heart, Sorry

For pilfering and abusing your children into half of their potential

You brave soul full of beauty and strength glazed over into a hard shell

I walk away down the dirt road along the ocean and lament your reserved.

You are strong and brave, incapable of forgetting or accepting.

I take that is not mine I can only offer my pitiful white sorry

## ***Symbolic Stepping***

Stepping stones of privilege like a dark path with no way out

We compare our histories in few short statements

Illuminating our losses, gains and struggles of childhood.

Emotion of my younger self like a hungry wolf lost from the pack

Clinging to the final support of my community distant from family

Heart pounding, laugh instead of cry. Alone in a crowd.

Brain synapses crossing over like a shooting star in the night sky

Connecting memories to prejudice and privilege

Where feelings were neutral assigned meanings were created

Mothers voice whispers like a songbird's lullaby

"Everything works out in the end, and if it hasn't worked out, it's not the end"

And because struggles create strength, I now feel stronger.

## ***Message to my 16 year old self.***

Dear 16-year-old self, Jenn,

You are more beautiful than you will ever be. Your strong athleticism will carry on into adulthood and provide you with years of laughter, camaraderie, and self-confidence.

Being gay is OK! It becomes legal in Canada to marry the same sex.

As for your secret love, no one finds out about your relationship, but tell Katerina, she still supports you 18 years later. Don't bother trying to save the relationship with your love because she goes on to marry a really awesome man and has many children. She doesn't like looking back on her relationship with you because there is too much pain and regret. Trust your coach and come out to her earlier, she is there to support and will help you get through this. Don't date your guy friends because you think you have to, just be their friends and have fun with them.

Allow yourself to date, experience people, fall in love, and get hurt. You fall in love with a talented beautiful woman and although you think marriage is overrated, yes, you get married! You are an extremely healthy and happy 34 year old and look back on experiences as valuable contributions to who you are today. You are still tight with your family and consider your siblings your best friends. People still tell you to slow down and not to take on so much, but my advice is to take it all on, just be more present in the activities you take on.

Be nicer to Janette Stenzel, you apologize later on this Internet thing called Facebook, but your bullying her has never made you feel better. You can talk to Nicole, Jessica, or Lara, Max, and Michael they are all gay too. Form an alliance and a secure place to chat.

In the years to follow gay people will be on TV, magazines, and yes Ellen DeGeneres is Gay! It may not be easier for the individual, but society is acknowledging that gay people have families, are professionals, and live in communities. In the summer of 2005 gay marriage will be legal in Canada!

All in all, you are a considerate, passionate, hardworking individual and even though you are struggling with poverty, sexuality, and suicide, it gets better and you are amazing!

Love and kindness, Jennifer

***Author: Jennifer Ivings***

Jennifer grew up outdoors. Her love for the outdoors led her to an Outdoor Recreation Leadership Diploma from UBC (Vancouver, Canada) and she is currently completing her ECCE degree at Capilano University. Jennifer works for North Shore Child Care in Deep Cove supervising the School Age and Preschool programs. Her value of nature and love for children inspire outdoor focused programs for all ages. Her motto is “The world is our playground”.