

## **My Little Residential School Suitcase**

The first time I left for residential school, my mother carefully prepared my little suitcase. She took care to put in it everything I would need. My clothes, some toys I would never see again. I was six years old on this first trip.

In my little suitcase, my mother had also put all the love she had, without forgetting the love from my father.

There were also embraces, tenderness, respect, for me and for others, sharing, and many other qualities she had taught me. The trip lasted 12 years.

When I returned home, my little suitcase was heavy. What my mother had put in it was gone; love embraces, all those beautiful things had disappeared. They had been replaced by hatred, self-rejection, abuses of all kinds (alcohol, drugs, sexual abuse) by violence, anger and suicidal thoughts. That is what I carried for a long time.

But I've been cleaning out this suitcase. I put back everything my mother had put in it when I left the first time: love, respect for myself and others, and a great many other qualities.

Oh yes...added sobriety and especially spirituality. My little suitcase is very light. It is full

of good things I can  
share with everyone

I meet along the way.  
Regardless of skin colour—  
white, red, black, yellow—we  
are all human beings, we  
are all God's creatures.

Marcel Petiquay (2007)

1. What is the main message in the poem (theme)?
2. What are the three most powerful lines or ideas?
3. What are three or more images that could represent the main ideas?