
Aponi the Caterpillar: A Therapeutic Story

— Karen Fjestad

This little story was written when the Pope was visiting Canada to recognize the tragedies regarding Indigenous Residential Schools and the harm caused to children and their families. At that time, there had been discoveries of thousands of unmarked graves on the grounds of former Residential Schools. This is offered as a Healing Story to acknowledge this tragedy and the associated generational wounds.

There was, once upon a time, a caterpillar named Aponi. Aponi lived in the forest with her parents and brothers and sisters, as well as her aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins. The forest was filled with other creatures, big ones like the moose and the bison, and smaller creatures like birds, mice, and butterflies. A lovely stream flowed through the forest and wildflowers grew all around.

Each day Aponi would munch on leaves and flowers and crawl around exploring the beautiful world around her. She was happy living in the forest surrounded by her family and the land that she loved so much.

One cloudy day, someone came into the forest. He had a shoebox and seemed to be collecting things from the forest to take with him. He plucked Aponi off a leaf and he took many caterpillars and bugs off the trees and forest floor and put them into his box. Although there were other caterpillars in the box, Aponi was frightened and felt alone. She was no longer with her family and in the place that was her home. The person would put leaves and water in the shoebox for the creatures, but it was not like the fresh water from the stream or the leaves that grew in the forest where she

had lived before. They didn't taste right. Aponi was sad. She missed the leaves that grew in her forest, the animals that lived there, and most of all she missed her family.

After a while, Aponi became very tired from living in the box, like she needed a long sleep to feel better. She became quite still, her body was heavy, and she slept and slept for a very long time.

Eventually, Aponi stirred and found that she was able to move just a little bit. As she wiggled and stretched, she realized that she had wings. She was not a caterpillar anymore, but had transformed into a butterfly. As she spread out her wings, she saw that they had the colours of the forest on them. Brown from the bears and bison, green from the trees, and blue and purple from the wildflowers and berries. The wings were beautiful.

She stretched out her new wings and flew back to the forest that she had missed so much. She flew high above her family and gently watched over them.

Aponi's family, who missed her so much, looked towards the sky and saw her flying with her most precious wings. ♦

Karen Fjestad teaches a 3/4-year-old program at the Calgary Waldorf School. She has a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Alberta and Waldorf Early Childhood training from the West Coast Institute. Karen found her way to Waldorf Education through her two curious and thoughtful boys who spent their schooling in Waldorf Education and both now study engineering at the University of Calgary. Karen enjoys sharing her love of Waldorf education through parent work and giving tours of the Early Childhood program.