

JOY ASHAM BIO

Sometime in the first few years of the Baby Boom, a First Nation Cree female was born in Interlake Manitoba, Canada. She must have been pretty sturdy: nine Aboriginal babies were born in the small backwoods hospital that week and only two lived. She has now outlived the other by some 20 years.

Her father worked the family farm and her young days were filled with rainbarrels, checkered oilcloths, whitewashed walls, kerosene and Clydesdales: she often rode workhorses for fun while her grandmother drove a work team beside her. Farming in this unfriendly region was not the type of life her sensitive Caucasian mother could endure. Being a World War II volunteer/veteran and having been handy with his fists in Golden Gloves competitions, her father left behind the farm and a 45-second professional career (his nose was relocated in his first bout) as a boxer and returned to the Canadian armed services.



Travelling the world, he advanced quickly, his Native intelligence making up for a lack of book learning as his able hands performed technical and mechanical miracles for the Canadian Forces. She often went along, in turn attending 17 different public schools in North America and Europe. As the backdrop of cultures flashed from screen to screen behind their lives, in his dignity and grace he taught her “Meno Bimadiziwiwin” or the Good Path. This is the richness of traditional First Nations/Aboriginal beliefs that become apparent in the method of undertaking the tasks laid about our feet, not the sometimes hollowness of merely how things look.

In describing her life, she says: “I spent the first half of my life in silent observation but I have been making up for lost time ever since.” She claims that this is the truth behind the myth of the silent Indian: we do not talk until we know what we are talking about and we do not talk for the sake of talking. Once we begin to talk though, a person like Joy emerges. She is an extremely prolific writer* and, frankly, you just can’t shut her up. You can find this storymaker and storyteller at joyasham@gmail.com. ><

The Joy Asham collection of writings, memberships, etc:

- Presently and for the last 12 years, regular columnist for the Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal
- Researcher/Author: Languages Without Refuge, 1987
- Radio Commentator and Performer
- Author and co-performer: Salt and Sage, a cross-cultural collaboration
- Installation artist: A-Space and Harbourfront, Toronto
- Magazine essayist, various print and art media – including author “Fencepost Sitting and How I Fell off to One Side” – classic essay on artistic/cultural appropriation – reprinted many times including in translations (German and French) and used as a teaching tool in college and university creative writing courses
- Member – Playwrights’ Union of Canada
- Casebooks author, Confederation College Aboriginal Culture, Aboriginal Worldview, Aboriginal Psychology, Aboriginal Advocacy and General Arts and Sciences courses. Teaching professor of same.