

GRANDPA TIME

Grandpa Time: Six going on thirteen

Feb 20, 2022



David Maack and his grandson, Kai, during a Ojibwe storytelling session for the Caledonia Historical Society.

I think Kai is 6 going on 13.

I pulled babysitting duty the other day and I insisted on watching my shows. Otherwise I'm forced to watch YouTube videos on Roblox, Lankybox or Ninja Kids.

When I went to make lunch, Tannerbert turned his videos on and when I came back, I didn't know how to work their TV.

Sadly, I was forced to ask my number one grandson for help and Kai immediately started whining, “Why do I have to do everything? I always have to do everything.”

Well it’s not like Tannerbert could show me. Although I wonder, he is the one who navigated to YouTube.

Recently Kai told me he wants a drone. Not any drone but a drone with a camera. I looked at him and said, “Let me guess, you’re going to fly it above my yard to see if I’m sitting outside?”

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And then you’re going to come over and say, “Oh Grandpa! I didn’t know you were home.”

He started laughing hysterically.

Storytelling

Recently, I was asked to do some Ojibwe storytelling for the Caledonia Historical Society. Winter is our traditional story time and on the night we went, it was bitterly cold and there was a layer of snow on the ground.

I’m reminded how years ago we loaded up our minivan and traveled to White Earth, Minn., for a traditional story camp. We left early on New Year’s Day and when we got up there, it was -50 degrees. No wonder it was the time to tell stories. The days were short and it is cold, very cold.

I brought Kai along with me to my presentation. He needs to learn these stories. I have been teaching him Ojibwe words since he was little. One day, his Dad called me up. He had been trying to teach Kai French and when he asked Kai to say hello, Kai said, “Boozhoo!” Instead

of “Bonjour!” Kai knew what he was doing.

My grandson can be shy so I prep him when we are going to be with people. I remind him to say hello and shake hands. I also said I will be introducing him and he should say “Boozhoo.” When we walked in, several people recognized him from my Grandpa Time column and even better, they had cookies.

As I introduced myself in Ojibwe, sharing my Ojibwe name, I explained that Kai has a name but we haven’t had his ceremony yet. I then introduced him and he got up and meekly said, “Boozhoo.” I asked him to say it louder and he said, “BOOZHOO!”

He sat through the stories and laughed at the funny parts. Afterwards, I told him that one day he will be sharing these stories and he looked at me and said, “You’ll probably be dead by then.” I said, “Maybe, but I hope I’m still alive to hear you tell them.”

Names

The other day, Kai asked what his real name was. I was taken aback and said, “Kaibert?” “No,” he answered, “That other name.” Then it dawned on me. He was referring to his Ojibwe name. While quiet in nature, that kid is like a sponge, taking in what we say and watching what we do all the time. Hopefully we can get the boys to some pow wows this summer. And we still have the matter of their naming ceremony.

Kai’s name actually came on the night he was born. As for Tannerbert, asema or tobacco must still be given for his name. I have a few names that I think would be appropriate but that’s not for me to decide. (Insert “smirk”).

Our Ojibwe names are important and we must live up to them. These names are not made up, found in a book or depict something the name giver sees, like Running Bear. In our tradition, we seek out those who pray for these names to come to them.

As a grandfather, I realize I only have so much time to share with my grandchildren the lessons I have learned along the way. Passing along our cultural heritage is one of those responsibilities.

There is no better job than being a grandfather.

David Maack is married to Amy. They have two children, Maria and David II, and two grandsons, Kai and Tannerbert.