

An Afternoon with an Elder

Synopsis: Our play mostly takes place in a classroom. An Elder has come to tell some students about what life was like in Nain when she was young. She first tells them about moving from Hebron and how it was difficult to adjust to a new place. The second story she tells is how she met her husband when they were roughly the students' age, and how they had to overcome some biases that existed due to the relocation. Finally, the Elder gives a visual presentation to the students demonstrating how various things have changed (transportation and technology) from when she was their age until the present.

Scene 1

A school classroom. An elder has come to talk to students. The elder sits in a chair while the students gather around her.

Elder: Hello everyone. Some of you may know me, and some of you may be meeting me for the first time. I am very pleased to come and speak with you today. I understand some of you would like to hear about my life, and how I ended up here in Nain. Who has the first question?

One of the students shyly puts up their hand.

Elder: Yes m'dear. What is your question?

Kid 1: How old are you?

Kid 2: Show some respect! She doesn't need to tell us how old she is!

Kid 1: I'm sorry. What I mean to say is, what was like in the 1800s? Is it true you used to use a tin can and string as a telephone?

Kid 3: No, I heard that was how they had to connect to the internet. And they didn't even have Facebook. They just had [*confused*] books?

Kid 4: Books? You mean those things we listen to on our iPods?

Kid 2: My teacher tried to get me to scroll through one of those once. I kept waiting for popups to come and distract me... [*disappointed*] but they never came.

Kid 3: [*annoyed*] Guys! Come on. We all know what books are. I think what my simple minded classmates wanted to ask was: how did you send out a tweet with two cans and a string?

Kid 4: AHM!

Elder: Oh, what it was once like to be young. I'm not that old... no. Believe it or not, not even my parents were born in the 1800s.

Kid 3: 1700s?

Kid 1: Will you be quiet!

Elder: Ha-ha. No, no, no. My parents were born in the 1900s, just like your parents. Times were different then... but a lot of the things are still the same. We hunted then, much like we do now. Just certain parts of it have changed. Our tools have improved. Our methods of transportation have expanded. Nain... this is your home, and it was likely home for your parents too. But it wasn't always my home.

Kid 2: You're from Hopedale? Lucky! I went to Hopedale once and...

Elder: No... not Hopedale. Though I have friends and family who live there. No, I was born in Hebron and that is where my parents were from too... It was very difficult when we were relocated. We were forced against our will to leave our home. The government didn't even check with us to see if we wanted to move.

Kid 3: They forced you? They didn't give you a choice?

Elder: That's right. They gathered everyone in the church. The government knew how important the church is to the Inuit. We wouldn't want to do anything to disrespect the church. I believe this was a Thursday.

Kid 4: You went to Church on a Thursday? Holy Mac!

Elder: Ahem. Some of us went to Nain. Some of us went to Makkovik and Goose Bay. We were given houses, but they weren't our homes. We no longer had our traditional hunting grounds. It was very difficult to get used to.

Cue music and dim lights while we set up the flashback scene.

A family is sitting down at the table.

Mom: Girls, I want you to help me set the table, and get ready for when your father gets home.

Kid 1: I hope he gets lots of partridges. It seems like forever since we've had any partridges.

Kid 2: Yeah mom, do you think he'll have any this time?

Mom: I don't know girls. You know your father is still trying to find the good places to hunt. It's not like it use to be. When he knew all of the places to go. Now it's trial and error. Some days he is able to get some, and some days not at all.

Kid 1: Doesn't he just need to look up in the sky? I mean partridges fly don't they?

Kid 2: It's not that easy, dummy.

Mom: Girls! You know how I feel about those names.

Kid 1: Sorry, mom. It's just that some of the other kids at school are starting to say things, and I don't know what I'm supposed to say back.

Mom: How is school my darlings? How do you find your classes and your classmates?

Kid 2: It's different

Kid 1: Yeah, I don't even know what we're talking about most times. The teacher forces us to speak English [*glum looking*] I miss Inuktitut mom.

Kid 2: Me too. I'm slowly forgetting how to speak it...

Kid 1: Nancy isn't coming to school, she has to take care of her mom.

Mom: Too many people are getting depressed and sick. t's very hard living here, being controlled. I do not like it at all.

Kid 1: [*starts pouting*] I miss home, being free.

Mom: [*mom hugs kid*] Me too. But this is our home now. We have each other.

Kid 1: Some of the kids make fun of us. Say we're from the other part of town.

Mom: Don't take to heart what the other kids say. They're still learning just like you. Once they get to know everyone better they'll be your best friends. You'll see.

Kid 2: It's been years though mom. Things don't seem to be getting any easier.

Kid 1: Today, in school. I told some of the other kids how many partridge Dad use to get. One kid said I was lying. They said that Dad is a bad hunter. That he can't provide for us. That he's going to cause us to starve and we'll go hungry.

Kid 2: That isn't true! You know that.

Kid 1: I know, but it really made me angry. When recess was over, and that kid was running back to class. I accidentally stuck out my leg. And he tripped on his face.

Kid 2: *[laughing]* Did they know you did it on purpose?

Mom: That is not how I raised my daughter.

Kid 1: *[to Kid 2]* No, I was tying my shoe. Not my fault he was running. And didn't look down. And didn't see my leg raise up just so that he was sure to trip over it.

Kid 2: Haha, it would have been funny to see the mud on his face. That'll teach him for saying things about Dad that aren't true.

Kid 1: It was an accident!

Dad comes home from hunting.

Mom: Did you get anything?

Dad: Got three partridges today. It was good. I'm still not sure where the good hunting places are yet. Everything is still so new even though it's been five years. Bob showed me a new spot.

Mom: Really, Bob showed you? I didn't know you and Bob were even friendly.

Dad: He heard about how good of a hunter I was back home. Said he wanted to see if it was true. I'm a little rusty. But it was good to show him how good I was.

Mom: You hear that? You kids be sure to tell that to those bullies tomorrow. Your dad can hunt!

Kid 1: Mom, I thought you were mad at me.

Kid 2: Does that mean I can trip a few kids and throw some mud on them. I know, I'll make a list!

Dad: What are you kids talking about?

Mom: That's not what I meant. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. But maybe Bob will tell his kids, and then you kids won't be teased as much any more. This is proof that your dad can hunt.

Dad: *[lovingly]* You didn't think I could hunt? I thought that's what made you like me in the first place.

Kid 2: I'm going to be sick.

Back to the classroom. Cue music and dim lights.

Kids: Wow....

Kid 1: So people from Nain were mean to you? But everyone from Nain is so nice and loving! I can't picture anyone being like that to someone who isn't from here.

Elder: Times were different then. People had already lived here, and it took some time before everyone accepted us. Now it isn't as much of an issue. But I'm sure if you ask someone who has recently moved here, they'd say the same thing.

Kid 2: Was it hard being bullied because your daddy couldn't hunt?

Kid 3: Her daddy could hunt dummy! He just wasn't used to the areas.

Kid 1: Don't call him a dummy! You're no better than the bullies from her day.... Dummy.

Elder: Kids will be kids. You have to learn not to take things said too seriously. And every now and again... if things aren't going your way... just trip things up a little.

Kids: Ha-ha-ha.

Elder: I'm just joking now, that isn't what you should do.

Kid 1: So you liked your husband because he could hunt?

Kid 3: Well that's why all of the girls are so obsessed with me. They don't call me Nain's best goose hunter for nothing you know.

Kid 4: I've never heard anyone call you Nain's best Goose Hunter.

Kid 3: Ummm. I guess you haven't been on my Facebook lately. I made it my status a few nights ago.

Kid 4: I thought it was a joke. You know. An April Fools sort of thing.

Kid 3: In November?

Kid 2: She didn't say it was supposed to be funny.

Elder: *[laughing]* Oh my. You kids remind me of me and my friends when we were your age. Friendship, families, that is something that remains important throughout the ages.

Kid 1: You said you fell in love with your husband because he was such a good hunter. Was that true?

Elder: *[laughing]* Well there was more to it than just that. But I guess you could say that's what drew him to me. In fact, we weren't ever suppose to be together if our parents could have had their way.

Kid 3: See. Told you. Nain's best Goose Hunter is going to be have his pick of the gander.

Kid 4: [disgusted] Gross. What do you mean? Why would your parents be against it?

Elder: Are you sure you want to hear the story of how me and my husband met? You won't find it boring?

Kids: Yes!

Kid 3: *[quietly]* no... I mean, yes.

Elder: Well believe it or not... it all started over a bit of caribou...

Cue music, dim lights. Scene change. A young girl and a young boy are playing hopscotch. After recess bell the girl is talking to her friends.

Girl 1: He's really cute eh? I think I'm getting a crush on him.

Girl 2: You's would be rye cute for each other too!

Girl 3: Him? I don't know... I heard his family isn't the greatest. I heard that they have stolen from others.

Girl 1: Who told you that?

Girl 2: You can't always believe rumors. People says all kinds of things about everyone. Lots of it isn't even true. Remember when people said you came to school on a Saturday and stayed until you went home at lunch, even though nobody was at school!

Girl 1: Yeah... but wasn't that true.

Girl 3: It was only until recess. And that is completely different.

Girl 2: That's exactly my point! You can't believe everything that everyone tells you. People mix up the facts.

Girl 1: I don't care what anyone says. I like him, and I think he likes me too.

Girl 2: Has he held your hand yet?

Girl 3: If he did... I hope you washed your hands after. I don't believe in Cooties, but I heard he has some kind of newly found cootie. And...

Girl 1: Anyway, no he hasn't held my hand. We have just started to talk more and we walk home together after school.

Cue music, dim lights. The next day at recess...

Boy: What you got planned to do after school?

Girl 1: Nothing at all, I'm supposed to fetch water and clean up, but it can wait.

Boy: Maybe we can go for a picnic not too far from your house. I just happen to have all of the supplies right here. Never leave home without them!

Boy and girl are picnicking and talking and laughing. Music plays while boy and girl have a picnic.

Girl: You know every time we walk home my mom looks at me really mad. She would be disappointed if she knew about us.

Boy: It's alright, you won't get caught. You're safe with me.

Girl: I do feel safe. But I don't know what it is that my mom has against you.

Boy: There are lots of rumors going around about me and my family. They're just rumors. You don't believe them, do you?

Girl: No! Of course not! It's just hard when everybody is telling you things, you know? Especially when it's my own family... *[looks in the distance and sees her mom]*

Mom enters and shouts at the girl to do her chores and finds the two together. She is furious and she takes the girl home yelling at the boy that they can never see each other again. The girl is crying and looking back at the boy.

Mom: Just what do you think you're doing? You know you have your chores to do after school? And what are you doing with... *him*. We raised you better than to hang around the likes of him! Do you have any idea what this is doing to our family? *[to boy]* And you I don't ever want to see you around my daughter again. Ya hear me? EVER! I don't want any daughter of mine hanging around thieves.

Boy exits. Girl is still crying.

Mom: I'm sorry you had to see me get on like that. I don't mean to get that upset in front of you. But, you know somebody stole our caribou. I got a feeling it was his family. They seem just like the type to do it. And that so called boyfriend of yours, his brother

was the last one out before the curfew and I'm going to go have a talk with his family after supper! Straighten out a thing or two!

Girl: No, you didn't!

Mom: Yes, and by being with that boy you're going to give yourself a bad name!

Girl: But Mom!

Mom: Come on now, let's get home.

Dim lights, cue music.

The family sitting at their kitchen table. There is a knock at door, mom answers it. A different boy from a different family is at the door.

Mom: What are you doing here? *[gasps]* Oh my ribs! Thanks for returning them!

Boy 2: Umm, I actually took them last night. Sorry Miss, my anansiak was running out of food. Then I heard word was going around that his brother stole it, so here! I'm really sorry. Please don't tell my folks!

Mom: No, keep it. Next time don't steal please. I don't want to hear about anybody going hungry. All you have to do is ask. Say hello to your parents for me, and if you or anyone needs any food again, and we have some to spare, all I ask is that you come see my husband or me first. Nobody likes a thief.

The boy leaves.

Mom: I feel so bad for blaming your friend's family.

Girl: I told you mom, you've got to apologize by the way, will I be able to see him now? We're just friends.

Mom: *[doesn't sound convinced]* Mhmm. Seemed like a little more than friends to me. Who just happens to have all the items for a picnic on them like that? Seems pretty fishy to me!

Cue music dim lights, back to classroom scene.

Kids 1, 2 and 4: Aw!

Kid 3: Picnic supplies eh? Think I might have to use that one.

Kid 2: What, being the best goose hunter isn't enough for you?

Kid 3: Just a little more ammo for my arsenal... you guys should really be writing this stuff down.

Elder: *[laughing]* Oh my, how I miss being young. Well kids, I think my time is almost up now. Does anyone have one last question?

Kid 2: Do you miss the old way of life? What was it like?

Elder: I certainly do! It was very simple without all the technology like we've got now. Everybody listened to their radio. Kids were more respectful. Their parents punished them better and everybody would play outside or visit each other.

Kid 4: I wish it was like that now.

Kid 1: I know everyone's just inside and on Facebook. It's rye lame now.

Kid 4: Do you like the way of life now or how it was before?

Elder: That is a hard question. I definitely loved how we socialized more in the past and we were allowed to hunt caribou. But it's good this day and age, being able to go off not as worried because we have better technology like GPS and spot guns instead of the harpoon and the bow. We have it so much easier now. I actually have a slide show you can watch...

Slide show and music.

Kid 4: Well, on behalf of everyone here, I just want to thank you for taking the time to talk with us today. I feel like we learned a lot not only about your life, but what life was like in Nain before all these modern changes.

Kid 2: It makes me even more proud to be from Nain than I was before.

Elder: It was my pleasure. It was so nice to be able to take the time to talk to all of you. To get to know you, and believe me, I've learned a thing from you kids too. Oh, and before I forget, you should all follow me on twitter.

Kids: You're on twitter?

Elder: Oh kids... so gullible.

All exit except Kid 3 and 4.

Kid 3: *[nervous]* So you want to walk home together?

Kid 4: Oh, does this mean I get to hear more stories about Nain's best Goose hunter?

Kid 3: If you like... I was also thinking we could have a picnic...

Kid 4 takes him by the hand and they walk off the stage.

Curtains.