

A poem by Raymond Tony Charlie

It's ok open your eyes
Stand up and look around your friends are gone
And much of your family

With flashing memories in your mind
With beautiful thoughts of bygone days
We shared together laughter, tears
Good times and bad

They are gone into the spirit world
But remembered and deeply loved
Remain treasured in our hearts

They are no longer in pain
Not suffering today
They want you to be happy
Don't be sad

Residential Schools are gone
They no longer exist but in your heart
Breathe in and let it go

Heal your body and your mind
Find yourself and move on
As a proud First Nations person

Learn your history
Your language
Connections to the land and water
The sacred medicines

Your family, need you and your people too
Grandchildren look up to you
Needing your love and support

Love yourself! As you are special

—poem excerpted from the forthcoming book
In the Shadow of the Red Brick Building (2021)



Coast Salish Elder Raymond Tony Charlie (Penelakut Tribe) is an educator, artist, public speaker, author, and residential school survivor who is committed to holistic healing for true reconciliation. He gave testimony as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in Duncan, B.C. in 2012. His personal story, including this poem, will be shared in his forthcoming book *In the Shadow of the Red Brick Building*.

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Designed and published on behalf of the author by the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance, Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria.