

STOLEN GENERATION

MY STORY – CLAIRE HENTY-GEBERT

I was born Clara Henty to my aboriginal mother Ruby Ngwarie, an Alyawarra aboriginal woman near Frew River Station – My father Harry Henty was one of a small group of white settlers.

I am one of the many thousands of children of aboriginal descents who were separated stolen or forcibly removed from their aboriginal mothers as a result of the Government laws and policies in the Northern Territory during the 1900's.

This story is based on my life long search and dream of finding my mother, my grandmothers Maudie Holmes and Georgina Wickham and other siblings, my extended family my birth place and country, my dreaming and a sense of belonging.

About 1989 (27th – 29th September) when I went on my research trip with my researcher David Alexander to find and meet my people I soon found out that I was picked up at Wolfram Hill Mine where my people worked for the miners.

I myself and other children were playing when the ute came onto the scene and picked us up and put us on the back of the ute. I asked my brother Dick Japanangka on my visit did I cry and he said no because you thought you were going for a ride and that you would be returning back again to us and your mother. Well I never returned to my people. At that time I was 3 years of age and was taken away by Constable Croud and the aboriginal trackers. I, and the others were taken to the bungalow outside of Alice Springs. Meeting my family for the first time in 1989 since I had been separated from them. I met my family in Tennant Creek, Ali Curung and Hatches Creek. I introduced myself, as Clara Henty and my mothers name was Ruby, to my family. They said they knew who I was, and I mentioned that my father was Harry Henty. Nita Holmes, who was helping as an interpreter for me at the time she said they knew who my father was. They said, "He enry endy, him proper cruel and cheeky one". I was saddened to hear the news that my mother had died some years previous. This saddened me.

I must say when I arrived at the bungalow as a kid my friend Netta Waters told me that I couldn't speak English and that I rattled my lingo and that other kids couldn't understand what I was saying to them.

I met Lena Nangala Dixon she asked me about my background and who I was. As I told her my name and my country she couldn't believe her ears. She told me then that she knew my mother and that they had been very good friends. She also told me to call her 'Aunty Lena'.

She remembered how most of the mother's around our community who had half-caste children and babies taken away from them were sad to talk about their children saying, might be my girl or boy turn like white now and don't want us black one no more. Also how some women, like my mother, died before seeing their children

taking the heartache with them. The saddest thing for me is that I will never have a picture of my mother in my mind, nor have any reminder of her.

Aunty Lena suggested I contact Murphy Japanangka, Dick Riley Japanangka and Kurrundi Billy to help me research information relating to my birth, childhood and parents. She said, "Do that before they pass away – because they knew my family, my mother and father Harry Henty". I met another relative, Eileen Bonny she told me that our mothers were always with other groups sending smoke signals high above the hills that the police or protectors were on their rounds of half-caste children. She said our mothers ran away with us, or painted us black quite often so that we could look like the other children in the camp.

When I was taken away many of my family remembered when I was taken from my mother and family. They all cried for a long time.