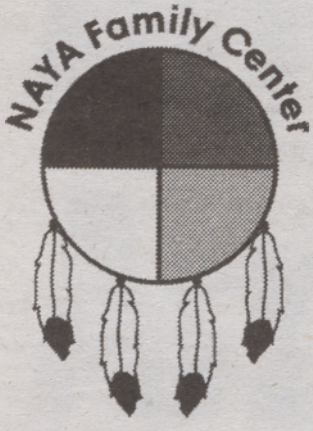


## To come and go as I please, between these two identities



Lanie Grimm and Destiny Robideau are students at the Native American Family and Youth Center's Early College Academy. The Academy's Language Arts class is partnering with Street Roots. After reading Sherman Alexie's "Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian," the students wrote personal narratives that reflected on loss and change in their lives.

BY LANIE GRIMM  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I wake up frantic. It's 9:39 a.m. and I'm late for school! I rush to get ready and be on my way. I get out of my warm, cozy bed and I grab my clothes, my towel, and I hop in the shower. The steaming hot water feels so good; I want to stay in there for hours, but I quickly wash up and hop out.

While getting dressed outside the bathroom, I hear a ruckus. My mom is yelling to my little brother "Get your lazy butt out of bed and get on your way to school, Nakai!"

It's 10:07 a.m. and I am finally done getting ready. I walk outside into the crisp morning air, deeply inhaling the cold oxygen into my lungs. I walk up to the bus stop, number 25, arriving in two minutes. I light up a cigarette, and begin to wait for the bus. As I await the bus, I try to plan out my day. Good mood? Bad mood? Emotional? I look forward to being there, angry with myself for waking up late. All my friends, all the faces, I'm just so ready to begin my day in this place of pure unadulterated joy.

This is my sanctuary, also known as school.

I've always missed days and always kind of screwed up. People often ask, "Why do you even bother coming?" I laugh and brush it all off, but in the back of my mind I think I come because me at school is so different from me at home.

When I'm at school, my biggest troubles are sitting down all day and getting my work done. Also, if altercations come up with any of the other students, I know not to let them bother me.

Those worries are nothing compared to the ones I am faced with when I arrive home. In my home I am the regulator, I keep everyone on track even when I am not doing so well myself. Living in my house are my mom, two older sisters, one younger brother, and one younger sister.

When I am not home, all of their lives are affected by my choices. When I am in my home, I stay out of trouble, but as soon as I leave it's like trouble comes looking for me, screaming my name, "Lanie, come cause some drama!" Whether smoking a blunt or killing a half-gallon of vodka, I am usually up to no good.

But when I attend school I don't get pressured to hit the tree or to take a chug.

I am able to focus on school, my writing, my art, and I am somewhat able to contain my thoughts. Coming to school, I always have a smile, because in truth, school is a place I am able to be me! I am able to be loved. It's a moment of silence away from my chaotic life. I know there are other kids like me who also have been through tough lives and like the fact that at school they can be appreciated.

When I smile, I smile for me, I smile for my peers who haven't had the best day or time, but they can look back and think, "All the shit Lanie has been through, from rape, murder, drug abusers, pushers, drunks, violence, etc., she still manages to smile and laugh." If I can do it so can you: that is what always runs through my mind when I hear that from people.

As I walk through the red doors leading into my escape, I am instantly happy and know this is where I want to be. I want to learn, I want to focus, hear new insights and perspectives of other people, adults, and children. This is why I love school. Although sad to say, in my place of escape, I still get judged. It doesn't affect me as much because honestly, I've been through worse. Still, when people judge me, I get really upset, and often my sorrow turns into anger. I let it slide when people make comments of "Why bother coming?" and I know, because I come when I can.

You think I am skipping and out having fun? Think again! Because really I am cutting, I am sleeping, I am crying, I am scared, I am lost, but really I am just

confused. Often I worry how much I am able to say at school about my home life. With all the mandatory reporters I don't want it mistaken that the abuse I am recovering from has come from my mother. She may have her faults sometimes, but who doesn't? She is the strongest, most caring person in the world to me, and as much as she tries to protect me, I am stubborn and do what I want. She does not place her hands upon me in anger, but soothes me when I am stressed. She places her hands upon me with a loving manner. She does not emotionally beat me down, but tries to bring me up, she just wants me to do better for myself, and I am coming to understand that now.

I feel caught between two identities, but things are looking up now. I have come to learn that things happen in good and bad ways, but no matter what the situation is there are always lessons to be learned.

"Why bother coming to school?" I come because I care about my education; I care about what is to become of my life. I come because I believe I deserve to be happy every once in a while. I come because I believe I am smart, that I can sometimes help my fellow students when the teachers are having a hard time. Although I am young, I have been through a lot, and I too am a teacher in my own ways.

I come because it is my decision. I come because I want to. I come because I need to. I come, to come.

Lesson learned. Please don't judge because of all my smiles and happy giggles. You never would have known what truly goes on. Being stuck between two identities does not feel good. In a sense it makes you feel fake somehow. You know whom I let you know, you find out as much as I let you. I am done with being two people. Just J'Laina Just Grimm.

Finally I realized I come because it is my decision and not yours.

## From beginning to end, in memory of Papa

BY DESTINY ROBIDEAU  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The day I was born, everyone in my family came to see me. Everyone said I was a little freaked out, I mean come on, I was just born. With a thousand people in my little baby face, of course I was freaked out. My family passed me around kissing my cheeks and going on and on about what a perfect baby I was, even when I was crying. Then my grandpa, Papa, got me; he waved his fingers at me. I grabbed one and stopped crying. He was the first person to ever make me feel better. That was the day I met my best friend.

A few things about my grandpa: He was a strong, proud, and for the most part very happy man. He was forgiving, as long as you were honest. He served in the Vietnam War and later became a Multnomah County Sheriff, for nearly 24 years. He believed in doing the right thing, no matter what it made anyone say or think. He loved his wife and family more than anything in the world.

Over the next seventeen years my family went through hell and back. There were fights, drugs, alcohol, prison, death, divorce and marriage. Everything, you name it, our family went through it. The whole time my grandparents remained our family's backbone, holding us tall and strong.

I remember when I was 15, one of my friends and I decided it would be a good idea to get drunk at my grandparents house while they were out of town. Well, long story short, my mom found out. My punishment was that I had to tell my grandma and Papa.

I was terrified and so disappointed in myself. My stomach was flipping, my hands were sweating, I thought I was going to pass out. This was the first "bad" thing I had ever done. My mind and my heart were racing.

"What if they don't love me anymore?"

"What if they ban me from their house?"

When I sat down in the living room to tell them, I was still thinking the worst. They were disappointed. My grandma told me that I should not have been drinking, that it was dangerous and unhealthy. My grandpa thought about it for a minute, looked me right in the eyes and told me,

"Well I'm happy you did it here where you were safe, but I'm angry that you were doing it at all. Grandma and I forgive you because we love you and we always will."

My eyes filled up with tears when I looked at them after that, that was the day I became the most grateful to have my grandparents in my life.

After that day, I tried never to disappoint them again. (But I am a teenager. And as much as we hate to admit it, we DON'T know everything and we WILL make mistakes. A lot of them.) So of course there were times when I knew they were disappointed in me, but they always pushed me to be a better person for myself, and they always believed in me; I never doubted their love.

In December 2011, I found out that my Grandpa's heart was deteriorating. It hit me like a blow to my face. I didn't know what to

do or think, so I moved into my grandparents' house so that I could be there in case of an emergency. The doctors gave him just a few months. He proved them all wrong. By June though, he wasn't doing well at all.

Near the end of July I went to Washington with some friends. I was supposed to be gone for three days, but on the second day my mom called me. I honestly don't remember that conversation. All I knew was I had three hours to get back to Portland and I was four and a half hours away. I was frantic, I felt like I was going so fast but everything around me was in slow motion. We got to Portland in three and a half hours. I ran into the hospital, I was almost positive the nurse behind the check-in desk could hear my heart beat. It was so loud and so fast.

When I stepped into the room, it was as crowded as the first time I met my Papa, everyone was there. Except this time everyone was there for a very different reason. I stepped up to the bed and choked on my own breath. He looked so small and tired lying there. I looked at my family's teary-eyed faces. I could practically feel my heart shattering. I sat next to him holding his crystal-thin hand for almost three hours. We sang to him and told him we loved him and we prayed. That was the day I lost my best friend.

Rest in peace, Fred Donald Michel.