

# Broom horses and Danish Jews

By Grace Wolf

**M**y Victoria Quaker friend Janet Hawksley makes hobby horses out of old broom handles she finds or people give her. She sews the heads out of remnants of grey or brown material and attaches button eyes and a simple wavy mane. Then, finally, she attaches a bridle and a yellow, six-pointed star. When we were recently at her house for a quick visit, I sat on her floor patting her dog and listened to her tell us the story again about the Danish King Christian.

Janet is one of the first Quakers I ever met in Victoria Monthly Meeting. I lived in her house for a few months too, just before I went on a four-month volunteer adventure in Fiji. But that is a whole other story.

One thing I know for sure about Janet: she can tell a good story. In Janet's stories, peaceful actions are the heroes. And she'll look you in the eye good and hard to make sure that you get the key message. The account of King Christian is one of my favourites. It's also one of hers, and one she likes to tell. The hobby horses she gives to local kids, with the story, which she tells them as she hands the horses off.

King Christian X (the tenth) was the beloved ruler of Denmark for 35 years. He was in his seventies when Hitler sent word that not only were they coming for the Jews, but King Christian had better make sure that all the Jews were wearing the Star of David when his troops got there.

King Christian was not amused. He thought about a response and acted quickly.

When the Nazi troops arrived, everyone they saw had a Star of David pinned to their clothes: Jews, non-Jews, even King Christian. They couldn't very well take everyone in the whole country, so the Nazi troops did not take anyone to a concentration camp. Then the Nazis threatened to seize Copenhagen. And, somehow, the Jews were snuck out of the country.

The whole time when the Nazis were threatening to storm into the country and were making demands, King Christian rode his horse every day alone, without a bodyguard or any kind of support.

This is the part of the story where Janet looks me in the eye, and I say, "Wow!" and she says, "Yeahw" in her Midwest American accent that makes her, in my mind, almost sound like a cat. She nods her head and I know that she knows that I know how important this story is to the world.

"Sometimes a person needs a story more than food," a kind, reverent voice quotes Rabbi Nolan on a tape of healing stories I have. Janet dishes this one out where and when she can.

I looked up some of this story tonight on the internet. Partially because I got talking with my husband about it and we were curious about what we could find on the web, and partially because I wanted to find out more information for a Jewish classmate who was intrigued

by the portion of the story she had heard secondhand when I told it to a couple of others in a class two days ago.

Our class had been doing a dramatic exercise on *Rose Blanche* (by Roberto Innocenti), a story about a young German girl who, after stumbling upon Jews in a concentration camp, feeds them, and brings to the land a flower of hope and 'somehow' disappears from her home in the chaos of war. I thought of Janet's story when I read this book, and told it to a couple of classmates.

The one classmate stopped me first thing this morning, determined to find out more about King Christian. I told her Janet's story, and that if I learned more, I'd pass it on. I did learn more.

Despite having taken, during my undergraduate studies in Anthropology, a course on Oral Traditions, and learning that oral stories hold valid information and truths that are parallel to and engage with print texts, I found myself looking for printed "proof" of events. To the internet I went.

Wikipedia, the on-line encyclopedia I consulted, says that the story of King Christian and everyone in Denmark wearing Stars of David is apocryphal. When I read that, I found myself immediately defending the story. "Well, maybe there's some truth to it somewhere," I said to myself. "It's still a powerful story." I kept looking on the online encyclopedia, and found an even better story, which was documented enough to be considered true in the

print-based scheme of things.

When the Danish people found out that the Nazis were coming for their over 7,500 Jewish people, the non-Jewish Danes found a variety of creative and brave methods of sending nearly all of their Jewish neighbours to neutral Sweden, within a two-week period! And, the website corroborated, King Christian did indeed show his bravery, not only because he rode his horse daily, without protection, often even through

the streets, but simply because he remained in his country while the leaders of nearby Norway and the Netherlands fled to England.

Both Janet's oral story and the printed encyclopedic stories hold hope and promise that people can be kind and resourceful and work hard for peace.

So many stories of the Holocaust are depressing. May there be more stories like these that cause the purple flower of peace and hope to

bloom in people's hearts and imaginations.

Rose Blanche carried such a flower in the book bearing her name. King Christian and the Danish people passed this flower to each other, their Jewish neighbours and the outside world. Janet Hawksley and others who tell this story and other stories like it also pass this flower on. Now it's yours. 🌸

*Grace Wolf is a member of Vancouver Monthly Meeting.*

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## gkisedtanamoogk, our neighbour and our friend

By Sophie Bérubé

gkisedtanamoogk came to talk with Young Friends during the Canadian Yearly Meeting gathering of 2004. In addition to sharing with us about the Neighbour's Project (see 'NOTES'), he also shared with us about the sunlight, the first dawn, the Wampanoag world view, and the importance of building relationships between First Nations people and Canadians.

He encouraged all of us to reach out to First Nations people, to go visit powwow's, to get to know First Nations individuals, to build bridges between our communities. He expressed his hope and wish that Canadians learn First Nations languages, dances and customs.

gkisedtanamoogk talked about the earth, the sky, and the creatures living on earth. He explained how, in his tradition, there are no separations between all living beings and

the rest of nature. We are all one. He mentioned how the Earth is feminine, and how he believes that the world should be governed by women.

gkisedtanamoogk spoke from the heart, sharing his wisdom with us in his quiet and relaxed way. The sky and the earth and the trees took on a new life, a new energy around us at King's Edgehill on that sunny morning. When gkisedtanamoogk gave us the honour of speaking to us in his native language, we could feel the resonance of his language reverberating in our natural surroundings. He genuinely shared with us a piece of his world, and we thank him deeply for that. 🌸

NOTES: THE NEIGHBOUR'S PROJECT OF THE TATAMAGOUCHE CENTRE AND THE WABANAKI NATIONS CULTURAL RESOURCE CENTRE AIMS TO DEVELOP

BRIDGES BETWEEN NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE PEOPLE IN THE ESGENOOPETITJ, NEW BRUNSWICK, AREA. THE PRIMARY FOCUS IS WORKING WITH GROUPS THAT ARE EARNESTLY WILLING TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY LINKS.

GKISED TANAMOOGK, WELL-KNOWN TO MANY CANADIAN FRIENDS, IS A MEMBER OF THE WAMPANOAG PEOPLE OF THE WABANAKI NATION. HIS LIFE'S WORK FOCUSES ON THE OFTEN DAUNTING TASK OF HELPING THE FIRST NATIONS AND NON-FIRST NATIONS POPULATIONS IN THE AREA FIND COMMON GROUND AND UNDERSTANDING.

EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS ARTICLE, WRITTEN ON A SMALL PIECE OF PAPER, WAS LOST IN THE BOTTOM OF MY CAMERA BAG FOR OVER A YEAR. GIVEN THE THEME OF THIS ISSUE, I GIVE THANKS FOR HAVING FOUND IT SO IT CAN NOW BE SHARED WITH FRIENDS.

*Sophie Bérubé is a member of the Annapolis Valley (formerly Wolfville) Monthly Meeting.*