

*What its like to be an aboriginal adult with FAS:*

*By Angela*

*I often woke up most mornings wishing I didnt have this learning disability, but that was back then, back when I used to think I was what other kids had labeled me: Stupid, mental retard. Those names used to really hurt me, but now I KNOW I am as good as everyone else, just that I take some more time to learn things. There were some teachers in Elementary school who just didnt understand how my brain operated. One teacher in the first grade whom I remember in particular was trying one day to teach me the simple concept of one plus one and I just could not get it and she got so frustrated that she raised her hand like she was gonna hit me.*

*My birth mother used to beat me quite a bit but I realize now it was her alcoholism that did that. I used to hate my birth mother, thinking if SHE did not drink then I would be "Normal" and not "stupid" like everyone else would say, but in time I came to*

*accept the fact I have this disability. Matter of fact, I dont look at it as a DISability, cuz that would mean I can't do much at all. I look at it as disABILITY. ABILITY meaning*

*I CAN do most things by myself, but I DO require SOME help with some things.*

*Sometimes I hate my disability and other times I do not think about it and I know I am as good as anybody else. It wasn't until just recently that I learned to forgive my birth mother for drinking while pregnant with me. Who knows? maybe she WANTED to*

*quit but she couldnt, because alcoholism is a disease. There were a lot of things*

*that happened to her that led her down this road of drugs and alcohol, and when one of my biological relatives told me of what life was like for my birth mother when she was around my age, that made me understand her a lot more and then I learned what forgiveness was. Nowadays, I try to use my disABILITY to reach out to others who have the same disABILITY and say "hey, its not so bad, matter of fact, God can take what was MEANT to be bad and make it into something GREAT". My*

*best friend Guillym taught me that having a disABILITY isnt all that bad. He also taught me to look beyond appearances and see people for who they really were. Guil and I were the best of friends, matter of fact, we were more like brother and sister.*

*What made us so close, you wonder? well, first off, we clicked right away because we both had the same type of disABILITY. Thats one thing I have noticed about other people with this type of disABILITY: we have that quiet acceptedness with each other. Another reason I came to accept this disABILITY? it was because of a great adopted mother I had. She taught me that I am just as good as anyone else, just that I am a little slower at learning things. Like I said, I used to think I was stupid, that maybe God made a mistake with making me. My ex boyfriend once called me dumb and*

*stupid and it very briefly brought back those feelings of shame, but then I stood up to him and told him it was NOT ok to call me dumb or stupid. When I got home I was still feeling pretty low about what he said, so I talked it over with Penny and my nephew listened in on the whole conversation and he put his two bits in by saying "Know what auntie? your not dumb or stupid, I love you just the way you are. NOBODY treats MY auntie this way." it is good to know that I have a very loving nephew who*

*loves his auntie no matter what. Cody has already learned that there are people who are different and that it can be a good thing. He accepts people for who they are and not what they look like. I was told that everyone has some disABILITIES. Like, my brother, Corey for example, when we were little he didnt know how to read very well, or spell things correctly. I have some very close friends who have Downs Syndrome, Autism, and what not. For some of us, its more prominent but for everyone, we all have some type of disability, just that we cant always see it. In me, you cant even TELL I have FAS but once you get to know me, you'll realize that there are some things about me that set me apart from other people. For one thing, I can't do hard math, like multiplication or long division, but whatever I can't do well in, I EXCEL in other areas. For one thing, I love little kids, and I can interact very well with them. I am also very caring and supportive of other people who need a friend and I am always willing and happy to lend a helping hand to someone in need. For example, a friend who is also a co-worker at the same daycare I work at asked me recently if I could fill in for her one day and she said she realized it was very short notice but I told her I was very happy to help her out. I am also an athlete in the Special Olympics. I do 5 pin bowling, 10 pin bowling, swimming, softball, track and field. I also like to go out and do things, like buying myself craft items. I also do a little bit of beadwork here and there. I like working with my hands quite a bit because I have found its good for hand eye coordination. Some people would still say I am Learning DISabled but to look at myself as DISabled would mean what I have said b4: I cant do much on my own, but being disABLED, to me means i can do lots on my own. For those who are still struggling to come to terms with this type of Learning disABILITY, I say, keep your*

*head up, smile lots, and whatever you may not be good at, all I can say is, KEEP YOUR*

*HEAD UP, things will get easier with time. Someone told me once that a lot of aboriginal people with learning disABILITIES did not graduate from high school. I replied "well, guess what? I'M going to prove them wrong and I WILL graduate". Just like Seal's song "I believe" "I believe I can fly/I believe I can touch the sky/I think about it every night and day/spread my wings and fly away/I believe I can soar/see me running through that open door?/...I believe I can fly". So in this case, I believe I can fly.*

*I wrote this story based on some of my experiences growing up with this disABILITY and to let others with FAS know that its not all that bad, in fact, it can be a good thing to be different.*

*"My darling baby oh so sweet I cannot wait until we meet. So why do I drink and hurt you so? Why can't I stop? I do not know."*