

today with the telephone company, honey. A real one. I have to take a week's training in the city. Granny's going to look after you and Luke while I'm gone. Maybe we can all go to a movie when I get back."

Luke came home later. We didn't talk about the cows. Mum told us all about her new job and how we might be able to get a television set for Christmas.

"We won't be able to get our house right away," she said. "That'll come later."

I had trouble getting to sleep that night. The air was humid with the promise of a hard rain, and, even with the window open, I was sticky and uncomfortable. I listened for the cows, but the field was silent. Later, I heard one of the gibbons cry out in its cage.

Where the Borg Are



By the time Milton Friendlybear finished reading Olive Patricia Dickason's *Canada's First Nations* for a tenth-grade history assignment, he knew, without a doubt, where the Borg had gone after they had been defeated by Jean-Luc Picard and the forces of the Federation. And he included his discovery in an essay on great historical moments in Canadian history.

Milton's teacher, Virginia Merry, was not as impressed with Milton's idea as he had hoped. "Milton," she said, in that tone of voice that many lapsed Ontario Catholics reserved for correcting faulty logic, bad grammar, and inappropriate behaviour, "I'm not sure that the Indian Act of 1875 is generally considered an important moment in Canadian history."

"Why not?"

"But I am positive that there is no significant correlation between the Indian Act and *Star Trek*." She said this with the natural assurance that the well-educated are able to manage, even though she had never read the

Indian Act and only knew about *Star Trek* because her husband watched it every night while they ate dinner.

"But it's all here," said Milton. "Pages two hundred and eighty-three to two hundred and eighty-nine."

"Your handwriting could use some attention," said Ms. Merry, and she wrote a note on Milton's paper in thin, delicate letters that reminded him of the doilies on the back of his grandfather's easy chair.

When Milton got home from school, he showed his paper to his mother, who sat at the table and looked at the grade for a long while. "Sixty percent's not too good, eh?"

"Ms. Merry said I have a vivid imagination."

"What's this about neatness?"

"That's because she's a Borg."

His mother read the paper, and, when she was done, she nodded thoughtfully. "Maybe you should go and talk to your grandfather."

Milton liked his grandfather a great deal and would have liked him just as much if he did not have a thirty-six-inch television set that was hooked up to the biggest satellite dish on the reserve.

"Hiya," said his grandfather. "You're just in time."

"*Star Trek*?"

"You bet."

"Are the Borg in this episode?"

"Who knows," said his grandfather. "It's always a surprise."

The episode did not have anything to do with the

Borg. It was about a hypnotic space game that would have turned the *Enterprise's* crew into automatons had it not been for the quick thinking of Data and Wesley.

"I wrote a paper on the Indian Act," Milton told his grandfather as they waited for *The Simpsons* to come on. "For my history class."

"Oh, ho," said his grandfather. "I've heard about that one, all right."

"My teacher didn't think that it was a great historical moment."

"That's probably because she's not Indian."

"But I read this really neat book, and guess what?" Milton waited in case his grandfather wanted to guess. "I think I know where the Borg went after they were defeated by Jean-Luc Picard and the forces of the Federation."

"Boy," said his grandfather, "that's probably the question of the century."

Milton took his *Canada's First Nations* out of his backpack and put it on the coffee table next to his grandfather's recliner. "Everybody's been looking for them somewhere in the future, right?"

"That's right."

"But if this book is correct, I think the Borg went back in time."

"Ah," said Milton's grandfather.

"Into the past."

"Ah."

"Europeans," said Milton, and he turned to page two

hundred and eighty-four in the history book and pointed to the eighth word of the first line. "That's where the Borg went."

Milton's grandfather looked at the word just above Milton's finger. "Holy!" he said, and he sat up straight and hit the mute button.

"That's right," said Milton. "'Assimilation.' According to this book, the Indian Act is . . ." And Milton paused so he could find the right tone of voice. "An assimilation document."

Milton's grandfather picked up the book and turned it over.

"It was written by this woman," said Milton. "A university professor."

"Those women," said Milton's grandfather, "they know everything. Is she Indian?"

"She's Metis."

"Close enough," said Milton's grandfather. "Does that Indian Act say anything about resistance being futile? That would sure clinch it."

"So, you think I'm right about the Borg having come to Earth and taken over."

"It makes a lot of sense," said Milton's grandfather, "but I suppose we better get a copy of this Indian Act and read the whole thing before we jump to conclusions."

When Milton got home, his mother was waiting for him. "So," she said, "what did your grandfather think of your idea?"

"He liked it."

"You know, stuff like that might hurt people's feelings."

"It would explain why dad took off."

"It would, would it?"

"Sure," said Milton. "He was assimilated."

The next day, after school, Milton went to the library and looked up the Indian Act. There were all sorts of listings for Indians, but the act itself was not there. Milton looked under "Borg," too, but it wasn't there either.

"I'm looking for the Indian Act," Milton told the woman at the desk. "Do you know where I can find it?"

"Is it a . . . play?" asked the woman.

"I don't think so," said Milton, though he didn't know exactly what it was. "It's got to do with history."

The woman went to work on her computer and in a matter of minutes found the act. Milton was impressed.

"It's not hard," the woman explained. "This computer is connected to all the rest of the libraries in the province and to the National Library in Ottawa."

Milton began to feel a little queasy. "Sort of like . . . a collective?"

"Exactly," said the woman, who did not particularly look like a Borg. "Do you want me to request a copy of the act for you?"

"Oh, yes," said Milton.

"Is this for a school assignment?"

"Yes," said Milton.

"Research is fun, isn't it?" said the woman.

"It certainly is," said Milton.

* * *

The Indian Act didn't arrive right away. By the end of the second week, Milton figured that the Borg were on to him and that he might wind up disappearing the same way his father had. But when he got home from school the next day, his mother told him that the library had called. "They said to tell you that your *Indian Act* thing is in."

Milton raced down to the library. The woman was still sitting at the reference desk, and she smiled when she saw him. Beside her on the floor was a stack of rather large, very old-looking books.

"The Indian Act," she said, and she leaned over and gave the stack of books a pat.

"All that?" said Milton.

"No," said the woman. "These are the Revised Statutes of Canada for particular years. The original Indian Act is in the 1875-1876 volume. This one contains the revisions for 1886. This one is for 1906. There are a couple for the 1950s and one for 1970.

"Wow!"

"The Indian Act was revised a great many times."

"So it probably represents a great moment in Canadian history."

"I don't think so," said the woman. "Most great moments in Canadian history have holidays."

Milton looked at the stack for a few moments. "Okay," he said, and he began to stuff the books into his backpack.

"Oh, you can't take them out of the library," said the

woman. "These are government documents. They don't circulate."

Of course, thought Milton. The Borg wouldn't want their secret to get out.

"But you can xerox the parts that you need."

"How much is xeroxing?"

"Ten cents a sheet."

Those Borg, thought Milton, as he hauled the books to one of the long tables by the window. They don't leave much to chance.

Milton spent the rest of the afternoon reading in each volume and taking notes. It was a long laborious process, but he was determined not to let the Borg and their ten-cents-a-sheet rule deter him. That evening, he showed his grandfather what he had found.

"What do you think?"

Milton's grandfather got up and stretched his legs. "I don't know," he said. "It sure sounds like the Borg."

"All the stuff about assimilation must be Borg," said Milton. "Look at this. 'Every Indian who is admitted to the degree of doctor of medicine, or to any other degree, by any university of learning, or who is admitted, in any province of Canada, to practise law, either as an advocate, a barrister, solicitor or attorney, or a notary public, or who enters holy orders, or who is licensed by any denomination of Christians as a minister of gospel, may, upon petition to the Superintendent, *ipso facto* become and be *enfranchised*.'"

"Whoa," said Milton's grandfather. "That could

certainly limit the choices Native people might want to make."

"It sure could," said Milton. "I don't think I want to be . . . 'enfranchised.'"

"It sounds better than 'assimilated,'" said his grandfather, looking at Milton's notes. "But it's probably the same thing."

"So," said Milton. "What are we going to do?"

"It may be more complicated than we imagine." Milton's grandfather closed his eyes for a moment and then opened them. "Look at this section, 'The Governor in Council may authorize the Minister, in accordance with this Act, to enter into agreements on behalf of her Majesty for the education, in accordance with this Act, of Indian children.' Now that sounds more like the Vulcans than the Borg."

"You think so?"

"Sure," said his grandfather, "the Vulcans were always the intellectual ones."

Milton stood up and walked around in a circle. "You mean it was the Vulcans who came back in time?"

"It gets worse." Milton's grandfather sighed. "Look at this."

Milton leaned over his grandfather's shoulder. "Management of Indian Moneys?"

"And these." Milton's grandfather ran his finger down the notes that Milton had taken. "'Descent of Property,' 'Sale of Property,' 'Rent,' 'Sale of Timber Lands.' Who does that sound like to you?"

"Oh, no." Milton paled. "Ferengis?"

"Yep," said Milton's grandfather. "Sounds like we might be dealing with the Ferengis."

"And the Ferengi *Rules of Acquisition*?"

"Let's check it out." Milton's grandfather went to the bookcase and came back with a small notebook. "I've been keeping track of the Ferengi *Rules of Acquisition* in case there was something worth knowing."

"How many are there?"

"At last count, there were two hundred and eighty-five."

For the next little while, Milton and his grandfather went through the Ferengi *Rules of Acquisition*, looking at each one carefully.

"Maybe you're right," said Milton. "Look at this. Rule Twenty-six. 'The vast majority of the rich in this galaxy did not inherit their wealth; they stole it.'"

"And Rule Twenty-seven," said Milton's grandfather. "'The most beautiful thing about a tree is what you do with it after you cut it down.'"

"And Rule Forty-two. 'Only negotiate when you are certain to profit.'" Milton's grandfather shook his head. "Boy, I sure wish I had known about this before we signed those treaties."

Milton felt a shiver go up his spine. "Look at Rule Sixty-one."

Milton's grandfather ran a finger down the page. "'Never buy what can be stolen.'"

"You're right," said Milton. "The Borg didn't come back in time. And neither did the Vulcans. It was the Ferengis."

The next day Milton stayed after class and apologized to Ms. Merry. "I was wrong about the Europeans being Borg," he told her.

"It's all right," said Ms. Merry. "I'm sure it was an easy mistake to make."

"They're really Ferengis."

When Milton finished writing "Racism hurts everyone" on the blackboard fifty times, he went back to his grandfather's house to talk with him.

"I've been thinking," said Milton, "and something doesn't make sense."

"That's the trouble with life," said his grandfather. "Television is a lot simpler."

"It sure is," said Milton.

"So," said his grandfather, hitting the mute so he could still see what Captain Cisco and Dax and Quark were doing on *Deep Space Nine*, "what doesn't make sense?"

Milton put the Indian Act and the Ferengi *Rules of Acquisition* on the coffee table side by side. "We know that the Borg and the Vulcans and the Ferengis have little in common."

"That's true," said Milton's grandfather.

"I mean, the Borg want to assimilate everyone. The Vulcans want everything to be logical. And the Ferengis are only concerned with profit."

"I see your point," said his grandfather. "Europeans seem to have many of the bad habits of all three."

"They could be Klingons, too, because the Klingons are warriors and because Klingons love to fight simply for the sake of fighting."

"Don't forget those tricky Romulans," said Milton's grandfather. "Now that I think about it, those treaties have Romulan written all over them. What else does that Indian Act say?"

"Not much," said Milton, and he made a face. "It has a bunch of stuff about who's an Indian and who's in charge of Indian affairs and how you can get an Indian declared mentally incompetent."

"Boy," said Milton's grandfather, "if you were a Romulan, that would be a handy thing to know."

"So, what should we do?"

"Maybe you better talk to your teacher," said his grandfather. "And see if she can help us."

Milton wasn't sure he wanted to talk to Ms. Merry again, but he was very sure he didn't want to get her upset and have to spend the afternoon writing on the blackboard.

"Hello, Milton," Ms. Merry said with a cheery chirp, when Milton stopped by after school the next day.

"I have this problem," said Milton, glancing at the blackboard. "I was hoping you could help me with it."

Ms. Merry listened patiently as Milton explained what he had learned about assimilation and the Indian Act and how the Borg, or the Vulcans, or the Ferengis, or the Klingons, or quite possibly the Romulans, figured in the history of North America. Along with his theories on space travel, wormholes, and time warps.

"Christopher Columbus was not a Ferengi," said Ms. Merry. "He was an Italian."

"But you told us that he kidnapped Indians from the islands of the Caribbean and sold them in the slave markets in Seville."

"Yes, he did, but that doesn't make him a Ferengi."

"Who else but a Ferengi would try to sell people?"

"Milton," said Ms. Merry, "do you remember what I told you about racism?"

"Racism hurts everyone."

"That's right."

"I told my mother, and she mostly agreed with you."

"Mostly?"

"She said it hurts some people more than others."

That weekend, Milton's mother had to go to Edmonton for a conference. "You can come with me, or you can stay with your grandfather."

"Are you going to be near the West Edmonton Mall?"

"No."

Milton's grandfather was in the backyard setting up his tipi when Milton arrived with his backpack and his sleeping bag.

"Nothing like sleeping out under the stars," said his grandfather.

"Like the old days, right?"

"Right."

"Before television, right?"

"You bet," said his grandfather. "Here, give me a hand with this."

"What is it?"

"An antenna. If you hook it to one of the lodge poles, it really improves the reception."

"We moving the big television outside?"

"No," said his grandfather, "it's too heavy."

Watching *Star Trek* on the seventeen-inch portable wasn't quite the same as seeing it on the big screen. But it was cozy inside the tipi, and during the commercials, if you looked up, you could see the stars.

"Look what I found," said his grandfather, and he handed Milton a magazine. "I went to the doctor's office the other day and there it was."

"*Maclean's*."

The banner headline on the cover said, "Abuse of Trust," and one of the stories was about the George Gordon Residential School in Saskatchewan.

"Residential schools," said his grandfather. "That's one of the places where Europeans tried to assimilate Indians."

"Are we back to the Borg, again?"

Milton's grandfather sighed and opened the magazine to page eighteen. "Look at this. It says here that in 1879 the John A. Macdonald government decided to set up boarding schools in order to remove Native children from their homes to begin assimilating them into white culture."

"And in 1894," said Milton, reading ahead, "Ottawa

passed an amendment to the . . ." Milton stopped for a moment to catch his breath.

"That's right," said his grandfather, "an amendment to the Indian Act making attendance for Native children mandatory at these schools."

"Wow!" said Milton. "So it was Borg, after all."

Milton's grandfather turned off the television and pulled the flap to one side. "Come on," he said. "I want to show you something."

It was a moonless night, and the sky was aquiver with stars. Milton's grandfather walked to the edge of the cliff overlooking the river and sat down on the prairie grass. "I think I know what happened," he said. "I think the Europeans and Jean-Luc Picard and the Federation are . . . one and the same."

"That's silly," said Milton, who did not really think of his grandfather as silly. "Europeans can't be part of the Federation."

"The Prime Directive, right?"

"That's right," said Milton. "The Federation's Prime Directive was never to interfere in the affairs of another race."

Milton's grandfather picked up a stick and drew a circle in the dirt. "You ever watch Sherlock Holmes on A&E?"

"It's a little slow," said Milton. "Mum likes it."

"Sherlock Holmes says that the way to solve a crime is to eliminate all the possibilities and then, whatever remains, however improbable, has to be the answer." Milton's grandfather paused and gestured toward the sky. "There's one."

Milton looked up in time to see a shooting star streak through the night.

"That's probably how it happened," said his grandfather. "That's probably exactly how it happened."

Milton was getting a little cold, and he was a little sleepy, and he had lost track of what his grandfather was trying to tell him. "We have anything to eat?"

"I got some apples."

"Any popcorn?"

Milton's grandfather shook his head. "Have you ever wondered why Europeans and the crew of the *Enterprise* look a lot alike?"

"Yeah, that is a little weird," said Milton.

"Europeans don't look like the Borg. They don't look like the Ferengis or the Klingons or the Vulcans or even the Romulans."

"Too bad Europeans aren't as nice and considerate as the crew of the *Enterprise*. I'll bet if Jean-Luc Picard had come to North America instead of Christopher Columbus, he would never have kidnapped Indians and sold them to other Europeans as slaves."

"Christopher Columbus did that?"

"Sure," said Milton. "You could make pretty good money selling slaves."

"Well, I guess that settles it," said Milton's grandfather.

"It does."

"You're a smart boy," said his grandfather. "How would you explain a race of people who look exactly like Federation officers, but who want to assimilate everyone and make a profit at the same time."

If Milton had had any hair on the back of his neck he was sure it would be standing on end.

"Remember that episode when the Borg were racing toward Earth?"

"And everyone was chasing them?"

"Klingons, Ferengis, Vulcans, Romulans. And Jean-Luc Picard. Everyone travelling through space at incredible speeds."

"Warp ten at least."

"They go faster and faster. The Borg out in front. The Federation right on their heels." Milton's grandfather paused, so Milton could catch up.

"Like a shooting star."

"Exactly." Milton's grandfather nodded. "And then . . . something happened."

"Something?"

"An accident. And explosion. Maybe a wormhole collapsed."

"A wormhole! You think a wormhole collapsed and caught everyone in a high-energy gravity field?"

"Maybe it was a faulty temporal time warp," said Milton's grandfather. "Who knows."

"But everybody would have been . . . crushed."

Milton's grandfather shook his head. "Or they were phased into particle streams, and their atoms were mixed and merged. Borg, Klingon, Vulcan, Ferengi, Romulan, even Jean-Luc Picard and his crew."

"You mean they were . . . reconfigured?"

"And when the dust cleared, what do you get?"

Milton sat back and took a deep breath. "Europeans." "Only thing that makes any sense," said his grandfather.

"This is worse than I thought," said Milton.

"I never did buy that story about Columbus sailing the ocean blue," said his grandfather.

"So what are we going to do?"

Milton's grandfather got up and brushed off his jeans. "Not sure there's anything we can do. I'll bet Europeans don't even remember it happening."

"You know what this means, don't you," said Milton glumly. "I'm probably going to have to write my paper over again."

For a Borg/Klingon/Vulcan/Romulan/Federation molecular composite, Ms. Merry was remarkably understanding. "No," she told Milton. "You don't need to do your paper over again."

"I know you can't help it," Milton told Ms. Merry. "It's just that I don't want to be assimilated."

"Then you should probably stop watching so much television," said Ms. Merry.

At the next community meeting, Milton's grandfather got up during the open microphone period and read Milton's paper out loud. It was a big hit, and, afterwards, several people came up and said it was nice to

have a scholar on the reserve. Milton was flattered at first, but after he'd had a few cookies and some time to think, he felt a little depressed.

"What's wrong, grandson?" asked Milton's grandfather, as the two of them walked home under a spacious, starlit sky.

"I don't know," said Milton. "Doing that paper on the Indian Act and discovering what happened to the Borg was fun, but what good does it do to know that Europeans were created by a freak accident in deep space?"

"Probably not much," said his grandfather. "But look on the bright side. Now that we know the truth, having Europeans around won't seem nearly as bad as it once was."

"You think so?"

"Sure," said Milton's grandfather. "They invented television."

"That's true."

"And those ice cream bars covered with dark chocolate are pretty good, too."

"They certainly are."

Milton's grandfather stopped and looked into the sky just as another shooting star flashed through the night. "And don't forget the Borg."

"The Borg?"

"Sure," said Milton's grandfather. "Europeans are no great shakes, but think how bad things would have been for Native people if the Borg had gotten here in one piece." The old man paused for a moment and a frown

began working its way across his face. "Unless, of course, we're wrong."

"Wrong about what?"

Milton's grandfather wrinkled his forehead. "Of course. That's what they want you to think."

"Who?"

"The Federation."

"Jean-Luc?"

Milton's grandfather sighed and sucked at his lips. "When has the Federation ever lost a fight? When have they ever lost anything?"

Milton thought about this for a moment. "Never."

"So, what if the deep-space accident never happened." Milton's grandfather was chuckling now. "What if the Federation attacked the Borg and defeated them long before the Borg got to Earth."

"You think the Federation attacked the Borg?"

"Why not. The Federation likes to fight as much as the Klingons."

"Yeah, but they never start the fights. The bad guys always start the fights."

"And they like logic, same as the Vulcans," said Milton's grandfather, "and they acquire things at almost the same rate as the Ferengis."

"Yeah," said Milton. "That's true. But what about the Prime Directive? The Klingons and the Vulcans and the Ferengis and the Romulans don't have a Prime Directive."

"Lot of good it does," said Milton's grandfather. "The Prime Directive says you're not supposed to interfere

with another culture, but Jean-Luc Picard and Data and William Riker and Councillor Troy are always sticking their noses into other people's business."

"They can get a little pushy," Milton agreed. "Especially Riker."

"To boldly go where no one has gone before," said Milton's grandfather. "Sounds like nosiness to me."

"That's just exploration talk."

"You know," said Milton's grandfather, "now that I think about it, the Prime Directive sounds an awful lot like the federal government."

"Our government?"

Milton's grandfather slapped his hands together. "You know what I think? I think that the Federation destroyed the Borg and then, when no one was looking, they ambushed the Klingons and the Ferengis, the Vulcans and the Romulans one by one, until there was no one left in the universe to oppose them."

"But why would they do that?"

"So they could have the universe all to themselves."

"But, Grandpa," said Milton, "the Federation are the good guys. Good guys wouldn't do something like that."

The smile on Milton's grandfather's face slowly faded, and the old man's shoulders sagged a little. "Holy," he said softly. "You're right. Boy, what was I thinking? I guess I got a little carried away."

"It's okay, Grandpa," Milton took his grandfather's hand. "It's an easy mistake to make if you don't know what you're looking for. All you have to remember is

that, in most cases, the bad guys look like lizards or devils or scary people with dark skin and snaky hair."

"And the good guys look like Europeans?" said Milton's grandfather.

"Sure," said Milton. "Who else would they look like?"

The following Monday, Milton stopped by Ms. Merry's room to give her the good news and to ask her, in light of all the extra work he had done, if she would consider changing his grade.

"Collapsing wormholes and molecular realignment?"

"My grandfather thought it might be a tear in the space-time continuum, but he doesn't watch as much *Star Trek* as me."

When Milton's mother saw the new grade, she was pleased. "There's probably no one else on the reserve who knows as much about the Indian Act as you do. I never would have realized that it was such an important document."

Milton settled on the couch. Yes, he thought to himself as he ran through the channels until he got to Space, the Indian Act was an important document. Certainly important enough to have its own holiday. And who would have guessed, Milton mused as he watched Jean-Luc Picard save another primitive civilization from destruction, that it would turn out to be the key to understanding the universe.