

Jordan 9/21/2023 ↻

My Journey into Education

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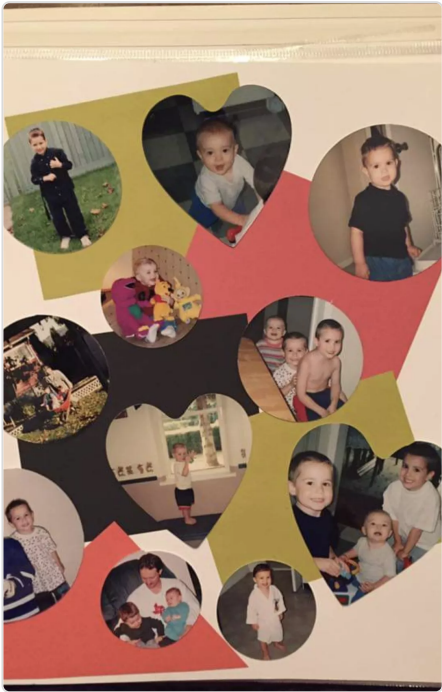
↻ This is where my story began. In this empty lot in which I fought a long hard battle of survival at the tender age of 0 months. In reality this is what is left of my childhood home in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

Google Street View

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↩️ **Nicholas**

My brother Nick was born in 1997, only a year older than me. He was from all accounts an oddly good child (oddly being the key word). As he grew year by year my Mom realized something wasn't right. When he was 4 years old he was diagnosed with Autism. My mom spent the next few years fighting relentlessly for support and funding for Nick to give him the best life she could. She was repeatedly denied until one day she finally broke down and left a final plea to the then Premier of BC. He called her back, apologized and approved funding for Nick. As soon as he got funding he was enrolled in speech therapy and working with behavioral interventionist. During this time Nick was receiving support I was 6-10 years old. Every session my brother had I attended to help out and learn. A few times I was certainly there for the candy and I *perhaps*, one night, ate all of it except the black licorice. While this didn't mean much to me at the time it is something I reflect back on fondly. This was the first time I actively took a role in education whether I knew it or not and has paved the way for my goals and passions.



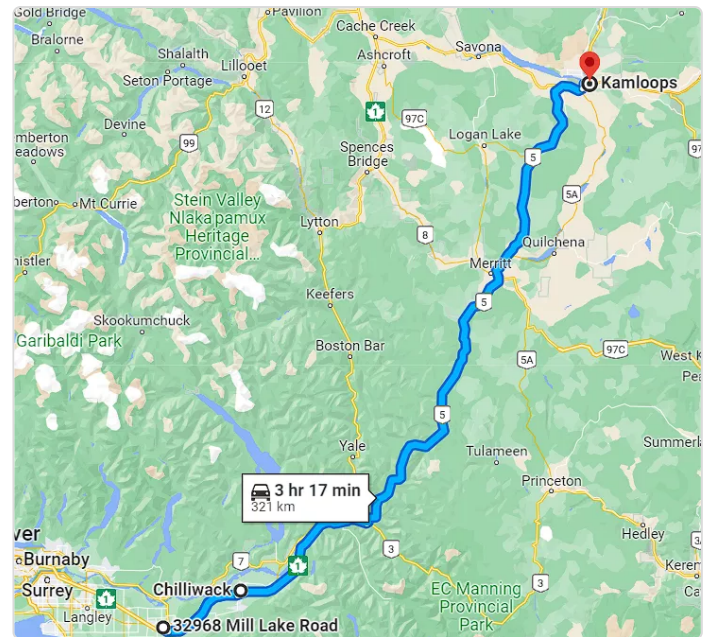
Nicholas (left), Matthew (middle), Jordan (right)



↳ (Not so) Clean Transitions 🔥

From 2002-2004 my family and I had moved 3 times. From Abbotsford to Chilliwack where we lived for 2 years and then to Kamloops. In that time I had lost many friends due to moving, made more which I lost and when we got to Kamloops I had a hard time. I had to get pulled out of my first school here for bullying part way through my second year. During this move to a new school I had a hard time making friends once again. Looking back I believe I was at a point where I didn't want to go through the effort anymore. While I had an okay time overall it wasn't until Grade 7 where things felt better. I had started to make a few good friends I also had a phenomenal teacher. Mr. Fridriksson was one of the most important influences in my life. We were able to connect since he was the best friend of my great uncle Robert (name of my best friend at the time too). He gave me room to grow, he pushed me in a way that worked for me, and he gave me tons of great advice. I felt I finally belonged and felt understood. When tasked with this assignment I tried to reflect back on very specific moments and I found myself always coming back to Mr. F. The way this has impacted me is I became quite shy. I generally don't like putting myself out there and I can see where problems will occur teaching. I have to put myself out there with students. I have to be fun, silly and set a good example for my students. One thing that has helped me start to overcome this is reminding myself to "do it for the kids".

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Jackson

Jackson was born when I was 16. It was the first time in my life that I actually thought, "I want to be a teacher". Having a brother with such a large age gap was hugely influential. He taught me a lot about teaching. He has his own unique challenges such as Dyslexia and ADHD. When COVID-19 hit he really struggled and he approached me one day and asked me to help him. I spent all night coming up with a plan to help him with his math homework. When I attempted to help him it fell FLAT. He just didn't learn the same way I did. I thought "How the hell do I do this?" I thought about how Nick was taught and the answer was simply to use tools he ENJOYS. At the time Nick loved candy and that motivated him to focus and learn. Jackson was a huge Minecraft fan and I realized Minecraft is the perfect platform to teach a young child things such as times tables, perimeter and area. Reflecting on how this influenced me I'd have to say that I will always try to connect with students with a learning disability to a fault. I have found myself prioritizing these kids/students perhaps more than others I may have. I will always try to give my students like my brother as much effort as I can because that is how I would want him treated.

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I've had a lot of Indigenous influences in my life. Many of them are my best friends. I know some of their parents were forced into residential schools. Hearing the news was heartbreaking, but it was angering. I felt confusion too. While it was somewhat religious based these people were still "teachers" and this is what I want to do? Also how could people be so inhumane that they murdered young children. As a white man how can I teach any Indigenous child when not 30 years ago we were still taking these poor children away from their homes and families. This shaped what kind of teacher I want to be. I want to be able to, in any way I can, help heal those who have been wronged. I want to make sure every child feels safe, can grow and can have an environment of healing. There might be no way I can do this but it is something I will strive for no matter what.

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BC residential school survivor struggles with discovery of children's graves in Kamloops

↩️ **Life Skills Room**

My volunteer work in the Life Skills Class at Valleyview Secondary was perhaps the final straw in my decision to follow through with being a teacher. Going here was an accumulation of everything I've experienced thus far. My brother being diagnosed with Autism, those tough transitions I faced moving schools and finally finding a place I belong, the treatment of those we deemed inferior for hundreds of years landed me here. Nick had attended Life Skills in high school so I had already known the teacher, Erin Price. She was the most wonderful and vibrant person any of these children could ask for. She made them feel safe, heard, and respected. Every single student was just pure joy. Spending my time with a group of kids with such diverse abilities gave me perspective. Perspective on the things I need to do to create a safe, healing environment for my students. Being with Erin and with the students means so much more than what I can put into words. It confirmed in my brain that I made the right choice to become a teacher. It has also shown me I have my own biases. I tend to gravitate towards those children who struggle in certain areas, whether its educational or emotional. My challenge, which I am happy to have, will be to make my classroom and myself open to all. To make sure every child is heard, and respected no matter what unique challenges they face. I have to make sure my attention is given equitably in hopes nobody feels left out.



↩ One of my brother's friends Ryan Kealy whom I worked with participated in the Special Olympics in Berlin this year

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Clearwater powerlifter is training hard for the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin

↩ Final Reflections

Throughout this assignment I've had to reflect on all the experiences I've had that let me to this point. I will always have very strong opinions about how Special Education is handled because of my family. I've always conducted myself in a way that I will treat these students how I would treat my own brothers. I fear that this may hinder me in other ways. I feel as if I may unconsciously ignore others to help those I feel need it more. I will always have to put my biases in check because every student that walks through my door has be equally and equitably treated not just some. At the end of the day my brothers and students in the Life Skills room mean so much to me. I will always put in the extra effort for students like them but I really have to make sure I also treat all my students that way.

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