

## Growing into Adulthood

“Aaneek, get up. You slept to long!” My grandmother was shaking me lightly, but her voice was disappointed. Usually I was up before anyone else to see the men out on their hunting or fishing trip. Today was an important fishing trip. The men were leaving to get halibut. It was important they had all their supplies.

I didn't think it'd matter if I missed the boat this morning. There were plenty of young girls to help the men with their supplies, but my grandmother had another thing on her mind. One of the men going out on the boat today had picked me to be his wife. Of course the old woman wanted me to assure him that I was a right pick.

“Get dressed and get out! There is much to be done.” She nudged at me before heading back outside the clan house. I had no choice but to go, there was a lot to do today. With the men leaving for the day, the woman were left to prepare for the gathering tonight, that included me coming of age and finally getting my labret. My friend's brother had died on a recent hunting trip and it was time to start the mourning process. There will be lots of people in the clan house tonight so food and dancing will be a necessity.

The men were just pulling out the canoes to head off. I was never one to choose only one male to help out, whoever was closest was faster. Of course my soon to be husband was closest. He seemed to be waiting for me but that was probably just in my head. I fetched some lines and he followed close behind to get hooks and nets.

Down at the boat, he smiled and thanked me for the food that I had brought with me to give to him for his trip before getting in the boat with a few others that were ready to take off. I stood on the shoreline with the other girls around my age or widowed and waved them off. Some of the girls were jealous of me. Their looks weren't as nice as they were supposed to be, but because they were raised better than that, they shrugged it off and made no ruckus of it.

Now came the hard part of the day. Everything needed to be clean. The house, places outside that we used, and the food. Yesterday, a few men brought back a big buck and they spent the majority of the night cleaning it so we can cook it today. Some of the women will be sent in groups to gather berries and plants. I was under the impression I was in that group, but somehow I knew my help was needed with cleaning and cooking.

The hours we spent were worth every second. Guests arrived not to long after the men returned and they spent a long time talking before eating any food. People eventually settled and listened to people talk about the lost brother. Dancing shortly followed after, one of the only things that I took part of, and then food was thrown into the fire to feed the spirits.

It was late before my grandmother helped with my labret. I had too many duties with helping the elders and my friend. Getting my labret was nothing too special, at least not as special as the mourning party. I was now a woman; well I was taking my first steps towards it. Once I was married, my family would consider me a woman. Then I'd go and live in my husband's clan house. I'd have to make new friends and stay in touch with the ones here.

My grandmother hugged me, telling me how proud she was of me. Tomorrow was just another day of cleaning, cooking and helping with whoever needed help. Soon I'd be married and ready to raise my own family like my grandmother raised me.