

**TILLICUM**  
March 2010

At residential school, the children joined hands under the table and they whispered, "All my relations" while Father said grace. In the dark, before Father came to choose, they planned their freedom rides across the water.

Some said it was better to find logs on the beach and paddle with tree branches. Others said they would wait for the whales. "We'll catch a ride with Tillicum," meaning "our brother" in the Chinook language, the children said when Father wasn't looking.

Several children disappeared on the exodus from Kuper Island. When the Orcas sang, I wondered if they were trying to tell us what happened to children and whales in captivity.

We say the same thing about captured whales & stolen children as we do of women in labour, "They will forget the pain," but do they, their loneliness breaching in every leap from the deep pools where they grieve for freedom & all their relations? Do we stop to think that the Orca Tillicum, companion of three drowned souls, might also be desperate to find his way home?