



## In My Own Moccasins: A Memoir of Resilience

**Helen Knott**

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A childhood and early adulthood marked by sexual abuse and rape led Dane Zaa and Cree woman Helen Knott into deep addiction. Despite her descent, she also managed to travel to Switzerland at the behest of the Nobel Women's Initiative as one of sixteen global change makers dedicated to ending gender-based violence. This duality of light and dark pervades *In My Own Moccasins*, an inspiring memoir about recovery and healing.

Knott grew up in Canada understanding that to be Indigenous was to be less-than—to the extent that, when their father told Knott and her brothers that they were Indigenous, her brother asked “But we're still part human, right?” Knott helps to make sense of the impact of reservations on First Nations people forced to rely on outsiders for their basic needs, showing how such marginalization often resulted in self-hatred. Fearful readings of the Bible, which seemed to condemn Knott for being a survivor of sexual abuse, combined with these stresses in a toxic way.

Knott's story illuminates how government treatments of Indigenous people harmed and destroyed generations. Knott found relief and recovery when she actively sought her culture, relied on a medicine man, engaged in smudging, and advocated for Indigenous people to guide her healing.

Knott's accounts are moving—as when she recalls an appointment with her gynecologist, made to assess the damage of a brutal rape and to see whether she would be able to have children. Such violence often goes unanswered for in Knott's story, and a large part of her life's work becomes about ending violence against Indigenous women.

Powerful and unsettling, *In My Own Moccasins* shies away from nothing, enacting Knott's claims that writing brings healing. It is an important addition to the histories of First Nations people in Canada.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (July/August 2019)

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