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Up Ghost River: A Chief's Journey Through the Turbulent Waters of Native History

Edmund Metatawabin, Alexandra Shimo

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A powerful, raw yet eloquent memoir from a residential school survivor and former First Nations Chief, *Up Ghost River* is a necessary step toward our collective healing.

In the 1950s, 7-year-old Edmund Metatawabin was separated from his family and placed in one of Canada's worst residential schools. St. Anne's, in northern Ontario, is an institution now notorious for the range of punishments that staff and teachers inflicted on students. Even as Metatawabin built the trappings of a successful life—wife, kids, career—he was tormented by horrific memories. Fuelled by alcohol, the trauma from his past caught up with him, and his family and work lives imploded.

In seeking healing, Metatawabin travelled to southern Alberta. There he learned from elders, participated in native cultural training workshops that emphasize the holistic approach to personhood at the heart of Cree culture, and finally faced his alcoholism and PTSD. Metatawabin has since worked tirelessly to expose the wrongdoings of St. Anne's, culminating in a recent court case demanding that the school records be released to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Now Metatawabin's mission is to help the next generation of residential school survivors. His story is part of the indigenous resurgence that is happening across Canada and worldwide: after years of oppression, he and others are healing themselves by rediscovering their culture and sharing their knowledge.

Coming full circle, Metatawabin's haunting and brave narrative offers profound lessons on the importance of bearing witness, and the ability to become whole once again.

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