

OVERVIEW OF THE PLAY SPIRIT HORSE

Spirit Horse is a powerful and moving adventure of two First Nations children, Angelina and Jesse. Both girls are introduced to a beautiful horse by their grandfather, an elder and storyteller who lives by the old ways. As the play begins, Grandpa is sitting in the shadow of Wildwind Mountain. Grandpa hears a horse galloping and sees it emerge from the mountain lake. To us, this might seem as a miracle, but to the Stoney Nakoda Nation, this particular lake is full of running horses. Occasionally, VERY occasionally, one of these horses runs out of the water and onto land. This is the Spirit Horse and if you can catch one, all the power of the horse will flow into its captor. Grandpa tries to lasso the horse but he can't. The horse wants Grandpa to follow her. Grandpa leaps into his pick-up truck and starts driving, faster and faster. He drives all the way to the big city as fast as 100 km/60 miles per hour and the horse keeps pace the whole way!

The horse leads Grandpa to the high-rise apartment building of his son, Pa, a former championship rodeo rider. Grandpa's dream is that Pa will ride the horse and rid himself of the sadness that has crippled him since the death of his wife. However, it's Angelina and Jesse whom he meets first. They race down the stairs to see the beautiful horse their Grandfather has brought them. He explains the horse's power and danger, but Angelina climbs up and rides the horse like it is a trained pony. The two children decide at once to adopt the horse. They call her Wildwind after the mountain where the horse was found and, in a hilarious scene, they cram the horse into the elevator for the long ride up to their small apartment. Pa is not pleased and neither are the neighbours! Soon the police are at the door and a tearful Angelina is forced to give up her beloved horse Wildwind. The horse is taken away and they learn it will be sold at a police auction. The next day Pa, seeing how upset the children are at losing the horse, goes to the police station and tries to use the rent money to pay for her release. He discovers that the horse has already been sold. The children feel betrayed and Pa retreats to his room and his memories. But their fortunes change when they see Wildwind on TV, featured in the annual Stampede.

They race to the fairgrounds and Wildwind leaps over the fence at their call. Together they race off to get out of the city. What follows is a series of adventures as the two children ride closer and closer to the mountains, their ancestral land. Along the way, they discover there is a reward for their arrest and that although they feel they ought to know how to live off the land, they really want spaghetti! Ultimately they discover that the horse has led them to the grave of their mother, and in a poignant moment, Angelina learns how her mother died. Simultaneously Pa has risen from his bed to find his children. For the first time in seven years, he mounts a horse that he gets from Grandpa at the reservation and follows his children into the mountains even as the police get closer and closer.

The climax of the play takes place where the story began, at the edge of the lake in the shadow of Wildwind Mountain. The horse is spooked by a police helicopter and begins racing towards a cliff with Angelina hanging on for dear life. Jesse calls for her to jump off but she is too afraid. The edge of the cliff is rushing towards them and Wildwind shows no sign of slowing down. Suddenly, another horse appears. It is Pa, riding his rodeo pony like the champion he still is. He stands on his racing pony and leaps onto Wildwind just as all three go plunging off the cliff and disappear into the lake below. Jesse calls helplessly from the shore. Pa's head comes up first but no Angelina. Pa dives once, twice, three times

and then comes up with the limp form of his beloved daughter. They lay her gently on the Rocky shore, praying for her to live. To their astonishment, she wakes as from a dream. “In the water”, she says, “It was peaceful. I saw Mama. She held my hand.” It is a moment of love and gratitude for being safe, for being together. They decide that Wildwind must have come to lead Angelina to the homeland of their people and the spirit of her mother. The Spirit Horse has reconnected them to their Native ties and in doing so, has brought hope and healing to her husband and bonded them together as a family.