

This is a continuation of a story about working as a nurse practitioner in Kashechewan in Northern Ontario, Canada. Shelley and I are nurses there. This is my first weekend.

### Eddy and Meeko

I was on call for the first time that night. Not knowing what to expect, I went to bed early. The phone rang at about 1:00 am. It was a lady who had been to the dentist in Moose Factory. I dressed and went over to the clinic, remembering to use the code to shut off the alarm.

“My tooth hurts so much I couldn’t sleep,” she said, holding the side of her swollen cheek.

I looked over her chart and found that the other nurses had been giving morphine for her pain.

After giving her an injection, she talked about her husband being in jail and how hard it was to manage her two boys when she was in so much pain. She was flying out on Tuesday to see the anesthetist, to see when she could have surgery for a tooth extraction.

I crawled back into bed, hoping things would be quiet tonight. *I guess I can't worry, I will just take one case at a time.* I drifted off to sleep.

As I opened the door to go for a walk Sunday morning, the dogs were sitting on the porch waiting for me. Shelley told me their names were Eddy and Meeko. Apparently, they always hung around the nursing station.

“Hi Meeko, Hi Eddie,” I said petting the two husky dogs.

“Do you want to go for a walk with me?”

They returned my enthusiasm, with their tongues hanging out as they jumped from the back porch.

We started toward the Northern Store en route to the dyke. I was a little more prepared for the mosquitoes. I patted my jacket pocket, making sure my repellent with DEET was with me.

As I walked past a few houses, I noticed a pack of black dogs along the road. To my dismay, Eddy and Meeko walked right to them, like they were challenging them. Maybe they were trying to protect me, or they just had their own pecking order. When Eddy and Meeko walked back toward me, the other dogs followed. I was now surrounded by six large dogs.

*This doesn't look right. I don't like dogs in a pack like this.*

Memories of the dog bite I had as a child surfaced. I knew what damage even one bite could do.

I saw the hair on their necks bristle. That was a signal for me to run, vamoose, get out of there. But things happened too fast. Two of the large black dogs curled their upper lips and growled. One of them snapped at Eddy. Then there was mayhem. Barking and growling, the other dogs joined in and pounced on both Eddy and Meeko. I panicked. I couldn't help the dogs, things were out of my control. As I sprinted up the hill by the side of the road to get away, I visualized them following me. Stopping to catch my breath I looked back and saw the dogs still fighting. I jogged toward the dyke. I felt I was a safe distance away, then Eddy and Meeko came up behind me as if nothing had happened. The other dogs looked on.

Trembling and scared that they would follow and continue the fight, I quickened my pace. I didn't want to be near Eddy and Meeko either because they attracted other dogs. True to my prediction, as we walked, other dogs from town came along.

"Go home!" I yelled whenever they appeared.

They didn't seem to listen to me, maybe they didn't know what "Go home" meant, but eventually, they wandered off.

The mosquitoes buzzed around my cap and ears, so I applied another layer of repellent.

Between the mosquitoes and the dogs, my nerves took over. This time I yelled at poor Eddy and Meeko and told them to ‘go home!’ They stood there, cocked their heads and looked at me with their pale blue eyes as if to say, ‘We are here to protect you. What’s your problem?’

I felt vulnerable; caught on the dike. I couldn’t go left or right. I had to walk around the full three miles. The sky was a deep blue and the colourful red fireweed was a stark contrast to the river flowing below. I would have liked to linger, but in my anxious state, I needed to move and continue my walk home.