

## Jessica Nelson – Sorry Day 2017 Speech

Kaya everyone, my name is Jessica Nelson I am a young Najki-Najki Yorgas from Merridan.

I would like to pay my respects to the Whadjuk people elders pass, present and future leaders.

Few months ago I was honoured to get ask by James to speak here with you all on this special day, Sorry Day, to share my story and why is the day so important to me.

Last year I graduated from high school from Kiara College. School was struggle but I finally got there at the end and I am currently at University of Western Australia doing the Aboriginal Orientation course and hopefully going into sport science next year.

Sorry day... thinking about this significant day gives me the goose bumps, this day is important to my family and I as my grandmother Marj Nelson was taken away to Carrolup mission with her older sister. Nan didn't know why she was taken away from her mum. My nan wrote many letters but this one stood out for me when she wrote a letter at the age of 76 about how she felt getting taken away and about her life as it had a big impact even when she got older. All the memories did not go away as she was hoping for and I am going to read it out to you. Be mindful back in the day they didn't know how to read or write and it was very rare if they did.

*My name is Marj Nelson nee Michael*

*I was one of the stolen generation back in the early 40's. I was young teenager I'm not quite sure what my age was. I don't know why we were taken away, myself and elder sister, we lived at a place called Wandering there was nothing around us just bush. I lived there with my family until my elder sister and I got taken away by the old white welfare man we didn't know where he came from. He took us to this prison, we had to stay in there for a night. I cried all night and then we got taken to Carrolup mission. I didn't know what was going on, I will never forget that terrible time, I was so unhappy. I hate to remember those days what happen to my older sister and I back on the mission. The days when they even made us use sham bag for towel to wipe ourselves. I still remember, I was shifted from all sorts of jobs. I often wish I was back home. I always tried to run away but I always seemed to get caught time and time again. I always got taken back to the prison and got the boob for punishment. It was hard to remember where I was sent to. I got sent to Perth to get my eyes tested. I was tired of running away until I met my Husband Jack Nelson, I rushed into marriage to get away from the white welfare man. I was sorry I did, I had a dogs life with him. He used to beat me a lot. I had a family with him. I am very sick now.*

*I never talk about my past, I don't want to be reminded of the life of a stolen children was. Pass still on my mind can't forget that we were taken away from our family for*

*what for... I am 76, the best of lives are bad memories I don't want to think about the past anymore. I am to sick now I like to live in good and happy time I got left.*

Knowing that what my grandmother and many other Indigenous people went through and what they did to them on the missions breaks my heart. All I wish is that I could take the pain away from them. I am glad I got to share my story with you because so many people don't know what happen to these innocent people.

I am thankful they have this day because we have to show respect and knowledge what happened and keep moving forward for our old people and make sure this never happens again.

There is a lot to celebrate today as the 20 year anniversary bringing home report that was issued. 25 year since the Mabo was decision, also since the 25<sup>th</sup> year since the formal journey Reconciliation began. As a young Indigenous lady there is a lot to celebrate but there is a lot to keep moving forward as the 54 recommendations haven't been all issued.

We need to all keep working together so we can keep moving forward as one.

Thank you.