

Senior Division, Percy Janes First Novel Award

Alex Saunders, Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Safe in a Dangerous Place: kamatsiagit ulugianattumi (an excerpt)

While sitting by the comforting fire, slipping in and out of sleep and lost in the glow of the coals in a dream world of people, voices and noise, I was jarred awake by a sudden rushing energy that pulsed through the night air. I felt something big just over my head, some energy that flew down close to the earth and rose again to the starry night sky. I listened intently, feeling with all my senses and tingling all over at something unexplained. Then I noticed the Northern Lights. They were alive and undulating across a starry sky, made brighter by a harvest moon. They moved with a sinuous wavelike action, displaying a smooth rising and falling side-to-side motion as they sped across the Arctic sky.

I meandered out onto the heather, gazing at the starry heavens and hearing the rustling noise again as the lights sped across the night sky. I lay on the ground looking up at all this wonder, listening to the noises the lights were making. I could smell the earth and the low fragrant plants that grow in the Arctic. The night air was cool but sweet and pure. I felt as if I had been doing this all my life as a secure sensation enveloped my being and bestowed on me a feeling of belonging in this land.

The colour display was amazing, mostly pale green with purple tinges, laced with blue hues outlining the body of the cosmic energy moving in the Heavens. Different intensities came and went as fading bodies of light sped North, only to be magically replaced with newer and brighter bursts of colour. I lay on the ground for a while wondering if this was a survival endeavour or an awakening of self-realization, a coming of age for a Native son.

I think I was blessed to have witnessed such a spectacular display by Mother Nature, and a warmth filled my being as I sipped a last tin of herbal tea before going to sleep. I found contentment and peace on that barren island and a sense of identity that I hadn't been aware of before. It was so surreal that I thought to myself, "I am dreaming the land and the land is inside me." We were dreaming each other and creating new heights of human awareness and

feelings that seemed to transform my soul to another sphere. I learned what silence was, patience and acceptance and an understanding of a part of a whole that was the Earth and me.