

## Neil and Raelene's Story

*Raelene:* What happened is, Junior [Bud, son, 10 years old] had an appointment at [the children's hospital]. I couldn't find a park, so I dropped Neil, Bud [Junior], and his nephew off at reception. And he [Neil] wasn't feeling too good. So I dropped them off and went to find a park. When I came back, I found him laying on one of the couches.

*Neil:* No, I was sitting.

*Raelene:* No, you were sort of leaning, like that [slouching]. And I said, 'What's wrong?'

And he said, 'I don't feel so good.'

I thought his blood sugar had dropped, so I said, coz we were running late for his [Junior's] appointment, 'I'll go and get you some juice or something to drink.' So I went and got him a juice and a water and I put it there. And I said, 'I'll take Bud through.'

So anyway, I took him through and the next thing I heard was there was a 'Code Blue' in reception. And I thought... My heart sank... And I felt no good, you know. So I ran to the front and I found this guy on top of Neil doing CPR.

And then the next thing I know, there was this lady rushing us off to the... To a room, myself. They left the nephew there, but I grabbed the nephew, because he was standing at the foot watching everything happen. And I grabbed the nephew and Bud and we went into a room.

And they just kept coming back saying, 'No heartbeat, no heartbeat'.

And then they finally got a heartbeat. And then they were transporting him to [the adult hospital].

So we got into the car... And then we all went to [the adult hospital] and he had already got there before us in an ambulance.

But what happened was, he was sitting on the bench and then he started to feel funny. And the security guards walked up to him... A security guard... And told him, 'I'm sorry, but drunk people aren't allowed to be here.' And, you know, he was trying to basically chase him out of the hospital.

And he [Neil] was trying to say, 'I'm not drunk, I'm waiting. I'm trying to get to the doctor to...'

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*Neil:* 'My son's got an appointment here.' Yeah. Hassling me. I still can't remember what...

*Raelene:* The nephew filled in some of that, said that... Basically... Just kept hassling him. And Neil just said, 'Look, I'm not drunk, I'm waiting for my son.'

And then this Liaison Officer saw what happened and walked over. And just as he walked over, Neil collapsed. They took a pulse and that's when they found that he had no pulse, so he told the nephew to call a Code Blue. He put him on the ground and started doing CPR. And that's when the security guard took off.

So, had the security guard been successful and kicked him out of the hospital, there would have been no one around to initiate CPR, and he would have died, because the heart attack was that bad. Even the doctor today can't believe that he's alive.

## More to the story

### Aboriginal Liaison Officer [also a nurse]

*Raelene:* The Liaison Officer was walking past and he heard the security guard 'getting really rough with blackfellas', that's how he put it. He said, 'I saw this security guard getting rough with blackfellas, so I went over to investigate. And that's when I looked at Neil. I looked at your husband and he didn't look right, he looked sick. And when I went to ask him if he was alright he said, "No, I'm not well." And then he collapsed.'

So he felt his pulse and there was no pulse. And that's when he put him on the ground and started doing CPR and told the nephew to go and call a Code Blue.

The security guards were gone. He reckons he can't remember. All he remembers was that the security guard was there initially, but once Neil collapsed they were off... Nowhere to be seen.

### Hospital

*Raelene:* The volunteers... They took us aside and put us in a room. So they took me and I grabbed Bud and Lyle, his name is, the nephew. And I said, 'No, they can't stay here and watch what's happening. You can't just take me, you know.' Coz he, the nephew, was standing at his feet and watching it all happen.

*Neil:* And screaming.

*Raelene:* So I grabbed him and then we all went into another room.

And then they had this lady that was coming back and saying, 'No heartbeat. There's no heartbeat.' I can just remember her saying that.

And then the last time she came back was, 'There's heartbeat and they put him in an ambulance and they're taking him to [the adult hospital].'

*Interviewer:* How did you get to [the adult hospital], did they transport you?

*Raelene:* No, I rung my sister-in-law and she came and got me.

*Interviewer:* So they told you, 'He's gone.' And then you basically had to find your own way there?

*Raelene:* Yeah, 'See you later.' I think they were all in shock too. Everyone was in shock, coz they've never seen anything like that happen, not there. And I think they were concerned,

coz he was a really big man. They were concerned that they wouldn't have tubes and stuff there at the hospital, being a children's hospital. But because they have big kids they had one that fit him, so they were able to tube him, and the ICU team came down and they shocked him about five times... They de-fibbed him... And they inserted a needle.

### **Taking it further with the hospital**

*Raelene:* We did go to the hospital. We went to the hospital and their media people came and spoke to us and their Human Resources people. And they all said, you know, 'What would you like?'

And we said, 'For starters, they need cultural awareness.'

But we have no proof that that's been done.

They apologised, the Executive. But we don't want an apology from them, they didn't do anything wrong, it was the security guard. You know, apparently he apologised through them, but we don't know that. They might just be saying that, you know, there was no proof.

We've had no follow up, no one has rung us and said, 'Look, the security guard has been fired...' Or that they have been made to do cultural awareness, or that they are going to write you a letter of apology, or nothing. We've had nothing.

*Interviewer:* So you feel that that would have at least made a bit of a difference?

*Raelene:* Definitely

*Neil:* And that he would have apologised to me in person or given me a decent letter to say...

*Raelene:* 'I'm sorry, what I did was wrong. I shouldn't have done that and I did judge you and I shouldn't have.' You know? Something along those lines. And we're still left in limbo. We still don't know... For all we know, he has still got a job and he's still treating blackfellas the same, you know? And the next time... The next person might not be so lucky. He [Neil] was lucky. Coz he [the Liaison Officer] was a nurse, he was a registered nurse.

The thing is, what if something again happens? We're not reassured that it's not ever going to happen again to someone else. At least if they would have said, 'The security guards have had cultural awareness training. He's going to write you a letter of apology or if you'd prefer...'

But it probably wouldn't be a good idea to meet him you'd probably want to still punch him, so that might not be a good idea [laugh].

But at least something.

### **Taking it further**

*Raelene:* We went to the Health Consumer Council and we've complained about it. Coz we've said, 'That's not good enough.'

Just coz you're black and you might be laying down or you might be sitting... Do you not have the right to sit in the hospital? Just coz he is a man, that doesn't mean that he can't sit there. He's got a child there as well, you know, but you're made to feel like that you weren't supposed to be there. Just coz you're black and you're a man... And they were accusing him of being drunk, coz he was sloped.

*Neil:* I was having a heart attack.

*Raelene:* He was having a heart attack, so he doesn't looking too good. So they thought that he was... Drunk. He didn't even smell of alcohol. Just coz he was black and he was a male and it was just him and his nephew, and the nephew's, you know, black as well.

### **Impact on nephew [20 years old]**

*Interviewer:* How did your nephew react, coz it must have been a shock for him?

*Raelene:* He's still having a hard time dealing with it. He won't talk about it. He can't even talk about it. The only thing he ever said to me was, 'No one has ever experienced what I experienced.'

I said, 'What's that?'

And he said, 'I saw my uncle dead in front of me, and then he came back to life. And I can't deal with that.'

And he went off the rails.

We tried to tell him, we tried to get him some help, hey? But he doesn't want it. He reckons, 'Ah no, I'm dealing with it.' But he's bad on the alcohol and drugs, mainly the alcohol. He just doesn't want anyone to help him. He got worse on the alcohol after it happened. He used to always drink but not half as bad as what he does now, but he won't go for counselling.

*Interviewer:* Not even talk to you guys about it?

*Raelene:* He talks to Neil, but he's angry. That should not have happened.

*Neil:* He doesn't like security guards.

### Reflections on the story

*Raelene:* We're funny towards security guards now too, hey. I took Bud back there on Tuesday. Neil, walking into the hospital, was looking around. And like, just the feeling of just going back into that hospital...

*Neil:* I'm the strong one, not my son. I'm the strong one, that's how I felt. That's how I feel every time I go there to [the children's hospital]. I'm scared that I might have another heart attack in there. It mightn't be the same security guard, it might be someone else.

*Raelene:* And you might not be so lucky, hey.

*Neil:* Hmm, I might not be so lucky. What would have happened if I had walked outside and collapsed outside on the road, on the sidewalk?

*Raelene:* They wouldn't have cared.

*Neil:* Would anybody stop and help me?

*Raelene:* No, they wouldn't have. They wouldn't have. That's the reality, unfortunately, today.

*Interviewer:* And that feels scary?

*Raelene:* It does feel scary. And I mean, sometimes you're even too frightened to say you're Aboriginal because people... Soon as you say you're Aboriginal, they put you in another category, you know? They put you in a totally different category. You're so stereotyped. You know that you fit this little category: that you're a drunk, that you're a no hoper, that you're violent. You know, that you fit all this and it's so horrible.

So when people say, 'Oh, are you Indian?' Or, 'Are you Maori?' We go, 'Yeah, whatever.' We just let them think whatever they want to think because it's safer, hey. For us.

Sad... In our own country. Okay we're not from Perth, we're from up North, we're from the Kimberleys, but that's not the point. The point is, we are not like every other people. And the race shouldn't matter, but you're automatically judged, in every hospital, as soon as you say you are Aboriginal.

They see the colour of your skin and they ask you... They don't even ask, 'Do you have...? No, you don't have private health insurance.' Even before we can finish saying it yourself. They automatically just judge you.

It is very frustrating. And then they wonder why we get... It's not so much abusive, it's angry and aggressive. You try to let it go, but it gets too much sometimes, hey?

It's not their fault, it's just that it's been building up, building up, building up...