

April 22, 2023
(Saturday morning)

PROMPT:

Write from the perspective
of the person you would
have become if a different
path had been chosen.

A Boy Named Shawnee

“We must not speak of these things,
Maxkii Wiixcheew,
except with words from our ancient language
that the shuwanakw
will never understand.”

“Why am I to be known as
Maxkii Wiixcheew
instead of as Shawnee,
the name the teachers call me
when I am at the residential school?”

“Your shehshkoolhaaluuwees do not know Lunaape,
Maxkii Wiixcheew
as they have forbidden it
to be known by
First Nation peoples.”

“But the other children say I am not
Maxkii Wiixcheew
as I am shaashuwanakuw.
May I know and speak Lunaape if I am not
Shawnee, Munsee or shuwanakuw?”

“Allow a moment of aanihkwaachiimuw,
Maxkii Wiixcheew
to speak to you of your ancestor, Abraham,
who many generations ago, lived among the Esopus
and came to speak as we do now.

“He was a skahunzuw- even younger than you,
Maxkii Wiixcheew,
when the soochuluw of the Dutch
came to take him from the laawooteenay
that had become his home.”

“Was his spirit name also
Maxkii Wiixcheew
as is mine, or was he known only as Abraham
- a name that does not seem mayaawii
to the words spoken among our people?”

“Legends say that he was named for the
Maxkii Wiixcheew
that were among the spirit forces
that came to him that day so laawate
to escape into the kohpii and mahta kulahkweew.”

“Did my ancestor speak to the
maxkii wiixcheew
in Lunaape? Did he recognize the aaptoonaaka
that was speaking to him?
How did he know what to do?”

“We do not know what would have happened,
Maxkii Wiixcheew
had he chosen to return to shuwanakwihleew.
Shukw kiisheelumukweengw knows that.
Perhaps, if he had, now you would only be known as . . .

. . . Shawnee.