

# Bad cough: A short story

**By Naats'keek**

My wife baby-sits for our daughter while she works. Our grandson is three years old, and one day he came to our place with a very bad cough. I told him that I was concerned and that we needed to "get rid of that bad cough."

He is not willing to go to the clinic when his mother has to take him there because of the many shots he had taken during previous visits. Knowing this, I knew I had to prepare him for the time when he would inevitably had to go for a check-up.

Every time he coughed, I would say, "That's a bad cough, Jack. We have to get rid of that cough." This went on throughout the day and soon it got to a point that when he coughed he would repeat, "Bad cough. Gotta get rid of that cough."

When his mother came to pick him up after work, we discussed

his illness. I knew that tomorrow he was going to have to go to the clinic. I was also convinced that we had gotten him ready to face the fact when the time came.

He was brought to our home the next morning with no change in his cough. Again, each time he coughed, he would say, "Bad cough. Gotta get rid of that cough."

Later that morning, we received a call from his mother. She had made an appointment for him to visit the clinic at 1:30 that afternoon.

"Dad," she asked. "Could you have him ready just before one thirty so I can come and get him and take him right to the clinic?"

I said I would.

At about one fifteen I started to put his clothes on. He coughed and said "Gotta get rid of that cough!" I thought I had him convinced until he asked me why I was getting him

dressed to go somewhere. The answer slipped out with no thought.

"I'm getting you ready to go to the clinic to get rid of your cough," I said.

With that he would not let me dress him any further.

It was exactly one thirty when his mother arrived. She proceeded to try and force his clothes on. He began to kick and cry, and resist his mother's attempt to get him dressed.

"That's a bad cough you have Jack." I encouraged. "Gotta get rid of that cough."

"No! No!" he cried and kicked and flung his arms every which way. "I wanna keep my cough. I wanna keep my cough."

*Naats'keek is a Tlingit freelance writer from Yakutat.*