

The Last of the Wild Ones

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A herd of wild horses used to roam the vast Canadian Armed Forces reserve near Suffield in southeastern Alberta. In 1994, the wild herd was rounded up, ostensibly because they were competing with indigenous wildlife such as antelope. A few horses did not survive the roundup; the rest were sold at auction; rumours persist that some of them ended up in pet food cans, despite the authorities' insistence that this would not happen. A controversial event, and one which inspired Joe

Adams, with Rona Altrows's encouragement and help, to pen a song viewing the event through the eyes of the captives.

The song was something of a work in progress even up to Joe's death; the lyrics I obtained from Rona had some differences from those given to me by Joe earlier. This version is a composite of the two, strongly influenced by my memory of the way Joe used to sing it. [JL]



The morn-ing sun ris-es bright as gold. Shin-ing on these snow-cov-ered



plains, And the wind beats a-gainst my breast, As it rus-tles through my mane; Our



an-ces-tors would be proud, Of their genes run-ning through our veins. Our



fore-fath-ers showed us how, When man tries to beat you down: Just let your spir-it



soar, And head for high-er ground.

The morning sun rises bright as gold.
Shining on these snow-covered plains,
And the wind beats against my breast,
As it rustles through my mane;
Our ancestors would be proud,
Of their genes flowing through our veins.

The mares and foals are in the draw,
With their backs humped against the wind;
As the morning sun comes down,
They'll start the morning graze again;
But this may be the last day,
For I sense changes coming in.

Many years this has been our home,
Out on these Suffield plains,
By shell holes and burnt-out tanks,
Where man must play his war games;

The guns and tanks are quiet now,
But they'll be back here in the spring.

I hear the snow machines a-coming now,
And a machine flying overhead;
Before this day is o'er,
I fear many will be dead,
For whenever man comes near,
There's always the smell of death.

In fear the herd is running now,
Even the weak and the lame,
And as I try to circle back,
In my chest I feel the froth and pain,
As some crash against the corrals,
Again and again.

I see them jammed into the chute,
And the white of fear in their eyes,
As the burning rope comes down,
To take the old and weak to die;
No more they'll be able to roam,
Under these Alberta skies.

For toys and rodeo we'll be used,
Until we're of no more need;
They'll try to strip our spirit,
To bring us to our knees;
But no matter how we're enclosed,
Our spirit will be free.

Chorus: Our forefathers showed us how,
When man tries to beat you down:
Just let your spirit soar,
And head for higher ground.