Inspired by “Maple Nation: A Citizenship Guide” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

Written by Morgan Petersen

I live in a small town that is obsessed with maple everything, it sounds ridiculous, but it is true. Yes, we are even named after it. I want to start the story off with a little background. My name is Nova Jane Smith, and I am about to be in the fourth grade. I was born and raised in Maple Nation, my daddy is the mayor, and my mom is on the school board. I do not know life outside of Maple Nation, we are all family in this town. When I get lonely, I just visit my old friend Kent, he owns the only grocery store we have in town.

“Hey Kent, how’s it going today” I asked.

“Oh Nova, doing just fine. The maple trees are blooming, and I am about to get a huge shipment of maple syrup in today” he explained. Kent loves talking about how much maple we have in the store. He is always worried that we are going to run out and he insists on telling everyone who comes in to pay taxes and watch how the sap is running. I say goodbye to Kent and go on my way to my favorite spot which happens to be the sugarbush, this is where thousands of maple trees are scattered and laid beautifully.

Maple Nation is an interesting town, I tend to wonder what other towns are like? Do they care so much about a particular thing in their town? Maple Nation, I swear has more trees than people in it. I think to myself how this town just keeps on running and all I think of is the trees. Just last week, Mr. Turner used firewood for warmth as he forgot to pay his oil bill. Or even how the fire department uses maple contributions to have a monthly pancake breakfast. I just think we all must do our part for this town to survive. If the trees go down, we are going down with them. As I walk back to my house, I see my father in the window. My mother is standing over him and has her hand on his shoulder.

(over)

My father looks unwell, he is rubbing his head and looks stressed out.

I walk into the house and my mother jumps suddenly. “Oh, Nova dear, you scared me.” Her eyes looked sad and sunken in. I knew something was wrong. “What happened” I said suddenly. My father looked at me and just mumbled something about “how he made a commitment to this town” and something about “how could this be happening.” I looked at mother and she pointed to the room, and she followed me.

“Honey, your father is very stressed, and we need to just stay calm and be there for him” she said. I asked a million questions and she stated that “there is something called climate change happening” and “It is putting a lot of stress on the maples” I was very confused and did not understand. If there were no maples, there would be no Maple Nation. I ran to my father and said that we had to do something about this! He said there will be a town meeting and that it would be best to just tell the town then.

The next day, I could hardly wait. I was ready to stand up and explain to the whole town that we need to change how we have been acting. The town meetings are very important in our small town, this is where we discuss a lot of the problems that are going on. My father gets up to speak about this climate change and everyone goes nuts! “What is going to happen to us” and “This is the end of Maple Nation” commotion started running through the town. My father shushed everyone and said something I will never forget. “Our maples do not deserve our government. They deserve me and all of you to speak on their behalf. We will fight political action and show civic engagement in this climate change business. We will not lose our maples.”

Everyone in the town was cheering and that is how The Maple Nation Bill of Responsibilities was made. We led with the wisdom of Maples and made sure that they were never going to end. Maple Nation lived on for years to come, thanks to the community caring about what is most important to them. This story should show you to fight for what you believe in!