

## Family

By: Tyneisha Thomas

to me, family is more than -

the ones I eat with over the holidays.

Family are the people I feel most safe with.

Families, know when you are going through something and give you time to heal or space without judgment.

Family are the people I can uglily cry and laugh with.

See, Families are not just the ones branched on my hereditary tree or the ones I share bloodlines with;

but to me, family are the people I feel most safe with.

Family members are the ones who forgive before they receive an apology.

Family, are the ones who teach + lead without saying "follow me"

Families connect us like wedding bands, forever is the love of family.

According to Webster's dictionary, a *Family* is defined as a group of individuals related by blood, marriage, or adoption OR a group of individuals who live together under common household authority and have reciprocal duties.

What I take from this, is that families don't always have to share the same last names or hyphenated versions;

but that those who choose to live in proximately with each other, share roots that connect them.

We are connected - by communities, shared interests, spiritual connections and friendships.

We are all connected by sending our children to schools in the same district and by feeding our families with goods supplied by the same markets.

Families can share generational curses, but each generation still aims to fulfil the same purpose;

and that's to be better than the last.

That's why we cannot ever forget things that have happened in the past.

Our family members are storytellers of history.

Disconnecting from our family runs the risk of making the same mistakes again.

From way back when tales were told of the power of community that stemmed from the unity of families.

Families are not only connected through bloodlines but by good times, shared time.

By residing here in the City of Barrie, like it or not – we have become a family.

And my family is no longer just a tree, but it is a forest.

And as I grow, I will do my part to help others flourish.

My daughter has her village, and it has only just begun to grow.

The harvest it will bring will glow even in the snow.

My family is no longer just a tree, but it is a forest.

My daughter has her village.

This twig will bark if ever her leaves are trampled on because she knows her history. She knows her roots; she knows that rotted roots can heal and bear fresh fruit

and most importantly she knows that we are all connected like family.

This seedling soon sapling, knows the nourishment her youth brings and the importance of growing in a good environment.

She knows strong communities are grounded in kindness.

My village knows that accountability is a requirement,

And not taking ownership of one's actions is childish.

My daughter and our youth know that it is important to speak your truth,

they also know that family is given + chosen if we are lucky enough.

The word family includes anyone who has love for you, even if you are not related;  
and the circle of life is not something to ever play with.

As newborns in diapers our family endlessly provides for us;  
feeding and bathing us early in life.

And it is our family that cares for us again, when we meet our end, back in diapers.  
Our children now care for us like we are their newborns.

My bloodline was waiting for me. They knew the stories they told would lead me to find my  
voice in poetry.

And now, as the Poet Laureate of Barrie,

I can proudly say how happy I am to have been included in this family.