



INTRODUCTION

My life experiences have shaped the work that I have chosen to engage in. As the child of a father who attended Spanish Residential School, I have spent much of my life trying to figure out how I fit in the world. My struggle to fit in has helped in my work with students and other people.

It is when we understand our past and where we come from that we can truly embrace the wonderful things life has to offer. The future is shaped by the experiences of the past, not just our own experiences but the experiences of our parents, grandparents, community and the world.

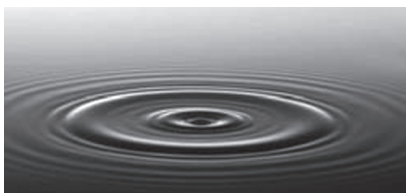
I chose to engage in this research project to provide some history of what happened in residential schools, how residential school shaped the lives of our parents and grandparents, and how those impacts shaped the second and third generations. The purpose of my research is not to provide an excuse or to lay blame, but to create awareness so that we have a sense of our history. When people understand where they come from, and the factors that shape their lives, they can deal with and overcome the barriers and bring balance to their lives.

A state of unbalance of the four aspects of self has been created, and we have lost the ability to walk the earth in a healthy way. We have forgotten how important it is to take care of and nurture the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical parts of ourselves.

Working with Anishinabek people, my people, for the past 20 years, I have encountered sadness; loss of hope; drug, alcohol, physical and sexual abuse; and lack of respect for self, family and community. But, more importantly, this work has provided me with a respect for the resiliency of my people. There have been many who remind me why I continue to work in my community. There are pockets of hope that encourage me to continue on the path I have chosen. I remind myself that it took a generation for us to get where we are, and it will take another few generations

to bring us out of that.

There is a ripple effect that started at residential school. This ripple will continue outward until another ripple



Balancing: The Impact of Residential School on Second and Third Generations



or object comes into contact with it; only then will the ripple be redirected. It is my hope that this research report will be the “something” that comes into contact with the first ripple and begins or continues to effect change in our communities.

During my year and a half of working on this project there were several times when I thought that I could not continue. It was just too difficult, heart-wrenching, close to home, emotional and personal. I didn’t feel like the research was going to make a difference. But it has made a difference. The lines of communication have been opened, and people are beginning to speak to me about their experiences or family stories. The opportunity to give voice to others and to listen to their stories has been healing.

As I questioned the research and myself, a story that is posted in my office popped into my head:

A man wakes early and heads to the beach for a walk.

In the distance he sees a woman; it looks like she is dancing in the early morning sun. As he gets closer, he sees hundreds of starfish on the beach. Then he realizes the woman is not dancing. She is picking up the starfish and throwing them back into the ocean.

He approaches her and says, “You cannot possibly make a difference; there are hundreds of them.”

She bends down and gently picks up another starfish and tosses it into the ocean.

She looks at the man and says, “It made a difference to that one.”



THE DECISION

Why this? Why now?

My reasons for participating in this research are both personal and professional. My personal story is one that is wrought with loss, sadness, loneliness, abuse and despair, but it is also a story of hope, faith, love and happiness.

In Anishinabek culture, it is believed that we choose our parents. The choice is made because there is something to learn by our births. In this choosing we are given the blueprint for our lives. I chose an Anishinabe father and a mother of English and Scottish descent.

My walk (birth) on Mother Earth began in 1965, the same year that Spanish Residential School closed. To me it seems almost set that the closing of that place would mark the beginning of my life’s struggle to fit into the world. I grew up without a father because of Spanish Residential School. My brothers and I suffered not for something we had done, but because Spanish took away my father’s ability to be a loving, caring, nurturing parent and a role model.

The struggle was partly due to the fact that my brothers and I were part of two worlds. Some referred to us as “Apple Indians” — white on the inside and red on the outside. It seemed like we were not fully accepted by white culture because we looked too Native and not accepted by Native

culture because we were raised in a white society. In an effort to protect us from his experience at residential school and to ensure that we would have a better life than he did, my father severed all ties with his family and community and even changed our last name. This brought many struggles about how to fit into the world.

It is interesting that this “fitting in” shaped my family and caused some tragic events. When I was about five years old we attended the funeral of my father’s friend — a friend who had been killed when, in a drunken state, he had fallen asleep on the road and been run over. The difficult part was that years later I discovered my father’s friend was actually his brother — a brother from the family that he had chosen to have nothing to do with. In addition, again many years later, I discovered two other aunts, along with cousins and relatives. My two aunts have passed on; therefore connection with them is not possible. It is interesting to feel loss and sadness for something you never had in your life.

In my immediate family there were my three brothers and myself. My father turned to organized religion and we became the ideal family, or so it seemed. It was important for him to make it appear as though we were the perfect family, attending church, working, going to school and living a good life. What many people did not know about was the abuse that we as children suffered at the hands of my father.

At residential school my father was taught many things. One of the things he learned was how to make people keep secrets. My father controlled our lives in the name of the new God he had chosen to worship. The church gave him structure, a structure and control that he was familiar with. In addition, it gave him the respect of fellow members of the church. It allowed him to control his family in the name of what was good for the church and what God would want us to do. Residential school had taught him well; it had taught him how to abuse and manipulate.

My mother was working hard to complete her education. Years later I found out that she had been planning to leave my father. She knew that to support four children she would need a good job. She became a registered practical nurse, got a job and then left my father. This broke our ties to the church; many believed my father’s lies about my mother and refused to support her. They did not believe in divorce; my mother had sinned. The people of the church who had seemed so loving and caring no longer wanted anything to do with my mother or with us. Once again, the church had affected my life in a negative way.

At nineteen my oldest brother committed suicide. He really struggled with trying to fit in, and he wanted his struggle to end. I was in my second year of a social services program, and his death made me question my career choice. If I were unable to fix or even recognize the deep struggle in my own family, how would I be of any use to others? I made a decision to take a business course — just numbers, not people. This lasted one semester. It was not where my heart was; helping people was what I wanted to do.

We become who we are: In spite of our parents or because of them

Twenty-five years later, I know that the decision to complete my social services course was the right one. It has helped me to grow and heal. The struggle to bring balance to my life is similar to the struggle of so many people I have had the honour of working with over these years. One question that pushed to the front of my mind was why — why was I able to move forward and gain balance in my life when others were not?

One of my friends and I would talk about our dysfunctional childhoods, marked by abuse, drugs and alcoholism — how were we able to become functioning adults, caring people and good parents? It is about resiliency. In our lives someone or something helped us overcome the difficulties and challenges. These qualities of others and of ourselves led us into the work we chose to do as adults.

That really brings me to the “why” of this project. It is because of my personal and professional experiences that I chose to do this research. Through my work I have observed, discussed, read, and gathered information and personal stories of the impact of residential school. This has allowed me to think about the effect of the “unbalance,” to look at how the four aspects of self have been affected by life experiences and how others have been able to move past these experiences into balanced, healthy lives.

There have been a few very good people in my life who have nurtured the unbalanced part of me. They have helped me and continue to remind me of the importance of my spiritual knowings, the essence of who I am and where I come from. They have encouraged me to continue when I felt that it was too emotionally draining and that it would not make a difference. It is through them that I really began to understand the importance of balance and how that is what many people are encountering — personal imbalance.

During this project I have had many “Aha” moments.” These are the moments when what I feel in my spirit, that special knowing, matches my experiences, observations and research about the impact of residential school and the resiliency of the Anishinabek people.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SPANISH RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

In the mid-1800s in Canada, warrants were issued for Native children. They were to be gathered up and sent to live at residential school. Some children were hidden by their parents; if they were caught, this could result in the parents being jailed for refusing to comply with the order.

The purpose of residential school was assimilation: to educate Native children and bring them into the church. The younger a child was when they entered, the more successful the assimilation. These children would grow up in the church, carefully molded by the rules of the church. The intention of those working in the schools was to empty the vessel or spiritual self of each child, so that it could be filled with the church's beliefs and values.



Children as young as four years old were taken from their parents and put in the residential school, where they would live until they graduated at the age of 16. Brothers and sisters were separated and not permitted to speak to each other. Children were severely punished for speaking their language and not permitted to participate in traditional ceremonies.



From the mid-1800s until the early 1970s, there were 22 residential schools that operated in Ontario. The last school in Ontario to close was Fort Frances Residential School, in 1974.



These schools were sanctioned by the government but operated by the various churches. The Roman Catholic and Anglican churches operated most schools.

Spanish Indian Residential School operated in Spanish, Ontario, from 1883 until 1965. There were two schools that operated at Spanish — St. Peter Clavier/Charles Garnier Boys School and St. Joseph's Girls School. At the same time, St. Charles High School operated from this location.

The boys' school was built to accommodate 65 boys, but there were often over a hundred boys in the dorm. There was overcrowding, physical and sexual abuse, poor nutrition and long, hard days of labour.

At Spanish Residential School, children spent many hours working, rising before 6:00 a.m. to work on the farm or in the bush and doing various other chores around the school to ensure that it ran properly. They spent hours in religious study and very few hours engaged in academic study. Although there was a farm at Spanish, most of what was produced there — beef, milk, chicken, eggs, vegetables and fruit — was sold to pay the cost of running the school or went to the tables of the nuns, priests and brothers of the church. Children were fed oatmeal with powdered milk, soup that was mainly broth, a few vegetables and very little meat.

The girls at school were responsible for doing the laundry, mending and cooking. They were responsible for doing these chores for both the girls' and the boys' school. Again, they spent so much time doing chores and religious studies that there was little time left for academic studies.



WHAT HAPPENED AFTER RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

The students who completed their terms at residential school chose various paths for their lives. Some went on to complete trades programs. My father was a licenced lumber scaler, firefighter and oil burner mechanic. Others pursued post-secondary education and became teachers, lawyers, politicians and community leaders. Many others could not find a clear path for their lives.

Hundreds did not return to their communities to live because they did not fit in. Some might have felt that others knew too well what had happened in the school and did not want to face the shame. Many married soon after graduation and began raising families. Alcoholism and abuse became the symptoms of what they learned at residential school. Alcohol abuse was widespread; even some who became successful had to overcome the temptation. Later in this report I will speak in more depth about the effects of residential school and how it has rippled into the second and third generations.

Despite all these challenges, or because of them, many children did grow up to continue their education in trades or post-secondary school and became leaders. They were able to use the skills learned at residential school to help themselves, their communities and Native people throughout Canada. I have always thought it a bit ironic that what was learned in the very systems, the church

and the education system, that wanted to assimilate Native people ended up being used against the church and the government.

It is my belief that understanding what happened at residential school and speaking of the resiliency of Anishinabek people to overcome this tragedy will help us to grow stronger as a people. Silence begets more silence; speaking out increases strength and determination.

BLENDING THE WHY WITH THE HOW

The process of blending my personal and professional experiences with other peoples' research about residential school, post-traumatic stress and resiliency was a challenge. I was encouraged by several "Aha" moments; these gave me a sense that the direction I was heading in was right.

This final research report looks somewhat different from my original idea. Prior to starting the project I had asked a student to participate in a case study. She was a person who understood and talked openly about her struggles within herself, her family, her school and her community. The idea was to have her share the journey of her life. After several months of me trying to get her to engage in further conversation and reflection, she admitted that she was not ready to participate. By this time, I had also come to the realization that this was a difficult project, one that would require self-reflection and some degree of personal healing. It had become emotionally taxing, even though numerous people supported me through the process. This student had very few people who were willing or able to support her through the process.

At this point I almost abandoned the project. I contacted the people in my support group and asked them what I should do. They would not let me abandon the project, and I felt if they believed in the project, then I had to continue. The support people had experience working in Native communities as literacy workers, counsellors, teachers and spiritual counsellors, and they felt that the project had relevance and merit. Their suggestions were to use the many stories of the various people I had encountered and worked with over all my years in adult education, counselling and literacy, including my own journey of healing and resiliency. So that is what this project became: *the voices and stories of many, of their journeys and struggles for balance*. This is an opportunity to speak for those who have not yet gained the courage to speak for themselves.

It is my hope that someday they too will find their voices and speak. Silence makes us believe we have done something wrong. Speaking out releases us from that shame.

THE MEDICINE WHEEL AND BALANCE

My experience with research is that it is very linear: questionnaires created, research of others reviewed, interviews conducted. All this is gathered into nicely written sentences that form paragraphs that follow in a perfect, orderly fashion. Well, this research was to be conducted in a different way: we were to use various creative methods to gather the information. I questioned my ability to do both these things, having never been very confident about my writing skills and seeing myself as less than creative.

As a child growing up, I felt that I had been placed in the wrong family. My mother and brothers were all very artistic and creative. They would say, "Just picture it in your head, then follow the lines." It seemed so simple, but I have difficulty drawing a straight line with a ruler!

Again, one of those "Aha" moments came to me. I had knowledge and belief in the power of the Medicine Wheel, and using it to convey my research made perfect sense. The Medicine Wheel

is divided into four sections, each having specific teachings, colours, medicines and aspects of self. The Anishinabek people use the Medicine Wheel to teach many things: phases of growth, seasons, responsibilities, planting and harvesting. It is a powerful teaching tool.

Many people don't seem to have the words within themselves to describe the events, feelings and challenges that have shaped their lives; I am no different. Words and pictures in various forms of print material have always helped me to describe my feelings and ideas. For this project I gathered and leafed through hundreds of magazines for words and pictures that would help describe what had happened to the thousands of children who attended residential school. What I chose helped me to put into words what I couldn't seem to find my own words to fully describe.

The pictures, words and phrases were sorted according to whether they described the spiritual, emotional, mental or physical aspect of self. There were instances where one word, picture or phrase fit into more than one aspect. In addition, I chose items that described the overall research project.

The Medicine Wheel is very adaptable, and that became my backdrop for the words and pictures. The first Medicine Wheel I created used four different coloured pieces of bristol board to create the four different quadrants. As the project progressed, the bristol board became too small to display all the pictures and words I had gathered. It became apparent that I required something larger. The result was a Medicine Wheel sewn from fabric that has a diameter of six feet, six inches. This provided me with enough room to organize all the items.

This Medicine Wheel has become the basis of my presentations. The words and pictures have been laminated; this protects them and allows me to use them multiple times. In addition, because the Medicine Wheel is so adaptable, I can change my presentation to suit my audience by rearranging or adding different items to the quadrants.

The Medicine Wheel has become a living project that adapts and changes to provide a unique learning experience and a visual method to describe my research.

CASE STUDIES, STUDENT STORIES AND OTHERS' WRITING

The case study I had initially proposed ended up being a self-study when the student who had initially agreed to participate decided that she was not ready to open herself and her family up to the process. As I worked through the self-study process, it became apparent to me that this would be difficult. It would open issues for me that even with my years of healing and support were going to bring me to tears and make me not want to continue.

Working with First Nations people has provided me with numerous stories and first-hand accounts of their struggles and joys. As a teacher, counsellor and someone who would listen to their stories, I cried many tears. Some of these tears were of joy, but many more were of sorrow: the sorrow of lost childhoods, lost innocence, lost loved ones, lost educational opportunities and lost hope.

One young woman told me, *"At the age of four, my father died; I was told not to cry. How could I not cry? My father was gone. But emotions were not acceptable in my family. No one was allowed to cry."*

This young woman struggled throughout her life with emotions. Before turning 30, she had lost several members of her family and several friends and had given up many of her own goals for the good of the family. She was very monotonous in her feelings, rarely feeling extreme joy, anger

or happiness. It was very hard for her to build lasting connections to friends and family, because she feared the emotions that were involved and knew that loss was inevitable.

There were many other stories from students, co-workers and friends. Then there was my personal story of how residential school affected my life, but this was not enough. It was essential to review other documents and stories about residential school, to compare my personal and professional experiences to those of others. These were stories of people I didn't know, from other communities, but the similarities shocked and saddened me.

In all that I read, the theme was the same. People had lost far more than they gained at residential school. They had lost a sense of who they were and where they belonged in society. This has been forced upon the new generations to deal with.

Reviewing the research and writings of others really helped to reaffirm that my personal and professional experiences with this type of trauma were not isolated. That did not make the experiences easier to deal with; it became harder, because now there were thousands of us who had been affected by residential school.

The next step was to identify the impacts on the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical aspects of self.

AROUND THE MEDICINE WHEEL

I felt most comfortable and able to express my research findings using the Medicine Wheel. My experience has been that many First Nations people, including me, have difficulty finding the correct words to express our ideas, emotions and thoughts. When provided with images or words, people could then express a relationship to them, and this would open some discussion.



My office wall is my "Wall of Inspiration." It is covered with quotes, pictures and poems that express me in ways that otherwise I have trouble finding. This became the basis for how to express my research findings. Pictures, words and quotes found in magazines were used to capture the ideas and to express the residential school experience and the ripple effect upon the next generations.

At the centre of the Medicine Wheel, I display items that have helped me along on this journey. There is a picture of my oldest brother and my father together. This is one of the few pictures that I have of my oldest brother as a baby and of my father. The white

eagle feather is a healing feather; a woman for whom I have a great deal of respect gave it to me. The smudge bowl was given to me by a student who taught me many wonderful lessons. Inside the smudge bowl are the four medicines.

The East

Medicine: Tobacco
Aspect of Self: Spiritual
Time of Life: Childhood
Qualities: Vision, courage, innocence, hope, mind, place of all beginnings



The spiritual part of yourself is the essence of who you are. Residential school broke the spirit of the children who attended. They were forced to give up and deny the belief systems, customs and ceremonies of their families and communities.

People are like vessels that contain who we are. The priests, nuns and brothers at residential school emptied the vessels, broke the spirit of the children, and then filled them with their own ideas, customs and ceremonies.

Children were not permitted to speak their language or to engage in traditional ceremonies. When an individual must deny who they are and create a new self, they rely on those around them. The priests, sisters and brothers of the church knew that to recreate these children as good Catholic or Anglican parishioners they would have to keep them from practising their own ceremonies. In addition, language is closely tied to the spirit of the people, so denying children the opportunity to speak the language broke their spirits.

Children, some as young as three or four, were taken from their families and communities and spent the years until they reached 16 being raised by nuns, priests, brothers and others at the school. They grew up with very little connection to family, community, language and ceremony. The church's influence was far greater the younger the child was and the longer the child stayed at the school. Children grew up with unresolved grief, having lost something but being unable to explain the loss. Second and third generations have realized that they are missing their language and culture; they struggle to retain or relearn these things.

To deal with their unresolved grief and shame, some parents turned to alcohol. This has resulted in a higher rate of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder among Native people than is the national average.

Others remained loyal to the church and brought their children up in "good" religious homes. The church's laws and ceremonies governed the people; this made them feel very comfortable. The structure of the church provided them with guidance and parameters for raising their children and living their lives. However, some tended to believe themselves superior to those who did not attend church. This was so with my personal experience in the church.

My father worked as a lay minister, and he was well respected in the church. Some of the few times I can recall hearing my father's voice involve him giving a sermon from the pulpit. As his children, we were expected to behave perfectly: attending Bible classes, Sunday school and church socials and participating in church events that made us better than those who did not. Church also

gave my father a curtain to hide behind; in the name of God he committed some terrible abuse. Residential school had taught him how to control and manipulate to get what he wanted.

Break the spirit, create shame in the person, and this allows you to control them.

The South

Medicine: Cedar

Aspect of Self: Emotional

Time of Life: Adolescent

Qualities: Love, compassion, growth, discipline, honesty and kindness



One woman told me, "My grandmother said that going to residential school was okay. That going there did not harm her. But my grandmother never hugged me or told me she loved me. I never knew that she did."

Residential school stole the emotional part of the children who attended. During their time in school they were not exposed to the kind and nurturing love of parents. When they became parents themselves, they did not know how to attend to their children's emotional needs.

At residential school, children were humiliated, ridiculed, put down and taught to keep silent. Maintaining silence and being the good child who did what you were asked meant that often the priests, brothers and sisters left you alone.

Showing emotion was not permitted. While being punished, many refused to cry because to cry was a sign of weakness. When they grew up, this "don't cry, be tough" attitude was expected from their own children.

"Don't be a sissy.", "Crying is for babies."

"Are you a man or a girl?"

The unbalance of their parents also meant that second and third generation children had to grow up quickly and take on things that they were not emotionally ready to handle. The roles of the parent and child in many cases were reversed. Often, children would be expected to look after their younger brothers and sisters. They, like their parents, were not given much of an opportunity to play or to be children. The responsibility for running the house was put on them. School was difficult to attend because there were things at home that needed looking after.

Many second and third generation children have grown up without the opportunity to become tuned in to their own emotional needs. Often, they seek someone to fill this emotional need, but they are not sure what the need is. Some have children because they believe that a child will fill their need to be loved, but this rarely happens. Children have needs of their own, and if you are not emotionally balanced then looking after the needs of a child creates even more stress.

In my work, I have met many people who are emotionally unbalanced or mono-emotional. They do not seem to have the capacity to feel or express emotions. While working with people, I would ask some questions to try to gauge their emotional vocabulary and to get a sense of what created strong emotions in them. Often they could not answer.

"What makes you really happy?"

"What makes you really sad?"

"What is one of your happiest childhood memories?"

"How does finishing something make you feel?"

The one question that was sure to get some response was *"What makes you angry or pisses you off?"* The answer was usually about some injustice that had occurred. More often than not these were small things, but people saw them as huge. Forgiveness or understanding others was difficult for them.

It was difficult for me to listen to people who did not possess the ability to be happy or to express good things. Also, these people tended not to be empathetic. Residential school had taught them that those who did not conform deserved to be punished. As they grew up, they believed that if you got beat up, abused or bullied it was because you deserved it. Many people would get themselves into abusive relationships because they believed they did not deserve to be treated better.

Second and third generations often did not get positive voice about being Native. They were raised off the reserve and not exposed to language or ceremony. They knew something was missing in their lives but were not sure what it was.

I grew up with sadness and loss. It is odd that you can feel a loss for something you never had, but it has been there all my life. At 16, I finally learned which community I belonged to. The first time I crossed the border into my home community, it occurred to me what I had been missing. I was missing the connection to the land and to my home community. The sadness still exists, even though I now work in my home community. It exists because now I see a community that is in crisis, a community of people who do not support each other but are more concerned with how to keep others down than with rising up to meet the challenge of living a healthy, balanced life. It is a community that is emotionally and spiritually hurting, and this deep hurt is coming out in physical and mental unbalance.

Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names can never hurt me.

Whoever said this was not a child of residential school.

The West

Medicine: Sage
Aspect of Self: Mental
Time of Life: Adult
Qualities: Wisdom, strength, fulfillment, cleansing/starting anew,
healing and kindness



The minds of the Anishinabek people have been damaged. This damage is from emotional trauma. If you tell someone enough times that there is something wrong with them, that they are stupid, can't learn or are bad, they come to believe it to be true. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Learning at residential school was quite different from learning at home. When children lived in the community they learned by watching and helping. This was

not book learning, but it was important for survival. The games they played were teaching them important skills for hunting and fishing. The labour skills they learned at residential school were taught hands on, but swift and severe punishment was given if something wasn't done correctly. Although this was not the way that Native people traditionally dealt with teaching new skills, after people attended residential school punishment became their method of teaching the children.

Depending on the time of year at residential school, particularly at planting time or harvest time, the time children spent in the classroom was reduced to a few hours a day. In addition to that, the children were not well fed, and they were tired from the chores they did each day. They got up around 6:00 a.m., did chores, cleaned up, went to religion classes or church, ate lunch, went to school, ate supper and did chores. Evenings were spent doing homework and more chores. Older children were sometimes given freedom to play sports.

Children dealt with the idea that being Native was not a good thing, but how do you change who you are? Many changed their names, denied their families and continued to live away from the reserve. Many turned to drugs and alcohol to dull the memories and pain of residential school.

Our communities today are reeling from the effects of drugs and alcohol. The use of drugs and alcohol has plunged many people into deeper depression, mental illness, trouble with the law, and too much abuse. Children are being removed for protection and people are committing suicide to stop the pain.

Native communities are dealing with fetal alcohol effects, attention deficit/hyperactive disorder and learning disabilities at an alarming rate. It seems that these disorders are increasing in our community. There are more children who require special services than in the past, but less money to provide these services. Again, it is the ripple effect, and instead of getting smaller it is growing and affecting the next generations.

Several individuals I have known have struggled with migraines. They have sought different treatments, but none seemed to alleviate the pain in their heads. In getting to know them, I began to wonder if the trauma and memories that they were unable to rid themselves of were the cause of their headaches. If people could deal with their unresolved trauma and emotional pain, would their physical symptoms diminish?

Over the years, I have also dealt with students who have been diagnosed with multiple personality disorder, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. In my experience, the prevalence of these disorders seems to be increasing. The few people who have spoken to me about their disorders and their lives have led me to believe that, again, there is a strong connection between unresolved trauma and their disorder.

So, how in all this can I talk about resiliency? Many who came out of residential school were able to succeed. Native people have many role models — lawyers, doctors, politicians, authors, sports stars, teachers, entertainers. There is a lengthy list. These people were able to succeed for many reasons, but a significant one is that they had role models or someone who believed in and supported them.

During my research, I wrote the following words in my journal:

Teenage years seem to be the toughest and growing up without a dad made them even tougher. As a single parent, my mom was really doing the best she could to raise four kids by herself. My mother did not drink, nor had she ever used drugs, so I think my brain was mostly all there. I struggled in school, but it was more about how I felt about myself rather than about academic ability. It was in my Grade 11 year that things really changed for me. I took a business and a law course, mostly because I disliked phys. ed., art, music and French.

I did well in these classes and really enjoyed them, actually kicked around the idea of pursuing some kind of business studies at college. As the year wore on and everyone was finding summer jobs, I was still not sure what I was going to do. My business teacher suggested that I apply for a job at a real estate company in my hometown. I was pretty sure I would not get the job, but I did. Apparently, my law and business teacher had recommended me to the owner of the company. I had a fabulous summer and learned a great deal.

Sometimes I think back and wonder, if they hadn't believed in me and helped me, how would things have turned out for me? The fact that they believed in me enough to recommend me to someone meant a great deal to me and changed how I thought about my abilities and myself. I graduated from Grade 12 as an honour roll student.

This experience made me feel I had worth, that someone believed in me. I carried this lesson into my career of helping people.

The true measure of goodness is being kind to someone who can do nothing for you.

The North

Medicine: Sweetgrass
Aspect of Self: Physical
Time of Life: Elder
Qualities: Introspection, looking within, humility, gift of sharing, time of meditation



Many people have stories of physical abuse at residential school. Many times children endured harsh corporal punishment for minor infractions. The physical abuse included sexual abuse and failing to provide adequate food. This abuse produced people who were unable to show positive affection or have physical contact.

At Spanish Residential School, they had gardens and farm animals, but this food was produced for sale or to feed the

people who ran the school. The children were given mostly broth, with a few vegetables.

I spoke with a gentleman who attended the residential school at Six Nations; it was known as "the Mush Hole," because children there were fed mostly oatmeal they called mush. He said, *"All we ever got was mush, with a little warm water. Mush in the morning, mush at lunch and mush at supper. For years I couldn't eat mush because it reminded me of residential school. Today in the news and in health magazines I hear about all the good reasons to eat oatmeal. It is very healthy for you. They were trying to kill us with the stuff, and they didn't know they were keeping us healthy. Now I eat it every day, 'cause it's good for me, but I have milk and sugar on it."*

The abuse children suffered at residential school meant that many did not trust others. When they had children of their own, they kept them close for fear that something bad would happen to them. In addition, these parents did not want their children to talk with others about abuse that might be happening in their own home. This loss of freedom made the future generations mistrustful of others, especially white people. They didn't trust many who tried to help them, such as teachers, police officers, probation officers, counsellors, Children's Aid workers or priests.

The second and third generations were brought up with physical punishment and very little positive affection. They did not know how to solve problems without getting physical. Fights among family members, schoolmates and others were the common way of solving a problem. But the problem was not solved in this way; fighting creates a cycle of physical violence.

Welfare, illiteracy and mistrust are causing physical problems for Native people. Many live on the money from welfare, which is inadequate to provide good, healthy, balanced meals. In addition, many of the second and third generations do not know how to cook and have little understanding of nutrition. They have been raised on fast food, which is making them overweight. Diabetes, heart disease, obesity and cancer are rising among Native people. People are passing away from heart attacks, cancer and complications from diabetes at a younger age.

Difficulties in reading and following directions lead to other medical problems. People don't take their medicine properly, can't follow doctors' directions and forget appointments. This leads to further complications with medical issues. In addition, it has led to problems with the law and other services. People don't remember appointments or understand the conditions of their probation.

In addition, many have addictions to gambling, bingo, smoking, drugs and alcohol. They use these to fill a void in their lives. Addictions create bigger problems, because people use their food money to feed the addiction. Children go hungry and are left alone to look after themselves. Children are missing out on being children because they are often expected to look after younger siblings or cousins while the adults party or go off to gamble.

At residential school, some children were given the opportunity to play on sports teams. Spanish Residential School had hockey, football, baseball and basketball teams. It was an honour to be chosen to play on the team. The hockey team at Spanish was particularly successful and went on to win Northshore championships. The children at Spanish helped to build a huge arena so that they could play hockey indoors. They were passionate about their sports, especially hockey.

This passion for hockey came down through the generations, and even today hockey is a huge winter pastime in my home community. We have several players who play Triple A hockey and a few in the NHL. Again, these people were able to take a not-so-good situation and turn it into something positive.

SO, WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

One of my primary reasons for doing this research is to make a difference in my community. I wanted to be able to tell my story: firstly, for those who have not found the courage to tell their own, and secondly, to provide an opportunity for those who have found their voices.

Residential schools are part of our history as Anishinabek people. This was a tragic system orchestrated by the government and the church to wipe out our race. The story of residential school should serve as a reminder of what we don't want to continue in our communities. We don't want to have to depend on others. We need to educate ourselves, so that we can be the self-reliant, organized, prosperous people we once were.

Native communities across the country are attempting to provide programming that promotes healing. People are beginning to recognize that our communities are out of balance, and they want to do things to bring that balance back.

This project has given me the voice needed to speak out about residential school and its impact, about resiliency, balance and hope. Maybe others too will find their voices and begin to heal.

One starfish at a time.

Remember, it made a difference to that one.

Chi-Meegwetch (thank you) to all the people who have shared their stories and experiences, who have listened to me while I doubted that this project would make a difference, to the ones who help me along my healing journey and who helped me to find my voice. It is an honour to have the opportunity to give back what they have given me.

In telling others' stories, I hope I have done so in a respectful, kind way, because that is how it is intended. To those who attended residential school and the generations that followed: this is a part of our history, but it is not who we are. Learn who you are as an Anishinabek person; then you can start your healing and bring balance to your life.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Peter Baumgarten: Support group, computer and technical support

Kate Thompson: Support group

Mike Johnny: Support group

Rebecca Hartley: Office assistance

My children, who encouraged me to continue

Mike Nadjiwon: Spiritual support and guidance

Father William Maurice: Photo collection, Shingwauk Project Archive, Algoma University College

Every person who attended residential school and their families

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