



## Jane (Mary Jeanette) Young Abram, Millbrook First Nation

My name is Janie Abram, from Millbrook. My parents are Tom and Sara Young. I was born in Antigonish Landing, the second youngest of 11 children: Tina (step-sister), Isabelle, Margaret, Alice, Maurice, Helen, Clara, Tom, Mary Kay (twin sister), myself and Eleanor. We lived in a loving, caring home, where my parents were very well versed in our traditional values and teachings and emphasized the importance of education. They knew the hardships of living off the land and waters, where my father fished and harvested what we needed to survive.

I was registered at the residential school at the age of five in 1947, where they gave me the name, Janie. All my siblings attended the Indian Residential School, except my sister Isabelle, who was sick with tuberculosis. I suffered physical, mental, emotional abuse during my years as a student there. I had never experienced violence or abuse before I attended the residential school. We were told that we were no good because we were Native and we wouldn't amount to a hill of beans. I learned to be fearful of many things and that emotional impact has had a constant impact in my life. I was released from the prison that I called the residential school in 1955 at the age of 13.

A childhood tragedy that was devastating to me was the loss of my big brother, Maurice, while he was a student at the residential school, when he was 16. He fell out of the loft in the barn and broke his back. He was in hospital for six months. My brother got sick during that time with pneumonia and tonsillitis and passed away in the Truro Hospital. We were living in Portland, Maine, where my Dad was working in the shipyards, when we received the news about my brother's death. He was the only student that was waked at the residential school at that time and I remember we walked the five miles to Indian Brook to lay him to rest. I don't remember where he is buried there. Years later, I attended a special mass in Indian Brook for families whose loved ones had passed on, but whose families did not know where they were buried.

After residential school, I attended high school in Antigonish and I was angry and confused and struggled with my self-image and identity as a Mi'kmaw youth. There were times in my life when I felt the negative impact of what I learned about being an Indian at the residential school.

At the age of 20, I met and married my husband, Cyril Abram in Millbrook. He was a Peacekeeper in Canadian Forces, a Mi'kmaw veteran. We have 6 children: Lorraine, Tom, John, Tim and twins, Alice and Jean. We also have seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. My husband was very strict in his ways in raising our children. My experiences at the residential school had instilled a fear of violence that also had an impact in our lives at home. I tried to protect my family from the negative effects of the residential school and today, I understand how fear can affect a person's well-being, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. I decided to move forward in life to help to make a good life for my family.

I returned to school at the age of 40, to pursue my education and attended the Nova Scotia Teacher's College and Mount Saint Vincent University and earned my Bachelor of Education Degree in 1983. I wanted to set a good example for my children and to prove to myself that I could succeed. Returning to school was my way of getting revenge. I regained my culture and traditions from our Elders who survived many hardships and shared their wisdom with us and I am passing these down to my children and grandchildren. I want them to embrace the importance of education and community spirit and promote positive parenting and nurturing to young parents that will help them to raise happy, healthy children. I worked as a teacher's aide for 10 years at St. Mary's School, which I thoroughly enjoyed. I was a teacher at the Millbrook Adult Learning Centre. I also worked at Dalhousie University as the Educational Counselor at the Aboriginal Counseling Unit.

Spirituality plays an important role in my life, such as traditional values and respect for Mother Earth and developing a connection to our Higher Power. Residential school had very strict rules; as a tradition in my family, we would say the

rosary every night, but it was not forced upon us. It was an opportunity for us to get together through prayer. The Seven Sacred Teachings of Love, Respect, Courage, Humility, Honesty, Wisdom and Truth are very important traditional values that will help you to live a good life. My advice to our youth is to be proud of who they are and develop their spirituality to connect with their Higher Power when they need help to let go of what holds them back from moving forward.

