



Judy Julian, Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation

I am a survivor of the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School and the school of hard knocks. I have memories that move me to tears and others that I have completely blocked out. My life experiences have helped to shape my character and made me the strong woman and Elder that I am today.

After leaving the Residential School in 1966 and returning to Paqtnkek, I met and married Albert Julian—also a residential school survivor, who is now my life partner of 50 years. I am a mother to eight children, four sons and four daughters, and grandmother to seven beautiful grandchildren. My siblings are Eunice, Vincent, Medrick and Elsie, and my brother Colin, who died in the Residential School from diphtheria. My mother, Mary Joe, raised her children, grandchildren and nieces and nephews. Because I grew up helping her, I created the same extended family in my own home. In keeping with our cultural tradition, we fostered and cared for 30 children, including my niece and nephews. Eventually, we adopted my niece's two sons. We raised great children that I am so proud of. All my children graduated high school community college and university.

My family has endured our share of adversity throughout the years, much of it the direct impact of residential school. The devastating sudden death of our son, Stanley, from sleep apnea, deeply affected us all. Although I realize that healing is a life-long journey, circumstances and health issues caused profound changes in my view of life. I am working on creating a positive legacy to leave behind for my grandchildren and our future generations.

My love of education and learning about the world led me to pursue my degrees in Anthropology and Native Studies, graduating in 1982 from Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario. I worked at the Peterborough Museum and the Royal Ontario Museum, while my husband also attended university. We both had our hearts set on one day working with Native 'youth at risk' to help them reach their full potential. I had the greatest of university experiences. Being involved with Native grassroots organizations opened my eyes to the world of politics and to the racism and discrimination of Native people in Canada. My greatest achievement was my study of Canadian Minamata disease caused by an organic mercury poisoning of First Nations communities in Ontario through the pollution of their food chain from a pulp mill that dumped effluent into their water and environment.

I am an entrepreneur, owning my store business in Paqtnkek for 30 years. I am proud to say that my store helped me to raise my family and support their education and pay for my home while providing a livelihood for my family all these years. My store and my grandchildren continue to keep me busy.

In 1983, we returned to Nova Scotia to care for my mother who was ill. My career began as a pre-school teacher. I worked as the Education Counsellor for 16 years and then as the Aboriginal Student Advisor for 10 years at St. Francis Xavier University, before retiring to spend more time with my grandchildren and working at my store.

I once had aspired to work in a museum when we returned to Nova Scotia, but that was not to be. I was fortunate to be able to apply my life experiences, passion and expertise in Anthropology and Native Studies as a member of the Mi'kmawey Debert Elders' Advisory Council at the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq. The highlight was exploring museums and reviewing Mi'kmaw artifacts and history. My hope is for our families and future generations to know our Mi'kmaw history and be proud of who we are!

