



### Theresa Julian

I am the daughter of Catherine Julian and Martin Francis. I have five siblings: Elizabeth, Linda, Bridget, and Lena and brother, Laun. My sister Elizabeth and I are survivors of the Shubie School. My mother was also a survivor. My father was a WWII veteran.

My story is about my recollections of my experiences as a child at the residential school. I hope you will try to understand how these memories have impacted my life and why I am still working on my healing.

In 1959 when I was four and a half years old, Father Collins came to my grandmother's home and took my sister, Elizabeth and I away to the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School (Shubie School). My grandparents, Mary and Frank Julian, were Elders and were taking care us, and although we lived in poverty, they loved us and were doing the best they could. We managed. The indian agent told Kiju that if they did not put us in the residential school, they would be cut off from their rations.

I was fluent in Mi'kmaw when I first arrived. An older girl took me under her wing and told me that I was not allowed to speak Mi'kmaw so she taught me to speak a few English words: "Yes, Sister," and "No, Sister," and "Yes, Father," and "No, Father." She said, "That is all you need to know, for now."

I was physically abused daily, along with the other students at the school, lining up for daily beatings. We would even put soap on our hands in anticipation of the strap, hoping it would lessen the sting. The Mother Superior was the only nun who was nice to me and I told her that Sister Gilberta was always beating me. She told me "Every time Sister beats you, tell her Thank you," and so I did. Sister Gilberta asked me, "Who told you to say that?" and I told her. The beatings were minimized after that.

We were lucky to be able to spend Christmas in Indian Brook with relatives. When we returned to the Shubie School, everyone would get powdered with DDT and we had to leave it on our bodies for two to three days, before we were allowed to shower it off. As a young child, I was deprived of my birthday celebrations because Sister Gilberta thought my birthday was in August instead of on December 8th and I did not get to celebrate my birthdays with a piece of cake. Today, I have cake to celebrate everything!

While I was beaten for speaking Mi'kmaw one day, Sister Gilberta wanted to know if anyone knew an Indian song that the children could learn to sing in church on Sunday. This was very confusing to me, but I told her that I knew a song my Granddad taught me. I did not know if I would get a beating for that. I had to teach all the children to sing the song, "Lnu'i'si Sikk'tase—Let's Sing Indian." The Elders from Indian Brook were invited to Mass on Sunday to hear us sing the song in Mi'kmaw. We were dressed in our Sunday best to put on a show for the Indians.

I remember the time Sister Gilberta got caught beating one girl whose mother just happened to arrive at the school to visit her children at that same time. The mother came on the girls' side and fought Sister to stop her from abusing her child. She left the school with her daughter who did not have to come back.

It was traumatic to witness the abuse of children, particularly being made to watch when other students were being beaten with the threat that the same would happen to us. We could not do anything to help



each other and were in a constant state of fear. I was once made to stand in a dark closet all night as punishment for getting out of bed. Sister forgot about me until the morning. As a result of this experience I developed claustrophobia and was afraid of the dark.

The following incident happened in 1963. There was something evil in that school that I have seen with my own eyes, that is not of this world. I was awakened by this creature that was jumping on the girls' beds, scaring us and laughing. Then it attacked one girl; it was pulling her hair and making her scream hysterically. She woke up the whole dormitory and Sister turned on the lights. The girl had to be taken to the mental hospital and stayed there for a few months. Several of us girls whose beds were jumped on by this thing got sick with fevers and were quarantined in the infirmary on the third floor, but never went to the hospital. I went into a coma, but slowly recovered. That creature did not come back on the girls' side. Many years later, I told this story to an Elder and she told me her younger brother had described the same creature that he saw on the boys' side.

Our health was often at risk when one of us got sick with diseases of chicken pox, jaundice and measles; and we all got sick—they did not isolate us from one another. Sister put us all in the shower together and put some liquid on us that would burn and sting our skin.

I tried to get help by running away a few times. One night, during the winter, my friend and I ran away, and we almost made it to Indian Brook. We were picked up by a couple from the reserve and returned to the school, because he was the reserve cop. We told them why we ran away and that we were going to be severely beaten. No one would believe us or protect us.

I remember learning to square dance as a young child, something that should have been fun. While dancing, I took a wrong turn and Sister Gilberta hit me so hard that she broke a yard stick across my back. I learned not to cry so that no one would make fun of me. Afterwards, my sister Elizabeth, told me Sister said to tell me she was sorry. I cried my heart out.

I was 13 years old when my sister and I were discharged from the Shubie School. My Grandmother was not allowed to pick us up and she was devastated. Father Collins told her that if our mother did not come for us that we would be sent to a foster home. I left that place with so much pain in my heart.

My mother came to pick us up and took us to Boston to live. I went to high school in Boston for a couple years, but quit school when I had my daughter. I came back to Nova Scotia in December 1978 and met and married Thomas Beadle in 1979 and moved to Pictou Landing, where I raised my two children, Josie and Roger and two grandchildren, Sabrina and Dimetri.

I lived with my partner and best friend for 15 years; we cared for each other deeply and we made a good life together. We were able to help to raise my sister's children: my niece, Angel and nephew, Victor. Every summer, I went to Boston to pick them up and we enjoyed the summer months, spending time together doing the things they would not get the chance to do in the city. I taught them camping and survival skills and to how to have fun in nature. I wanted them to have a chance to be children and to be a positive influence in their lives.



My reward is that they are both doing well and I am so proud of them. I always receive cards from my niece and nephew expressing their love and appreciation for all I did with them. I love being a grandmother and spending time with my grandchildren. I count my blessings everyday! I am Morning Sun Woman.