



Christine Pierro, Wagmatcook First Nation

My name is Christine Matilda Pierro. I was born in 1951, to Victor and Louise Pierro, of Wagmatcook. I have nine siblings: a brother and sister died in infancy. I am the mother of four, Byron Googoo, Matilda Pierro, Michael Francis Pierro, and Francine Pierro-McDonald, and I have ten beautiful grandchildren.

I am a survivor of the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School. I was seven years old, when I entered the Ressie, along with my siblings. After my mother passed away during childbirth, my dad found it too difficult to raise eight children alone. Our great-aunts and grandfather could not look after us. I did many chores, but I liked working in the kitchen so I could sneak food to the boys, because they were always hungry. There was constant fear instilled in me, but I kept my language by telling stories and sneaking to speak Mi'kmaw to the other girls. I was a rebel. The

IRS experiences of abuses and neglect were devastating to me and my siblings—to grow up in a place where we were constantly abused and never mothered or loved as young children. When we returned home to the reserve, we were ostracized by the community.

After I got discharged at the age of 15, I lived with my father and my sister and attended school at St. Joseph's convent in Mabou. Like many IRS survivors, I soon began to drink alcohol to numb the pain to cope with the memories of life in the residential school and what happened to me after I got out of there. I decided to change my lifestyle and moved my family to Toronto with my sisters to get away from the reserve and from the past. It was a good move for me and my family and I began to heal and we were happy.

When I returned to Nova Scotia, I moved to Halifax and enrolled in school at the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre to get my GED and graduate. I was hired as the Administrative Assistant there to help students. My training at the Ressie made me a strict and assertive worker and the students called me the "General." I made sure they learned life skills that would carry them throughout their lives.

In 1991, I returned to Wagmatcook after my dad passed away. I got involved with the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School Survivors Association (SIRSSA) and Nora Bernard, and I attended meetings with other Survivors to share our stories. After one of these meetings, there was an accident that happened one regrettable night that impacted my life in many negative ways. I was humbled when I was knocked down to my lowest. I was self centered and felt successful, on top of the world: I had everything, friends, a job, car, and a house, but after that night, nothing or anyone mattered to me anymore.

My healing journey began when I moved to Indian Brook to live with my daughter and grandson, Logan. He was my pride and joy. My daughter helped me in so many ways. I received counselling, attended AA, and worked on making positive changes in my life and my relationships. I re-evaluated my life and furthered my education and employment. I was a better mother and best grandmother. I learned about my traditional ways and practiced my culture. I turned my life around to do positive things, like teaching my grandson, Logan, to play hockey and sports. I gave him my time and love and he helped me to heal. I got a job at the Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre and worked there for a good 10 years, where both my grandchildren went through the daycare and Head Start programs. I retired early at age 60, when I decided it was time to go home to be with my family. I moved in with my niece and have been living with her since. My first three years of retirement was spent travelling and reconnecting with family and friends. I keep myself busy volunteering in my community for the Powwow and attending Honouring Survivors events and Healing Ceremonies with my family, which have helped me immensely.



I have dealt with the past and I am continuing on with my healing and learning to live a good life. It is so good that as we grow older, we start to heal more. We know there is no way we can go back. We move forward, and learn to have so much gratitude for our many blessings and teachings in life. Wela'lin.

