



### **Deborah Rose Stephens, Sipekne'katik Band**

My name is Debbie Stephens and I am the daughter of the Daniel Paul Stephens and Rita Rose Jeremy-Howe. I was born in Truro in 1954, one of twelve children. I have six sisters and five brothers. My paternal grandparents, Paul and Margaret Stephens were originally from Barra Head in Cape Breton and came to live in Millbrook during Centralization. My grandfathers and my father were veterans of the war. My maternal grandparents, Bridget Maloney Howe and Ernest Howe, were from Indian Brook. I became a Shubenacadie band member when I moved here at age 18.

I am a survivor of the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School as were many members of my family and extended family. I went to the Shubie School between 1961 and 1965 along with four siblings and many cousins. We spent the summers at home in Millbrook with my mom and our younger brothers and sisters. After the tragic loss of my father, my mom was left to raise ten children alone. She decided to leave Millbrook to move to Boston to make a new life. Mom hired someone to drive her large family to Boston, taking only what we could fit in the trunk and we went to stay with my aunt Nancy and her family, until my mom found us a nice place to live that was near her sisters.

We moved around Boston and lived in many parts of the city, Jamaica Plain, Dorchester, South Boston and finally to Brockton, where my mom bought a house. I went to junior high and moved on to high school, but it was difficult to concentrate on school when I was moving around so much. I worked at summer jobs, as a daycare worker, a gift wrapper at Jordan Marsh, factory work, and as a candy striper at a nursing home to help support myself.

I was transient during my teens and early twenties and moved back and forth between Boston and Nova Scotia, like so many other Mi'kmaq, before finally settling down in Indian Brook where I live today. I moved back to Indian Brook to attend high school at Hants East Rural High, but I quit school in grade eleven. I moved back to Boston, where I had my daughter Tabettha, on April 13th, 1973. The next year, I went to the Boston Indian Council and found work at the daycare at the BIC. I returned to school there in the Adult Education program to work on getting my GED. In 1974, I attended the Roxbury Community College for prerequisite courses in English and math, hoping that I would get accepted into university.

I moved back to Nova Scotia and decided to attend the Miss Murphy's Business College, bookkeeping program. At that time, I was caring for my nephew, Joey. He and Tabettha were toddlers and attending daycare together, while I was going to school. I did not like the course so I quit school and moved back to Indian Brook. I applied to Dalhousie University and was accepted into the Bachelor of Arts program and we were off again—this time to Halifax. After two years struggling to find suitable housing and childcare and keep up with my studies, I quit school and we moved back to Indian Brook to get settled in our house. My daughter would be starting elementary school that September.

My career in construction work began when I found employment in Windsor, Nova Scotia as a labourer on a construction project to build housing for low income families. I found that I liked to do this kind of work and I enrolled in the Carpentry program at the Nova Scotia Community College to work towards my journeyman certification. I finally found my niche and although I did not complete my journeyman certification, I worked in construction for almost 30 years. The carpentry work on reserve was for apprentices and I wanted to work on the reserve to build houses



and I also worked on the Indian Brook Community Centre for two years. I was pregnant with my second child, Jeremy, during my second year on that job. I took some time off to raise my son and returned to work, but was injured on the job, and had to leave my profession early. I always took pride in the work that I did and I am enjoying my retirement.

I have been busy with my growing family, and spending time with my grandchildren is a treasure. I am proud of my daughter Tabetha, who is a teacher and has three children, Katria, Tomaz, and Charlize, and of my son Jeremy, who is a welder and has a son, Jeremy Jr. My oldest granddaughter Katria has given me three great-grandchildren, Colson, 5, Nalayah, 2 and my newest blessing, Reignn, who was born on June 24th, 2016. My family is my legacy, all are a piece of my heart and I am so thankful to be able to spend time with them.

