



Dennis Gedeon, Listuguj

My name is Dennis Augustine Gedeon, my spirit name is Little Bear and my traditional name is Three Feathers, a name given to me in the '80s by an elder from Burnt Church. Three Feathers is a family symbol; one feather for the father, one feather for the mother, and one feather for the children and other family members.

I was born at Gesgapegiag, Quebec on November 17, 1948. I was brought into this world at home with the help of my great-grandmother, Susan Martin our doctoring medicine woman. My parents were Bridget Martin and Clayton Gedeon from Gesgapegiag. My maternal grandparents were Robert (Bob) Martin from Gesgapegiag, and Yvonne Martin who was a Maliseet woman from the Maliseet community of Viger, Quebec. My paternal grandparents were Milton Gedeon from Gesgapegiag, who was a WWII veteran and police constable in the community for 36 years, and Josie from the Glass Bay area in Nova Scotia, who was a registered nurse in WWII, which is where my grandfather and her first met.

I am a survivor of Indian Day School and Residential Boarding School. From grades one to seven I attended the Indian Day School at Gesgapegiag, which was administered by nuns and by Father Provost. Father Provost controlled our parents, he brainwashed them into believing that Mi'gmaq was the devil's language and shouldn't be taught at home to their children, and whenever he beat us, he would tell them he was doing God's work. He would get the older boys to hold us down on his lap, and they would pull our pants down while he strapped us. He told us that he was civilizing us and if we went home to complain to our parents, we would get another beating at home. I don't know which was worse, the beatings from the priest or the beatings from my parents for complaining about the priest. The nuns would hit us too, with a rod, and once when I was hit on the side of my head, the rod cut me and made me bleed. I didn't go to the hospital though, because my grandmother took care of the cut. My father and grandfather would also help in the community like that. My dad learned how to pull teeth with pliers, so many from our community would come to see him if they had a bad toothache, needed anything fixed or if they needed a hair cut.

I don't know how many times I went to bed crying wishing I was dead, or that I wanted to kill my mom for drinking so much and not caring for me. I had so much anger and rage built up inside me. When I finished Indian Day School, I was taken to a Residential Boarding School at a monastery by the priest, Jerry Duguay, where I stayed for three years from around age 12 to 15. After Residential Boarding School in Quebec, I went back home to live with my alcoholic mother. At home, I took up weightlifting to harness the rage, channeling it into something that I excelled in. It took many years for me to be able to talk about the abuse I endured during that period of my life. My mother was sent to a Catholic convent as a young child, and I can only imagine what kind of childhood she had with the life she lived.



My life was not good, living with an alcoholic mother and an absent father, while working in Saint-Georges, Quebec. The death of my grandmother Josie, when I was nine, was traumatizing to me. I lived the impacts of Indian Day School and Residential Boarding School every day. I tried to commit suicide three times during my adolescence, and again when I was 20 because I was in a lot of pain and couldn't take it anymore. It's hard for me to share all my past, but I want others to know that it has taken a long time to heal those wounds. I spent four years in therapy, and I'm thankful every day that I'm still alive.

In 1968, when I was only 17, I met my first wife Rose Barnaby from Listuguj. We got married at Gesgapegiag and moved to Listuguj where I transferred my band membership, so I could find work. Rose was also a Shubenacadie IRS survivor. We had three children; Lisa, Chad, and Rhonda Gedeon, who presently live at Listuguj. In 1975, I was working as a mason construction worker and living in Nashua, New Hampshire, with some friends from home which was great because we helped each other out while living far from home.

In 1975, I was living on my own, working as a taxi driver and finalizing my divorce to my first wife Rose. That same year I met and married my second wife, Catherine, who was working as an Air Traffic Controller for the Federal Government. While we were living in the US, Catherine and I had two children; Jeremiah and Pamela Gedeon. I also adopted Catherine's two children from her two previous marriages; Debbie and Zu. We are currently grieving the loss of our son Jeremiah, age 40, who was killed in a motorcycle accident in Tucson, Arizona on October 22, 2018. Jeremiah left behind wife Elena and daughter Italia, in Tucson, and son Jordon in Campbellton, New Brunswick. His entire family misses him very much. My grandson Jordon and I are very close. I will be doing a Memorial Motorcycle Run for my son on June 16, 2019. It would have been Jeremiah's 41st birthday.

In 1986, my family and I moved back to Canada from California. From the years '93 to '99, while living at Pabineau First Nation in New Brunswick, I was fortunate enough to go on a spiritual journey. I had a sweat lodge and space for many sacred fires - I loved it there. I was chief of the Aboriginal Peoples Council in Fredericton, New Brunswick during the late '80s to early '90s and was on the Board of Directors for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation for about six months. I enjoyed the work I was doing. From '00 to '07, my wife Catherine and I attended St. Thomas' University, where I majored in Native Studies. I am proud to share the fact that I made the Dean's list twice before graduating in 2006. When I went to university as a mature student, I only had a grade nine education. From '07 to '15, we lived in a modest log cabin by the Nepisiguit River. We lived off the land and got all we needed from the land, hunting and fishing in the traditional ways learned from my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents in Gesgapegiag.

My Maliseet grandmother Yvonne was a doctoring medicine woman. She knew the medicines of our people, could read tea leaves and could reverse bad medicine brought



to her by community members. Many people came to her for help. These spiritual gifts were passed down to me and were rekindled in my life during my many healing journeys. I connected with these gifts and began to do this type of work when I was 40. I was acknowledged as an elder back then, and was a registered Mi'gmaq Cleric officiating in NB, performing Mi'gmaq marriage ceremonies since June '00, and am a full Commissioner of Oaths in New Brunswick.

I'm now 70 years old and am happy and healthy, enough to ride my huge yellow motorcycle cruiser. My good health is owed to my wife Catherine who I have been married to for 44 years. Twenty years ago, I had arthritis so severe that I had to use a wheelchair. My wife took a nutrition course and helped me heal by eliminating foods from my diet that was causing disease. She had me replace bad foods with organic fruits and veggies, farm fresh eggs, wheatgrass, traditional herbs, and distilled water. I have learned that when I revert to my old diet, the pain of arthritis comes back. My beautiful Cherokee/Black wife, Catherine, is an amazing Reiki Master and certified Health Coach, and at 76, she still shares her knowledge of maintaining a healthy diet and drinking clean water which is vital to good health.

Anxiety and stress affect your health even more than a poor diet. Find what makes you happy and work on that. I have never been bored in my life. There is always something you can do, even if it's helping another person each day, that small act will make you happier. Spiritual richness starts on the inside; when you are full on the inside, you have everything you need. I love to fish and ride my cruiser and that helps me to relax. Loving nature is the best way to heal. I remember the time I was in PEI spearing salmon with a Mi'gmaq friend, Chief Graham Tuplin, and the DFO wardens were watching us, thinking we wouldn't get anything in that muddy water. We knew how to connect with the salmon and made a tobacco offering when we got a few salmon to feed our families that evening. Fishing still makes me happy.

My wife and I are now semi-retired, and we enjoy going on pilgrimage to Saint Anne de Beaupre, Quebec, each year in June. We travel from Listuguj with Elder Patsy Gray and have an enjoyable time attending the Indian Mass. It is a wonderful healing experience to see our people get together; the dancing and singing at the altar in a beautiful Indian ceremony.

I would like to offer these words of wisdom, "You can't change the past but you can learn from the past, and you can heal from the past, so you can live a good life and help others to also heal." Your happiness and your healing will help others to smile and to heal also. Wela'lin.

