



### **Troy Daniel John Paul, Membertou First Nation**

My name is Troy Paul and I am a descendant of a survivor of the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School. My father was Daniel Douglas Paul, born in 1936, from the Membertou First Nation in NS. He was a survivor of the IRS during the 1940s. My paternal grandparents were Percy and Mary Paul. My mother was Mary Elizabeth Paul, born in 1939. My maternal grandparents were Mary Jane Doucette and Charles Doucette.

I want to share some history of my grandfather, Charles Doucette, whom I never met but am very proud of. On June 7, 1944, he was executed in WWII in France, as a P.O.W, at Abbaye d'Ardenne, one of 11 Canadian Prisoners of war, soldiers from the North Nova Scotia Highlanders. My grandmother only told us that he was missing-in-action. Recently, the German War Graves Commission contacted our family regarding the 75th anniversary of the D-Day Invasion that took place in France on June 5, 2019. There they honored my grandfather and all those killed at Abbaye d'Ardenne at a new exhibition at La Cambe German war graves cemetery, which stands as a representation of all Canadian troops that died there. It is kind of sad that the Germans are honoring the Allied troops that were killed there and the Canadian government hasn't done this. I was happy to see Parks Canada making him a "Hometown Hero" on June 6, 2019, in Halifax, with his image on a flag to be displayed on the Halifax waterfront so all Canadians can know of his story and of the sacrifice he made for his country.

As a result of my grandfather being a Canadian P.O.W who was killed in action in WWII, his children were spared from attending the Indian Residential School in Shubenacadie because they were exempt. My mother, Mary Elizabeth Paul and her sisters, Marie Doucette, Caroline Young, and Rachael Shewshuck, were all exempt from attending the Residential School as well, but the odd thing was they wanted to go because all their friends were sent there. In retrospect, it was good that at least one of my parents was not indoctrinated by the impacts of Residential School.

I grew up in a home with alcohol abuse and family violence and often witnessed my mother bearing the brunt of my dad's pent up anger whenever she stood up for her children. I remember that I would be the one to try to intervene and protect my mother against my father. Growing up with family violence negatively impacted my life and as a youth, I was angry much of the time and did not know how to deal with it. This was one of the impacts of Residential Schools that touched many families of survivors and descendants.

Another intergenerational impact to my family was that my parents did not teach us the language and culture because they were focused on indoctrinating us to the teachings of the church and never questioned it, they just did it. We had to do well in the western model of education because my parents felt unworthy and they had to make sure their children excelled in the white schools. Their issues of



values from the church, paternalism, respect for authority, feelings of inferiority, were ever-present in our lives. My parents taught us that the "white man's" way was the right way and it was my dad's way or the highway. At my dad's house, we had to follow his rules which were, if you don't like it, there's the door. We were over-achievers, growing up with a sense that something was wrong with our family.

I can now understand why my father only shared his painful experiences of Residential School when he was under the influence of alcohol. He shared his experience of being initiated to the Indian Residential School as one of the new boys upon arrival. He was brought to Monsignor Mackie for a boxing lesson, where he learned to take a punch and got a broken nose. Dad never got his nose fixed and always saw a reminder of his IRS days in his reflection. He'd talk about some painful memories too, about the boys who wet the bed and how they had to march up and down the hallways between the girls and boys, on the walk of shame with their soiled sheets on their heads.

I only learned about the traumatic abuses that happened at the IRS and the impacts caused to survivors and their families, after attending a descendants' healing gathering and attending a workshop on lateral violence. I learned about the continuous cycle of shaming, blaming, triggers of anger and pain, and how this is perpetuated on our families. The impacts of the IRS are where survivors learned to put other people down, how children were taught lateral violence, blaming others, they weren't taught parenting skills, being indoctrinated into a religion that caused more harm than good, process of assimilation, our language and culture ostracised.

It is recently in the last two years that I have been working on understanding why things were the way they were in my family. I began to see the impacts of my parents' experiences in my own life and on my family too. It was indoctrination of abuse. I had to break the cycle of abuse and deal with the issues that have come from the impacts of Residential School and intergenerational abuse.

I now understand that it was not their fault for how they were raised at the IRS. It wasn't their fault what they learned was forced on them. I had to start working on having empathy and understanding so that I could start the healing process. If we don't do the work to break the cycle of doubt, self-hate, and addictions and break free of those modes of thinking we will be stuck in that way of not being able to show love, not being able to be empathetic. I recently discovered through this understanding that this is what has impacted my life too and that there is still work to be done with the people I love. I am thankful for the help and understanding of my girlfriend. I learned about the IRS impacts through the workshops and healing programs I attended for descendants that helped me understand the trauma of the IRS.

It is not an easy thing to do and I will strive to do this for the rest of my life. It is hard for survivors and descendants to reconcile the abuse and impact on



our families, but we need to do this to heal. We do it so that our children and future generations will have a healthy and happy life.

The Residential Schools harmed our people and generations of children where abuses occurred and fundamentally, it was child labour because a lot of children were working in the schools. There were starvation experiments and abuses of every kind to children for generations. My father told me that small children, including himself, had to work to unload the coal for the furnace from a rail car manually. The different generations that went there had different stories, but the abuses and punishments were similar, and the impacts were the same. Some survivors have worked on themselves to heal from the abuses and how they carried this into their own families. Thanks to the survivors and descendants who have done this work, there is hope for the next generation to understand and change the way they deal with anger and not continue with the cycle of abuse and pain.

There are many impacts that families deal with, it's taken me my whole life to understand this. I hope that others get the help they need to heal from the impacts of Residential School. As children of survivors and their descendants learn about and begin to understand the impacts of Residential School, they will need to have that help available for them too.

What I learned on my healing path is that it is not my parents' fault, and it isn't my fault. We shouldn't be judgemental of that way of thinking about survivors and families. The positive is that even in the face of adversity, we are resilient and courageous, and we learned through perseverance. I strive to do my best and I don't have to do more; my best is good enough.

These are some words of wisdom for the youth and others that I want to share - accept who you are; be proud of you and love yourself. You are good enough. The communities and the general public need to be educated about the IRS and the on-going legacy that it has created for survivors and their families. I am changing the legacy in the way I am living my life with my loved ones, through understanding and healing.

