

# **Workbook**

## **For Residential School Survivors**

### **to Recognize, Create and Share their own Resiliency Stories**

#### **Goals:**

- Working and supporting each other throughout our healing journeys by sharing and celebrating our resiliency stories together
- Acting on our understanding of our experience as residential school survivors to create our own resiliency stories
- Honouring our parents and their survival through our Nation's residential school history so we can promise a good life for our children

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Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Northern Nishnawbe Education Council, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Pelican Falls Residential School Survivors group, the First Nations, and the people who attended the conferences

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## **Purpose of this Workbook**

The idea for this project began during the conferences held at the site of the Pelican Lake Indian Residential School situated outside of Sioux Lookout, Ontario.

After listening to story after story from survivors of this residential school, the question formed, “how did you get through the experience”? In many cases these experiences were so horrific for the individual on a spiritual, emotional, physical and mental level. Yet these survivors were still there, telling their stories so others could learn from their experiences and help us continue on our healing journeys.

During these gatherings we invited survivors to examine and share their stories so everyone could celebrate their resiliency to survived such difficult situations. Afterwards our planning team decided to document these examples and qualities of resiliency that we witnessed and learned about during these conferences. We wanted to find a way for each individual residential school survivor to become engaged in an empowerment process that is claimed by oneself and is not given by anyone else.

This workbook is intended to assist all the participants in the different residential school gatherings and meetings happening across the country to understand and celebrate their own resiliency. Attending these events by yourself or with your family, friends and other community members demonstrates your own resiliency and survival gifts and strengths. It is one of the many steps each of us has to take as we heal ourselves.

By putting together this workbook, we want to first acknowledge the things that happened to our brothers, sisters, friends, family, community and nation. Then we want to celebrate our survival stories as a means of demonstrating our resiliency.

Our hope is that everyone using this workbook will recognize themselves in some part of the stories being shared in the different sections of the exercises. We have added a number of reference materials and sources of information that will help everyone learn more about resiliency.

As you work through the content of this workbook, it is important that you surround yourself with a support system that will be there for you. Knowing there are people and resources available for you to use as required, helps everyone have the confidence to do the work we need to do on our healing journeys.

Our story as survivors of residential schools is one of resilience. Iris Heavy Runner writes: “Resilience is not a new concept to aboriginal peoples. It’s an ancient principle in our philosophy of life. To persevere, to stand strong, to never give up hope. A culture’s world view is the lens through which they learn how to nurture, protect, and dream for future generations.”

## Defining Resiliency

The definition of resiliency as it is used throughout this workbook is ...

*“Being able to live “the good life” in spite of having survived our residential school experience.”*

There are many definitions for “resilient” and “resiliency” but as it relates to residential school survivors, I have chosen to relate this definition to living “the good life” as described in our traditional teachings. The exercises, especially exercise #2, gives lots examples “the good life” for everyone to consider.

Other definitions can be found in all the reference material included in Appendix A. Some these other definitions include concepts such:

- “bouncing or springing back”
- “gives of self”
- “self-confident”
- “healthy self-esteem”

The importance of being able to look at the concept of resiliency is that you are now on that healing journey to being able to effectively deal with your own residential school experience.

This workbook is intended to assist survivors to take some additional steps along this journey we each have to take for our children, our families and our communities.

**Exercise 1: Our residential school experience: *Acknowledging our experiences, identifying what happened to us, our families, our friends, our communities and our nation.***

Place a check mark (✓) beside any of the following statements that you have witnessed or are familiar with because either you or a member of your family experienced something similar to what is described. All these events or experiences are drawn from the statements made during the past three Pelican Falls Residential School gatherings. By working through these statements we want to first acknowledge the tragedies, trauma, risks, losses, damages and stress placed on each of us as a result of the residential school experience.

Some examples of these stories as told by residential school conference participants are included as Appendix B of this workbook. The list of losses as presented is from research conducted by the Assembly of First Nations

([http://www.turtletrack.org/ManyVoices/V\\_1/Issue\\_06/Aftermath.htm](http://www.turtletrack.org/ManyVoices/V_1/Issue_06/Aftermath.htm)).

**Loss of identity:**

\_\_\_ Cutting our hair (to remove our “braids of life” and our memories of our mothers caring for our hair)

\_\_\_ Having to dress the same and have the same hair cut as everyone else

\_\_\_ Becoming a number and having everything belonging to you being given the same number

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of innocence:**

\_\_\_ Being touched and punished inappropriately (for example, standing naked in the centre of a circle of other students being strapped)

\_\_\_ Hearing the kids making their “get away” down the fire escapes

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of meaning:**

\_\_\_ Being denied basic needs (food and water - hearing the toilets flush at night so the kids could get a drink of water)

\_\_\_ Watching your children getting on the bus or the plane and not knowing where they are going to be or when you will see them again

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of family:**

\_\_\_ Hearing about the death of family members back in your community

\_\_\_ Wondering about your parents and feeling abandoned

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of connection:**

\_\_\_ Getting on a bus and not knowing where you will be going to school that year

\_\_\_ Being kept at home while your other brothers and sisters went to residential school

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of language:**

\_\_\_ Getting your mouth washed out with soap for speaking our language

\_\_\_ Getting strapped for speaking our language

\_\_\_ Refusing to speak our language out of fear of being teased by other students for speaking differently or punished by staff

\_\_\_ Not being able to communicate with our parents because you lost your language

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of childhood:**

\_\_\_ Listening to other little children crying themselves to sleep

\_\_\_ Missing your family members and your mother's comfort

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of feeling:**

- Watching your brother or sister getting strapped or punished
- Getting tossed off the train into a snow bank because the steps were too high
- Being numb and feeling helpless
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of community:**

- Getting picked up by a plane at the dock or in the middle of the bush
- Watching the fights among other students from different communities
- Traveling hundreds of miles away from your home to fill a residential school along with other students from far away communities
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of pride:**

- Getting de-loused regularly
- Being punished for something that you always understood was okay
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of trust:**

- Being teased and bullied by other students
- Having no one to comfort and reassure you
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of confidence:**

- Watching other students being punished
- Being teased and bullied by other students and people in positions of authority

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of spirit:**

\_\_\_ Being found and returned to residential school after escaping

\_\_\_ Running away from residential school and traveling all the way back to your home

\_\_\_ Feeling scared and lonely

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of morality:**

\_\_\_ Knowing that others were being sexually abused by supervisors and people in positions of power

\_\_\_ Being denied any opportunity to make your own decision about anything

\_\_\_ Hurting other students out of anger or frustration

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of memory:**

\_\_\_ Forgetting your language

\_\_\_ Feeling ashamed of being “an Indian”

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of life:**

\_\_\_ Never hearing what happened to your sick brother or sister or other students after they were taken away

\_\_\_ Learning about the deaths of other students through running away, accidents and illnesses

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Loss of control:**



Exercise # 2: **Recognizing and celebrating our abilities and achievements in overcoming our residential school experience.**

We also have to learn to recognize and celebrate the stories about how people have moved beyond these negative experiences and are now taking control of their own lives. Many are finding creative ways to share their experiences and stories so our children will never again have to experience similar things in their lives.

We are SURVIVORS! We are RESILIENT!!

Write the word “**YES**” beside any of the following examples that might apply to your own experience. These examples have been drawn from the sharing circles that took place at any one of the past three Pelican Falls Residential School Conferences.

**YES** means that “yes, I have done, I am doing or experiencing this in my life”.

**Caring and support:**

\_\_\_ I have people in my life who care about me

\_\_\_ I know people who will support me

\_\_\_ I take care of myself through healthy habits

\_\_\_ I work with and am involved in groups that help others

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal expectations and achievements:**

\_\_\_ I believe in myself and my abilities

\_\_\_ I have people in my life (family, friends, work) that believe in me

\_\_\_ I have set goals for myself and have achieved them (school, work, family, etc)

\_\_\_ I am still able to speak my language.

\_\_\_ I am able to listen and accept other people’s experiences.

\_\_\_ I spend time living on the land using tradition skills and knowledge

- \_\_\_ I like learning new skills and knowledge
- \_\_\_ I fulfill the expectations of others in my work
- \_\_\_ I celebrate my achievements and successes
- \_\_\_ I am able to laugh and have a good sense of humour
- \_\_\_ I try to live well today and look forward to tomorrow
- \_\_\_ I fulfill my obligations and responsibilities
- \_\_\_ I am a spiritual person and practice my faith
- \_\_\_ I face and overcome personal challenges by not giving up
- \_\_\_ I enjoy expressing myself in creative ways
- \_\_\_ I feel thankful for the gifts in my life
- \_\_\_ I am honest in my sharing of thoughts and feelings
- \_\_\_ I work to maintain a healthy lifestyle
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Family relationships:**

- \_\_\_ I enjoy spending time with my children
- \_\_\_ I share my skills and knowledge by doing traditional activities with my family
- \_\_\_ I share in the work and responsibilities for creating a healthy home environment for my family
- \_\_\_ I respect and trust other members of my family's boundaries
- \_\_\_ I respect and learn from my elders and their experiences
- \_\_\_ My partner and I act as positive role models for our children
- \_\_\_ I try to create happy memories for my children

\_\_\_ I make decisions based on what is important to me and my family

\_\_\_ I celebrate and honour my family's achievements and successes

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Community Participation:**

\_\_\_ I keep informed about what is happening in my community

\_\_\_ I volunteer and participate in community events and gatherings

\_\_\_ I work with and support other community members, programs and services

\_\_\_ I believe that my community is the best place to live and work

\_\_\_ I know about the history of my community and the different family connections

\_\_\_ I respect and support the community leaders and elders

\_\_\_ I contribute to the social and economic well-being of my community

\_\_\_ I promote and participate in community and recreational activities for children and youth

\_\_\_ I attend meetings and am a member of different community groups and organizations

\_\_\_ I am aware, accept and responsible for my position and role in the community

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTES:**

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Exercise # 3: **Describe your own story and experiences that demonstrate your resiliency and determination to overcome your residential school experience by writing (or having someone else write) a few points about each of the following areas.**

For examples of resiliency stories as told by residential school survivors, see Appendix C: Survivor's Resiliency Stories.

**My grandparents and parents were ....**

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(Describe the teachings, your relationship and the impact your grandparents and parents had on your life.)

**My brothers and sisters were ....**

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(Describe some of the positive and negative stories from your childhood with your siblings)

**I attended residential school because ...**

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(Describe how you were sent to school and your understanding about why you went to residential school. Describe when you first went and how long you stayed.)

**I learned the following things at residential school ....**

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(Describe both the positive and negative things that you remember learning while at residential school)

**I saw these things happen at residential school .....**

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(Describe both the positive and negative things that you remember happening while at residential school)

**After attending residential school, I began ....**

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(Describe some of the highlights of your own experience and achievements that you are willing to share with others where you marked a YES beside in Exercise 2.)

**After attending residential school, some of the things that I wish I had done differently ....**

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(Describe some of the stories and experiences that have occurred in your life that you now understand as being a result of your residential school life.)

**I have changed my approach and understanding of my life in the following ways ....**

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(Describe some of your achievements that you share with others.)

**Today, I am able to deal with stress, conflicts and challenges in the following ways ....**

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(Describe some of your own methods for recognizing and addressing different challenges that you face each day.)

**Today, I am enjoying life in the following ways ....**

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(Describe what you are doing today, including your success stories and experiences.)

**Today, I am passing my skills and stories onto my children and grandchildren by ....**

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(Describe what you are doing today to make sure your children and grandchildren are able to learn from your experience.)



**Exercise #4: Celebrating and sharing your resiliency story ... determining how you want to work with the information that you have produced by completing these exercises.**

There are many different ways to successfully complete this exercise. The following are some options that you can consider.

As the author of this workbook and a survivor of the residential school system, I continue to work with other survivors and work with parents to come up with approaches to being effective parents for our children. I will continue to find ways to provide the support and environments where Aboriginal people can work together to ensure our children and grandchildren are healthy and strong.

Finding ways to bringing the “balance of life” back into our own lives, the lives of our families and communities is important. Our stories, support and involvement in this work helps to make our families, our communities and our nation strong!

Celebrating and sharing our “cultural resiliency” ensures the ongoing maintenance and protection our unique and vibrant heritage.

\_\_\_ My story is very personal to me and I want to keep this information for myself. I have gone through the exercises and am now able to recognize and celebrate my own resiliency and ability to cope with my past experiences. I am comfortable putting this information in the past and leaving it there so my residential school experience no longer interferes with my present and future life. I know I am resilient and also a survivor. This is my personal story!

\_\_\_ I will work with others in my community to share and gather our stories with each other, so our children and grandchildren know about our history and struggles to build a strong and healthy future for everyone.

\_\_\_ Together we can document all our stories so they can be used in our school and in our homes, so everyone understands our history, our struggles and our successes.

\_\_\_ I want to share my resiliency story with others outside our community. I will send my completed workbook to Lorraine Kenny so the information can be worked with to produce my story so it can be shared to educate others. This step involves the editing and publication of your story for others to read.

**Appendix A: On-line Reference Material About Resiliency**

[www.ahf.ca](http://www.ahf.ca)

Toll-free (888)725-8886

email: [programs@ahf.ca](mailto:programs@ahf.ca)

**Aboriginal People, Resilience and the Residential School Legacy**, Prepared for **Aboriginal Healing Foundation** - This report contains a critical analysis of the resilience literature that is undertaken in the social contexts of Aboriginal survivors of residential school.

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<http://www.cce.umn.edu/nrrc/nativeamerican.shtml>

**The National Resilience Resource Center** - the NRRC's goal is to capture the Indigenous voices that speak to the connection between culture and resilience. It presents articles on "cultural resilience" and information about related NRRC training programs.

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<http://www.adultstudent.com/student/asg5/quiz.html>

**Resiliency Quiz** - an On-Line Self-Scoring Quiz  
Resilience: The ability to recover quickly from disruptive change, illness, or misfortune without being overwhelmed or acting in dysfunctional ways.

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<http://www.indianeduresearch.net/handout3.pdf>

**Handout on Cultural Resilience**

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<http://education.umn.edu/carei/Reports/Rpractice/Spring97/traditional.htm>

**Article on Traditional Native Culture and Resilience** - Cultural resilience is a relatively new term, but it is a concept that predates the so called "discovery" of our people. The elders teach us that our children are gifts from the Creator and it is the family, community, school, and tribe's responsibility to nurture, protect, and guide them. We have long recognized how important it is for children to have people in their lives who nurture their spirit, stand by them, encourage and support them. This traditional process is what contemporary researchers, educators, and social service providers are now calling fostering resilience. Thus, resilience is not new to our people; it is a concept that has been taught for centuries. The word is new; the meaning is old.

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<http://www.askdrjami.org/index.html>

The purpose of **AskDrJami.org** is to promote resiliency in teens. Librarians and media specialists build resiliency in teens by making connections and mentoring, promoting reading, and teaching problem-solving and information skills.

[http://www.nnfr.org/general/pub\\_efp.html](http://www.nnfr.org/general/pub_efp.html)

**National Network for Family Resiliency:** building family strengths to meet life's challenges. Information on Family Resiliency and Effective Family Programs .

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<http://p2001.health.org/Ctw15/day1pm.htm>

**Workshop called "Storytelling for Empowerment"** - This two day workshop will help participants learn about the oral tradition of stories, how stories transmit self identity and cultural affiliation and how storytelling can assist substance abuse prevention. The primary aim is to enhance participants' awareness of the fact that stories do not contain just "simple" concepts, but teach complex concepts that are understood at a deeper level as they are recalled over time. In addition, knowledge of the advantages of oral traditions in teaching respect and reflectiveness are conveyed. The workshop uses American Indian traditions as a storytelling model, even though many other cultures have storytelling traditions. The intent is to assist participants in learning techniques to incorporate storytelling in local substance abuse prevention projects and help them find stories from their own cultural background to incorporate into their prevention programs.

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<http://www.impactinc.org/trails/index.html>

**TRAILS: Teaching Resiliency and Instilling Life Skills** - TRAILS is a unique primary prevention curriculum for children in kindergarten through third grade. Focusing on a strength-based concept, TRAILS helps children develop resiliency traits that build a strong foundation for healthy habits and the positive decision-making skills needed when confronted with alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.

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<http://www.indianeduresearch.net/weeklongtransc12-9.htm>

**Transcript of an Online Discussion** - Nurturing Resilience in American Indian and Alaska Native Children, Youth, and Communities: What Have We Learned?

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<http://www.voicesforchildren.ca/report-Nov2003-1.htm>

**Resilience - giving children the skills to bounce back** - Authors Darlene Hall and Jennifer Pearson report that training early childhood educators to model resilient thinking behaviours in childcare settings has had a positive impact on the educators, the centres and the children in their care.

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[http://parentteacher.aadac.com/team\\_building/resiliency/index.asp](http://parentteacher.aadac.com/team_building/resiliency/index.asp)

**Resiliency is the ability to rebound** from hardship, difficulty and misfortune and successfully adapt to adverse situations. Supportive relationships with caring adults encourage self-motivation, competency, flexibility and independence. These protective factors promote resiliency and enable youth to overcome unfavourable circumstances and grow up to lead rich, stimulating lives free from alcohol, other drug and gambling problems.

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<http://www.bcifv.org/resources/newsletter/1999/summer/resiliency.html>

**RESILIENCY - A Strategy for Survival of Childhood Trauma** - The challenge here is to not exclusively look at the hurts which are inevitable, but also to explore the wellspring of individual strengths. To demonstrate the concept's potential, this paper reviews the issue of children who witness family violence. However, rather than focus on effects which would normally provide a frame of reference for the intervention, the collateral concept of resilience is reviewed.

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<http://nsdes.nsw.edu.au/static/upload/Resilience.pdf>

**Resiliency theory article** by Don Mulheron, NSW Department of Education and Training - an attempt to understand why some people who are exposed to a wide variety of significant stresses, nevertheless, survive to become strong, successful adults.

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<http://www.projectresilience.com>

**Project Resilience** is a private organization based in Washington, DC offering teaching materials and products, providing training and dissemination of information for professionals working in education, treatment, and prevention. They promote a strengths-based approach to both youth and adults struggling to overcome hardship, for instance family disruption, poverty, violence, substance abuse, and racism. Their hallmarks are a balanced psychological model that includes pathology and mental health, a developmental vocabulary of strengths, and culturally diverse materials. Since 1988, they have been training clinicians, educators, and prevention specialists throughout the USA and Canada.

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<http://www.resiliency.com>

**Resiliency** is the ability to spring back from and successfully adapt to adversity. An increasing body of research from the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and sociology is showing that most people—including young people—can bounce back from risks, stress, crises, and trauma and experience life success.

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<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/families/Resiliency/qa.html>

**Building Strengths to Meet Life's Challenges** - Learn More about Family Resiliency - Questions and Answers

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<http://www.makinithappen.org/>

**Makin' It Happen** works to build developmental assets in all youth. Resilient youth have certain internal and external opportunities, relationships, skills, values and guidance to help them face life's challenges. They have developmental assets.

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<http://www.uwyo.edu/ces/PUBS/Wy1038.pdf>

**Family Resiliency:** Qualities of Families that Thrive and Survive

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<http://www.resiliencycenter.com/>

**Resiliency Center:** - Your resource for developing resiliency in yourself, your work teams and your organization.

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<http://www.fww.org/articles/misc/0628d.html>

**Metaphors of Resiliency** - Resiliency, the capacity for physical, psychological, and spiritual renewal and recovery in the face of stress or trauma, is currently receiving much academic and popular press. Since the paradigm defies traditional logic (i.e., children of abuse all abuse their own children) and is a part of the fabric of life stories, it is particularly amenable to description by story and symbol

## **Appendix B: Residential School Survivors Experiences while attending these institutions**

“Out in the middle of nowhere there was an airplane that came looking for Native people. He landed on the lake where we were camping. This was the first time I saw something that big.”

“... these nuns came out from the buildings, each of them were wearing big long, black dress with big hat and collar. I tried to stick close to my brother and my sister... they took us inside of that building and began to separate us from each other. I had to go with the other school inmates that were my age. I was put in one side, my brother on another side of the building and my sister was on the other side.

Then I began to feel afraid, getting scared, wondering what's going happen. What were they going to do to us? The language we speak was never spoken in that school ... the white language that they were speaking .... I didn't understand them.

We all lined up to get a check up, take our blood pressure and whatever else they put in our bodies. They looked in our hair to see if we had lice ... then they took us to shower and wash our bodies and everything. I was wondering, what's going on? What's happening here?

Some of the other kids my age, young people began to cry because they were scared. I tried not to be scared, I tried to be as brave as I could. I sat down in one place and did not say any words to any other kids... I thought it was just only for awhile...

Then after awhile I began to have supper. This food I'm eating, it doesn't taste right. It's not the food that I used to eat at home. I didn't feel like eating because it's not the same food that I had at home.

And this nun walks around watching us.... she poked me with a stick and said, “Are you eating?” And I looked at him, I didn't say anything. And she said, while she poked me again, “You had better eat.” I took a spoon but it still tasted awful.

And then later on, this priest walks around. Looking at everybody that asleep. I don't know how many hours and then finally he went and got this boy. He took him into his bedroom.... I could not say anything, I didn't want to breathe either because he might hear me. He went into that room with that boy. I don't know how long he was with this boy. I was scared. I thought about myself, maybe I'm the next one. And then he came back and I could hear that boy crying. The way it sounds his body was.... I covered my face under the blanket.....not breathing. I could hear that priest walking by. And he went back to his bedroom.

If you say one word in Indian they grab you, they take you out in the washroom and use that soap and wash your mouth with that soap. And slap you in the head to go back to sit where you were.....that's how the treatment worked in that school.

I was scared. I was shaking. ... He began to touch me all over. I just sat there. I froze, just like a icicle. I could not move. My heart was pounding. My mind was just going out in space. I didn't know what to do, what to say or to scream or do something. I could not do anything. I had to be silent because of what was happening. Finally it was over. I went back to the bedroom. Shaking in my bed, you know just like.....just like a freezing came to my life ... took all my life away.

... I could not sleep. I know I'm going to run away this time. I wanted to scream but I could not scream. Everything inside me was blocking me. So finally my friend came to me, "Let's go!" We left from the fire escape early in the morning. We ran as fast as we could to the field. We went to the barn where the horses were. Then we got into the bush. My heart is pounding, scared. "What's gonna happen if we ever get caught? Let's just keep on going 'til we hit the railroad track..."

Conference Participant, Pelican 2002

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... I've been an alcoholic for many years... my kids growing up with that. The reason why I became an alcoholic was to hide my pain inside me... as a sexual abuse victim when I was a little child. I must have been about four or five maybe. And my perpetrators were my uncles. They went to residential schools. Then I went to their schools. I have found and seen that there's no place for them to run too. Because there's a big lake and across the lake is the residential school. Across the lake from the school is the reserve. I could see that there's no place for them to come across. You know it's a long trip... about half an hour, fly-in reserve. So I could see that they had no place to run to if they would ever try to run away.

That's when I started to make sense of my perpetrators, why they were like that. I think they had no place to run to. They were victims themselves. They must have had it worse than I had.

Conference Participant, Pelican Gathering, 2002

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... took us about eight hours coming here by train. And we arrived in Sioux Lookout around midnight. We came to the school during the night. They put us in the sewing room to sleep.

The next morning before we mixed in with the other kids, they gave us a bath. I thought that was kinda funny because my aunt had scrubbed us clean before we came to

school. And they cut our hair really short, almost bald after we got here.

I'm a Cree Indian... And when I mix in with the other kids, they were all talking Ojibway, which I didn't understand at all. And I didn't know a word of English. So it was just like being transported to another country for me.

Anyway, I found it very strange and hard to adapt to this new environment. Like at home we were free to eat anytime. We didn't have a set time for meals. We just ate whenever we were hungry.

And I was constantly hungry here because all they fed us for lunch and supper was just watery soup, one piece of bread and tea with milk, a little bit of milk, no sugar. That was our meal all week long. Never had any snacks in between. We had to steal some food because we were so hungry. We had a big garden out in the field here. And we used to sneak into the garden and eat some turnip, carrots and potatoes.

If anyone did anything wrong and didn't own up to it, all of us were punished. We had to hold our hands up like this, over our heads 'til supper time. Sometimes right after four o'clock until six when it was supper time. I remember this little girl. Her name was Mary.... she was so small. I don't know how old she was. Anyways she used to put her arms up until she got tired and she'd put her arms down. And the supervisor would throw her into the dark room there. There's a dark room just off the play room. I used to hear her screaming her head off. I often wondered how she made out later.

... one time when I was was fourteen years old, the junior girls used to eat way at the end on one side of the dining room and the seniors on this other side. I was at that last table because I was a senior. My youngest sister who was about seven years old was sitting at the first table there. And then I heard a commotion. There was this old nurse her name was Miss Parker. She was the nurse for the school. She was a supervisor during supper that time. Anyway I heard the commotion over there, I asked "What was going on?" They said, "That nurse is beating up your sister." So I got up and I looked and went over there. I saw that nurse poking her and my sister was trying to get away from her. She was underneath the table. And that nurse was poking at her with this broomstick. I was so mad when I saw that I jumped on that nurse. She used to have a big bun on the back of her head. I grabbed her by that bun and I threw her on the floor. Then I grabbed the broom and started hitting her with it. She had been so mean to all of us kids there, that the all the kids jumped up on her. We started beating her up. Then after I came to my senses, I realized what was gonna happen to us.

So I ran and I yelled to the kids saying, "I'm running away!" So three other girls came with me. We caught a freight train from here to Hudson and walked into Hudson. It was raining as this was late October. All we had on was our dresses and a sweater. It was raining. We were waiting there along the waterfront for a freight train to come by.

There were some ties there near the lake and the water was splashing onto us. We were afraid to go uptown because the cops might be looking for us. So, anyway, I don't know what time it was early in the morning. The freight train went by real slow with one of the doors open on one of the box cars. So we jumped on in. Then we, I don't know if you know where Panyon is. It's past MacIntosh. That's where we jumped off. We were on our way to Quibell where one of these girls lived.

Anyway, we walked we started walking. I almost starved. It was three days since we had eaten anything by the time we got to Quibell. And it was raining all the time. I often wondered how come we never got pneumonia. I think the reason we didn't get cold or catch cold was we were eating those rose hip things you know, the ones that grow in the bush. Those things they're orange color things from the rose. That's the only food we ate all that time. Anyway, we stayed in Quibell for one week. And then her father sent us back to school.

So I didn't know what was gonna happen. I knew we were gonna get the strap. But I wasn't prepared for what happened. The whole school was assembled in the dining room. Including all the male workers, all the staff. Everyone connected with the school was there.

So they called us up to the middle of the dining room... had a big bench there. So, we went up there, one by one. The principal had a great big strap. He went and pulled up our dresses, pulled down our bloomers. We used to have bloomers. Can you imagine the embarrassment I felt? I was almost fifteen years old. In Christmas I would have been fifteen. And for my bum to be exposed to all the boys like that, I was pretty well...really ashamed. Anyway, that wasn't bad enough. After we got strapped, the principal made us sit down on that bench. And then they went and shaved all our hair off. That was really something. And I was shy, very shy. I had a shy personality to begin with. So you can imagine how I felt afterwards. All the kids used to laugh at us and call us names.

Conference Participant, Pelican Gathering, 2002

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One of the things, I remember was when I was at the Cecila Jeffrey school. I always tell people when they ask me to tell my story about the residential school. I didn't really get abused. I did the abusing to the staff. And I just about drove my principal crazy.

One of the things that I remember is... when the girls used to do something wrong, the supervisors used to put the girls' names on this list .... And at the end of the week, on Fridays....we'd all go to the principal's office.

What happened to me was when... I got very aggressive ... I didn't allow anybody to abuse me. That was my way of surviving. I became very mouthy. Talk about somebody

being mouthy.

But at times too I remember ... when the principal used to pick girls out at random. I used to try and make myself really small. I used to close my eyes and I used to just stand and try and make myself really small so he wouldn't pick me.

He used to take us down into his basement. That's where he used to sexually abuse us. I used to just cringe. I used to just really cry and cry. Because that's something that I wanted to keep that was mine. Oh, I hated that principal.

But the girls at CJ, I think we were abused more than the boys. I remember this one little girl talking about that little girl that was locked up in a dark room. We did something wrong. But anyway they went and locked us up in a lockers. You know how narrow those lockers are. And that's where we got to ... the supervisor just stuck us into this locker. The two of us.

I could hardly breathe and she started crying ... I told her, "Don't cry." "Kagomowiigen." I told her. You see I'm a Cree. And I learned to talk Ojibway. I said, "Kagomowiigen. They're not gonna let us out." I said, "Let's play a game."

You know we were in that locker for two days. And I kept talking to her. But I was scared. Being locked up and in that locker for two days. I don't think the girls missed us. Now I have a fear of closed in places.

Another thing too that they used to make us climb. Then they used to knock us off from there. They used to have this one ledge and they used to have a ladder and they used to make us climb. And this one supervisor would get a big pole and knock us off. We would fall to the floor. Now I have a fear of heights. I'm really terrified of heights. Those memories come back to me.

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Johnston, Basil, Indian School Days Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1988. ISBN 1550130722. Library of Congress call no. E 99 .C6 J63 1988. Re: Garnier Residential School and the Ojibwa children.

This is an autobiography of Basil Johnston,

"...a native Ojibway, who was taken from his family at age 10 and placed in a "residential" school in northern Ontario. The book opens in 1939 when the feared Indian agent visited Johnston's family and removed him and his four-year-old sister to St. Peter Claver's School, a boarding school run by Jesuit priests at Spanish, 75 miles from Sudbury, Ontario..."

**Appendix C: Residential School Survivors Resiliency Stories**

“when I sit with residential school people (survivors), I know how it is not to be able to talk... because of your fear... That great fear was put upon us from day one when you went into that residential school. And a lot of us carry it.”

“... I’m still waiting for my case to be settled. But today it really doesn’t matter. Because I’m helping others and that’s the greatest feeling that I can get from all of this is to be able to share and experience my story and help somebody through it.”

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“I always take some food when I go out and I put it down on the ground. I never forget my grandfather’s teachings. Even with all the things I went through. He’s always here. I kept him here. There (points to his heart)...

“I went fasting. I did all that healing for myself. I didn’t have helpers ... human being helpers. But I had helpers. My greatest helpers were the birds. All the animals were there; teaching me a lot of things and the way I should do things”.

“I didn’t have blankets. I didn’t have any food. I watched these animals what they ate. And I ate that what they ate. They survived. I can survive too”.

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And that spirit bear told me, “Did you know that you can go?” And I didn’t know what he meant. “Did you know that you can fly?” That too ... I didn’t know what he meant. “Okay, I’ll fly,” I told him in my dream. So...”You stand there bear,” I told him. “I’ll run over here and then I’m going to, you know how a plane takes off and then they go up.” So I’m running and I’m going like this and sure enough, I went up. I didn’t know then that was my freedom. Until a couple of months later when I shared this dream with an elder and they said, “You know you made it. You made it this far.”

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I felt that I’m not always the one to recognize when I am called to do something. And I felt that there’s probably a reason why I was asked. And that’s how I usually approach it. Whenever I asked, when asked to do something, in my prayers. And I usually ask the Creator to guide me. What I should say when I go somewhere. When I interact with people that I had never met before.

I always start off, first of all with an acknowledgment of the Creator and the four directions. And always to remember the teachings that my father taught me that wherever I go to always approach everybody with kindness and respect above all else.

I was very glad to be at the sacred fire, to put tobacco down. I'm always careful to remind myself that if I say something ... what I'm saying now, that if I make somebody uncomfortable or if I say something that doesn't make you happy ... I'm sorry.

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And I guess that's the biggest change that exists in our communities now. That when he told his mother what had happened to him, she validated him. She didn't say, "Don't talk like that. You shouldn't say that about priests." Nothing like that. She acknowledged what he said. She accepted what he said. And she validated everything that he said and she said, "I believe you."

I guess that's what gave him the courage to find that support. And even with that, he's still going through a very hard time. I can't imagine what it must be like for a child to have that happen and to be rebuked by the person who's supposed to be looking after you. But there are people out there who can do that.

And then from that, something even better came. Not only for him but also for me and for my wife.

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..., the first picture was a picture that keeps coming back to me. And it's a picture of a little boy, in a parka, standing on a point, looking out at the lake. I guess that's me when I lived out on my trap line, during the first nine years of my life.

And I discovered that the reason why that first picture was there is because the first nine years of my life were really only the only time that I was happy.

After that, my life changed. I was sent away, and I was never really happy after that. And I never had my feelings. From nine years old on, I began to lock my feelings away. And I didn't have any feelings.

I meet a lot of men like me, who feel that way. They say, "I don't know how to love, I don't know how to feel this and that." That's because, we lock them away.

When I talk about that day, when my father and my brother left to go trapping, left me

behind .... I could never talk about that without crying before. Never. I tried several times. In different places. I tried telling my friends. I even did it one time at the University of Toronto one time to about 150 medical students thinking well this will be a breeze. And I broke down. I couldn't do it.

But after unburdening myself of that event and those feelings, actually today is the first day that I been able to talk about it publically without crying. To me that was great progress. And it's the action that I took of going to treatment to deal with that issue.

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Anyway I.... after I went home, I had turned fifteen by that time. When in July my dad said, "You have to go back to school." I told him, "I'm not going back to school." I said, "If you send me back I'm going to run away and you'll never see me again." So he said, "Well you have to find some kind of work because I can't take you with me to the trapping ground."

So, in August of that year I found a job at the hotel in Nakina. I was fifteen years old that time. And I have been working ever since. I'm 68 now and I'm babysitting my two year old grandson. (Laughs)

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When I met my husband, I thought to myself, "I have to tell him, what had happened to me when I was a little girl." So he came home one evening, I gave him tobacco and I told him, "It's up to you. What you want to do. If you want me to leave, I'll leave." I told him. "I'm gonna tell you something that I never ever told anybody."

So, I gave him tobacco, and he and I talked all night. Sometimes I would stop and cry. I told him everything that happened to me, the sexual abuse. My father and my uncle sexual abusing me.

Towards morning, the sun was just coming up and he smoked his pipe. He said, "It had nothing to do with me ... that happened long time ago ... my feelings haven't changed for you." You know taking that risk. I was always afraid that he would find out.

So I went to .... to a training session. And it was a five day healing session that I went to. That's where I dealt with my sexual abuse. That's where I dealt with my father while I was going through that healing. But my father went to a residential school too.

That's where I saw my father, sitting in a corner, a five year old little boy all scared and

crying ... crying for his parents because his parents died and that's where they sent him.

And that's where I forgave my dad. I told my dad, "I forgive you dad, and I love you. And I know you did the best you could to bring me up. You gave me some beautiful gifts. You taught me how to go moose hunting. You taught me how to survive in the bush. You taught me how to clean fish, how to clean ducks, how to butcher that moose."

And my mom too, I forgave my mom. I told my mom, "I forgive you. You gave me some wonderful gifts. You taught me how to sew, how to do beadwork, how to make mukluks, how to make moccasins how to make gauntlets."

All those beautiful gifts that my mom and my dad gave me. My mom gave me life. And I know my mom....I lost my mom last year. It's one year now that she had passed away. I still grieve for my mom.

Conference Participant, Pelican Gathering, 2002

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### **My Personal Development Process**

written by Clayton Kenny, a First Nations Nursing student, for an assignment  
(Clayton's mother is a survivor of residential school)

Many people helped to form my path towards the Native Nursing Entry Program. There were many teachers in high school and college who ensured that I reached my potential. Many people advised me that an education was the best investment for the future, community members encouraged me and many Native role models inspired me to fulfill my goals.

Without my parents' help, I don't know where this would have led me. They were always supportive, in both good and bad times. Their moral and financial support, together with assistance from my band, helped me help get control of my life. This assistance allowed me to concentrate on what was my most important challenge that I was facing.

I believe that any form of education is valuable. I am convinced that there are many ways to learn, not just a Native or a non-Native way. What you need is a clear mind that is open to learning. Education programs aimed at Native students should spur us to action. More than support, they are an open door to change. I realized that I have learned a lot, since I started on my journey as a student. In spite of the hardships, education is a special phase in my life, filled with wonderful memories of friendships and dreams to pursue. As well as being richer for this academic and personal learning, I will soon be in a position to help others recover their health and live well.

A quote related to staying enthusiastic about life has helped me this year in university, "Happiness is not the absence of problems; but the ability to deal with them."

Throughout life we are put through many tests. We are often faced with difficulties that we must overcome in order to grow. Disease itself is one such test. Progressing as a health professional provides a sense of pride. Doctors, nurses, managers, and all the others...we all work towards the same goal: the recovery of those who experience illness firsthand. Is there a more noble gesture than extending a hand to one's fellow human beings?

"Educate me so that I may be kind to my fellow man" - Indian proverb.

When I complete the nursing program I will work with a First Nation community. We will build a program that teaches the children about living a balanced lifestyle. Being a certified canoe tripping instructor, I will use this experience to teach young people about active living. I will also be able to educate as well as treat the community members. Fighting fires out of northern communities has given me a first hand look at need for certified community nurses.

There are a lot of opportunities and challenges that we each face as we move through this life. I am looking forward to my future, working, learning and growing with my people.

## Appendix D: The Author's Own Story of Resiliency

The journey to finding out about your own resiliency is a difficult process. Today, there are so many things to do, so many things happening around us, events unfolding that affect each of us in some way. So, why bother to look into your past, especially if it is filled with painful memories?

I would like to share my story with you as an example of resiliency. My story is similar in many ways to other experiences I have been privileged to hear in numerous sharing circles and countless written stories I have read from individuals who also attended residential school.

Resiliency literature talks about being able to look back at our past and being able to reflect on it in a safe way. It also talks about being able to decide who you want to share it with, whenever you feel the timing is right. And finally, being able to say, that was my life story but this is what I am going to do next. That's an exciting place to come to in one's life. My favourite analogy is the jingle about the Timex watch, "It takes a licking and keeps on ticking".

At one point in my life I had no choice but to look back at my past because I began to experience panic attacks. This was happening to the point where I could not go to any public place without one of my family members staying right beside me. I also experienced what is called "depersonalization". Sometimes when I was driving somewhere alone I would wonder whose hands were on the steering wheel. I would wake up early in the morning and feel like my skin was as thin as an onion skin.

The last straw for me was when my two older children were about four and six years of age. They started to be afraid to go outside by themselves. That is when I looked for professional help. I wanted my children not to be afraid to go outside by themselves. With the help of a psychologist I was able to understand what I was going through ... my problem had a name. I educated myself about the mental condition and I researched how other people came to recover from anxiety attacks.

Around the same time I met a couple of people who assisted me with a process called Re-evaluative Co-counselling. Over the next few years, whenever we had an opportunity to get together, they would help me go through this process over and over again. I was able to confront the painful experiences I endured as a child and as an adult. I remember completing yet another session and I was just exhausted. I was thinking "when will this end, I need for this pain to stop, I have had enough".

Gradually, after a few years I discovered the painful emotions became less and I started to remember my early childhood. It was incredible, my mom and dad really and truly loved me. They had showed me their love in all kinds of different ways. I was able to

take a deep breath and recognize the pain my mom and dad endured when their children were removed from their care.

They had no idea what we experienced. How could we share the emotional, physical, and spiritual abuse we experienced? How could we have shared that with them? What words would we have used? In my therapy, I asked them “why did you let me go”. I had the opportunity to see their pain. I now understand and accept my fierce, protective, and nurturing attitude towards my own children. “You better not do anything to hurt my cubs,” says the big mama bear .... that is how I feel towards my children.

I now can also talk with some of my former school mates about some of the things we used to do. Now we are able to laugh about some of the trouble we used to get into. The english language was foreign to us and certain sounds were more appealing to us, so we often used them to make each laugh. After we were back together living in the same town, my good friend and I were laughing about the words, “Kragelatchie, Edmonton”. We still wonder why we were so attracted to those two words.

I call her my good friend because upon hearing about the death of my mother from another girl while in the residential school in Sault Ste. Marie, she decided to run away with us. It was a cold February morning when four of us left the school, our two friends also from our home community, my sister and I. We ended up getting lost somewhere along the railway tracks north of the city. We got caught and got into serious trouble when we got hauled back to the school. When the principal settled down, we told him why we needed to go home. A couple of days later, when he called us to the office, I knew by the look on his face it was true. I vowed not to cry about it. I did not cry until I was nineteen years old. By then, I was in a rage, against everyone. I got over that too. It was not easy, but I did, with a lot of support from my family and friends.

Today, as I was writing this article about my resiliency, I received a surprise visit from a friend. We worked together years ago and she is now back in school pursuing her educational dreams. I was deeply honoured to have her tell me that she thought of me as a “social engineer”. I like that, I told her ... “I am going to put that on my resume”.