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STATEMENT BY ROSALYN ING, PH.D. SEPTEMBER
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This is a journey of healing from the residential school experience and it happened not BECAUSE of residential schools but DESPITE IT.

*My family's story of university education is presented on slides. I chose to focus on an element that's rarely expected or discussed in First Nations issues - success.

I spent eleven years of my childhood in Indian Residential Schools - moved 4 times - each move a traumatic adjustment. We started in Elkhorn, Manitoba, about 500 miles from The Pas, or Opaskwayak, my home community. The school was closed due to terrible conditions, and complaints from parents like my father, and we were moved to Prince Albert, Sask. the next year. At All Saint's Anglican school, we were slowly adjusting when one night we were awakened and told to pick up our clothing (always folded at the foot of our beds, with shoes on the floor) and put on a truck. We were not told anything else. Later we found ourselves at another school, St. Alban's. My younger sisters and I were together but when we looked for our older sister she was nowhere to be seen. We were told she was at All Saint's. Of course, we were upset and started crying. We wanted to be with her-she was our only tie to a mother. She was in fact, our mother there. We cried and asked to be with her. We were locked in a

playroom during the day and told not to act like babies and not allowed to go to class until we stopped crying. I don't know how long we were there crying and asking the same question, can't we be with our sister? I can never forget this early traumatic and heartbreaking experience. No one cared or comforted us - we were helpless, sad, and hope less - we learned to accept this in our childhood. I grew to resent my parents for allowing this to happen.

*I finished grade 10 when I left residential school. In my 30's I regained my sense of self and confidence in my abilities to begin my education journey and learned what happened at university. The reason was no justification for removing children from parents. What pain and loss they must have endured because their children were taken away from them when the Government of Canada decided they were inadequate to raise their own children and the residential schools would do this for them.

When I learned this I was outraged. I stopped blaming my parents. I realized my parents would never have traded my self-esteem and safety to get me 'civilized'. We were stripped of our Cree identities, forbidden to speak our language under threat of severe punishment, suffered mental, physical and sexual abuse, endured many other injustices, and even witnessed homicide at residential school. It's hard to reconcile. WE WERE BRAVE CHILDREN - Barney Williams said yesterday.

I never felt comfortable in my own culture or in the dominant society. I was totally lost and isolated when I left residential school. I did not belong anywhere.

This forced confinement was supposed to assimilate us into the dominant society. All that heartbreak was senseless because in the end, many Canadians were not prepared to accept us. Sadly for me, and shamefully for Canada, assimilation did not equate with equality or acceptance of Indians. Many former residential school students are still trying to be a part of Canada.

Truth is hard to accept. I remind all that truth telling is not a condition for reconciliation. It is a courageous first step by survivors but it cannot be a one-sided effort. All Canadians must come together and acknowledge the past and build a better Canada for EVERYBODY. Canada's values are being tested and witnessed by the whole world in this Truth & Reconciliation Commission.

I love my family and I honour them. I know what diligence it requires to succeed in a rigorous university degree program as one must overcome many barriers and those who chose not to attend university still continue to make significant contributions to help children. We are not unique nor are we unaffected as we suffer from the effects of this separation from our parents and culture, too. We lost a dear nephew to suicide, there is some alcohol abuse, some children were violated and abused, and

parenting was difficult but we survived as a unit.

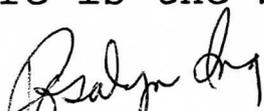
Residential schools destroyed First Nations families and a way of life that can never be regained but my family renewed their strength with grace and learned to create our own vision of a family - with goals to achieve success. We live meaningful and productive lives to inspire future generations. After all, *Canadian Indian Policy* never intended us to become members of a class society: at residential school we were trained to become farmers and housekeepers.

My parents walked with pride and dignity with commitment to a family. Dad encouraged us to pursue education. We, in turn, did the same with our children and now our grandchildren. We value our degrees and appreciate the advantages of them. Dad's love guides me still. My family honours his vision. We live with healing and purpose.

Our success was not BECAUSE of residential school but DESPITE it. The scars still exist but we learned to soften them. You can, too. Thank you all.

Ekosi. All my Relations. Kakinaw ni wakomakanak.

Here is the slide presentation.


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