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Selections from Out of the Depths The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia ~ A New Book by Isabelle Knockwood ~ INTRODUCTION: "How can you forget your past?" writes Rita Howe in Out of the Depths. "It's part of your thoughts every day. This is our history and now we're talking about it." The experience of the Indian Residential Schools continues to gnaw at the Iuli'(maw community, and through them continues to gnaw at us all. Whether or not we were there, or know some? one who was there • 'that experience remains a significant element in all our future relations. It is not only the question of whether or not the residential school system was appropriate treatment of the native people; or rather, that is another question • the issues to be discussed in our homes and in our schools. But that there is a residue of emotion that helps organize thinking regarding the Mi'kmaq himself, the Mi'kmaq in the larger world and so forth • 'that has to be known. It has been suggested that the residential school experience is better simply forgotten. One review of Out of the Depths said that it is time to say, "Amen, and Let it be." There are both Mi'kmaq and non-natives who feel that way. But so long as books like this are written, so long as people still struggle to admit that these situations existed, were real parts of real lives • it is not the time to say, "C'mon, forget it, get on with your life." The story of the residential schools is part of the baggage. It is part of the Mi'kmaw story, and of all our story • if we have the courage to address it. Memory can change things. Memory can bring things into accurate focus. But memory is a kind of accomplishment. We cannot do less than read and discuss. "Please don't blame yourselves for what happened at the Indian Residential Schools, for the Great Spirit's sake, we were only children." This is Imelda Brooks in the Micmac-Maiiseet News, 1991. "Scared and frightened children who were taken hundreds of miles from home. We were beaten to learn and live a different life and culture, children who were forced to speak English and Latin instead of Micmac... It's time to be heard by the people of Canada. Only the ones who went to the Indian Schools know what went on because we lived it. We lived it every day of our 'Man Muffler i • NEW LOCATION • 93 King St., North Sydney EXIPAIMDED 3ERVIOE3! Exhaust • Brakes 'Struts 'Shocks 'Springs Michelln and Brunswick Tires • Wheel Balancing (Life Time Warranty) Estimates 794-7500 Isabelle Knockwood with her grandson Timothy Alan Toney at her graduation from St. Mary's University, October 1992 From Out of the Depths WHEN I WAS ABOUT TEN OR ELEVEN YEARS OLD, I was sent to work in the laundry. My sister Rose was working on the mangle. At recess time, she came over to where I was working at the washer and warned me about the mangle. The mangle was a red monstrosity of a machine that was about six feet long and about four high with three long rollers that were four inches in diameter • 'two in the front and one in the back. They rolled around another larger metal roller in the center that was about three feet in diameter. It was heated to a hot enough



temperature to dry and iron all the sheets and tablecloths. Two girls stood in the back, one on each end. One girl would take one end of a wet sheet and feed it into the machine, and as it rolled through it was dried and ironed. Two or three girls stood in front of the machine and took the sheet away and folded it. Depending upon whether the sheets were taken off the clothesline or out of the washer, they may have required more than one ironing to dry them. The sheets taken from the extractor were still quite damp and required more than one ironing and because they were wet, they were more apt to get stuck on the rollers and tangle up. Sometimes the sheets were so wet, they had to be taken out and hung on the clothesline no matter how cold it was.

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