

I'm a survivor not a victim

I am an Ojibway First Nations woman who had a very rocky start to learning about life.

At the age of 14 I was a Grade A student in High School and then one sunny day walking to the store for my mom which was 2 miles away I was thrown in a car and raped by several older boys who attended the same school as I, and my whole life changed.

I lost all interest in school and dropped out mostly because of embarrassment. Everyone knew what had happened to me and I could not handle the teasing so I ran away from home.

My parents put me in care of Child and Family Services (CFS), and from there it was downhill. I didn't think school was important so I would skip school and go drinking with my new friends and doing drugs. As the drinking and drugs took control nothing was important to me anymore. Whatever little self-respect I had was quickly lost. I went from man to man, whoever would buy my drinks I would sleep with him. As I was getting closer to the age of 18 and needed to fend for myself I found prostitution was so easy. I had the life of luxury! I didn't have to go to school, lost contact with my family, but I could drink and do drugs and hide in my own little world, and all I had to do was sell my body.

At the age of 18 I met a guy who I thought was everything I would ever need, till I found out I was pregnant. At first he was so loving and caring till about 3 months into my pregnancy and the physical abuse started. First it was a slap here and there and then it was a gun being put to my head and being thrown into traffic. I thought I was so in love with this guy that when the police stormed our apartment and found drugs he had hidden, I took the blame so he didn't go to jail. He was on parole and I didn't know this. When I was 6 months pregnant I was sentenced to 3 months in jail. After being in jail for about three weeks, I was reading the paper and found out he was sentenced to do the rest of his 2 years in prison. The real shocker was when I found out that 1 week after I went to jail he married my best friend. After doing a month and a half of jail time I was let out and 7 1/2 months pregnant. I wanted to change my life around for the child I was about to have. I tried going back to school but the baby's father was constantly in and out of my life, so again I dropped out.

When my daughter was 2 years old I made a break for it, and bounced from one abusive relationship to another. At the age of 24 I found out I was pregnant again, and my son was born. His father totally denied him, and now I had 2 children from different fathers, no education and no job.

I tried working here and there but could only get waitressing jobs in the bars. Working in that environment was a mistake for me because I started drinking again. After 2 years I finally gave my mother custody of my children so CFS wouldn't take them.

I continued partying and having a good time till I was 32 years of age. I met a man from my past and in 1989 we got married. I quit drinking and doing drugs and tried to get my children back but they wanted to stay with their grandmother. I volunteered at a CFS agency in the area and from there my whole life started changing. I got a job with CFS as a respite worker, and transporting children to and from visits.

At the age of 15 my daughter became pregnant, and my husband and I took custody of my granddaughter. Life was good till the year 2000 when my husband died of cancer. I was so scared of falling back into my old lifestyle. There I was again alone and feeling like the whole world collapsed.

In 2003 I again met someone from my past and in 2005 we were married. He has taught me so much. I returned to school, got a job at an Aboriginal Head Start Program for Children as a cook, and from there went on to work in a clinic as a HealthCare Worker. I used to feel like a victim, but through life and trial and error I now know I am a survivor not a VICTIM!!

My words of encouragement are do not allow yourself to be dragged down to the bottom...fight as hard as you can to stay on top!! An education is so very important, and at the age of 51 now I am still learning each and every day!