



BROKEN CIRCLE

The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools: A Memoir

Theodore Fontaine

Theodore Fontaine lost his family and freedom just after his seventh birthday, when his parents were forced to leave him at an Indian residential school by order of the Roman Catholic Church and the Government of Canada. Twelve years later, he left school frozen at the emotional age of seven. He was confused, angry and conflicted, on a path of self-destruction. At age 29, he emerged from this blackness. By age 32, he had graduated from the Civil Engineering Program at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and begun a journey of self-exploration and healing.

In this powerful and poignant memoir, Theodore examines the impact of his psychological, emotional and sexual abuse, the loss of his language and culture, and, most important, the loss of his family and community. He goes beyond details of the abuses of Native children to relate a unique understanding of why most residential school survivors have post-traumatic stress disorders and why succeeding generations of First Nations children suffer from this dark chapter in history.

Told as remembrances described with insights that have evolved through his healing, his story resonates with his resolve to help himself and other residential school survivors and to share his enduring belief that one *can* pick up the shattered pieces and use them for good.

Theodore Fontaine is a member of the Sagkeeng First Nation in Manitoba. He attended the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School from 1948 until 1958, and the Assiniboia Indian Residential School from 1958 to 1960. He led a mineral exploration crew in the Northwest Territories for a global mining corporation, was chief of the Sagkeeng First Nation from 1979 to 1981, and has worked for the federal Secretary of State Department; for the Northwest Territories Region of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada; as executive director of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs; and as Strategic Advisor to the Chiefs on Indian residential school issues. He was instrumental in negotiating and finalizing the national employment equity settlement with national corporations and the Canadian Human Rights Commission. He now chairs the Indigenous Leadership Development Institute, a national leadership training institute based in Winnipeg. In April 2010 he was appointed to the Board of Governors of The Manitoba Museum. He is also a director on the board of Peace Hills Trust, a national financial institution serving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses across Canada, and is an end-of-life volunteer with the Manitoba Hospice and Palliative Care Association. Theodore lives with his wife, Morgan, in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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