

Doug Knockwood, Mi'kmaw Elder

### **A New Life in Boston**

Things were very good in Boston. I was working at Leslie College. They paid me my salary, then they gave me a boost on top of my salary, then they paid me expenses for travelling back and forth. If I stayed there they paid for my hotel, my meals. I was doing good.

While I was working at Leslie College, I did a lot of volunteer work with addicts in the prison and the rehab centres. I used to go to do volunteer work all the time. On weekends I would go somewhere and do volunteer work. In fact the group I belonged to in Chelsea came to put a meeting on in Springhill. So when I started getting the meetings going, we exchanged meetings. I came home and one of the boys, Frank, said, "Why don't you get us a commitment? Put the meetings on." I said, "Sure I will. But you are going to have to sleep on the floor." He said, "Why?" I said, "No hotels in Springhill. You can sleep on my mom and dad's floor, the front room floor." He said, "We don't care where we sleep." Anyways, we got it all organized so that people who were in the program in Springhill would take one or two people. A man and a wife, they would go to a family, but the single guys they went to different houses.

When they were in Boston, the kids used to come with me to meetings, and they also went to the Alateen meetings, which are for children of alcoholics and drug addicts. So that's how they started to learn about alcohol and drugs. They were able to help one another. I got custody of my two kids and I was able to bring them over every summer. Bernie came first. He worked with me for two summers but had to come back to go to school. Carol Ann had another year of school. Then she came to work with me. They both started out in the cooking field. Bernie used to love it 'cause there were a lot of young girls. Of course, he was a nice looking man. The girls would always find some excuse to go and talk to him. Of course, Carol Ann was a knockout anyway. I used to take them to the ball game, Red Sox ball game. I don't know where she learned that one-fingered whistle, but outside, jeez, it'd tear your eardrums right out. I took her to a ball game one Saturday afternoon and her little friend came with her. We were sitting there and all at once two little boys almost broke their father's arm off. "Daddy, daddy, look at that girl whistling!" She was there with her fingers. That was her fun. People never thought that nice, mild-looking little girl would have that type of strong whistle.

When Bernie graduated from grade twelve, he took a trade in welding. Man, he was good. He came to work at Revere Beach. I forgot the name of the outfit but he was there for three years, in Chelsea, Massachusetts. He was making money like you wouldn't believe. So they both started out working for me and then they branched off.

Bernie got so afraid they were going to scoop him for the army. All his buddies

had been gone for two years. He said, "I guess I'll go home, Dad." "What are you going home for?" I asked, "You'll never make this kind of money in Nova Scotia." "I know," replied Bernie, "but I could be put in the army here." "They won't touch you," I said, "You're a Canadian citizen. You don't have to worry about that shit here." But I couldn't convince him. He went home.

Carol Ann went back to live with her mother when she was in grade twelve. She was the first female Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia to graduate from high school.