

A Self-Spoken Promise by Sandi Savage

As a young girl I was timid, shy, and afraid. My parents' behavior started long before I was born. Every weekend, my parents would drink to excess. Without fail they would fight. When I was around age 5, my family lived in a trailer house on the north end of the reservation. The bar was just down the road a of couple blocks. My grandmother, who spoke only Chippewa, was babysitting. My parents came home from the bar very drunk. An argument started between them. As the argument became more heated, a physical fight started.

I witnessed my mom hit my dad on the head with a fence post that had a nail at the top of it. My dad got knocked out right there in the kitchen of that little trailer house. I was jumping up and down on the couch yelling, "Daddy, daddy, daddy!" I must have blacked out. The next thing I remember is my dad shoving my mother backwards into the cupboards. She was sliding down onto the floor with her back broken saying, "Ray, my back, my back!" Again, I was on the couch jumping up and down only this time I was yelling, "Mommy, mommy, mommy!"

I didn't know then but as I grew older I realized something wasn't right at my house. Bad things happened in my childhood home. There were a million egg shells just waiting to be stepped on. When my parents went out drinking, it was normal to hide guns, knives, and anything else that could be used as a weapon. In the beautiful summer days after that very terrifying event, I promised myself that I would never be like my parents; violent, hurtful, cold. That self spoken promise gave me hope that got me through the rest of my childhood. It wasn't easy but by acknowledging, accepting, and talking about my childhood it gave me the gentle strength that made me who I am today, a strong Anishnabew woman. I am proud to say I have kept that promise I made all those years ago. I met a wonderful fellow enrollee who is my best friend, husband, soul mate and together we raised 3 children and are now the grandparents of 4 with one more on the way. As I reflect on my life story, there are no regrets, only learning experiences. Even with pain, comes growth and healing.