



Living past the pain

Survivors of residential school system speak at Dalhousie

BY DAISY KIDSTON

When one looks at a Mi'kmaq map of Nova Scotia, it's easy to realize how European immigrants truly erased a culture.

But this erasing and destruction of the Mi'kmaq people and their culture, along with the same sort of destruction done to

native groups all across the nation, takes many forms beyond changing the names on a map. One of the most horrifying of these forms was the residential school system.

Residential schools began at different times across Canada, but the first ones started in the 1880s and though some were closed down in the 1960s, others remained in operation until as late as the 1980s.

These schools were set up by the government and ran by the church. Their purpose was to assimilate young native children into white Canadian society.

Young children were taken from their homes, often with violence, and put into schools where they were forced to stop

speaking their language, practicing their spirituality and following the cultural behaviour and practices of their society.

Here in Nova Scotia, a residential school in Shubenacadie was in operation from 1930 to 1960 and had 1000 native children pass through it. Many of which today are still "scarred emotionally and physically" according to a Mi'kmaq resource guide on the school.

On Mar. 14, the Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group (NSPIRG) invited two speakers to discuss the horrors of residential schools in Canada, and the evil effects it had and continues to have on native people.

One speaker was the Reverend Kevin Annett, a former United Church minister who preached in Port Alberni in British Columbia.

The other speaker was a Mi'kmaq man named Sulian Stone Eagle Herney, a founder and past war chief with the Mi'kmaq Warriors Society. He is an activist who took a stand in the Oka crisis. He has also faced arrest for challenging the government to acknowledge native land rights.

Sulian is a passionate environmentalist who founded the Sacred Mountain Society, an environmental group that seeks to unite all people in solidarity against the destruction of our planet.

He is also a survivor of the residential school he was sent to as a young boy.

But he did not survive unscathed.

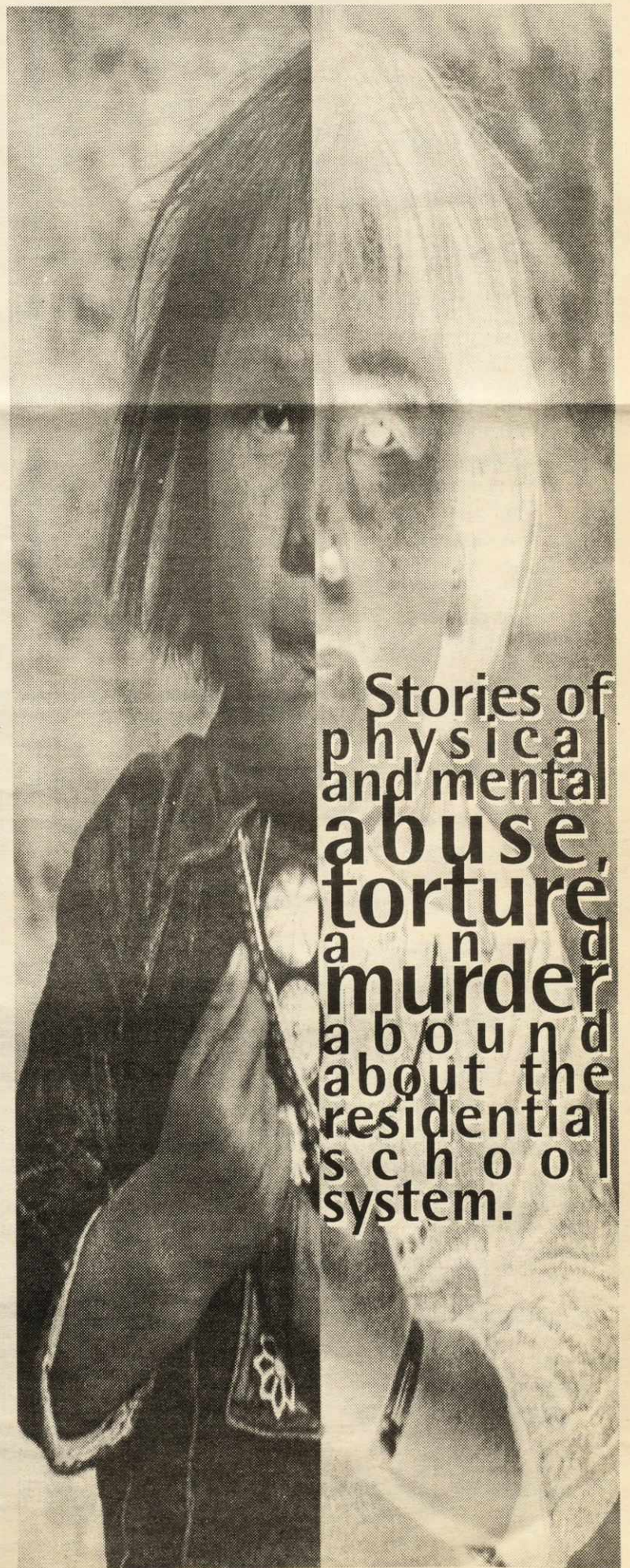
The purpose of the evening was to spread the word of the atrocities done to native children in residential schools, instead of having this dark part of Canadian history quietly swept under the rug.

People like Sulian refuse to be silenced, even though repercussions and difficulties come from speaking out.

Stories of physical and mental abuse, torture and murder abound about the residential school system.

Though it was difficult for him, Sulian told the audience some of the atrocities he experienced as a young boy.

It is because of the continued plights of Sulian and other men and women like him that the stories of native people are being heard.



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