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Youth spread their message in Pelican Falls

Talking to a large audience of students in a school located in a huge city takes lots of guts. Most adults don't even have the courage to overcome their fear to share their stories.

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However, Shane Turtle overcame that fear when he presented a slideshow on



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Shane Turtle, left, and Correen Kakegamic –spoke about the intergenerational impacts of residential school
-Steve Feeney - Wawatay News

intergenerational impacts of residential schools in Hamilton last year.

“I felt so nervous that I almost couldn’t do it but I did it anyway,” Turtle said.

Turtle, along with a few students from Dennis Franklin Cromarty (DFC) in Thunder Bay, have been spreading their stories for the past year and a half to many schools across the nation.

Turtle, Correen Kakegamic and Andrea Rae came to Pelican Falls July 15 to show the audience their presentation on intergenerational impacts of residential school.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation hosted a residential school survivors gathering all last week at Pelican Falls.

Hailing from Deer Lake First Nation, Turtle said the presentation was about what impacts the residential schools had toward the youth.

Kakegamic, who is from Sandy Lake, said that the youth deal with the impacts of residential schools in a negative way.

“The youth cope with these things by violence or substance and alcohol abuse. We deal with it the wrong way,” Kakegamic said.

“We’re hoping that this presentation will not only go towards elders but also the youth so we can hope that they would find their way of coping with all this stress and what they’re going through.”

Kakegamic said she’s experienced abuse in her life.

“At first I would cope with it by drinking and doing drugs and stuff like that. I didn’t know how to cope with the stuff that was going around me,” Kakegamic said. “I didn’t know anything about my culture.”

Sharing her story in Hamilton was tough for Kakegamic but it was the start of a healing journey.

“Once I started getting involved with stuff at my school, I got involved with the right crowd. I kind of drawn away from all that stuff,” Kakegamic said.

Kakegamic said her teacher Tornette Kakepetum introduced her to a traditional culture and helped create the presentation.

“She’s helping me through it,” Kakegamic said.

Rae shared she doesn't know much about her culture and grew up around alcohol, violence and abuse.

"I watch people getting beaten right in front of me and I don't like it," Rae said. "And today, it still hurt me. I still think about it."

Rae said that before she met Kakepetum, she used to abuse alcohol pretty badly.

"But then right now, I will get better at this, I will become a better person. I want to be," Rae said. "I know people can get through this, most people want to."

Rae shared her scary experience while abusing alcohol.

"I had an experience where I did stop breathing when abusing alcohol," Rae said. "I ended up in the hospital and I didn't know how I got there. When they told me what happened, I cried. That's when I realized I don't want anybody to experience that, what I experienced."

Turtle said that it's good to look up to an older role model.

"The person I've looked up to always was my grandfather," Turtle said. "He passed away a while ago but he's never tasted the taste of alcohol and he's never done drugs. He was basically the traditional teacher for me."

Turtle said he would have hung out and listened to his grandfather if he were still alive today.

"He was a good man," Turtle said.

Kakegamic said they have been to Calgary, Hamilton and Sioux Lookout to give this presentation.

Other students involved included Karla Kakegamic and Michael Goodman.

Kakegamic will be doing her last semester of school this fall at DFC. Turtle graduated from DFC in June and will be going to Confederation College in Thunder Bay this fall. Rae will be doing her grade ten year at DFC this coming school year.

Turtle encourages youth to finish school, get a job and, "be the best that you can be."

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