

Yellowknife author Bonita Nowell and her mother host book reading of *My Mother's Legacy*



Angie Mercredi-Crerar hugs one of her family members after the book reading of *My Mother's Legacy*, hosted by her daughter and author Bonita Nowell at the Yellowknife Public Library Saturday. Jill Westerman/NNSL photo

'When I was left in that residential school, they wrecked me,' mom says of childhood experience in Fort Resolution

By Jill Westerman
Northern News Services

It was a book reading that evoked many emotions at the Yellowknife Public Library Saturday, as Métis author Bonita Nowell and her mother Angie Mercredi-Crerar shared heartfelt moments with their audience about Nowell's book, *My Mother's Legacy*.

The story, published last autumn, shares the early childhood experiences of Mercredi-Crerar, such as when she was taken away to residential school — a painful time in her life that she only shared with her daughter when Nowell decided to document her mother's history in the pages of her book.

"I didn't tell my kids about it because it was too horrible," said Mercredi-Crerar, who attended St. Joseph residential school in Fort Resolution. "All I learned from that is that my kids would never, ever feel the way I did."

She said after her children were born, loving them was the most important thing for her to do to counter the effects that residential school had on her life.

"When I was left in that residential school, they wrecked me. I had nothing. Nowhere to go and there was no hope. There was nothing for me. We were all alone and nobody cared.

"And as I was growing up, I was thinking, 'Maybe someday, if I have kids, I will love them and fight for them forever,'" she recalled.

Poignant journey

While writing the book, Nowell told the audience that she "felt every emotion you could imagine" and that its pages are filled with instances of hope, healing and reconciliation.

She said she feels very fortunate that she was able to document her mother's life while she was still alive.

"I am grateful my mother is still here to share the story," Nowell said.

To complement the written book, and to honour her mother's story further, Nowell said they just completed an audio-book version of the book — complete with her mother's voice and that of several other narrators, including herself.



Métis author Bonita Nowell and her mother Angie Mercredi-Crerar held a book reading of Nowell's book, *My Mother's Legacy*, at the Yellowknife Public Library Saturday. The book documented highlights from Mercredi-Crerar's childhood and also the trauma she experienced at St. Joseph's residential school in Fort Resolution. Jill Westerman/NNSL photo

"I wanted my mom, my mom's voice to be heard. And so I can pass that along to my siblings and their families. It's a gift to my siblings and their families," Nowell said.

The audio recording should be ready for sale on platforms such as Amazon, Audible and Google Play by the end of February, she noted.

Nowell said it's a good feeling knowing her mother's story is documented for others to read and hear — now and for future generations.

"It's the greatest service to others — be it my family having my mother's voice forever; be it the story that may inspire others to reflect on their own family and appreciate their own family," she said.

"It's been a privilege to share the story. These are hurts, but my mother is at peace today. She has peace of mind, she has peace in her heart. How did she get there? I'm sharing some of how she got there."