

Young, Mary Elizabeth. (1952 – 2015)

Mary is fondly remembered as an Indigenous Language advocate and long-time Board member of the Louis Riel Institute.

Mary was the daughter of Charlie and Isabelle Young (née Orvis, English Metis). Mary was Anishinabe Kwe from Bloodvein First Nation. She received her early education (grades one to eight) in Bloodvein before leaving, as a result of residential schooling policies, at the age of 14. Mary then attended residential school in Pine Creek and Winnipeg before living at the Assiniboia Residential School on Academy road in Winnipeg, and graduating from Kelvin High School. Mary was supported in her final years of high school education by George and Lenore Taylor. This cherished bond continued into her adult life as Lois Taylor became a sister to her. Mary obtained her BA from the University of Winnipeg, and her Post-Baccalaureate and Masters in Education from the University of Manitoba. She completed her PhD in First Nations Education at the University of Alberta.

Before returning to university for her Master's degree Mary had worked as a Probation Officer for Community and Youth Corrections (Manitoba). Those of us who worked with her remember her tireless efforts to teach us her Anishinabe language.

Notwithstanding these degrees, Mary consistently honoured the way her parents taught and educated her. She believed they were truly her first teachers. Her parents were the ones who encouraged her and insisted she speak her Anishinabe language. As she continued her work at the University of Winnipeg as a Native Student Advisor, Counsellor and now as the Director of Aboriginal Student Services, she often remembered and recalled the words of her parents.

In her educational and personal journey the education she received from her parents greatly influenced what she choose to write about in her dissertation, which was a narrative inquiry into "Language as identity". Her parents' way of life, their beliefs, values and culture continues to influence her in her every day life and in her work.

Mary had dedicated her time and energy to the education of young people regarding the devastating legacy of residential schools. She believed in the power of sharing our lived experiences with one another, and demonstrated that large-scale change often begins with the personal.

Over her career, Mary was the recipient of the University of Winnipeg Marsha Hanen Award for Excellence in Creating Community Awareness and was nominated for the YWCA Women of Distinction Award (Education and Leadership). Mary also served with pride on the Helen Betty Osborne Foundation and the Louis Riel Institute Board, as well as the planning committee for the annual Aboriginal Education Research Forum, "Shawane Dagoiwiniwin."

In 2005, Mary authored *Pimatisiwin : walking in a good way : a narrative inquiry into language as identity* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc.) Her article on "Anishinabemowin: A Way of Seeing the World" was published in the *Canadian Journal of Native Education*. Her passion is to work towards the preservation of the Anishinabe language.

Besides her work, Mary enjoyed tennis, racquetball, walking, curling and golf. She won the Silver Medal in golf at the North American Indigenous games in July 2003.



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