

Chapter 6

The Road to Inclusion: One Family's Story

by Alene Steinbach

There are many dimensions to every story of integration: one that is often overlooked is the impact on family life. What does integration mean on the human level, away from school board meetings and resource teachers? Every family experiences joys and trials in the course of their child's development: the first day of school, the move to a new neighbourhood and a new school, the formation of new friendships. What dimension does the constant struggle for inclusion in the regular school system add to these experiences?

My family's story shows integration from this perspective — one which is often overlooked. It is the story of education and of how education leads to many other things in life. It is a story of friendship, love, community and the future.

I realize, as I look back at my earlier experiences and education, that I never had the opportunity to know people who talked or walked differently from me, or who were labelled mentally handicapped, or who used a wheelchair. I didn't have the opportunity to feel natural or confident around people who were different from myself. My entire generation lacked this experience, which led many of us to believe that people