

On August 1, 2013 Karonhiaràhstha Sky Junie Delisle was born a healthy 7 lb, 9 oz big, blue-eyed, beautiful, baby girl. I held my daughter and felt the pure energy you always feel through your body when holding your baby for the first time. Her energy filled up the room with instant joy and happiness. Our families were present and I could still smell the crisp air and the sounds of the trees blowing in the wind outside the hospital.

That day was a very special day for nature - it rained, it became sunny, then clouded over and even hailed for a moment then became sunny again. Because of this we decided to name her Karonhiaràhstha (drawing the sky). Baba Dennis named her of course and all was great and peaceful. Her English name, Junie Delisle, was shared by her great-aunt, the late June Delisle, who worked incredibly hard for the Kateri Memorial Hospital Centre (KMHC) as she was one of the Founders. I thought that this was very ironic because my auntie Junie took on that role as a revenue seeker for the development of the hospital and now her great grandniece has taken on the same role.

We brought her home to be greeted by her brothers and sisters Atonwentison, Otsitsateken, Ronwarhare, Kyryn and Poochie with kisses and hugs, her grandmothers Carlene and Connie were so proud. It was perfect and my family was now complete. She had these blue eyes that seemed to look straight through me almost like she was looking at someone behind me all the time. She was spoiled. I thought this is my first and probably my last daughter so I'm spoiling her; she had everything life could give her, everything we could give her, love, comfort, compassion, everything... She was so loved.

On December 27th while on vacation in the Virgin Islands of St Martin Carla found Karonhiaràhstha not breathing around 11 pm. I can still recall the screaming and yelling coming from the room “She is not breathing”, those words still haunt me to this day. I immediately started CPR along with her Auntie Kathy and Auntie Lisa.

We continued to perform CPR until the ambulance arrived, unfortunately the ambulance only came one hour or so later. Within this hour time stood still and I felt so helpless. I could no longer wait for the ambulance so I picked up my baby and ran with her in my arms to the end of the gated building to find the ambulance was still not there. I continued CPR on the sidewalk of the road and by some miracle there was a pediatrician on vacation in the same building as us and he took over CPR for me. When the ambulance finally arrived there was only one person facilitating the emergency vehicle and that was the driver. So one police officer carried my daughter into the ambulance then Kathy ordered the pediatrician to ride in the ambulance because the ambulance was short staffed. Myself and Carla rode in the back of a police car behind the ambulance for



a horrific 45-minute drive to the hospital.

When we arrived at the hospital there was one doctor and one nurse present. All I can remember thinking was, this isn't happening I must be dreaming, my little girl cannot be deceased. I stood on the side while they took my baby out of the ambulance and walked her through two big metal doors. When I finally got to see Karonhiaràhstha the doctor told me he had done all he could do and he was very sorry for my loss. I was in shock, I couldn't speak, and my whole body got numb and heavy.

Now I had to go pass the message to her mom Carla and tell her that our daughter is deceased. While I was walking out of the room the nurse tapped me on the shoulders and with no remorse said, “you have some paperwork to fill out and a bill for the service they provided for \$275.00”. Imagine! \$275.00 to try and save my daughter's life.

From this point on all I wanted to do was just get myself and my family out of the country and back home safe. Our departure is a whole other story that I won't get into because I don't have enough space to write, but let me just say this; it was inhumane what we had to endure emotionally to take our baby out of the country. We had to pay a large amount of money in legal fees to line the pockets of the Prime Minister to sign the release permit. If we chose not to pay they would keep Karonhiaràhstha for a criminal investigation and autopsy that would take 3 to 6 weeks & then ship her home in a cargo plane.

It was 3 days of torture waiting for all the paperwork to be done so that we could take our baby home with us on a private plane. Thank God for our family that was with us because we couldn't have done it without them.

The horror didn't stop there, as we arrived at Dorval airport Poissant was waiting for us. Once again, we had to give up our baby girl. It was now

New Year's Eve and because of the holiday we had to wait another 4 days to get her back. We knew coming into Kahnawake was going to be uneasy, knowing our baby girl's picture would be up everywhere we went and drove. She was on the billboard with Dr. Horn for the Kateri Memorial Foundation's first Give Where You Live Campaign.

We decided it would be best if the Foundation kept the pictures up. It was too heart-wrenching to see so we left for Tampa for 7 wks. While there, we found a grief support group for parents who've lost children called the TCF (The Compassionate Friends). Grief counseling has been the key ingredient in getting through the first year for us. We've had our ups and downs, family support has been great, everyone came together and most stayed helping us to continue getting through our first year. I'm very grateful we have a loving, supportive family that understands the grieving process. It's been like a super-fast roller coaster with no bars holding you in your seat. All you have is the person next to you to grab onto.

Based on the experience I went through I would like to pass this message to the community. My child died under the worst possible conditions imaginable as far as the horrible response team, an unequipped staff and hospital, as well as an inexperienced ambulance technician. We should be very grateful for what we have here with our hospital and medical support.

It's very important that we continue to raise funds to make the KMHC the best it can be so our families may have the best care and equipment. We've all used this hospital at one point in our lives and will continue to do so.

A very good friend once told me that it takes a community to raise a child. Well, if that's the case then it should be in our best interest in helping to preserve and maintain their life as well. The potential for the death of a child can happen to anyone. For those who it has already touched we know your pain and know how you feel. I would like to take this time to honor all the parents who lost a child and continue to try and find meaning to move forward in life. “Happiness comes from finding one's self worth, accepting it as it may be, and finding that peace in life's duality of unexpected occurrences”. Having said that my happiness and peace as a bereaved father will forever be a challenge because I know I will forever walk this earth with a broken heart. Unconditional love for one's self will only be complete when my daughter is back in my arms again.

This is our story, thank you for reading. We would also like to thank all the people in the community who came to help, offered condolences and shared in our grief.

Nia:wen Ko:wa.  
Iohahio & Carla