

It's been a long and varied road since Kelita used to play at the old Golden Inn here in Grande Prairie in the 1980s. It's that journey the former country singer-turned inspirational singer/speaker will share as she presents a special fundraising concert for Burden Bearers at the Grande Prairie Inn, Oct. 12.

"I'm pretty honest about where I've been and what I've been through," said Kelita in recent phone interview. "It's a good match for this organization because they're all about helping people who are going through a tough time. I'm there to hopefully inspire them."

Inspiration, home and forgiveness are all part of Kelita's story. Born to a cattle-ranching family in the foothills of Alberta, Kelita's life was far from perfect. Sexually abused by a brother 10 years older than she at a very young age, she lost her father to suicide when she was 11. Shortly after, Kelita's mother was diagnosed with breast cancer and passed away less than four years later.

The young woman and her two siblings were faced with living with an adoptive stepfather, his new wife and her children. Two years after the death of her mother, the brother who had abused Kelita died of a heroin overdose. By age 18, the young woman had lived through a lifetime of grief.

Dreaming of escape, Kelita enrolled in the York University theatre program where she fell into a life of drugs and alcohol. She married in her third year of the four-year university program and set out to become a country singer.

"I finally decided that I had been writing songs for a long time and I would probably never do anything with them if I stayed in acting," she said.

Kelita hit the Canadian music scene during the 1980s and soon found a niche in the country market.

"I never dreamed in a million years that I would become a country singer, but I guess my voice lent itself to that genre and my songwriting was really down to Earth. And, being an Alberta born and raised ranch girl, it felt pretty natural," she said.

The life of a country singer was not all it was cracked up to be, as drugs and alcohol continued to unravel the threads holding Kelita together.

"My life was such a mess," she said. "I was hanging by a thread in many ways. I really was very close to just admitting myself somewhere. I was such a messed up woman and you add all the drugs and alcohol – com-



Kelita

ing from a dysfunctional family and a lot of loss and all that stuff, you just bury things. You want to move forward in life pretending everything's okay and none of that happened.

Unfortunately all those things that happen in our lives shape and form who we are and when we get older our relationships, no matter who we are, are hinging on stuff from our

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