

## **MOLLY OF DENALI's Auntie Midge is the Role Adeline Juneby Potts was Born to Play**

The first time that Adeline Juneby Potts auditioned for a part in her high school play, she didn't get the part. It wouldn't be until February 2018, more than 50 years later, that Potts would try out for another part. This time, she finally landed the role she was born to play.

This summer Potts' debuts as Auntie Midge in PBS KIDS' groundbreaking series, MOLLY OF DENALI. The children's series is the first nationally distributed animated children's series in America to feature a Native American and Alaska Native lead character.

"I still can't believe I got the part," said Potts. "I am overjoyed. I'm very happy that for the first time there is a TV series that respectfully portrays Indigenous people."

For Potts, MOLLY OF DENALI is art imitating her life. When she first read the audition script, Potts immediately connected with Auntie Midge, a "feisty-busy body" who was Chief of the fictional village, Qyah.

"Like Auntie Midge, I know what's like to live in a village," said Potts, who is Han Gwich'in. "During part of my audition I had to sound upset. So, I thought back to a time when I saw a loose dog near my fish cache (a place where dried fish is stored away for winter). In my language I said, 'Go away! Go home!' The words came out naturally."

When Potts later asked producers why she was selected, she was told that she sounded energetic and feisty -- just like they had pictured Auntie Midge. The Alaska Native Elder is the fifth of eleven children who were born and raised in Coal Creek (Woodchopper) area, a part of the historic gold mining district in the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve of Alaska. Potts spent the first seven years of her life in a mining camp, where her father, Willie, worked as a cat-operator in a mining camp owned by Ernest N. Patty, a mining engineer who later became the President of the University of Alaska.

Potts grew up in the village of Eagle, Alaska and went to school in a one room cabin. Now, she and her husband of nearly 44 years, Mike, live on Lake Vermilion in Minnesota. They were Christian missionaries in Mongolia for seven years. "My faith in God keeps me going," said Potts.

Potts was raised in a traditional subsistence lifestyle. Her family lived off the land; they hunted, fished, trapped, and gathered berries. She taught her children these traditional subsistence survival skills. Potts and her husband come to back to Alaska often to visit her daughter and four grandchildren and live a bit of their traditional subsistence way of life.

“I think MOLLY OF DENALI will introduce children to the traditional Alaska Native ways,” said Potts. “In one of the episodes, the children forget to tie up the boat and it floats away. So, Auntie Midge teaches Molly and Tozey how to build a raft using trees.”

Potts sees MOLLY of DENALI as a positive role model for all children from diverse backgrounds. It’s about family, love, respect, laughter, curiosity and hope for the future.

“MOLLY of DENALI is going to make a positive influence on children around the world. Many people who only know about Alaska from reality television shows will soon learn about the Athabascan language and culture. They will see Native people showing respect and love as well as learning from people who are from a different background,” said Potts. “MOLLY of DENALI is a children’s show and will help them to be prepared, ask questions and navigate through life’s many challenges.”