

Our Journeys – *By Diane Cote and Marie-Jeanne Will, 2023*

My journey begins with defensive thoughts and words

That just couldn't be
Maybe there were good reasons
Maybe the actions were warranted
Maybe the government knew what was best
Maybe the church was just trying to help
Maybe their way of life was not sustainable anyway
Maybe they just need to get over it and move on
We are kinder than that, smarter than that
We come from good Christian people
We can't be held responsible for what we didn't do

My journey began with a rapid drive through

The slums of Saint Henri in Montreal.

My people lived in rundown shacks.

Maybe there were good reasons.
Maybe they were lazy.
Maybe they were uneducated and living in poverty.
Maybe the church was saying big families are God's will.
Maybe they should learn to speak English anyway.
Maybe they should just be like the rest of Canada.

My English friend was kind, she was smart.

She came from the good side of Montreal.

She can't be held responsible for what she didn't do.

My journey continues with guilt and shame:

How come I didn't know about this?
How did people of good will get caught up in thinking and acting in a certain way?
How come I didn't teach this to my students?
How do I remain in the Catholic Church?
How do we support those still suffering from the impact of IRS?
How do we fix this and move on?
How will something so messed up ever get better?

My journey continues with better understanding.

I am learning about true Canadian history.
Slums are slums, whether on reserves or in Montreal.
Oppressed people living in poverty are held back.
The History of the oppressor is taught in schools.
The Catholic Church has been complicit in oppressing.
How do we walk side by side with the oppressed?
How do we build relationships?

My journey has some cautious hope:

What if we could all accept the real history of Canada?
What if we build the ethical space that allows for communication and understanding?
What if we just spent more time together?
What if we could appreciate the values of two world views?
What if we could build on what we have in common in Indigenous spirituality and the Catholic faith?
What if we could stop being afraid of what we might lose and focus on the good that could come?
What if we truly believed that what we cannot do alone, we can with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit?

My journey has renewed hope.

What if we could all be taught the real history of Canada?
What if we read books authored by Indigenous writers to know their knowing and their doing?
What if we went to Indigenous celebrations?
What if we could value the Indigenous world view?
What if we could see that Indigenous spirituality is a gift to the Catholic Church?
What if we could stop being afraid of what we might lose and focus on what we could gain?
What if we truly believed that the Holy Spirit is with the Indigenous Peoples and us, helping and guiding toward a better tomorrow?