

# DeHart Pro D paper

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Mary and I have always done ministry as a team. We did this workshop again together as a team. For thirty five years we have been trying to express to our churches, our support team, and countless Canadian friends, the things that Dr. Wilson and the survivors and other speakers and writers stated so much more clearly in this workshop.

In Canada and now in the states, we talk with non First Nation's people today, Christian and pre-Christian... who have never heard of residential schools. We did that this morning in talking with a Veteran's Administration psychologist. She had never heard of residential schools.

So many of our friends in Mt. Currie and a dozen other communities in British Columbia have told us of the horror they experienced in residential schools in Kamloops and Mission.

Thirty years ago when we were bringing youth to our youth retreats in Kamloops, new believers from Lillooet and Mt. Currie brokenly begged us to not ever bring youth and them as our partner staff back there because of all the horrible memories. They couldn't even go into the washrooms or the dormitories without weeping and telling us terrible things.

Watching these video's and reading the articles reopened places where we had wept with so many friends over the years.

How do we answer the question of healing, the collective woundedness, spiritually, morally and physically? I asked myself and more than thirty informers, Native and non -Native, Christian and pre-Christian, many of these same questions when I was writing my final writing project for CIU in 1999.

Many of the things we heard and read during this workshop were repetitions of deeply held pain from many of the people I interviewed during my research. Things like, learning to listen, recognizing protocol, embracing traditional cultural values and yes, spiritual values...and aboriginal issues without branding them simply as being evil, brought me face to face with many prejudices I had not recognized within myself.

We have grieved over the loss of 85 per cent of our students going away to universities and being lost in the non aboriginal teaching methodology...and then caught in the vortex of city life so far away from everything they knew at home.

Many of the stories we read or heard were very similar with simply different voices and faces. Today, in Mt Currie, especially as a result of Red Soul Rising camp, we are seeing and experiencing forgiveness in this generation of the parents of our campers. That is a huge change for Mt. Currie. Statements like, "forgiveness is healing and freedom from anger and shame and guilt," which was defined by survivors as a "spiritual sickness", seem like giant steps to us as we look back on our history in Mt. Currie. Statements like "my happiness is revenge, I am free, forgiveness is not for the weak... it is the beginning of freedom, when you forgive you

actually live”.... These statements express the change we prayed about for thirty five years.

One of the things so clearly defined in my research for my final writing project from CIU was, “the pain of change is greater than the pain I have learned to live with.” Hearing statements like, “We fed our experiences to our children, we passed learned behaviours on to our children, I did to my children what was done to me”, we saw acted out in so many of our friends in Mt. Currie in the 1980’s and 1990’s. People whom we saw come to know Jesus, continued to be caught and strangled by the pain of their residential school experiences and what they experienced generationally back in Mt. Currie in their own homes.

It will be wonderful and amazing if these “calls to action” are honored. They have the potential to change the nation. Can they become a mirror to Canadians and Americans alike?

The Caralyle Indian School initiated in Virginia, from our understanding, was the prototype of the residential school system in Canada. Statements similar to that of John McDonald promoting cultural genocide and nearly one hundred years later by Duncan Campbell Scott began the horror that 150,000 children in Canada experienced in that one hundred and forty years of residential school. In 1987, I was still picking up children at the train landing in Mt. Currie coming from residential school in Mission.

The heroes of residential school survivors who persevered to bring about this work of the beginning of reconciliation aptly defined that apology and regret are not the final answer to repair the broken history of the past one hundred and forty years. Regret and apology must be demonstrated by change and action, beginning with the government, religious institutions, and all of the people of Canada and the United States. It is because of the courage of survivors that truth and reconciliation is even coming to light in this generation of parents breacking the cycle of pain.

Don and Mary DeHart