

Perspective

by SHERALYN ROMAN

A few days ago, we awoke to the truth of the magnitude and horror that was the residential school system.

If you did not already know and understand the importance of the Truth and Reconciliation Act, one certainly hopes you have a better understanding of its purpose now. To know, not only that this system was in place, but that as recently as the 1990s, children were still being stripped from their parents' arms and sent hundreds of miles away to 'boarding school'.

There, they were further stripped of their dignity, their heritage, their language and their culture. That as a result of this so many CHILDREN died is simply incomprehensible to me. The discovery of a mass, unmarked grave holding 215 CHILDREN is a stark and horrifying reminder of all Canada has done wrong as a nation.

While we lament the mental health of our young ones during this pandemic, unable to see their friends, socialize and go to school, I ask you to put that in perspective and consider instead the enormity of the fact that Indigenous children were stolen from their parents, suffered, died and were disposed of like so much garbage, in unmarked graves.

Should there be a National Day of Mourning? You betcha. Sadly, I feel that this discovery, a grave containing the remains of CHILDREN (yes, I will keep putting that in bold type ? we are talking about CHILDREN as young as three years old) is only the first of many that may be found.

We have a responsibility to mourn their loss and to mourn the collective loss of generations of Indigenous heritage, culture and language.

Those that feel intergenerational trauma doesn't exist need only to reflect on the cumulative impact of approximately 150 years of children being forcibly removed from their families.

According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that's seven generations of Indigenous people impacted by the actions of our forefathers and the INACTION of our current political leaders. Those of us who are immigrants to this country, I invite you to think about how hard you try in your own homes to maintain some sense of your cultural heritage, language and traditions. Indigenous families have been robbed of that opportunity ? for at least seven generations.

To the people who think it's time to move on, 'get over it' and look forward to the future, I urge you to pause and reflect on the fact that many First Nations communities still don't have access to clean water. WATER! This, from a country that has clean water in such abundance it can potentially send it south to our American neighbours but cannot find a way to provide this basic human right to our own Indigenous communities.

Those of you that think the Indigenous, First Nations and Metis are not still discriminated against should review my article (or any of the abundance written at the time) expressing outrage at the death of Joyce Echaquan who suffered and died alone IN A HOSPITAL, while being verbally abused, taunted and ignored by at least two nursing staff. This just happened. In September - of 2020.

After the tragedy of Sandy Hook, in the US, many of us both north and south of the border paused and grieved. After the Humboldt tragedy in Saskatchewan, we paused and grieved. This most recent discovery demands that we pause and grieve.

We have a moral responsibility to acknowledge this dark stain on our country and a moral responsibility to call for action ? not words, ACTION.

It's time Canadian history is taught in schools in its entirety, the full and sometimes ugly truth of it. It's time for clean water. It's time for real and meaningful political action and it's time for truth AND for reconciliation.

We can start by lowering the flags for 215 hours because it is the right thing to do but so is mourning the loss of 215 CHILDREN. There must be a National Day of Mourning because we have a lot to mourn and we should be doing so, collectively, as a nation.