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Sent: July 1, 2020 11:20 AM
To: gscharback@westgrey.com
Subject: In support of Beth Hamilton: education

In reference to the current racial tensions and desires for change:

You can't KNOW what you have not been exposed to. You're left with either the choice to seek more information or deem your current situation satisfactory.

If you have the pleasure of never experiencing anything other than a community that looks like you, prays like you, speaks like you, etc., and one where you never feel yourself standing out for any reason beyond your control; then you can easily continue to assume that society has changed for EVERYONE'S betterment since the abolishment of slavery and residential schools and gay rights allowing same sex-marriage because you aren't exposed to anything to the contrary. Your community is filled with comradery and kin.

My beautiful children 'look' a little different than myself on the outside and sometimes this affords me just a glimpse into the inside world of that 'contrary' I recently mentioned. In this community alone I've been asked by well-intentioned people and those a little more malicious:

- 1) If I was sure that I actually birthed my daughter because she's so much darker than me;
- 2) I've had the luxury of someone practically yelling congratulations to me in the optometrist office how I should be so proud of myself for adopting a child from Africa. (First off, the assumption that it's ok to yell at someone that you think has adopted their child ONLY happens to those of us who look different than our offspring, and second, the undertone of superiority for 'saving' a poor black baby informs me just what 'progress' is being made around here.)
- 3) I've been shoved aside so a man could practically yell out to my sons his question, 'Do you know Paul? Yah. Paul. He's from Africa.'
- 4) My daughter has been requested she give permission to classmates to say the N-word because of her skin colour and then stood there while they proceeded to discuss her validity of providing permission because she's 'Only Half'.
- 5) I've had my daughter mistaken by a childcare worker (outside of daycare) for the only other dark-skinned girl because she couldn't tell them apart when they weren't standing next to each other. (She is an entire head taller, different length of hair, face shape, etc). But I guess that's really hard to discern if you're not exposed enough and have a natural bias. 'They all look the same'. (By the way, we all have bias' but some turn into dangerous prejudice and predispositions. We are responsible for being conscious of who we are as well.)

I will refrain from more examples though I hope you are beginning to produce some curiosity to learn more. Maybe you are beginning to nurture a new sense of curiosity to what systemic racism, unintentional racism and all the other variations that exist in between look and feel like, then please step up and start the process of becoming an ally.

Agree to great education that comes your way. Share it and talk about it. Talk to someone you aren't naturally drawn to because of the obvious commonalities previously identified. Get to know the variety that truly exists in OUR Canada!

Ask your Indigenous community if you are genuinely showing them that they matter and be prepared for the REAL answer, not the one you want to hear. Ask a community member who wears a turban to tell you more about their religion and listen for new commonalities. Ask them how they feel in a community whereby they are clearly a minority.

Be prepared to step outside your comfort zone and ask those who are clearly not like you, either by colour of skin, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, or status as an immigrant and practice active listening to their experiences. Interrupt yourself before you interrupt them. Listen to them fully and don't dismiss something you haven't seen or experienced because it's not yours to dismiss.

We need to start the hard work of learning about that which could make us very uncomfortable, as the role models our children so desperately deserve. Education is the key to our empowerment.