



A CANADA for All:

“The level of citizen awareness about social challenges seems to be increasing.”

PINNINGTON

What do you find hopeful about what is currently happening in Canada?

DUGUAY

Our current reality in Canada is not that encouraging. However, the level of citizen awareness about social challenges seems to be increasing—about issues such as inequality, discrimination, the role culture plays in society, and the environment. I find this hopeful!

Recognizing the potential of individuals to move past prejudice and to think critically and creatively is not a utopian act, but rather a first step in social trans-

formation—something which is already happening here. Even if the road is long and we need many change agents along the way, it’s encouraging to see citizen initiatives arising all across the country. At the political level, looking at municipalities is encouraging. There you find openness, creativity, innovation, collaboration, and support for initiatives that move beyond prescribed sectors and social norms.

When you look at the current situation in Canada, what worries you?

Canada is one of the 10 most developed countries in the world, but we still have flagrant inequalities. And it’s even more discouraging to see how far-reaching disinformation is in this country. Many Canadians think it is unjustified to continue talking about rights, because they think everyone’s rights are already respected! The reality is that if you are born First Nations in this country, you will face serious housing challenges—

for example 68% of Inuit living in Nunavik live in overpopulated homes, and 53% live in homes that don’t respect the minimum building standard. You will be eight times more likely to be homeless in your lifetime and 10 times more likely to go to prison; in 50% of cases, you will have a longer sentence than other Canadians for the same crime. Serious questions arise from this.

If things don’t go well over the next 20 years, what will have happened?

If we think about the darkest panorama for the next 20 years, the state will continue disengaging, the educational system will abdicate its independence, and citizens will become more disillusioned about the possibility for good things to happen. We will continue to develop societies where social status,

the place you were born, or your level of education continue to dig deeper inequalities around human rights. Instead of looking at all the potential in our differences, we will continue to create imaginary borders between us and create a self-sustaining system that constantly reinforces our limits.

If things go well in the next 20 years, what will have happened?

We will be able to imagine citizens, politicians, and organizations in society that listen to one another, exchange with one another, and recognize each other as complementary actors who have the capacity to collaborate and create real solutions. All too often, we attack each other but forget that others are also probably thinking carefully about what can be done. We need to

increase our capacity to be open to sharing knowledge and experiences, and to look at the Other as someone who could nourish our way of thinking. If everything goes well in 20 years, we will have understood that solutions will not be brought by organizations, researchers, or politics, but from society itself—through the capacity of individuals to recognize each other.

What are some important lessons from Canada's history?

I think that residential schools are a very important notion from our history that often get silenced or minimized. *OUR SOCIETY NEEDS TO LOOK THIS TERRIFYING PERIOD OF OUR HISTORY IN THE FACE, IN ORDER TO LEARN FROM IT AND BUILD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF OUR CURRENT ISSUES.* While Canada has not had great wars in our territory, we perpetrated a great cultural violence. It's

important to note that many involved in the residential schools had good intentions; they wanted to do good and to help. It is here that we have much to learn about the importance of cultural identity and also about the fact that we shouldn't help people just because we want to. It's only through a careful reading of history that we can extract such valuable learning for the future.

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What are some failures in Canada's history?

The relations between First Nations and non-First Nations people. Still today First Nations people are not considered full citizens. Our society has continued in a dynamic of dominators and dominated, where we consider that we have nothing to learn from First Nations people. We think we only have to help them. But there is nobody

who helps anybody else. Each of us has something to learn or share with others, regardless of our social position. We cannot build the Canada of the future without all Canadians. Creating a truly inclusive dialogue means all of us positioning ourselves as learners, rather than as masters downloading our knowledge to others.