



Both Sides Now

Jenny McGrath

I am listening to Joni Mitchell. I have always been a fan, but this week I watched in wonderment as she at 78 years young, made her return to the Newport Folk Festival. A full circle moment “on the carousel of time”. In 2015, an aneurism required a relearning of many things, so witnessing her play guitar and sing again, was soul filling.

I am turning 50 in October. After all, “the seasons they go’ round and round”. I find I am differently contemplative now. I am sure that my age is



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part of the reason, but the last few years in a lonely pandemic has also given me much space to ponder, to re-evaluate, and to imagine new possibilities for my life. Some days I have had to dig deep to find the positives, but I remind myself that “something’s lost but something’s gained in living every day”, so I continue.

I have been thinking about what gives me purpose and what brings me joy. I have a few things that are “constant like the northern star” in family, friends, nature, travel, books, and great music.

The other is child and youth care. I have been a child and youth care worker for over half my life, and it has brought me both purpose and joy.

What stood out the most in watching Joni Mitchell return to the stage, was how she was surrounded in love by other artists and musicians. They celebrated and honoured the ways they have gained inspiration and learned from her. They also acknowledged her lasting contributions to music. I think about the insightful lyrics that Mitchell wrote in her youth. Songs like “both sides now”, “big yellow taxi”, “and “the circle game” although poignant then, hold renewed meaning today.

I am writing today to show love and respect to those child and youth care workers that came before me. There are too many to mention here but know that I see you and I value you. I have been in relationship with many of you throughout my career. You have inspired me, challenged me, and encouraged me. You gave me hope and helped me see possibilities, in myself, and for the field of child and youth care.

“I don't know who I am
But you know, life is for learning”



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I honour those no longer with us. I continue to revisit your teachings.

“Oh, don't it always seem to go
You don't know what you got 'til it's gone”

I purposefully maintain relationships with many child and youth care workers of my generation, and the next. I seek their guidance, knowledge, and support. I am grateful to work alongside you and I look forward to our continued journey.

“There'll be new dreams,
Maybe better dreams and plenty”

I am fortunate now to teach those that will continue to move our field forward. I learn from you every day. You give me hope for our future. I know you also feel the passion and commitment that has carried many of us. I encourage you to learn about those who came before you. Read, listen, and visit. They too were change-makers. They still are.

“We can't return, we can only look
Behind, from where we came”

I often think child and youth care is like music. The lyrics, the instruments, the voices, the rhythms can all exist in isolation, but the collaborations create magic. We can blend our history with our present, and together we can move forward with hope and possibility.



“All I really want our love to do is to bring out the best in me and you too”

The next Canadian national child and youth care conference will occur this October in Canmore, Alberta. Conferences are where I revisit my purpose and commitment to this work. The people, being all of you, help reignite my passion. It is also the 50th anniversary for our hosts, the *Child and Youth Care Association of Alberta*. There is much to celebrate!

I hope to see you there so we can re-visit and continue to re-imagine the wonder of child and youth care.

“People will tell you where they’ve gone
They’ll tell you where to go,
but ‘til you get there yourself,
You’ll never really know”

Until then ...

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