

A Hero During Unprecedented Times - Marion Young Carson



When I arrived at the Marion Carson Elementary School in the afternoon of March 17th, 2020, the sky was awash with various shades of grey and the icy north wind was blowing the wind straight into my face. It was a Wednesday, but the school was extremely quiet, the parking lot was mostly empty, and all the classrooms were dark. Just a few days ago the Alberta Government had decided to close all public schools indefinitely due to the widespread deadly COVID-19 virus. I received an email from my teacher saying we can come back to pick up all our important belongings today.

I slowly walked into Marion's Meadow, it is a beautiful garden with many big trees, bushes and logs right outside our school building. I went to sit in my favorite spot surrounded by rocks, trees and bushes. I used to play here with my friends every day. We always talked about girls' secret stuff, our plans for the weekend, and our wonderful school. But now it is oddly quiet. I felt sad, sitting there playing with sticks and kicking my toes into the mud. Suddenly, I heard a soft voice coming from behind me, "What's wrong little girl?"

I turned around and saw a kind young lady looking down at me. She was wearing a beautiful long black dress and a white hat. She smiled at me waiting for my response. I hesitated for a moment, "Oh...hi, I just feel a little sad because schools are now closed, and I don't know when I can see my friends and teachers. To make it worse, I am in the Grade 4 Bilingual program, this is my last semester here at Marion Carson school and I will miss this school so much."

The young lady nodded and said, “That sounds sad. Yes, I agree it’s a very tough situation for everyone right now. We should feel lucky, we are merely inconvenienced due to the lockdown but at least we can stay home to study and work. We must keep in mind there are many people, including the front-line healthcare workers, grocery store workers, bus drivers who are risking their lives providing services to the public. During this difficult time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, let us find ways to help each other and the community.” She paused and looked at me, “What do you think?”

“That sounds right!” I nodded, “what should I do to support the community?”

She smiled, “that’s a very good question. There are so many ways to help the community during this unprecedented time. The situation today makes me recall the Great Depression back in the 1930’s. I had to spend lots of time helping underprivileged children by collecting milk money for Calgary’s less fortunate and formed a group to feed the unemployed. I found there were a shockingly high number of patients who suffered tuberculosis, I began actively volunteering and recruiting others in my work. Our efforts eventually led to the construction of Alberta’s first tuberculosis sanatorium in 1910, and for years after that, I led free tuberculosis clinics for school children.” She paused for a moment, “You see, No matter how big or how small, any support you can offer is positive and impactful during these challenging times. Start working today to help people around you, I am sure you will soon become a superhero for the local community! “

I was very impressed by her accomplishments, I was so curious and asked “What is your name? Do you work here at Marion Carson School?”

She was about to answer me, but I felt someone pushing me hard and saying, “Wake up! We need to go to school now to pick up your belongings.” I opened my eyes and noticed that I just had a nap while waiting for my mom to go to school together. What an interesting dream!

When we arrived at the school parking lot, everything looked the same as what I saw in my dream. I pushed open the big, blue heavy front door, walked down the quiet hallway with my mom. I suddenly noticed a portrait on the wall. There was a woman in the black and white picture, she had a black dress with a white hat and a warm smile. She looks exactly the one I just talked to in my dream and she is Marion Carson! I used to run at this hallway with my friends all the time, but I never really paid attention to the picture. There was a description under the picture. It said, “The school was named in honor of Mrs. Marion Young Carson, one of Calgary's former best-known and beloved citizens. Marion Carson devoted her time to bettering the lives of those around her and worked tirelessly to make Calgary a better place in which to live. Mrs. Marion Carson was born in Kent County, Ontario on May 9, 1861 as Marion Young Coutts. Her early years were spent in Manitoba and she came to Calgary in 1893 with her husband, William Carson. From her first days in Calgary, she was concerned about the number of people suffering from tuberculosis (TB) and it was through her hard work that the first TB Sanatorium in Alberta

was made possible in 1910. Mrs. M. Carson headed the Alberta Tuberculosis Society for eleven years and was made an Honorary member of the Canadian Tuberculosis Association in 1949. She was also instrumental in attaining health support for the area's indigenous peoples. Education received a great deal of her attention and she sat as a member of the Calgary School Board for four years from 1920-1924. She helped organize the Women's Literary Club in 1906, and when she was on the Calgary Library Board, she helped instigate the establishment of a central library. As chairman of the City Health Committee, she worked toward both constructing free clinics for school children and distributing milk to needy children. She was the first to form a group to feed the unemployed. Mrs. M. Carson received several awards including the King's Medal in 1938 and the "Citizen of the Year" award in 1946. Marion Y. Carson died in Calgary at the age of 89 on July 13, 1950..."

As soon as I got home, I started calling my friends on Google Hangouts and sharing the story of Marion Carson with them. I told everyone about my dream today and asked my friends to join me in supporting our local community during the lockdown. Everyone was so excited, and we came up with lots of great ideas. We decided to start from something very small - we will be doing more chores to earn \$1 per day from our parents, and we will donate all the earnings to the Calgary Food Bank.

I couldn't wait to start out. Marion Carson is a Canadian hero, she gave her whole life towards making a difference for others. What she had done to society during the Great Depression has inspired me and my friends. I will always remember what Marion Carson has told me in my dream, "There is a hero inside all of us, you just need to believe in yourself."

References

<http://school.cbe.ab.ca/school/marioncarson/about-us/school/pages/default.aspx>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJJQelC0vCc>

<https://poweredbybreathing.wordpress.com/2014/03/05/remembering-marion-carson/>