

# Our Sacred Heart Story with the Potawatomi People in Kansas, 1841-79

Mary Kay Hunyady, RSCJ, response to Session One, 2/16/22

I was impressed with Maureen last time, and as I told her, I was particularly impressed with her capacity to stop speaking when it's time to stop speaking especially with such a mind full of facts, reflections and hypotheses.

One little thing really strikes me in Maureen's book: it's the photo of where the nuns slept. Clearly, it's a suggestion of how cloister would shift with this group of rscj. It's also a testimony to their good knees and limber bodies—to be able to get up and down from those little mats on the wooden floor. As Maureen said last time: “the mission with the Potawatomi pushed the nuns to examine their cloister mentality and way of life,” which included how the two classes of religious were treated in the ministry. The coadjutrix sisters and choir nuns co-mingled in the ministry and were not so “classified”.

I loved and was touched by Jerilyn's manner. In Western psychology, anyway, it is believed that people cannot hear something until they are ready to take it in. Jerilyn's manner helped me to try to take in as deeply as possible what she was presenting—take it in so deeply that I felt it. For example, when she used the words “By the end of the exterminating wars...” those words haunt me, and I feel that reality in my heart.

Other things that Jerilyn talked about: the US government policy regarding Indians does go all the way back to the Doctrine of Discovery which Jerilyn touched on briefly: the Christian imprimatur on taking over Indian land and people due to the stated belief that if the white Europeans who “discovered” America found there people who were not Christian, they were not considered people, and they then did not deserve to have land. They should be brought under the banner of Christianity.

Jerilyn spoke of the off-reservation boarding schools that were designed to civilize and Christianize the Indians, to turn Indians into white Christian people. Jerilyn mentioned the lack of an attempt to understand and respect the Indians' spirituality and culture. That's what people who colonize do, right?

A few years ago, we had an international meeting in the Philippines on issues of Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation. There was a document promulgated from that meeting, and the document's title is: Being Artisans of Hope in our Blessed and Broken World. I love that title because it speaks of our world which is both blessed and broken, and it speaks to the charism in a particular way, calling us to be artisans of hope... hope, not despair. The only way I know how to hope is to act. So, I want to discern how I can act, what I can do, to decolonize my heart with Native American people.