



# We Didn't Start the Fire

by Dr. Marsha Boyd-Mitchell

**“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7, NIV).**

Billy Joel is a famous singer/songwriter, and he was at his height of popularity at the end of the 1980s. The story of “We Didn’t Start the Fire” goes like this: while recording in the studio in 1989, Billy Joel met a woman who would turn 20 in a few days. They got to talking and she told him the 1980s was absolutely the worst era in which to come of age. Billy Joel got thinking about that, and, having been born in 1949, he started recalling all the changes he had experienced between 1949 and 1989. The music legend wrote, “We Didn’t Start the Fire,” quickly, like a stream of consciousness; it’s a jumbled listing of people, happenings, and social phenomena of the 40-year span. If you are familiar with the song, some of it is nonsensical and some of it is deep. I guess that is indicative of life, in some ways.

However, those growing up during this pandemic have experienced an unusual volume of difficulties. In the March 16, 2020, issue of *Rolling Stones* magazine, David Browne did an article about a Twitter post that suggested the world needed new lyrics for “We Didn’t Start the Fire.” Many people wrote in, posting potential new words to the song. I wrote my own version describing what kids have been experiencing in the last couple of years.

### ***Kids in 2020–2022 be like:***

COVID-19, pandemic, vaccine, two shots, three shots never enough. Wuhai, laboratory, hazmat, rapid test, too much too digest PPE, 811, China is the smoking gun. Trudeau, Rideau Cottage/Hall, Trump administration, Biden calls Storm the capital, Jasmeet Singh, Annamie Paul won’t run again.

We didn’t start the fire  
It was always burning, since the world’s been turning  
We didn’t start the fire  
No, we didn’t light it, but we tried to fight it

Statues down all around, street names changed, no parades  
Residential Schools, finding graves,  
flags half mast, shadow cast, how long will this feeling last?  
Houses burnt, people hurt, Nova Scotia rampage, Canada’s disconcert  
George Floyd, BLM, when will things be right again?  
CEBA loan, on the CERB, economic downturn.  
Herd immunity, vaccine pass, conspiracy theory’s doubt is cast.

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Red, yellow, orange, green, new state of emergency  
Online school, cancel friends, will the virtual world ever end?  
Angry fists in the air, CUPE strikers everywhere,  
Stop school, the pensions sold, workers think the offer’s cold  
Fredericton? Ottawa? Circuit Break  
How much more can these kids take?

Trucker convey heads north, east, south and west  
Whose opinion is considered best?  
Justin Trudeau do you hear the people as they tremble with fear?  
No more mandates, no more masks, Everyone has COVID at last.  
Canadian young people forever changed,  
formed in real time from COVID’s pain.

There certainly is no mistaking that kids today are experiencing a higher level of anxiety than at any time in recent history. March 2020 hit us in a time when kids were already experiencing a high level of anxiety, fear, and despair. What is the answer to this pandemic problem? We want to realign and reimagine our future and reset our expectations in this time. We’ll get them there; there is light just around the next turn. We need to let the words of Philippians 4 lead the way.



*Dr. Marsha Boyd-Mitchell is the executive director of Christian Action Federation of NB Inc. and head of schools for Sussex Christian School Inc.*

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