

## **WHAT WE CHOOSE TO FORGET: A QUEBEC STORY OF UNSHARED MEMORIES**



We are writing to you about a seminal new book, ***What We Choose to Forget***, which investigates the contemporary history of Quebec. Author Guy Rex Rodgers is a respected community leader, media producer and filmmaker.

***“This is not a tale of unspeakable violence. There are no horrifying villains and, sadly, few inspiring heroes. It is a simple human story about fear, vulnerability and tribal defences. This is a story of loveable underdogs, all struggling to preserve their histories, languages and cultures. Their tragedy is what they have chosen to forget — about themselves and each other.”***

*What We Choose to Forget* builds on Guy Rodgers’ work connecting with communities across Quebec and telling the stories that conventional Quebec history has disregarded or misrepresented. For this project he visited 55 communities of English-speakers and allophones to collect oral histories. These stories make an important contribution to the fields of Quebec studies and Canadian studies.

*What We Choose to Forget* is available in three versions: print, pdf and epub. The two electronic versions contain hundreds of bonus hyperlinks to enhance the stories in the book. We would be happy to provide you with a review copy in the version of your choice.

Information about the book at the website [www.whatwechoose.ca](http://www.whatwechoose.ca)

This is the sequel to Rodgers other research and chronicling work. He directed the series ***Waves of Change*** televised on Videotron’s MA-tv that featured a cross-section of English-Speaking immigrants who navigated language tensions and built successful lives in Quebec. Then he made the acclaimed documentary ***What We Choose to Remember***. The film’s interviews covered waves of immigration from the Conquest to today. He toured the film for three years.

Dozens of communities around Quebec organized screenings of *What We Choose To Remember*, which was released at the same time as the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government passed Bill 96. The film looked back at a half-century of dramatic social and cultural changes and examined how non-francophones contributed to modern Quebec: a success story in the annals of majority-minority relations. And yet, The CAQ passed Bill 96 ostensibly to combat “*alarming failures*” in language policies and immigration.

These clashing visions strain social balance, shared history and purpose. *What We Choose To Forget* offers an unprecedented portrait of Quebec wrestling with some of the major issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A society with low birthrates requires immigrants to populate its workforce. What kind of immigrants are good? Under what conditions? How many years/generations does it take for immigrants to become full citizens in the host society?

### **Appreciation for *What We Choose to Forget***

“Guy Rex Rodgers has a remarkable ability to reveal the humanity that lies beneath Quebec’s complex history and politics. He demonstrated this with great sensitivity and finesse in his documentary film *What We Choose to Remember*. His new book, fittingly titled *What We Choose to Forget*, builds on that work with depth and insight. Ours is a complex society that resists simple explanations, yet Rodgers opens this world with clarity and grace, helping us better understand ourselves while offering the rest of the country a window into our lived reality.”

**Frank Baylis P. Eng.**

**Co-Executive Chairman / Baylis Medical Technologies Inc.**

**Former Member of Parliament, Dollard-des-Ormeaux**

“I like all these oral histories. There’s an intimacy and frankness to them. They’re like private confessions. We haven’t had very many well-structured conversations in the English-speaking community about political and sociological change like the ones featured in this documentary film and book project. This is valuable piece of sociological work. And *What We Choose to Forget*, the conclusion to the project, is a welcome addition to the published works relating to the place of English and the English-speaking community in Quebec.”

**David Johnston**

**Quebec and Nunavut regional representative of the federal Commissioner of Official Languages, 2014-22**

“Rodgers’ work updates the historical conversation first established by Ronald Rudin’s *The Forgotten Quebecers* and Clift and McLeod’s *The English Fact in Quebec*. The inclusion of allophone voices is especially pertinent given the changing demographics of the province. For future historians, *What We Choose To Forget* will doubtless become indispensable to a historical understanding of Anglo-Quebec in the first half of the 21st century.”

**Raymond Jess PhD**

**School of Irish Studies, Concordia University**