

IHSS Research Seminar Program 2023

[Gender and Women's History Research Centre](#)

Catholic one day, Catholic always: Jeanne Côté's dilemma

Professor Mélanie Méthot (University of Alberta)

Chair: Dr Jessica Lake

Wednesday 10 May, 1-2pm AEDT

To be held in room 460.3.01 and online via Teams

Abstract: Attracting the attention of newspapers around the world, the 1901 Delpit Case gained the status of cause célèbre. When Edward Delpit, husband of Jeanne Côté and father of their three young children, asked the Catholic Church for an annulment of his seven-year marriage to Jeanne, although the twenty-three-year-old wife did not want to live with him any longer, she contested his action. Jeanne was not ready to say that the marriage never existed. The social, legal, religious, and personal discourses surrounding the case reveal many of the tensions and debates within Quebec and Canadian society concerning religion, marriage, and the law, as well as the way power relations worked themselves out when a marriage came apart. Turning my lens specifically on Jeanne's discourse and actions, I showcase a very bright young woman who had to tread very carefully if she did not want to lose custody of her children.



888 RAPPORTS JUDICIAIRES DE QUÉBEC.
SUPERIOR COURT.
MONTREAL, 30 March, 1901.
Coram ARCHIBALD, J.

EDOUARD DELPIT v. DAME MARIE-BERTHE-
AURORE-JEANNE COTÉ.

Marriage—Validity of marriage between two persons alleged to be Roman Catholics, solemnized by a Protestant minister under license—Decree of ecclesiastical tribunal—Arts. 127, 128, 129, 156, C.C.

archive.org/details/lesrecueilsdeju17courgoog/page/838/mode/1up

Bio: Mélanie Méthot is a Professor of History at the University of Alberta, Canada. She researches social reform movements at the turn of the 20th century and most recently has focussed on legal history, particularly cases of bigamy in Australia and Canada. She received in 2020 a Social Science and Humanities Research Council grant for her research project "Marrying too Much: Bigamy in Australia". She has recently developed a [website](#) featuring bigamy stories and their relevance. Méthot is researching not only how the law, society, Christian churches understood marriage as an institution, but also what it meant for individuals who entered the bond of matrimony.