

RANDOM REFLECTIONS: Celebrating Canadian!

By Kathryn Wishlow

For many years, most of us have looked forward to July 1st as a welcomed holiday. You were always only able to have the exact day off, whatever day of the week it fell on, so it was not always a nice long weekend. For working folks, it was either a working day with extra pay, or time off. Being a needy young person without family obligations, I often volunteered to work, happily counting my time and a half, or double time pay with anticipation.

Yes, it changed my tax status and a larger portion of taxes were deducted. When I complained, my parents would say, "Just be grateful you live in Canada, as your free medical is worth more than gold!" Certainly a young, healthy teenager does not anticipate possible medical issues, does not have family health responsibilities and has no idea that other people in the world do not have the same benefits. That is a perspective that changes rapidly the older you get, especially when you have children of your own and aging parents.

This year more than ever, counting our blessings for living in Canada has really been highlighted. I found myself in discussions with friends and guests about what being "Canadian" really means to us. For

we are *much more* than the stereotypical descriptions of foreigners' impressions of us being all about great hockey, tasty poutine, huge moose, empty wildernesses and snow. That reminds me of the time I was in Florida and a young waitress asked me if I knew anyone who lived in an igloo, and could I please speak some Canadian? Her lack of knowledge about a place a couple of days drive away ... astonished me.

So, think about it! What does being Canadian mean to you? Our uniqueness and sovereignty needs to come to the forefront now to avoid being absorbed or swallowed by the country south of our border. From what I see and hear in the last few months, we seem to be gaining more awareness of the need to clearly be separate from them. Lack of interest or apathy, and ignoring threats from stronger countries is not advisable. The world is changing. Borders are becoming more defined after blurring for many years.

Therefore the need to define ourselves becomes quite important. Aren't we more than maple leaves, hiking trails, snow tires and beaver tails? Is our kindness towards

others and polite demeanour a negative personality trait to make fun of? Personally, I do *not* think so! This is a good time to adapt positive words to describe the "us" we truly want to be. Some of the best ones should become not only our daily vocabulary, but what we strive to represent. Strong but flexible, experienced with wisdom, and cautiously optimistic could be what we represent.

Again the words from our anthem are in my head, "... true north, strong and free!" Being proud of what we are, what we have, and what we can become is very important. We do have so much to be grateful for! I sincerely hope this Canada Day, you take a few precious moments aside from your busy life, to really think about "who and what" Canadians are ... and can be ... and celebrate!

(Kathryn Wishlow belongs to White Pine Writers Inc., a local group of like-minded authors who encourage and support all facets of writing and publishing literary efforts. Their next book, "Amethyst: Facts, Myths & Legends" will be available in July. Follow them on FaceBook or

www.whitepinewriters.ca)