



United Nations Association in Canada

A Sense of Belonging, July 1st, 2007

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“ Every Canadian woman, every Canadian man prizes that freedom...It has helped create the spirit of adventure that I love above all in this country, this country where each and every one of us is able to participate fully in the ongoing task of building it. ”

- The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean Governor General of Canada on the occasion of her installation in September 2005



Finding 'a sense of belonging' in Winnipeg this Canada Day

BY ELENA ANCIRO, WINNIPEG, MB

I am a Canadian; first generation, born and bred. I have a passport. I watch CBC. What does it mean to be a Canadian? I'm not sure. I'm still barely on the cusp of realizing what it means to be a Winnipegger.

A true suburban child, my world ended at Polo Park Shopping Centre. It wasn't until university that I met my first "North End" friend. My first "multicultural experience" only happened once I stepped on a bus and crossed that invisible boundary of my childhood community.

Like many other Winnipeg youth, I fell prey to the idea that "you can only be successful if you leave Winnipeg." So at 19, I left for Toronto, only to find the city cold and lonely, not at all the quick solution that I had hoped for. I came home dejected, depressed and feeling like a real failure.

In the coming years I started to realize that my success will not just be determined by the city I live in, but by ceasing the opportunity to genuinely understand and appreciate my home.

It was only when I had the courage to challenge the stereotypes, to explore other neighbourhoods, to meet new people, to go to that restaurant across the city on that street I'd never heard of – that was when I started to make the connections that I knew would lead to success.

On this Canada Day long weekend, I urge Winnipeggers to not only reflect on what it means to live in this country, but what it means to live in this great city of ours. Try something different, do something different, think of ways that we can get Winnipeggers from all parts of our city talking and connecting.

But most of all, be happy that this is where you live and be proud of being a Winnipegger.



Elena Anciro,
A Sense of Belonging
Regional Coordinator in Winnipeg

In the Heart of a Great Nation: Saskatoon Celebrates 140 Years of Canada

BY MAYA MEDJESI, SASKATOON, SK

Saskatoon is the heartbeat of Canada. We are big city dwellers with a small town mentality. We care for our next door neighbors as family yet we belong to a larger Canadian family. Our strong family roots and cultural diversity give us the support we need to succeed in whatever life endeavors we pursue.

This generous and kind-hearted mentality is also illuminated through our extensive volunteer hours and other charitable donations. We play a big role in the big Canadian picture as peacekeepers, policy makers and healthcare workers.

Today marks 140 years since Canada's federation. On this Canada Day, let us celebrate our diverse city and take pride in our reputation as Saskatoonians and the contributions that Saskatoon has made to this great country.



Maya Medjesi,
A Sense of Belonging
Regional Coordinator in Saskatoon

What does it mean to be Canadian?

BY ANA PERDOMO, YELLOWKNIFE, NWT

I have been asking myself this question for a long time. As immigrants we come to this country full of expectations. A full luggage of hopes, dreams and background that we believe we can apply at any time as soon if we have the chance.

After awhile we start to realize that things in Canada are not that easy. Without Canadian experience, it is extremely difficult to find meaningful employment. Doors are constantly closed, and many people get tired of waiting.

Canada is a welcome country, or it seems like that from the outside. People from all around the world apply every year with the desire to become Canadians, hoping that one day they make it here and their lives will be easier and happier.

In a way there is sort of a dilemma in becoming a Canadian. Newcomers have two options: adapt and adjust to this new culture and be happy, or suffer the rest of their lives knowing that they don't fit in a place like Canada. Unfortunately, there isn't a middle ground.

Being Canadian is understanding that Canada is not a paradise or the perfect country, it's just Canada. A place where you have to work just as hard as you did in your own country, a place that if you don't speak one of the official languages you are not going to succeed, a place where it takes a lot of time and effort to make friends.

Being Canadian means to feel emotion when you sing or hear *Oh Canada* and can't believe you are here. After all your struggles in life, you are now a Canadian Citizen.

Being Canadian means to understand jokes and have a good laugh, especially when they are related to the Government and its rules.

Being Canadian means to go home once your day is finished, watch *The National* and realize even when you miss so much of your own country, your culture and heritage, you are here, in Canada.

This is the maple leaf country, where most people still believe in human rights and how we can help the planet from the global warming. Where most people still believe that their system works and the freedom we have is a precious treasure rare in the rest of the world.

To be Canadian means to be friendly, shy, respectful, honest, a freedom and justice lover, a dreamer and a naturist. It is someone who looks beyond the all the crisis around the globe and still is tries to do his/her part to save this world. A Canadian is a volunteer, a peace maker and an eternal believer.



Ana Perdomo (left) is a *A Sense of Belonging (SB)* Regional Coordinator and lives in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Ana is originally from Uruguay and has lived in Canada for 10 years. She is extremely active in her community and well-known for her fun and interactive youth workshops and activities.

She believes much more should be done to welcome immigrants to the north. Ana is currently director of the city's New Canadian and Multicultural Program with SB partner organization, the *Centre for Northern Families*.

“Being Canadian means to feel emotion when you sing or hear *Oh Canada* and can't believe you are here. After all your struggles in life, you are now a Canadian Citizen.”

– Ana Perdomo
What does it mean to be Canadian?



The “Pleasant Canadian”

BY KEVIN COLE & KIM RATHWELL-AUSTIN, KAMLOOPS, BC

Internationally, Canadians are viewed as polite, peacekeepers, and living side-by-side in a multicultural society that seems to work. For the most part, we are thought to be slightly left of centre, a passive bunch, proudly stitching the maple leaf to our backpacks as we travel around the globe.

From the inside, we see ourselves as supporters of justice, promoting what is right and setting a moral compass for other developed nations. We are the perfect dinner companions. While recognizing these positive aspects of being Canadian, it is important to recognize the downfalls that also come with this title.

Being Canadian also means to acknowledge our government’s laws and policies that we may or may not agree with, and move to change what is unjust and un-Canadian. For example the highly controversial, Indian Act, that dictates the lives of over a million Aboriginal people today.

Being Canadian means more than just the stereotype of the “good” person. It means that sometimes we may have to review our personal beliefs about people and how we treat them.

The good news is that we always have a choice. We can continue to embrace the label

of the “pleasant Canadian,” a stereotype that, at times we know may not be all that correct. Or we move beyond this to embrace the true essence of what it means to be a Canadian and work together to create an inclusive society that values differences as much as it embraces the strengths that each of us bring to this country.

Something to think about this Canada Day, Kamloops.



Kevin Cole, *A Sense of Belonging* Regional Coordinator in Kamloops (second from left).

Did you know?

Since 2001, Canada has welcomed an average of 240,000 newcomers each year - helping to increase the national growth rate.

According to population projections, net immigration may become the only source of population growth by about 2030.

- Statistics Canada, 2006 Census



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UNA-Canada is a national charitable organization celebrating its landmark 61st anniversary. As a ‘think and do’ organization, UNA-Canada supports a network of 17 volunteer branches and local contacts, with a National office in Ottawa and a Western professional office in Vancouver. Our mandate is to engage Canadians in the work of the UN and the critical global issues that affect us all, through innovative projects, policy research, and on-going communications with Canadians.

JOIN US NOW! Become part of our family of like-minded and committed Canadians working for a better UN and a better world.

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