

## Reality check

By Sarah Sobanski

Week one in the community was amazing. I am constantly taken aback by how friendly and kind people can be ? I feel welcomed into the community, and for that I thank you.

That being said, I am aware that my gender, and my cultural heritage deem me mostly acceptable in Canadian society.

I am a woman, so society has raised my peers to assume that I am approachable. I am also white, so there isn't a whole lot of assumption happening about my motives for being in a certain place at a certain time for a certain reason ? or maybe that is my privilege speaking for itself without my meaning it to.

I touched briefly on tolerance in my last editorial, but something happened this week that has made me think that I must bring it up in earnest.

Harvest the North had a delicious barbecue last Friday. There were watermelons, salads and burgers ? but there were also options for those of us who can survive without meat, and do so as an active choice. There were children of all ages hanging around, stuffing their faces with abandon, and there were elders of the community doing the same. An indigenous welcoming was sung and a message of acceptance and harmony was expressed to everyone who assembled. The gardens placed around the community were open to anyone in the community who might need a little extra help to put food on the table.

Before Bancroft Councillor Bill Kilpatrick even made his address to those assembled, already four off-sect groups had been specially considered. And centred before the four raised soil beds? A tree wrapped with the rainbow flag.

Kilpatrick spoke to how the flag stands for LGBT pride, but how it also stands for the pride and coming together of all diversity ? cultural, religious, political, and natural.

From my quiet understanding so far, Harvest the North has been taken on by members of all sorts across the community, to grow the community. This was quite literally the first event I attended in Bancroft. I was stunned by the beauty and acceptance shown there. So imagine my surprise when I returned to my office to find an anonymous, ill-informed letter condemning a cultural heritage and religion, and its entire people, for the tragic actions of a select few. I won't say which groups were named, because that's not the conversation we're having.

I went to a rare and positive event. If I was always surrounded by such positivity, and am never confronted because of who I was born as, I could easily imagine that that's what the world is like. Then this letter reminded me of reality.

Take a look at the world. Donald Trump has a real chance at presidency in one of the most powerful countries in the world.

Westboro Baptist Church protested Orlando shooting victims funerals. Refugees were denied asylum by a handful of European countries, and by the Harper government.

The fear and hate that festers in these ideas and actions doesn't seem very close to home. Really, they seem outlandish to me ? far, far away. That's something everyone can be accused of taking for granted every now and again. If it doesn't affect you directly, or right away, why take a stand? Why not sit and watch from afar?

I am not an advocate of any particular group or party by any means. I don't write that to avoid association with something that might cause confrontation. I write it because I have never contributed in a tangible way to an oppressed group. I believe in feminism, but I've never picketed, or lobbied, or strutted topless in a SlutWalk.

It astounds me that people can take the actions of a select few, and make them a reflection on the whole. It also astounds me that people can take thousands of years of history and debate on a subject, and turn it into a single-sentence argument. This people is bad, because they believe in this, and the bottom line of that is this which equals bad.

Confrontation because of my beliefs, or because of the nature of who I am, isn't seeking me out. If you're like me, and that's the same for you, please take a moment to imagine that were different.

If that thought process doesn't stop you from acting against someone, look at how this article could have been about an amazing group in the community and all the good it is doing, but was spoiled by having to have the argument for tolerance yet again.

Say you have a child. She is too young to speak. You put her in a playpen with four other children who are all the same age. Not one of the children in the pen have the same race, culture and sexual identity as your child, nor do they have that in common with any of the other children.

Do they still play together? Tolerance shouldn't be an argument. I commend those of you who make Bancroft bright, like the members of Harvest the North.