

Another year over

By Sarah Sobanski

Sunday morning, as I waited for the coffee to brew and the Advil to kick in, I looked back and I couldn't believe the year I'd had. Coming down the pike of 2016 there were a lot of questions. There were a lot of what ifs and whens and hows. Then I blinked. Now it's 2017.

I was working a part-time/no-time freelance gig with no prospects for the future, no plan. I was thankful for an extended vacation, but it was still scary. I had a degree in my back pocket and no idea how to use it ? not to mention the ?they? who said finding a job in your field, my field, a cornfield would never happen. Unless it did 10 years from now.

While eating dinner with my parents and grandparents for my birthday, I was staring at an email on my phone asking me to come to Bonnyville, Alta., to be a reporter. It was a joke at the dinner table. Me? Out west again? No.

Yes, actually.

I met some really cool people six hours north of Calgary and another three hours north of Edmonton. Seriously, very north, practically the North Pole.

It was the first time I worked as an equal in media. I wasn't Sally the Intern as I had been so many times over the past four years. I was a colleague, a peer ? and my peers became friends.

I had my first shot at a council beat. I did live updates and coverage for the Fort McMurray fires. I saw a rocket fire from the back of a pickup truck. I learned about industry and energy and brushed the surface of Canadian Forces coverage.

Three months later I took a phone call interview just off that base in Cold Lake. It was the second time I had thought, *Them, hire me? No way, but let's apply anyways.*

A week later I was packing up the contents of my apartment. I had a cleaning out my fridge party and said goodbye to the people who had taken care of me so far away from home. I left and drove a total of 45 hours to get home.

By Canada Day, I was living in Bancroft. Lots of people laughed; ?they? said you don't move into Bancroft you move out of Bancroft. ?They? were wrong.

I was having this conversation over tea in an interview last year ? in December. I've lived in small towns most of my life, but I've never been to one quite like Bancroft. Most small towns you can get out to the city and shop, run errands, entertain yourself. Worse, you have to go to the city to get services for those in need. My hometown doesn't have a food bank, or a thrift shop.

Bancroft is well equipped as an independent haven. From its beauty, to its resources, to its hardworking volunteers there isn't much more you could need that you couldn't find in town ?except lower hydro rates, maybe. I haven't lived here long enough to know if that's because of the industry that used to exist, or because Bancroft is that little town that could. I suspect it's the latter, but even with industry gone, Bancroft keeps fighting.

Six months here have flown away. I'm lucky enough to say it's become home. I've begun developing a family up here between the cliffs and the snow banks taller than me ? thanks for the warning. I've found amazing people both at work and at home. Some of them inspire me, some of them support me, and there are some whose company simply makes time fly in a better way.

If I met me a year ago I wouldn't know me. If I had told me not to worry about 2016, I would've told me yeah right. (Don't blink, you'll miss it.)

Maybe I don't say it enough, but I'm lucky for the people who have touched my life. Thank you for your impact, however big or small, from being a reader to being an interview subject to starting a community program we've covered to reaching out to being a friend. We made it to 2017.

If you're looking down the pipe of ?17 like I was in ?16, take a breath. Instead of asking yourself, ?What the hell am I going to do now?? try, ?What can I do or what will I do??

Happy New Year from everyone here at the *Bancroft This Week*.