

Cold shmold

By Sarah Sobanski

Canadians have an undeniable affection for winter.

Snowball fight? No gloves? Who needs 'em?

Sound familiar? That's because there's just something about the wet and the cold that suppresses our instinct for self-preservation.

Take the last Skate Maynooth, for example. *Bancroft This Week's* Nate Smelle reported 'some 20 brave souls' made it to Maynooth's outdoor rink Jan. 5 ' during an extreme cold weather warning. It was -41 degrees with the wind chill.

To put that in perspective, the Canada 150 rink in Ottawa moved hockey games indoors over the holidays when temperatures dropped below -18 degrees.

Is it our lack of ability to feel the cold that makes us ignore it, or the fact that skating on an outdoor rink, or any winter sport really, is very much a rite of passage for most Canadians?

I spent the first decade or so of my life in a family-starter bungalow in Oshawa. That was back when a flat rectangle of a backyard seemed expansive. For a few years running, my dad would pull on his rubber boots, warm up the hose and ' step-by-literal-side-step ' pat down and water the snow in the backyard until it transformed into an ice pad. It wouldn't be long before kids on the block would find out.

Some days older boys ' who my dad said I was too young to play with and hence made me a smaller, separate rink to practice my slap shots on ' would come and scrimmage. On better days ' in my opinion ' my uncle and cousins would come over for what seemed like a gold medal game, every time. A legendary rivalry between my dad and his brother, and my cousin, Daryl, and I ' the only other next-generation hockey player at the time ' would ensue, complete with 'and the crowd goes wild? sound effects. One day we played long into the night ' Dad had to hang floodlights so we could keep playing. If memory serves, it was freezing outside and eventually Mom had to threaten the men with the paplepel (wooden spoon) to get us inside ' so we didn't turn into Popsicles.

Inside, my uncle untied and removed Daryl's skates. The warmth from in the stairwell hit his toes and he immediately started crying ' hard enough that it's ingrained in my memory. His feet had turned white and waxy.

My uncle picked him up and followed my mother to the bathroom where she turned on the bath. Putting his feet in the warm water however, wasn't the best idea.

Daryl wailed louder. I remember touching the water afterwards and not understanding why. It was lukewarm at hottest, but to my cousin it must have felt scalding.

My uncle then held Daryl's toes in the palms of his hand. Later, he'd be wrapped in blankets with a warm towel over his toes.

In the end, my cousin kept his feet. He went on to be a goalie and I became a defenceman ' so we had to find other things to have a rivalry over. He's the eldest boy in the family, I'm the eldest girl ' it's a long history.

I spoke with **John Cannan from Hastings Prince Edward Public Health** this week about the warning signs of frostbite. I now know that Daryl was suffering from early frostbite. That's a real risk in these temperatures.

Get out there and be initiated as a Canadian, just please, stay warm. The cold won't ignore you.