

Happy for freedom in Canada

By Sarah Sobanski

Do you remember your first Canada Day celebration?

My earliest memory is sitting in the back of the car fighting traffic as night falls.

My parents are in the front seat debating the best plan of attack for a parking spot. 'There's one, there's one!' my mother shouts.

My dad proceeds to treat the asphalt like a go kart rally track.

The next flashback is of red and white exploding across the sky. I reach up from my father's shoulders and try to catch the falling sparks. That might just be a Canada Day commercial I've imprinted into my mind to fill the blanks in years I can't quite remember ? was I ever small enough to sit on my father's shoulders?

Regardless, when I think of Canada Day, I think of the great mass of people that collect to celebrate our country. My mind is a continuous video compilation of bright eyes wowing after fireworks, parks filled to capacity, two-coloured flags, maple leaves, beavers, rushing water and after that it all just blends together.

We are a people who love our country and we love to show it.

Now, why do *I* love *this* country ? what does Canada mean to me?

Freedom is the word that keeps circling. It correlates with a memory of running full tilt at a cliff edge to plunge into a hungry lake below. Thinking of beautiful Canadian landscapes draws my mind to an anecdote of telling my father we had to buy the house on the hill. The feeling of spreading your arms wide at its peak so the wind can push you back was the embodiment of freedom itself. I could climb the massive hill and find inspiration for my writing.

Suddenly, writing is what draws the idea of freedom to a needlepoint. It hits close to home.

I attended an event earlier this month where a wonderful reader introduced herself. She told me she appreciated my editorials. She said she was impressed by my sense of humanity.

I write this because it had me thinking that I never saw it that way. I've written editorials that have teetered on the edge of offending a portion of the population under the banner of humanitarian. I can do that because I have the right to. Not only as a journalist, but as a Canadian.

I have the freedom to write ? in poems, in fantasy adventures, and most importantly, to record events and hold people accountable for their actions as a journalist. That's sublime.

Think about how incredible this is for a moment. We invest in members of our society to investigate our democratic practices.

Many countries have governments that disallow such practices, openly or otherwise.

Because I live in Canada, I have a job.

I can ask questions and expect answers. If I don't get them, I can refer to Canadian legislation that dictates freedom of information.

Without writing in all caps to drive the point home, it's near unfathomable that we have laws about telling the truth.

Now, I know what you're thinking: laws and the media don't stop misinformation, lies, government scandals and the many other things that are wrong with Canada. I'll be the first to write that Canada has a lot to answer for and a lot of work to do.

This Canada Day however, I'll be celebrating the freedom I've taken advantage of since I was old enough to hold a pencil ? the freedom to write, to ask questions, to share my views and opinions.

I've absolutely taken my freedom for granted. Have you?