

BROCK'S BANTER: A Canada Day Resolution

By Brock Weir

Some people start a new day by getting out of bed, throwing open the curtains and looking out with a smile, excited at all the possibilities that lay ahead over the next 24 hours.

Unfortunately, I am not one of those people. Or, rather, I'm about two-thirds of the way there.

Like most people, I do start the day by getting out of bed. So far so good. Yes, I do stagger over to my curtained window and pull it back just a little bit to see what lies ahead. And yet?the deep breath heralding the excitement of all the possibilities ahead is usually replaced by a big, dramatic sigh every time I look out because directly in my sightlines, for the better part of two years, is an otherwise lovely redbrick house emblazoned with a rather hackneyed lifestyle slogan scrawled in sidewalk chalk.

Okay, I'll admit it, whenever I see a sign with this particular phrase in question, particularly in the context of home décor, I wince.

You can dress it up in all sorts of fancy fonts, jazz it up with some funky colours but, at the end of the day, there is only so much you can do because, when you get right down to it, although the words themselves sound nice together, they really say nothing at all.

Okay, I might be ranting here, but I promise I have a point.

Canada Day was no different. As I looked out the window, despite the lovely weather, I saw the slogan and felt my body do another involuntary wince, but a wince that was slightly less heaving than usual. Aha! Mother Nature had finally checked her DMs and gotten to work.

For the last couple of years, I have marvelled at the durability of sidewalk chalk. Evidently, the quality has markedly improved since I last had a stick of it in my hand, because no degree of rain, snow, hail or wind had done anything to dull the blow these words have to my senses ? but now there was a letter missing. Yes, just one letter, but I'll still count it as a win.

I joke, of course. Yes, the phrase is more or less still in place, it only riles me up as far as an eyeroll, but I've nevertheless set myself a Canada Day resolution for the

very first time: get the hell over it.

This neighbourly

spirit was inspired in no small part by the tone set by Governor General Julie Payette in her traditional message to Canadians on the 152nd anniversary of Confederation.

Using the backdrop of

a canoe and kayak club on the banks of Ottawa's Rideau River, she used the flowing water as an illustration of the ties that bind this country together, specifically referencing the National Film Board of Canada's 1966 picture *Paddle to the Sea*.

?It tells the tale of

an Indigenous boy who carved a man in a wooden canoe and set it out on a journey into the sea,? the Queen's representative explained. ?We follow the canoe as it makes its way from Lake Superior to the great Atlantic Ocean, an odyssey that shows how we, the people of Canada, are connected by our stunning geography and our love of the land. More than half-a-century later, the story of *Paddle to the Sea's* adventures still resonates because we are indeed all connected. We share values, cultures, interests, and we are so fortunate to be tied together by such a diverse, beautiful, bountiful country. And there is no shortage of opportunities in Canada, in the towns and cities, in the countryside, everywhere; opportunities to explore, to discover and to learn ? learn about ourselves and learn from each other.

?I don't know where

you will be in Canada as we celebrate the country's 152nd birthday. I hope you will be somewhere unique and special to you. Perhaps you will be by a campfire in one of our great parks, or walking the trails on the west coast or the east coast, watching a game or the fireworks in Toronto, sitting with a friend at a café in Montreal or Saskatoon, or enjoying one of the countless lakes and rivers that knit our country together. I just hope you are out and about regardless of what Mother Nature sends our way? Whether you were born here or chose to come and live here, wherever you happen to be, Canada Day is your celebration. It is about coming together in our communities, with friends, neighbours and family to celebrate this life that we share, to celebrate who we are, rain or shine.?

So, how did you

celebrate? If you were like me, you were able to find a balance between some of the many Canada Day activities that the Town and other local groups and clubs had to offer and a bit of quieter personal time; but how many of you decided to knock on your neighbour's door, invite them to share in the celebration and, by the time fireworks lit up the night sky, learn from the lives and stories of the individuals around you?

Everyone has a

different idea of what it means to be Canadian. If you ask that question of someone who was born here and contrast it with someone who made the conscious choice to emigrate to Canada from a country with a generally similar way of life, such as the United States or Australia, chances are you will get very

different answers.

If you did the same with newcomer Canadians, whether they came to this country simply to provide more opportunities for their children or fleeing violence and persecution in their homeland seeking refuge in our fair dominion, chances are it will offer an invaluable and contrasting education.

So, my personal Canada Day resolution is to make the effort to get to know my own neighbourhood better, something I realise might be taken for granted, to find out what makes my fellow residents tick and what being Canadian means to them ? even if I have to avert my eyes from particular slogans on my way to the doorbell ? and see how my perspectives change by the time Canada's 153rd birthday rolls around.

How did you celebrate the day?