

## Canada Day

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In June 1991 we returned from seven years in a foreign country, with two barely school-age children in tow. We moved from a tropical island in the Caribbean to Quebec, where Jim could continue his English-teaching business. Even in June we froze, holding our hands over the stove since it was officially summer in Canada and the heat in the building was turned off. The transition was far from easy, physically and mentally.

In another sense, though, it was good to be back home, although neither of us is from Québec. The food, the orderliness, the decency, the politeness, the sense of practicality and hospitality were welcome after the years abroad. Every province may celebrate its differences, but it was the similarities that struck us.

We were intensely grateful for another reason as well – egalitarian attitudes supported by law and by culture. My husband was born with arthrogryposis, a rare condition affecting the growth of tendons and ligaments in his limbs. Although non-degenerative, it required that he learn to walk 4 different times during what would be a total of 36 operations before the age of 13. His four older siblings roughhoused with him and his parents challenged him constantly; there was never time or room for self-pity, only new ways to figure out how to cope and be happy.

Living in another country had been his first experience with a culture that didn't accept him as equal, competent and capable of full participation. Total strangers would argue with him, saying of course he couldn't work. He'd explain to them that he did work and, more or less humorously, he'd possibly add that they may be the ones who had something wrong with them.

In Quebec, he applied for jobs, and got an interview as a technical writer at a fiber-optics firm. He scored so high on the test given to him by the receptionist that they called and hired him over the phone. When he went in, they were obviously taken aback. There were a few moments of awkward silence. They got over it.

Eventually Jim earned a six figure salary in the IT sector, and no one questioned his abilities. It was no doubt his attitude that got him there, in large part, but another part was the good fortune to have been born in these times and in this country.

We're believers in the future of Canada for many reasons that have to do with our rights and freedoms, but also because of our personal beliefs. At the age of 20 we joined the Bahá'í Faith, a religion not much older than Canada. As curious as it may seem that religious writings would have anything to say specifically about a country, there's a Bahá'í prophecy on record concerning Canada.

It was first uttered in 1912, in Quebec, when the son of the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Abdu'l-Bahá, by then a venerable older man, visited Montreal. He said, "*The future of the Dominion of Canada... is very great, and the events connected with it infinitely glorious.*" Later, he added, "*Again I repeat that the future of Canada, whether from a material or a spiritual standpoint, is very great. Day by day, civilization and freedom shall increase.*"

Any true Canadian would modestly say that we have lots of work still to do, but if you can gain enough altitude to look at the progress made over the past 150 years and extend that arc into the future, those words ring true.

Sheila Flood practices the [Bahá'í Faith](#), is active in interfaith work, and hosts a monthly potluck discussion on spiritual matters.