

CANADIANS DISCOVER POINT OF UNITY: ANTHEMAL DYSFUNCTION

“...our anthem sparkles with Canadian-brand values.”

Elvis is called the king of rock and Michael Jackson, king of pop. But king of the half-song is none other than yours truly.

Yes, I'm notorious for knowing the first few lines of a hit and forgetting the rest of the song. Examples abound.

Sometimes I find myself humming the '60's classic, “It was an itsy bitsy, teenie weenie yellow polka dot bikini that she wore” -- and that's it. The song ends abruptly in my mind. Who is this person? Why the odd choice of colours and where exactly did she wear it? Given its scantiness, I hope she was confined to her house, but it's all a mystery to me.

Or what about “Born to be Wild,” or Rihanna's “Under my Umbrella.” More than titles, they're the entire song for me. Like a well-worn record, the lines repeat themselves over and over. Maybe I have a scratched inner cranium.

Unfortunately, I am representative of a society that frequently suffers from lyrical memory loss, even with our national anthem. Countless Canadians stumble through the lyrics, repeating lines then humming the melody.

Yes, we citizens of the Great White North have finally discovered a point of national unity -- I call it anthemal dysfunction.

It's a shame, because our anthem sparkles with Canadian-brand values; there are no “bombs bursting in air” or perplexing questions like, “Jose, can you see?” We lean toward “true patriot love” and the celebration of folks from “far and wide” pursuing unity despite diversity.

I'm proud to call Canada my “home and native land.” Though world travel is part of my life-journey, my favourite part of a trip is touching down on the tarmac in the “true North strong and free.” A sigh of relief escapes my lips as I step onto home territory teeming with hockey, minority government, RCMP and maple fudge. I couldn't be happier; it's where I belong, eh.

When my baritone voice belts forth at a hockey game “from far and wide, oh Canada, we stand on guard for thee” -- I really mean it. As I consider this vast natural expanse festooned with peaks and prairies, waves and wildlife, I understand why our anthem describes “glowing hearts.” Mine sizzles with gratitude for the honour of dwelling in this country-extraordinaire that looms so large it links the oceanic giants, Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic. It's a treasure of astounding proportion.

Robert Weir, author of “Oh Canada,” punctuated the song with a mid-stanza prayer, “God keep our land glorious and free.” Weir believed national glory and freedom to be more than a political product; they were evidence of Divine involvement. Our role is to realize the source of such daily blessings and send heart-felt gratitude heavenward. Anything less seems cold and callous.

This Canada Day may our nation ring with the resounding thunder of 34 million voices blending in exuberant expressions of our great anthem. And if you need to hum occasionally, take heart -- a half-sung song is better than no song at all.