

Winner

Hunter lafrate

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Canadian Citizenship

I had never given much thought to the question, "What does being a Canadian citizen mean to you?" until it was asked. The truth is, I am exceptionally delighted and thankful to have been born a citizen of a country that places an emphasis on freedom and diversity. However, I believe the people who best understand what it means to be a Canadian citizen are the people who had to work in order to become one.

A close family friend of mine recently obtained Canadian citizenship, and it put things into perspective for me. This individual is a world traveller, who has seen all seven continents and has more pins on a map than anybody I know. However, she selected Canada to be her final place of residence. In a recent conversation, I asked her why she chose Canada of all the places she had been, to not only live in, but become a citizen of. Her response, *"Leaving one's country of birth is truly a life-changing move. Your nationality is so much a part of the very fabric of who you are as a person, that it's difficult to imagine suddenly being Canadian. It's not something you take lightly. So my decision to move to Canada was a very conscious one. I wanted to live in a country that reflected my values and ideas. Values like freedom of speech, equality and acceptance for people from all walks of life. I liked Canada's policy of peacekeeping and diplomacy as a way to overcome disputes with other countries. I loved the kind, caring nature of Canadians, their tolerance for people who are different and their sound environmental policies. Canadians have proven to be honest, peaceful, kind and wonderful. I have never regretted my decision to immigrate. While this wasn't part of my initial decision, living here has also afforded me other, unexpected joys like free healthcare, beautiful national parks that are accessible and affordable, a wealth of museums and a healthy support of the arts."*

After hearing the empowering story of my family friend going through for her Canadian citizenship, and the many other people each year who also go through the process to become Canadians; it makes me appreciate my citizenship even more. Being a Canadian citizen to me represents freedom, diversity and acceptance.