



Our Heritage

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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Even though there are a variety of names in Canada for the first Monday of August, most areas of the country observe it as a public holiday. In Alberta we call it "Heritage Day".

There are different ways that people celebrate as well as different ideas about what heritage even means. I like to think of heritage as the investments or gains that we have received because of our past including the following:

1. Roots - Today I went for blood work and referred to Saskatchewan as "the old country". The lab tech, who is an immigrant, was surprised and stated that he thought Ontario and Quebec would be "the old country:". I explained by saying that I was born and raised in Saskatchewan so, for me, those were my roots and, despite my two-decade residency in Alberta, Saskatchewan is the place that I still refer to as home.
2. Values - I learned from my prairie rural start about the importance of family, hard work and honesty. Sociological theorist Emile Durkheim proposed the idea that communities enjoy harmony when they have shared values. As countries and societies evolve, the laws that are legislated usually reflect values of the population. Even our leaders hold their positions because of the monarchist, democratic or tyranny structure that we allow.
3. Skills - Have you ever noticed that some families have multiple generations in the same profession? One family might have a number of carpenters who learned this trade from their elders. Another may sport dentists or business owners, or gas and oil experts. We also tend to learn how to cook, sew, or develop hobbies when stimulated by other family members.
4. Characteristics - I was always surprised when I worked in schools as a child psychologist to meet parents for the first time. I would instantly notice how the smile, walk, or tone of voice was similar to that of the children. We not only inherit DNA but also learn from watching those who raise us. Even emotions can be learned. A mother who is afraid of insects, for example, shouldn't be surprised when her children are afraid of insects!
5. Health - History reveals tales of situations that affected a community's health, death rate and living conditions. We read of plagues, wars and environmental issues that alter populations in significant ways.
6. Traditions - As children we unwrapped Christmas gifts on the evening of December 24th and claimed that this was because of our Scandinavian grandmother. The way that we celebrate occasions or create and save heirlooms can be related to our ethnicity or the preferences of our ancestors who pass them down to us.
7. Relationships - I recently meet with twenty-seven co-students who had graduated from high school in 1969. We laughed, shared memories and had fun despite that fact that most of us hadn't seen each other for several decades. It was only a matter of minutes until we had "caught up" on the basic changes over the years until felt like time had not passed and we were good friends once again
8. Spiritual influence - No matter where you go, there are churches. Mind you, some of them are a lot emptier than in the past, but they are symbolic of the importance of faith to our ancestors. The lyrics of a well-known hymn tells the story: "Strength for

today and bright hope for tomorrow". Belief in a power greater than ourselves is an age-old practice that gave and can give comfort.

Heritage Day is not only a time to celebrate; it is also a time to reflect on the idea that our descendants will one day be thinking about us and what we have done.

What are you contributing to the world today that will be recognized by the generations to come?