

Regal steps in the right direction

by BROCK WEIR

There are many dates indelibly stamped in our collective consciousness.

It's drilled into us from a very early age what modern country was formally founded on July 1, 1867. We know the pivotal moments of world history that happened on, to pick just three examples, November 22, 1963, September 11, 2001, and January 6, 2021.

Other dates, slightly less pivotal, but still very important, like August 31, 1997, are also on the radars of many members of the public when poignant anniversaries arrive, and are either celebrated or commemorated accordingly by those who hold the dates, and the events that happened on them, close to their hearts ? for good or bad.

For me, one such day is September 8, 2022.

As someone with a long-standing appreciation for the work of Elizabeth II and what she represented, as the late monarch came closer to the end of her story, I often imagined how that last page would be written, how the news would be announced, and how the next chapter would begin.

Somehow when you consider a public figure of her stature, one that was so familiar to just about every person on this planet of every single living generation, my imagination produced results that were far more grandiose than the reality.

Never once did I imagine I'd get the news of the death of a monarch of 70 years, and the accession of a new monarch who had spent just as long learning at her feet, while sitting in a local convenience store enjoying a Dole Whip with a municipal council candidate discussing her vision for local long-term care.

Thankfully, for the purposes of that interview and my own piece of mind, we knew that something was coming after Buckingham Palace announced the monarch was placed under medical supervision. It was not a complete surprise, both candidate and editor were regularly checking their phones throughout, and when the bulletin finally came, there was a sense that we both exhaled ? both for what was, what was now, and what was still to come.

The ?now? and ?still to come? collided just a few days later when the King addressed the Commonwealth with very poignant words.

?Queen Elizabeth's was a life well lived; a promise with destiny kept and she is mourned most deeply in her passing,? said Charles III. ?The promise of lifelong service I renew to you all today. Alongside the personal grief that all my family are feeling, we also share with so many of you in the United Kingdom, in all the countries where the Queen was Head of State, in the Commonwealth, and across the world, a deep sense of gratitude for the more than 70 years in which my mother, as Queen, served the people so many times. In 1947, on her 21st birthday, she pledged in a broadcast from Cape Town to the Commonwealth to devote her life, whether it be short or long, to the service of her peoples. That was more than a promise: it was a profound personal commitment which defined her whole life.

?As the Queen herself did with such unswerving devotion, I too now solemnly pledge myself, throughout the remaining time God grants me, to uphold the Constitutional principles at the heart of our nation. And wherever you may live in the United Kingdom, or in the Realms and territories across the world, and whatever may be your background or beliefs, I shall endeavour to serve you with loyalty, respect and love, as I have throughout my life.?

This Friday will mark the one-year anniversary of the accession of our new monarch, one who hit the ground running, new in all but name ? his lifetime apprenticeship giving him the tools to pick up from exactly where Elizabeth II left off.

Over the last twelve months, we have seen many examples of this loyalty, respect and love demonstrated in his reign throughout the Commonwealth.

From steps in the right direction when it comes to the journey to Truth & Reconciliation, to the floods and wildfires that have and continue to ravage this country, it's been clear from multiple actions and statements that the now not-so-new King and Queen of Canada have been with us every step of the way.

?My wife and I were desperately concerned to learn about the recent states of emergency declared in the Northwest Territories and British Columbia due to wildfires,? the King wrote last month. ?We know that this Summer has been an incredibly difficult one for Canadians everywhere. Severe flooding, devastating fires and deteriorating air quality due to smoke have impacted the country from coast to coast to coast.

?My wife and I send our deepest condolences to all those who have lost loved ones and we continue to pray for all those who have been displaced, who have lost their homes, businesses or property in such dire circumstances. Our admiration is unbounded for their tireless work of local officials, volunteers and first responders in assisting and protecting their neighbours and communities in the face of such danger and uncertainty.

?The beauty of Canada is not limited to its landscapes; its true beauty lies in the strength and resilience of Canadians and the care and concern they show to one another in the face of adversity.?

It can only be hoped that the King and Queen will have the opportunity sooner rather than later to express their admiration in person to those who have worked tirelessly to save the lives and property of others.

It has been the custom that the Monarch and his or her heir may only visit this country at the invitation of the Federal government, a custom that does not apply to other members of the Royal Family.

The first visit of the King of Canada to this realm is long-overdue and I can't think of a better way to mark the first anniversary of his reign than formally announcing a visit to Canada.

Actually, the best way might be to deliver on many of the promises made during the Canadian ceremony to mark the King and Queen's Coronation back on May 6: the unveiling of an official Canadian portrait, a new effigy for our coins and \$20 bill, and, most importantly in my view, the bestowment of the already-announced Coronation Medal.

If handled properly, the medal program would be an incredible way to honour Canadians across the country who have gone the extra mile to tirelessly serve their communities, whether in everyday invaluable volunteer capacities, or the numerous first responders who took on jobs even more herculean in the spring of 2020.

But, without any indication as of this writing on Tuesday that movement on these initiatives is imminent, I'll settle for a visit announcement this week.

It's now been a year, let's get to it.