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NATIONAL FLAG OF CANADA DAY

Statement by:
The Honourable Bev Busson

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

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Hon. Bev Busson: Honourable senators, I rise today to mark National Flag of Canada Day. It's a day to remind ourselves of the values for which we all stand.

Fifty-eight years ago today, on February 15, 1965, our new national flag was raised on Parliament Hill during a ceremony made official by Queen Elizabeth II, just in time to be showcased to the world two years later at Expo 67, celebrating Canada's one-hundredth birthday.

While the design of the flag was new, it featured a familiar symbol. The maple leaf emerged in the 19th century as a symbol of Canadian identity and was being seen everywhere, from books to coins. It was during the First World War when the maple leaf was first used as the cap badge worn by members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and became the most widely recognized emblem of our nation. More poignantly, it is a single maple leaf that is carved upon the many headstones of Canadian servicemen and servicewomen who gave their lives in the First and Second World Wars. It became a symbol of courage and sacrifice.

Today, we continue to drape our flag on the caskets of those in the Armed Forces and other first responders who have given their lives in service of our country, both abroad and at home. This act is a jarring reminder that the preservation of our shared values comes at a tremendous cost. We then give the flag to the family members of our fallen as a symbol of respect and strength, to convey our nation's collective condolences.

While the Canadian flag is a symbol of peace, hope and respect around the world, provincial flags pay homage to their respective

histories. Based on an 1896 design, the flag of British Columbia was officially adopted in 1960. The top of the flag depicts the Union Jack, reflecting B.C.'s British heritage, with a crown in the centre. Below is a setting sun, representing B.C.'s position as Canada's westernmost province. The wavy white and blue lines symbolize B.C.'s location between the Pacific Ocean and the Rocky Mountains, signifying the vast diversity of the landscape.

I should have started today with the flag of the very first peoples to occupy and shape the territory I now represent. The flag of the Secwepemc, or Shuswap, people, whose traditional territory is a vast part of the interior of British Columbia, is filled with symbolism and meaning. It consists of red and black bars of a cross, which represent the intersection of the great spirit and of human beings. In the centre of the bars are blue wavy lines to signify the great rivers, the Fraser, the Thompson and the Columbia, which define this territory. The crossing point depicts the dwelling site and the sun, the creator's life force. There are two fawns and two salmon on the white background to signify the traditional food of the Shuswap people and our collective obligation to be stewards of the earth. At the ends of the cross are the four colours — red, black, yellow and white — a reminder of the circle of life. With respect, it is now flown in significant places in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities throughout the Secwepemc territory.

On this Flag Day, we must honour our past. We must be grateful for the blessings of the present. And in the spirit of reconciliation, we must look to a brighter shared future for generations to come.

Kukwstép-kuc. Thank you.