



Looking to the West, in Pursuit of a Romantic and Distant Homeland

"Senate of Canada 150th Anniversary Medal" Award Ceremony Postscript

Bradley Z. Zhao

(Translator: Boyang Zhao)

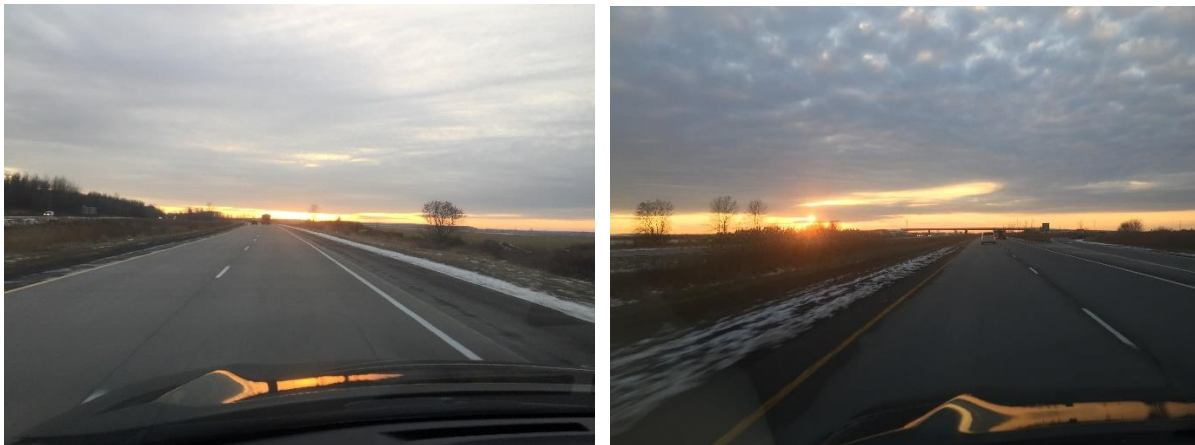
July 1st, 2021, marks Canada's 154th anniversary, and I have celebrated 24 of her birthdays on this beautiful land! This is a beloved home for us immigrants, a land of joy and opportunity. Here we planted our seeds, and over the years, we have reaped its generous rewards many times over! This is a magical land where immigrants from all ethnicities, faiths, and cultural backgrounds can sow their golden dreams, and she never hesitates to reward you richly, assuring you that your prayers will be answered, that your wishes will come true. Canada is the charming and distant horizon of our dreams!

I am an immigrant who has planted the seeds of my dreams on this land. For over 20 years, I have diligently nurtured these dreams without any expectation for the outcome. Never did I dare to imagine that this generous land would bestow upon me the greatest honors and rewards. Through founding "Elite College" I have made significant contributions to the promotion of the French language and provided educational support to children of all ethnic communities in Quebec. In recognition of these efforts, on the occasion of Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017, I was awarded the "Senate of Canada 150th Anniversary Medal", atop Parliament Hill! The awarding of this medal is a unique event in Canadian history, and I am the sole recipient among the Chinese community in Quebec! This extraordinary honor fills me with immense pride, but I dare not claim full credit, preferring instead to attribute all these honors to our country—Canada, this home and fertile land where dreams turn into reality!

(Senate of Canada 150th Anniversary Medal: To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first session of the Senate of Canada on November 6, 1867, and to honor those Canadian citizens or permanent residents who have generously and selflessly dedicated their time and efforts to community building, thereby making their homes, communities, regions, provinces, or territories better places to live.)

History is a collection of memories of every moment and detail of human activity. Recording history is the greatest respect and tribute to the people who lived their lives earnestly during those times. On this National Day, I wish to revisit and clearly document the moments of my decoration that connect me most closely with this country, and to share with my fellow immigrants my deep gratitude and respect for this nation.

It was November 28, 2017, and the early winter chill covered the vast land of Quebec. The expansive sky was adorned with a magnificent sunset! Under the setting sun, I felt as if I were clad in golden armor, my spirits soaring high, singing loudly as I moved towards the radiant sunset, heading West to the capital, to Ottawa, to reap the fruits of my dreams sown with romantic and distant aspirations. In that brilliant moment in time, it felt as though I wasn't driving a car, but flying in an airplane. I wasn't the person who had been transformed by the Canadian spirit, but the young man from 20 years ago, crossing the Pacific Ocean westward, with a mix of apprehension and excitement, with ideals and hopes, seeking distant and fanciful horizons on the North American continent! Twenty years have passed in an instant, and now I have taken root and thrived in Canada!



Early on the 29th, all awardees gathered in the Senate Hall of Parliament Hill. Looking around, the grand hall comfortably accommodated over 200 of us. From the diverse skin tones, appearances, and attire, it was evident that we represented immigrants from all over the world. I couldn't help but marvel: Canada possesses a unique magnetism. It attracts people from all corners of the Earth. On one hand, they proudly preserve their cultural traditions, while on the other hand, they willingly embrace Canada's universal values of freedom, inclusivity, diversity, and respect.

At 8:30 AM, the solemn procession entered, led by the ceremonial officials escorting Mr. George J. Furey, the Speaker of the Senate, into the hall. The decoration ceremony commenced officially. Everyone stood up and sang the national anthem "O Canada" in unison.

O Canada!
Our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!



The national anthem filled me with a surge of emotions. To stand as a recipient within Canada's highest seat of power was never a dream I dared to entertain as a new immigrant. But in Canada, dreams do come true!

The host proclaimed, "Those gathered here today are all outstanding Canadians! We extend our gratitude for your remarkable contributions to building a better Canada. Your generous volunteerism and service embody the true spirit of Canada: kindness, sincerity, selflessness, and collective advancement." As I receive the golden commemorative medal from the Speaker of the Senate, and see my name, Bradley Z. Zhao, engraved against the backdrop of the Canadian Senate, I silently whisper in my heart: "Canada, thank you for your generous gift. I shall not fail to honor your kindness!"



Pictured above left: Senate President George J. Furey and Senator Yuen Pau Woo awarded the medal to Bradley Z. Zhao.

Above right picture from left to right: Ms. Eva Luk from Grande Prairies District, Mr. Eric Yeung from Atlantic District, Mr. Eugene Y. K. Chieng from Alberta District, Senator Mr. Yuen Pau Woo, National Chairman Mr. Richard K. Wong, Mr. Zhigang Zhang from Capital District, Mr. Bradley Z. Zhao from Quebec District, Ontario Mr. Qixin He.



Back in the day, upon graduating from graduate school, the field of computer sciences that I studied was in high demand. Most of my classmates opted to pursue higher pay and lower taxes in the United States. However, I made a firm decision to stay. The reason, as I have articulated in a speech at a French festival, was this: "When I first arrived in Canada, with no family help or source of income, it was the government that supported me, encouraging me to study by providing financial aid. Though the scholarship at the time wasn't high, it did indeed meet the basic survival needs for our family of three. Since I received such selfless assistance from the federal government, the province of Quebec, and Canadian taxpayers, I am willing to give back everything I was given! So, I remained, becoming a Canadian citizen, a proud taxpayer: at first with personal taxes, then contributing more in corporate taxes. I hope that those in need can benefit from me, just as I benefited from others back then. I hope to contribute to the community and city where I reside!"



After the investiture ceremony, several senators from Quebec who attended the investiture ceremony came to congratulate him and took a group photo.



After the award ceremony, we were treated to a tour of Parliament Hill. It was a rare and unforgettable experience to witness firsthand the sacred place where national decisions are made, which we had previously only seen on television or in newspapers. Here are some highlights from the tour.

Portrait of Sir Winston Churchill:



At 1:00 p.m., at the invitation of Mr. Geoff Regan, the Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons, we visited his office for a warm and engaging chat. The Speaker shared with us the story behind the portrait of Sir Winston Churchill hanging in his office. During World War II in 1943, Churchill, then the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, came to Canada to meet with President Roosevelt of the United States and the Canadian Prime Minister to discuss international affairs. Just after the meeting, Churchill entered the room with a cigar in hand, and the photographer began setting up his photo. However, the photographer felt that the cigar might detract from Churchill's charm, so he boldly approached and removed the cigar from his mouth. Then, quickly returning to his position behind the camera, he captured the now iconic portrait.

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Below the portrait of Churchill on the wall cabinet sits a colorful cane. The Speaker explained that during the early sessions of Parliament, only those holding this cane were permitted to speak, while others remained silent, maintaining order during proceedings. However, this protocol has long since been abandoned, and now we often witness on television heated debates, even moments of chaos, among participants.

The Parliamentary Library:

Next, the Speaker's secretary, Sophie, led our group to visit the Parliament Library. This is the only building that survived the great fire of 1916, as it was specifically constructed with fire-resistant

materials. This foresight saved it from destruction and contributed greatly to the preservation of the young nation's collection of precious books and historical documents. Today, the library serves as a place for members of both the Senate and the House of Commons to access books and documents. (It reminds me that a book I published in 1993, in English, is also housed at the Library of Congress of United States and Harvard University Library.)

Observing a session of the House of Commons:

We exited the library just as the Members of Parliament were convening. Alongside triumphant Canadian Olympic athletes recently returned from Australia, we were ushered to the public gallery on the second floor of the House of Commons to observe. MPs began to trickle in, followed by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet Ministers. Canada, being a multicultural nation with English and French as official languages, requires simultaneous interpretation during national meetings. Today, we truly witnessed the essence of a democratic session: the opposition and the ruling party engaged in spirited debates, neither side yielding an inch. On one side, there were forceful criticisms of the ruling party's governance, while on the other, passionate defenses of their actions. The chamber echoed with raised voices and pounding fists on desks, each side seeking to assert dominance. At one point, the meeting grew so heated that the Speaker had to intervene and call for order. Amidst the fervent exchanges, we couldn't help but think: Isn't this the manifestation of democracy, where everyone has the right to speak and express their doubts freely and equally?

Having Dinner with a Chinese-Canadian Senator:

It's a source of pride to see Chinese-Canadian senators represented in the Senate. Senator Yuen Pau Woo joined us for dinner in the evening. Among the attendees were medal recipients of Chinese descent, including National and Regional chairs from the World Chinese Business Association of Canada, prominent business leaders, individuals engaged in Sino-Canadian cultural exchange, educators, and active members of Chinese communities across the country. As we gathered in the Canadian capital, these faces were deeply moved. They were honored to receive recognition for their outstanding contributions to their second homeland. Canada has embraced us with open arms, and in return, we strive to repay her trust and assistance. We have contributed in various ways to building our home here, making it more beautiful and stronger. Isn't it precisely this relationship between the nation and its citizens, in this free, diverse and inclusive country, that has created its inexhaustible vitality and strength?

I was proud to share with Senator Woo that at Elite College, we are dedicated to promoting French language education and providing supplementary tutoring in various subjects. We have developed our own French textbooks, which include articles introducing Chinese history and culture. As immigrants, Canada embraces the uniqueness of our own cultures, and as citizens, we have a responsibility to uphold Canadian values. Therefore, we have seamlessly integrated this concept of uniqueness alongside coexistence into our teaching practices, promoting and embodying the spirit and values of equality, inclusivity, and diversity that define Canada!

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Today, on July 1st, 2021, we gather here to celebrate Canada's 154th birthday. Amid the pandemic, this national day lacks the usual fanfare of parades and festivities, yet we are eager to shower her with even more sincere affection and boundless praise. Canada, this land of sunshine, freedom, and inclusivity, this fertile soil where every seed sown reaps rich rewards. Canada, you are the poetic and distant horizon in the hearts of every dreamer!

Happy birthday, Canada!



On December 15, 2017, CCTV made a special report on Bradley Z. Zhao being awarded the "Senate of Canada 150th Anniversary Medal"