

Speaker 1 ([00:05](#)):

Hello London,

Speaker 2 ([00:10](#)):

I'm Carol off the host of CVCs as it happens. London is in so many ways. My home, my family lives here. My family is here. I think most of you are my family. I, you see, I told you my family, my home is also a Western university where I went and from where I have so many stories of Western, none of which I will be sharing with any of you. And then my family came here from Winnipeg. This city is where I think that my mother and father had their best years and where they died, surrounded by friends and family and wonderful caregivers here in London. My sister and I went to boxes of photos after my mother passed away last year. And there were a lot of familiar faces, a lot of memories, but we came across some photos, pictures that didn't belong. They were photos of strangers, people who appeared to be Southeast Asian.

Speaker 2 ([01:19](#)):

So we figured, okay, there's some kind of a mix up somebody else's pictures and somehow got into my mother's photo box. But then later on to the box, we found more photos of these people. But this time my parents were in the pictures with the strangers and they were laughing and they were celebrating and sharing a meal. They were adults, they were children. And we say, are they, my sister finally figured it out. Do you remember the Vietnamese boat people in 1970s, there were thousands, tens of thousands of refugees who poured out of Vietnam after the war ended. And they escaped on rafts and little boats. And so many of them died, but large numbers of them came to Canada. And my parents helped to sponsor one of those families to come to London, Ontario, and all this happened after I had left home. So I never met them.

Speaker 2 ([02:18](#)):

But the photos that we found were of those refugees, and it was clear that my parents were dear friends of these people. And that in fact, they were not strangers. They did belong the box because they were family at my mother's funeral. I met those people for the first time and the children in the photos for now, grownups who now have children of their own. And the grandparents who have been the young couple in the photos were decades older. And now the grandparents. And so there were three generations from Vietnam, but of Canadians. They told me how much my mum and dad had meant to them, how they couldn't have survived. They couldn't have made it here. Had it not been for what my parents did. And they told me the harrowing story of their escape, but a little boy who clearly had not had the experience of being on that boat, but knew all the stories.

Speaker 2 ([03:21](#)):

He started to target his mom's sleeve. And he says, mom, mom tell her about the Apple. And the mother laughed. And she said, there was a day on that crowded boat. And we were out of water, food and fuel adrift on the sea. And we were losing all hope. And then someone noticed something red bobbing in the water and someone on the boat managed to get it in. And it was an Apple. She had never seen an Apple before, but somebody on the boat cut that Apple into so many pieces and gave as many people as possible. A bit of that Apple. And she said that as a little girl, she had this one little taste of that Apple shortly after that, they were rescued and they arrived in Canada where they lived. But the woman said to this day, she can never eat an Apple without remembering that first delicious experience of that fruit.

Speaker 2 ([04:28](#)):

We all have stories of how we came to be here. Even indigenous people often came from other parts of turtle Island and their ancestors passed down stories to them. As we share our stories with our children, as they were passed to us as children in North Winnipeg. When I was a kid, we lived surrounded by people who were from other countries. They'd come to Canada, escaping war and tyranny and poverty. They were from Ukraine. They were from Lithuania. They were from Poland. There were Slovaks and Germans and Jews, Jews who still had the tattoos on their arms, the numbers that they were put there. And they still had the emotional scars. We could not see my own grandmother came from Poland. She wasn't supposed to. My family, her family had spent all the money. They had to buy tickets and travel documents from my grandmother's older sister. The night before she was to depart, the sister broke into whales in tears. He said, she wouldn't go. She could not go. She argued with her parents all night and shortly before Dawn, her parents gave in, they had only one option left to them. They went into my grandmother's room and shook her. Wake up, may you're leaving for Canada.

Speaker 2 ([06:00](#)):

She was 17 years old. She travelled alone. She crossed an ocean and then a continent. She came with almost nothing. But as a family, we have treasured and shared that story. It's in our DNA and we pass it on to our kids and my grandchildren. Now, as children and Winnipeg, we went to people, other people's houses where the food was strange. The smells, the languages were all foreign, but I remember everyone had some kind of cookies. All the cookies were good, they're all wonderful. But all those people also had different stories of how they got there. What had happened to them, who they left behind, what they took with them. I love the cookies. Okay. I came to eventually love their stories. And I think that's why I became a journalist. So I could hear more of those kinds of stories. So over the years, I've interviewed people.

Speaker 2 ([07:02](#)):

I've learned that everybody has a story that defines them and the stories they have told me, her filled me with awe and wonder at the resilience of people. And they have filled me with shock and disbelief at the cruelty of others. But each time I hear a story, I put myself in their shoes and the barriers between us fall away and I begin to care. And then I share those stories with you and we share in their humanity. And there are no longer strangers. They are no longer the other. They're no longer what Don Sherry would call you. You people.

Speaker 2 ([07:41](#)):

We identify with them. And then we are the ones crossing, a stormy sea in a flimsy rubber raft with our children. We are the ones scrambling through a mountain pass, carrying our ailing mother. We are the ones confronting razor wire and hostile border guards with tear gas. We are leaving behind all that's familiar and seeking a safe Haven, a new home because there's no future where we come from. For most of us, our stories are much less dramatic, but there are fraught with difficulty. In the last century. People came from Europe, mostly in later years. People came from China, Pakistan, Sri, Lanka, Afghanistan, all over Africa. And they arrived with very little and they opened restaurants down on Richmond street and they worked in our parking garages and they still do downtown. And they wash dishes in our hotels and they drive taxis around our cities and they clean our houses and their children go to school and they grow up with dreams and they realise those dreams. But in every one of those stories, you'll hear. If you ask them for their story, that there are people along the way who heard those stories and help them, who listened to them, who understood, who identified with a stranger and made

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it easier. And those from earlier centuries where indigenous people who helped our settlers, otherwise we wouldn't be here. Now.

Speaker 2 ([09:03](#)):

I wish I had been with my parents when they met that refugee family from Vietnam. I wish I had heard those stories about the dangerous escape and shared the sense of humanity. I would have liked to see my parents, how much they would have enjoyed and felt about those stories and how delighted they would have been to hear about that Apple. One of my favourite writers, the late Richard Wagamese describes it best in his Canada poem. And it's ironic that I know Jibo man at the best understanding of what this country is, but he did. Richard wrote that the name Canada means home, but he believes it also means campfire. That home is a campfire. And he believed that Canada is actually a place where people come from all around the world, all are strangers, but then they sit at this campfire and they tell their story and everyone listens. All we carry forward. And all we leave behind are our stories. It's who we are. It's what defines us. And as we tell the stories, we are no longer strangers or enemies or anyone to be feared. We are no longer different ethnicities or colours. We are no longer you people. We are just one race, the human race sitting here as we are tonight telling our stories around this great campfire we call Canada. Thank you.

Speaker 1 ([10:43](#)):

[inaudible].