

# Canadian slang mostly missing

## DICTIONARY

*Continued from A1*

In the age of the Internet, dubbing any fragment of language “new” puts wordsmiths on shaky ground. The newness of *Unofficial English* is in its focus on words that haven’t been documented in leading North American dictionaries, or have acquired new meaning since appearing in those dictionaries.

“You’ll find words you’ve never seen before — even though they’ve been around for decades,” Barrett says in the introduction to the dictionary.

It’s a collection of language — more than 750 words — that deserves more attention.

A thrillionaire, for instance, is a wealthy Richard Branson type who pursues expensive and dangerous pastimes.

A pudding ring describes facial hair made up of a moustache and goatee.

Sandbox isn’t the playground staple, it’s military slang for a country in the Middle East, and a paleoconservative is someone with outdated or old-fashioned conservative beliefs.

D-girls are junior film industry executives, frankenbites are TV clips edited together to manufacture drama on a reality show and ego ramps are catwalks or stage spurs that extend into or over a concert audience. Fratmosphere is an environment resembling or affiliated with a college fraternity.

“It’s not a goofy book of wacky words so much as it’s a companion to your everyday dictionary,” says Barrett, who is project editor for the *Historical Dictionary of American Slang* and editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of American Political Slang*.

The most controversial section of *Unofficial English* is titled Colourful Names for Whitey, which comprises racist epithets or nicknames for Caucasian westerners that are unique to various regions around the globe.

A companion section cites derogatory terms used within an ethnic group or race to insult its own members.

“Information, not provocation, was the intent,” says Barrett, noting the lists were included because of their substance. “Like the rest of the book, I tried to treat them in a giggle-less, outrage-free fashion.”

It quickly becomes evident in scanning the dictionary that widely used Canadian words such as “stagette” are rarely found or unknown in American conversation and texts.

“Even though there might not be a physical border, the psychological barriers do a fair bit to keep words inside the margin,” says Barrett, a New Yorker. “We’ll get (the word’s meaning) but we’ll also recognize that it’s not native to us ... so we’ll keep our hands off, which is usually something Americans aren’t known for.”