

The Disneyfication of Canada: Totem poles & rocky mountains

by Vivian Thomas
The Brock Press (Brock)

ORLANDO, Fla. (CUP) -- Turning right as you exit Future World, you enter a vast landscape of rocky mountains, waterfalls, totem poles, a French-style Château, an old European-style "Vieux Québec," the Victoria Gardens, a log cabin, a trading-post and a CircleVision 360 film.

This is Canada as many Americans see it. This is the Canadian Pavilion at the Epcot Centre, Walt Disney World, Fla.

"The first thing you see in 'Canada,' as you walk up to the merchandise side of it, is this wood cart where we make leather bracelets and sell hockey stuff and then when you walk up the stairs you have these totem poles," said Linda McIlvaney, a 19-year-old student from British Columbia who works at the Epcot Canadian Pavilion.

"Even Canadian guests, the ones that are from Eastern Canada will look at the totem poles and be like 'that's not Canadian' which is really funny because I'm from the west and we actually do have Totem poles, in Stanley park they're very famous."

McIlvaney explained that it is difficult for many Canadians to relate to the Canadian Pavilion located at the "World Showcase" at the Epcot Centre.

"You see this log cabin and this trading post," said McIlvaney. "So it looks like it's still from the Hudson's Bay or something and then you walk up the stairs further and you get the Château Frontenac and somebody from the West Coast like me, looks at the Château Frontenac and this model of an old Québec City and says, 'no that's not Canada.' Canada is such a large country, so no matter what you do it's hard to represent it completely because every Canadian has a different view of what Canada is."

So Canada's, like, a moose and a penguin, eh?

When McIlvaney first began to work at the Canadian Pavilion as a Canadian "ambassador" and merchandise person, she said that she was "horrified" because of the overly stereotypical setting of the pavilion.

"I thought that it was a really

horrible stereotype of Canada," said McIlvaney.

"But since I've had to spend the last eight months or so defending it, you realize that it's not intended to be a factual Canada, as we see it as Canadians, because the Canada that we know is the day-to-day, going grocery shopping, hanging out, doing that. Whereas, a Canada that someone traveled from another country to see would be ... that wilderness side, the French-English end of it, which is Disney's fantasy and is supposed to be a fantasy version of Canada."

McIlvaney said that she's noticed that many American guests believe a lot of Canadian stereotypes and like to poke fun of their neighbouring country.

"We all say 'eh,' I get that one a lot," said McIlvaney, addressing the main stereotypes believed about Canadians.

"That every Canadian speaks English and French. People will often ask us if we actually wear those plaid shirts all the time at home. My dad owns plaid shirts but that's about it. I don't actually own any myself. The 'eh' thing is the one that drives me nuts."

Some of the problems faced with American guests, according to McIlvaney, are ones that would horrify any Canadian patriot.

"Canada, America's Hat," and the differences between us

"I think it's more that they don't understand Canada," she said. "In my experience, Americans tend to see Canada as just an extension of their country. There are t-shirts that say 'Canada, America's Hat' things like that. This was on an actual guest t-shirt and we couldn't figure out if the guest was Canadian or American, I don't know exactly what he was trying to say by that."

McIlvaney also identifies the Canadian accent as a typifying characteristic to Americans, and another means for stereotyping.

"I did not realize that I had a Canadian accent until I moved here, and I didn't realize that we all have accents ... I recognized that everyone had an accent but I did not think that the Canadian one was distinct," said McIlvaney.

"I always thought that we just sounded like Americans, but Americans will walk up to us all the time and say, 'Oh yeah you're Canadian, I can tell by the way you talk' and it will be somebody



from a part of America where they have a similar accent to us."

There is one incident that happened with an American guest that McIlvaney said she will never forget.

"We've had guests ask us where they can find the penguins," she said.

"A lady came in and she swore up and down that when she was in the Canada pavilion last year, they had penguins. We had to explain to her penguins are in the South Pole so we clearly never had them in our pavilion. You just try so hard not to laugh and you try to be polite and you educate them."

Stereotypes from outside the US

McIlvaney said that most of the negative stereotyping is from the US but there are also problems faced with guests from other countries.

"The states are different because we live so close," said McIlvaney. "I think because we live so close to the Americans they feel as though they know a little bit more about

Canada. They'll bug us about the 'eh' thing. Where as other countries, a lot of them will see us as Americans, they think of North America together," explained McIlvaney.

"As Canadians, we like to keep our identity separate. Most Canadians will tell you right away, 'I'm not American, I'm Canadian,' even though we live right next door and share pretty much the same culture," she said.

McIlvaney said Europeans and other international tourists think Canadians are really nice people and see Canada as a nice country, open minded, fairly forward thinking.

"Most people will recognize that there is a difference between Canada and the USA," she added.

Despite the politically incorrect comments from American guests, McIlvaney explained that Canadian guests are actually more of a problem.

"The Canadians that visit are actually the worst," said McIlvaney.

"They'll make jokes to us that may seem funny to them but we hear the same jokes all the time. Such as, 'Can I pay for this in Canadian dollars?' We have to say 'No sir you cannot, if we accepted Canadian dollars, then the Japanese pavilion would accept yen, the U.K. pavilion would accept pounds, Germany and Italy would accept the Euro, the Mexican pavilion would accept the Peso. Could you imagine trying to do a return or refund three days later when the exchange rate changed.'

McIlvaney said her "no," is usually met with disappointment.

"Then they'll look at the prices and say 'Is this in Canadian dollars?' No it's not. 'Do I get a discount because I'm Canadian?' ... 'Oh we're in Canada eh?' Even though they've blatantly never said 'eh' in their life," she said.

"So our Canadian guests are actually some of the worst offenders."

Join the Bruns!

**SUB room 35
WED 12:30**

Be there!

SCHOOLBRIDGE

An opportunity for UNB students to volunteer in a local public school.

- 1: Are you interested in sharing your knowledge and mentoring a child or young person?
- 2: Do you have an hour a week to spare?
- 3: Have you completed one year of university?

Please join us for an information session

September 28th, 4:30 - 5:30

OR

September 29th, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Both sessions will be held in Room 225 (Lounge), Marshall D'Avray Hall

WANTED

DANCERS
ACTORS
MUSICIANS
TECH CREW

JUGGLERS
FIREBLOWERS
ACROBATS

ANYONE WHO WANTS TO JOIN IN THE FUN!!

HELD IN THE DARKEST DAYS BETWEEN THE COLOURS OF AUTUMN AND THE WHITE OF WINTER, LE CABARET ROUGE WILL BE A NIGHT OF MUSIC, FOOD, WINE, POETRY, SONG, DANCE AND MASQUERADE.



Le Cabaret Rouge
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18
UNB Art Centre
Memorial Hall
9 Bailey Drive
453 4623

**ALL CALL TO BE HELD IN MEMORIAL HALL
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28TH 5 00 - 7 00 PM**

This week at boom! nightclub

THURSDAY
SEPT 22
OPEN
8-2

LIVE DJ 10-2 NO COVER
STUDENT BODIES
SURVIVOR 9-10 ON BIG SCREEN CORONA'S \$2.75
ARE YOU READING THIS AD? CLIP OUT 2 FOR 1 COUPON AT BOTTOM

FRIDAY
SEPT 23
OPEN 4-2

TOGA PARTY 9-2
Come dressed in toga or we can dress you
See Website for details

SATURDAY
SEPT 24
OPEN
8-2

9-2
HOUSE HEAVEN

SUNDAY
SEPT 25
OPEN
4-7/10-2

4-7
SUNDAY SOCIAL

10-2 Are you reading this ad? Clip out 2 for 1 coupon at bottom
OPEN DECKS
LIVE DJ'S SPINNING AT CROWD LEVEL
MASON JAR MADNESS
\$6 well doubles all night
Keiths Bottle \$2.00 from 10-11

WEDNESDAY
SEPT 28
OPEN 8-2

10-2
BEATS
live DJ

474 Queen Street,
Fredericton NB
506-463-BOOM

WWW.BOOMNIGHTCLUB.CA

2FOR1 DOM BEER - WELL LIQUOR - DRAFT
ON FIRST PURCHASE - VALID THURSDAY & SUNDAY NIGHTS ONLY
COUPON EXPIRES SEPT 30/05