

INSIDE AURORA: Mural Musings

By Scott Johnston

With Canada Day rapidly approaching, there's no better time to look at that most Canadian of features in Town, the "Oh Canada" mural at Yonge and Wellington, and pose the question; is it time for an update?

Don't worry; I'm not suggesting a wholesale change. We should all celebrate our country's history and successes, and those images are a great reminder, especially to our younger generations.

But while many of the themes up there are great choices, and will remain in our minds for years, I think a few tweaks might make the overall collage more relevant.

This came to mind when we were driving by the mural one day, and my nephew asked me "who's Team Canada?"

I explained about the excitement around the country-unifying hockey series between Canada and the then USSR in 1972, and that final electrifying goal by Paul Henderson. But the resulting unimpressed "humph" told me that the impact wasn't sinking in.

So, for the required hockey reference up there, we need one that's historic, but also one that more recent generations can appreciate. If we want one that people across this great land will be able to relate to for years to come, we need go no further than to highlight the futility of the Toronto Maple Leafs. The image could be accompanied by the phrase "Perennially Cup-less", or "Maybe next year?", or words to that effect.

The best part is that with it already pushing fifty years since their last Stanley Cup win in the 1960s, it's pretty much guaranteed the caption will never need to be updated. At least, not in any sort of foreseeable future.

Another great Canadian achievement was the invention of the telephone, which justifies Alexander Graham Bell's inclusion on the wall. While his face should remain up there, kids may not associate him with today's modern portable devices, so let's emphasize this by adding a cell tower in the background.

This would also add another recognizably prominent structure, like the CN Tower and House of Commons images that are already up there.

Apart from structures, there are a number of natural features on the mural, like the prairies and the Rockies. As these are still relevant, we can keep all of them, at least until the hydro-electric companies divert any more water from Niagara Falls, and this natural wonder runs dry.

Animals are another recurring theme on the wall, but for some reason, plants seem to have been given a miss.

There's one plant that is unlikely to become anything but more common across the country in both our urban and natural landscapes, based on increasing country-wide water and herbicide bans.

Therefore, let's address this vegetative omission on the wall by including a dandelion in some open spot, preferably close to ground level.

If we want to go all out, we could include an image that combines built structures, natural features, animals and plants. This could only be something that wasn't even discovered when the mural was painted (or it would surely be up there); the world's longest beaver dam, at almost a kilometre in length.

A visual like that would wind around other elements of the mural, and would almost "out Canadian" the existing images of the Bluenose, Group of Seven, or that pile of donuts.

Finally, the smiling face of Bonhomme reminds us that our friends in Quebec City host the world's largest winter carnival.

But that carnival is enjoyed by just over 30,000 people a day. While an impressive statistic, there's another annual event in Canada that hosts over 50,000 people in just a six hour period.

Maybe it's time that Aurora's Street Festival makes an appearance on the wall.

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