

INSIDE AURORA: Repainting Canada

By Scott Johnston

Our country's 150th anniversary this year had me thinking about the most visually Canadian object in Aurora; the mural at Yonge and Wellington.

While there's no arguing the achievements and icons it features, there are so many great things to celebrate about our nation, you could easily create a whole new mural with equally valid images.

For example, nothing says "Canada" like winter sports, and hockey is up there now in a couple of forms. But another winter sport that is enjoying increasing popularity, especially in televised form, and at which Canadians excel, is curling. How about a game featuring two of our best world champion women skips in recent years, Rachael Homan and Jennifer Jones?

Apart from sports, we're a nation known for the arts. Let's swap out the Group of Seven to highlight the similarly Canadian work of Emily Carr and Norval Morrisseau.

For music, which really isn't represented on the current wall, we could provide a bit of a collage of genres, with Oscar Peterson, Rush, Walter Ostanek and Gordon Lightfoot.

Margaret Atwood, Stephen Leacock and Lucy Maud Montgomery could symbolize a small portion of the country's vast range of literature.

Other performing arts could be covered by Cirque de Soleil.

As for other heroes, it was a great choice putting Rick Hansen up there but a more enduring legacy is that of Terry Fox, whose Marathon of Hope continues today with runs every September, which have now raised over \$650 million for cancer research.

To continue the current mural's theme of iconic Canadian animals, the arctic could be further represented by a narwhal, walrus or muskox.

And if we want to think geographically and provide equal coverage to the other two coasts, how about a salmon and a lobster representing BC and the Maritimes?

Looking at wildlife closer to home, we could add a trumpeter swan, a local bird brought back from the edge of extinction in part through the efforts of an Aurora biologist.

Going further back in time for Canadian animals, western Canada contains one of the richest troves of dinosaur fossils in the world. A T-rex or Triceratops would make a nice historical addition.

Donuts have been an amusing part of the mural, but there are other more uniquely Canadian foods such as poutine, butter tarts and Nanaimo bars.

As for landscapes, they did do a good job covering these the last time around, but a few iconic Canadian views they missed include icebergs off of Newfoundland, Lake Louise, the lighthouse at Peggy's Cove, and even the Northern Lights.

Of course, the most iconic image of our country is the Canadian Flag. That's the one image from the old mural that we'd need to include again.

The snowmobile and Canadarm are great Canadian inventions (really glad they didn't put the Blackberry up there), but these are not everyday items for Canadians. Instead, let's celebrate some more commonly used creations, like the zipper, garbage bag, egg carton, paint roller or Robertson screw.

Perhaps most fitting for this time of year is an update on our military history. Billy Bishop and standing on guard for our nation were excellent themes to be included the first time around, but an appropriate update would be to add Canadian First World War doctor John McCrae.

We all recognize his poem, In Flanders Fields, but we don't often see his picture. That, perhaps accompanied by a poppy, might help folks to remember not just on November 11, but through the rest of the year, as well.

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