

OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Test your Canadianness

Most Canadians learned to trace pictures in kindergarten. Recent events suggest that some employees of *The Canadian Champion* missed that particular day at school so long ago.

In today's issue there is a community service page with a map of Canada under the banner 'KEEP CANADA UNITED'. It was reproduced by our crack staff using skills learned in kindergarten.

What you actually have is the corrected version of the map. Originally it said 'KEEP CANADA METHODIST' but the religious connotation was too overpowering. So the fix was in. It was realized that some other minor adjustments could be introduced as well.

Thus it was that Nova Scotia was included, Prince Edward Island returned from beneath the waves and British Columbia was given back a large part of its land area near the Alberta border.

Labrador was carved from Quebec and Vancouver Island returned to shelter the west coast. Certain heretofore unbenowned land bridges were removed and a large island taken from western Lake Erie.

Actually, the exercise of returning Canada to its real self was interesting. People began to realize the things they take for granted in Canada; in our case, two of the provinces.

But, hey, it's easy to forget parts of Canada. There are 250 million Americans who forget all of Canada, if they ever knew it at all. There are millions of people all over the world who have no idea that Canada even exists and there are others, who despite living here, have little concept of the vastness of this country.

I know people who have never been outside the happy confines of Metro Toronto, to them Milton is as foreign as Marrakesh. And yet, it is still possible for most people to be amazed by various locales which are quite close to home.

I remember the first time, only a few short

REAUME WITH A VIEW

with BRAD REAUME



years ago, when I encountered Limehouse, Ontario. I'd never heard of it, I had no idea it even existed, and now I wouldn't mind living there.

With that in mind let's try an exercise in nation building. On a clean sheet of paper draw a freehand map of Canada. Include geographic features such as lakes, rivers, islands, mountains and the ocean coastline (without which no map would be complete). Then add political boundaries, cities, towns and parks.

See how much detail you can add. Compare your map of Canada with the maps made by other people to see how much you know about the place you call home.

This procedure might prove embarrassing to some people but it should be enlightening. Get to know your country. Canada is a pretty big place to be arguing about without some necessary background.

History has played its role in our national character, or as some would say, our lack of history has played a role in our lack of national character. Geography however, has probably played a bigger role. We are, what we are, because we are here.

With that in mind, a lack of familiarity with other regions of Canada precludes a person from being in touch with the national consciousness.

Here at *The Canadian Champion* some of us have developed our sense of Canadianness only as far as our tracing skills. But, it's a start.

You make your bed and you lay in sawdust

It was my idea. Now I'm going to have to live with it.

It started with a growing dissatisfaction with my office in the basement. While I was resigned to labouring beneath the earth, I had difficulty concentrating on my work in the open-concept design we had devised for my office. If I was seated at my desk, I could look down the length of the recreation room past the sitting area and down to the kids' chaotic play area that was usually peopled by my little shadows. I yearned for a cubbyhole. So this is what we did.

The thirteen year old carted books, shelves, dressers, and his million pieces of Lego from his basement bedroom up to the master bedroom. Then he and I shifted the desks, filing cabinet, shelves, and of course, books, from my office into the empty room.

Did you notice that I didn't mention his bed? When we first moved into this house, we put a chesterbed in his room but he complained that it was too uncomfortable, so over the last one and a half years he has camped out on the five-year-old's upper bunk upstairs. The truth is, he wanted to be closer to the rest of the family.

He and I actually did venture out once in search of a bed but his tastes proved incompatible with our budget. However, my mother offered to sell us a single bed which she had



ON THE HOMEFRONT

with ESTHER CALDWELL

recently bought. The new apartment to which she was moving (her sixth move in five years) would not accommodate this extra bed so we took it off her hands. Unfortunately, its delicate frame, flower print bedspread and profusion of pillows suited our eight-year-old daughter more than our teenager, so he ended up with her bed.

However, before we could assemble her new bed, we had to move her old bed into the master bedroom, and before we could do that, we had to take our kind-sized captain's bed apart and carry it down to the basement. Phew!

But that's not the end of our story. My resident home renovator insisted he would have to build a wall to separate our bedroom — now in the old office area — from the rest of the recreation room. And, oh yes, install more ceiling light fixtures, switches and plugs (his specialty). Panic (mine) set in as I awaited the transformation from tidy home to messy one.



Underachievers — odds are 1 in 4

Learning disabilities represent a very small proportion of children who underachieve at school. The problem is far, far greater than that.

While learning disabilities occur in 3 to 4 per cent of school children an incredible 25 per cent of children underachieve — do poorly or fail, despite normal intelligence.

Many underachievers are in fact children who have other problems — motivational (lack of interest), psychological (eg. depression), limited opportunity (eg. parental neglect, poor classroom situation), developmental (immature or slow developing), or a maladaptive family situation (eg. poor parenting, stress, lack of concern for schooling).

These are the children who are most apt to drop out of high school; they're twice as likely to become unemployed; and they become "stuck" working at low paying jobs with little opportunity for advancement.

Our society puts a premium on education. It's not like it was 20 or 30 years ago, when many people made it without much education through hard work, perseverance and "street smarts".

Now, most people won't even get the chance without a college degree. Yet, 20 per cent of



PSYCHOLOGY IN THE '90S

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

our adolescents don't even finish high school.

The time to do something is in the early school years, when underachievement first shows itself. Kids don't start underachieving in high school, it starts in elementary school. Studies of children doing poorly in high school show that 50 per cent of them experienced their first failure by second grade, 75 per cent by the fourth grade, and 90 per cent by the seventh grade. Once it starts of course, it snowballs, as the gap between themselves and their peers gets wider every year, unless a special program is put in place early.

Why do children underachieve? One reason is motivation. For students to realize their potential, they must be motivated to study and learn. Children who do well in school tend to be curious, interested in learning, and they value hard work. They feel good about receiving high marks. By the time they're 12, they see a relationship between doing well at school and achieving long-term goals, like getting into college and getting the type of job they want.

Kids who underachieve have a very different motivational make-up. They aren't interested in "intellectual" tasks or values, they have minimal if any educational goals, and they lack the motivation to apply themselves. They may work hard enough to avoid the embarrassment of outright failure, but they do little more than what is necessary to get by.

They usually don't like school, and get no inner satisfaction (or external reward) for doing well. Underachievers fail to see any relationship between their schoolwork and what they will be doing later in life.

Where does this lack of motivation come from? Most often, it is the parents that play the major role: they may not themselves be interested in education, respect the teachers' efforts, or think school is that important; they may be too busy to notice the child's progress (or problems) in school; they may not have done well in school themselves, and lead the child to expect the same; they may brag about how much they accomplished without much schooling; they may say that education is important, yet not show any personal interest in reading, learning or intellectual discussion; the praise and rewards they use in child-rearing seldom have anything to do with schoolwork.

Next week: Helping the underachieving child.