

We Are More

by Shane Koyczan

When defining Canada
you might list some statistics
you might mention our tallest building
or biggest lake
you might shake a tree in the fall
and call a red leaf Canada
you might rattle off some celebrities
might mention Buffy Sainte-Marie
might even mention the fact that we've got a few
Barenaked Ladies
or that we made these crazy things
like zippers
electric cars
and washing machines
when defining Canada
it seems the world's anthem has been
"been there done that"
and maybe that's where we used to be at
it's true
we've done and we've been
we've seen
all the great themes get swallowed up by the machine
and turned into theme parks
but when defining Canada
don't forget to mention that we have set sparks
we are not just fishing stories
about the one that got away
we do more than sit around and say "eh?"
and yes
we are the home of the Rocket and the Great One
who inspired little number nines
and little number ninety-nines
but we're more than just hockey and fishing lines
off of the rocky coast of the Maritimes
and some say what defines us
is something as simple as please and thank you
and as for you're welcome
well we say that too
but we are more
than genteel or civilized
we are an idea in the process
of being realized
we are young
we are cultures strung together
then woven into a tapestry
and the design
is what makes us more
than the sum total of our history

we are an experiment going right for a change
with influences that range from a to zed
and yes we say zed instead of zee
we are the colours of Chinatown and the coffee of Little Italy
we dream so big that there are those
who would call our ambition an industry
because we are more than sticky maple syrup and clean snow
we do more than grow wheat and brew beer
we are vineyards of good year after good year
we reforest what we clear
because we believe in generations beyond our own
knowing now that so many of us
have grown past what used to be
we can stand here today
filled with all the hope people have
when they say things like "someday"
someday we'll be great
someday we'll be this
or that
someday we'll be at a point
when someday was yesterday
and all of our aspirations will pay the way
for those who on that day
look towards tomorrow
and still they say someday
we will reach the goals we set
and we will get interest on our inspiration
because we are more than a nation of whale watchers and lumberjacks
more than backpacks and hiking trails
we are hammers and nails building bridges
towards those who are willing to walk across
we are the lost-and-found for all those who might find themselves at a loss
we are not the see-through gloss or glamour
of those who clamour for the failings of others
we are fathers brothers sisters and mothers
uncles and nephews aunts and nieces
we are cousins
we are found missing puzzle pieces
we are families with room at the table for newcomers
we are more than summers and winters
more than on and off seasons
we are the reasons people have for wanting to stay
because we are more than what we say or do
we live to get past what we go through
and learn who we are
we are students
students who study the studiousness of studying
so we know what as well as why
we don't have all the answers
but we try
and the effort is what makes us more

we don't all know what it is in life we're looking for
so keep exploring
go far and wide
or go inside but go deep
go deep
as if James Cameron was filming a sequel to The Abyss
and suddenly there was this location scout
trying to figure some way out
to get inside you
because you've been through hell and high water
and you went deep
keep exploring
because we are more
than a laundry list of things to do and places to see
we are more than hills to ski
or countryside ponds to skate
we are the abandoned hesitation of all those who can't wait
we are first-rate greasy-spoon diners and healthy-living cafes
a country that is all the ways you choose to live
a land that can give you variety
because we are choices
we are millions upon millions of voices shouting
"keep exploring... we are more"
we are the surprise the world has in store for you
it's true
Canada is the "what" in "what's new?"
so don't say "been there done that"
unless you've sat on the sidewalk
while chalk artists draw still lifes
on the concrete of a kid in the street
beatboxing to Neil Young for fun
don't say you've been there done that
unless you've been here doing it
let this country be your first-aid kit
for all the times you get sick of the same old same old
let us be the story told to your friends
and when that story ends
leave chapters for the next time you'll come back
next time pack for all the things
you didn't pack for the first time
but don't let your luggage define your travels
each life unravels differently
and experiences are what make up
the colours of our tapestry
we are the true north
strong and free
and what's more
is that we didn't just say it
we made it be.