**My Canada - The New York Times**

Canada, our No. 1 pick for this year s 52 Places to Go list, spans millions of square miles. It also contains multitudes, not just of people and locations, but of memories. We asked five Canadian authors to reflect on places that have lodged in their psyches. My mother always kept a bright yellow hard hat in her car, an unexpected accessory for a petite Hong Kong immigrant in her . She was the senior purchaser for a British Columbia forestry company that, in lean years, laid off everyone in her department except her. (Mores the pity she dreamed of early retirement.) In the meantime, she shuttled between the provinces pulp and paper mills, doing the job of six people, negotiating contracts for hotels, log loaders, harvesters and more. One year, when I was 25, I finally said yes to her persistent invitations to tag along. She wanted me to meet the men and women who earned their living in the mill towns, and who called her by her English name, Matilda. We set out in her car, exploring the of Vancouver Island, heading for the northern tip, Port Hardy. This would turn out to be the last trip we took together. I remember the wet October chill eagles descending over corridors of evergreens a seemingly endless highway. At twilight, the world took on the shifting depths of an Emily Carr painting. I had to put up with my mothers terrible driving, and her devotion to Celine Dion. She had to put up with my moods. I was going through a breakup and had decided that, in order to strengthen my moral fiber, I should camp, alone, for three days in the woods. I instructed my mother to drop me off at my campsite, work for a few days in Port Hardy, and then pick me up again. Port Hardy is a microcosm of Canada: a town with a complex human and environmental history. The archaeological site of the islands oldest known human habitation (circa 5850 B. C.) the area is the place of origin for the Kwakiutl peoples. The land of the Kwakiutl, whose name translates to œsmoke of the world, was taken into ownership ” both private and national ” by gunpoint, dishonored treaties and restrictive and discriminatory laws. The scramble for artifacts and the theft of Kwakiutl art ” work that was celebrated by Claude as among the most sophisticated in the world ” has meant that much of the communitys historical work is housed in museums elsewhere. After 1849, the Kwakiutl population was decimated, but it survives. In 2013, British Columbia was found to have once again breached the Kwakiutls 1851 Treaty rights. This is not a history I learned in school. Alone in the woods, I pitched my tent. The dark fell suddenly. I made it five hours before calling my mom, telling her I was afraid, and asking her to come get me. That night, we shared a bed in a small lodging provided by her company. I smelled of the fire I had briefly managed to start. It felt good to lie beside my mother in a place that was complex and old. A little over a year later, my mother died suddenly in a town where she was working, much like this one, on a November night when her heart gave out. It was her two kind forestry men who, worried about my mother, entered her hotel room in the morning, to find her gone. So peaceful, they told us, as if she were only sleeping. Fourteen years later, I understand better how the smoke of the world is never still. Many of the mills my mother visited have closed, jobs have been lost, and, as of a decade ago, a staggering 75 percent of Vancouver Islands productive forest has been logged. It is a place that will tell us much about the balance between jobs and environmental stewardship, about our respect for First Nations treaty rights and our obligations to the land. This is the Canada still to come. Madeleine Thien is the author of œDo Not Say We Have Nothing. Grindstone Island is a dot of green leaves and Victorian gingerbread structures in the middle of Big Rideau Lake, halfway between Kingston and Ottawa. in the 19th century to make way for its eponymous grindstone quarry, the island later became the summer home of Charles Kingsmill, the first admiral of the Royal Canadian Navy, and served as a genteel hub for Ottawa society life. Kingsmills daughter, Diana, who had a lifelong association with pacifist Quakers, took over Grindstone and turned it into a nonviolent resistance education center, staging legendary games that recreated the infamous Stanford Prison Experiment as a way to train the œprisoners to fight oppression with noncooperation ” a practice that ended after a disastrous fake œinvasion by a local biker gang retained for the purpose. I came to Grindstone as a young teenager in the attending the annual summer camps run by the nonprofit cooperative the Quakers put together to manage the island. The camps explicit mission was to train a new generation of activists, another step on the ladder that they had climbed, through trade unionism, farmers unions, suffragism and feminism, to antiwar activism. Grindstone was full of kids like me: babies who attended alternative public schools in Toronto, Kingston and Ottawa, who could rhyme the classic protest chant œ with the facility of lifelong practice. Today it sounds hopelessly idealistic. But in the 80s, Grindstone was a perfect incubator for young activists. With its quiet paths, crisp lake swimming and isolated spots with names like Moonwatchers Point, the Grindstone experience was one part lazing around and chatting, one part intense, practical instruction. The Victorian cottages we slept in had once housed the political elites of Ottawa society and their celebrity friends. Now they were ours. Ive always been an early riser, and it was on Grindstone that I became addicted to sunrises, swimming around the island to catch them on the still lake amid the loon calls, then rushing in a shiver back to my cabin to change for breakfast and morning meeting on the broad, shaded porch of the main lodge. As I graduated out of the summer camps, I became active in the maintenance and management of the island, volunteering in the kitchens and serving on the s board. When the s finances crashed with the recession, we sold the island to a dentist from Kingston who planned to commute by small pontoon plane. I was devastated. Today, Grindstone is the private home of David Bearman and Jennifer Trant ” museum technology pioneers who fell in love with the island the first time they saw it, immediately dissolved their successful consultancy and took up residence there, running small conferences for people interested in museums and the web. Five years ago my family and I were their guests. The island felt haunted by the ghosts of the friends Id made there and the dreams wed shared. It has been 25 years since I left Grindstone on its final weekend as a social justice education center, and not a week goes by without my yearning for it with a kind of joy and sorrow that is sunk very deep in my heart. I visit it in my dreams, and in the photo feeds from its current owners when I see them at museum conferences, I demand to know all the minutiae of the islands upkeep, which trees survived the winter storms and what color theyre painting the porch this year. I live in Burbank, Calif. now, and I take my daughter on hikes in the nearby mountains. Sometimes, when we sit on a trailside boulder and listen to the winds soughing in the trees, I can almost pretend that Ive brought her back to Grindstone, the place I had always assumed I would raise my own family. Cory Doctorow is the author of the forthcoming novel œWalkaway and a special adviser to the Electronic Frontier Foundation. The Hawker Siddeley HS 748 is a delightful, turboprop relic of an airplane, with metal everywhere you expect plastic, made to land on gravel or ice. Nestled in a Hawker, I flew north from Whitehorse, Yukons capital city, past 300 miles of moonscape ” gray craters scarred by the white lines of mining roads that seemed to loop and go nowhere ” before Dawson City appeared through a hole in the cloud cover. The subarctic town, nicknamed œParis of the North during the late Gold Rush, looked like a strange, solitary incursion on the land. I was there to spend three months living in the childhood home of the Canadian writer Pierre Berton, who had donated the house for this purpose. A volunteer picked me up at the airport. On the drive through town, we passed a truck with an animal carcass in the bed, antlers poking out past a tarp. black birds pecked at the exposed edges. œIf you leave your moose out, the ravens will get at it, the volunteer said. The Yukon River divided the town into Dawson proper and West Dawson, a scattered community of cabins whose inhabitants hauled their own wood, water and propane. I walked down to the river almost every day. It was October, and the black, bottomless water flowed fast toward Alaska. Over the next few weeks, the river changed. First the water took on the faint sheen of an oil slick. Then slivers of ice began to race along the current, catching the light like the heads and bellies of surfacing seals. Then bigger, chunks of ice formed, audibly colliding and jostling for space until they clustered and at a bottleneck bend. Finally, one morning in November, I woke to an eerie, noticeable silence. I went down to the rivers beach sheets of ice overlapped where theyd heaved onto the shore, their exposed resembling massive blocks of turquoise glass. A government employee had drilled into the ice and laid out orange flags indicating where the ice was thick enough to walk safely. I watched a dogsled cross. Because of the snow cover, it wasnt immediately clear where the ground ended and the river began. As I stepped out, I could hear ice continuing to crack, the sound of trickling water running in open rivulets. Under my feet, Id been told, ran water deep enough to swallow a truck. This would be a stupid way to die, I thought. Halfway across, I stopped and looked south, toward where the Yukon River met the Klondike River. At this time of year, the sun rose so late and set so early that it circled the horizon in a continuous blaze of orange. Part of the Canadian identity is that were a hardy people, thriving in the inhospitable north. Its one of those myths so ingrained and pervasive that you believe it even if, like me ” like most ” you have lived your whole life in cities less than 60 miles north of the American border. For just a moment, my breath clouding around me, icicles forming on my chin, I stood in that mythical Canada. I crossed and hiked triumphantly around West Dawson, which had been inaccessible except by helicopter during the . The temperature dropped below degrees Celsius. When I returned to the house, hours later, I peeled off my jeans and saw that my thighs, like my cheeks and nose, were a raw, violent red. Out on the river, I had seen two other people crossing. The first glided past on skis with a baby strapped to his chest. The second was an acquaintance pulling a sled. œJust picking up my mail! he called. Kim Fu is the author of the novel œFor Today I Am a Boy and the poetry collection œHow Festive the Ambulance. Hans Johann was a capitalist pig farmer, a man who owned the pigs and the farm. His wife was Barbara. They were both German Mennonites. After World War II, both had fled with their families from what was once Prussia to Niagara, which is where, on some acres between the lake and the waterfalls, they stayed and became Mama and Papa, then Oma and Opa. My mother, Linda, was the fourth of Oma and Opas seven children, born and christened at such a rate that the family could not afford middle names. Mama made up for this by calling me œSarah Nicole, while my father, one of four from the suburbs, has never said anything but œSarah. At home in London, Ontario, I sided with my dad, thinking two names were less smart than one but when we went to the pig farm, my name was turned by thick German tongues into œ . This older, extrinsic version of me was the one I liked best. Summers belonged to Niagara. Driving to the farm in a station wagon with no empty seats, we knew we were close when the asphalt turned to dirt and had arrived when the dirt turned to gravel. A long lane, in birches, led to an ancient Mercedes or two and a big John Deere tractor, a nameless cat curled under the exhaust pipe. In the kitchen, we ate Omas bread with havarti cheese and summer grapes, on which a skim of dust belied a of gold. What did we need money for? Nothing. Ice cream, maybe, if we wanted it in a cone from Avondale Dairy. Turtles swam with us in the pool, the water cold and unchlorinated under scum, colored the dim vegetative green of fairy tales before theyre Americanized. Oma said her ferns would grow better if we urinated in the soil, and we rolled our eyes but did it, one at a time. I sneaked away to the gully, read my aunts ahistorical romance novels. My brother shot a dove with a BB gun. Pigs screamed in the barn. It seemed in those summers impossible that the sun could either burn me or fail to wake me up, that I could ever be sick for more than three days or have an allergy. I was no more friends with nature than I was friends with my kin, yet it seemed that nature and I felt the same way: indifferent to the rules, remote no matter how we were tamed. My grandfather is alive, freshly widowed. Though he no longer capitalizes on much or practices animal husbandry, he lives in the bungalow on the farm and makes and sells peach and grape jam. Everyone thinks they know what peach and grape jam taste like, but I maintain that Opas jam can make you forget what a fruit is. Sarah Nicole Prickett is a writer in New York and the founder of Adult Magazine. A few years ago, I got to pick a small village to stay in for a while and write poetry. I chose the Missisquoi Valley, in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, because I liked what the bays First Nations name meant: many aquatic birds. Indeed, I saw birds everywhere: in my dreams, above my head, through the windows. I saw the wind, too, moving across the cornfields. The region also brought me back to my love of New England. When choosing the town I was to stay in, Id randomly pointed at a little village called Mystic. It was an enticing name. Id also found a sister city in the United States with the same name, which had a museum with a room dedicated to Herman Melville. When I write, I always let myself be led by coincidence. I quickly started inventing connections between Melville and the Qubcois Mystic between me scribbling notes in a rented Cavalier and the trailblazers of real and fictional territory that were the great American writers of the 19th century. I also imagined stories of the devil whirling around in the towns barn, and created my own private numerology. I would look for covered bridges on the road, round barns built by utopian Quakers and Victorian houses. I thought about loyalists fleeing north after the Revolutionary War, about Irish Catholics fleeing famine, about all the immigrants who left their mark along the path. I knew that by venturing further, to the shores of the great Lake Memphremagog, I would also think about the Vietnam War deserters whod found refuge there. I thought about the First Nation Abenakis, how they named the lakes and rivers, and about our ignorance. I began my stay at Pike River, but I understood that this road was one where each stop would lead to another. I walked into the office of tourism in Stanbridge Station, my next stop, and asked a petite historian a thousand questions. She showed me Chemin St. on the map, which she called the second prettiest road in Quebec. (I never learned where the first was.) I didnt stay in Mystic. As soon as I caught sight of the old cemetery in Hunter Mills, I became fascinated by the border zone between Quebec and the United States. It represented the state I was in myself: a wandering state of mind, looking for ghosts, mine and others looking for my words, my promised land, my house built stone by stone throughout my life. And that is how, having been asked to stay in a small village, I found myself gathering the rosary beads of hamlets strung along the border area. Im still enamored with the scenery I found there: isolated villages in the shadow of the mountains, whose grandeur lorded over long lakes and rivers farms and cornfields a Mercedes up on four blocks amid the junk strewn in front of an abandoned house old cemeteries that pop up at every turn leafy trees of maple, walnut, beech, oak, birch a few wayside crosses old churches and train stations and checkpoints and in the morning, at the inn by the river, a little black cat sitting on a tree branch listening to the sound of the falls and the purring coffeepot. ‰lise Turcotte, a poet and novelist, is the author of œThe Sound of Living Things and œGuyana. Translated by Allison M. Charette. En fran§ais: Il y a quelques annes, on ma demand de sjourner dans un petit village de mon choix afin dy crire des po¨mes. Jai choisi la valle de la Missisquoi dans les cantons de lest en Qubec, parce que jaimais la signification du nom donn par les Premi¨res Nations   la baie: beaucoup doiseaux aquatiques. Dj , je voyais des oiseaux partout, dans mes rªves, autour de ma tªte, derri¨re les fenªtres. Je voyais aussi le vent bouger   travers les champs de ma¯s. Cette rgion me ramenait aussi   mon amour de la . Afin de choisir le village de mon sjour, javais point mon doigt sur un petit village appel Mystic. Ce nom mattirait. Javais aussi dcouvert une ville homonyme aux o¹ il y avait, dans un muse, une salle ddie   Melville. Je me laisse toujours guider par les co¯ncidences pour crire. Jinventais dores et dj  des liens entre Melville et le Mystic qubcois entre moi prenant des notes dans une Cavalier loue, et ces dfricheurs de territoires rels et fictifs que sont les grands crivains amricains du 19e si¨cle. Jimaginais aussi des histoires de diable tournant en rond dans la Grange   douze c´ts, et crais une numrologie intime   moi. Je chercherais les ponts couverts sur la route, les granges rondes construites par des quakers utopiques, les maisons   fa§ade victorienne je pensais   la fuite des loyalistes vers le nord, aux Irlandais catholiques fuyant la famine,   tous ces immigrants ayant laiss leurs traces sur le chemin. Je savais quen maventurant plus loin, aux abords du grand lac Memphrmagog, je penserais aussi aux dserteurs de la guerre du Vietnam. Je pensais aux Abnaquis des Premi¨res Nations, qui ont donn les noms aux lacs et aux rivi¨res,   notre ignorance. € l  o¹ mon sjour commen§ait, jai compris cependant que jtais sur une route o¹ chaque arrªt menait   un autre. Je suis entre dans le bureau du tourisme, jai pos mille questions   une petite historienne de Stanbridge Station. Elle ma indiqu sur la carte o¹ se trouve Chemin la deuxi¨me plus belle route du Qubec. (Je nai pas jamais appris o¹ se situe la premi¨re). Et je ne suis pas reste   Mystic: d¨s que jai aper§u le vieux cimeti¨re de Hunter Mills, cest la zone frontali¨re entre le Qubec et les qui ma fascine. Elle tait lillustration de ltat dans lequel je me trouvais, dans lesprit de lerrance,   la recherche de fant´mes, les miens, ceux des autres   la recherche de mes mots, ma terre promise, ma maison construite pierre apr¨s pierre tout au long de ma vie. Et cest ainsi quappele   sjourner dans un petit village, je me suis retrouve   ramasser les grains dun chapelet de hameaux disperss sur le chemin de la fronti¨re. Le dcor que jy ai trouv menchante toujours: villages enclavs dans lombre des montagnes, dont le grandeur veillaient sur les lacs longs et les rivi¨res fermes et champs de ma¯s une Mercedes sur quatre blocs   travers le dbarras devant une maison   labandon de vieux cimeti¨res qui surprennent   chaque dtour des arbres feuillus, rables, noyers, ªtres, chªnes, bouleaux quelques croix de chemin danciennes gares et glises, de vieux postes de fronti¨re et le matin,   lauberge, un petit chat noir perch sur une branche darbre coutant le bruit des chutes et de la cafeti¨re qui ronronne.

**Ben Hubbard**

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