

Preface

This is a book about Canadian creativity. I have written it because I found during the course of my research on Canadian culture that Canadians are an extremely creative people and that creativity has played a crucial role in the country's development. Unfortunately, the extent of this creativity is not well known in Canada or in other parts of the world, in itself providing one of the most important reasons for writing this book.

Canadian creativity is not limited to hockey, insulin, basketball, standard time, and the telephone. On the contrary, it is spread liberally across every area of the country's cultural life. Over the centuries, Canadians have been compelled to be highly creative in order to deal with many complex problems and unique opportunities. What is particularly fascinating about Canadian creativity is the degree to which it is intimately connected to the country's colossal size, cold climate, and small population. It is no coincidence that Canadians have been highly creative in the development of transportation and communications, health care and social security systems, and in such industries as pulp and paper, mining, petrochemicals, hydroelectricity, and a host of other fields and endeavours. The size, nature, and demands of the country have necessitated it.

In coming to grips with these challenges, Canadian creativity has flowed from small towns and rural areas as well as large cities. Individuals and groups, men and women, recent immigrants and long-time residents have all played vital roles. There is hardly a region, community, or ethnic group anywhere in the country that has not made an enduring contribution in this regard. Equally fascinating is the fact that Canadian creativity has benefited countless people in other parts of the world.

There is no better time to be focusing on Canadian creativity than the present. Not only is there a great deal of interest today in creativity, but growing numbers of educators, business leaders, and politicians are coming to the conclusion that creativity is the key to improving living standards around the world, as well as coming to grips with the planet's most difficult, demanding, and debilitating problems.

But there is another, equally compelling reason for focusing on Canadian creativity. It is an ideal vehicle for telling important aspects of the Canadian story. For just as it is impossible to tell the story of the Canadian economy without reference to the crucial role that natural resources have played in it, so it is impossible to tell the story of Canadian culture as a *whole* without dealing with the quintessential role of creativity.

To illustrate this fact, it is necessary to include in the book many events and developments that are not necessarily creative as such, but nevertheless form an essential part of the context needed to understand how creativity has evolved in Canada, why it is so deeply engrained in the country's cultural life, and how it has contributed to Canadian development. Creativity does not take place in a vacuum. It is the product of very specific historical, environmental, cultural, and human circumstances, and a response to many different needs, pressures, and possibilities.

It is impossible to write a book like this without encountering some very contentious issues, including how terms like "creativity" and "Canadian" are to be used, as well as how dates, places, and "firsts" of one type or another are addressed.

In the first instance, I have used the term creativity very broadly as encompassing the origination of things that have never existed before, that have broken new ground in some way, or that are original or unique. Used this way, creativity is an expansive notion that includes innovation, invention, exploration, discovery, and application—what Thomas Homer-Dixon meant when he used the word "ingenuity," and what Northrop Frye called "the imagination." While this is a broader use of the term creativity than the standard dictionary definition, it is consistent with how the concept is viewed today.

Equally problematic is the term "Canadian." By "Canadian" I mean people who were born in Canada and developed much of their creativity here, and by "Canada" I mean not only the country as it presently exists but those lands and colonies which would eventually make up Canada, including the independent Dominion of Newfoundland prior to its joining Canada in 1949. Many creative Canadians moved to other countries to carry out most or all of their life's work, but I still consider their contributions as being representative of Canadian creativity. I have also included the contributions of those born in other parts of the world who came to Canada at some point in their lives and did a significant part of their creative work here.

With respect to the equally difficult problem of dates, places, and “firsts,” I have consulted many different sources of information, and have tried to follow the consensus among researchers working in this field. I would like to pay tribute here to the pioneering contributions made to this fascinating field by J.J. Brown, Thomas Carpenter, Roy Mayer, Ralph Naddir, Ken McGoogan, John Melady, Bob McDonald, Susan Hughes, Lisa Wojna, Maxine Trottier, and John Andraos, as well as by Research Matters, *Historica.ca*, and its recent *Canadian Made* series. I would also like to acknowledge the fact that the book *Canada from Sea unto Sea*, published by the Loyalist Press in 1968, was very helpful in my own research.

It remains to thank a number of people who have made specific contributions to this book, or have supported my efforts over the years to broaden and deepen knowledge and understanding of Canadian culture and creativity in all their diverse forms and manifestations. Included here are my immediate and extended family—Nancy, Charlene, Susan, Alan, brother Murray and his wife Eleanor, and my children’s godparents Attila and Elfriede—as well as André Fortier, Tom Symons, Mavor Moore, Bill McWhinney, John Meisel, John Hawco, Ian Morrison, Steven Thorne, Leslie Oliver, George Tillman, Don McGregor, John and Francine Gordon, Barry Witkin, Joyce Zemans, Frank Pasquill, Peter Sever, and many others.

Most of all, I would like to express my gratitude to Walter Pitman, James Gillies, John Hobday, and Sheila Jans for the valuable contributions they made to the book and to my work in the cultural field in general. Most of all, I would like to thank my good friend David Stover for the key role he played in the design, editing, and publication of this book. While the book has been in the making for many years, it simply would not exist without David’s crucial contribution to it.

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2016