



Welcome Home: Travels in Smalltown Canada

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Across thousands of miles, the Canadian population clusters like loosely strung beads on the thread of the 49th parallel. This is truly Canada—a vast stretch of land and a bounty of small towns. In *Welcome Home*, Stuart McLean takes us on a heartwarming journey from one coast to the other to visit these small yet vibrant places and meet their remarkable citizens.

We visit Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, an old-fashioned "cow town"; Dresden, Ontario, once a destination for escaped slaves using the Underground Railroad; St-Jean-de-Matha, Quebec, where the world's strongest man is buried; and Foxwarren, Manitoba, a quintessential hockey town. We wander along Main Street in Sackville, New Brunswick; explore Nakusp, B.C., which may have been the home of an illegitimate child of royalty; and watch the icebergs float by in Ferryland, Newfoundland.

Each town Stuart visits tells us a little about Canada's rich and often forgotten history and a lot about who Canadians are today. With a storyteller's eye for detail and an effervescent sense of humour, Stuart McLean introduces us to seven truly wonderful places and dozens of extraordinary people.

Welcome Home: Travels in Smalltown Canada Details

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Author : Stuart McLean

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Stefan says

Welcome Home by Stuart McLean was an outstanding work of nonfiction. McLean writes in a simple, engaging, and humorous manner as he describes his experiences in several towns (the different towns were chosen to reflect different parts of Canadian society and culture). Welcome Home chronicles the people, atmosphere, setting, culture, and history of several different towns. This book was entertaining to read, but was also insightful because of its look at small town Canada.

Violet Sunflower says

Welcome Home: Travels in Small-Town Canada is the book every Canadian should read. Through the differing cultures and histories of seven small towns across the nation, Stuart McLean shows the diversity as well as the essential connectedness of Canada. As with all of Stuart McLean's books, the reader is caught by the light-hearted style, and held by the sincerity of the emotions and situations expressed through the writing, ultimately leaving the reader with a deep feeling of nostalgia, sorrow and national pride. A brilliant work, well worth the read.

Jann says

I enjoyed the homey feeling that McLean brings with his chats to the people of the various small towns he visits. Most are longtime residents of each particular town and wouldn't want to live anywhere else. In between the conversations which are related, many anecdotes and interesting facts are told, some which involve the history of our country. Some of the towns I have visited myself and I can agree with McLean's impressions but without the way he skillfully gets people to talk about themselves, their friends and their town, I would never have known most of the fascinating details.

I did find, however, that the book wasn't one that I wanted to read straight through all at once. Since I started it, I have put it aside several times to read other books. Due to the nature of the book I didn't have the same pull to keep reading that I do with a mystery, for instance, but I am glad that I kept picking it up again and finally finished it. The last two locations, Nakusp, British Columbia and Ferryland, Newfoundland are places I wouldn't want to have missed reading about.

I enjoy visits to large cities occasionally but generally they overwhelm me. All the towns chosen by McLean typify the sort of town I like to visit as I like the friendliness often found in them. As it was written in 1992 some things will have changed but not the welcoming nature of small town people. I would recommend the book to my Canadian friends as it relates so much about our country and I also recommend it to non-Canadians as it reveals so much about the country and its residents.

Laura says

It was a really good read. Stuart Mclean is truly a Canadian icon, and I very much enjoyed this jaunt into non-fiction.

There were a LOT of spelling, grammar, and typographical errors though. For a book that was published in 1992, one would think these would have been ironed out by now. That was very disappointing to me.

Tonia says

Twenty years later this book is still a relevant piece of Canadian literature reflecting on the lives of those individuals who live in rural communities. Working hard to survive and communities these people share with McLean what they love about living in small towns, what endures them to their community members, and the various ways in which they are attempting to survive together as urbanization increases and their rural populations decrease. From a hockey town in Manitoba, to the historic town of Maple Creek, to the far reaches of a bay town of Sackville, the reader is taken on a soft and melodious journey through the eyes of those who live and work in rural communities. I wonder if he has written an updated version. I think McLean should.

The most interesting part for me was the meeting McLean secured with the person who created the Canadian flag, George Stanley living in Sackville, New Brunswick. He was asked to create a version of a potential flag by a member of parliament as he had strong interests in history and heraldry (a means of identification, usually focused on country or familial commitment). He based his single maple leaf design on outfits Olympians wore during the 1928 Olympics, the games my grandfather Doral Pilling and his room mate Percy Williams both competed in. "One of the images I have carried with me all my life is a photograph I saw when I was a boy. It was a picture from the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam of Percy Williams breasting the tape and winning a gold medal for Canada. He was wearing a white jersey with a red maple leaf on his chest. It's an image that has always struck with me." Recently a book was written about Percy Williams by Samuel Hawley titled, I Just Ran: Percy Williams, World's Fastest Human (<http://www.amazon.ca/Just-Ran-William...>). Another book to read especially since the author consulted with my Aunt Arta Johnson who was instrumental in documenting her father's, Doral Pilling's, oral history which included stories about the 1928 Olympics and the athletic tours he participated in as the team returned to Canada. I also have two cousins who have taken this maple leaf motif from their Olympic uniforms and had tattoos made from them. Family stories and choices coming full circle. Thank you McLean for shedding more light on a family story of which I was unaware.

Fiona says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Someone, either my brother or my mum, gave me this book for Christmas about ten years ago although now that I am reading it in my quest to read the books I own and save money, neither has taken credit. This book makes me want to visit more of Canada. Thank you Roger or Mum.

Jason Moody says

Heartwarming anecdotes of Canadian culture. Makes me nostalgic for things I didn't even experience.

Kathy says

I enjoyed this book of Stuart McLean's travels across the width of Canada, stopping in gems of small towns and staying long enough to really get to know the people and feel a true sense of the place. The towns he chose were Maple Creek in Saskatchewan, Dresden in Ontario, St-Jean-de-Matha in Quebec, Sackville in New Brunswick, Foxwarren in Manitoba, Nakusp in BC and Ferryland in Newfoundland. I particularly liked the way Mr. McLean was able to take every day lives and the simplicity of small town events and transform them into truly interesting stories. My favorite town was the "outport" of Ferryland in Newfoundland where everyday life is so far removed from my own experience of modern day living that it seems as if it were in another century. Mr. McLean also captures beautifully the characters of the people he meets. Interestingly, not one of the many people he met had any desire to leave their quiet towns; in fact, a number of them had escaped city life to find peace in small town Canada.

Rick Pozeg says

It is awesome to see the hospitality people have in small towns. The close knit communities. The way people will give for free with the optimism and trust they will be paid back but never with expectation. Small towns seem to be safer, everyone knows everybody else. Canada truly is a vast stretch of land made up of small towns. It is in these towns that true Canadian identity and history exist. It is where we have built our character.

It seems the people in small towns, they use only what they have, they keep traditions going and never beg for more, they make the best of it and rely on old principles.

But technology is inevitably on a path to eradicate these towns by destroying jobs.

Landmarks, they are infinite reminders of our life events

Whether it is a building or a tree planted, a tire swing, or an old clock, they are reminders of the past to carry on the future. They are reminders of our childhoods. They remind us where we are in the world, where we came from and where men before us came from. They perpetuate our lives in some way, through history and time.

They make up the places that we call home, wherever that may be.

We live in a beautiful country with such rich diversity from one end to another.

Emily says

I've enjoyed all of Stuart McLean's "Vinyl Cafe" stories, but this is a more serious non-fiction account of seven small Canadian towns, their history, their struggles, and their attractions. It's a pleasant, quiet read probably not of much interest to non-Canadians, but it made me want to visit many of these places and spend more time in small towns.

If you're not a particular fan of McLean already or a student of Canadian history and small towns, I would probably recommend starting with a Vinyl Cafe collection instead, though.

Becca Arend says

About two weeks before I began this masterpiece of a book, I started reading Bill Bryson's "The Lost Continent: Travels Across Small-Town America." As an American living in Canada, I thought it would feel like home... talk about an antithesis. Where Bryson's book was witty, but oozing with sarcasm and cynicism, "Welcome Home" is warm, reverent, and wonderful. I have yet to make it past the first chapter of Bryson's book, but Stuart McLean's beautiful stories got me hooked from page one. How very Canadian.

Stuart McLean tells vignettes from the lives of hundreds of small-town Canadians, living in communities where people really care about their neighbors; where history and ancestry matter; where everyone is a story-teller. McLean paints a fascinating picture of a wonderful country.

Canadian or not, this is worth the read.

Justin says

Welcome Home is a non-fiction book. The narrator of the story and also the author of the book is Stuart McLean. He tells the story of his travels in Canada. He goes to Maple Creek, Saskatchewan a small ranch town, where cow auctions still take place. He goes to Dresden, Ontario a small historic town of a mere 2 600 inhabitants. He stops by St-Jean-de-Matha, Quebec, which was by far my favorite town he visits. I liked it so much because he spoke about things I had heard about and also because he speaks of Black lac, another small town where my mother comes from. He also speaks about Louis Cyr, Champion des home forts. This also lead me to discover that my grandmother Doris Cyr is related to him. After that he goes to Sackville, New Brunswick a small town that was once the best farming town in Canada. He then travels to Foxwarren, Manitoba a small town that hardly classifies as a town. In this town hockey is not a sport, it's a religion, literally. After that he goes to Nakusp, British Columbia. The town is so small that when Stuart decides to go the museum, the town gives him the key and tells him to close up when he is done. Finally he goes to Ferryland, Newfoundland. This town is so small that there is no bank, and that when you go to the Gas/Hardware/Plumbing/Electric/Fishing/Groceries store in town you don't need money you just need your name. Now that's what I call trust, the store just assumes that after two weeks the client will give a pay everything they purchased. I truly loved this book for the simple fact that it had a comforting feel to it. Every time I read it, I would feel that even in the worst of times there always small towns like these ones where they don't worry about big city problems. Where everyone in town knows each other and there is no reason to not let your kids go play with other kids without supervision. The way Stuart McLean strings all these stories together is truly fascinating, you feel like you are right there, in the passenger seat as he meets truly unique people in each town. Stuart also teaches you some history of Canada along the way. For example, there was a time where war prisoners were aloud to walk into a restaurant with no questions but a black man in the Canadian army wasn't. A-

Thebruce1314 says

I've read all of McLean's books and loved them. This book was good...I'd give it a 3.5 if that were an option...but I found it really hard to make my way through. It felt more like a personal journey to me - McLean's memories of the time he spent with the people in the seven towns visited across Canada. It was a melancholy journey, at that. McLean laments the loss of innocence and the quirks that go with living in small town Canada due to modern technology and urban industry, particularly in this tenth-anniversary edition, where we learn that many of the places he visited are almost unrecognizable after a decade. Certainly some of the tales were enjoyable and the love for his subject-matter comes through in McLean's writing; I just didn't feel like the stories were meant for the reader, but rather for the author himself.

Hilary says

This is one of those books every Canadian can feel good about. And probably every Canadian knows someone who knows someone in the book. While I read it I was struck by how small the world is. As I was reading this book during a break at work my co-worker came up to me and said "ah yes Stuart McLean he's a great author, do you know he wrote a book about Maple Creek and in it he talks to my great aunt on a ranch?" It was weird because she didn't realize this was "that book" and I was on the Maple Creek chapter. It made me smile.

One complaint is there were a lot of spelling errors and grammar errors (a lot being approximately 10 errors which is 10 more than the average book I read). Which is annoying to a reader who can't skim and reads every word. I'm sure people could find a bunch of errors in my write up, but I'm not an author and don't have an editor.
