



I am Canadian, eh? We all tend to behave as if Canada and the United States are the same. And in many ways we are. English is the first language of each; we wear the same type of clothing styles; we watch many of the same TV programs, read many of the same books and magazines, go to the same movies, frequent many of the same shops and love our country.

But, when it comes right down to it, we are also different. What makes us so different?

# THE SAME ONLY DIFFERENT

By Lynne Benjamin #86190

WHAT DO YOU THINK  
ARE THE MAJOR  
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN  
CANADIANS AND  
AMERICANS?

WHAT MAKES  
US DIFFERENT?

WHAT MAKES US SIMILAR?

I grew up very close to the Canadian/United States border between southern Alberta and northern Montana. My family had good friends in Cut Bank, Montana, and we visited there often.

### Going Across the Line

Late every summer, my folks took the family to Great Falls, Montana, for our new back-to-school outfits, and when we moved into our new house, my mother went across the line (as we called it) to decorate the house. I never thought about going to a different country.

**“FROM AN RVER’S PERSPECTIVE, THERE ARE CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THAT SIMILARITY/DIFFERENCE THAT AFFECT US MORE THAN OTHERS.”**

Later in my life, I worked with people who often went to the United States to work. They would tell me about all the things that made us different. They all had stories. Each story was about some unique or strange happening. Interestingly enough, many of them had difficulty adjusting to that new society and then adjusting again to life when they returned to Canada. We all wondered why this was.

Even later in my life, we have become the consummate RVers, spending eight to 10 months on the road, six months of which is in the United States. From an RVer’s perspective, there are certain aspects of that similarity-difference that affect us more than others.

I took it upon myself to explore what RVers think. Many of the thoughts and comments here are the results from informal surveys on various discussion groups asking the questions:

- What do you think are the major differences between Canadians and Americans?
- What makes us different?
- What makes us similar?

Very important to this question is the fact that we are two different countries with different histories and development. Even though we are both democracies, our systems of government are different.

### The Elephant and the Mouse

Next is the fact that the United States has approximately 10 times the population of Canada. Many respondents pointed out that, when you have a neighbor big and powerful, “when the elephant sneezes, the mouse catches a cold.”

That is to say, everything that happens in the United States affects Canada in some way or another.

After all, our cultures seem to be so similar, so why do we feel the way we do? Our expectations? Well, maybe.

Many Canadians envy the diversity of weather found in the United States. There is no place in Canada that allows us to escape the long winter chills and still stay within our borders.

One respondent pointed out that “the U.S./Canadian border goes the wrong way. If it went north and south instead of east and west, the people of both countries could enjoy more temperate weather all year-round.” On the other hand, many American respondents commented on the vastness and the pristine beauty of the Canadian wilderness and the cleanliness of the cities.

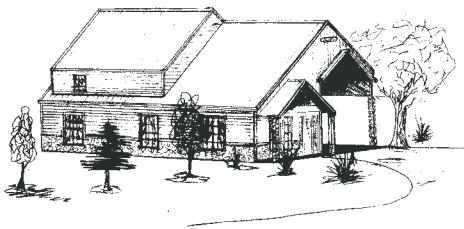
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**Picturesque Mural in Chemainus:** This is a mural of the first saw mill in the town square at Chemainus, British Columbia, Canada. There are wall murals scattered throughout this old saw-mill town, located on the east shore of Vancouver Island. Photo by Lynne Benjamin.

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## Canadian Realities

As a Canadian traveling in the United States, allow me to contrast a few of our realities.

**1** Canadians are restricted to a maximum of 182 days in any one year by the United States Government.

Well, this is both true and not true. As visitors, Canadian citizens with proof of Canadian citizenship can travel to the United States for a maximum of 182 days (six months) each year. Canadians, as other foreigners, can be in the United States beyond the 182 days, but they must obtain visas.

**2** Not all Canadian health care plans are the same; none covers everything; they are not free, and we need to purchase supplementary emergency medical coverage when we travel.

Even though no Canadian can be denied medical attention in Canada, health care is a provincial matter.

No provincial plan covers the additional cost of medical treatment in the United States, and each insists that you have a permanent address and reside in that province for six or seven months each year.

The rates for medical travel insurance coverage differ. Under certain conditions, rates can become insufferable, and some people may take a larger deductible. Some stop traveling entirely, or some may take a gamble and travel without the additional coverage.

**3** The Canadian dollar is different from the U.S. dollar. Even now, as the Canadian dollar increases in value compared to the U.S. dollar, we still pay around \$1.10 for each U.S. dollar, and that makes it very difficult to control expenses.



**4** Canadian law restricts the ownership of firearms. Even though many Canadians own and use rifles and sporting shotguns, these must be registered. Handguns, automatic weapons and the like are highly controlled. Walking down the street or driving along the road with any kind of firearm is completely outside my realm of understanding.

**5** The military does not hold a very prominent place in Canadian culture. It has been difficult for me to appreciate the strong military existence in the United States. The Canadian military is primarily considered a peacekeeping force, under-equipped and under-funded.

**6** Canadians use the metric measuring system. I grew up with the other system, but the metric system is all the young people know.

I've stopped trying to convert the two systems. I've just learned what they mean, i.e. -40 degrees in Celsius or Fahrenheit is very cold.

## To Quote Respondents

"People who live in regions share more common interests and needs than we necessarily do with our fellow nationals who may live several time zones away. In some ways, I think people, whether they be Americans or Canadians, have more in common with each other if they live in regional areas. For example, people who live in southeast Saskatchewan, southern Manitoba, northern Minnesota or North Dakota have more in common than, for example, northern Minnesotans do with Texans, Georgians, etc., or Canadian prairie people do with those from Toronto or the Maritimes."

## "I WOULD NOT WANT ANYONE ELSE LIVING NEXT DOOR."

"I have found that I was not born to judge others or the ways of others. We are all North Americans and proud to be so. We both have the very best neighbors on the planet. We watch, interact, grow with and assist each other like one happy family. Even happy families have major differences. I would not want anyone else living next door."

"North or south of the border, we are mostly the same—downright good and caring people." 🇨🇦

### Escapees Canadian Chapters

Escapees has six active Escapees chapters in Canada. See "Calling All Chapters," on page 76, for information on joining one of these chapters, or see page 72–74 for their upcoming rallies.

#### Alberta:

Chapter #44: Alberta Roamers

#### British Columbia:

Chapter #22: Van Islanders

Chapter #33: BC Okanagan SKPs

Chapter #35: Dogwood SKPs

#### Ontario:

Chapter #18: Maple Leaf

#### Québec:

Chapter #43: Québec French Connexion

While visiting Canada, be sure to meet up with fellow Escapees for an SKP Get-together luncheon in Alberta, British Columbia or Ontario. See page 80 for details.