

# Oh Canada!

Compiled and edited by Emily Smibert

To celebrate our nation's 150th birthday, we asked some of Canada's leading jewellery designers to share what being Canadian means to them.



"After spending five years working toward my master goldsmith's degree in the Netherlands, I returned to Vancouver to follow my dream and open a small design studio. Thirty-five years later, I have worked with and employed goldsmiths from all corners of the world, and with my British business partner of 17 years and new partner from Lebanon, we have built a successful world-renowned workshop and storefront. Our mosaic of international goldsmiths allows for innovative collaborations and an opportunity to develop from each other's techniques. Only in Canada!"  
*Mary Ann Dupuis, Costen Catbalue Goldsmiths & Design, Vancouver, B.C.*



"Being a Canadian designer means having the freedom to experiment with new ideas, techniques, and challenging materials. I've pushed myself to develop my designs, together with my skills as a goldsmith, to keep them evolving, which makes designing more exciting for me and my clients. It's easy to stick with what works, but for me, all the fun is in creating new designs and pushing boundaries. Fortunately, my clients here in Canada feel the same way."  
*Andrew Costen, Costen Catbalue Goldsmiths & Design, Vancouver, B.C.*



"In my experience, Canadian clients demand quality, value, and good design over showy jewellery that's meant to impress; this is very satisfying for me. It can be a challenge to meet a client's desires, but the rewards when a piece is finished and the client is thrilled make all the preliminaries worth it. International competitions not only exercise my creative impulse, but allow me to meet and become friends with fellow designers both across Canada and abroad. This exposure has helped keep my ideas fresh and encouraged me to look beyond my community for inspiration and encouragement."  
*Lynn L. Strelau, Jewels By Design, Calgary, Alta.*



"Being a Canadian designer gives me pride; our country is strong and free, and these values are cultured in our minds and everyday lives. Yet, we Canadians are also simplistic and more connected to nature than many of our counterparts around the world. I try to bring these values into my design philosophy, and choose to illustrate the simple expression of nature and its complex abundancies in my designs."  
*Neeta Gupta, Neeta Gupta Fine Artisan Jewelry, Winnipeg, Man.*



"I love the contentment of Atlantic Canada, although living and designing here is not without challenges. We have a wonderful crafts community here in Nova Scotia, but there are no suppliers or sub-contractors, and the province doesn't have the clientele to support sales of an individual maker without exporting. Thus, everything gets shipped in, and everything gets shipped out. And yet, I am determined to continue to work from here."  
*Dorothee Rosen, Halifax, N.S.*



"I wake up every day grateful to live in a country where I can follow my dreams, explore my design ideas, and live from my creative pursuits. A country where anything is possible if you are dedicated and put your heart and soul into it. With all the vast and varied sources of inspiration Canada offers me and other outstanding Canadian designers, I feel an enormous sense of pride when I put my "Made in Montreal. Made in Canada" label on my work. It simply makes me smile."  
*Kate Hubley, K8 Jewelry Concepts Bijoux, Montreal, Que.*



"I'm ridiculously patriotic and still get goosebumps every time I tell the Canadian diamond story and how I became part of it. I try to pack as much of Canada into each collection as I can to evoke emotion, whether it's a maple leaf, fleur de lis, or 'wrapping' hockey tape on a men's wedding band. I want my work to resonate with Canadians and tell our story using ethically sourced components, such as Canadian diamonds and gold, which are literally part of the breathtaking Canadian landscape. I feel a responsibility as a Canadian designer to shine a light on what is extraordinary about this country and hope my jewellery reflects this here in Canada and around the world."  
*Shelly Purdy, Shelly Purdy Studio, Toronto, Ont.*



"When I'm abroad, I love that Canada always gets a warm and positive response, and is highly respected as entrepreneurial. I find people like to travel and look internationally, but they truly love the fact they can come home and have an item made in Canada where things are trusted and safe. I see the Canadian designer's strengths as a fresh and innovative understanding of the importance of sustainability and the environment. Also, the fact that Canada is such a safe and bountiful place, it really does create a peaceful environment to be creative."  
*Myles Mindham, Mindham Fine Jewellery, Toronto, Ont.*



"For me, Canada is a land of openness, diversity, and a vibrant mosaic of thoughts and ideas. As an artist, it means freedom to be who I choose to be and the limitless possibilities for my art to serve those it touches. A place for all expressions is truly Canadian!"  
*Reena Ahluwalia, Toronto, Ont.*



"Being a Canadian designer means embracing the cultures of the world. My mother is Finnish and my father was Greek; they met in Toronto. By age 11, I had travelled to more than 22 countries. My designs are infused with these experiences, and are supplemented by my research into art history, architecture, literature, and nature."  
*Niki Kavakonis, Kavakonis Designs, Toronto, Ont.*