HOME

O Canadiana!

Remember those short-necked glass beer bottles better known as "stubbies"? And those silver souvenir spoons emblazoned with provincial flags that our parents and grandparents collected and corralled in little wooden racks? What about teardrop-shaped snowshoes, made of wood, rawhide and leather, hung on cabin walls? They may seem a little bit campy now, but they're as nostalgically Canadian as loons on lakes. ▶

by Janet Gyenes

Canadiana objects such as vintage snowshoes, mooseheads and miniature canoes add a touch of nostalgia to a modern space.

True north home (clockwise from top left): vintage showshoes and raw wood create a Canadian cabin feel; a bulletin board corrals Canuck objects; vintage paddles hang stylishly high in a contemporary space; a forest-themed wall decal plays off Bay stripes and vintage macramé.

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CANADA

POSTES POSTAGE

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The Canada craze

"I just can't get enough Canada," says Andrew English. He's one of the owners of Everything Old, a vintage and antiques shop in Brentwood Bay Village on Vancouver Island. Whether functional finds or decorative objects, nostalgic items are making their way into modern homes – and this seems to have stirred up another obsession: collecting vintage Canadiana, whether it's wall-sized school maps or turn-of-the-century wooden canoe paddles.

Maybe it's because we're marking the 150th anniversary of our Confederation and peeking into the past. "[There's] less of a focus on the item itself and more focus on the history," says English. People want to know, "Where did this come from? What part of Canada? What's the story attached?"

English sees some influence from the tiny home movement, in which downsizing homeowners are seeking out "working or usable antiques" – interpreting the archetype of Canadian style in a fresh way. Even those with mid-century modern and minimalist homes are adding accent pieces that juxtapose with their other furnishings, says English. And forget about spit and polish, or furniture refurbished with a fresh coat of milk paint. People don't want perfect, says English. "People want the marks, the wear." Over the past two years, he's noticed an upswing of interest in iconic Canadian items, such as an investment-worthy original First World War lithograph by Group of Seven member J. E. H. MacDonald.

Homespun kitchen goods also seem to scratch the collector's itch. Those glazed stoneware crocks made in Alberta from the 1900s to 1960s that were originally used for fermenting foods? Hipsters are snapping them up to use making kimchi and pickles. "If you don't have a lid, you can put your utensils in them," says English, adding that most people want functional items they can use in an unconventional way.

Coastal influences

If necessity is the mother of invention, then opportunity is the mother of reinvention. Frances Riley, co-owner of The Argosy