

Canada and the World

Leaf in Uniondale, N.Y., also booed the anthem.) Harbaugh agrees the booing was in poor taste. "I think Michiganans know a fair bit about Canada, we're close," says Harbaugh, a 27-year-old software designer. "I mean, I go up there all the time to party." Wohl admits he doesn't know anything specific about Canada, but suggests the media might be making a big deal about nothing. "It's something for people to write about, I guess," says the 26-year-old. "We're almost the same country."

Of course, in a certain way we like the fact that they know and care so little about us. It gives us permission to feel superior, to chuckle indulgently at the rubes Rick Mercer traps with his leading questions about seal hunts in Saskatchewan and Prime Minister Poutine. It defines our patriotism and fuels our celebrations—admit it, the Olympic hockey golds are all the more meaningful because of whom we beat. But then there are the times it rankles. We're so attuned to their world. How can they not know what happens in ours?

After all, stand on the waterfront in Windsor and you can see the lines of traffic streaming in both directions across the Ambassador Bridge. The invisible border between the two nations is only a couple of hundred metres out in the centre of the slate-coloured Detroit River. Still, last week the distance seemed so much greater. The flags in Canada were all flying at half-mast, like they did after Sept. 11, but not the Stars and Stripes that proudly decorate the top of Detroit's skyscrapers.

Jennifer Therriault and her friend Laurie Osborne were wheeling their baby daughters along the waterfront in the bright spring sunshine. Therriault, 29, was born in the States, but her family moved to Canada when she was a 14. Having roots in both countries, she is acutely aware of how little Americans know about their neighbours. "Sometimes it's embarrassing," she says. "But I don't think it's an intentional thing. They're just focused on themselves so much. The basis of what you learn in school in America is how great America is." Osborne says Canadians promote American ignorance by being so low-key about the country's heroes and accomplishments. "It's just not that glamorous to be Canadian," she says. "Americans know their history, Canadians don't. I mean, I couldn't give you a list of our

prime ministers the way they can name their presidents."

The Tunnel Bar-B-Q has been a Windsor institution for more than 60 years. The scent of its famous slow-cooked ribs is the first thing that greets American visitors when they pop up from under the river, and the restaurant draws around 30 per cent of its business from across the border. Shirley Steinhoff, a waitress, has a son in the Canadian Forces. She's worried that he might end up in Afghanistan, or someplace else fighting alongside the Americans, and she's angry about the deaths of his colleagues. "I don't find Americans mean people, but they just don't know nothing about us," she says, citing the customers who ask about snow in July, wonder if they can order in English, and inquire about the availability of ketchup in Canada, unaware of the giant Heinz plant in nearby Leamington. The United States only cares about Canada when they want something, says Steinhoff. "I think Canadians should get upset about this stuff. They're right next door to us. Some day they're going to take over."

In the dining room, Bill Cox and his wife Cynthia are devouring a large plate of ribs, with sides of french fries and mashed potatoes and gravy. They make the trip from Livonia, a Detroit suburb, three or four times a year to sample the Tunnel's artery-clogging pleasures. "We're pretty much the same people—two nations, but very compatible," Cox says as he gnaws on a bone. He knows about the dead soldiers and he's sorry, but a mention of Canadians' anger at Bush's tardy apology and rude basketball fans draws a blank look. "Canadians and Americans get along great from everything I know." And, his wife adds, "I like the prices here."

In the same way that American reporters never thought to ask Bush about the dead Canadian soldiers, the Detroit media ignored the booing of *O Canada* until the Toronto papers made it an issue they couldn't avoid. The Pistons issued a statement asking their fans to "respect the opposing country and its anthem." The crowd in Auburn Hills got the message. When the Raptors and Pistons lined up for the second game of their series, they cheered Canada's anthem just as loudly as they had derided it days before. But most of them still don't know who Jean Chrétien is. m