From Moose Jaw, With Love

When it comes to Canada, Will Ferguson has the write stuff

s Victoria really a city resting snug in its flannel comforter? So says author Will Ferguson in his latest work, Beauty Tips From Moose Jaw. But don't take it personally, as he's clearly a man in love with our city. From his history of our country and its leaders, Bastards and Boneheads, to his Cancon culture guide, How To Be A Canadian-Even If You Already Are One, Ferguson has been teaching Canadians about themselves for years. Now, in his latest book, Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw: Travels in Search of Canada, Ferguson takes us on a three-year trip throughout the Great White North and shares his reflections on how our country works.

A historian, fiction writer, world traveler and humorist, Ferguson feels a common misconception

among Canadians is that we are all the same. "I see Canada as a collection of outposts," Ferguson says. "It's a survival thing. [The country is] so vast and so far flung, to have one monolithic culture wouldn't have worked. It would have fallen apart." He explains how Canada does not have a central city that reflects the country's culture, but rather many "regional outposts with their own spheres of influence."

Ferguson chose 10 such outposts to explore, and *Beauty Tips* takes us through his close encounters with hungry polar bears in Manitoba, run-ins with Newfie fishermen and even his survival of a poetry slam



Will Ferguson 7:30pm Tuesday, November 9 Open Space Gallery, 510 Fort Tickets \$5 382-2464

in our very own James Bay Inn, to name but a few of his adventures. On the way, he proves that Canada isn't just one great big country, but a collection of unique regions

that have somehow found a way to co-exist. *Beauty Tips* is a funny and thoughtful take on what it means to be Canadian. "I want people to discover things they didn't know about Canada," he continues, "to get a sense of the sheer variety and vitality of our country."

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If anyone knows about Canada's variety and vitality, it's Ferguson. Having grown up in northern Alberta's tiny Fort Vermillion (pop. 840), he also participated in the cross-Canada Kamitavik youth program. "Kamitavik sent me across Canada for a dollar a day and all the granola I could eat," Ferguson laughs. "It's kind of like a hippy commune: govern-

ment-sponsored counter-culture. That should be a contradiction-in-terms, and in most countries it would be, but in Canada it's quite common."

is packed with information that all Canadians should know. For example, how many of us know that

example, how many of us know that St. John's, Newfoundland is closer to London than it is to Winnipeg? That Canada was the third nation to make it into space? That Moose Jaw thrived under the illegal whiskey trade in the '20s? Or even that the Laurel Point Inn was built on an ancient Indian burial ground? By weaving such tidbits of travel trivia into his stories, Ferguson creates a vibrant picture of Canada's rich history and diverse culture.

"These aren't simply trips," Ferguson concludes. "They're trips with an eye to something bigger, to get a better understanding of our country."

-Sarah Gignac