Isabelle Blais sits in the Antechamber, designed by Marie-Andrée Fortier. This living space with rock armchairs on an oriental carpet of stones and moss is the ultimate in garden humour.

SUSAN PINKER
Special to The Gazette

At the Botanical Garden, just behind the exquisitely landscaped Flowery Creek gardens ablaze with lilies, is a pine and maple forest. Slashed by newly bulldozed roads and an undulating concrete structure in its centre, it looks like a logging site at first, a wild wooded area with trees culled at regular intervals leaving little bald spots.

Great Peace of Montreal, and is designed to reflect the close ties between native people and nature. The last major garden to be created at the Botanical Garden, it is a happening that is not to be missed. As big as five football fields, the area of the First Nations Garden is divided into five zones: hardwood forests of the St. Lawrence Valley, mixed Laurentian and boreal forest, taiga and tundra, an interpretation pavilion and a large meeting area for special events.

The idea of a First Nations garden took root in

less, executing a space to reflect the links to nature of more than a dozen unique native cultures was hardly a fait-accompli.

Numerous consultations with various groups were made to ensure that the gardens avoid stereotypes and reflect First Nations activities related to the plant world "from gathering food and medicinal plants to using wood and trees to make items and build and transport their homes, to growing plants, mainly corn and vegetables," says Jean-Jacques Lincourt, director of the Botanical Garden.

opening, with workers and consultants from all parts of the province called in to plant an additional 3,000 shrubs, 1,200 plants and 750 mature trees, not to mention to dig and fill an enormous peat bog and the river feeding it.

Planting each of the 7-to-10-year-old trees was an elaborate ballet, says François Ouellet, a Botanical Garden spokesman, requiring earth-moving equipment and two or three men with their arms around each tree to guide it into place.