



National Farmers Union  
Union Nationale des Fermiers



# union farmer

Quarterly

Winter 2016-2017 / Vol. 22 Issue 4



*Photo: Paul Slomp (left) facilitates an interactive session at this year's convention which was held November 24 to 26, 2016.*

## Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

**E**specially in the aftermath of the U.S. election last fall there has been much discussion in traditional media, such as CBC radio and daily newspapers, about *fake news* and its role in the election of Donald Trump. The Oxford English Dictionary followed the same trend, declaring *post-truth* as its 2016 word of the year. Dr. Ian Mauro was the first speaker on the opening panel at the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual NFU Convention last November. His opening comments were a clear reminder of our responsibility as an organization advocating for strong communities, sound policies and sustainable farms to see beyond the twisted facts designed to mask the truth in an attempt to appeal to our emotions and influence our behaviour at the ballot box and beyond. Throughout the convention there were clear reminders of why we need to untwist facts, and in doing so, to consider who benefits from those twisted facts. As Terry Boehm reminded us during his presentation on a panel about regulations, we always need to be conscious of who has power and the influence those powerful entities are exerting on government to insure they maintain and strengthen their power.

The NFU Annual Convention is designed to be a forum where NFU members, elected officials and staff can come together to learn from and with each other -- a forum where we can sort through and

debate the many facts and discuss how we can use those facts to tell our stories in an effort to influence public policy. In many ways it is not surprising that the NFU was the first farm organization to invite Dr. Christy Morrissey to talk to farmers about her research around neonicotinoids and prairie wetlands. Within the NFU we are not afraid to venture into difficult discussions that may call into question some of our own farm practices when those discussions are based on solid scientific research undertaken in the public interest. And of course, the NFU is never shy about advocating in the interests of farmers first, rather than the more common trend today of agricultural organizations "speaking for industry as if the interests of agribusiness corporations are always parallel with farmers' interests", as President Jan Slomp notes in his President's message.

Only a handful of NFU members are able to attend the Annual Convention each year, therefore, the NFU Board of Directors provides other opportunities for members to get a taste of the information presented at the convention. Audio recordings are a great way to hear full presentations, including the question and answer period. An audio recording order form is on the back page of this magazine. This issue of the *Union Farmer Quarterly* is devoted to convention coverage, along with a report from Maureen Bostock from the Convention on Biological Diversity in December in Cancun, Mexico. More coverage of convention panels will appear in future issues, as will the *Paul Beingsnessner Award* winning essays.

—Ann Slater  
Chair of the Editorial Advisory Committee

## union farmer quarterly

Official publication of the National Farmers Union  
2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6

Telephone: 306-652-9465 — Fax: 306-664-6226 — E-mail: [nfu@nfu.ca](mailto:nfu@nfu.ca) — Website: [www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca)

PRINTED AT ST. PETER'S PRESS, MÜNSTER, SK, AGREEMENT NO. 40063391, POSTAGE PAID AT MÜNSTER, SASKATCHEWAN.

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATE:

Members \$ 15.00; Non-Members \$25.00; Institutions \$35.00  
(price includes monthly newsletter and quarterly magazine)

*We believe a strong rural community in Canada is an essential part of our national culture. In the National Farmers Union, we work collectively to strengthen the farm community by: building ties between farmers in all parts of Canada, with farmers in other countries and with non-farm people; ensuring all people have access to an adequate, nutritious and safely-produced food supply; promoting equity for women and young people in the farming community; promoting social support systems that permit people in farming communities a good quality of life; promoting the development and maintenance of a Canadian infrastructure to serve Canadian goals in food production and trade; and helping governments to form fair and constructive policies related to food production and food trade.*





# A message from the President

— by Jan Slomp, National President

On my travels to and from all NFU regional meetings, I have discovered one thing that is similar everywhere in rural Canada -- a bleeding countryside and a very obvious decline in prosperity in rural communities. The effects of a sharp decline in the number of farmers over the decades has been camouflaged by reasonably well paying off-farm jobs in manufacturing, resource extraction and so on. These well paying jobs are harder to find as trade agreements force the relocation of industries abroad and as the resource sectors in the west retract. The NFU needs to illustrate and measure the decline of the rural economy, not just in terms of net farm income, but also in how drastically these changes have affected economic activity in small and medium-sized towns over time. That number will be staggering.

Economist Jim Stanford writes about how trade agreements fail to improve our position, and instead create a Canadian economy that lags behind with fewer well-paying jobs, a negative balance of payments and a declining manufacturing base. Meanwhile, successive Ministers of Agriculture boast about the increase in Canadian agricultural exports every time another free trade deal is signed. Yet farmers who create that growth often take home less than what it costs to produce these export commodities. Food imports are rising hand-in-hand with the growth in agricultural exports. This is causing a further disconnect between eaters and growers. When farmers have both market power and a connection with consumers, they produce what consumers value. Farmer market power creates room for quality products to command a premium price for farmers. Trade agreements typically make farmers the suppliers of the lowest common denominator commodities for the benefit of transnational processors and traders.

Commodity organizations are increasingly speaking for industry as if the interests of agribusiness corporations are always parallel with farmers' interests. The board of the Canola Council

of Canada, which is partially funded by grower checkoffs, is made up of fifteen directors, of which four are farmers. The other directors represent grain and seed companies and a transnational processor. Until recently, Canada's canola standards allowed for some premium in the international market. However, the Canola Council of Canada just helped make a deal to sell more canola to China by allowing more dockage in return for a lower price. What good does it do for a Canadian farmer to sell more canola at \$10 if it costs \$11 to grow it?

Since the summer of 2016, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario have offered a new class of discounted milk for Canadian cheese manufacturers, as a way to persuade them to no longer use tariff-wall-circumventing, imported skim milk from the US. The Canadian government has an obligation to assert border control over imports as a reward to Canadian dairy farmers for not over-producing. The federal government uses trade agreements as an excuse that ties their hands. Lower farm-gate prices were also agreed on in the past as a way to limit tariff-circumventing US butter-oil/corn-syrup blends for Canadian ice cream makers and tariff-circumventing pizza cheese ingredients for restaurants and frozen pizza makers in Canada. By allowing the federal government to get away with insufficient border control and fighting imports by altering and adding classes of milk that are discounted at the farm gate, we open the door for a steady undermining of the pillars under supply management.

The good news is that in early January, 2017 Minister MacAulay announced the appointment of Jennifer Haynes as Commissioner for the Canadian Dairy Commission. She farms in the Gaspé region of Quebec and manages both a modest-sized dairy and a beef herd. Having someone from Quebec with a more modest-sized operation will hopefully bring some firm representation to Ottawa. The NFU congratulates her on the appointment.

*Sincere Solidarity in 2017, Jan Slomp*





# A message from the Women's President

— by Coral Sproule, Women's President

As I write this at the beginning of January, I am just now settling in to 2017. With planning for the upcoming season and ongoing farm chores in full – and bitterly cold – swinging over most of our country, we pause and reflect on our convention and other achievements as we move along our path to greater agricultural policies and attitudes to support them.

As always, I was deeply moved, humbled, and in awe of the speakers and those who attended our 47<sup>th</sup> Annual National Farmers Union Convention in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan this past November. The level of knowledge and passion of our members never ceases to amaze me, as those in attendance work to shape new policies and broaden the awareness of themselves and others when we meet in person each year. Through resolutions discussed, debated and passed, we have a positive direction moving forward and an enthusiasm shared by many to continue working on many issues relevant to shaping the agricultural and social landscape in our rural and urban communities. We passed resolutions on a wide range of topics including: minimum basic income initiatives; the prevention of further rural school closures; farm bankruptcies; GM alfalfa contamination; and parental leave benefits for farm families.

The Women's Caucus, the Youth Caucus and the International Programming Committee meetings all saw great progress and determined plans to organize around member outreach, education, and to highlight opportunities to attend relevant meetings and international gatherings. During our Women's Caucus, I was glad to see our members speak up on issues of inclusion and oppression. Whether or not we care to admit it, there still exists an image that our agricultural community is made up of mostly white, hetero-normative, male farmers, and perhaps their farm wives who care for the children and make the meals. This could not be

further from the truth. Women and youth are a force in our agricultural landscape today and integral members of every aspect of farm business and life. Gone are the connotations and stereotypes of '*the farmer takes a wife/the wife takes a child*', as goes The Farmer in the Dell nursery rhyme that plays on my child's album as I type this. I must seek to change these lyrics in our household! Women and youth played a fair part in our discourse and we were proud to see such a great turnout of female, young and new farmers represented at the NFU convention. While there is a growing diversity among the friendly faces at our convention, as an organization we still have a long way to go to become a model of inclusion and fair and equal representation of our society.

I finished my convention attendance by joining a packed room to watch the screening of the powerful and emotionally moving film: *Migrant Dreams*. The film screening and question period was facilitated by the International Program Committee and our Migrant Farm Worker Committee. I was left with a feeling that we need to continue to build relationships, understanding and outreach to the marginalized and oppressed members of our farming community. There is so much exploitation that still exists in our world, and we wish for the National Farmers Union to be a model for change in this realm. We will continue to strive to provide a safe space, and empowerment for all who wish to participate, in processes and expression of opinions from the grassroots to the national levels of this dear organization, the NFU.

We are looking forward to 2017 and beyond with a vision for a more fair and sovereign food system in all of our communities.

*In Solidarity, Coral Sproule*





# A message from the Youth

— by Ayla Fenton, NFU Youth President

**H**appy new year! I do not think I am the only one happy to see 2016 out the door. It seems that it was a challenging year for just about everyone. In my neck of the woods, we experienced the worst drought in 130 years. I know it caused many a new farmer to quietly question their career choice. Watching farmers deal with that kind of stress emphasized in my mind the importance of building stronger communities of solidarity. I saw that even simple things like commiserating with other farmers at a mid-summer meeting, or chatting about drought management strategies on a Facebook forum, could begin to lift some weight off heavy shoulders.

I think this is a crucial part of the NFU's appeal to new and young farmers across the country. So many of us are beginning to farm, but do not have pre-existing agricultural communities built through family ties. We are new to farm life and need to build our support systems from scratch. The NFU provides such a crucial service of connecting us to other farmers, young and old, new and experienced. The sense of solidarity that comes with being a part of this organization is what motivates a lot of folks to keep on with the often burdensome work of farming.

Much of our work in 2017 will be to expand and energize the grassroots of the NFU. Lasting engagement comes when people are meaningfully connected and active at their local level. This is why, after building momentum for many years through our annual Youth Retreats, we have decided this year to put our energy and resources into organizing NFU Youth events in each region. For the first time since I have been involved, we have active Youth Advisors in each region who are keen to organize! Dana Penrice, the youth vice-president, and I are working with them to put on at least one "mini youth retreat" in their region. If you are interested in getting involved or just want to keep up to date with what is happening in your area, please email us at [nfuyouth@nfu.ca](mailto:nfuyouth@nfu.ca).

Another exciting prospect for the coming year is the growth of the international youth articulation of La Via Campesina (LVC). Back in October, I represented North America (along with a compañero from Union Paysanne) at LVC's youth meeting in Cuba. Youth from all over the world participated, youth who are building agroecology and struggling against patriarchy and capitalism. Words cannot describe how empowering it is to share stories and strategies with such a diversity of young, powerful food producers. We observed how some LVC regions, like Europe and South America, have built strong mechanisms for connecting sister organizations, and how that connection strengthens their movement. We are inspired to improve the lines of communication with our regional partners in North America and join our struggles together. *Globalicemos la lucha, globalicemos la esperanza!*

I have attended several LVC events, and I am proud to report that everywhere I go, people from all over the world recognize the NFU for the strength of our women and youth. They often ask, "how is it that the NFU Youth are so well organized?" I tell them that it is because of the deep and sincere support our elders give us. Thank you!!

*Ayla Fenton, Youth President*

## Save a tree, save a stamp and save the NFU some money!

Postage and printing costs keep going up and it's easier than ever to distribute documents electronically so we will begin offering the **Union Farmer Quarterly** via email in 2017. We would like to encourage you to switch from paper to PDF so we can allocate more money to organizing, research and advocacy for family farmers. If you would like to get the electronic version of the newsletter in your email in-box instead of getting the paper version in your mail box, please let us know.

**Send an email to [nfu@nfu.ca](mailto:nfu@nfu.ca) with the subject line "Quarterly by Email". Include your name, NFU membership number and/or mailing address in the body of the message.**



# The Climate Crisis

## – A defining issue for the next 50 years?

*The theme of the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual NFU Convention in Saskatoon this past November was "Agriculture in a Changing Climate". The opening panel, titled The Changing Climate for Agriculture Policy, featured three speakers: Dr. Ian Mauro, Associate Professor in the Geography Department at the University of Winnipeg, Blain Snipstal, a returning generation farmer who is part of the Black Dirt Collective in Maryland, U.S.A. and Darrin Qualman. Qualman is a writer, researcher and activist with strong ties to the NFU, as a past NFU Director of Research and Executive Director and currently the coordinator of the NFU's Manitoba Project on Agricultural Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction in Manitoba.*

According to both Qualman and Mauro we are facing a climate emergency both in Canada and across the globe. Mauro noted that recent data published by the United Nations (UN) shows that 2016 was the hottest year on record and sixteen of the seventeen hottest years on record have occurred in this century. In his presentation, Qualman cited data from the UN which shows that despite important and ongoing progress, the Paris Agreement has put us on track for a global temperature increase this century of 3.2 degrees Celsius, even though the goal of the Paris Agreement is to keep global temperatures from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. This data was published in *The Emissions Gap Report 2016*, United Nations Environment Programme.

This global temperature increase of 3.2 degrees Celsius will not be felt equally in all locations. Some areas will experience an even higher temperature increase. Places like the Canadian prairies, which are in the centre of the continent and at a relatively high latitude, will warm up twice as fast and "will change everything we know about farming here", says Qualman. According to Blain Snipstal, in the United States half of the agricultural production regions have experienced some type of drought in the past seven to ten years.

Dr. Mauro started his presentation by pointing out that the Oxford English Dictionary's word of the year for 2016 was *post-truth*. According to the Dictionary, *post-truth* is an adjective defined as "relating or denoting circumstances in which

objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion or personal belief." The Oxford English Dictionary chose *post-truth* as their word of the year because of its increased use, particularly in relation to the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom and to the presidential election in the United States. Mauro went on to say, "I am a scientist by training. This is a very disturbing trend. If the facts don't matter, where does that leave us?" He went on to suggest that as farmers we need to tell stories of how our world is changing, both in terms of the changes on the landscape and the changes in our lives. "These stories matter at a time when facts don't. (They) have the power to change the perceptions of the public."

As part of his presentation to the convention, Qualman predicted that as the NFU nears its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary we should consider that climate change will likely become the defining issue for our next 50 years. He outlined the following five reasons NFU members should take a deep interest in climate change and why we should work hard to solve the problem:

- the climate emergency (self interest);
- justice (the interests of others, such as small island nations);
- it gives us an opportunity to transform our food system;
- emissions solutions can be net farm income solutions; and
- big changes are coming.

The NFU project on Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction in Manitoba has been funded by

*(continued on page 7...)*





the Manitoba government <sup>1</sup>. The aim of the NFU Manitoba project is to do something that has never been done before, that is, to create a complete blueprint of on-farm measures and government policies to show how farmers can achieve a thirty percent reduction in emissions by 2030 and a fifty percent reduction by 2050. The work of this project is relevant not just in Manitoba and the other prairie provinces, but for farmers across Canada.

At the University of Winnipeg, Dr. Mauro has been documenting how people who live and work on the land are experiencing and adapting to a changing climate through films, including *Qapirangajug: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change* and *Climate Change in Atlantic Canada*. Some of his more recent work is with the Prairie Climate Atlas, which merges film and map making to address the question of how the climate of the Canadian prairie provinces is going to change in the coming decades. Videos are being embedded within the atlas to allow prairie farmers to share their stories of climate change. This interactive atlas can be found at [www.climateatlas.ca](http://www.climateatlas.ca).

Greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture can be placed into three categories: livestock and manure (mostly cattle); soils and fertilizer (mostly nitrogen); and on-farm fuel and energy. According to Qualman, "farmers are doing a lot of things right but there are some things we are not doing right, and a big one is nitrogen use." He presented data showing that between 1991 and 2016, the use of nitrogen fertilizer, increased by 112 percent, with an increase of 56 percent between 2006 and 2016. In North America for every calorie of food energy that reaches our mouths, we consume 13.3 calories of energy (mostly from fossil fuels). This calculation is based on *Energy Use in the U.S. Food system; USDA, Agriculture Fact Book*, published by the United States Department of Agriculture. Qualman suggested that "in terms of energy efficiency, our food system is the least efficient in the world, and in history" and that

<sup>1</sup> The NFU Manitoba Project on Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction was approved by the previous Manitoba government. Our project will be about profitable farming and about caring for the earth, environment and people. We await the remainder of the funding. The majority of funds are now nine months late (at the time of printing) in arriving which has significantly slowed progress on the project.



Panelists Blain Snipstal (left), Ian Mauro (centre) and Darrin Qualman (right).

this ratio is much more efficient, in other parts of the world where farming practices and food distribution channels are different from ours.

Given the climate crisis we are facing, what are the solutions? As Qualman noted humans have been farming for 10,000 years but have only contributed to greenhouse gases in the last hundred years. Therefore, it is not farming that produces greenhouse gas emissions but rather it is the use of agricultural inputs today that produce the emissions. Blain Snipstal spoke of the need to share knowledge of agro-ecology among farmers, to highlight both what we are already doing on our farms to address climate issues and what changes we need to make to farm in greater harmony with nature. Qualman believes that embracing low-input/low-emission agriculture can also help solve our low net farm income problems, since those who sell farm inputs have made themselves the main beneficiaries of the work we do on our farms. During the question period, Qualman cautioned attendees to be skeptical of the solutions offered by transnational corporations. For example, precision agriculture will provide agribusiness transnational corporations with a lot of data which they can then use to maintain their power over items like grain prices.

Between 1900 and 1950 there was a massive transformation of agriculture in North America with a move away from solar-powered, zero-net-emission farming systems towards fossil-fuel dependent, high-emission systems. Qualman would like to see another massive transformation in agriculture during the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: this time a transformation to low-emission/low-input agriculture.

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# Balancing Power in the Public Interest and Understanding the Science

Throughout his presentation to the NFU 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, former NFU President, Terry Boehm, reiterated the need to think about power – who has it, how it is being used and in whose interest. Boehm was one of the speakers on a Saturday morning panel, *Regulations: Red Tape or Red Herring?* The other speakers were Dr. Christy Morrissey from the Department of Biology and the School of Environmental Sustainability at the University of Saskatchewan and David Zirnhelt, a rancher and former Member of the Legislative Assembly from the Cariboo Region of British Columbia. Terry Boehm is currently chair of the NFU Seed and Trade Committee with particular expertise in analyzing the governance of the Canadian Grain Commission, rail transportation regulations and intellectual property issues as they relate to seed, seed legislation and variety registration systems in Canada.

Terry Boehm started his presentation by stating that the issue of regulations and public interest governance is very dear to his heart and to keep in mind that "the devil is often in the details". He went on to say that if we do not create regulations in our own interests then someone else will occupy the vacuum and create regulations in their interest, thereby giving themselves the power to enslave and extract. He provided two examples of regulations designed to curb the power of the railways and grain companies in the prairies, both put in place over a century ago.

Section 113 of the *Canada Grain Act* includes a *common carrier obligation*, a responsibility written into the law in the early 1900's, which requires the railways to move every properly loaded car to its destination, regardless of who is shipping it. This means that railways cannot discriminate and cannot decide with whom they will do business. Speaking to the "devil in the details", Boehm turned to the Canadian Transportation Act (CTA) Review (also known as the Emerson Report) which came out in early 2016. The railways convinced the CTA review panel that in the event of a service dispute the regulator should not look at whether individual cars

were moved, but rather it should look at the impact of moving the disputed cars on a system-wide basis to determine whether the railways are fulfilling their common carrier obligation. A move to a system-wide view, would mean that railways could argue that if they take the time to pick up an out-of-the-way producer car for a group of farmers, it would decrease system-wide efficiency. If this change is adopted it would allow the railways to pick and choose what to move and for whom, based on their own priorities, and most likely isolating small loading sites and ports.

Another regulation put in place to the benefit of farmers in the early 1900's is the *legal right for farmers to ship producer cars* which first came in under the *Manitoba Grain Act*, the forerunner of the *Canada Grain Act*. At that time, railways and grain companies were forcing farmers to deliver their grain through Ogilvie Milling, a subsidiary of Canadian Pacific Railways. Under the *Grain Act*, ten or more farmers were given the right to petition to establish a producer car loading site. According to Boehm, "this was a means to discipline the grain companies and the railways." He went on to say that more recent governments "have decided railways should have the right to decide when they can abandon producer loading sites."

These are two examples of regulations, favouring Canadian farmers, being enacted as a result of farmers advocating in their own interests. According to Boehm, powerful entities, like railways and transnational grain, seed and chemical companies have "lobbied and pushed and pushed and pushed until they got exactly what they want" whether that be control over seed through UPOV or under trade agreements like CETA. "In general," Boehm said, "they want all the wealth we can create from the land and the soil for themselves and they just leave enough of it for us to keep producing that wealth. They will extract everything they can. There is not a lot of logic for the health of the land or of communities."

(continued on page 9...)







Panelists Terry Boehm (left), Dr. Christy Morrissey (centre), and David Zirnhelt (right).

In order to balance power in the interest of farmers and the larger public interest, Boehm said "we have to push and push and push and push back. We have more power than they do." One tool we can use to push for regulations in the public interest is the NFU's Fundamental Principles of a Farmers' Seed Act, available at <http://www.nfu.ca/issue/fundamental-principles-farmers-seed-act>. In addition, Boehm said, "Every last one of us can go out and plant a seed. Are they going to arrest all of us? No. All these things can crumble very easily when societies decide to say no. We have to say no, no, no! We want something better for the future."

Dr. Christy Morrissey brought a different angle to the discussion of regulations. She said that as a research scientist she is not a regulator and does not form policy but she hopes her research is communicated to the people who need it – "those who form policy plus, more importantly, those subjected to policies and regulations - that is the farmers." The NFU is the first farm group to invite her to speak. This may be somewhat surprising given that her research focuses on one of the most important agricultural regulatory issues in recent years – neonicotinoids, particularly their presence in aquatic invertebrates on the prairies.

Morrissey is interested in how agriculture has changed over the decades. She presented data showing dramatic change over the last fifty years, based on statistics from the United States in the absence of equivalent Canadian data. In 1960 each farmer fed 25.8 people. By 2000, one farmer was feeding 100 people, but this huge increase in productivity and yield came with a significant increase in the use of chemicals, particularly pesticides. Total US pesticide use was 617M lbs/year in 1964, increasing to a peak of 1,121M lbs/year in 1980 with a slow tapering off to 857M lbs/year by 2007. The type of pesticides and insecticides used has also changed over time, with organo-chlorines being the leading insecticides in the 1960's, organo-phosphates in the 1980's and in this century neonicotinoids dominate.

Imidacloprid was the first neonicotinoid registered by Bayer CropScience. Neonicotinoids are registered in 120 countries for use on 140 crops. Worldwide, they make up eighty percent of seed treatment and thirty percent of insecticide sales. Ninety-nine percent of canola in the Canadian prairie provinces is treated with neonicotinoids. Morrissey's lab has conservatively estimated that eleven million hectares or 215,000 kg of neonicotinoids are applied annually in Canada.

*(continued on page 10)*



Research on neonicotinoids has exploded since the early 2000's, although regulators, policy makers and industry continue to say the science is too uncertain to justify further regulation of their use. Morrissey said that Canadian regulators say that they are waiting for conclusive field studies before taking further action on neonicotinoids. Some field studies have been done and almost all of them show either negative effects or, due to problems with the experimental design, they show no effects. Researchers face major challenges trying to find proper control groups for comparative studies in the field because neonicotinoids are so pervasive worldwide, especially in agricultural areas.

Bees and other pollinators have received most media attention when it comes to the environmental impacts of neonicotinoids but there are others being debated and studied including persistence, water contamination, aquatic insects and birds. Morrissey said that environmental impacts are balanced off against crop protection needs and economic gains and losses. She pointed out that unlike older chemicals, neonicotinoids were designed to be very good at moving into water because they were intended for use as seed treatments. The plant takes the neonicotinoid into its tissues as it grows but it is not a perfect system as only two to twenty percent (on average five percent) of the chemical is taken into the plant. The other ninety-five percent goes into the soil, the water and to a lesser extent the air. Neonicotinoids are highly soluble in water, highly persistent in soil and very stable to hydrolysis and photolysis (break down by water and/or light). Their half life in soil is 1386 days (over three years) and it takes twelve years for them to disappear from soil. All of this information was known when neonicotinoids were registered, according to Morrissey.

Research published in 2014 showed that sixteen to ninety-one percent of Canadian prairie wetlands had detectable levels of neonicotinoids, over half with detectable levels of more than one neonicotinoid. Morrissey said that almost all neonicotinoid combinations are synergistically toxic to invertebrates. Surprisingly, this study found that neonicotinoids were most frequently detected in the spring before farmers applied chemicals. During her presentation, Morrissey pointed out that although neonicotinoids are very toxic to a whole range of aquatic invertebrates, there are significant

variations. Crustaceans, such as *Daphnia*, are much more tolerant to the presence of neonicotinoids in their habitat, than insects like midges, which are an important food sources for prairie birds. According to Morrissey, *Daphnia* was the organism used in tests submitted by the companies to regulatory agencies with their request for registration of neonicotinoids. Further studies on insectivorous birds have shown that in crop-intensive sites there are higher neonicotinoid concentrations in wetlands, poorer nestling body conditions and increased foraging times for adults with more time spent away from the nestbox.

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*... "it's not enough to ban one chemical", we need to talk about other solutions. And in terms of regulations she said, "science has to be communicated to the stakeholders that will use it, in this case the farming community."*

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As a result of scientific research, by Morrissey and others, Canadian regulations around neonicotinoids are changing. In June 2016 Health Canada said that it would no longer grant new conditional registrations for pesticides (almost all the registrations for neonicotinoids are conditional). Then in November 2016 Health Canada announced a plan to phase out the use of imidacloprid in three to five years because of the risks it poses to aquatic ecosystems. Morrissey ended her presentation by saying, "it's not enough to ban one chemical", we need to talk about other solutions. And in terms of regulations she said, "science has to be communicated to the stakeholders that will use it, in this case the farming community. Most of the time science is communicated to the scientific community then filtered to the agencies that make regulations and spat out by the agency as a regulation. Stakeholders, like farmers, would be more likely to embrace the regulation if we understood the science."

In his presentation, rancher and former BC MLA and Cabinet Minister, David Zirnhelt, spoke of the need for farmers to work together and do more research in our own interest, including social science and market research. He said "Every regulation has unintended consequences. It is incumbent on government to gather all relevant information but we also have to step up to the plate."

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# Reflections on the NFU's 47th Annual Convention from Bursary Recipients

*Following are write ups from the three recipients of bursaries for first-time convention goers. This was the first time the NFU has offered these bursaries, which were entirely funded by donations from our members.*

*Megan Klassen-Wiebe is a small scale CSA farmer in Winnipeg and part of the Metanoia Farmers Cooperative. Her bursary was donated by Stewart Wells, Saskatchewan.*

*Erin Beulah, originally from the Okanagan Valley, B.C, now lives in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, attending her third and final year of at the Institute of Agrofood Technology, focusing on the technical aspects of fruit and vegetable production. Her bursary was donated by David Suzuki, British Columbia.*

*Julie Enman lives and runs Nowhere Apiaries in Courtney, B.C. Her bursary was donated by George Neville, Ontario.*

**—by Megan Klassen-Wiebe, Winnipeg, Manitoba**

I attended the National Farmers Union's 47th Annual Convention as a first time convention attendee and new NFU member. I was not sure what to expect but I was excited to meet other farmers from across Canada.

I am a small-scale, urban vegetable Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farmer and part of the Metanoia Farmers Cooperative. How would I fit within the spectrum of people who make up the NFU? I was glad for the diversity that I discovered at the convention. It is wonderful that the NFU represents family farms that range in size and in what they farm. This diversity, while challenging, is surely what keeps the NFU strong and motivated to work on the issues that are important to farmers. I also enjoyed meeting other young farmers from across Canada who have such passion for the work that they do and the work that they participate in through the NFU. I was inspired by this passion, watching them engage in the NFU and hearing their stories.

One of the reasons I attended the convention was because of the theme: *Agriculture in a Changing Climate*. I recognize that the climate is changing, creating extreme weather events that bring droughts and floods, extreme rainfall and heavy winds, and often creating struggles for farmers here in Canada

and around the world. The Metanoia Farmers experienced some extreme weather this summer and our potatoes drowned. Farming friends struggled to make enough hay for the season on soggy land that rarely had a chance to dry out. I also know that in other countries, such as Nicaragua and Ethiopia, severe droughts are affecting farmers' ability to grow food for themselves and for markets. I am encouraged that the NFU chose to tackle this topic at the convention and I appreciated the panel and keynote presentations on this topic. A current of energy pushing us towards real change in our food system and farming practices was clearly reflected in the stories shared by farmers in the final panel of the convention. They are paying attention to their land and working to find new ways of caring for it.

As we continue to depend on the land where we live and grow food, I also appreciated the support for indigenous communities that was expressed by the NFU in the conversations about Standing Rock protests, in hosting a panel on Indigenous Food Security, and in recognizing our presence on Treaty 6 Land during the convention. I hope the NFU continues to be a voice for reconciliation.

I really enjoyed my experience at the NFU convention and I hope to be able to attend again and continue learning and working with the NFU.

*(continued on page 12...)*



—by *Erin Beulah, Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec*

I would like to start by extending a sincere thanks to the NFU, the NFU Youth and David Suzuki for the financial support, which allowed me to participate in the NFU annual convention in Saskatoon last November. As a woman, a youth, and a student of horticulture searching for entry points into the domain, I am astutely aware of the barriers to my participation. Removing the financial barrier afforded me an incredible opportunity to expand my social network of politically engaged folks involved in agriculture, to learn about important issues facing our domain in light of a rapidly changing climate, and to grow in my own political ambitions. Meeting and mobilizing with such an impressive number of youth who are engaged with the problems of climate, environmental degradation, land access and market constraints in creative, progressive, and tactical ways was equally inspiring. Conversations among the youth, and within the many intergeneration exchanges I was able to have also gave me hope for the ability of agriculture to adapt in this ever-changing world – environmentally, commercially, socially and politically.

As an active member of the Union Paysanne (UP), a grass-roots agricultural association that strives to represent, defend and protect small farms and the peasant lifestyle in Quebec, it was my honour to represent their voice at the convention. As a member of La Via Campesina, UP's solidarity work with the NFU dates back for some years now, however, extending the invitation to UP to attend the NFU convention was a new step to building more powerful links between our two sister organisations. Additionally, the NFU Youth invited the UP youth committee to sit on the National New Farmers Coalition, a position which myself and my compatriot Pierre-Olivier Brassard have accepted.

Attending the convention allowed me to learn, grow, network and find my political voice. I am excited to mobilize together into the future, to exchange and learn from one another as sister organisations sharing a common desire to protect farms, from the land they sit on to the way of life that they represent.

—by *Julie Enman, Courtenay, BC*

It was so wonderful to see and hear farmers from 'across' Canada, and the NFU's attempts to lift up women in the organization, but I think we can do better. Participating in the convention was a wonderful learning experience, yet I am still dismayed by the sea of white faces in a hetero-normative atmosphere. I mean, I have trouble envisioning our vast and varied country being completely represented in this space.

When I think back on the presentations, what stands out to me is the farmer planning for the climate changed future and planting hickory trees from Virginia on the prairies. Then I think about how much winters have changed in our northern reaches. It was not so long ago that most of the things my friends and I ate came from our yard or surrounding farms, just north of 60. Yet, here we are at a Canadian farm convention, all huddled close to the American border. And, I still wonder where are the voices of our northern most food producers? When you live in a place where the highway washes out, and where you must decide which side of the river to live on during freeze up, well, food sovereignty takes on entirely new meanings. Then my mind focuses on the many immigrants befriended while organizing community gardens across Canada. They are all seeking the familiar foods of distant lands, and I wonder if changing Canadian tastes and faces can be incorporated on our farms and grown in coming years for the changing environment.

There is just something about the NFU's branding that does not seem to welcome all those others just yet. The white folks of all ages smiling in the brochure, and holding hands with children, do not look like many of the new farmers I know. NFU folk all spoke to the fact that there is nothing that intergenerational about new farmers, out-migration is big, and many folks are buying into farming, rather than being born into it. Some do not identify as a man nor a woman, and there is not any space to welcome those and others from the LGBTQ2 into our community.

We spoke so much of bringing farmers and other folks into our organization at convention, and there is a lot of work to be done. The NFU could start with some rebranding, and creating spaces to welcome minority farmers, or something simple like acknowledging that Newfoundland is in fact an Atlantic, not a Maritime province, and that over forty percent of our landmass is above the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel. Diversity and inclusivity would be a great theme for some upcoming National Farmers Union Convention.

Thank you to the Cree and Métis peoples for allowing us to congregate on Treaty 6 Territory, and thank you to Mr. George Neville for supporting first time National Farmers Union Convention goers. I hope to shake your hand at some future farm convergence.



# Gene Drives Threaten Biodiversity

## *Report from the Convention on Biological Diversity*

—by Maureen Bostock

NFU Region 3 member, Maureen Bostock was the NFU representative on the La Via Campesina delegation to the UN Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) to the Convention on Biodiversity held in Cancun, Mexico in December, 2016.

I was delighted to have the opportunity to travel to Cancun, Mexico from December 1 to 6, 2016 to be an observer at the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. La Via Campesina (LVC) had a second representative from the North American region – Alberto Gomez Flores who comes from the National Union of Autonomous Regional Peasant Organizations in Mexico.

The United Nations (UN) Convention on Biological Diversity holds a Convention of the Parties (COP) to the international agreement every two years. The 2016 meeting is identified as COP 13, the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the countries which are signatories to the international agreement.

Just to make things a little more complicated there are two other international agreements that address biological diversity. The Cartagena Protocol on BioSafety ensures the safe handling, transport and use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), referred to by the UN as Living Modified Organisms (LMOs). It identifies adverse effects of GMOs on biological diversity, taking into account risks to human health. The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair & Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization ensures that biopiracy<sup>1</sup> is not practiced and that indigenous people are fairly compensated for the use of genetic resources taken from their territory and commercialized. Note that Canada, along with fellow GMO exporters Argentina and the United States, has signed but has not yet ratified the Cartagena Protocol, citing concerns with its lack of clarity and predictability in terms of its

implementation and enforcement.<sup>2</sup> As a non-Party to the Cartagena Protocol, Canada cannot become a Party to the Nagoya Protocol.

Delegates to the COP 13 consisted of representatives of nations who have signed on to these international agreements. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as La Via Campesina, are observers and are able to make presentations to the delegates throughout the conference, as well as at events organized to educate delegates on principle issues. Three issues were identified as critically important by the NGOs:

- the implementation of the Gender Plan of action to ensure gender equity in biological diversity approaches;
- strengthening the effective participation of indigenous peoples, including their right under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to free, prior and informed consent in decision making at all levels; and
- deep concern at the unhampered progress on genetic sequencing and the development of synthetic biology.

Synthetic biology is an emerging branch of biotechnology that uses engineering principles to design novel artificial biological pathways, organisms and devices or the redesign of existing natural biological systems. One of the new devices synthetic biologists are developing is the *gene drive*, which threatens the survival of whole species. A gene drive uses CRISPR-cas9 gene-editing to introduce a trait to one member of a population in such a way that it will be present in every successive generation, resulting in a change to the whole species. Current laboratory

(continued on page 14...)

<sup>1</sup> Biopiracy, a term originally coined by ETC Group, refers to the appropriation of the knowledge and genetic resources of farming and indigenous communities by individuals or institutions that seek exclusive monopoly control (patents or intellectual property) over these resources and knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://tinyurl.com/jpst8l5> for more information.



research applies the technology to fruit flies, mice, mosquitoes, micro-organisms such as yeast, and pathogenic nematodes. There is no technology to undo a gene drive once it has been released. The potential impacts on the food chain could be catastrophic. If there is any genetic technology that requires the application of the precautionary principle<sup>3</sup>, it is this one.

The ETC Group ([www.etcgroup.org](http://www.etcgroup.org)), Friends of the Earth ([www.foei.org](http://www.foei.org)), Third World Network ([www.twn.my](http://www.twn.my)) and the Federation of German Scientists ([www.vdw-ev.de](http://www.vdw-ev.de)) brought forward a proposal for a moratorium on gene drive technology, one of the worst forms of synthetic biology. It reads:

*In view of the significant ecological and societal threats posed by genetically-engineered gene drives, including threats to biodiversity, national sovereignty, peace and food security, we the undersigned call upon governments at the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in accordance with the precautionary principle, to put in place a moratorium on:*

- 1) any further technical development and experimental application of gene drives; and*
- 2) environmental release of genetically-engineered gene drives.*

As La Via Campesina delegates, we worked diligently to add the signatures of the National Farmers Union of Canada, the Global Forest Coalition and La Via Campesina, among others, to the moratorium. The response was very enthusiastic from the campaign organizers.

On December 5, I engaged in an effort to lobby the official Canadian delegation on our demand for a moratorium on gene drives. I provided them with an overview of farmers' concerns that the Canadian regulations currently in place have been totally ineffective in controlling genetic modifications in agriculture, that a comprehensive regulation that keeps a tight hand on the development of synthetic biology is needed and that gene drives pose an extreme danger to biodiversity. I also expressed concern that the Canadian government's gene sequencing project could violate the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, if the plant samples were collected from indigenous lands without prior,

free and informed consent. The danger of this new technology is that a corporation armed with a computer and a basic understanding of biology could copy the genetic sequence of a traditional plant species and develop a GMO for commercial release.

The opportunity became available on December 6 for LVC to deliver a statement to the delegates at COP 13 during their plenary session on synthetic biology. Here is what we said:

*Thank you, Madam Chair. I am speaking on the issue of synthetic biology. I am speaking on behalf of La Via Campesina, an international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless people, indigenous people, agricultural workers, rural women and youth. La Via Campesina has 150 member organizations in 70 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas and over 200 million members. As stated by Bolivia and Venezuela, we also urge Parties to implement here at the COP 13 an immediate moratorium on the environmental release and commercial use of synthetic biology and have signed, along with 168 organizations from 127 countries, a joint demand for the immediate moratorium on the development and release of gene drive technology.*

*Synthetic biology is the next wave of biotechnology that threatens life, biodiversity, food sovereignty and farmers' rights. No longer is industry limited to genes found in nature – with synthetic biology, new genes and traits that have never existed in nature, can be developed based mainly on the market interests of big corporations that fund this technology.*

*Gene drives are designed to spread and persist in the environment. There is no technology to reverse the modifications. These organisms will lead to unpredictable interactions with nature and threaten the health of our ecosystems.*

*Governments and the United Nations as a whole are responsible to govern on behalf of all citizens; instead they only consult the private sector and scientists. We citizens suffer the impacts and pay for the consequences of such technologies. Such technologies don't resolve our problems, instead they intensify them.*

*We urge Parties to apply the precautionary approach and establish an immediate moratorium on synthetic biology and gene drives at this COP. We urge Parties to listen to and consult peasants as we produce the world's food and are the ones who will suffer most from the loss of biological and agriculture biodiversity.*

—nfu—

<sup>3</sup> The precautionary principle calls on public authorities to act to prevent irreversible harm when it is within their power to do so, even when there is not complete scientific certainty.



# "Islanders and the Land" and "Migrant Dreams"

—Two documentaries of interest to NFU Members

The two documentaries highlighted below were screened during the 47<sup>th</sup> NFU Annual Convention.

**Islanders and the Land** is a video documentary which explores how the people of Prince Edward Island have struggled to keep land in the hands of communities. It follows the words of Reg Phelan, NFU Region 1 Board Member and author of *Islanders and the Land*, who said "The Islanders' struggle for land in the 19th century is crucial to an understanding of the appreciation and ties to the land today. This history which has stayed alive against heavy odds informs our present attitudes and perceptions of development".

This documentary looks at how land concentration and corporate control over the inputs and outputs of the farm are a threat to farm communities. It shows how we can learn from the people of Prince Edward Island to build alternatives to the industrial agricultural model.

Produced by Don Kossick and Denise Kouri and available to view at:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpU2qOrCDHY&t=49s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpU2qOrCDHY&t=49s)

**Migrant Dreams** by Min Sook Lee is a powerful award-winning film which documents "the untold story of migrant agricultural workers struggling against Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) that treats foreign workers as modern-day indentured labourers .... [and] exposes the underbelly of the

Canadian government labour program that has built a system designed to empower brokers and growers to exploit, dehumanize and deceive migrant workers who have virtually no access to support or information in their own language. Workers willing to pay exorbitant fees to work at minimum wage jobs packing the fruits and vegetables we eat in our homes. Migrant workers who

deserve basic labour and human rights. Canada it seems, has failed them."

For more information or to request a screening of Migrant Dreams go to: [www.migrantdreams.ca/](http://www.migrantdreams.ca/)



## We would like to take this opportunity to thank our Convention Sponsors:





# NATIONAL FARMERS FOUNDATION

## Report to the NFU National Convention

November 26, 2016 - Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
- delivered by Michelle Melnyk

**F**or those of you who are not familiar with the National Farmers Foundation, we were incorporated in 1986 and are a registered Canadian charity. We are a unique charity: Our five-member board must be composed of three NFU members and two NFU associate members. And our by-laws explicitly state: *Each member must accept and uphold the Statement of Purpose and the politics of the National Farmers Union.*

Our mandate, as written by the founders of the National Farmers Foundation, is: *... to organize and implement programs of education and research around the development of rural Canada and to direct these programs toward both rural and urban populations.*

We rely entirely on the volunteer efforts of our board of directors: myself, Dale Fankhanel, Kalissa Regier and Christina Magill, our secretary-treasurer. Our long-time treasurer, Stuart Thiesson, retired suddenly from our board last year. Stuart was many things to the National Farmers Foundation: he was our fundraiser, our keeper of institutional history, and our greatest champion. It would be an understatement to say that we have had to do a lot of work to fill the role that Stuart played on the board. We are grateful for the tremendous support of the staff of the national office of the NFU, who have assisted us over the years, but especially over this last year.

We are giving our report to convention later than usual because we spent Friday morning in strategic discussion to help direct our work. I would like to publicly thank Wendy Manson and Carla Roppel for their excellent facilitation.

You will have seen and heard at this convention at least two examples of projects we fund. We supported Don Kossick's documentary work, and we supported the NFU youth retreat. I understand we have close to 50 youth members in attendance at this convention.

You will have also read in the NFU Spring Quarterly about our support for the NFU International Program Committee's *Sowing Seeds: A European Perspective* tour in Manitoba. To quote from Ian Robson's report in the quarterly: *These events gave German and French farmers an opportunity to share*

*experiences on farm policy, seed laws, and advocacy with Canadian farmers.*

We are accepting proposals for funding. To learn more about the National Farmers Foundation, please visit our webpage on the NFU website. You will find the link to the National Farmers Foundation under the "About" section on [www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca).

We are also collecting names of potential future board members—both farmers and non-farmers. If you are interested in serving on our board, please connect with any of our board members to express your interest.

We are always happy to receive donations! You may donate by cheque to: National Farmers Foundation, c/o Christina Magill, 146F Clinton Street, Toronto, ON M6G 2Y3. You can also donate on-line through [www.CanadaHelps.org](http://www.CanadaHelps.org).

The NFF relies almost entirely on individual donations, largely from the NFU membership. Many of our most regular and significant donors are here in the audience. On behalf of the board and the projects we support, thank you for your generosity. —nfu—

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# Therefore be it resolved....

Resolutions passed at the NFU's 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention  
November 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016 – Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

## 1. **FARM BANKRUPTCIES**

WHEREAS farm bankruptcies are very stressful for the families involved;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union conduct a study on farm bankruptcies nationally and that a future Union Farmer edition contain an in-depth report on this situation, including the effect farm bankruptcy has on the person's credit rating.

## 2. **WATER TESTING FOR NEONICOTINOIDS**

WHEREAS we are concerned about the presence of neonicotinoids in our well water;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU lobby federal and provincial governments to provide any citizen with access to facilities that can test our well water for neonicotinoids, glyphosates and their respective derivatives.

## 3. **NATIONAL FOOD POLICY**

WHEREAS Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has mandated the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lawrence MacAulay, to "develop a food policy that promotes healthy living and safe food by putting more healthy, high-quality food, produced by Canadian ranchers and farmers, on the tables of families across the country" (Minister's mandate letter, November 2015); and

WHEREAS the National Farmers Union has advocated for policies that work toward viable family farms, such as protection of farmland, support for new farmers, a farmers' bill of rights for seeds and domestic and foreign market policies that build the Canadian food and farm system primarily for Canadians; and

WHEREAS, despite food being a major component of important areas of Canadian life (including the economy, the environment, health, education, social and cultural activities), Canada does not have an integrated food and farm policy that ensures equity, health and sustainability; and

WHEREAS the National Farmers Union contributed to Food Secure Canada's "Resetting the Table -- A People's Food Policy for Canada" (2011), calling for a healthy, just and ecological Canadian food system;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that NFU urge the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to consult widely across Canada with the objective of

developing a holistic, integrated food and farm policy based on the pillars of food sovereignty as defined by La Via Campesina that meets the social, economic and environmental needs of all Canadians, including farmers.

## 4. **GM ALFALFA CONTAMINATION**

WHEREAS the NFU-O passed a resolution in 2013 calling for a day of action against the release of genetically modified (GM) alfalfa that resulted in rallies in 36 communities across Canada, and the NFU passed a motion in 2013 to call on the federal Minister of Agriculture to cancel registration and halt any further registration of all genetically modified alfalfa varieties and encourage NFU locals, regions and members to take similar action;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU:

Call on the federal Minister of Agriculture to initiate and oversee an investigation into the source and scope of GM alfalfa contamination in Alberta and into other current potential sources of contamination; and

Call on the federal Minister of Agriculture to cancel all GM alfalfa varieties such that they will not be commercially released in Canada; and

Call on the company Forage Genetics International to immediately halt any further commercialization plans for GM alfalfa in Eastern or Western Canada; and

Call on the Canadian Seed Trade Association to abandon the "coexistence plans" for GM alfalfa as unrealistic and now discredited.

## 5. **BASIC INCOME GUARANTEE**

WHEREAS the NFU is committed to the sustainability of the family farm; promoting environmentally-safe farming practices; building healthy, vibrant rural communities; and ensuring an adequate supply of safe, nutritious food for Canadians; and

WHEREAS 4 million Canadians, including 1.15 million children, live in households where there is not enough money to buy safe, adequate, healthy food; and

WHEREAS the incomes of Canadian farmers are often unstable, there are significant financial barriers for young people who want to farm and farmers who want to retire; and rural communities are under threat; and

(continued on page 18...)



WHEREAS farmers have difficulty retaining trained seasonal workers and are pushed for economic reasons to environmentally undesirable practices; and

WHEREAS a basic income guarantee would reduce income insufficiency, food insecurity, financial insecurity, and ensure everyone an income sufficient to meet basic needs and live in dignity; and

WHEREAS a basic income guarantee would help improve the consumer market for family farms, increase the freedom of farmers to take risks and choose farming practices on grounds other than economics, and help stabilize rural communities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU endorse the concept of a Basic Income Guarantee for all Canadians.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU encourage the federal government to work with the provincial governments to consider, investigate, and develop a Basic Income Guarantee for all Canadians.

#### **6. FARM MACHINERY SECTOR CONSOLIDATION**

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU request that the Government of Canada through the competition bureau and other means, shall actively investigate the detrimental effects to farmers of consolidation in the farm machinery sector.

#### **7. RR ALFALFA**

WHEREAS Roundup Ready Alfalfa will be a perennial weed which cannot be controlled by application of Roundup in other crops;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU request the federal government terminate the registration of GM alfalfa in Canada on the basis that GM alfalfa is a glyphosate resistant perennial weed which will increase production costs of glyphosate-resistant canola, soybeans and corn.

#### **8. TRACKING AGRICULTURE CHEMICAL USAGE**

WHEREAS Christy Morrissey's presentation shows the lack of data kept on chemical usage in Canada unlike the US and UK;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU urge the government to track/document agricultural chemical usage across the country for the purpose of studying their long term effects.

#### **9. DEVELOPMENT OF GRAINS**

##### **NOT SUBJECT TO PLANT BREEDERS RIGHTS**

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU urge the federal government to support the development of new varieties of wheat, barley and other grains that are not subject to PBR (Plant Breeders Rights) or other private control mechanisms.

#### **10. AGRICULTURE REBATE PROGRAMS**

WHEREAS it is important to limit GHG emissions in agriculture; and

WHEREAS a carbon tax is needed to lead to a reduction of GHG emissions; and

WHEREAS governments should not simply use carbon tax as general revenue; and

WHEREAS agribusiness corporations will use their market power to pass all their carbon taxes on to the farm level, and

WHEREAS revenue recycling (paying to farmers, on a per-acre or gross margin basis, all carbon taxes collected from agribusinesses) can enable farmers to shoulder the tax but can also leave in place the incentives and disincentives such a tax creates; and

WHEREAS, agricultural methods that cause fewer emissions, or sequester carbon need to be promoted;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby all levels of government to create comprehensive agriculture rebate programs based on measurable on-farm carbon emission reductions and increased carbon sequestration

#### **11. BILINGUAL COMPACT LOGO**

WHEREAS NFU members have enjoyed wearing NFU branded clothing and using NFU branded items as a way to express pride in the organization and raise our public profile; and

WHEREAS the sale of attractive NFU merchandise provides a valuable revenue stream; and

WHEREAS the NFU Branding Committee worked from 2012 through 2015 to develop our new logo and a Brand Standards Guide to guide its use; and

WHEREAS the NFU uses bilingual branding on documents in the national context and allows for some flexible use across regions; and

WHEREAS a resolution passed at the 2015 NFU convention restricts the use of the NFU logo on clothing from using the flexible options available in the Brand Standards Guide to only the bilingual two leaf version; and

WHEREAS the NFU's bilingual two-leaf print logo is not suitable for use on all clothing and merchandise items;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU Board work in conjunction with NFU-NB to develop a bilingual or non-lingual version of the current NFU logo that has a compact shape that would be authorized for use on clothing, merchandise items and elsewhere.

#### **12. DIAFILTERED MILK**

WHEREAS the federal government has jurisdiction over the flow of goods in and out of the country; and

*(continued on page 19...)*



WHEREAS the importation of dairy products into Canada are restricted as part of Canada's Supply Management System; and

WHEREAS there are currently ingredients from milk that were removed in a process called diafiltration, that are entering Canada to circumvent Canada's Supply Management rules; and

WHEREAS these ingredients are used by Canada's dairy processors in the production of dairy products, and

WHEREAS the import of these ingredients cost Canadian dairy farmers in lost sales, lower income, and quota reductions;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU continue to call on the federal government to ensure ingredients from the diafiltration process or any other process that separates milk into component parts are treated as dairy and their import into Canada is restricted.

### 13. CHILD CARE

WHEREAS the NFU has excellent policy related to a National Child Care Plan to be implemented by the federal government, and

WHEREAS the cost and availability of child care is highly variable across this country, and

WHEREAS farming is a family affair and working on the farm while caring for children is not always desirable or safe;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU revitalizes its efforts to lobby the federal government for a National Child Care Policy.

### 14. PARENTAL INSURANCE/LEAVE

WHEREAS current parental leave/insurance is covered and managed by employment insurance (EI); and

WHEREAS payment under current parental leave/insurance is based on a percentage of a person's salary; and

WHEREAS many farmers are self-employed and do not pay into employment insurance and therefore do not qualify for parental leave/insurance; and

WHEREAS some farmers barely make a living wage and receiving a percentage thereof as part of a parental leave payment does not make financial sense; and

WHEREAS many farmers have no choice but to work on the farm with their infants in tow which is not always desirable or safe;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the federal government to implement a Farmer Parental Insurance Plan that will enable farmer parents to receive parental leave benefits.



*Resolutions Committee members Ian Robson and Hilary Moore.*

### 15. C.O.O.L COMPENSATION

WHEREAS Canadian beef, pork, goat, and sheep producers have had to endure 8 years of trade injury due to the prejudicial U.S. Country of Origin Labelling (C.O.O.L.) legislation; and

WHEREAS Canadian producers were successful in proving injury of \$8 Billion dollars to the World Trade Organization (WTO), not once, but twice, against U.S. appeals and were cleared by that panel to seek restitution; and

WHEREAS beef, pork, goat, and sheep producers have still not been compensated for the financial loss that they are entitled to under NAFTA; and

WHEREAS U.S. C.O.O.L legislation has been repealed against Canadian beef and pork producers but continues to discriminate against Canadian sheep and goat producers, creating injury; and

WHEREAS U.S. President-elect Trump has indicated that he may re-enact new C.O.O.L. legislation, in clear violation of America's obligation to NAFTA and the WTO;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union seek restitution as provided by NAFTA for Canadian discriminated beef and pork producers and for those producers that have left the industry as well as securing the same degree of compensation for Canadian sheep and goat producers that are still being injured by C.O.O.L. legislation.

### 16. WEEDS IN FORAGE SEED

WHEREAS forage producers are facing the unnecessary introduction of numerous and new weeds, each time they plant new pastures and hayfields; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is the body responsible for determining the allowable percentage of weed seeds in forage seed;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Ministry responsible to reduce the allowable percentages of weeds allowed in commercial forage seed.

*(continued on page 20...)*



**17. MIGRANT WORKERS**

WHEREAS NFU policy acknowledges that migrant farm workers are often exposed to abusive conditions and discrimination; and

WHEREAS the NFU has endorsed the MoVE Campaign by the Coalition for Migrant Worker Rights Canada which calls for permanent immigration status for migrant workers; and

WHEREAS migrant agricultural workers in the Low-Wage Stream of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program are not eligible for any federal program leading to permanent immigration; and

WHEREAS the temporary work permit system restricts migrant workers' fundamental human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the following ways:

- Migrant Workers are limited to a particular employer and position,
- Migrant Workers do not have mobility rights,
- Migrant Workers are often subjected to differential working conditions,
- Migrant Workers are not able to participate in the political life of Canada,
- Migrant Workers are not able to obtain effective remedies when their rights are violated; and

WHEREAS the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) has been operating for 50 years, proving that migrant workers are a permanent part of Canada's food system as it currently exists;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU will call upon the federal government to grant migrant workers in agriculture permanent residency status in Canada.

**18. BUYING LOCALLY**

WHEREAS our rural economies rely on local purchasing to survive; and

WHEREAS the NFU supports food sovereignty as a principle of our organization; and

WHEREAS, sharing in celebration of what we produce on our farms is an act of solidarity; and

WHEREAS existing policy calls for local food procurement at NFU banquets;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU encourage local purchasing by its members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU place a priority on local suppliers in their purchasing decisions.

**19. GM ALFALFA**

WHEREAS economic impact is not considered in the registration process for new seed varieties; and

WHEREAS the economic loss due to GM alfalfa would be significant if not devastating;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU call on the Federal Minister of Agriculture to investigate potential market loss from the release of GM Alfalfa.

**20. RESCINDING OF ALFALFA APPROVAL**

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU call for the Federal Government to rescind the approval of GM alfalfa.

**21. CATTLE RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS cattle prices have dropped significantly lately; and

WHEREAS cow numbers have not risen much from recent lows; and

WHEREAS the market continues to be dominated by two large beef processors and their captive supplies; and

WHEREAS lower prices for beef are further exacerbated by drought for farmers in Ontario and Quebec;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU researches the reasons behind the recent drop in cattle prices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU uses the results of this research in addressing the unfair market conditions for farmers with Federal and Provincial governments.

**22. PRODUCER CAR RECEIVER**

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU call for the creation of an independent receiver to operate at all ports to receive and take possession of producer car contents to market and allocate to grain companies to the best advantage of producers.



*David Suzuki (left) and Kent Mullinex (right), keynote speaker at convention.*

*(continued on page 21...)*

**23. PRODUCER CAR GRADING AND MARKETING**

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU call for the CGC to act in coordination with port receivers to grade and market producer cars.

**24. PRODUCER CAR SITE CONSTRUCTION**

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU call for the reinstatement of the ability of producers to petition for the construction of producer car loading sites, and that 10 producers would be an appropriate number of petitioners.

**25. MEMBERS AREA ON WEBSITE**

WHEREAS we live in a world where members increasingly interact with information through the medium of the internet; and

WHEREAS we are in dire need of more members and active members; and

WHEREAS new members do not currently have easy access to an orientation package and other materials; and

WHEREAS we have limited human resources and drafting resolutions, press releases and letters require a lot of time;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU introduce a members area on its website so that members can more easily access material like: templates, handbooks, training materials, factsheets, member stories and other NFU resources.

**26. ONTARIO LIVESTOCK FINANCIAL PROTECTION BOARD (OLFPB)**

WHEREAS Island livestock producers ship cattle to packing houses in Ontario; and

WHEREAS the Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program, administered by the Livestock Financial Protection Board (OLFPB), adjudicates claims and administers the compensation fund for cattle producers in the case of defaults on payment by the buyer; and

WHEREAS Prince Edward Island livestock producers may utilize the services of the Livestock Financial Protection Board (OLFPB) in the case of defaults on payment by the buyer; and

WHEREAS the OLFPB has protected cattle sellers when a licensed dealer defaults on payment; and

WHEREAS the OLFPB can pay the seller 95 per cent of any approved claim provided that:

- the sale was to a licensed dealer;
- proper notification procedures for non-payment were followed;

- the claim was filed within 30 days of the date of sale, and
- credit was not extended to the buyer; and

WHEREAS these adjudication meetings are recorded both written and electronically;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Office of the National Farmers Union investigate and pressure the Ontario Government to require the Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program to give the claimant within one week, a transcript of the adjudication meeting.

**27. FARM GATE PRICES**

WHEREAS the gap between farm gate prices and consumer prices is widening; and

WHEREAS consumer prices are at a record high;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU create an updated report on farm gate price in comparison to consumer prices and its effects over the past 40 years.

**28. RETENTION OF MAXIMUM REVENUE ENTITLEMENT OF THE CANADIAN TRANSPORTATION ACT**

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU support the federal government in retention of the MRE (maximum revenue entitlement) provisions of the Canadian Transportation Act.

**29. INDIGENOUS SOLIDARITY WORKING GROUP (ISWG)**

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU consolidate all its policies on Indigenous-Settler solidarity and Indigenous food sovereignty in a single section of the policy manual; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU Indigenous Solidarity Working Group (ISWG) maintain this section by developing a coherent set of policies to guide the Union to be presented as a series of resolutions at future conventions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ISWG coordinate with other members and bodies of the Union to encourage the development and implementation of Indigenous solidarity policy and action.

**30. PUBLIC EDUCATION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES**

WHEREAS the public education system across Canada has seen a dramatic change, and there is a lack of support for the communities and families that are living and working in our rural areas. This is evident through recent changes and closure of schools in many communities that are not located within urban boundaries; and

WHEREAS a strong and vibrant community relies on many components - schools being one - that allow our children and youth to be educated close to home,

(continued on page 22...)



hiring teachers that understand the community and may also live within that community, as well as to foster involvement within that community through various extracurricular activities. Children who attend a school in their own community feel a sense of place, and they will give back; and

WHEREAS any changes in the current education system that looks at rural schools within its authority as an "expenditure" should start to view youth and students as an "asset";

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union lobby nationally and each Region of the NFU shall lobby their own provincial governments, including in collaboration with other like-minded organizations, to keep our rural communities alive through a strong education system that allows our children to attend schools within their own communities.

### 31. SOLIDARITY WITH LAND PROTECTORS

WHEREAS land protectors, including those at Standing Rock North Dakota, Miq'Mac nations in the Maritimes, and at Unis'tot'enin British Columbia, are engaging in civil disobedience in defence of water, air, land and wildlife; and

Whereas we are witnessing the militarized repression of many such land protectors on a large scale in violation of their civil rights;

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU denounce the repression of peaceful protesters, including Indigenous land protectors, and express its support for the rights of people to engage in acts of civil disobedience in defence of the preservation of water, air, land and wildlife for future generations.

### 32. TB QUARANTINE CRISIS

WHEREAS tuberculosis is occurring in Canada and is a serious health risk to people and farmers livelihoods; and

WHEREAS there is a serious and current outbreak of tuberculosis creating the necessity for a quarantine of 34 herds on farms in Alberta and Saskatchewan; and

WHEREAS this quarantine requires that all saleable animals must remain on their farms causing loss of income as well as incurring the additional cost to keep, care and feed animals that are ready for sale;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU immediately demand that the federal and provincial governments provide immediate financial relief to the cattle farmers whose herds are being held in quarantine due to the bovine TB outbreak in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

—nfu—

*We Remember...*

## MARION DRUMMOND



The National Farmers Union in Prince Edward Island lost a valued long-time member on October 2, 2016 when Marion Drummond of Freetown, PEI passed away after a short but courageous battle with Lou Gehrig's Disease. She is deeply missed by her husband Sidney, daughter Janelle (Gary) Mann and son Kirk (Christine Hawboldt) and other family members.

Marion worked diligently at whatever task was before her. She was a very community-minded person as was evidenced by her untiring work in her church, 4-H, Women in Agriculture, and numerous other organizations. She was a Play School and Kindergarten teacher for many years and so enjoyed working with the young children.

The NFU was very dear to her heart, and she along with Sidney, was very active in her Local. She was Region 1 Women's Advisory Committee member for a number of years, a position she held until her passing. Attendance at Regional Convention and National Convention each year was a highlight for Marion. As well, she always took time to assist with meetings the NFU held with government officials or with other organizations. She was a very

strong supporter of the family farm and several years ago she and Sidney were the deserving recipients of the Grass Roots Award.

Marion is greatly missed by all NFU members in Prince Edward Island, and indeed, across the country. Marion loved her family, she loved her friends and she loved life itself. Hers was certainly a life well lived. Her largely-attended funeral was held on October 6, 2016 at the North Bedeque United Church, and she was tenderly laid to rest in the Freetown United Church cemetery - just a short distance from home.





*We Remember ...***MARIE HENDRICKEN****1935 – 2016**

Marie Hendricken was one of the rare multi-gifted persons whose influence was wider and deeper than she ever knew. Her graceful death on October 14, 2016, after a relatively short illness has left an unimaginable void in many people's lives and in the life of a wide range of progressive organizations.

Most people who knew Marie were accustomed to saying "Marie and JP" in one breath, though each was their own person. They lived long years together in mutual admiration. Marie always spoke of JP with awe, not only because he is one of the most intelligent people she knew but also one of the most tender-hearted. JP speaks of Marie's patience, kindness and her courage to take on any challenge.

Their six children, Danny, Darlene, Cathy, Ike, Kim, and Clair were surrounded with kindness and respect. They were brought up to reach out to others and to work for justice.

The family's caring extended to sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, fifteen grandchildren and six great grandchildren. Marie from Antigonish, NS was one of thirteen Boyd siblings. She and JP both from large families knew the value of caring for each other and sharing the ups and downs of life. Marie's children knew their Mom as one who always provided positive words of encouragement, welcomed them with hugs, smiled broadly with pride, and provided a socially responsible perspective on all topics. She never wanted anyone to go away hungry or without a cup of tea. She was an amazing cook and a gracious host..

Marie was a farmer to her core. One of her great joys was to be out on the tractor and preparing the land for spring planting. She experienced the life of the land and the wonder of its power to produce food for people. One of her friends described her relationship with the land in these words, "Marie carried the land in her soul". A touching part of her burial service was that JP added to her grave some soil from their farm.

Her commitment to the family farm gave direction to most of her life. Her family was one of the first in PEI to join the National Farmers Union (NFU). Marie as a young woman was introduced to NFU policies which support and defend the rights of farmers to be paid fair price for the food which they produce. She had a clear picture of the ways the promoters of the industrial model of agriculture influence public policy and that they claimed an unfair share of the wealth, leaving farm families struggling for survival. One of her greatest pains was to see that because of current policies, young people may not have the option to farm. She saw also that in this system the land and the water are at risk.

Marie was most proud of the NFU's foresight in the late sixties to ensure that women and youth had a strong voice in the organization's administration. She participated in strengthening the engagement of women and youth by taking on, many times, the national decision-making position of Women's Advisory and as Women's Vice President. She was a familiar and welcome sight at the national conventions. Just a few days before her death she told an NFU woman that she wanted to start getting ready for this year's convention. The NFU was never far from her mind, even in her final days.

Many social justice movements were part of Marie's life and work. She was a founder and valued constant member of Cooper Institute. She supported the national and international work of organizations involved in improving the lives of women and men peasant farmers. She participated with Farmers Helping Farmers in Kenya and was involved in farm exchanges with other countries of Africa, as well as Germany, Holland, and Scotland.

Marie was dedicated to her local community. She always had time to go play cards with her friends and neighbours, be involved in community benefits, take in social gatherings, bake pies for those in need, and sing in her church choir. She believed strongly in the power of forgiveness and how this ability was one of the greatest ways to unite us. She did not judge but rather accepted people where they were.

Marie Hendricken was a woman of hope. In response to the question of film-maker Don Kossick, "Where do you find hope?" Marie responded, "I find hope in meeting with people. Hope comes from people".

Don Kossick's tribute: "Honouring Marie Hendricken of Prince Edward Island. National Farmers Union Leader, solidarity activist, feminist, community builder, educator, internationalist. Viva Marie!" (See Youtube, *Remembering Marie*)

*Rest in Peace, Marie. A loving, hopeful life well-lived with and for others!*



## NFU BOARD / ADVISORY MEMBERS and OFFICES

### Regional/National Offices:

Region 1: Amanda Wildeman, Executive Director  
 648 Smythe Street, Fredericton, NB E3B 3G1 Ph: (506) 260-0087 Email: nfu.nb.office@gmail.com  
NB Member Tax Service: Judy Barr, 559 Route 390, Rowena, NB E7H 4N2 Ph: (506) 273-4328  
PEI Financial Services: Gayle Read, 120 Bishop Dr., Summerside, PEI C1N 5Z8 Ph: (902) 436-1872  
 Region 3: Sarah Bakker, NFU-O General Manager, 5420 Hwy 6 N, RR 5, Guelph, ON N1H 6J2  
 Ph: in ON 1-888-832-9638 / Ph: outside ON (705)738-3993 Email: office@nfuontario.ca  
 National: 2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6 Ph: (306) 652-9465 Email: nfu@nfu.ca

### National Officers and Directors:

*Jan Slomp*, President, Courtenay, BC; *Lydia Carpenter*, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President (Policy), Dunrea, MB; *Cam Goff*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President (Operations), Hanley, SK; *Coral Sproule*, Women's President, Perth, ON; *Katie Ward*, Women's Vice President, Woodlawn, ON; *Ayla Fenton*, Youth President, Kingston, ON; *Dana Penrice*, Youth Vice President, Lacombe, AB; *Reg Phelan*, Region 1 Coordinator, Morell, PEI; *Ted Wiggans*, Region 1 Board Member, York County, NB; *Emery Huszka*, Region 3 Coordinator, Florence, ON; *Tony Straathof*, Region 3 Board Member, Westmeath, ON; *Don Ciparis*, Region 3 Board Member, Rodney, ON; *Ian Robson*, Region 5 Coordinator, Deleau, MB; *Dean Harder*, Region 5 Board Member, Winnipeg, MB; *Rachelle Ternier*, Region 6 Coordinator, Cochin, SK; *Ed Pedersen*, Region 6 Board Member, Cut Knife, SK; *Ed Sagan*, Region 6 Board Member, Melville, SK; *Doug Scott*, Region 7 Coordinator, Waskatenau, AB; *Glenn Norman*, Region 7 Board Member, Red Deer County, AB; *Peter Eggers*, Region 8 Coordinator, La Glace, AB; *Seann Dory*, Region 8 Board Member, Parksville, BC.

Women's Advisory Committee: *Shannon Jones*, River Herbert, NS; *Lois Robson*, Deleau, MB; *Marcella Pedersen*, Cut Knife, SK; *Toby Malloy*, Nanton, AB; *Julie Enman*, Courtenay, BC.

Youth Advisory Committee: *Phillipe Gervais*, Moncton, NB; *Martin Boettcher*, Brussels, ON; *Jeanette Sivily*, Winnipeg, MB; *Christopher Sanford Beck*, Cochin, SK; *Alyse Stach*, Courtenay, BC.

## NATIONAL FARMERS UNION 47<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL CONVENTION

November 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016 – Saskatoon, Saskathchewan

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| 1       | Welcomes, Greetings and Opening Address                                                                          |          |
| W2      | (Workshop 2) Cory Ollikka & Karen Pedersen: <i>For the Record!</i>                                               |          |
| 3       | PANEL 1: <u>The Changing Climate for Agriculture Policy</u> <i>Ian Mauro, Darrin Qualman, Blaine Snipstal</i>    |          |
| 4       | REPORTS: Board of Directors, Women's, Youth & National Farmers Foundation                                        |          |
| 5       | PUBLIC EVENT: <u>Agriculture in a Changing Climate</u> <i>Kent Mullinex, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, BC</i> |          |
| 6       | PANEL 2: <u>Indigenous Food Sovereignty</u> <i>Harry Lafond and Barry Hill</i>                                   |          |
| 7       | PANEL 3: <u>An Interactive Session</u> <i>An Introduction to Kitchen Table Talks</i>                             |          |
| 8       | BEINGESSNER AWARDS - BANQUET - GRASSROOTS AWARDS                                                                 |          |
| 9       | CAUCUS REPORTS                                                                                                   |          |
| 10      | PANEL 4: <u>Regulations: Red Tape or Red Herring?</u> <i>David Zirnhelt, Terry Boehm, Christy Morrissey</i>      |          |
| 11      | PANEL 5: <u>Farming in a Changing Climate</u> <i>Iain Aitken, Shannon Jones, Don Voss, Chris Wooding</i>         |          |
| 12      | Closing Address                                                                                                  |          |