



National Farmers Union  
Union Nationale des Fermiers



# union farmer

Quarterly

Spring 2017 / Vol. 23 Issue 1

## *La Via Campesina North American Delegates*



*The Regional Meeting of La Via Campesina North America was held February 7th to 10th at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives in Epes, Alabama prior to the 7th International Conference of La Via Campesina. Organizations represented were Border Agricultural Workers Project (BAWP), Farm Workers Associate of Florida (FWAF), Rural Coalition (RC), National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), National Farmers Union (NFU), Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autónomas (UNORCA) and Union Paysanne (UP). NFU representatives were Joan Brady, Ayla Fenton and Eva Rehak. (See story on page 12)*

# Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

Although the inclusion of the word *advisory* in the name of this committee suggests otherwise, the Editorial Advisory Committee is very much a working committee. Every few months, the members of this committee set aside time from their regular farm work and other commitments to read through numerous reports and articles written by NFU elected representatives and NFU members. As we read through we note places where more clarification is needed, check facts, smooth out writing and strive to correct any spelling or grammar mistakes. There is always much email traffic back and forth as we strive to pull together, with crucial support from all staff at the national office in Saskatoon, a thought-provoking and informative magazine which reflects the values and actions of the NFU.

The National Board has given us a new task – to make the production and distribution of the Union Farmer Quarterly (UFQ) revenue neutral. To do this we need your help. Following are some new initiatives you can help us with that will help us either bring in additional money or save us money.

- 1) Once you have read your copy of the UFQ, please pass it on to a friend, neighbour, family member or acquaintance and encourage them to join the NFU. A membership form is on the back cover.

*Note: past issues of the UFQ are available on the NFU website at <http://www.nfu.ca/publications/unionfarmerquarterly>.*

- 2) On the back cover you will also find a donation form. Please consider making a donation, over and above your membership, to the NFU.
- 3) Are you comfortable reading magazines on your computer or electronic device? If so, consider making a request to receive an e-UFQ by contacting the NFU office at [nfu@nfu.ca](mailto:nfu@nfu.ca). This will save postage and printing costs. Please be assured that we will continue to send print copies of the UFQ to all members who prefer the print option.
- 4) **This is maybe the biggest change.** We will now be placing a limited number of advertisements in the UFQ. The cost will be \$125 per issue for business card size ads and \$300 per issue for quarter page ads. The deadline to receive ads for the summer issue of the UFQ is May 29. Please send your advertisements to Joan Lange at the NFU office at [lange@nfu.ca](mailto:lange@nfu.ca) and to Ann Slater, Chair of the NFU Editorial Advisory Committee at [aslater@quadro.net](mailto:aslater@quadro.net). **See page 18 for more details.**

Of course, if you have topics you think we should cover in the UFQ or if there are NFU members who have passed away and need to be remembered in the UFQ we want to continue to hear from you.

—Ann Slater  
Chair of the Editorial Advisory Committee

## union farmer quarterly

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*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

## Challenges in a *Post-Truth* Era

In 2016, *post-truth* was chosen by the Oxford English Dictionary as its word of the year. This was due to the context it was given in 2016 in relation to the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom and the US presidential election. Nigel Farage, former leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), and US President Donald Trump were notorious for appealing to disenfranchised voters with a rhetoric in which the truth was stretched, to say the least. Burying the truth did not start with Trump or any other reactionary political party on the extreme right. Underfunded public broadcasters, along side decades of commercialization and consolidation of the media, has led to a loss of investigative journalism. Media moguls are bombarding the public with commercials but also with populist, privately-funded manufactured news that has filtered out the inconvenient truth. Fabrications to deny the reality of man-made climate change, or appeasing concerns about it, often corresponds to funding from fossil fuel exploration companies.

The agricultural media in Canada is primarily paid for through advertisements. Only a small portion of revenue comes from subscriptions. Given the huge sum of money spent on agro-chemicals, seeds and equipment, on the input side; and the size of businesses taking commodities to market on the other; advertising dollars may hold a sword over any content that compromises the potential profits of the advertisers. The systematic decline of public institutions and public research have driven Canadian farmers into the abyss of *post-truth* largely due to over-exposure of lopsided information.

Dr. Christy Morrissey, from the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, studied the runoff effects of imidacloprid (a neonicotinoid pesticide) on aquatic insects. Imidacloprid is registered for use as a seed treatment, a foliar spray and in a granular

formulation. Its persistence in the environment, on top of its intense use, has rapidly increased levels in water bodies near the crops on which it was used, resulting in a negative impact on aquatic insects. Farmers are, in most cases, only offered seed that has been treated with a neonicotinoid, although most have no need for the treatment.\*

In her presentation to the 2016 NFU Convention, Dr. Morrissey cited yield trials in the US that showed no yield benefit from neonicotinoid seed treatments in soybeans. It seems that treated seeds are sold without sharing proper information and that regulatory authorities have not seen enough data to make proper decisions in the public interest. Farmers and regulators are clearly struggling in a *post-truth* environment. The regulator is ill equipped to do independent research and lacks the enforcement of the precautionary principle. Farmers suffer from the results of reduced public research, reduced public plant breeding and a lack of legislation that would enshrine the right to use on-farm saved seeds.

Numerous NFU submissions have been sent to government agencies, pointing out these inconvenient truths. Too often the NFU is the only organization that offers the farmer perspective in light of an overall public responsibility. Besides working with those agencies, it is our common goal as NFU members to inform our farmer friends and neighbours with truthful data. Too often it is untold by the big media that clearly reports un-distilled information from mega-bytes of electronic data.

—In Solidarity, Jan Slomp

\* Ontario legislation requires seed companies to have corn and soybean seed available that is not treated with neonicotinoids. In addition, it requires farmers to prove the need for neonicotinoids by testing for pest pressures when they want to buy neonicotinoid-treated corn or soybean seed.





# A message from the Women's President

— by Coral Sproule, Women's President

In Ontario, we are in the early days of spring work as higher than normal temperatures allow us a little time to try to get a head start on the coming season, or as it were, to finish up the loose ends that we did not attend to before the farm was blanketed in snow for the winter months. As I work, I watch my child at my side adapting to his environment and learning from the world around him. I am reminded that there are many factors that threaten to undermine his ability to thrive in our local community.

The strength of our rural communities has been fraying for some time. One of the keys to ensuring our next generation's ability to continue to occupy our rural communities will be to strengthen the support for our rural education systems to continue to nourish young minds. Many communities across Canada are facing the imminent closure of schools — the removal of one of the cornerstones of a thriving rural economy and way of life. This brings to mind the resolution on rural school closures passed at our 2016 convention which reads as follows:

*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.*

The NFU, and many allied community groups, are seeking to prevent school closures in several regions. In NFU Region 3, the Ontario Alliance Against School Closures (OAASC) is opposed to the proposed closure of 37 schools across this province. This alliance is pressuring the Ontario Premier and the Minister of Education to put a moratorium on school closures until further review. Many of the current proposed changes will result in overcrowding of the existing schools if these closures occur. In New Brunswick, with over a dozen rural schools facing potential closure, a coalition of parents and other representa-

tives is aiming to change the trajectory of their rural school system. Many in this province are simply asking for more time to seek out alternative funding models, or even, to prepare for the changes that may occur if their children are required to ride a bus for hours each day to reach a new school in a distant community.

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Without access to the education our children need in their communities, rural families are faced with the decision of whether to have their children bussed to the next community or to leave the rural community for the sake of their children's future. It is not all about the bottom line when it comes to publicly funded education. It is a vital service and one that is essential for our rural and agricultural communities to not only survive, but to thrive, for generations to come. In a recent press release by Grey County NFU local 344, Local President Gary Kenny stated, "The NFU promotes the public good, and it's difficult to see how closing rural schools, with its impact on small communities, will further the public good, despite the financial efficiencies closures may represent."

If you are facing similar changes to the education systems in your community, please contact me with an update on the progress and work taking place in your community to prevent this erosion of our community and educational institutions. I look forward to hearing your stories and working together to change our rural communities for the better. The NFU will continue to put pressure on all levels of government to recognize the significance of and potential negative impact of rural school closures.

—In Solidarity, Coral Sproule





# A message from the Youth

— by Dana Penrice, NFU Youth Vice President

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with David Korten, author of *Change the Story, Change the Future: A Living Economy for A Living Earth*. While we have entered into an era in which we cannot afford to look away from the systemic challenges of our current place and time in history, one thing that we need to embrace is consciously living the future we want to create.

Korten says that we need to stop living by, what he calls, the *Sacred Money and Markets Story* where time is money, wealth is measured only by dollars and corporations are the main organizing unit of our way of living. Instead, he calls for a *Sacred Life and Living Story* where time is life, where wealth is measured in real living wealth, where we recognize that life only exists in community and where “environmental sustainability, economic justice and living democracy are inseparable”.

When discussing how we can live the future we want to see, part of Korten’s vision is to see, “young people return to the land and learn to live from farming and ranching using methods that support the regeneration of soil and aquifers.”

These are reassuring words for the work of the NFU Youth. This year, we are excited to be working with NFU Youth Advisors in each region to host events and gatherings for new farmers across the



NFU and Young Agrarians introduction circle in Winnipeg.

country. Our goal is to build community, support new farmers and engage people in the work of the National Farmers Union.

Two events led by the NFU Youth have taken place so far. On Sunday, January 29, under Paul Gervais’ leadership, Region 1 and NFU-NB hosted over 40 new, experienced, and aspiring farmers who came together to share ideas, inspiration, and food, and to learn about innovative forms of farm financing.

In Winnipeg, Jeanette Sivilay, hosted an NFU Youth & Young Agrarians Potluck on February 11 as part of Seedy Saturday. Twenty people were in attendance and participants were invited to bring a *Farmer Slideshow* to share stories, knowledge, ideas and challenges. Jeanette also womaned an NFU booth throughout Seedy Saturday to reach more people and invite them to the Region 5 Convention.

In Region 8, NFU President Jan Slomp and Young Agrarians Coordinator Sara Dent shared the value and work of the NFU at the Vancouver Island Young Agrarians Mixer with over 100 aspiring and new farmers.

Thank you to all of our champions, volunteers and funders, including the National Farmer Foundation, who have supported this work. Look for more events happening in other regions over the course of the year!

—Dana Penrice, NFU Youth Vice President



NFU-NB and NFU Youth of Region 1 host event on January 29. Photo taken at Community Forests International’s 700-acre piece of land, Whaελghinbran Farm.





# Regional Reports



## Region One:

*Provinces of PEI, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia*

- by Ted Wiggins, District 2 (New Brunswick) Board Member



Only months after the announcement of New Brunswick's Local Food and Beverages Strategy, Real Food Connections, a local food advocate, closed and another prominent local food business narrowly avoided closure. The 2017-18 provincial budget in support of this initiative more than tripled, however the adequacy of this initiative is questionable in light of the systemic obstacles it faces.

On January 29, NFU-NB hosted an event on financing options for more than 40 new or aspiring farmers. Avenues of financing explored ranged from Farm Credit to Farm Works, a Nova Scotia Community Economic Development Investment Fund. In February, NFU-NB partnered with the Urban Teaching Farm project in Fredericton to address the need for more farms, farmers and formal education in regenerative agriculture in support of the new Climate Change Action Plan. The NB Agricultural Land Policy Committee is tasked with developing policy that will encourage the development of agricultural land and protect it for future generations. Items under discussion include FLIP, a tax deferral program, encroachment of non-farming land uses, the NB land evaluation system and the Livestock Operations Act. The NFU-NB has actively contributed to the development of this file for the past year.

The NFU-NB Annual General Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, March 19, at the Pembroke Community Hall. AGM business will be conducted in the morning, followed by a guided tour of Strawberry Hill Farm. The afternoon will consist of a diverse panel of speakers who will discuss the question of genetically modified (GM) potatoes in our province. Our goal is to encourage an informed debate on the genetic modification of food in the largest possible scientific, social, historical, environmental and ethical context.

—nfu—

## Région Two:

*Province of Québec*



- by Paul Slomp, Coordinator

### **An NFU Region in Québec...**

Bonjour de notre jeune région! Nous sommes un petit regroupement en ce moment et pour notre première année, nous allons explorer le rôle de l'Union nationale des Fermièr(e)s au Québec.

Traditionally, the NFU has decided not to organize in Québec mainly due to the strength of L'Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA), to which all farmers in Québec need to belong, and their ability to keep agriculture high on the provincial government's agenda. We have also never really had an existing membership in Québec that has been willing to organize on behalf of the NFU... until now...

La motivation première d'établir une région de l'UNF au Québec en ce moment est l'état du secteur laitier. Récemment, les fermièr(e)s laitières ont perdu une partie de nos marchés domestiques au fromage européen. Celui-ci traverse maintenant nos frontières suite à l'Accord économique et commercial global (AECG) avec l'Union Européenne. De plus, à cause de l'excédent de protéines de lait au niveau mondial, les transformateurs de lait États-Uniens ont développé le lait diafiltré pour contourner les réglementations de la gestion de l'offre. Malheureusement, le paiement forfaitaire que le gouvernement Canadien a donné au secteur ne rapatriera pas la part du marché perdue par l'AECG. La transformation du lait diafiltré au Canada ne mettra pas non plus d'argent dans les poches des producteurs/productrices. Les fermièr(e)s laitières du Québec se retrouveraient le bec à l'eau. L'UNF peut s'engager et trouver une vraie solution pour les fermièr(e)s laitières.

### **Rendez-vous de planification de Région 2**

Some of our members got together in February to make a plan for our region in the coming year and to discuss how we navigate the existence of the NFU in

(continued on page 7...)



*(Region 2 report, continued from page 6)*

Québec politically and with our La Via Campesina ally L'Union paysanne. Having a more active NFU membership in Québec will allow us to more actively support and engage in actions and events organized by l'Union paysanne. As well, for the time being, we will focus our efforts on farm issues that have a

more federal angle, leaving the provincially oriented issues to be tackled by the UPA.

Pour cette année, nous organisons un événement avec la jeunesse de l'UNF en avril, nous allons commencer à rencontrer quelques fermier(e)s laitières, et notre convention régionale aura lieu en septembre.

—nfu—

## NFU-O/Region Three:



*Province of Ontario*

*- by Emery Huszka, Coordinator*

***The real role of the NFU going forward .....***

Community conscience, that is how the National Farmers Union distinguishes itself from other farm groups. We are relevant to the fabric of Canadian society and to our valuable heritage of food production.

Over the past year, processing vegetable growers in Ontario have experienced an outright attack on the fundamental structure of orderly marketing for their sector. While 500 or less farmers may be insignificant in Queens Park, these hard-working families have generated most of the vegetables for the Ontario frozen and canned processors that we as eaters take for granted. Represented by a farmer-elected, farmer-run marketing board, the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers (OPVG), have successfully negotiated hundreds of contracts with processors over their 70 year plus history!

The OPVG works on behalf of farmers to negotiate fair pricing, delivery expectations, quality expectations and dispute resolution mechanisms. This system has served the province fairly and efficiently. Former OFA president, Geri Kamenz, in his appointed role as Chair of the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission, rattled the farm community in 2016 and paved the way for the attack on the OPVG. The departure of Mr. Kamenz from Farm Products did not end this experiment with free-for-all, survival-of-the-fittest, neighbour-against-neighbour direct contracting.

Fast forward to March 3, 2017, Ontario Agriculture Minister Leal, with the stroke of a pen fired the OPVG

elected board and replaced them with Elmer Buchanan, a former Ontario agriculture minister, who was appointed as the trustee for OPVG. While Mr. Buchanan has personally demonstrated an affinity for the farming community, he will now serve as the messenger of democratic abolishment. He will be responsible for negotiating the 2017 production contracts until a new board is elected in December. We denounce dictators around the world for side stepping democracy, yet, regardless of Mr. Leal's "good" motives, a democratically elected group was wiped out deliberately.

Without hesitation, the National Farmers Union denounced this departure of yet another farmer approach in favour of corporate worship which our governments time and again clearly treat as their favourite child. All partners in the food chain must prosper to be a reliable system.

**Farmers never leave; our ground is under our feet!** We are here for the duration and are committed to providing safe quality food! Dear government, when will you appreciate your loyal rural citizens?

A resolution was passed at the NFU Region 3 convention on March 4 in support of the democratically elected marketing board system, and called for Ontario to restore the OPVG board with current powers under Ontario Regulation 440.

Today more than ever, the NFU needs to be the voice at the table asking blunt questions that defend people over companies. We see our moral responsibility as food producers, environmental stewards and social justice advocates. We see ourselves as the backbone which is under attack by the puppeteering control of powerful, profit driven interests. Large farm businesses have ignored the pattern of community abandonment by corporate agendas and our elected government, but as OPVG growers just found out, when all of the other small

*(continued on page 8...)*

producers go the way of the dodo bird, you become the next small producer in line. **To all of the other elected boards — you need to stand with the OPVG — you could be next!**

The NFU in Ontario is strong, but our influence requires the society we are defending to stand with

us. Our processing vegetable farmers need solid support, not just back room political footsies. Add your voice to the food discussion and learn as much as you can to constructively force policy change that protect farmers. **FARM FAMILIES FIRST! NATIONAL FOOD POLICY FIRST! NO EXCUSES!** —nfu—

## Region Five:

*Province of Manitoba*

— by Ian Robson, Coordinator



**R**egion 5 NFU wishes members much success in 2017. We all continue to farm and hope for better results at all levels. Farmers put their vast skills to work to raise our crops despite many challenges. It is part of the reward that we grow crops each season by overcoming many challenges, and having a proper plan.

Some of the challenges: crop budgets show very thin margins; farm debt is increasing; land prices are a challenge for beginning farmers; our support systems (e.g. AgriStability) are flawed; important crop research funding from government sources needs to be expanded to prevent the excess costs we see for soy, corn and canola seed; the cost of repairs to equipment and hourly shop rates have increased; vertical integration has removed the option to raise hogs; those who want to raise pasture poultry need room within the rules to do so while we support supply management against imports from USA or New Zealand; and the price of meat in the store has increased while the farmers' share of the consumer dollar is slipping lower.

There is room to pay farmers much more fairly for our work and there are many people working on this issue. There are many people who wish to start farming and many food eaters who want to buy from local farmers and pay fairly for the costs involved.

The major agricultural thrust in the province of Manitoba has been identifying *red tape* rules, regulations or decisions which add costs to farmers or to other areas of the economy -- presumably to make Manitoba *the most improved province in Canada*. The NFU in Manitoba responded to the Red Tape consultations. A copy of our response is available on request. There is unneeded red tape but there is also

responsible red tape which requires that a debate takes place regarding each proposal from our Manitoba government.

One proposal, already announced, is to make it easier for only one General Farm Organization (GFO) to be the legislated voice for Manitoba farmers. This is an error. There are many farm voices in Manitoba and the government should listen to both National Farmers Union and Keystone Agricultural Producers. A choice of voice strengthens democracy and leads to better decisions, something the current government has said it wishes to do. The Ontario model of funding GFO's could be easily adapted for MB.

OXFAM has reported that eight people in the world own as much wealth as the poorest 50% of the world's population. Farmers in Manitoba are lucky, but our job is not to help the rich get richer. Lydia Carpenter, NFU VP (Policy) and Manitoba farmer, has been asked to take part in La Via Campesina meetings with other farmers from around the world and we look forward to hearing her experience. Farmers share common interest across all types of production.

There has been a lot of talk about a social license to farm or to do business. But the consumer is always correct and a great many consumers do care about their food and its taste and wholeness. It is not the job of farmers to speak for companies who process our products or sell us farm inputs or products that someone else says is okay to use on crops or livestock. Farmers use these products with care but there are many concerns for which real discussion is necessary.

The Region 5 NFU Climate Change Greenhouse Gas Reductions Report will be delivered shortly to the Manitoba government, who want a made-in-Manitoba Climate Change Action Plan. We are describing the need to measure and be paid for better management practices, which many farmers already are doing, and to help manage the carbon in the soil for better profit and healthy crops. —nfu—







## Region Six:

*Province of Saskatchewan*

- by Rachel Ternier, Coordinator

### ***"For land is the heart of the matter"***

Following the fatal shooting of Colten Boushie on a farm in rural Saskatchewan last summer, the NFU felt compelled to make a statement condemning the flurry of hateful racist remarks that followed the shooting. Our statement, drafted by Region 6, ended with a call to commit ourselves to building relationships of solidarity, mutual respect, and friendship with Indigenous neighbours, and to honouring our obligations as Treaty people. I believe this is critically important for our Region and for our organization.

In January, author Roger Epp wrote an article in the *Prairie Messenger* titled *Rural Prairie West: last frontier for reconciliation?* The stories and statements in it are important for farmers to hear and contemplate, in order for us to understand the connections between our settler colonial history and the effects of current and past government policies on Indigenous peoples and communities. At the core of the article is Epp's assertion that "land is the heart of the matter".

As NFU members we have a certain reverence, appreciation, and respect for the land, and Epp's statement really struck a chord with me. I have been reflecting deeply on land for the last five years, having chosen to move back to a rural area to live and farm. It is important to ask questions like the ones Epp poses in his article, and reflect on the history of this place and how we as farmers came to be here.

In the process of moving back to the farm where I grew up, it has become very important to me to better understand the signing of Treaty 6, and to honour the intent of that agreement. The spirit of Treaty is about sharing the land between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. How can we do this better? Epp's article discusses the film *Reserve 107*, a story from Saskatchewan. The small town of Laird is confronting the reality of the land they live on

through conversation with the Young Chippeweyan band, whose federally designated reserve lands were sold off to farmers by the government years ago. As *Reserve 107* shows us, addressing these questions will involve difficult conversations, but can also be the beginning of enriching relationships and experiences in discovering the common ground that brings us together in ways we never before realized. The film is worth watching and is available online. As you watch it, think about your own context, and what sharing land in the context of treaties can mean.

Epp continues, "What might it mean for farmers and farm communities to renounce the doctrine of discovery? What might the work of reconciliation look like in places where land still matters?" If land really matters to us, what does that mean for how we treat the land? What does it mean for how we practice farming in a way that can be regenerative for and restore the health of the land, and ultimately, of our farms, families and communities?

In mid-February, my partner Russell and I attended the Organic Alberta and Holistic Management joint conference. Darrin Qualman, started the weekend off with a presentation on *Farming and Climate Change on the Canadian Prairies*. He emphasized that a transition to low input agriculture, which is what has been practiced for most of our agricultural history, can resolve farm income problems (he showed that most farm income today seems to be spent on agricultural inputs), and improve the health of the land and the climate as well. The conference featured many excellent presentations which addressed how we can manage and respect land in healthier ways, with all of our neighbours (human and non-human). We connected with a few people at this conference whom we hope to bring to our regional convention as guest speakers and also connected with potential new NFU members. We will be working on membership recruitment to bring more people to our Region 6 summer convention which we are thinking of holding in Saskatoon this year. I look forward to coming together at our convention to continue this conversation with all of you about what it means to honour the treaties as farmers.

—In solidarity and love,  
Rachel Ternier



## Region Seven:

*Province of Alberta*

*- by Glenn Norman, Coordinator*



**H**ere in Alberta, we have made it through one of the toughest climate and economic years in recent history, with both positives and negatives depending on what section of agriculture you are involved in and where in the province you live.

After a winter that wasn't, seeding proceeded early in 2016 but an unheard of May heat wave left crops in many areas stressed and soil moisture depleted. June brought heavy rains that saved most cereal and grain crops but came too late in some areas to save hay crops that were further reduced in quality by near daily small rains. By summer's end the cereal and oilseed outlook for harvest was excellent with the potential for some record quality malting barley. Forage, although of very poor quality, was there in sufficient quantities to meet the needs of livestock producers. Harvest began on time in many areas but was quickly ended by more moisture which deteriorated the quality and complicated harvest operations. In March, 2017, about 7% of the 2016 crop remains in the field across the province but in many areas the situation is much worse because of the excess moisture. In some areas in the northeast over 50% of the crop remains in the field. Crop insurance claims will be high, as will support payments as much of the canola crop needed drying and was discounted.

On the cattle front, the price drop on cattle is not being reflected in the supermarkets. Many large feedlots have closed due to financial losses and unfair competition from the packing plant captured feeders. In addition, the low dollar has bled calves into US feeders. However, the late onset of winter reduced feeding costs. For the first time ever, I went to the 2016 NFU convention with cows on the range with grass and open water. They remained there until December 3, more than a full month later than the previous farm record.

Region 7 members have met with the Alberta Agriculture Minister to discuss agriculture issues. We were well received, but for the most part achieved little. The NFU was one of the only farm organizations to come out in favour of Bill 6, the *Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act*. A number of Region 7 members put their names forward to join the Technical Working Groups to craft the regulations under the act, in an effort to counter the strong ideological voices from the commodities driven agriculture coalition. I was the only NFU member to be appointed to a group where I worked with two principles in mind — that workers must be protected on the job and that the occupational health and safety regulations must not cripple the industry. Through a lot of discussion and a little arm-twisting our mixed group of employers and employees achieved consensus on the rewrite of the sections of the code we had been assigned. We were also successful in getting the Alberta Farmers' Advocate Office to release a public warning on the danger of selling your oil or gas surface lease to a third party involved in an investment scheme.

During the National Farmers Union Annual Convention in November, we sent out a press release calling on the federal and provincial governments to release funds to aid the ranchers affected by the Southern Alberta TB outbreak and to pay their bills.

Currently we are working with the Alberta Federation of Agriculture with the goal of achieving if not stable funding, then at least targeted funding for projects, leadership and research through the provincial government.

*—In solidarity,  
Glenn Norman*



**Check us out  
on the web:**

**www.nfu.ca**



## Region Eight:

*Peace River District of  
Alberta & the Province of BC*

*- by Peter Eggers, Coordinator*



There are a number of issues looming in Region 8. Some are short-term in nature, like the unfinished harvest of 2016 in the prairie portion of the region. The workload associated with that will be significant — not only because of the unfinished harvest but also because almost no anhydrous ammonia (82-0-0) was applied in the fall. Now there are worries that there will be logistical problems to produce and move the amount of fertilizer required this spring. There are actually better alternatives, for example, ammonium sulphate (21-0-0-24) or urea (46-0-0). When using these types of nitrogen the rate of actual N can be cut by 20% with the same yield potential as using 82-0-0. The problem lies with the application of N as a broadcast urea because it will dissolve and go back into the air. The best way is banding either urea or ammonium sulphate. Ammonium sulphate will not evaporate when broadcast. Banded 21-0-0-24 is the absolute best solution because the plants to be grown will utilize only the amount of N actually needed. If there was an over application it will remain there for next season. One thing we tend to forget is that nitrogen is always a double-edged sword. One pound of N destroys 10 pounds of carbon [stable humus]. Over application does not only cost cash but water holding capacity. Carbon in the soil can hold eight times its weight in water. Another side effect is that artificial N kills mycorrhiza fungi which is essential to form stable carbon in the soil.

There are also long-term issues looming in Region 8, specifically environmental issues around oil and gas exploration, production and at the end, decommission and reclamation. In Alberta, there are currently 444,174 oil and gas wells. The Alberta Energy Regulator is currently tracking 88,080 inactive wells. Some of these wells belong to companies which are bankrupt or no longer exist. Wells with no owner are turned over to the Orphan Well Association who then have to perform their duty and prepare the site until a reclamation

certificate can be issued and the land is returned to the landowner. The annual rent on those sites is paid by Alberta taxpayers until a reclamation certificate is issued. The Orphan Well Association is funded by the oil and gas companies. In March 2015 they had 162 orphaned wells on their books. In January 2017 there were 1,590 wells, and in February 2017 another 1,380 wells, 201 pipelines and 81 facilities were added.

The cost to retire a site is \$50,000 to \$1,000,000 or higher. The oil companies are funding the Orphan Well Association at \$30 million annually. If it costs \$250,000 to retire a well, it will take 25 years to remediate the wells currently on the books with the money available. There are estimates that the cleanup will cost anywhere from \$36 billion to \$300 billion for all decommissioned wells in Alberta. That does not take into consideration the loss of productivity on the remediated land. 444,174 well sites is 1.9 million acres and that does not include pipelines which have by far the largest land impact by acreage. By not having the end in mind before you start, which is what happened here, you can see that all that money made with oil and gas seems to be gone and the liabilities might mean that we are broke. In British Columbia, the number of wells are smaller but the Ponzi scheme seems to be going on there too. The British Columbia Oil and Gas Commission says there are 45 wells in their orphan program but an investigation by the David Suzuki Foundation found 6,978 abandoned, and 2,945 suspended wells, many of them idle for many years. The cleanup is not taking place because it is a lot cheaper to pay a little rent than to clean up. —nfu—

### **SAVE A TREE, SAVE A STAMP & 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. If you would like to get the electronic version of the magazine in your email inbox 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.**



# North American Region Meeting of La Via Campesina

—February 8th to 11, 2017, Birmingham, Alabama

Joan Brady, Ayla Fenton and Eva Rehak attended the LVC North American Regional Meeting in Alabama. Meeting host, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, has assisted in land retention and development, especially for African American farmers, since 1967.

The NFU delegation joined representatives of five other LVC member organizations: Union Paysanne (Canada), UNORCA (Mexico), National Family Farm Coalition (US), Rural Coalition (US), Florida Farm Workers Association (US) and the Border Farm Workers Project (US). This meeting was convened to discuss the current North American political context, the various struggles and successes that have been experienced by each organization and the development of an action plan for the upcoming year, including LVC's 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference in July.

At the youth meeting, a proposal to create regional youth positions on the International Coordinating Committee was introduced, and with the support of the North American (NA) Region, it will be brought forward to be voted on at the LVC 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference. To improve communication, the youth formed a regional collective which will include a representative from each member organization.

At the women's meeting, it was determined that there should also be a women's collective in the NA region and a Woman's Declaration was drafted for International Women's Day, March 8.

Joan Brady was elected to replace Dena Hoff (National Family Farm Coalition) as the co-coordinator of the region. Carlos Merentes (Border Farm Workers Project) will remain the other co-coordinator.

Participants from all organizations left the meeting with a renewed intention to participate fully as a region within LVC, and to support each other in our common struggles.

Each organization will send delegates to the LVC 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference, July 16 to 24, 2017 in the Basque country. For more information about the 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference or the NFU's International Programs Committee, please contact the IPC Coordinator at [ipccordinator@nfu.ca](mailto:ipccordinator@nfu.ca) —nfu—

## The North American LVC Women's Declaration

We are Women.

*We are Leaders in the movement and members of LVC North America.*

We Lead with a Women's heart with love and respect for all life, concerned with the children, their future, and speaking to them truth.

*We are nurturers of the land and community.*

We treasure the gifts of the soil and our ancestors before us.

*Food, its production, its preparation, and its defense, brings us together.*

We are builders of community and food sovereignty, whether we have been here for generations, sojourning here or beginning our journey – we are one to protect what is necessary to us, our families, and peasants around the world.

*We fight and stand together with all who believe that it is the people that produce and eat the food that know and can be trusted to guard our land and our future.*

We dress to meet the challenges of the day: soil on our hands, boots on our feet, ink on our fingers and light in our eyes.

*We work until the work is done and then to sleep, to be ready to grow and lead another day together, no walls between us, the Campesinas of Mexico, Canada and the United States.*

## La déclaration des Femmes de l'Amérique du Nord

Nous sommes les Femmes.

*Nous sommes des Leaders dans le mouvement et membres de LVC Amérique du Nord.*

Nous menons avec un cœur de Femme avec l'amour et respect pour toute vie, préoccupées par les enfants, leurs futurs, en leur partageant la vérité.

*Nous sommes les nourricières de la Terre et de la communauté.*

Nous valorisons les cadeaux de la Terre et de nos ancêtres.

*La nourriture, sa production, sa préparation et sa défense nous rassemblent.*

Nous sommes les fondations de nos communautés et de la souveraineté alimentaire, qu'on ait été ici depuis des générations, de passage ou qu'on commence notre voyage, nous sommes celles qui protègent ce qui est nécessaire pour nous, nos familles et les paysannes autour du monde.

*Nous luttons et nous nous tenons debout ensemble avec toutes celles et ceux qui croient que ce sont les gens qui produisent et mangent la nourriture et qui savent et peuvent être digne de confiance pour garder notre Terre et notre avenir.*

Nous nous habillons pour faire face aux défis de la journée; la terre sur nos mains, les bottes à nos pieds, l'encre sur nos doigts et la lumière dans nos yeux.

*Nous travaillons jusqu'à ce que tout le travail soit accompli, pour ensuite nous reposer et grandir ensemble de jour en jour, sans mur entre nous, les Paysannes du Mexique, du Canada et des États-Unis.*



# Opposing Paradigms

— *the need to land squarely on the ecological side*



Dr. Kent Mullinix, Institute for Sustainable Food Systems, Kwantlen Polytechnic Univ.

Towards the end of his address to the NFU's 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention last November in Saskatoon, keynote speaker, Dr. Kent Mullinix suggested that the NFU is uniquely positioned to take a leadership role in creating an economy in which family-based farming can flourish. To do so, he said that we are going to have to take an unequivocal stand, since we cannot have our cake and eat it too, and we are going to have to roll up our sleeves and take our gloves off.

In her introduction to the Thursday evening public event, former NFU president, Nettie Wiebe described Dr. Mullinix as a researcher, activist and thinker. He is currently the Director of the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in British Columbia but also comes with a background in horticultural crops. He started his presentation with the biggest of the big picture, suggesting that we developed our current thinking when the world was pretty empty with endless resources. We now live in a world that is over-flowing with people and our resources are overtapped. Mullinix said that we are now in the *anthropocene* period, the "earth's most recent geologic time period in which global atmospheric, geologic, hydrologic, biospheric and other earth system processes are substantially altered by humans."<sup>1</sup> We live in a time when 55 of the top 100 economies are corporations, not countries. By the end of this century we can expect 55% of the world's species to become extinct, primarily as a result of human activity.

Agriculture was developed over 11,000 years ago under relatively constant and predictable weather patterns in suitable soils. Soil is a non-renewable resource and we are currently using all of the available arable land. Agriculture currently uses 70% of the world's fresh water, and Mullinix says, "we are tapped out". The global climate change wild card is leading to changes in precipitation patterns, irrigation water availability, the incidence of insects and disease, and the frequency of severe weather. According to Mullinix, "the agri-food

system is driving climate change", with ten to 25% of global greenhouse gases coming from agriculture and up to 50% from the whole agri-food system.

"We must figure out how to live on earth in a way that does not kill it, in a way that nurtures it, so future generations can continue to live," says Mullinix. He believes that our food system is the foundation of a sustainable humanity and questions whether we can have a sustainable humanity if we cannot bring forth a sustainable food system. In his view, our current food system is not economically sustainable, it is not environmentally sustainable and it is not socially sustainable.

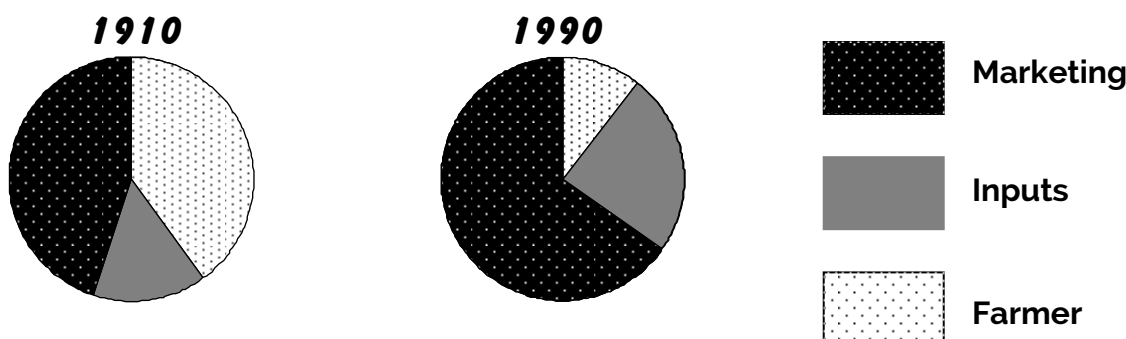
Those of us involved in agriculture, whether as farmers or as academics, were taught to believe in the production model of agriculture as a way to feed the world. Mullinix says that in return for the noble pursuit of feeding the world we were given the license to do other things. But what was the outcome? We do produce more food and feed more people -- but at the same time 1.2 billion people are food insecure, including over nine percent of Canadian households. Another 1.5 billion people are overfed while 3.5 million children die each year from nutritional deficiencies. Mullinix describes it as "an agri-food system that feeds those that are sufficiently affluent to participate in it".

According to Mullinix, most of our food dollar - 65% - goes to marketers, to the extent that the "money you spend on food is primarily going to convince you to spend money on that food." Meanwhile, he says that the eight to ten cents the farmer gets is not enough to cover the cost of production. The production model of agriculture is capital- and input-intensive with exorbitant expenditures on fuel, machinery, pesticides, fertilizer and land. The money that is spent in the pre- and post- production sectors is included in the gross farm receipts statistics but Mullinix says that money goes to corporate headquarters by close of business everyday. Despite record gross farm incomes, there is not enough money staying in rural

(continued on page 14...)



## Where does our food dollar go?



Heffernan, W., 2005 In Mullinix ed., The Next Agricultural Revolution

communities to keep farms afloat. According to Mullinix, "When your cost of production is so askew from your potential net receipts, you are assuming tremendous economic risk" and can no longer bounce back from crop or market failures. Some say the fact that this agri-food situation has impoverished North American farmers is not a problem that farmers should get big or get out, thereby absorbing their neighbours and leaving fewer farms and aging farmers.

Mullinix also addressed what he calls the environmental transgressions of the industrial, production model of agriculture, including: habitat/biodiversity destruction; pesticide and fertilizer contamination; soil erosion/salinization/desertification; pollution of air, water and soil; aquifer and ground water depletion; genetically modified organisms; and greenhouse gas emissions. Mullinix describes agriculture as "the human endeavour that utilizes organisms that are capable of capturing radiant energy from the sun, converting it to chemical energy and maintaining a positive energetic balance on earth" but he says "industrial agriculture has turned this beautiful relationship on its head." Agriculture is now an energy loser with a negative *energy return on energy invested* (EROEI) – with a current average of 1:5. In 1940, the EROEI was 2.5:1.

We are frequently told that the free market will solve these problems. Mullinix counters with the observation that a free market in the food system does not exist because the agri-food system is dominated by tremendous economic interests. With Bayer's purchase of Monsanto, one entity will

control 25% of the world's pesticide market and 25% of the world's seed market. Mullinix calls this "control beyond belief."

### Corporate hegemony (concentration)

- 4 corporations – 80% of Canadian and U.S. beef packing
- 3 corporations – 75% of Canadian and U.S. pork packing
- 4 corporations – 62% of Canadian flour milling
- 3 corporations – 95% of Canadian dairy processing
- 4 corporations – 62% of Canadian food retail
- 5 corporations – 80% of global crop seed
- 2 corporations – 100% of global turkey breeding and egg laying stock

There are two competing paradigms (models) for the agri-food system currently "battling it out", according to Mullinix. One the one side is the *life science intensive* paradigm which has a focus on competition, domination of nature, specialization, dependence, centralization, short-term benefits and high inputs. The *ecological intensive* paradigm, on the other hand, has a focus on community, harmony with nature, diversity, independence, decentralization, long-term benefits and conserving resources for the future. Mullinix says that we need to land squarely on the ecological side.

The appropriate vision of agriculture and food that Mullinix calls for is a global network of bio-

(continued on page 15...)





regional food systems that operate per the environmental capacity and the ecology of our life places and which occur in conjunction with appropriate national and trans-national systems.

In closing, Mullinix presented ten actions we can take as individuals and collectively within the NFU:

- Embrace deep sustainability and organic production methods – it's the high ground.
- Tell it like it is (challenges, vision, solutions) to the public forthrightly and relentlessly – they are listening and will support you.
- Challenge neo-liberal economics and laissez faire capitalism – there are other ways to organize and operate a healthy, robust economy.
- Demand an end to oligopolistic control of our food system – or accept likely outcomes.
- Champion greater social and economic equity for all – ability to secure basic necessities, good food is a human right, not just for the sufficiently affluent.
- Support diversity in farm types, sizes and marketing channels – confers adaptability and resiliency.

- Encourage, mentor the new generation of farmers – they bring lots of new skills, passion.
- Empower women agriculturists – support their perspective, intellect, and energy.
- Ally with diverse activist organizations – sustainable food system, Indigenous rights, environmental, social justice, etc. - they are kindred spirits and will support you.
- Demand and contribute to climate change mitigation – far less expensive than adaptation and far better outcome for you. —nfu—

*The full power point slide deck for Dr. Mullinix's presentation can be found at*  
<http://www.nfu.ca/issues/national-convention>

<sup>1</sup> Stromberg, J., Smithsonian Magazine, 2013



National Farmers Union  
 Union Nationale des Fermiers



# NFU 48th Annual Convention

November 23rd to 25th, 2017

Holiday Inn Ottawa East

1199 Joseph Cyr Street, Ottawa, ON K1J 7T4

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(Group Code: NFU or refer to the NFU Convention and dates of event)

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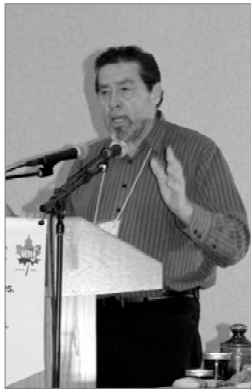
(\$10 additional fee for third/fourth person)

*Parking is ample and complimentary.*



# Rethinking Our Relationship to the Land

The Friday morning panel at the NFU 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, titled *Indigenous Food Sovereignty: The Canadian Context*, took place on Treaty 6 Territory in Saskatoon last November and featured two engaging speakers – Harry J. Lafond from Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan and Barry Hill from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in Ontario. Lafond is the Executive Director of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, but for 40 years has lived on land his father broke and farmed, making him the keeper of the original family plot. Hill operates Hillsfield Farms – a 2,000 acre grains and oilseed farm – with his wife Cheryle.



Harry Lafond

*"The treaties, from the Elders' perspective, were negotiated within the relationship between creator, his children and all elements of creation..."*

Treaty 6 Territory stretches across the central part of Saskatchewan and Alberta and is the homeland of the Cree people plus some Nakotas and Saulteaux. According to Lafond, there are two stories to be told about Treaty 6, as well as Treaties 1 – 11. Historically, Lafond says that Canada has been told a very short story from the Morris<sup>1</sup> perspective but the story from the indigenous side is very interesting. It shows a challenging divide between the Morris version and the oral history version that will take a long time to understand. Key to this gap is the relationship to the land. The Morris story talks about ceding and surrendering the land based on European thinking about land ownership. The indigenous story conveys a very different type of relationship to the land and talks about sharing, living together and mutually benefitting from the land.

By 1876, hunting, gathering, fishing and the fur trade were all experiencing a downturn, so leaders

of the Cree communities began to encourage their people to move towards farming for a living. According to Lafond, there are letters and stories from this time, showing that indigenous farmers wanted to expand their operations but Indian agents determined that they were only good to be peasant farmers, therefore, they did not need tractors and could continue to farm with oxen.

In recent years, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner has been mandated to bring the fuller story of Treaty 6, and the other treaties, to the people of Saskatchewan. According to Lafond, there are clauses within Treaty 6 that need to be addressed, understood and put into a new context. He says, "The treaties, from the Elders' perspective, were negotiated within the relationship between creator, his children and all elements of creation. That's a very different way of thinking about being on earth and living from the life-giving forces and life-giving gifts that have been given to us." Most recently the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has given us some guidelines but there needs to be much more recognition of the ceremonial, medicinal and nutritional value of hunting and gathering and much more dialogue between big farmers and hunter/gatherers.

Barry Hill is a member of the Mohawk of Six Nations which are part of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy or the People of the Longhouse. The Two Row Wampum Treaty flowed out of the first contact between the Haudenosaunee and Europeans. Hill says that the two parallel lines in beads in the Two Row Wampum belt say that "your people and my people will co-habitate together in peace and harmony, never crossing into each other's path. This was to continue forever." Due to their allegiance to the English, Hill's ancestors became persona non grata after the War of Independence in the U.S. They were resettled on 950,000 acres along the Grand River in 1784, which has now been whittled down to 45,000 acres.

(continued on page 17...)



Barry Hill



*(Rethinking Our Relationship to the Land, from page 16)*

Traditionally, the Haudenosaunee were both hunters and agriculturists, with the men hunting and the women growing the corn, beans, squash, berries and other fruits given to them by the creator. The traditional ceremonies in Hill's community revolve around the weather and the agricultural cycles of the year, starting with the strawberry ceremony and moving on to the harvest of the squash and the hunting seasons.

According to Hill, one thing that distinguishes his area is land ownership. On reserves in southwestern Ontario people have individual title to land which Hill says leads to both good and not-so-good things. In the 1960's the cost of keeping small, mixed farms going became onerous and many people drifted out of agriculture and into factory jobs. During the '60's

and '70's much land on Six Nations was rented out to off-reserve farmers, such that when he returned to farming in the 1980's, from off-reserve work as a professional engineer, Hill had trouble finding land to rent. In the mid-80's, the Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario helped reverse the trend by making operating and loan capital available to indigenous farmers. Hill says that whereas at one time 90% of reserve farmland was rented to off-reserve people, now 90% of the reserve farmland is farmed by their own people. On Six Nations, they now have younger farmers and farming practices are improving, although they still have to deal with the lack of regulation around land use.

—nfu—

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Morris was the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and North-West Territories in 1876 when Treaty 6 was signed.

*Each year several NFU members step into elected positions at the Annual Convention. In this edition of the UFQ we introduce you to some of the Board Members who began their terms of office the NFU 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention in November, 2016.*

## Board Member Region 6 (Saskatchewan)



— Rachelle Ternier

**R**achelle is passionate about seeds — securing public access to them, teaching people to save them, and showing the diversity they contain! She is

taking over the family seed collection from her father Jim Ternier. Operating as Prairie Garden Seeds, she is in the process of moving it all back to the small farm where she grew up on Murray Lake north of North Battleford, Saskatchewan in Treaty 6 Territory. Their seed collection consists of about 800 cultivars of various plants from flowers to vegetables to grains and more. She strongly encourages everyone to nurture even one small plant for food, save some seeds, and enjoy the wonders of locally grown food. As a Prairie Garden Seeds vendor, she attends about ten Seedy Saturdays and Sundays on the prairies (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) every year.

Rachelle started realizing the power and importance of diversity through studying languages and linguistics at the University of Saskatchewan, making the connection between biodiversity and linguistic and cultural diversity. She is now fluent in five languages and of those five, Spanish is closest to her heart! She always looks up places to go Latin social dancing (salsa, bachata, etc) in every city she visits as this is one of the most life-giving activities for her! Rachelle and her partner Russell are settling into the family farm which includes an off-grid house where they recently finished installing solar power.

Rachelle's grandfather was one of the founding members of the NFU in 1969. She has become involved with the NFU in the last three years and has found a new home in the wonderful relationships developed at the last three National Conventions. She values the strong social and environmental justice principles of the NFU. She is excited about bringing together Saskatchewan members to connect with each other, share best practices, and build relationships in our community of people advocating for a just and healthy food system for all.

—nfu—

*(continued on page 18...)*



## Board Member Region 8 (BC/Peace River County)



— Seann Dory

**S**eann Dory moved to Vancouver Island in 2015 to start Salt & Harrow, an organic mixed vegetable farm. Seann worked as the Co-Director and Founder of Sole Food Street Farms, a social enterprise that provides jobs

and agricultural training for people in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) of Vancouver. Previously, Seann was a project manager at another DTES social enterprise, United We Can. Seann is a founding member of the Young Agrarians — an initiative to recruit, promote and support young farmers in Canada. Seann speaks regularly at events including the Young Farmers Conference at Stone Barnes and the EAT! Festival. As a member of the National Farmers Union and as part of the steering committee for the National New Farmers Coalition, Seann works on farm policy to reduce barriers for new farmers entering agriculture.

Salt & Harrow is a 37-acre organic farm. The farm grows over 50 varieties of vegetables, fruits, legumes and herbs and has a small flock of heritage breed hens for eggs. The farm is situated between French Creek and the historic E & N Railway on Vancouver Island, BC in the Qualicum First Nation Territory.

—nfu—

## PLACE YOUR AD HERE!!

**Do you want to advertise your farm operation, your business or an upcoming event to fellow NFU members?**

**Do you know a business or organization that is of interest to NFU members?**

We will now be placing a limited number of advertisements in the UFQ. The cost will be \$125 per issue for business card size ads and \$300 per issue for quarter page ads.

**The deadline to receive ads for the summer issue of the UFQ is May 29.** The print copies should start to hit mailboxes around the end of June/beginning of July.

**Please send your advertisements to:**

Joan Lange at the NFU office at [lange@nfu.ca](mailto:lange@nfu.ca)  
and to

Ann Slater, Chair of the NFU Editorial  
Advisory Committee at [aslater@quadro.net](mailto:aslater@quadro.net)



## 2nd Vice President (Operations)

— Cam Goff

Cam started farming after graduating from Kelsey Institute in 1975 with a degree in Renewable Resources. His farm is located near Hanley, just south of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The family operation, run with his brothers and mother, consists of four thousand acres that are cropped with malt barley, canola, durum, spring and winter wheat, oats, flax and peas.

In 2008, Cam was elected as a director of the Canadian Wheat Board, and served on that board until its termination in 2011. During that time, he also sat on the board of the Western Grains Research Foundation. In 2013, he was elected to the newly formed Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission and served as Chair for its first two years.

Cam and his wife Beverly have three grown children.

—nfu—



# The Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

**T**he National Farmers Union (NFU) would like to congratulate Nikaela Lange and Kevin Morin, who were the winners of the Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing. Nikaela is 18 years old and from Dalmeny, Saskatchewan. Nikaela spent part of her Grade 11 year studying in Tokyo, Japan. Later that same year, she received the Global Citizens Scholarship, and was one of a 12-student delegation that went to Europe to participate in a Leadership and Innovation Summit. She is currently in her first year at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon majoring in International Studies. Kevin is a graduate of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. He spent last summer working at Tourne-Sol Cooperative farm and is in the process of starting his own farm in the Outaouais. In the off season, he travels to Arroyo Seco, NM acting as a garden educator for the Snow Mansion's School of Life.

The Beingessner Award is part of the NFU Youth's Campaign for New Farmers, and is given to the authors of the best 500-1000 word essay on agriculture and food issues in Canada. There are two age categories – 15 to 21, and ages 22 to 30. The winner from each age category is awarded a prize of \$500. The theme of this year's essay was "My Future Vision for Canada's Farming and Food System".

The Beingessner Award is named after Paul Beingessner of Truax, Sask., who passed away in the spring of 2009 in a tragic farm accident. Paul was born on April 26, 1954, and returned to the family farm after obtaining his BA (Hon) in Psychology in 1976 and working with youth in Regina for a few years. Described as the "god-father of modern shortline railways" by former NFU President Stewart Wells, Paul was instrumental in the founding of Saskatchewan's first shortline railway, Southern Rails Cooperative, and served as general manager from 1991 to 1997. When he left Southern Rails, he stayed on as a board member, and worked with the Ministry of Highways Short Line Advisory Unit supporting other efforts of farmers to start shortline railways. Since 1991, Paul wrote a weekly column on farming and transportation issues with a social justice focus featured in papers across Western Canada. After leaving the government in 1999, his expertise on transportation issues resulted in consulting work across Western Canada and the United States. Beingessner also served as a Sask. Wheat Pool Delegate from 1996 to 1998, was an ardent supporter of the CWB and ran for the position of director in 2008.

## Dear Canada: An Open Letter

—by Nikaela Lange, age 18, Dalmeny, Saskatchewan

### Dear Canada,

I'm sorry we broke your land. I'm sorry corporate greed exhausts your soil, pollutes your air, dirties your water, treats your animals like cogs in a machine. I'm sorry we expend your every resource in sight and only expect you to produce more, more, more. I'm sorry we've gone from the practice of wholesome family farming to steel-caged production for a demand that just won't end. I'm sorry we may not see the error in our ways until it's too late.

I'm sorry the days of family farming seem to be behind us. It seems the image of the farmer in the straw hat and overalls, growing food for his community, no longer applies. It's been overthrown



by animals locked in too tiny cages, stewing in their waste, waiting for slaughter. Replaced by harmful pesticides, imported goods, and so called "organic" foods with impossible-to-pronounce ingredients. Infiltrated by a corporate hand, taking over the land, mass producing food, daring small scale farmers to compete. I'm sorry you went from a bountiful, promising and beautiful land to merely a tool of production. I'm sorry your sprawling and plentiful prairies were

seen as nothing more than space for another industrial farm, another factory twisting your purpose to meet its insatiable needs. I'm sorry this has been our recent past, and unfortunately, our present.

(continued on page 20..)



I'm sorry we seem to have a broken system, but I don't believe it's beyond repair. Many Canadians can see past the seemingly-perfect, mass produced, industrial system, and long to fix it. Many of us share a vision to not only change the ways of our agricultural industry, but make sustainable improvements. A vision to take back your land from the greedy hands that snatched it up and give it back to those who truly love it. Return to the ways of diversified, family-run farming, which we've seen to be more resilient and bountiful time and time again. To make farmers' markets the norm, rather than the exception. Provide communities with locally grown food at reasonable prices, while also ensuring family farmers get fair pay for the work they diligently put into our land. To feed not only ourselves, but continue to be large players in the world market, feeding the world's growing population as well. To aim to not merely sustain the world's environmental quality, but actively seeking to improve and repair it. But, as many dreams are, these ideas are worthless without a plan to put them in place.

So, what can we do to make this vision for your land a reality? Firstly, we must start with an education. Teach the people of your land about all the ways you are being destroyed. Teach them about how buying locally, while expensive, will contribute to the local economy and over time become more affordable. Teach about pollution, climate change, urban sprawl. Teach them why we need to support our local family farmers to end the reign of the corporate hand and go back to the basics. Teach an appreciation for your land. With this education will hopefully come action, and with this action, change.

Dear Canada, I'm sorry we broke your land. I hope you will soon be healed again.

I'll end this letter with a quote from Canadian poet Brian Brett, more relevant now than ever.

*"Farming is a profession of hope"*

## My Future Vision for Canada's Farming and Food System

—by Kevin Morin, age 25, Quebec, Outaouais Region

While talking about backyard cereal breeding, an old Cape Breton farmer once told me that the agriculture there was so far back that now they're ahead. And if you were to have a cereal killer oatmeal stout from the Island's own *Big Spruce Brewing*, you may be inclined to believe that.

I dream of a farm of my own someday, cows in the pasture, neat rows of cabbage.... Think of the rainy days spent in the woodshop, the brisk November mornings crouching in the greenhouse, a woodlot to keep me busy over winter and spring. To farm such a mixed enterprise like that of our grandparents is no romance.

While many would call a small scale approach to agriculture backwards, I prefer to think that it is the small, local producer who will lead our agricultural



future. The trend of going big or going home has led to a precipitous drop in the number of farmers in our country. What first generation farmer can afford a barn big enough to put a modern combine in? Or find the labour to pick those countless rows of cabbage? The modern saying about dairy farming comes to mind: if you have enough money to get into it, you have enough money to stay out of it. 30 years ago there were 20 farms on this road.

Because of this mentality, today, there are two. I'm worried about the future of farming in Canada. Who will I share machinery with and depend on when need be? Who will my children play with? Or how long will their bus ride be to school? Will I have to drive further and further to sell my produce?

*(continued on page 21...)*



As a teenager, I was typical of my generation: two generations from the land and one from the kitchen. Two working parents meant for quick meals and the extent of my cooking was directions off of a pizza box. I came to agriculture after reminiscing over childhood summers spent on the now defunct family farm. More strawberries and raspberries than I could ever eat, broccoli that my 10-year old self actually liked and a woodstove that made very good toast. This agro-inspiration was not a godsend or serendipitous, just an attention to the superior quality of fresh food. And frankly, outside of necessity, I think that having people taste the difference is the only way that we will embody the food and farming system of the future that I dream of.

Arriving in India in my mid twenties on a funded project for my Master's research, I was puzzled to find so much pollution and poverty in a country that the English Empire once considered the 'richest country in the world'. It is said that the wealth it once knew came from village-level economies. Craftsmanship then was extremely skilled; garments were able to be made thin enough that an entire full sized shawl could be folded to fit into a matchbox. To compare the merchandise today to these tales is to question whether all our "development" is indeed beneficial.

It has become difficult for us to imagine a society in which global capitalism does not play a central role; a pure market economy. It is easy to forget that

it is only in the past 100 years that it has taken a central role. No society, ever, has been managed in such a way. I doubt that an agriculture that is genuinely ecological, productive and accessible to everyone is possible within our current confines where the majority of the world's strongest economic entities are corporations, not countries. Though I am convinced with steady steps and honest work, that the future of Canada's agriculture can be reinvigorated so that folks are motivated to live in a rural setting, knowing that they can gain a healthy honest living, much like their families once did there.

My vision for Canada's future food and farming systems is one where people know their local cattle breeds as they would know grape varieties, where a microbrew from 100 km away is considered an import. It's one in which the local high school guidance councillor recognizes that farming can be a healthy and viable career choice. Where a diversity of local farms are competitive on the world market, that innovate according to their local region and bring about a local pride that fuels environmental stewardship.

Much like that oatmeal stout or the shawl thinner than paper, there are some things that are only possible at village-level economies. I would like to see a future Canadian farming system that facilitates me feeding my neighbors and that collaborates towards the decommodification of food and seed, to a place where taste, and trust prevail over the dollar. —nfu—

## The Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

### Award Criteria and Details:

- There will be two age categories – 15 to 21 years old, and 22 to 30 years old. One award in the amount of \$500 will be awarded each age category for a **NON-FICTION OPEN LETTER** 500-1000 words in length. **Applicants can only win once per age category.**
- **THIS YEAR'S THEME IS: WHAT DOES SOCIAL LICENSE MEAN TO YOU?**
- Deadline for entries is November 1, 2017.
- The winners will be announced at the NFU Convention in November 2017.
- All or some entries may be published by the National Farmers Union.

### Send entries to the National Farmers Union:

By email: [nfu@nfu.ca](mailto:nfu@nfu.ca), or by mail to:  
National Farmers Union  
2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6

*We will confirm that we received your email submission within a week. If you do not get a confirmation email, please resend your entry or phone the office at (306) 652-9465.*



# Climate Justice and Food Sovereignty Training in Morocco

—by Lydia Carpenter, Vice-President (Policy)

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP22) was held in Marrakesh, Morocco from November 7-18, 2016. During the proceedings, Morocco's National Federation of Agricultural Unions (FNSA) hosted a La Vía Campesina (LVC) climate justice and food sovereignty training session. The session was held as an effort to challenge the false solutions of COP and to build organizational capacity in order to give voice and political power to our movement.

The training brought together LVC delegates and allies from all over the world including many allies from the Middle East and North Africa (MeNa) region. I was there on behalf of the National Farmers Union representing the North American region of LVC. The focus of the training was on climate justice with an emphasis on the importance of the ongoing participation of youth and women within the movement. As part of the training we also worked on strengthening understanding of issues relating to climate justice and food sovereignty in the Middle East and North Africa.

During the training participants shared stories from their regions of political and agrarian struggle. We talked about energy sovereignty, the commodification of carbon, peasant struggle, land grabbing, land transition and succession, and the false solutions of COP. We visited a rural area of Morocco and among the many stories that were shared we heard first hand from workers and farmers about the transition towards corporate farms, struggles with water access and drought, and the conditions for [female] agricultural workers.

During the training several participatory sessions were co-facilitated by LVC delegates and allies. Session topics included: Capitalism is Crisis: A History of Struggle and Convergence; The COP21



*Photo: During our climate justice training session we visited with striking agricultural workers who were seeking fair pay and working conditions.*

*(Photo by Salena Tramel)*

Paris Agreement: A Real Threat to Peasants and the Planet; The Struggle for Climate Justice in Morocco, Tunisia, and Palestine; The Struggle for Land and Territory in a Changing Climate; The Struggle for Energy Sovereignty; and Food Sovereignty and Climate Justice.

Conversations about these important issues are ongoing through the work of the various organizations that participated in the training and through LVCs Climate Justice Collective. We need to continue the conversation and the debate on false solutions to the climate crisis and to make sure we are versed in the implications of carbon commodification via sequestration and potential land grabbing.

La Via Campesina's 7<sup>th</sup> Conference will be held in the Basque Country from July 19-23, 2017. A summary of the results from the discussions and actions at the training will be compiled in a 'collective memory' document to be shared with all members and allies in advance of the 7th international meeting.

—nfu—



## WE REMEMBER ...

# JOYCE HUTCHINGS

(November 9, 1929 — November 2, 2016)



At Joyce's funeral service in November, her good friend, Mona Dier, summed up her tribute to Joyce with these words:

"She has left us with a legacy of note, having always taken a leadership role, no matter the cause. Not content to just be a member, she would join an organization with a view to making a difference.... She could always see the brighter side of life. She worked hard and she played with equal zeal."

Born in 1929 on a farm near Forfar, Ontario, Joyce lived all her life as an active member of a dairy farming family. She and her husband, Elwyn Hutchings, were married for more than 65 years and had three children, Karen, Susan and Bruce. The farm, Halling Holsteins, continues to be farmed by Karen and by Bruce and his family – his wife, Wendy, and sons, Eldon (Heather) and Grant.

Mona said Joyce was "blessed with an active, inquiring mind and a will to succeed in life, ...soaking up and storing away information gleaned from all available sources."

Involved in local, district, regional and national NFU work, and in many aspects of her community, Joyce focused on making a difference.

Mona described Joyce's dedication to the NFU in her tribute: "She saw membership in the Farm Union, and a seat on the board of directors, as the best way to secure a voice for farmers and a fair deal when it came to policy making. She spearheaded membership drives, opened and ran an office in Ottawa, and organized many a government lobby." One of those lobbies was to raise concerns about the use of bovine growth hormone in Canada, concerns which she took to the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. "She did exactly what she felt had to be done, and we should be most grateful to her for protecting our dairy products," Mona said.

Jim Earl, president of Local 318, describes Joyce as a generous and enthusiastic contributor to all aspects of the work of the local -- including participating in meetings and activities at all levels of the NFU, helping to write briefs, and organizing and staffing NFU displays at community events. "Joyce also gave attention to the important social aspect of our Local, whether in relation to meetings or in hosting summer picnics at her cottage," Jim says. For many years, Joyce and Elwyn hosted a district picnic at their cottage, an important opportunity for NFU members from neighbouring locals to socialize and talk about farm issues and happenings.

"She was always supportive of me, when, as a new young member, I took on projects, and when I became chair," Jim says. "We had interesting conversations during our many road trips to meetings. She was well read and helped me appreciate much of the national work going on."

Joyce was a "Renaissance woman" – a self-taught organist, a participant in amateur theatre, an accomplished cook and seamstress, a gardener, carpenter, motorcyclist, snowmobiler and photographer, with plenty of experience in making community activities happen. She was part of starting and maintaining monthly social gatherings for people living on Stone Road, building a covered bridge on her property, developing a small park in her neighbourhood, and organizing day trips for the local seniors club. Wherever there was fun to be created, Joyce was sure to be there – for instance, arranging a surprise stop at a refurbished carousel during one of the day trips. ("Seniors scrambled aboard, acting like kids again, and the look on their faces was priceless," Mona reported.) In 2007, Joyce received the township's Senior of the Year award, recognizing her years of service with various organizations within the area, and her many accomplishments.

We honour the style, grace and achievements of this remarkable woman, and extend our sincere sympathy to Joyce's family and friends.



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# YES



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