

quarterly union farmer



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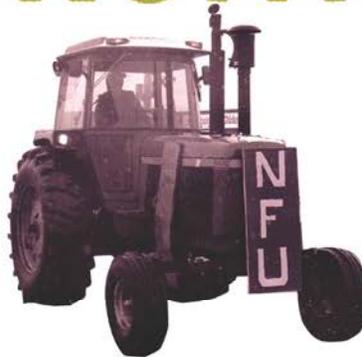
Fall 2019 / Volume 25 Issue 3



50TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

FARMERS ON THE FRONT LINE

CELEBRATING
50 YEARS
OF THE
FARM
MOVEMENT



NOV
24-27
2019

CANAD INNS DESTINATION CENTRE POLO PARK
1405 ST. MATTHEWS AVE., WINNIPEG

BOOK LAUNCH/SOCIAL NOV. 24 - 7 PM

KEYNOTE: **AVI LEWIS** – Award-winning documentary filmmaker, journalist

FREE PUBLIC EVENT NOV. 25 - 7 PM

LOCAL FOOD BANQUET NOV. 26 - \$55

EVERYONE IS WELCOME to attend the entire convention.
For program info, tickets and online registration visit

WWW.NFU.CA/2019CONVENTION



Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

Autumn and harvest have again come to our farms, this year presenting challenges to us. Across almost the entire country, problematic weather over the growing season has resulted in late harvests, and in the west, at least, as I write this in mid-September, the weather is still not cooperating. As always, we will push through as best we can, and hope that fortune favours our enterprises.

One bright spot that we can all look forward to is the NFU's 50th Annual Convention. Running from Monday, November 25 to Wednesday, November 27, the convention timing is set earlier in the week than usual. As well, we have chosen to return to Winnipeg for our milestone celebration – the city where our founding convention was held in 1969.

The theme of our 50th anniversary convention is **Farmers on the Frontlines**. We will celebrate the work that our

members have accomplished over the NFU's first half-century. Our successes and setbacks form a history we can look back on with pride, and will be chronicled by members who have been active over the preceding years. We will also look forward to the many challenges that lie ahead, from the climate crisis to seed issues, and to the changing methods of farming that will allow us to practice our passion of producing food in the changing environment.

The last months have seen a successful search for a coordinator for our climate change project. Margret Asmuss will introduce herself in this issue, and she will be working with the NFU and its partners to define agriculture's challenges and solutions to the crisis our civilization faces. Farmers must proactively work to ensure that our contributions, strengths and knowledge are recognized, providing our own

answers rather than having others impose unworkable solutions.

The NFU is also in the last stages of selecting a new Executive Director. By the time you read this, we hope to have a fully staffed organization that will carry the NFU forward for years to come.

As is always the case, our Regions have been active locally, pressing for solutions to unique district and regional problems and advocating for the policies that make farming profitable. Check out the reports from our Regional coordinators for more details.

In closing, I wish all of our members a safe and prosperous harvest, and encourage you to attend our 50th anniversary in Winnipeg to celebrate our past, and plan for our future.

—by Cam Goff, 1st Vice President, Policy,
on behalf 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 Katie Ward, NFU National President

How do you have a conversation with your neighbours these days about important, weighty topics, without causing people to become defensive and retreat into their comfortable bubble? Most of us will easily recall the tired old maxim that you should not talk politics or religion in polite company - to avoid controversy, I guess. But conforming to that convention seems to have resulted in a society that no longer knows how to have a civil discussion or debate about difficult subjects.

I find myself pondering questions like this a lot these days, as I am writing to you just a few days into the writ period of the federal election. You will know the result of that as you read this edition of the *Union Farmer Quarterly*. I hope our democratic process will have sent representatives to Parliament who are willing to speak up for farmers and our environment, and who will work hard to protect our democracy. But for now, from where I sit in this time before most of the election campaign has taken place, I am confined to hoping, and struggling to find ways to talk to my neighbours of all different political leanings about issues that will be so critically important to our society in the next few years and decades.

No matter what the particular issue may be, it seems that many people take disagreement or debate as a personal criticism of themselves, their values, or the way they have chosen to live their lives. This can seem jarring to those of us who are used to robust policy debates informed by the base assumption that debaters are working from a foundation of desiring positive progress. It seems that a better way to approach neighbourly debates on a particular issue which may be inflaming one of the current major divides in our society – whether it is urban versus rural, east versus west, older versus younger generations, or environmentalists versus the pro-pipeline crowd – is to start from a place of respect and understanding that the vast majority of our fellow citizens care about the same things as we do; broadly, we all care about health, money concerns, and our families.

I am reminded of work done by the Women’s Advisory of the NFU in the early 2000’s. Small group meetings were held across the country and farm women were invited from all over, no matter whether they were affiliated with the NFU or not, and some folks with very different and divergent views attended. The meetings were structured to gather feedback from farm women that could be used to make policy recommendations, but what is important in this context is not the recommendations – the

lesson to be learned is in the way the feedback was gathered from these farm women. The conversations began from the very basic starting point of, “What concerns you? What challenges do you face on a regular basis?” A lot of common answers were given, and so they were grouped into broad categories. Then the question was asked, “What is something that could help you with that challenge?” Again, common themes emerged among the answers, and these were pointed out. At this point in the process, a feeling of solidarity started to form, since participants could plainly see that they had more in common with their neighbours than they previously thought.

And this is the point where a good-will debate can start to happen among neighbours. We might have different ideas about how to solve our common problems, but at least we can discuss them with a little more compassion and understanding in our hearts. Steely resolve is needed sometimes in policy debates – let alone electoral politics – and standing your ground on principle is commendable and necessary. But solidarity with the plight causing distress to our neighbours in the farming community and our fellow citizens can help knit us back together, which is something our society seems to be sorely in need of these days.

—*In Solidarity, Katie Ward*

Tribute to Evelyn Potter

Founding NFU Women's President

- by Coral Sproule, NFU Women's Vice President

I first heard the name Evelyn Potter at my first National Farmers Union Convention in Ottawa in 2009. It was the 40th Anniversary of the NFU. Unfortunately, Evelyn was unable to attend in person as planned, but her written address was read to the convention because she was the NFU's first Women's President. As a relatively new farmer, and one who had not grown up in a rural community, I was feeling intimidated as I entered this room of mentors and elders in agricultural work, cooperative movements, and social justice movements. As someone new to this world, and one that I had seen from the outside as a male-dominated livelihood, I was immediately welcomed by a fair representation of women, men, and youth farmers as I entered the convention floor.

We in the NFU and the greater farm community were deeply saddened to hear of Evelyn's passing this summer. We wish to express sincere condolences to all of Evelyn's friends, family and community. Evelyn will be remembered as a farmer, and also by many of us, as truly a revolutionary when it came to her work and positive impact on the lives of farm women and others in our communities.

What I heard when Evelyn's address was read at the convention in Ottawa, was a powerful message to me as a young farmer on a new venture and life path. It has continued to have an impact on my practices and truthfully, my confidence, as I continue to work with the soil and other farmers and

farm communities in our shared solidarity and struggle.

A woman with a gracious, friendly presence, Evelyn was also clearly determined, prescient and courageous in her leadership and defence of women's rights. Evelyn and other women farm leaders and grassroots organizers throughout history, have continually fought not only to obtain long-deserved recognition and equal rights for farmers, but for all rural women. They campaigned for matrimonial property rights for women and against violence and other forms of oppression. They stood alongside urban and global women's movements for issues from seed sovereignty to reproductive and parental rights. Evelyn and other NFU women have worked on breaking down barriers to women's inclusion by pushing for childcare and other support to enable fair representation and equal recognition of the role and importance of female farmers in global food production.

In her 2009 address, Evelyn expressed that there was "a heated debate" around the women's positions at the first convention of the NFU, which resulted in the addition of women's and youth positions at the national board of the NFU. This decision has really helped shape the organization and ensure participation and advocacy for women and youth farmers, as it should be.

I was reminded of this story recently as we debated and passed a motion at a regional level to strive for positions inclusive of all, balancing representation of



genders, and diversity of farmers in Canada. This was hotly debated and amended on the floor before eventually passing, and has now become an important part in inclusion moving forward as an agricultural community. It did highlight that the need still exists for pushing towards justice and equity for all farmers, regardless of gender, sexuality, and race.

Humbled by the legacy of Evelyn and all of the strong, intelligent, thoughtful and inclusive women working together in the NFU, Women's Institutes and in all farm communities, we have a powerful history to learn from and move forward with in union in our 50th year. As we face a continually challenging, and tumultuous time in political, social, and environmental realms, we will need to draw on the legacy of struggle and solidarity of Evelyn and others who have come before, as their history continues to be shared with generations of farmers. We will collectively strive to honour, share and emulate Evelyn Potter and others' stories of organizing farmers for positive change that continue to impact and influence us today. ■

—Coral Sproule farms near Perth, Ontario. She is currently the NFU Women's Vice President, and has previously served as NFU President and NFU Women's President.



A Message from Stuart Oke, NFU National Youth President

It's been a whirlwind few months for me and my partner Nikki, in fact, this summer seems to have gone by faster than the rapid pace at which it normally does. After doing some long-term planning and evaluating of where we would like the farm to be in a few years and crunching some numbers we decided to bring on a new business partner to help manage the farm's expansion and increased workload to allow us to occasionally leave the farm for non-errand or market related reasons. A practise which my non-farming friends tell me is called... 'fun'.

Our days in early fall are taken up with bringing in all our bulk root crops for winter sale and storage, whilst simultaneously fulfilling our regular harvesting for farmers markets, CSA members and whole sale clients throughout the capital region. Within the Union we have been busily finding spare moments to submit a first rate application for a seat on Canada's new National Food Policy Council. The council, announced as part of the National Food Policy and which I have discussed in previous UFQ issues this year, will provide advice to the government on their Food policy and make

recommendations on the proper approaches to implement it. It would be an important space to influence the government and we believe a critical area where a farmer perspective free from corporate interest is badly needed. We will be sure to keep the NFU membership updated as we hear the results of our application and the strong coalition of partners and allies which have supported it.

The federal election may be over by the time you read this report but the following questions, which speak to new farmer issues, can provide some input into your candidate's or your newly-elected MP's knowledge and gain insight into their plans to help support the next generation of farmers.

▪ **Stats Canada tells us that the average Canadian farmer is 56 and that 80% don't have succession plans in place.** *What is your plan to successfully enable the transition of this land into the hands of the next generation?*

▪ **Many farmers today cannot access the capital required to start and acquire land.** *What plans can you propose to facilitate getting the farmers who want to produce crops to feed and stimulate economic growth on to the land?*

▪ **Increasingly we see agricultural land purchased by large multinational corporations to be**

used for residential development or investment portfolios. *Further, we've seen how farmland is acquired and the market inflated as people purchase and retire on farmland without making use of it for agricultural purposes. With all of these barriers new farmers face in acquiring land how will you protect farmland for farmers?*

▪ **Acknowledging that agriculture plays a significant role in climate change and the emission of GHGs and that farmers are on the front lines of the most observable effects of this changing climate.** *How would you enable and incentivize farmers to use their farms to help fight climate change?*

Finally, our Convention Planning Committee is busily working away on making this 50th annual convention in Winnipeg one to remember. I am excited to attend and alongside all our members help to celebrate our long history and more importantly, look to the next 50 years and discuss how we can continue to fight for farmers across Canada. A few helpful reminders for convention goers:

Remember to encourage young farmers and family members to make submissions for the Beingssner writing award. There are two age categories 15-21 and 22-30 years old. Winners from both categories will receive \$500, applications are due November 1.

(continued on page 6...)

This year's theme: *At this critical juncture when farmers must consider and employ climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, what does farming in a changing climate look like to you?*

Remember to bring some items for the annual youth auction! See side box for further details.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible this November in Winnipeg. Until then I wish everyone a bountiful and productive harvest season.

—In Solidarity, Stuart Oke

Auction Items needed for Youth Auction!

Every year the NFU youth organizes an auction which occurs concurrently during the annual convention. Funds raised help to subsidize youth activities throughout the year. Funds raised previously have gone towards a multitude of uses including farmer training, lobbying efforts, peer to peer education, design and pamphlet creation and a whole lot more.

If this seems like a worthy cause please consider bringing items for donation to this auction. Crafts, food, books, clothing and NFU memorabilia have all been popular items in past years.

Your participation as a donator or bidder makes a big difference in helping support young farmers.

BEINGESSNER AWARD For Excellence in Writing

Working with the family of Paul Beingessner, the NFU has established an annual literary prize in honour of Paul and his contribution to rural and agricultural journalism. Paul Beingessner was a farmer, an activist, and a writer who defended Canada's family farms until his tragic death in a farm accident in the spring of 2009. His widely-read and respected weekly columns brought a fresh and progressive perspective to rural and farm issues. Young writers are encouraged to submit their work to the Paul 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:** *Farmers are on the frontline of the climate crisis. At this critical juncture when farmers must consider and employ climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, what does farming in a changing climate look like to you?*
- **Deadline for entries is November 1, 2019.**

The winners will be announced at the NFU Convention in November 2019 in Winnipeg, MB. All or some entries may be published by the National Farmers Union.

Send entries to the National Farmers Union:

By email: nfu@nfu.ca or

By mail: 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

REGIONAL REPORTS



Region 1: District 1

Province of Prince Edward Island

—by Reg Phelan, Coordinator

Hurricane Dorion made its way through Atlantic Canada with heavy winds and rains in early September. A lot of crops and trees were flattened and power was out for more than a week in some rural areas.

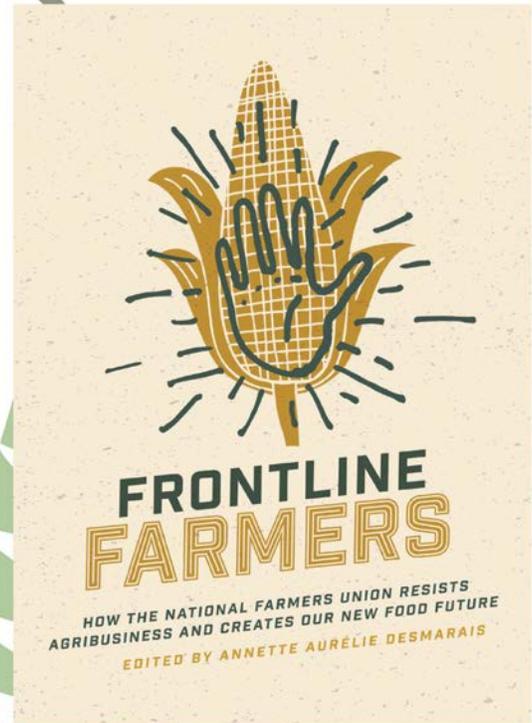
We also had another type of hurricane happen; this one from the Irving Empire. This one blew past the Lands Protection Act and Island Regulatory Appeals Commission. Just before the Provincial election the Irvings had been turned down on attempts to purchase a large acreage in the Bedeque area of Prince Edward Island. By buying the Corporation that owned the land, they were able to announce ownership of said land without going through the regulatory process. Government has asked for a study to determine how it could happen.

Our regional convention was held in Prince Edward Island this year on September 26. National President Katie Ward joined us and gave a presentation on agriculture and democracy. We will be looking at land banking concepts and other related businesses.

A symposium on Trade Justice took place in September with Clayton Thomas Muller, a Climate Justice and Indigenous Rights Activist from Winnipeg taking part.

A North American meeting of youth in Via Campesina will be held in Rogersville, New Brunswick on November 11 – 13.

I'm looking forward to seeing people at our 50th Annual Convention in Winnipeg in November. ■



**Frontline Farmers:
How the National Farmers Union Resists
Agribusiness and Creates
Our New Food Future**
edited by Annette Aurélie Desmarais

Frontline Farmers collects the voices of NFU members who tell the stories of the key struggles of the progressive farm movement in Canada: fighting to build viable rural communities, protecting the family farm and creating socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems.

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Region 3/NFU-O: Province of Ontario

— by Don Ciparis, Coordinator

As the weather turns to fall, NFU-O/Region 3 activities are starting to ramp up. In September, we tabled at the Outdoor Farm Show and were able to meet members and non-members as well as network with fellow agriculture organizations. During the show, I attended a roundtable with Hon. Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, and Premier Doug Ford to discuss the current challenges faced by the agri-food industry, including speculative buying of farmland, access to affordable farmland for new farmers, the need for small abattoirs, and ongoing trade disruptions.

Across Ontario, farmland prices continue to rise due to foreign and pension plan ownership of farmland, which has led to record land prices and rents. In turn, those costs have limited farmers' abilities to purchase land and make a living farming. While this is not new, we continue to bring it to the government's attention and ask them to address it.

In response to those concerns, the NFU-O/Region 3 and the Ontario Farmland Trust have received funding from the Gosling and McLean Foundations to run a pilot project on farmland succession

and conservation. This project will include workshops in Ontario to share information on succession, land access, and farmland conservation. We will also bring young and new farmers who seek land together with farmers and other rural landowners who are looking for successors or farmland renters.

Livestock farmers are also facing a number of issues. Region 3 council recently received a letter from the Beef Farmers of Eastern Ontario raising concerns that abattoirs are being "over-burdened with unnecessary rules and legislation that restricts them from carrying on their businesses efficiently", noting that there is no common-sense approach or cooperation from inspectors. We are working to bring those issues to the Minister's attention.

As well, NFU-O/Region 3 General Manager, Sarah Bakker attended a meeting with Minister Hardeman and other agriculture organizations to discuss the issue of animal extremists who are trespassing on farms and interfering with livestock. The discussion revolved around revising the legislation to increase the likelihood of successful prosecution of trespassers, and attendees discussed issues of biosecurity and public safety. The Minister is looking to farm organizations

and commodity groups for continued feedback.

Regional Council has been discussing the injury to Canadian farmers with the ongoing trade tensions between China and the United States. In an article that was recently published in the *Ontario Farmer*, we noted that the U.S. producer is clearly cushioned from trade disruptions due to these new tariff regimes while Canadian producers watch with no such comparable support forthcoming from their federal government. Even worse, Chinese buyers are nervous about buying Canadian because the ongoing tariffs could cause U.S. soybeans, for example, to be diverted to Ontario, harming domestic soybean production in the province and denying Canada the opportunity to service a long-time market. While a weak Canadian dollar has softened the impact to Ontario crop producers, the situation clearly indicates that Canadian farmers are collateral damage in this new age of trade wars. We have asked our fellow farm organizations to join us in requesting that these trade distortions affecting Ontario producers be met with a tangible, strategic plan from the federal government which ensures the solvency of Ontario producers.

Regional Council looks forward to a busy fall and seeing members at upcoming events like our 50th NFU Annual Convention, the EFAO conference, the Eastern Ontario Local Food conference and more. ■



Region 5: Province of Manitoba

— by Ian Robson, Coordinator

For 50 years, the National Farmers Union has tracked data on issues of interest to farmers and the public. The NFU work shows and describes the policy effects upon farmers and the public over time. Fantastic work has been done in Canadian public seed breeding and research, for instance, but our government is woefully wrong to try to cut these public services and trade them off to private ownership. Yet somebody is currently trying to implement these UPOV seed policy changes; is that somebody with a narrow non-public interest?

The Manitoba Agricultural Crown Land Leases and Permits Regulations were changed by less than one hundred voters demands, in this case the Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP). I witnessed the meeting and the vote of the MBP in 2017 when a resolution was shockingly passed asking the Manitoba government to end its long standing and beneficial Agricultural Crown Land Lease (ACLL) point system of allocating lease units among only Manitoba farmers or ranchers. Debate noted that a high dollar auction would distribute ACLL to those who wanted land for cattle or crop raising and set the new rent price for other ACLL. Many in

support of this resolution had recently arrived in Manitoba from other parts of Canada. Many lease holders were not in attendance to vote even though they were able to attend. This advice was quickly accepted by the Manitoba Agriculture Minister who ended the point allocation system.

Local and family ranchers will be disadvantaged under the high dollar auction. But the few in favor wanted the change because cattle prices are so low that an expanded herd is needed to make economy of scale. The Manitoba cattle herd is shrinking and will be about 400,000 head. The market economy pricing is suggesting that 500 head of cows are needed to be viable. This means that the Minister wants only about 800 beef cattle producers, but he also wants to see the cow herd in Manitoba expanded to near 500,000 in an already tight market. The Minister has not listened to Manitoba interests but to outside interests. The NFU in Manitoba has asked the Ministry of Agriculture for a full cost benefit analysis of its goal to increase the number of cows in Manitoba.

Under the auction system it will not be clear as to who is leasing the agricultural crown land. All this could have been fixed by setting a new lease level at a reasonable rate. Unit lease

holders have family who want to continue a ranch as a top point in unit transfer. Family will now have to bid against outside finances. Scale of the units will increase, but this does very little for low cattle prices nor for local business. Many other factors are affected and those who wish to exit leases have difficulty with their asset value. Lease fee costs will likely go up depending upon the bids, but bids could actually be quite low thus reducing the government revenue from crown land.

Cattle play a vital role in helping the soil and farming, but the model needs a mix of crops and livestock. World wide, students are demanding that Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction policies be implemented. Canada had destroyed the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) which was looking after fragile environment on farms. This concept is needed around the world now to deal with proper cycling of human wastes from our activities which cause GHG. Darrin Qualman, in his book *Civilization Critical*, suggests a revised PFRA. The Manitoba NFU participated in a workshop on farm climate challenges at Harvest Moon Festival on September 14 with the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives, about beneficial policy to reduce GHG in Manitoba and Canada.

Be sure to partake and enjoy the 50th NFU Convention the November in Winnipeg to discuss farm issues with other farmers. ■



Region 6: Province of Saskatchewan

— by Glenn Tait, Coordinator

Who speaks for farmers? It is always an important question but right now, as I write this in the silly season, when we are all vying for the attention of policy makers and stumping politicians, it is really important. Who do they think speaks for us?

Years ago in Saskatchewan the respective provincial governments did not make an agricultural move without first consulting the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. And wise it was to heed their advice. With 2/3 of the grain business (as well as cattle, hogs, farm supplies, and so on) and an extensive and responsive delegate system, the Pool had its finger on the rural pulse. Who do they listen to now? With the farm policy forum so fractured now, I suppose legislators can just shop for a group which agrees with what they want to do anyway.

The NFU staff, executive and alumni have some tremendous 'cred' when it comes to speaking on policy and agricultural opinion. It is great when I see news and articles quoting Stewart, Terry, Cam, Nettie, and others, but is intelligent policy too boring to report? Or to state the corollary: is simple-minded barking too entertaining to pass up?

In a recent *Western Producer*, NFU Vice President (Policy) Cam Goff got about four paragraphs on page 14 arising from his well written article on just who was

speaking for farmers with respect to proposed changes to the Canadian Grain Commission. On another topic the Western Canadian Wheat Growers (WCWG) got space on page three, shoulder to shoulder with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Canola Council of Canada. Actually, WCWG executives were also interviewed on page four. This is the state of the media, it is not in any way meant to be a slam against the *Producer*. Their staff in large part does good work, but they work with what they can reach.

OK, so who speaks for farmers? Often it is the loudest and the flashiest. It is those who make the most noise but not necessarily the most sense. Agriculture needs show people and promoters but policy should be based on sound and ethical philosophy, not on what grabs the most attention in the fewest lines. It needs to be us that speaks for us.

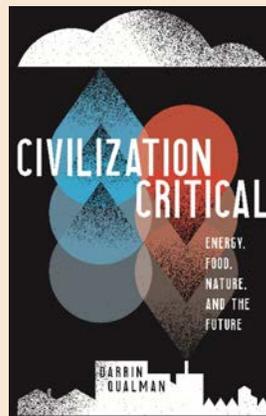
There are a great many seminars and presentations on how to speak to the media, and most of them are

quite good, but nearly all are missing the most important point. How do you get the attention of the media in the first place? On this I have no sage advice to give except for, you know, hard work and perseverance. Write articles, letters, and opinion pieces. Lots, if you can. Be the name that is stuck in the heads of editorial staff whenever they wonder what the average farmer thinks of...well, whatever the next topic is that comes across the desk. Be so ubiquitous that you are always thought of to be included in panel discussions.

Post on social media too. You should be aware that your message may never leave your own "opinion silo", so join a few lesser informed arenas. This not only pushes the message of the NFU and similarly grounded farmers into the public eye, but it can help the profile of boards and committees as well. One should be elected or appointed because of policy and ability, not your huge volume of twitter followers.

Yeah, I know. If we did not have to work so hard we would have time to campaign and advocate for policy so we did not have to work so hard. ■

Darrin Qualman was the NFU's lead researcher from 1996 to 2010. His new book, ***Civilization Critical***, examines food and agriculture, energy and industry.



Ronald Wright calls the book "thoughtful and thoroughly documented."

Available now!

—from local independent bookstores
—from the publisher, Fernwood Publishing
—from Amazon.ca

More information:

www.darrinqualman.com



Region 7: Province of Alberta

— by Doug Scott, Coordinator

As we continue our harvest many concerns are on the minds of Alberta farmers. In our area, just northwest of Edmonton, we experienced a very wet and cool summer. This delayed crop development and overall crops are matured slowly. Thankfully there was not an early frost. Some harvesting

of peas and barley has started, as I write this in mid-September, but for the most part general harvesting of canola and wheat will likely have started by the end of the interests of prairie grain farmers.

In case you are wondering what happens to some of the dollars that go to the grain commissions every time you deliver a load of grain to the

elevator, Jeff Nielsen, who led the charge to kill the CWB, is inviting us to attend the annual Barley Commission gala at the Banff Springs Hotel. This is one of the most expensive hotels in Alberta and it makes me wonder how many of the directors have ever attended on their own dime. Apparently the highlight is the Saturday night pub crawl along Banff Avenue.

Wishing you all a safe and fruitful harvest and hope to see many of you in Winnipeg in November. ■



Region 8: Province of British Columbia

— by Seann Dory, Coordinator

The BC government has announced funding for agriculture climate adaptation strategies in a number of regions in BC including the Kootenays and Fraser-Fort George. The adaptation strategies come with regional funding to adapt to wildfires, crop suitability, drier conditions, and changing pests.

Large Asian Hornet nests have been found on Vancouver Island. This invasive pest is known to feed on honey bees. The government is currently

studying one destroyed nest in hopes of finding the hornets origin. Plans are being rolled out to help beekeepers trap and monitor the pest if they should come in contact with hives.

BC has launched a Food Security Task force to build the agriculture sector in BC through technology and to build technologies which will have a global reach. An appointed three person board will head up the task force. The BC Ministry of Agriculture continues to roll out its plans to create regional food hubs as a way to create regional economic activity. There are plans for food hubs in each region to create jobs by providing

access to equipment and expertise for food processors.

The BC government has received some backlash over the handling of the meat processing consultations this summer, around Class D licensing and inspections. You can read more about this at the Small Scale Meat Processors Association website.

The Agricultural Land Commission is receiving some pushback on its decision to close down or send stop work orders to farmers who have on-farm ancillary businesses which are larger than their primary agricultural business. While many have applauded the increased enforcement on Agricultural Land Reserve land it is still a contentious issue on a case by case basis.

The fall started off very wet in BC. We are keeping our fingers crossed that everyone gets the harvest off in time. ■

Thanks to some external project funding, the National Farmers Union is going to do more work on climate change with farmers across Canada. Our Climate Leadership Project will highlight the need for climate change action that includes solutions that work for farmers and the food system.

Working with the Prairie Climate Centre (PCC) and USC-Canada (USC) we will share information and help amplify the voices of farmers in support of policies and programs for sustainable and climate resilient agriculture.

Meet Margret Asmuss: Project Coordinator for the NFU Climate Leadership Project

My name is Margret Asmuss and I was recently hired as the Project Coordinator for *The Climate Leadership Project*. I officially start work at the beginning of October and am looking forward to working with NFU members from across Canada on this very important project. I have long been concerned about the lack of farmers' voices in current conversations about climate change. Both the impacts of the climate crisis on agriculture and the role that farmers can play to reduce greenhouse gas emissions need to be brought to the forefront.

The goals of the project are:

- to highlight climate-friendly farm practices,
- to amplify farmers' voices, and
- to promote adoption of climate-friendly farm and food policy as part of the larger climate conversation in Canada.

This project is a logical extension of work, both as a volunteer and an employee, which I have been doing over the last 30-plus years on issues of energy, climate change and sustainability. For many years, I was the Energy Projects Coordinator for the Saskatchewan Environmental Society where I worked with school divisions and small municipalities throughout Saskatchewan. I was also with the University of Saskatchewan's Office of Sustainability for 14 years and spent some time as a Ministerial Assistant to the provincial Minister of the Environment managing the energy and climate change portfolio.

Although I am not a farmer, I have been living in a small agricultural community for about 30 years and have a good understanding of the special dynamics and difficulties of farmers and farming communities. My husband and I also did community development consulting for a number of years



and during that time we worked with many rural municipalities and rural development associations, including on some agriculturally-focused projects.

In my free time, I enjoy gardening, crocheting, singing in a choir and playing (or at least trying to!) the fiddle and the guitar.

Although it will take a while to ramp up this project, I am eager to hear from NFU members throughout Canada on your experiences dealing with the erratic weather that climate change brings, on what you are doing on your farm and on your ideas for this project. Please feel free to email me at asmuss@nfu.ca and we will set a time for a conversation. ▪

NFU Annual Convention

Farmers on the Frontline: Celebrating 50 years of the farm movement

Going back to the city where it all began...

Fifty years ago, the National Farmers Union held its inaugural convention in Winnipeg, Manitoba. And this year, we're going back!

Please **CELEBRATE** with us in:

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

Monday, November 25 to Wednesday, November 27, 2019
(BOOK LAUNCH SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24)

Canad Inns Destination Centre Polo Park, 1405 St. Matthews Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Room Rates: \$119 (plus taxes) Single King bed or Double Queen beds (Parking included)
MUST BE BOOKED BY OCTOBER 24, 2019 TO RECEIVE NFU CONVENTION RATE.

CALL: 1-204-775-8791 Ext. 5 (direct to hotel) or
EMAIL: shepner@canadinns.com

Use room block #371730

NEW THIS YEAR! ADVANCE REGISTRATION FOR CONVENTION (SEE BACK PAGE)

THIS YEAR'S CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE

AVI LEWIS, KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Documentary filmmaker, journalist, TV host and producer, **Avi Lewis** is our keynote speaker, **Monday, November 25 - 7 PM**. A co-founder of *the Leap*, and champion of social movements, he is organizing with Canadians to build a collective response to the racism, inequality, and climate change crises we are facing.

BOOK LAUNCH: Annette Aurélie Desmarais and friends will launch **Frontline Farmers: How the National Farmers Union Resists Agribusiness and Creates our New Food Future**. The book collects NFU members' stories of key struggles to build viable rural communities, protect the family farm and create socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems. **Sunday, November 24 - 7 PM**

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: Sessions include panels, interactive discussions and presentations to celebrate our 50 years of history, delve into today's pressing issues and look ahead to the policies and practices farmers are creating now to build for our future. **Monday 9 AM – Wednesday 4:30 PM**.

Visit <https://www.nfu.ca/2019convention/> for details as they are confirmed.

NFU to host Via Campesina youth for regional gathering

This November, Ferme Terre Partagée in Rogersville, New Brunswick, in coordination with a number of NFU youth members, are hosting approximately thirty La Via Campesina (LVC) youth members from across North America for a dynamic, politically-oriented gathering. We received financial support from the LVC International Secretariat and are self-organizing to shape a meaningful experience.

The methodology and content of the gathering is being planned by a team of youth from across the continent, supported by LVC and NFU-NB staff and volunteer translators. Since July, we have been having biweekly calls to talk about our expectations and aspirations for our brief time together. Strengthening relationships and energizing one another to take leadership roles within LVC, learning about each other's respective struggles and histories, and mobilizing ourselves for common action were named as a few main goals of the gathering. Climate justice, the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, land and agrarian reform, and popular peasant feminism as main themes will guide our interactive sessions.

The planning team has articulated the desire to participate in a direct action together, learn and engage with



the local Acadian culture, and visit an Indigenous run community food centre.

“The youth of LVC is the present and the future of the movement, it’s our responsibility to be sure that the youth are well represented inside the region and also at the international level,” says Pierre-Olivier Brassard, cooperative member of Ferme Terre Partagée and NFU member. “Peasant agroecology and food sovereignty is what we stand and fight for!”

We look forward to sharing collective knowledge about LVC processes, both regionally and

internationally, learning together in horizontal learning structures, and bringing back our experiences to our respective organizations. ■

**If you are an
NFU youth looking
for more information,
please email:**

**jessiemacinnis@
gmail.com
or
brassardpierreolivier@
gmail.com**

Who's in Charge of Agricultural Policy?

—by Cam Goff, NFU Vice President Policy

While harvest will take top billing in farmers' minds this fall as we put in long hours, other issues have to be considered. Two of the most important are Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) attack on farmers' right to freely use our own seed, and AAFC's seemingly unsupervised rewriting of the Canada Grain Act – including the Canadian Grain Commission's (CGC) mandate to regulate in the interests of producers.

Many farmers have a sense of what is being presented, and what is at stake, with AAFC's attempt to bulldoze farmers on the seed issue. After years of extensive lobbying by seed industry groups, and almost no input from farmers, AAFC presented two completed industry-designed "solutions" to their fabricated problem.

In the case of both *End Point Royalties* and *Trailing Contracts*, government regulations would be passed to turn control of Canada's seed system over to corporations. This would force farmers to pay tens of millions dollars annually to seed companies. Their plans could destroy Canada's public plant breeding system, and cause the loss of our reputation for top-quality grain.

When Agriculture Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau's staff was questioned about plans to give seed companies the right to add additional and ongoing charges to farmers for the "privilege" of

using their own seed, the reply was, "Well, we have to ensure that these companies make a profit". The concern did not seem to extend to farmers.

Now, it appears that AAFC has embarked on a similar mission to revise the Canada Grain Act, including the mandate of the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC). The Grain Act was passed, and the CGC was created, in the early 1900's to protect farmers from the predatory practices of the grain companies and railroads. The Act and the Commission are the sole remaining institutions that place the interests of farmers to the forefront, and they are as necessary now as when they were formed.

With the active participation of the Chief Commissioner of the CGC, AAFC has settled into the CGC's Winnipeg office, pushed aside the two appointed farmer Commissioners, and has held multiple meetings with representatives of the grain industry. They are reportedly preparing a plan that will strip farmers of the protections put into place over a hundred years ago, and replace them with an industry wish list that will clear the way for the likes of Cargill, Viterra and Bunge to decide the rules of the grain trade.

Meetings with some government MPs have revealed a grave concern with this process. Questions have been raised directly with Minister Bibeau's office. However, answers about the process and the players

involved have been non-existent. This leads to the conclusion that at the very least, AAFC staff and the Chief Commissioner of the CGC have embarked on a revision of both the Canada Grain Act and the Canadian Grain Commission's mandate guided solely by the wishes of the grain companies. Under these conditions, it is impossible to believe that farmers' interests will be defended. If this is the case, farmers will end up with another mess like the so-called "Value Creation" seed royalty debacle. Farmers will again be faced with dealing with a stacked deck when AAFC employees trot out a finished product and expect farmers to approve it.

All of this brings into question who is determining agricultural policy in our country. Is it the government officials we elect and who are responsible to Canadian citizens? Or is it unaccountable employees of AAFC who are allowed to implement corporate agendas to the detriment of farmers?

The Minister of Agriculture's refusal to investigate the serious questions raised by these issues is unacceptable. The Minister of Agriculture needs to step forward and answer the concerns of farmers directly affected. Any review of the CGC and the Canada Grain Act must be immediately stopped, and an entirely new start made only when bona fide farmer representatives are at the table. ■

PRISON FARM UPDATE

Things are buzzing at Kingston's two prison farms these days – literally.

After a small pilot project in 2018 (two beehives) at Collins Bay Institution, this year there are 10 hives each at Collins Bay and Joyceville Institutions. About 25 inmates have been looking after the hives, attending courses and have received certificates in beekeeping to add to their employment files. CORCAN, the division of the Correctional Service of Canada that operates employment training programs, expects to harvest about 25 gallons of honey, and will be bottling it for use in area institutions.

The beekeeping project is part of the return of the prison farm program at the two Kingston institutions.

Almost 10 years ago, the federal government, under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, closed the six prison farms across Canada, despite a vigorous 18 month grassroots campaign in the Kingston region to keep the prison farms operating. At the time, there was one prison farm each in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and New Brunswick, and two within the boundaries of Kingston.

The government said the program was costing \$4 million annually and that few inmates were getting farm jobs after they served their terms. Prison farm supporters argued the farms offered training in valuable



Beehives (below) at Joyceville Institution.

(photo supplied by CORCAN)

employment skills that are applicable in many occupations, and that it provided rehabilitation and therapy that helped inmates to better integrate into life outside the prison. Furthermore, food products from the farms were used with the prison system; as signs in the farm fields said, the inmates were "paying their way through agriculture".

The 2018 federal budget, under the Liberal government, provided funds to re-open the farm program at the two Kingston prison farms. Since then, inmates have been involved in producing field crops, repairing drainage systems, building fences and renovating farm buildings.

Inmates are tending gardens at both sites and have donated several hundred pounds of fresh vegetables to community organizations such as the food bank, shelters and food providers.

On a recent tour of the prison farm at Joyceville, staff discovered that the old orchard trees on the farm are loaded this year with apples and pears. The fruit, which is in beautiful condition, has been donated to community organizations. CORCAN will engage inmates in managing the orchards in future years.

There are plans to expand Joyceville's maple syrup production (a program for Indigenous inmates), and discussions are being held about establishing hazelnut trees at Collins Bay, as part of a research project through Queen's University, Kingston.

A small number of cattle arrived at the prison farms in the spring – six dairy yearlings at Collins Bay and 17 beef stockers at Joyceville. Plans call for construction of dairy cow and dairy goat operations at Joyceville, and caring for young goats

(continued on page 17...)



Apple tree at Joyceville Institution, Kingston. (photo supplied by CORCAN)

and cattle at Collins Bay, giving inmates at both institutions the opportunity to work with animals.

These steps towards re-establishing prison farms in Kingston are satisfying to the

hundreds of people in this region, and across Canada, who fought a decade ago against the closure of the prison farms.

Thank you to prison farm supporters everywhere, and to

the NFU as an organization, for persevering in the campaign to save (and to re-establish) our prison farms.

While the process of restoring the farms is underway, public support is still very valuable in keeping the process going. We look forward to seeing the prison farm program succeed here, and for it to be adapted and implemented at other prisons in Canada. ■

—by Dianne Dowling, NFU Local 316. Dianne is a member of the Save Our Prison Farms organizing committee and a member of CORCAN's prison farm citizens advisory panel. Her family operates a certified organic farm on Howe Island, east of Kingston, Ontario.

National Farmers Foundation - Meaningful Volunteer Opportunity!

Are you an NFU Associate member? **There is an opening on the National Farmers Foundation board for an Associate NFU member.** The NFF hopes to fill this position in time for the volunteer to meet the rest of the board at our AGM in November 2019 in Winnipeg. In addition to being a member of the board, the person who fills this board spot must also be willing to take on the role of board treasurer (training will be provided).

The National Farmers Foundation is a registered Canadian charity. Its membership is comprised of its five-member volunteer board of directors. The board is composed of three NFU members and two NFU associate members. The NFF's by-laws explicitly state: Each member must accept and uphold the Statement of Purpose and the politics of the National Farmers Union. The Foundation's mandate: "... 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."

The treasurer's role requires someone who is organized, is comfortable being responsible for financial details (receiving and depositing cheques), has access to a computer and is comfortable with on-line banking, and can use the basic functions of Word and Excel.

As a board member, the treasurer has the same responsibility as other board members to contribute to the decision making of the organization, to attend meetings by phone (usually two per year) and to participate in the annual general meeting (travel stipend is provided). This volunteer role requires approximately four to five hours each month, and most of the work can be done according to the treasurer's schedule.

The NFF's membership assess applicants for board openings to fit the needs of the organization and votes to select new board members. Board terms are three years and renewable.

For more information or to learn the process for submitting your name for consideration, please email: nationalfarmersfoundation@gmail.com before Monday, October 28.

Standing in Solidarity with Brazil's Landless Workers Movement

—by Coral Sproule

In early June, as Canadian farmers were busy planting, cultivating or struggling to get crops in the ground with extreme of wet and dry conditions in various provinces, I left our farm in Lanark under the care of family to attend three days of solidarity and planning meetings of Friends of the MST, U.S. and Canada in Chicago, Illinois. This meeting presented a valuable opportunity to learn from and support the work, history and current struggle of the MST (Movimento Dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra), Brazil's Landless Workers Movement, one of our allies and fellow member in La Via Campesina.

A number of allied organizations gathered in Chicago, including the National Family Farm Coalition (U.S.), members of Friends of the MST-Canada which includes academics and delegate from Common Frontiers, numerous social, food and farm justice organizations from across the U.S. and members of the leadership of the MST. We met to discuss the many crises we face globally as peasants and small scale family farms all seeking ways to advance food sovereignty in people's movements, and primarily to focus on how we support the current crisis in Brazil. We explored the history and current context of the MST movement in Brazil. More importantly, we met to organize support and resistance to the many injustices being faced under the current rule in Brazil which is a

repressive, violent, and exploitative government led by Jair Bolsonaro. The current government came into power undemocratically after the unlawful jailing of the former leader, Lula de Silva of Brazil's Workers Party.

The MST has a 30 year history of struggle to occupy and protect lands in Brazil for food production and community building, and to create resistance to the corporations and governments who seek to exploit them. Through cooperation and popular education models, this movement has gained strength and notoriety as a growing movement of the people of Brazil. Some members of the NFU have been involved in this movement through the educational training of the MST in building resistance and in seeking agrarian reform in our respective communities and countries. The people's agrarian reform focuses on the principles of Agroecology, Food Sovereignty, Education and Culture, Gender and Political Education.

The MST is made up of 150,000 landless peasants in encampments focused on struggle, resistance and organization, and a further 380,000 families in settlements throughout Brazil. In these settlements, a space for life, dignity and production exists. The settlements are organized when the state expropriates land and gives families the right to use the land and the encampments become settlements. In the settlements peasant families live,

work and produce crops, providing a social function for the land and the people. The settlements continue to work towards a goal ensuring the social rights of all Brazilians to access housing, education and food as steps towards agrarian and social reform. The growth of this movement is incredible as the MST has organized more than 1.5 million people in Brazil, and has occupied these lands to fulfill their social function through land and agrarian reform.

At the meetings in Chicago, we learned more of the current political, social and agricultural context in Brazil, and the current threats to this people's movement in Brazil. Not surprisingly, there is a connection between land grabs and threats to the people's movement in Brazil to funding and exploitation by many agricultural and resource extraction corporations in the U.S. and Canada. We discussed strategies and actions to inform our citizens and attempt to pressure and expose our governments and corporations who directly or inadvertently support the inequality and continued exploitation of Brazil's people and lands. The Brazilian government, led by Bolsonaro, is in a race to reverse the social and environmental protections in their country which have previously preserved and protected Brazil's lands and people, through a sell-off of the country's most valuable resources, those being oil and

(continued on page 19...)

large tracts of the Amazon rain forest. In Brazil, a staggering 46% of all lands are held by 1% of landowners. Of these 400 million acres, only 60 million are used for crop production. This is very disturbing juxtaposed to the approximation of 4 million landless peasants in the country.

We learned from the leaders of the MST that the Brazilian government has plans for extensive auctions of their oil and other natural resources in the near future. Plans to alert the global community of these atrocities is underway as misinformation around these issues is perpetuated by the government and its bedfellows. More recently, concern has grown to a panic among our mainstream consciousness as we have seen photos and stories of raging fires in the Amazon this dry season. As often is the case, many media and other groups have blamed farmers, and over-simplified the issue by pinning beef consumption as the catalyst for this recent blow to one of the world's precious biospheres, when in fact we should be recognizing and calling out that the current Brazilian government is complicit in the corporate raping of the Amazon and other lands of Brazil and the threats to the peasant farmers, MST camps and Indigenous tribes that defend them.

As I write this report, The Friends of The MST have just

learned that the Brazilian government has threatened to overtake one of the MST's main educational centres, the Paulo Frieri Centre in the North Eastern province of Pernambuco. This is a major threat to the MST movement and is considered a direct attack on one of the MST's most important educational gains. A letter writing campaign is underway to government officials and more information can be found on how to partake in further actions by visiting the links at the bottom of this report.

For those of us on the front lines of climate crises, as corporations race to exploit valuable natural resources of land, water and forest in Brazil it is an all too common challenge we face. As we support the resistance of the exploitation of the lands we work and love in Canada, and strive for reconciliation as settlers, we must not forget or dismiss the relation to the exploitative, xenophobic, violent and elitist governments and corporations throughout the globe. As expressed in La Via Campesina movements, we as farmers and people of the world must Globalize the Struggle and Globalize the Hope. There is great value in these opportunities to learn and meet with one another as we begin to recognize that our struggles are the same struggles, and we must continue to move forward in unity and solidarity.

Those attending the meetings in Chicago worked on furthering plans for solidarity actions and support of the MST and Indigenous led movements in Brazil and beyond. We continue to work on dedicating ourselves and the support of our organizations and communities to continue to resist together and build on existing movements and forms of education, agroecology and food sovereignty to ensure we do not stand idly by as further exploitation of land, people, and resources occurs at the hands of a powerful few.

One of the leaders in the Friends of the MST, Rebecca Tarlau, has recently had her book published on the MST movement titled *Occupying Schools, Occupying Land: How the Landless Workers Movement Transformed Brazilian Education* (Tarlau, 2019). NFU locals are helping to promote her discussion in Ottawa where Rebecca will share with us her book and her work with the MST in October.

For more information or to become involved in the discussions on how we can support the MST and Friends of the MST as members and supporters of the NFU, please contact Carla Fehr, IPC Coordinator, at ipccoordinator@nfu.ca

*In solidarity, Coral Sproule,
NFU Women's Vice- President,
Vice-Chair of the NFU International
Programming Committee*

Also please visit these pages for more information on Friends of the MST and how you can support this movement:

U.S- <http://www.mstbrazil.org> – (English)

Espanha – www.sindominio.net/mstmadrid (espanol)

www.amisdessanterre.blogspot.com.br (francais)

Common Frontiers statement on Canada-Brazil Mercosur trade talks: <https://www.commonfrontiers.ca/canadian-organizations-concerned-with-canada-mercotur-free-trade-talks/>

More "BLAST FROM THE PAST" Profiles

We are continuing our "Blast from the Past" profile project, celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the founding NFU! This time around we delve deeper to learn more about two people who we still see a lot of at Convention.

ANN SLATER

NFU Vice President (Policy), 2013 – 2015

The venues may have changed from the street corner to the farmers' market and from the sign at the end of the laneway to a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) delivery program, but essentially I am doing the same thing I did as a teenager in the late 1970's. Just like a handful of farm women in my community during my younger days, I started out by expanding the family garden and selling the extra produce to neighbours and people in the local town of St. Marys. Although my scale is somewhat larger and a full-time pre-occupation, just like those farm women my operation is an extra enterprise on a larger farm, in my case a few acres rented from my brother's organic dairy farm.

The labour, for the most part, is provided by me, myself and I (and occasionally it feels like three of us are needed to get the work done). Instead of the 100 mile diet, my focus is, and has always been, the 15 kilometre market. Although some people may travel a bit further to get to the St. Marys Farmers' Market and a couple of

CSA members pick-up at my farm because they are somewhat further afield, most of my fresh organic vegetables are sold to people within 15 kilometres of my farm from early May until the end of November/beginning of December.

Along with the acre or so of intensive market garden, I have a small flock of sheep (10 ewes). I often say I keep the sheep for two reasons – for their poop and to have a reason to get up and go outside first thing in the morning during the winter. But in reality there is another reason. As an ecological farmer, I have always believed that plants and animals belong together on a farm, so early on in my farming career I decided I should get some animals to provide the balance. Sheep are relatively small and easy to handle and they can survive on grass and hay.

I have been a director in my local, Perth-Oxford 341, for a long time. I was the Region 3 (Ontario) Coordinator/NFU-O



President in 2012. And then I stood as National NFU Vice President (Policy) in 2013 until 2015. Since stepping down as NFU Vice President (Policy), I have continued to volunteer as a member of the NFU Editorial Advisory Committee, an active committee which helps to pull together each issue of *the Union Farmer Quarterly*. Outside of the NFU I am on the board of the Farmers' Market of Ontario and have been very involved with the Ecological Farmers' Association of Ontario.

Thanks to fellow committee member, former Vice President (Policy) and Region 3 board member, Hilary Moore, for her dedication to reaching out to members to provide profiles for each UFQ issue. ■

CORY OLLIKKA

Youth President
National Vice President
National President (1998-2001)

I was raised on a mixed family farm near the Village of Waskatenau (was-ET-nah), Alberta. We raised cereal grains and beef cattle, but also chickens and a few occasional pigs. Other than being paid a dollar or two to clean grandma's chicken coop, my first income was trapping muskrats and beavers and selling furs when I was a kid.

Some of my earliest memories are of attending NFU Local or District meetings with my parents and neighbours. I even remember attending a rally to save the Crow Rate in the early 1980s.

The last meeting ever held by our Local was in 1986. It was at that meeting that I was "volunteered" to be the Local's Delegate to the Annual National Convention in Winnipeg (also the last time this convention was held in Winnipeg up until this year). I was taken to this convention by the woman I have since referred to as my "Jedi Master", Ruth Veiner, and my Uncle, Ronald Koistinen. I went only with a strong but vague sense of social justice, and instructions from my family to not, under any circumstances, come back with a position, job, or title of any kind. I returned as the Youth Advisory Committee Member for Region 7. And my life was changed..... "The Union's Inspiration", as it were!



Despite, farm, off-farm, family, and education times, I have managed to stay pretty heavily involved in the NFU to present day. I became Youth President, Region 7 Coordinator, Vice President, and President (1998-2001). Nowadays, I am still asked to co-chair the National Convention, to provide mentorship to new chairs as well as facilitate some training workshops on democratic literacy and processes.

Still on the farm, though I work off-farm as a municipal administrator as well. The land is Certified Organic, and I raise a small-ish, non-certified herd of Luining cattle which are exclusively grass-fed and grass-

finished. I mostly market direct to consumer, though surplus production goes to the conventional commodity market. It's really only through the NFU that I have learned the intricacies of the farm and food marketplace and of my insignificance in it. You might think this would be disempowering, but it has been quite the opposite.

It's the education, inspiration, story-sharing, activism, consciousness, and analysis that drew me into the National Farmers Union 33 years ago, and what keeps me believing in its purpose, practice, and people today. ■

We Remember...



EVELYN JOAN POTTER

October 8, 1926 - July 25, 2019

Evelyn was born and raised on a dairy farm near Guernsey, Saskatchewan, in 1926. She worked as a telephone operator after completing her Grade 12 education, and in 1946 married Douglas H. Potter. They began farming on Doug's grandparents' farm near Biggar. She became an active partner on the farm and involved in community affairs. The Potters joined the Saskatchewan Farmers Union and she went on to assume a leadership role within that organization, becoming District Women's Director, then Women's Vice-President, and finally Women's President.

When the SFU merged with three other provincial farmers unions in 1969 to form a national organization, Evelyn Potter received the support of farmers across the country and was elected as the founding Women's President of the National Farmers Union.

In 1971, along with NFU President Roy Atkinson, Evelyn was part of the first unofficial delegation of Canadians to visit the Peoples Republic of China as a cross-cultural exchange. She documented the month-long visit with over 1,000

slides of city, farm, school and factory life, which are now part of a travelling exhibit, *China Through Canadian Eyes*.

Evelyn spearheaded a grassroots committee of farm women across Canada who undertook to research and publish a book analyzing Canada's food system from the field to the table. For Evelyn, the process of creating the book was all-important, because of the learning, discussion and social time that involved so many members in the project. She considered *Nature Feeds Us – the food system from soil to table*, published in 1976, to be a great accomplishment by NFU members. It became a best-seller and was an important step towards the concept of Food Sovereignty as it is understood today.

Evelyn was a strong advocate for economic and social justice for farm families. Under her leadership, many farmers came to realize the importance of working for marketing agencies that returned to farmers a fair share for their labour and investment.

She was a strong advocate for women's rights, and throughout her long involvement with farm organizations and community groups, worked hard to change policies that were inherently unfair to women. In particular, the issue of matrimonial property rights and the advocacy of equality for women within marriage was a

major focus for Evelyn Potter and other women leaders of the NFU in the 1970s. The enactment of Matrimonial Property Rights legislation in Saskatchewan in 1980 was a direct result of that advocacy over many years.

Under Evelyn's leadership, the NFU took a major role in the effort to involve women directly in farm policy decision-making. In the March 1969 edition of the *Union Farmer*, Evelyn Potter wrote that one of the biggest challenges facing the farm movement was overcoming the "tradition" of down-playing women's role. She wrote:

We have assumed that women should remain in the kitchen, serve lunch, or perhaps be responsible to make arrangements for meetings and banquets. Many men and women express amazement that they should both attend a farm union meeting. .. How are these barriers of prejudice going to be overcome? By better understanding, which will eliminate differences and bring people together. Prejudice is ignorance. Its effect – discrimination – is acquired and can be cast off. Not only will our women have to change their attitudes, but our men will as well. The farmer's wife must show more initiative in becoming an active member. She must become better informed on the economic questions involved and current issues that affect the farmers. Indeed, the woman who

(continued on page 23...)

can get up at meetings or conventions and speak with authority on topics of this nature is going to be listened to and respected.

Evelyn Potter concluded her term as NFU Women's President

in the autumn of 1974, just prior to International Women's Year (1975). During her tenure, farm women made tremendous advances across Canada. Evelyn Potter provided invaluable

leadership at a critical period and helped lay the foundation for equality of women in farm organizations, rural communities and the nation as a whole. ▪



JEAN LEAHY

NFU Women's President, 1975 - 1979

internationally gave us an opportunity to tackle an issue of importance for farm women", she told an NFU convention in Ottawa. "We chose matrimonial property legislation".

Jean said at the time, many farm women across Canada had no right to share in the farm in the event of a divorce or legal separation, according to law. Women did not have their name on any property. So, the women of the NFU pressured the government to develop the matrimonial property legislation, allowing women the right to co-own their farms with their husbands. "Every legislature eventually enacted new matrimonial property legislation", said Leahy. "They didn't adopt all our ideas, but there were great improvements".

She said even within the NFU, the idea made some members uncomfortable at the time. "Many women realized they did not have their names on the property, so there were some arguments. But, as always, there was a farm union member, in this case George Hickie of Saskatchewan, who would say just the right thing. He said, 'I always assumed that Mary owned half the farm. I'm sick to

think that if something happened to me, she may have to fight for it'. So the changes were welcomed.", according to Jean.

The NFU women also pushed for legislation to allow farm women to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan.

Along with advocating for farm women, Jean worked tirelessly to initiate the *Save Our Northern Seniors* campaign, which addressed the concerns of senior health services and affordable housing in the north. Jean belonged to the Women's Institute, the local Chamber of Commerce, as well as sitting on the provincial boards of BC Rail and BC Hydro. She was a member of the Peace Valley Environmental Association from 1997, advocating for the protection of farmland in the Peace Valley.

Jean was once asked why she was such an active social advocate. Her answer was, "It gives me peace of mind to know that my contribution will be there to protect the things I worked so hard to achieve...and to make sure that my grandchildren grow up in a better world".

Jean Leahy passed away August 26, 2019 at the age of 84. ▪

Jean Leahy will be remembered for her tenacity, her spirit of adventure and her stick-to-it-ness - characteristics she possessed since birth. She came into the world on Sept. 20, 1934 weighing just two pounds, and spent the first week of her life inside a shoe box on the oven door. From then on, she continued to prove what a fighter she was.

Jean was the eldest of 9 children, raised on her family farm in Montney, BC. She married Lyman Leahy in 1953, and they raised their 3 children on their own family farm in the Two Rivers area. Lyman died in 1987.

After joining the National Farmers Union in 1969, Jean served as Women's President from 1975-1979. International Women's Year, in 1975, was a watershed year for women of the NFU, according to Jean. "The recognition of women

NFU ^{50th} Annual Convention *Celebration*

NEW THIS YEAR! ADVANCE REGISTRATION

Early bird prices are in effect until October 11, allowing you to buy now and save \$25 off regular registration fees. On October 12, regular prices will come into effect and single day registration will be offered. Please note that registration fees **DO NOT INCLUDE MEALS**. Member registration includes spouse and children under 14. If there is **MORE THAN ONE VOTING DELEGATE** in the member family, a registration fee will be required for each. If you have questions about registration, please phone (306) 652-9465 or email nfu@nfu.ca

NOTE: Pre-purchased banquet tickets and fees are refundable up to October 31 LESS a \$25 processing fee.

TO GET YOUR EARLY BIRD PRICES, REGISTRATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY SEPTEMBER 30.

USE THE FORM BELOW and mail with your cheque or credit card information to the NFU, 2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6 or **USE OUR ONLINE REGISTRATION** at <https://www.nfu.ca/2019convention/register/>

CHOOSE REGISTRATION TYPE(S):

- FULL CONVENTION - NFU MEMBER \$175 (regular \$200) X _____ (QUANTITY) = \$ _____
- FULL CONVENTION - NON-MEMBER \$200 (regular \$225) X _____ (QUANTITY) = \$ _____
- FULL CONVENTION - STUDENT/YOUTH \$ 50 (regular \$75) X _____ (QUANTITY) = \$ _____

Name(s) on ticket(s):

ADD BANQUET TICKETS: \$ 55.00 X _____ (QUANTITY) = \$ _____

Name(s) on ticket(s):

AMOUNT DUE: \$ _____

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION: (if paying by credit card) **VISA** **MASTERCARD**

(16 digit card number)

(Expiry date - month/year)

(CVV - 3 digits on back of card)

Cardholder's Name: _____

CONVENTION REGISTRANT'S NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE AND EMAIL:

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

We look forward to seeing you in Winnipeg in November!