



National Farmers Union
Union Nationale des Fermiers



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**DISTRIBUTION OF THE UFQ IS CHANGING.
See page 6 for more information.**



Coral Sproule of Perth, Ontario, was elected NFU National President at it's 48th Annual Convention in Ottawa, Ontario, Nov. 23 to 25, 2017.

Strong Communities. Sound Policies. Sustainable Farms.
Des communautés solidaires et des politiques sensées pour une agriculture durable.

Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

During her keynote speech at the NFU 48th Annual Convention in Ottawa last November, Janine R. Wedel talked about erosion of trust in government. She dug deeper than the obvious shallow performance of Trump by illustrating the interconnectedness of individuals between think tanks, universities, consultant firms, government departments, media and large corporations. In the past an elected official would sever ties or manage a measured distance between responsibilities before coming into office, but at present these relationships are openly maintained and not seen as a conflict of interest. She substantiated these findings with many examples.

During her address Ms. Wedel talked about research she undertook in communist Poland, in the 1980's. Her work was done against the backdrop of Lech Walesa and the work under Solidarity, to organize and democratize labour at the shipyard in Gdansk. The Polish regime, under General Jaruzelski responded with increased dictatorial controls and harsh measures to counter Walesa's influence and the general unrest. Ms. Wedel illustrated that the lack of trust in the Polish government resulted in a growing underground economy. Connections between neighbours and people in the street became the vital

networks for production and services. While the Polish government tried to address problems by enacting draconian measures against democratic reform, the massive underground economic system that had developed addressed real needs and real production. When the communist bureaucracy collapsed at the end of the eighties, the underground economy cushioned the chaos and severe human misery at the grassroots level. Ms. Wedel drew a parallel between the loss of trust in government in the US and the rise of an underground economy.

My own thoughts about this example of eroded trust in government is that many NFU members, and particularly many youth, are experiencing the erosion of trust in provincial and federal governments. They are responding with an act of protest and resilience by becoming food growers, despite the odds of it not being an easy economic success. They continue to work the land and set up new relationships and systems that bypass the corporate model and government schemes to meet head on what eaters need and want. In fact these acts of resilience and protests are the underground building blocks of food sovereignty and the survival of a food system.

—by Jan Slomp, VP (Policy)
on behalf of the Editorial Advisory Committee

Note: A report on Janine R. Wedel's keynote speech can be found on pages 7 to 9.

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 National President



— by Coral Sproule, National President

Greetings for the new year to everyone,

Following convention, many of us had a busy end to 2017. We have been able to speak in solidarity with fisherfolk in British Columbia in the Save Our BC Fisheries Campaign. We have had the opportunity to add our voices to the many who are taking action to recognize the issues we continue to face with gender based violence - especially in the context of our sometimes remote and isolated living circumstances as farmers. Many of our members stood with others at vigils on December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, to recognize wrongs of the past and envision a better, more peaceful and empowered future for everyone. Some of our members are working with other organizations to advocate for basic minimum income guarantees, which would be especially beneficial to young and beginning farmers.

As you may recollect, our convention theme this year was *Farm Renewal*. The winter often presents itself as a way to start fresh, as we have an opportunity to spend some time planning our coming season or making improvements to our systems. It may be a time for reflection upon how to improve our businesses and the needs for our own quality of life in the mostly rural communities where we farm. We seem to have a vigorous energy among our membership to bring what we have gleaned from our conversations and speakers at convention back to our communities. Here we continue to forge through with the political and social constructs that support our way of life as farmers, ranchers, fisherpeople and all who make their livings from this land we inhabit. As NFU members, we continue to express our takes on

everything from NAFTA renegotiations, soil conservation, challenges to grain marketing, net neutrality and improving internet accessibility in rural communities, rural access to education, and working with indigenous communities towards reconciliation.

As of January 1st in Ontario, we have a new minimum wage of \$14/hour. Many media outlets are focusing on how this will negatively impact local small businesses, but as usual the loudest voices are those of the corporations who profit unfairly on the backs of the average labourer. While this wage increase will serve as a challenge for many farmers who employ staff, it is a positive change for many workers in our province who have struggled to make ends meet at a minimum wage that does not meet minimum living standards. We look to examples of success in communities from across the world who have begun to recognize this type of injustice and have already raised their minimum wage. In these places there has been relatively little negative impact on small businesses while the positive outcomes are already becoming clear. What is clear is that there is a better way forward, and NFU members inspire one another every day with examples of positive change.

It is a great honour to be able to work with each and every one of our board members, volunteers, staff and everyone else we meet through our work with the National Farmers Union. This feeling of shared purpose and solidarity among farmers in our organization, as well as with our allies, is one of the great gifts that come with the work we all do. I can personally attest to the richness it brings to our farming and family.

We send wishes to everyone for a joyful and abundant year to come. ■

A Message from the National Women's President



— by Katie Ward, Women's President

After a difficult weather year for many of us, coming home from the 48th annual NFU Convention last November, with its theme of Farm Renewal brought not only a renewed sense of connection with our NFU family, but also a renewed sense of purpose about what we do as farmers and as a farm organization, and why we chose to become members in the NFU. We learned much over the few information-packed days about farm succession and the many forms it can take, about land ownership and access, and about how that affects our food sovereignty especially on colonized and unceded territory; the impacts that the current NAFTA negotiations may have on our farm livelihoods; and the impact that NFU members are having on their local communities. I am always inspired by the many different actions NFU members are taking to make their communities and our rural areas a better place to live and farm.

I was pleased to see the positive reaction at the convention to our newly adopted policy regarding harassment in the workplace, and would invite all members to review and familiarize themselves with this policy at <http://www.nfu.ca/policy/policy-regarding-harassment-workplace>. This policy applies to all of us as members when we are volunteering on behalf of the NFU and attending meetings. Our NFU focus on solidarity has long meant that we encourage each other to treat each other with respect and civility, so having this policy in place simply means that we have put down in writing what we were already doing in practice.

Much of Canada is shivering under the polar vortex conditions as I write this in early January, including here in the Ottawa Valley. To my mind, that makes this the perfect weather to finish our barn chores as quickly as possible so we can warm up by the woodstove and start making lists and plans

for the year to come. As farmers that means we will likely be working on some combination of seed ordering, crop rotation plans, grazing plans, or livestock breeding plans depending on the type of farming we do, but as NFU members it also means working on important policy and action items. One exciting initiative within the Women's Advisory Committee is taking place in Region 6 (Saskatchewan), where there will be a series of workshops on the theme *Press for Progress*. Any members who wishes to become involved in these workshops is welcome to reach out to Region 6 Women's Advisory Representative Marcella Pedersen at 306-398-2795 or gilmar@sasktel.net.

Region 3 (Ontario) has formed a Gender Equity Working Group with the goals of encouraging a diverse population of members to volunteer for leadership positions at all levels of the Union; identifying barriers that may be preventing some members from more extensive participation; and formulating an action plan to break down or overcome these barriers. Members interested in participating are encouraged to contact Anna Dipple at anna@nfuontario.ca to be added to the email list for information on upcoming meetings.

The NFU has also nominated a member from Region 3 to participate in the Canadian Delegation to the 62nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) which will take place in New York from March 12 to March 23, 2018. Nominations have not yet closed at this time, but our NFU values of *Strong Communities, Sound Policies, and Sustainable Farms* seem tailor-made for the priority theme of the UNCSW in 2018: *Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls*.

These are just a couple of examples of the interesting and compelling activities that will be taking place over the coming months, and if you are interested in participating in these or other activities please reach out to your Regional Women's Advisory Representative, myself, or Women Vice-President, Shannon Jones. ■

A Message from the National Youth President



— by Stuart Oke, Youth President

It is my pleasure to have a chance to write to you and introduce myself on this chilly day at the end of

December amidst the cold snap affecting many of us across the country.

It was with a sense of great responsibility and excitement that I accepted the position of Youth President last November at our national convention in Ottawa. That being said, I knew I would have some big shoes to fill in taking over from my predecessor. I am looking forward to working with our youth advisors across the country and our new Youth VP Marta Reczek in helping to support and empower the next generation of farmers; continuing the work in connecting with new and current members; and helping to reinvigorate the grassroots building and action that has been the focus of the NFU youth for the past several years.

With that in mind, it has been encouraging to see the number of youth attending convention increasing over the past few years culminating this year in a larger group of attendees than in recent memory. Convention has always been a chance for youth from across the country to meet each other, share experiences and participate in the process of elections and



Christopher Sanford Beck, Saskatchewan Youth Advisor (left) and Ontario member Aaron Armstrong (right).

resolution building. Youth who attend convention continue, in large part, to stay involved in the NFU for years to come and their involvement represents an important investment in the organization's future. In the coming year I would encourage all members to keep an eye out for youth who have never attended convention and encourage them to reach out to their regional, district, or local coordinators, or to the NFU Youth directly at nfuyouth@nfu.ca. Funds are sometimes available locally or nationally for youth to apply for to subsidize their costs to convention.

I enter 2018 with a sense of purpose both personally on my own new farm and also in my work with the NFU. On a personal note after nearly a decade of working for other farmers and farms my partner Nikki and I have finally started our own farm business in Region Two, between Ottawa and Montreal. We are currently knee deep in planning for the upcoming season as our marketing of produce slows down from the frenetic pace of the summer and fall seasons. I know my story in starting a farm is not unique and that it mirrors the experience of many young farmers today. Our own farmer-led research and the upcoming New Farmer Report, which is in its final stages of publishing, confirms that the majority of young farmers today come from non-farming backgrounds or said another way, from non-farming families. These findings provide new importance to the work of the NFU youth in building resilient grassroots communities in which to serve and empower this new generation of farmers who may not have knowledge of or access to the traditional farm knowledge, networks and communities that a multi-generational farm family may possess.

The context of declining farms and farmers nationally means that connecting with and engaging this new generation of farmers will be critical to the work we do and our ability to stay strong as an organization. Building strong communities and networks of farmers in addition to the crucial policy and advocacy work we do will serve as a road map the NFU youth use to engage with and support our young farmers into the future.

—In Solidarity, Stuart Oke

ATTENTION MEMBERS

The distribution of the UNION FARMER QUARTERLY AND NEWSLETTER is changing

The NFU Executive has decided to make email the primary method of distribution for both the Union Farmer Quarterly (UFQ) and Union Farmer Newsletter, starting with the Spring 2018 edition.

Printing, postage and mailing preparation of the UFQ and Newsletter require a large amount of money and rates keep going up. Many NFU members have mentioned they would rather get these publications electronically. With these factors in mind **the decision was made to provide only the digital version to all members except those who specifically indicate they wish to continue getting the print version**. We expect this change to save thousands of dollars annually, allowing us to spend that money on other priorities that will make our organization stronger and more effective.

The UFQ will still be made available in paper format to those members who contact the national office and specifically indicate they would like to keep getting paper copies of the UFQ or the Newsletter or both.

If you do not receive any email from the NFU or have recently changed your email address, please contact the National Office to update your information to make sure you get your publications.

To provide your email address OR to request printed version of the Newsletter and/or the UFQ:

- email nfu@nfu.ca,
- phone (306) 652-9465,
- fax (306) 664-6226 or
- send a letter to National Farmers Union, 2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6.

Include your full name, membership number and contact information.

Outsiders, Influence Elites and Corrosion of Democracy

Given her extensive academic and research background, NFU members and guests gathered in Ottawa at the National Farmers Union 48th Annual Convention last November would have expected a thoughtful and relevant analysis of the current state of democracy from keynote speaker Janine R. Wedel and that is exactly what she delivered.

As a social anthropologist, Janine R. Wedel writes about governance, corruption, influence elites and accountability through the lens of an anthropologist. She is a professor at the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University in Virginia, a Global Policy Chair at the University of Bath, U.K. and a Fellow at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin.

During her speech titled *New Influence Elites, Trumpism and the Corrosion of Democracy* she chose to address four topics:

1. Outsiders and Insiders, an Estranged Couple
2. New Influence Elites - Their Modus Operandi and Organization
3. How do Trump et al. -actually govern when they come to power?
4. What Can Be Done about the Corrosion of Democracy?

Outsiders and Insiders - an estranged couple

In the 1980's, Wedel spent time in Eastern Europe where her research focused on the informal networks that existed for both survival and political action under communism. At this time people had more trust in their informal networks than in their government or public institutions. Over the past few decades people in the west have also increasingly lost trust in public institutions, as they began to believe the system is rigged against them and Wedel says they have a point. In her opinion this loss in trust of public institutions has occurred as shadow or influence elites have rearranged rules so that they wield more power and influence. As a



Janine Wedel, keynote speaker at the NFU Annual Convention.

result, an outsider class of people who feel excluded from and unrepresented by the system has arisen.

According to Wedel, while societies schooled in communism are accustomed to not trusting the system or formal public institutions, until recent decades people in the west have generally had confidence in formal public institutions. At the same time as trust in public or civic institutions has fallen, income inequalities have surged. Wedel calls the Tea Party on the right and Occupy Wall Street movement on the left “peas out of the same pod” - both being examples of people who see themselves as outsiders. In the 2016 U.S. election both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders capitalized on this sentiment.

While many academics and pundits are using the word “populism” to describe what is going on Wedel argues that this is not the populism of the past. She says disaffected outsiders are not just anti-establishment and anti-elitists but are profoundly anti-system, with little notion of what can replace it.

New Influence Elites - Their Modus Operandi and Organization

Wedel has written extensively on the power and influence of the new shadow elites or new influence elites. She defines shadow or influence elites by how they operate. During her talk she mentioned four relatively recent changes which contributed to the rise of influence elites in the West:

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- the privatization and de-regulation that was a major impetus of the Reagan and Thatcher governments in the 1980's;
- the dispersion of global authority with the end of the Cold War which has resulted in a huge number of entities becoming involved in policy making;
- the outsized role financialization has taken on in the economy at the expense of the production of actual things; and
- the rise of digital technology which has nearly destroyed the legacy or old media while giving elites new media to brand themselves. Information is now blasted into a million pieces. While we are just getting a few of them we think we are still getting the full picture on our tiny little devices.

During her talk, Wedel outlined four means by which the current shadow or influence elites operate:

1. **Players serve as connectors** - there are now many more entities, such as think tanks, non-governmental organizations and consultants, which often do the work of governments. The players themselves are connectors of power and often have overlapping roles, making it more difficult to get to the bottom of who has influence and how that influence is being wielded. Wedel provided the example of a retired general who continues to sit on a government advisory board and thus gets inside government information. At the same time, the retired general sets up his own consulting firm and a *perch* as a visiting professor at a university. From this perch he is able to provide *neutral* commentary during appearances on CNN but at anytime it is hard to determine whether the retired general is acting in the interest of the nation or his own interest. Wedel says that there is nothing inherently wrong or bad about players serving as connectors but there is inherently less accountability.

In a second example Wedel described a consulting firm with international reach that is comprised of former government regulators. The consulting firm uses its inside information to both help its bank client get around the existing regulations and to informally lobby against new regulations. At the same time, the government has

outsourced some of its regulatory authority to consulting firms, including this one.

2. **Informality** - in the 1980's under communism everyone knew that the formal system did not work to get a better cut of meat, a new refrigerator, gasoline or whatever citizens needed to get by. The informal system was the best way for people to get what they needed, a system whereby people called in favours in a long chain of people. The key to success in this informal system was information from informal sources. Today on the world stage policies are regularly forged outside of government. As an example, Wedel talked about the Group of Thirty which describes itself as a *Consultative Group on International Economic and Monetary Affairs* and which she describes as part think-tank, part interest group and part club. The executive director of the Group of Thirty told her, "we don't make policy but you can see our recommendations ending up in policy."

Between 2007 and 2016, the number of registered lobbyists in Washington declined by 25%. However, Wedel says that does not mean there is less influencing, rather the lobbying has just gone underground as shadow lobbyists who choose not to register but continue to wield influence.

3. **Flexibility** - shadow or influence elites take on multiple roles which overlap but are not disclosed. The new revolving door features multiple entry and exit points, often straddling two or more at the same time, as people move back and forth and between government, think-tanks, consulting firms, law or lobby firms and media commentary. According to Wedel, we used to have help from journalism to sort out these overlapping roles but with the decimation of serious journalism by the digital age, just a few investigative reporters are left standing to unearth some of what is taking place.
4. **The set-up and use of vehicles of influence, like think tanks, grass-roots organizations, philanthropies and consulting firms.** Wedel says that since the end of the Cold War there has been a huge growth in the number of think tanks, a growth that started first in eastern Europe.

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How do Trump et al. actually govern when they come to power?

Wedel described Donald Trump as a wealthy celebrity who had not involved himself in any big way in establishment policy manipulation prior to becoming president - someone who could accurately portray himself as an outsider.

However, once becoming president, Wedel said that he is not *draining the swamp* as he promised, rather he is doing the opposite by borrowing tactics from the power-elite playbook. She predicts that during his tenure corruption will explode and income inequalities will grow larger. Trump is consolidating power in the executive by dismantling government structures, undermining and disparaging the courts, downsizing public broadcasting, appointing outsiders with strong ties to the industries they are supposed to regulate to government agencies, sidelining and devaluing the expertise held within the bureaucracy, and surrounding himself with loyalists. According to Wedel, his style has a destabilizing effect that is reminiscent of martial law in Poland controlling people by always catching them off-guard with executive orders and tweets. At this time everything seems to be up for grabs, even the truth, says Wedel.

What can be done about the corrosion of democracy?

1. As citizens we have a responsibility to participate and help improve democratic institutions, such as the NFU, the local parent teacher association, the local school board, co-ops, and municipal governments.
2. "We must not obey in advance." Wedel says that over history people have been remarkably accepting of new rules and new mandates in a new setting. As citizens we need to think about it, not just adapt to a new situation.
3. We must work to distinguish fact from falsehood and fake news. We need to peel back the layers. Post-truth is pre-facism. ■

Janine Wedel's presentation to the NFU 48th Annual Convention was quite dense, timely and information packed. If you are interested in learning more about her academic work and scholarship, a list of some of the books she has authored is available in her biography on the NFU website at <http://www.nfu.ca/about/48th-annual-convention-2017>. Information on how to order a recording of her presentation is printed on the back cover of this issue of the UFQ.

Celebrating Marcella Pedersen – GLOBAL CITIZEN!

Marcella Pedersen is one of four amazing Saskatchewan people being recognized this year with Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation's **2018 Global Citizen Award**. This year's award recognizes inspiring people and initiatives that demonstrate the impact of working through partnership and solidarity towards global citizenship, global cooperation, justice and peace. SCIC says "Award recipients have dedicated themselves to building a better world, raising awareness about global issues and how to get involved in making change. Although the work of international development is a collective task, it is important to recognize that the individual actions of one person, one group, or one campaign can make a difference."

Marcella farms with her family near the town of Cut Knife and has been an NFU member since 1971. She has held positions in her NFU Local and District and is currently the Region 6 (Saskatchewan) Women's Advisor. She has organized several NFU International Women's Day (IWD) events. The 2017 IWD theme was "Strength and Resilience of Indigenous Women". Marcella organized five events throughout the province which were attended by 155 people, most of them Indigenous women. Through sharing circles, stories, art, song, and craft markets, they celebrated their struggles and achievements to end violence against women. Marcella hopes that by getting Indigenous and non-Indigenous women together socially and making an effort to understand one another we are breaking the pattern of racism, prejudice and injustice. She thinks the IWD events were a great way to celebrate our achievements while reminding us of the need for vigilance and action to gain and maintain women's equality in all aspects of life..

Visit <http://earthbeat.sk.ca/events/global-citizens-award/> for more information about this prestigious award and watch for interviews with this year's winners! <http://earthbeat.sk.ca/events/global-citizens-award/>

Renewing Our Relationship to the Land

The opening speaker on the *Renewing Our Relationship to the Land* panel during the NFU's 48th Annual Convention in Ottawa last November was **Christopher Kelly-Bisson**. He is a PhD candidate in the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa and the lead researcher on the farmland preservation policy stream for the Farming and Farmland Network of Sustain Ontario. His presentation focused on Quebec's farmland protection laws.

The *Loi pour la protection du territoire et des activités agricole Québécois (LPTAAQ)* or the Quebec Farmland and Farming Practices Protection Act was created in 1978 by the René Lévesque PQ government. It established both a protected agriculture reserve and a commission to oversee the law. The Act is complemented by the *Loi sur l'acquisition de terres agricole par des non-résidents* or the Act Respecting the Acquisition of Farmland by Non-Residents. According to Kelly-Bisson, these Acts grew out of unique situation in Quebec in the 1960's and 1970's including the post-quiet revolution welfare state and the push for Quebec national sovereignty. The *habitant* identity plays a big part of what it means to be Québécois, giving food and agriculture an important role within society.

The farmland protection zone covers 6.3 million acres or 4.7 % of the total land in Quebec, including all agriculture and continuous lands south of the 50th parallel. The Act takes precedent over most planning regulations. The quasi-judicial sixteen member commission which oversees the LPTAAQ has the power to rule on applications for inclusion/exclusion of land from the agricultural zone and advises the provincial government on matters of farmland preservation, among other responsibilities-

According to Kelly-Bisson there are a lot of virtues to the LPTTA: It is strong; it makes it difficult to develop land; and it is effective in terms of preserving land from urban sprawl. But he also says there are problems including the lack of democratic engagement through the quasi-judicial commission, the uniform treatment of all farmland regions whether peri-urban or more remote, the privilege it



Panelists (left to right): Danielle Boissoneau, Sally Miller and Christopher Kelly-Bisson.

gives to industrial agriculture over small producers, and the lack of protection against domestic speculation. There have been continual changes to the Act in an ongoing attempt to find the right balance with municipalities and to adapt to changes in agriculture. However, Kelly-Bisson says the current Quebec government has significantly weakened the Act by devolving more power to municipalities and by giving the provincial government the power to overrule commission decisions.

Sally Miller who is currently the Ontario Local Food and Farms Co-ops Network Project Manager was the second speaker on the panel. From 2015 to 2017, she was the Research Coordinator for the City Region Food Systems Toronto Project, part of an international research project looking at urban/rural food systems and during that time she interviewed fifty farmers. Miller says the strongest message that came through in the interviews was that farmers wanted to retire with dignity and new farmers wanted a chance to start with dignity and security.

Some of the key issues identified by farmers in the interviews were:

- a lack of prioritization of foodlands;
- a lack of recognition of the importance of food sovereignty, particularly close to populated areas;

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- a lack of support for agricultural and food systems; and
- the need for new land use models which provide:
 - access to land and capital;
 - control over land use decisions;
 - tenure security so that farmers are able to invest in the land.

When Miller asked about solutions over 50% of the farmers interviewed said, “if the border would close all this would change”. During her presentation, Miller downplayed this solution but was asked during the question period why she discredited this option. Her reply was that instantly closing the border without replacing it with another system would lead to widespread hunger, especially among more food insecure populations within Canada.

Based on the farmer interviews and her research, Miller proposed several other solutions including:

- prioritize foodlands;
- support food and agricultural systems, not just farmland but the infra-structure needed to support farms, like processing and distribution;
- implement development penalties, with the state of Maryland as an example;
- integrate urban/rural protection, with Hamilton, Ontario as an example;
- rebuild the middle, e.g. processing;
- support collaborative farms which can:
 - provide access to land;
 - help manage succession;
 - help keep land in agriculture;
 - share the risk and the profits;
 - draw on a larger pool of expertise
- look at options to use public lands and the commons.

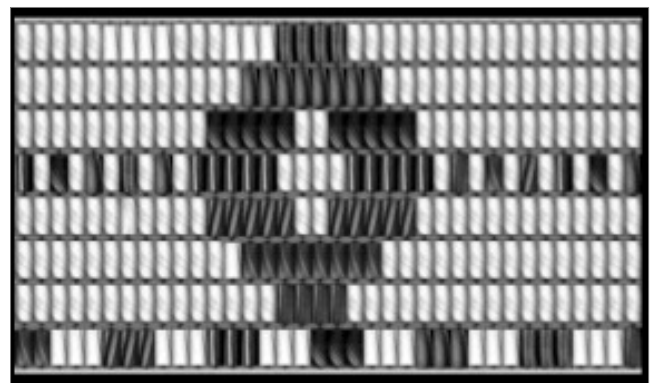
Examples of collaborative farms in Canada include Tourne-Sol Co-operative Farm in Quebec, Glen Valley Organic Farm in B.C. and Lohbrunner

Community Farm Co-operative in B.C. In concluding her presentation, Miller said, “Co-ops can make significant change.”

The final speaker on the panel was **Danielle Boissoneau** who is Anishnaabe Kwe from the Garden River First Nations on the shorelines of the Great Lakes, although she now lives in Hamilton. She is a writer, a seed saver, a gardener and works towards food sovereignty for her people through education and action, including through her work as the Community Action Coordinator for the Hamilton Community Food Centre. Before she began her presentation, Boissoneau introduced herself in her own language which she said was to introduce herself to the land and to the spirits who still live on this land.

In the introduction to her presentation Boissoneau told NFU members that she sees the world in a different way because of who she is and where she comes from. She said, “The way I see the land and the way that my ancestors see the land is that I don’t own the land. My people don’t own the land. We see the land as something we are dependent on and rely on. As farmers I know that you know this to be true.” The difference she said comes when we start to commodify the land which skews our values and our relationship to the land as it is no longer something we are dependent on but rather as something we are getting commodity from.

The *dish with one spoon wampum* is an ancestral agreement made between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee people and is a guiding principle as to how to relate to the land. Boissoneau described



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(Renewing Our Relationship to the Land, from page 11)

the dish with one spoon wampum as an agreement made between people and the land. It helps people understand their place on the land, how they should relate to it and their responsibility to it. The dish with one spoon wampum says that we have only one dish which has to feed and sustain all people. The one spoon is a reminder that we should only take what we need because there needs to be something left for all the other people. The beaver tail within the dish with one spoon wampum highlights the strong connection indigenous people have to the food they are eating - beaver tail is a medicinal food intended to help leaders keep a clear mind and make good decisions.

Food sovereignty is an affirmation of who we are as indigenous people and a way, one of the most surefooted ways, to restore our relationship with the world around us."

For Boissoneau the dish with one spoon wampum informs how she relates to the land and since it has existed longer than Canada or Canadian policy it supercedes Canadian policy. She also reminded NFU members that there are people who come from the land who have been displaced from the land. This displacement has led to ethno-genocide of people in Canada, i.e. the destruction of the land is leading to the destruction of people. We are often told there are limited resources to go between us, but Boissoneau says that in her world view there is enough for everyone, if we share and live together under the dish with one spoon agreement.

Through her work as a community action coordinator Boissoneau says it is her job to help people understand why the beautiful food grown by farmers does not get to certain groups of people, like indigenous and black people who more often live in food deserts. Her initial inspiration to push for food sovereignty came from the following quote by

Winona LaDuke: "Food sovereignty is an affirmation of who we are as indigenous people and a way, one of the most surefooted ways, to restore our relationship with the world around us." In Boissoneau's experience, food sovereignty begins with confidence and knowledge that we have a relationship with this land. With her children she grows a garden on a three foot by three foot community plot but this garden plot gives them the opportunity to learn from the land, to ceremony the land and to be grateful for the land.

In concluding her presentation, Boissoneau said she has teachings that say "if we are to create real change in the world, it starts with ourselves", then goes to our family, then to our clan or our community and finally to the nation. She said we need to have the confidence within ourselves to know what we are working towards and to be very intentional in how we relate to the land and in how we relate to people outside our own circle. ■



National Farmers Union
Union Nationale des Fermiers



ATTENTION MANITOBA MEMBERS

The NFU Region 5 (Manitoba) Convention will be held:

Saturday, March 3 2018

Registration: 9:30 AM

Canad Inn

Portage La Prairie, Manitoba

For more information, call:

Ian Robson @ 204-858-2479

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More information regarding the convention will be mailed out at a later date.

NAFTA 2.0: Questions of Power and Democracy

NAFTA 2.0: Questions of Power and Democracy explored NAFTA, trade agreements in general, and their implications for our democracy. Panelists Dr. A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi, Gus Van Harten and Chris Holman examined how trade deals work, who are the winners and the losers and how we can take back power for ourselves.

Dr. A Haroon Akram-Lodhi began by explaining how the concept of *comparative advantage* is used to promote and justify the kind of globalization that is enforced by international trade agreements. *Absolute advantage* is the ability to produce something at a lower cost than another country can. *Opportunity cost* is the value one must give up to produce something else. A country has a *comparative advantage* when its opportunity cost is lower than its trading partner's opportunity cost for producing the same thing. Thus, the USA might be able to produce both corn and soy for a lower cost than Canada could, but because Canada would have to give up less of its corn land than the USA would to produce additional soy, both countries could be better off if Canada grew more soy and sold it to the USA, while the USA grew more corn and sold it to Canada.

These comparative cost relationships are the justification for free trade: if it is better to specialize and trade, then any restrictions on trade will reduce the gains that could be made from trade. "So", explained Akram-Lodhi, "for two centuries, *comparative advantage* has provided a rationale for *laissez-faire* economic policy". The theory is that with less regulation, producers, countries, companies, individuals, etc. can respond to supply and demand, leading to more consumption and lower prices for all. "The policy implication of comparative advantage is very powerful", Dr. Akram-Lodhi explained. "Remove state intervention from economic and social affairs and limit the state to regulating free markets -- we have comparative advantage to thank for the economic foundation of neoliberalism".

However, comparative advantage is a myth. Key assumptions about labour, capital and competition hard-wired into the concept of *comparative advantage* must be true for it to work. Akram-Lodhi exposed these assumptions as false:

Labour: *Comparative advantage* assumes it is easy to switch workers from job to job in any location. However, it is not easy to move workers to jobs with completely different skill sets, tools and knowledge that take time to learn and apply.

Capital: *Comparative advantage* assumes capital will not move between countries, yet it can and does when companies can make more money by investing their capital elsewhere.

Competition: *Comparative advantage* assumes specialized companies compete with each other to reduce costs and prices. Competition does not exist, but market power does – big companies are so large they no longer have to compete, but can set their own terms for doing business.

Today, only a handful of companies dominate the global market. Their vast market power allows them to keep prices higher than would occur if competition existed. This corporate strategy is called "rent seeking". "Rent" is the difference between the profit that would be made in a competitive market and the profit made with market power. This has led to what economists call *rentier capitalism*. In the US, this outrageous market power has led to four companies seeing more than half the revenue generated in the US market.

Rentier capitalism has been rampant since the US and Canada signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 1988. Food is a small share of what Canada imports and exports, yet the FTA led to a continental food supply chain in agriculture that facilitated corporate restructuring and the emergence of rentier capitalism in North American agriculture. As agri-food exports have grown, realized net farm income declines, and farm debt rises. The reason: commodity prices remain stagnant while rentier capitalists in agri-business keep increasing the price of inputs. Low returns are driving the mass exodus of

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farmers and the polarization of farm income to the extent that now 20% of all farms capture 75% of the realized net farm income.

Because the foundation of comparative advantage is false, the whole system of globalization and its free trade agreements not only fail to deliver more prosperity for everyone, everywhere, but they are designed to reinforce and strengthen the most powerful. It is not just farmers who are disadvantaged. Low pay exists across the food system. Social inequality is the foundation of our current system and this is why we need to replace it with food sovereignty.

Law professor **Gus Van Harten** opened his presentation by noting that trade agreements contain many things that have nothing to do with trade. “The clearest and most outrageous feature of free trade agreements are the special international protections to foreign investors, which no-one else has, and which have been snuck into the trade agreements through their chapters on investment and through bilateral investment treaties,” he said.

This special protection for foreign investors, known as *Investor-State Dispute Settlement* (ISDS) is a legal mechanism that goes back to the 1960s, created to enforce European colonial powers’ continued economic control over newly independent former colonies and included in bilateral treaties. Using weak courts in the newly independent countries as an excuse, these treaties were the first time foreign investors were given the power to sue countries directly. Van Harten explained: “Whereas countries used to settle disputes among themselves on behalf of their own people, now one slice of the population – foreign investors – is elevated to the international level alongside countries.”

These treaties lay dormant until the 1990s when a small group of creative lawyers who ruled on international trade disputes decided to interpret ISDS in a broad way. This opened up a floodgate of opportunity for foreign investors -- mostly multinationals and very wealthy people -- to sue countries. NAFTA was the first treaty to apply this system between two developed countries with mature democracies and reliable court systems. It opened the door for Canadian companies to sue the US and vice versa. Because of NAFTA, Canada is one of the five most sued countries in the world.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s many countries signed treaties with ISDS without first analysing the potential impact of ISDS. By signing CETA and the TPP, which both include ISDS, Canada is the leading developed country to concede its sovereignty this way.

Inspired by the claim that ISDS is about protecting small businesses, Van Harten and his students investigated who, in fact, is making money from this system. They found that the beneficiaries that gain most from ISDS are companies with annual revenues of at least \$10 billion. The next biggest beneficiary is the legal industry that serves these treaties. Third in line are very rich individuals having over \$100 million in net wealth, then large companies with annual revenues between \$1 billion and \$10 billion. Clearly, small businesses do not benefit from ISDS. The big losers are taxpayers in countries being sued, who have paid billions to cover the awards and their governments’ legal fees.

The benefit to foreign investors goes beyond the cash awards. ISDS promotes a “regulatory chill” where governments concede to the demands of the foreign investor over the interests of its people to avoid being sued. The ISDS system is like a new world-wide “supreme court” that has the power to review every law or regulation a government passes. If a government decision can be proven to hinder the income of a company, that company is paid an award, not only for current losses, but for loss of future income too. The sole purpose of the ISDS system is to protect the property rights of foreigners.

Van Harten summarized his concerns in four key points: ISDS is a new price tag on sovereignty and democracy; ISDS privileges foreign investors; ISDS provide foreign investors with rights without responsibilities (thus governments cannot sue corporations); and the ISDS system lacks judicial independence and fair process.

The ISDS measures are buried in trade agreement texts that are kept secret until after they are signed. Only a few people actually read this information and raise the alarm, but they are dismissed as being “anti-trade” or prejudiced against other countries. In fact, the ISDS is a set of rigged rules to give the most powerful protection to the least vulnerable economic actors.

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If NAFTA was repealed, Canada would be freed from this significant constraint on our sovereignty. Van Harten asserted that NAFTA is not immobile -- no trade agreement is. We should be able to talk about it and change it, and we ought to.

The final panelist, **Chris Holman**, a member of the Wisconsin Farmers Union, spoke about trade, questions of power, and building solidarity. He set the stage by telling how trade issues, particularly his response to the US dairy industry's attack on Canadian supply management, led to his participation in our convention.

As a result of the production model encouraged by US agricultural policy there have been record yields in the US, farm-killing prices and serious farm losses. He said "Full-throttle Agriculture" continues to reign alongside the other horsemen of the farmocalypse: *cognitive dissonance*, *culture war*, and *situational rationality*. The Trump administration has drastically increased uncertainty. The agriculture sector wonders if the plan for trade agreements is to repeal but not replace them, and to let overproduction sort itself out by eliminating ever more farmers.

Holman highlighted the *situational rationality* of farmers producing more to benefit from good prices, then when prices are down, further increasing production to pay for the costs of running the farm. What makes sense at the individual level doesn't make sense in the big picture because it leads to the irrational situation of glutted markets and plummeting prices. This experience makes it harder to keep people from questioning. Speaking truth to power puts the powerful in the awkward position of publicly defending themselves.

Mr. Holman went on to explain how the powerful make contested economic, political or social practices seem natural and inevitable. For example, the process of consolidation is made out to simply be a natural trend, while ignoring the fact that people are making the decisions that result in consolidation. Mr. Holman then went on to explain how power uses culture to keep people divided by reinforcing feelings of difference and making it harder for people with common interests to work together.

Violence and coercion is a form of control available to the state, but it is less acceptable to use it these days. When the state does use it, it usually wins. To avoid using force, the powerful rely on *hegemony*, the kind of insidious control that convinces people to participate in a system that exploits them because they believe it is normal and natural.

Power succeeds by spending a lot of money framing controversial issues to get people to see the matter in a particular way. The powerful expect opposition, but they also figure out how people will respond. They take into account both their framing of the issue and predicting the opposition response when making their plans. They are prepared to deal with the expected opposition – and often they design their frame to create pitfalls for opponents to fall into. Instead of avoiding conflict, the powerful manage conflict so they can win at the level that matters to them.

We can succeed in countering the powerful by intentionally creating strong, non-partisan, one-on-one relationships that become valuable networks for action. When there are differences, it is important to leave the defeated room to retreat with grace so the possibility of working together in the future remains intact.

Holman said we can take advantage of the context that has been created by the powerful. The corporations and powerful elites are imposing their ways on people around the world, but this same homogenization process also creates a space where we can work together. Thus, we can use the powerful's resources to defeat them by forming *co-operatives*. That is, co-opt (use) the framework created and paid for by the powerful, but find and pull out the threads you can sew into your own fabric. Use their language, but inject our own arguments into it.

Holman says we can win by getting people to question the powerful's socially accepted point of view, then turn the language used by the powerful to our own purposes. Get farmers and consumers involved in action to change the space we work within. This will change the economy, which he reminded us, is just us and how we interact with each other. ■

The Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

Congratulations to Chris Stevers who was the winner of the Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing. Chris is 15 years old and lives on his parent's mixed organic 300-acre farm near Stratford, Ontario. Chris hopes that in the future there will be more prosperous farmers and healthy farmland all over Canada producing great volumes of high quality food that everyone can afford.

The Beingessner Award is given to the authors of the best 500-1000 word essay on agriculture and food issues in Canada. 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, Saskatchewan, who passed away in the spring of 2009 in a tragic farm accident. Starting in 1991, Paul wrote a weekly column on farming and transportation issues with a social justice focus featured in papers across Western Canada.

To the farmers who are trying to make a living, meanwhile feeding us:

—by Chris Stevers, age 15, Gadshill, Ontario

There's something these days that's affecting your business, your life, and the world you live in. It's called social license. For those who don't know, social license refers to the communal permission given to—or, as is more often the case, withheld from—business activities, farming or otherwise. It likely stopped the Energy East pipeline. It is helping to grow the practice of organic farming. It is being taken from animal farmers by vegan militias. Obviously, social license is common in farmers' issues. And clearly it is something important to farmers of all sorts: the vegan with his vegetables; field crop/livestock men who are grappling with the morals of new ag-technologies; and the farm men and women of all sorts in between.

After study, social license hits me as a potentially dangerous weapon. It isn't rule by the people. It's rule by the loudest voice. And the loudest voice isn't often the most reasonable voice. Right now animal rights activists are a major concern to the farming community, and rightly so. They threaten to shut down animal agriculture, which is most natural and nearly necessary. They're pursuing their goals through "social licensing". They are scaring/pushing politicians and bureaucrats into pursuing anti-agriculture regulations by withholding social license for animal agriculture. If you see a respectable person lampooned by those who disagree with him you will know what I mean. Rogue social licensing happens in other areas too, outside of farming. Excessive regulation, activism based policy, and the tearful or violent appeals that lead to those regulations and policies are other symptoms of well-intentioned but evil social licensing. Not to mention the soulless manipulation of people in order to get the desired social licensing.



This is not to say that social license is always evil or useless. If placed properly it's a way to reward the corporations, industries, and business movements that are in the Right (and no that's not *necessarily* the political Right). Take for example ecological farming. If biological farming is the right way to go social license has certainly found a useful niche there. Social license can encourage people to go against the grain. This is what allows my family to farm organically. Take for example corporate morals. Yes, the moral of large corporations may be to make the most money without incurring criminal charges or causing unrest. But social license in practice can sometimes make proper morals part of the urge to make money. Social license, because it is simply given by the active citizen is less often ruled top down like established media and political parties. It's a tool in the hands of willing activists who want a better alternative to the present. Clearly, in spite of its obvious drawbacks social license *is* a powerful tool for good.

The problem is, when people get use to using social license they are going to use it improperly—either through their own will or manipulation by social scientists. Perhaps *National Post* said it right when it stated that we need a just third party speaking for the people and their society. From this perspective social license serves as just another reason to look for reform of modern States as is suggested by the outstanding open letter, *Quadragesimo Anno: on Reconstructing the Social Order*.

Social license is certainly food for thought. For the time being, we farmers just have to justly take advantage of it and hope it doesn't injure us too much. Hopefully it will be replaced—or of itself lead to something better.

Sincerely yours, Christopher Stevers

Resolutions passed at the NFU's 48th Annual Convention

1. **1969 TASK FORCE REPORT ON AGRICULTURE**

WHEREAS the 1969 Task Force Report on Agriculture has had a long-term negative impact, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU National Board undertake a study researching the impact of the 1969 Federal Task Force Report on Agriculture on the current economic situation in rural Canada, focusing particularly on farmers, farming and rural infrastructure.

2. **WATER TESTING**

WHEREAS rural residents have a right to know and access public water tests which include heavy metals and chemical residues for actual products being used presently and historically in the region, in addition to standard pathogen testing; and

WHEREAS this testing ought to include an “on-demand-by-landowner” option for well water, water points, and public systems,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby Health Canada, the federal and provincial ministers of Environment and Ministers of Agriculture to provide readily and clearly accessible “on-demand-by-landowner” water testing to heavy metals and chemical residues and that these results be disclosed in full to the landowner with summarization of collective data to be sent to public health.

3. **WILD PARSNIP SPRAYING**

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU establish a working group to prepare a factsheet on a variety of municipal roadside spray programs.

4. **BECOMING A FARMER**

WHEREAS the NFU recognizes that there is a severe shortage of skilled labour in the Agricultural Sector;

WHEREAS on-farm skills and experience gained by active farmers are often lost once they retire;

WHEREAS youth growing up on farms often leave the farm, taking their skills and work ethic into industries where these skills are better recognized and rewarded;

WHEREAS aspiring farmers and families without a farming background face considerable challenges

developing the skills needed to begin farming successfully; and

WHEREAS recognition and certification of on-farm skills training, in combination with academic coursework at established institutions, would be beneficial to building confidence among new and aspiring farmers, and among those who could help them to establish their business;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU supports efforts to establish and/or enhance an agricultural training and skills organization that would offer new and young farmers, as well as youth growing up on farms, multiple streams to gain the skills needed to enter into ecological farming, and that this organization could facilitate the recognition and certification of on-farm skills training;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU supports (and wishes to participate in) research into the feasibility and prospective business operations of such an agricultural training and skills organization.

5. **LAPSED MEMBERSHIPS**

WHEREAS the National Farmers Union has lapsed memberships; and

WHEREAS some regions have no stable funding; and

WHEREAS the National Farmers Union is seeking memberships,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union coordinate between the office and the regions to allocate resources to calling lapsed membership with the objective of having lapsed members renew their membership.

6. **REPORTING GRAIN SALES PRICE AT PORT**

WHEREAS The Canadian Grain Commission (CGC's) mandate is to "...[work] in the interests of grain producers" and is guided by the Canadian Grain Act, and

WHEREAS The Canadian Grain Commission, in the interest of farmers, is responsible for setting grades, elevator tariffs, and bonding by the Canadian Grain Act, and

WHEREAS farmers require accurate grain value information to calculate farm gate prices, and

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WHEREAS a responsible agency is needed to collect and report to farmers the sales prices of grain by elevators port and processing facilities in Canada,
 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the National Farmers Union lobby the Canadian Grain Commission to collect and report grain sales price at port, to buyers and to processing locations in Canada to allow farmers accountability in grain pricing.

7. END POINT ROYALTIES

WHEREAS all funding for varietal research, even End Point Royalties ultimately comes out of the farmer’s grain sales, or from taxpayers,
 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU oppose any form of end point royalties being applied to Canadian crops.

8. FREIGHT AND ELEVATION COSTS

WHEREAS today, the freight rate cost on cash tickets is not disclosed,
 BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union pushes the federal government to mandate that freight and elevation costs be printed on grain cash tickets.

9. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU oppose the use of intellectual property such as patents to control, restrict access, or use of soil microorganism and fungi,
 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU express our opposition to the use of intellectual property such as patents to control, restrict access, or use of soil microorganism and fungi to its own provincial and federal governments.

10. EMERGING FOOD SYSTEMS ON FIRST NATIONS RESERVES

WHEREAS First Nations in Canada are pivotal to land stewardship and food security, and
 WHEREAS there is a lack of resources available for First Nations youth who wish to pursue agrarian lives.
 BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU advocate that all levels of government co-operate to create mentorship and start-up consultation programs to foster emerging food systems on First Nations Reserves.

11. PAYING FOR WATER

WHEREAS the government of British Columbia has introduced the Water Sustainability Act in February 2016 and farmers are now required to pay for water from their own wells, dugouts, lakes, streams and rivers, and

WHEREAS, farmers are facilitating sustainability by providing water infiltration, storage capacity and aquifer re-charge relative to the area they farm for precipitation over course of the year,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NFU lobby the government to exempt farmers from paying for water not administered by a public utility for household, livestock and irrigation to the extent that is relative to the water sequestration and storage capacity on their landholdings.

12. CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD AUDIT

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU request, in writing, that the auditor general conduct an audit centering on the dissolution of the Canadian Wheat Board and the creation of G3.

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13. NATIONALIZE PORT OF CHURCHILL

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the federal government to nationalize the Port of Churchill and rail line to ensure sovereignty of the North, to protect the environment and provide farmers with an economical alternative for grain shipments.

14. FARMER DIVERSITY

WHEREAS the face of farming in Canada is changing;

WHEREAS the NFU values democracy, participating, and inclusion;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU strike a working group to improve diversity within the NFU, identify barriers to participation for diverse groups of farmers, and develop anti-oppression training for our membership.

15. RESOURCE EXTRACTION

WHEREAS the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) specifically identifies the rights of Indigenous People to free, prior and informed consent; and

WHEREAS resource extraction and energy projects interfere with the rights of Indigenous People to conserve and protect their lands, territories and resources; and

WHEREAS the National Farmers Union passed into policy statements in 2016 and 2007 condemning the issuing of permits for resource extraction on unceded Indigenous territory, and denouncing the repression of peaceful protestors;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union support the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP);

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union support initiatives by Indigenous peoples to resist resource extraction and energy projects that disrupt Indigenous food and governance systems, and interfere with the health of their lands, territories, and communities.

16. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

WHEREAS the Truth & Reconciliation Commission Report on Residential Schools documented the brutal treatment of Indigenous children through over 100 years of residential schools in Canada; and

WHEREAS the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's

2015 Calls to Action urge all Canadians to commit to learning about this horrific period, and encourage non-Indigenous people to recognize that reconciliation requires an understanding that our society continues to perpetuate colonialism and racism against Indigenous people; and

WHEREAS reconciliation between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people depends upon truth being told and justice being served; and

WHEREAS Indigenous nationhood, territorial sovereignty and traditional Indigenous governance structures must be empowered and recognized in a Nation-to-Nation relationship based on mutuality and respect; and

WHEREAS in 2013 the National Farmers Union passed a policy statement demanding the release of records on the residential school nutrition experiments;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union urge the Canadian government to implement the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union encourage the membership to participate in reconciliation events in local farming and urban communities.

17. VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN & GIRLS

WHEREAS more than 1200 Indigenous Women and Girls have gone missing or been murdered in Canada since 1980; and

WHEREAS violence against Indigenous women and girls continues to this day; and

WHEREAS the federal government has initiated an inquiry into the Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls; and

Whereas the National Farmers Union passed a resolution in 2015 condemning violence against Indigenous women;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union commit to issuing an annual statement of solidarity with families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls on October 4th of each year;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union urge its members to represent the National Farmers Union at Sisters In Spirit vigils, which take place across Canada every year on October 4th.

18. MEMBER BENEFITS

WHEREAS there has been expressed interest from grassroots members for our National body of the NFU to seek out appropriate benefits with providers appropriate to NFU general principals.

AND WHEREAS clarity is required around this issue

AND WHEREAS accessing certain benefits does not necessarily equal a sell out of conscience or policy,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the NFU actively seek out supportive partners to provide valued services and that these include but are not limited to community credit unions, co-operatives, community mutual insurance companies, union made vehicles etc. as determined by the affected regional coordinator and NFU executive.

19. INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

WHEREAS Indigenous Food Sovereignty is defined as the inherent right of Indigenous Peoples to determine their food systems and continue to maintain their sacred responsibilities to their lands and food systems; and

WHEREAS at the November, 1999 convention, the National Farmers Union adopted a policy which affirms Indigenous food sovereignty;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union support initiatives by Indigenous Peoples to assert Indigenous Food Sovereignty.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union encourage locals, regions and their members to participate in local events that provide non-Indigenous people with information about Indigenous Food Sovereignty, and to explore how to implement food sovereignty at a community level.

20. MEAT INSPECTION AND THE INTERPROVINCIAL SALE OF MEAT

WHEREAS any meat that crosses a provincial boundary needs to be federally inspected;

WHEREAS farmers who sell meat directly to customers are looking for meat to be cut into retail cuts;

WHEREAS federally inspected abattoirs are generally set up to the cut the meat into primal cuts, not retail cuts;

WHEREAS meat from animals slaughtered in a federally inspected abattoir, and cut into retail cuts at a provincially inspected abattoir lose their federal inspection; and

WHEREAS provincially inspected meat is not allowed to be stored in a province other than where it was inspected;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the federal and provincial governments to develop a mechanism for the legal interprovincial direct-to consumer sales of meat.

21. TELECOMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE

WHEREAS Canadian telecommunication infrastructure is lacking and lagging the rest of the world, and

WHEREAS net neutrality is crucial to maintain equal access to the internet in the public interest,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the federal government and regulators to require the improvement of rural telecommunications infrastructure to a standard and speed at least equal to the average of European nations, at a reasonable cost in comparison to urban areas, and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the federal government to enshrine in law the commitment to net neutrality in the provision of all telecommunications services and infrastructure.

22. CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

WHEREAS the loss of the farmer elected, single desk Canadian Wheat Board has resulted in an increasingly dysfunctional rail system, no grain logistics oversight, a loss of transportation efficiency on rail and at sea, reduced grain quality guarantees to other nations, and an overall yearly loss of billions of dollars in income to prairie farmers which has had a devastating impact on Western Canada's economy and

WHEREAS the ending of the CWB 'single desk' marketing system has resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs across Canada including 460 direct good quality jobs in the heart of Winnipeg and a further 1,834 full-time equivalent jobs that were sustained by the CWB administrative expenditures,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU work with and support the farmers of western Canada by calling for the reestablishment of the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) and single-desk selling of grain in western Canada inclusive of transportation and sales logistics, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU develop a plan of action to reinstate a CWB 'single desk' marketing system. ■

Report from La Via Campesina's 5th Migrant Rural Worker Encounter

—by Jennifer Pfenning, NFU Region 3 Member

In November, La Via Campesina (LVC) hosted its fifth Encounter on the topic of migration and peasant workers. Delegates from around the world convened in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico to share information on the status of migrants and the impact of migration in each region.

We started with a beautiful traditional ceremony that combined indigenous cultural practice and newer religious traditions brought by European settlers. It was presented by local indigenous groups who blessed us in their tradition on the Day of the Dead. The delegates and attendees then proceeded with workshops and reports for the next few days culminating in a rally and the presentation of a manifesto written by the group.

What we heard from delegates and attendees is that everywhere the details are different, but the end result is the same. People are forced to seek employment far from their homes and families because of economic hardships and political challenges. They travel to the United States, Canada, Australia and Western Europe in search of something better for their future. Throughout South America they talk of people moving through countries looking for a way to the north, to get across the border to the US in order to find a job that will lift them and their families out of poverty. The Haitian diaspora in Mexico faces



The hands of Jenn Pfenning and Richard Phillips on the border wall. There are hand prints painted on the wall in white with red paint dots to symbolize the deaths of desperate people trying to cross the border and getting shot.

discrimination, disappearances and loss of residency status. One quote from campanero Jaime sums it up well for all countries, “People should travel and seek new places to work and live out of a desire to see new things and find adventure, not because they have no options in the countries where they are born.”

Families left behind in the global south and Eastern Europe benefit from the influx of cash but at a cost to the children they leave behind and the societies impacted by the temporariness of contact with parents and spouses whose work takes them far away. The impacts reported by countries where migration takes a large percentage of the adult population are social breakdown and teens getting into trouble because parents are absent much of the year. The stress of the emotional toll is not measured in monetary terms but is felt nonetheless.

Hosting this encounter on the border with El Paso, Texas was an intentional choice. The tens of thousands of people who seek passage each day across that border face incredible challenges and the political system stacks every regulation against them. The system is set up to serve the economic interests of employers who make no commitment to the workers whose work enables them to stay in business.

The world over, people’s movements have been increasingly restricted as goods are moved with fewer and fewer restrictions under ever-wider free trade agreements. Until people are as free as the goods they produce there can be no freedom from enslaving global corporate interests. ■



(L-R) Jenn Pfenning (Delegate), Rosemary Martinez (Organiser), Juan Reardon (LVC Staff), attending a demonstration in Juarez prior to presenting our manifesto at the border wall.

Bursary Recipients Report on Attending Their First Convention

Following are write ups from the 2017 Annual Convention bursary recipients. The Convention Bursary Fund was set up in 2016 to encourage participation at National Convention by reducing financial barriers.

The fund is entirely funded by voluntary contributions from our members. This year's donors to the bursary fund include: Fritz and Linda Laepple (Ontario), Emery Huszka (Ontario), Stewart Wells (Saskatchewan), Wayne Amos (Saskatchewan), Ontario Local 362, George Neville (Ontario), William Boccock (Alberta), and Shannon Storey (Saskatchewan).

These funds will be used to help fund future bursary recipients. NFU members who are first time convention goers are encouraged to apply.

—by Murray Jowett, Winnipeg, Manitoba

The most impressive element of the NFU national convention was that folks were so willing to discuss agricultural policy in-depth at 4:00 am - very telling! You are a group of intelligent, passionate, and welcoming people, and I cannot stress enough how grateful I am for your hard work which benefits us all. I am a city-slickin' Winnipegger (Associate Member) pursuing the development of a resilient and sustainable food system. I came to convention with the intention of better understanding "how different food systems can mitigate and/or reproduce social and environmental injustice." (Sarah Rotz)

Most of you can easily name fifty problems about the mainstream food system off the top of your head. You likely can name multiple remedies for each as well. Clearly the NFU vision is well crafted, but the implementation of the vision in our modern world seemed to be a common impasse at convention.

I respectfully forward my observations: the government is becoming less responsive to a petrifying repertoire of tactics; and a compelling message will not be delivered in the form of bare facts and policy briefs. Look at the NFU's history of

tractor blockades, hog cavalcades, and egg giveaways and you will find a rich history of unorthodox, unexpected, and attention grabbing direct action.

I sense a tentative engagement with modern communication technology. Even as a Luddite, I understand that this is how social movements are amplified in this day and age. What if we were to implant the old spark of the movement into the modern vehicle of social media? Food is having a moment in the public sphere. Now is your chance to harness this power through social media.

It was inspiring to see forward-thinking young farmers at the convention. Thank you to Grey County Local 344 for providing the bursary to attend the 2017 convention. It was an incredible opportunity to deepen my understanding of agricultural politics and stoke the fire of resistance to neoliberal agricultural policy. I hope to do justice to your generosity in all future efforts. Thank you also to Dean Harder (Local 504) for the warm welcome and encouragement in applying. ■

Murray is an Associate member who became interested in the NFU and its policies after learning about it and food sovereignty at university.

(continued on page 23...)

—by **Jessie MacInnis, Tatamagouche, NS**

My first experience at the National Farmers Union convention was inspiring and encouraging. Having only a fundamental knowledge about the NFU prior to my arrival, I was inspired by the progressive policies and the passion among the members. I was impressed by the respect for the democratic process and the voice that it gave everyone in attendance. It was encouraging to see the number of youth who are committed not only to farming but to being part of the shifting tide of the agri-food system in Canada. Attending convention gave me a profound sense of solidarity with farmers in my region and across the country – and it was a lot of fun!

The dialogue and discussion surrounding farm renewal and succession was informative and insightful. I appreciate that differing perspectives and solutions were presented by the dynamic speakers. I was particularly inspired by Danielle Boissoneau and her dedication to the revitalization and resurgence of Anishnaabek food sovereignty.

As I have a background in international relations and development, I was particularly excited to learn about and engage with the International Programs Committee (IPC). I am a firm believer in the work and goals of La Via Campesina (LVC) and strengthening the North America region of the LVC should continue to be a priority for the NFU. The work currently being done to build indigenous solidarity and support migrant farm workers is vital. With increased immigration every year, the IPC is also an excellent platform to reach out to newcomer farmers looking for a supportive network. In my new role as co-chair of the IPC I hope to help build on the strong goals set in past years and also to place emphasis on the importance of diversity and inclusion within our organization as a goal for the coming years.

Overall, I had a fantastic time at convention, and it inspired me to be a more active member of the NFU. Hope to see you again next year! ■

Jessie lives and farms in Nova Scotia. She is currently finishing a Professional Certificate program in Food Security from Ryerson University.

—by **Kate Garvie, Ottawa, Ontario**

This past year offered me a unique opportunity to learn about the NFU's policy platforms from current Women's President Katie Ward while farming alongside her in rural Ottawa. Katie embodies the core values of the NFU and is working tirelessly to strengthen her community and breakdown barriers for new farmers (myself included).

After attending a few local meetings and learning about the work of the NFU, I gladly accepted the opportunity to participate in the annual convention. I would not have been able to attend without generous support from Perth-Oxford NFU Local 341.

For me, the 2017 NFU convention highlighted the incredible ability of farmers to consider the bigger picture. Despite significant differences, NFU members were able to debate and move forward important policy positions. The thoughtful framing of complex issues that acknowledged privilege at the individual and organizational scale, and in turn our responsibility to participate in global solidarity efforts like La Via Campesina, made me hopeful that

change is possible. I am humbled by so many NFU members' dedication and perseverance.

As we stand in solidarity with those in other countries, I believe it is important that the NFU accurately represent the changing face of farming in Canada. Sitting in the convention hall, I was struck both by the diversity of production practices represented, and the absence (or lack of recognition) of racialized and LGBTQ2 folks. As the NFU works towards growing its membership I look forward to working with the gender equity committee to help make the NFU a safe space for all.

Without the support and mentorship of many farmers, I would not be starting my own farm business this year. A step that feels less daunting with the network of folks I met at the convention. I look forward to contributing to the incredible work of the NFU, and helping to grow a diverse, inclusive organization that stands with farmers around the world. ■

Kate is a new NFU member who is starting her own farm in the Ottawa Valley this year. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Kate for taking minutes for us at convention this year.

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NATIONAL FARMERS UNION 48th NATIONAL CONVENTION

November 23rd to 25th, 2017 – Ottawa, Ontario

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2	PANEL 1: <u>Restoring resilience, regenerating the farm</u> <i>Sarah Rotz, Anna Korzenszky, Meghan Entz</i>	
3	Board, Women's, Youth and Foundation Reports	
4	PUBLIC EVENT: <u>New Influence Elites, the Corrosion of Democracy and Trump as Trickster</u> <i>Janine Wedel</i>	
5	PANEL 2: <u>Renewing Our Relationship to the Land</u> <i>Christopher Kelly-Bison, Sally Miller, Danielle Boissoneau</i>	
6	PANEL 3: <u>Generating Farmer Power</u> <i>Member Education</i>	
7	Banquet and Awards	
8	REPORTS: <i>Women's Caucus, Youth Caucus, International Program Committee</i>	
9	PANEL 4: <u>NAFTA 2.0: Questions of Power and Democracy</u> <i>Dr. A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi, Gus Van Harten, Chris Holman</i>	
10	PANEL 5: <u>Cultivating Communities</u> <i>Barbara Schaefer, Arzeena Hamir, Gary Kenny</i>	
11	Closing Address	