

quarterly union farmer



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Young farmers from around Canada gathered in March for the 2019 Young Farmer Convergence. With over 60 young farmers the event was larger than any young farmer event in recent memory.

(see story on page 5)

*Celebrate
with Us!*

NFU 50th Annual Convention
Celebration

SEE PAGE 14 FOR INFORMATION

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

Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

One issue has dominated the National Farmers Union's policy work for the first quarter of 2019, and that is the attempt by Canada's seed industry to remove farmers' historic right to freely save and reuse seed.

This right, practiced since the dawn of agriculture, has enabled our species to steadily improve our food supply by carefully selecting seeds from our crops that exhibit beneficial traits – such as yield, disease resistance, and maturity. Seeds were exchanged and saved, and transported to other parts of the globe where the process was repeated. And, for the most part, this improvement was done freely, for the benefit of all. At first, this process was carried out by individual farmers, and more recently by public institutions such as universities, but always in the interest of the public good.

Then, towards the middle of the last century, commercial interests took notice of this practice, and started to devise ways to extract profit from it. This led to the formation of the *International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants* (UPOV), an intergovernmental organization whose purpose is to establish and promote rules for intellectual property rights for plant breeders. Since 1961, this organization has steadily advanced its agenda by slowly implementing measures that place increasing restrictions on the use of new varieties of plants and to move control into corporate hands.

Now, a collection of Canadian seed and farm chemical companies, under the umbrella name of *Seed*

Synergy, are attempting to convince our federal government to push through regulations that could severely restrict or even eliminate the ability of farmers to grow new varieties of plants without obeying the conditions that the plant breeders' rights holder chooses to place upon it – and pay whatever on-going royalty fees they demand.

The NFU believes that farmers and all citizens must have the inalienable right to freely save and use seeds and other propagating material for reproducing plants. There is no moral justification for handing public control of the basis of our food system – plants – over to corporate interests. We will work with other farm groups and civil society to prevent erosion of our rights.

There are also other issues the NFU has been working on in the new year. The appointment of a new Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau, means we need to familiarize her with the NFU's positions on agricultural issues, and we are seeking a meeting with her. Another recent event is the unannounced plan by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada to make changes to both the *Canada Grain Act* and the operating mandate of the Canadian Grain Commission, both of which could have profoundly negative consequences for farmers.

Our members continue to work on land ownership, food sovereignty, social license, climate change, fusarium problems in Ontario corn, as well as a host of other matters. As the internal voice of the NFU, the Union Farmer Quarterly will strive to keep all members informed about our efforts on your behalf.

—Cam Goff, Vice President of 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 the National President



— by Katie Ward, National President

We have major wins to celebrate in the National Farmers Union!

The recent announcement of federal funding to kick off a new National Food Policy, with its major pillars of a *Local Food Infrastructure Fund* and *Making Canadian Food a Top Choice at Home and Abroad*, can be traced directly to the policy work and advocacy of the National Farmers Union in conjunction with the alliances we have forged over years of work in this arena. Major financial commitments to the traditional food systems and needs of northern and indigenous communities are an important step along the path to food sovereignty. The proposed pilot project, announced in the federal budget, to find a path to permanent residency for non-seasonal, full-time agricultural workers acknowledges a principle of fairness that has long been a focus of the NFU's Migrant Workers Subcommittee.

Countless volunteer and staff hours spent researching, analyzing data, preparing policy briefs, networking, attending meetings with Members of Parliament, Senators and bureaucrats, and testifying before Parliamentary and Senate committees over many years contributed to informing and shaping this National Food Policy. We owe our thanks to everyone who contributed to this effort. It is up to us to safeguard and honour their work. We now need to do the hard work of ensuring that the implementation of the National Food Policy benefits Canadian farmers and enshrines the principles of food sovereignty – a localized food system that produces food for people in ways that value the decision-making power and value of the farmers and eaters, while building knowledge and skills and working with nature.

Working and farming with nature in the face of extreme weather events and an ever-increasingly erratic climate is a challenge we know every day on our farms. At this crucial time in our history, we have some inter-related opportunities in the National Farmers

Union to develop and carry out actions and campaigns to educate, organize and mobilize around climate change. One initiative we will be starting this year is a book discussion group, under the auspices of the Climate Change Action Committee. The first book that will be the subject of discussion is *The Carbon Farming Solution: A Global Toolkit of Perennial Crops and Regenerative Agriculture Practices for Climate Change Mitigation and Food Security* by Eric Toensmeier. Any members and associate members who wish to participate in this timely discussion are invited to call the office or email nfu@nfu.ca with the subject line *Climate Discussion*.

To build on years of NFU efforts to build awareness around climate change, and to amplify our policies and research, we have secured outside funding to work with the Prairie Climate Centre and USC Canada. This collaboration will magnify the voices of farmers to support policies, tools and programs for sustainable and climate resilient agriculture in Canada, and strong rural communities. We will advocate for policies and practices to ensure we can continue to farm in climate and weather conditions which support our ability to grow crops, raise animals, and feed our communities. This opportunity will allow us to bring broader awareness among the general public to the food sovereignty principle of respecting and valuing the contributions and knowledge of food providers. We have an opportunity to collaborate with our allies to further this work, and we look forward to sharing more information with you on how you can participate as our plans take shape.

This is an exciting time to be a member of the National Farmers Union. And as our thoughts turn to planting (despite the two feet of snow still on the ground as I type this), it occurs to me that one thing we farmers are exceptionally good at, is that we do not rest on our laurels after harvesting a crop. Instead, we use the bounty to seed yet another crop, always pushing forward. In this auspicious 50th anniversary year of the National Farmers Union, we will honour the work that brought us to these successes, and continue to advocate for the ideals of the National Farmers Union so that our movement can continue to grow and prosper.

—In Solidarity, Katie Ward

Message from the National Women's President



— by Toby Malloy,
NFU Women's President

With spring emerging I have been thinking about abundance. While pondering what I would include in this report, I started out thinking about the contrast between abundance and scarcity, in particular, the difference between abundance and scarcity thinking. It began with thinking about some of the tasks I hoped to have completed thus far as Women's President and the irony of how work – lifework, farm work, house work, relationship work and all the other kinds of work I have not mentioned here are the reasons for both why I took on this role and why it is so difficult to get to the work of it. It is a matter of abundance – the abundance of being in the richness and fullness of life, replete with joy and burdens, beauty and messiness.

This led me to reflect on how these qualities and characteristics are embodied in the richness of the National Farmers Union's 50 year history of campaigns and policy work:

- *the wealth of knowledge, insight, intelligence, integrity and critical thinking in our membership;*
- *the thousands of acts of kindness, compassion and support;*
- *the myriad thoughts, ideas, opinions, hopes and experiences that have shaped us as a farm organization nationally, regionally and locally;*
- *the sheer number of hours dedicated to food sovereignty, agroecology, supply management, climate change, and saving our seeds;*
- *the work of the International Program Committee and La Via Campesina;*
- *the role of the NFU in the recent UN signing of the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants;*

- *the work of the Indigenous Solidarity Working Group and the Migrant Worker's Rights sub-committee;*
- *the protection of the commons and;*
- *the National New Farmer Coalition.*

As I name the above I am fully aware of how much I am also missing, also not naming and still learning about as an NFU member and board member. It is a matter of abundance.

I am also reflecting on the abundance of the sisterhood that I am privileged to be a part of. I am remembering the generative, heartfelt intellect of the women around the table at the 2018 fall convention in Saskatoon. I am remembering the voices of women on the convention floor, the hallway conversations, the formal and informal sharing of information, best hopes, concerns. There was so much experience, wisdom and energy in our gathering. I was also lucky enough to attend the Region 3 Convention/NFU-O AGM in Alliston, Ontario in February where this was also the case. Abundance.

By my way of thinking, this wealth of abundance leaves little room for scarcity. We are being invited at this time to view our lives, our work as farmers and the world through a lens of scarcity and protectionism. But is that the story we are actually living? Abundance is not the absence of suffering and strife and I do not think it insists on the belief that all resources are infinite. We know that is not the case. But there is a quality of timelessness to the deep well of work, commitment and spirit of our NFU to which we all have the opportunity to draw from and contribute to. It positively hollers abundance!

So, with spring kind of in the air (I am writing to you from Alberta after all). I would like to report that in the very near future we will be organizing a Women's Advisory telephone call. It will be the first one this year. I will be reaching out to you. My hope is that you can join the conversation and it can be as abundant as possible.

—In Solidarity, Toby Malloy

A Message from the National Youth President



— by Stuart Oke, Youth President

It was with excitement and pride that the organizing committee of the 2019 NFU Youth Convergence welcomed over 60 young farmers from across Canada to a three-day event. The convergence was as big and as ambitious an event as can be remembered as far as the number of participants and the progressive and educational workshops showcased. The majority of participants were unfamiliar with the NFU upon arriving but received a crash course through the innovative facilitation used by the NFU youth organizers and the powerful and rich history our organization is celebrating in this, our 50th year. In addition to bringing new youth members to our organization we developed networks amongst each other and made connections which will serve us well in our organizing initiatives across the country. I asked brand new Region 5 youth member and young farmer convergence attendee Justin L. if he would share his experience at the convergence here in the UFQ which he was kind enough to do.

Inspiration, Motivation, Validation and a Sense of Community

—by Justin L., Region 5 Youth Member

Community, family, inspiration, and hope. These words represent the feelings and emotions that people expressed and shared on the final day of the 2019 NFU Youth Convergence held at RKY Camp in Parham, Ontario. Nowadays it is rare to be able to spend three full days with a group of people and go from being complete strangers to being part of a community. This convergence left me feeling so energized and motivated in a way which I have never felt before. Over the course of three days, we actively participated in discussions regarding the political economy of agriculture, decolonization of the food system, the relationship between climate change and farming, and farm planning. These main topics were starting points for further discussion and time was given to allow everyone to discuss topics of interest and concern, such as, a group action for international women's day, farm manager and worker/intern relationships, cut flower production, business planning and land access.

I had not been involved in such rich and intriguing conversations since I had been in university. I personally did not go to a post-secondary institution for a bachelor in agroecology, horticulture, or even environmental sciences. However, the NFU youth convergence gave me the chance to connect with other

youth who have had similar experiences and who have also found joy and purpose in farming.

The convergence left me feeling inspired because there are so many other young people like myself that are involved, interested or invested in small-scale agriculture. To hear other people's struggles and successes is a reminder of what is possible.

I felt motivated because I was surrounded by so many passionate people from across Canada who are not only interested in growing or raising great quality food/farm products, but they want to tackle climate change, be an accomplice in decolonizing the food system, and use farming as a means to break down the barriers that divide us.



(continued on page 6...)

I experienced a sense of community because we all have so much we can learn from one another, through common passion and struggle. I have never been surrounded by so many like-minded people in one space where you simply had to state where you were from and what you farm, to generate endless hours of conversation.

And ultimately, the NFU youth convergence gave me a sense of validation and that I am not crazy for wanting to work on and maybe eventually own my own farm. Farming is filled with lots of risks, but the rewards are beyond measure.

I left this gathering with a new vision of what my future could look like. Young farmers are strong, compassionate, committed and ready to tackle the industrial food system, climate change, decolonization and whatever other challenges and issues they encounter. Since the convergence, I have become a youth member of the NFU in Region 5 (Manitoba). I began a new farm season with a renewed sense of purpose and I feel driven to be as active as possible



with organizations that promote food sovereignty in my region.

Thanks to the NFU, the Youth Advisory Committee and all other supporters/sponsors for allowing me the opportunity to attend such an amazing event.

Sincerely, Justin L

Thanks to Justin for his submission and to all those people who donated to our crowdfunding campaign and helped to make the event happen. This event has made an incredible contribution in helping to deepen the training and organizing capacity of NFU youth members across the country.

—In Solidarity, Stuart Oke, Youth President

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

Regional Reports



Region One:

District 1 (Province of PE)

— by Reg Phelan, Coordinator

The NFU in Prince Edward Island continues to be very involved with the land protections issue. The spirit of the Lands Protection Act is not being enforced. Large processors and foreign interests are continuing to take control of large acreages of farm land. A coalition for the protection of PEI land has been formed in an effort to have the public become more involved in this issue. More than 200 people participated in a forum on “land-grabbing” organized by this coalition in February.

At our annual district meeting in March, the provincial Minister of Community, Lands, and Environment gave a presentation on the land issue followed by lots of discussion. The leaders of the three opposition Parties were also in attendance and gave short presentations about the land issue.

Carina Phillips, our Women’s Advisory member, was involved in organizing three Seedy Saturday events with good attendance. There has been some good media coverage on seed royalty issues and our website received a good number of inquiries.

There is a lot of concern about the Free Trade, particularly how it impacts Supply Management. We are part of a Trade Justice coalition which is organizing events on this issue. ■

Region One:

District 2 (Provinces of NB & NS)

— by Riley Côté-DeMerchant,
Region 1 Board Member



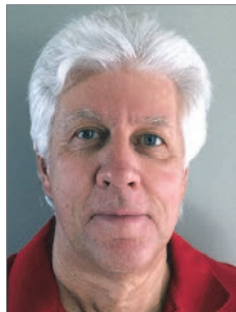
The NFU in New Brunswick has been focused on re-accreditation since the late fall of 2018. Our accreditation as a general farm organization in New

Brunswick will be renewed this coming September. The largest requirement for our re-accreditation is to have enough members within the province and then a spread of different commodity producers in a share of the counties. It is certainly more detailed than that, but that sums it up. With that in mind, some of our members and our limited administration staff undertook a very successful membership campaign in the month of January to get New Brunswick farmers out to renew their farm business with the National Farmers Union as their representative of choice. With that portion behind us, now the paperwork begins!

As I write this, we are preparing for our AGM, which took place on April 10th, 2019. This is the first in many years for the AGM to be held on a week day. This year it took place in Fredericton, New Brunswick. The agenda included a great lineup of speakers covering the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, Seed Sovereignty, Farm Land Identification Program (FLIP) and pesticide/herbicide use and management. The FLIP program is used in New Brunswick to defer taxes on farm land and farm buildings. The program is generally well appreciated by farmers in the province; however, the government is proposing some changes, some of which are likely welcomed. As in many provinces, the use of pesticides and herbicides is a hot topic. Applications in agriculture do not typically receive a lot of attention, as most of the public focus is on use in forestry. Herbicide use in our industrial forests is quite widespread in New Brunswick, especially when compared to many other provinces, and on crown land the use is funded by the taxpayer.

Thankfully as I write this the winter is nearly over. Many cattle and dairy farmers found themselves short on feed going into the winter after a dry summer and then a very cold and wet fall. Many farmers left a small portion of their potato crop in the ground and some soybeans were lost to the early snow. The start of last year had flooding in the southern part of the province which delayed planting and harvesting of crops as well. I think most hope for a slow melt this spring with moderate rainfall and temperatures. ■

NFU-O/Region Three:



Province of Ontario

— by Don Ciparis, Coordinator

The 2019 NFU Region 3 Convention and NFU-O AGM was held at the wonderfully restored Gibson Centre in Alliston on February 21 and 22. The theme of this year's Convention was *Growing Sustainable Communities*. Keynote speaker, Tamer Soliman had delegates and guests riveted to his presentation, *The Power of Food: How to Build Community in the 21st Century*. Soliman discussed how modern lifestyles, technology, impaired access to the natural world, and social media addiction are leading society into a new age of loneliness. He concluded his presentation with some solutions, one of which involved using his research of local food and community to help create happier and healthier lifestyles for individuals.

Attendees also heard from Ruth Knight of the Soil Health Coalition on *Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities*. She described in detail the ecosystem components of healthy soils and healthy communities. She concluded with an update of the coalition's training of citizen scientists who are researching soil carbon, organic matter, bulk density, particle size, and water infiltration at 28 sites in Erin, Ontario.

My thanks to retiring Council members Stephanie Laing, Tony Straathof, and President Emery Huszka. I also want to thank NFU members Ian Payne and Viki Reynolds, who sourced and catered all of our convention meals with local food sourced primarily from Dufferin and Simcoe Counties. Organizers and providers have set a very high standard for future AGMs.

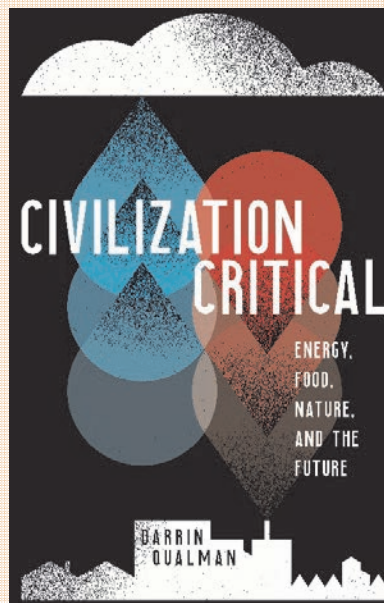
With help from external funding sources, Region 3 is facilitating a series of kitchen table meetings across Ontario on climate change to encourage farmers to take action to mitigate climate change. A variety of stakeholders and our extensive NFU-O network of sustainable agriculture and food system allies have participated in 11 meetings. Next up, we plan to create

resources packages for members to be able to run and host their own meetings.

Thanks to a number of Locals, members, and allies, the NFU-O ran its first successful crowdfunding campaign in the fall, which supported the 2019 NFU Youth Convergence. Over sixty young farmers from across Canada came together for three full days of skill and knowledge sharing, business planning and training and to share experiences in farming and community building.

Our policy priorities for the coming year are climate change mitigation, farmland preservation and access, and supports for new farmers and direct marketers. I look forward to working with you over the course of the year, and please do not hesitate to reach out to myself or any of the Regional Council members. ■

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 Five:

Province of Manitoba

—by Ian Robson, Coordinator

Everyone, please be safe on the farm and hope for good farming conditions in 2019. The continued right of farmers to use our own seeds without lawyers involved would be one of those safety conditions. Sometimes safety on the farm is about less corporate control of seed ownership. It is safe to say that seeds would be less expensive without royalties and lawyers. I was impressed by a fellow gardener who said that God owns our living seeds not a patent holder. Anyway, always track the causes of farm injury (and financial injury). The stress of poor corporate-backed public policy is a risk that can be fixed not with band-aids, but by participation and informed people, namely participatory democracy. One way to participate and be informed is to join the NFU in 2019, our 50th year.

The Region 5 NFU Annual Convention was held March 8 in Brandon, Manitoba. NFU President Katie Ward gave an update on NFU activities and took questions from members by Skype. Dr. Martin Entz, University of Manitoba, discussed Regenerative Agriculture which is a very popular and widely supported idea that focuses on the soil, the water, the livestock, the seeds and the people who farm as well as those who eat good food. Dr. Entz highlighted farmer participatory seed selection projects where farmers grow trial seed plots and make selections that appear beneficial and merit more breeding work, thus improving seed traits. This puts power in the hands of farmers who make these seeds freely available without any royalty.

Matthew Wiens from the Manitoba Agriculture Department spoke about Manitoba greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agricultural sources and spoke on ways that farmers may help reduce GHGs and rebuild the soil. Best Management Practices appear to be the present policy. Farmers can apply for partial funding, maybe from carbon tax money, to make changes, such as, using green cover crops or rotations with perennials.

Region 7 Board member Peter Eggers spoke about soil testing and the use of mineral-nutrient balance to help improve crops. He has attended many soil seminars and has experience improving his soils using holistic and organic methods.

Dean Harder gave an update on 50th Anniversary celebrations for the 2019 NFU Convention planned for Winnipeg in November. Please watch for details and plan now to attend as a delegate or a visitor. It will be a great convention.

Until now, Agricultural Crown Land (ACL) leases for cattle have been let to ranchers and farmers, capped at about 250 cows per year capacity, based on a point system. Points were scored on a range of economic skill sets, turning the lease over to younger generations, intentions to ranch for an entire career, and so on. Thus, there was lease security. Capped leases helped build a rural community. But the new ACL law passed on October 31 scrapped the point lease system and the cap, and instead implemented a highest dollar bid system and larger leases which could be held by any Canadian resident. The law was changed without proper consultations.

New regulations on how to conduct a bid for leases are proving quite hard to institute. Should a minimum bid be set at the level of the former, quite low lease rate? Whether the new lease will be for the entire ranch career, or have to be renewed at say, 10 years, is still in discussion. The planned new lease auction is targeted for September 2019 and would apply to those who are wishing to exit their lease. Retiring people are delayed in their plans. Anyone wishing to bid on the leases does not know the rules yet. Present leases would see a potential increase in lease rates. The point system would have solved all these issues and let people get on with their lives, and a lease fee increase would have solved the province's desire for more revenue from ACL. The Agriculture Minister wants Manitoba cow numbers to increase from the 420,000 or so today to over 550,000.

Manitoba members also need to be aware of possible changes to the Manitoba Education tax levy on farm land. These could be applied to all rural households, creating more unfair taxation situations for farmers with older houses versus higher-assessed houses, shifting the tax burden while putting school budgets into chaos. The time to get informed and active on this issue is now, to make sure the needs of our rural communities are respected. ■



Region Six:

Province of Saskatchewan

—by Glenn Tait,
Coordinator

Well it was a tough, wet harvest last fall with a lot of tough, wet grain put in the bins (and on the ground). August skies filled with smoke from fires in British Columbia shut out the sun and delayed combining for about three weeks. Luckily we have a dryer on the farm but then grain movement was so bad that we had to wait many more weeks for an empty bin to dry into. It is April now and grain movement is...worse? My brother-in-law is just now hauling an October delivery contract for wheat. When it comes to grain the word 'contract' takes on a whole new meaning.

Speaking of hauling, I have three elevator companies close to me to which I haul canola. The closest is Richardson-Pioneer but the Chinese canola embargo has closed those doors to them, possibly permanently it is said. Down the road Viterra was nixed next. Oh well, I still have Parrish & Heimbecker, right? But no, they had a fire.

Though the arrest of a Huawei executive in Canada may have been a trigger, this is not the first time there has been trouble moving canola into China. We have been hearing news reports about foreign material and disease for three years or more. Data from the Canadian Grain Commission shows that farm-delivered canola averages about 1.8% dockage, yet we hear that every ship leaves port with the maximum allowable of 2.5%. At best, this is just seed salvaged from screenings re-added to the load, as has been reported by industry spokespeople. At worst as reported anecdotally, this is the seller adding tonnes of chaff and weed seeds to the ship before the hatches are shut. Such actions would be the sole responsibility of the grain companies, instigated as a profit-grab, while farmers are left to suffer the consequences.

Like many of us I wear several hats. I am also a municipal representative appointed to the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS). At a recent policy conference APAS held,

some rough calculations were presented that show that when the extra costs for grain drying, rail and truck transport, natural gas, and electricity are added up, GHG pollution pricing could cost Saskatchewan farmers an extra \$1.95 per acre this year, and \$3.83 per acre by 2022. It was also thought that the costs for cattle would increase by \$92 per beef cow and \$240 per dairy cow. APAS and the NFU are taking opposite tacks in addressing the issue but in any case such calculations show that addressing our carbon footprint will have serious implications for Canada's farmers. We need policy that helps farmers reduce emissions and that ensures input sellers can't just offload their increased costs onto us. Overwhelming evidence from around the world shows that carbon-pricing programs reduce emissions – for example it was presented here at the conference that B.C. has had a 22% reduction in its contribution to Canada's greenhouse gas emissions in recent years.

Carbon pricing and other measures are essential to maintain a liveable climate for our planet, but in order to work for agriculture, careful economic analysis must be carried out, and strategies must be implemented to enable Canada's farmers to sustainably produce the food that the world needs, and it must allow us to make a living while doing so. If farmers are going to bear the carbon costs of supplying the world's food, then we must also be recognized for our work in reducing that burden. We cannot be expected to shoulder the carbon costs of other industry components without fair compensation.

Call me anytime, but I still hope to see you all at the Region 6 Convention. Saskatoon maybe? We will let you know. Have a good spring. Stay safe. ■

Check us out on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/nfuCanada/>



Region Seven:

Province of Alberta

— by *Doug Scott,*
Coordinator

Happy Spring from Alberta. As farmers in Alberta prepare for the 2019 season they face many challenges. At the top of the list is the ongoing dispute with China over canola exports. This is a multifaceted dispute that involves much more than canola and is unlikely to be resolved quickly. Over a quarter of our annual canola production had been going to China and finding a new export market for five million tonnes of canola will present many challenges. Canola prices have collapsed and it is currently trading at prices we saw 20 years ago. Too many Alberta farmers had fallen into an unsustainable canola-wheat rotation with never a thought given to the loss of their most important export market. The Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) had a strong presence in China and was highly regarded by them. Now when farmers really need someone to step up to the plate for them, like the CWB would have done, there is no one.

Soil conditions across the prairies are very dry with the snow in many areas having vanished very early. In our area, just northeast of Edmonton conditions are somewhat better but the spring runoff will be over by early April and the fields will dry out quickly. Once again we will be dependent on timely rains to get the crop off to a good start.

The federal government's initiative to fundamentally change the way plant breeding is funded and conducted in Canada is an issue which has united farmers. The consequences of signing on to UPOV '91 are now becoming very real. The two proposals presented by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, End Point Royalties and Trailing Contracts, were not well received and if they are implemented will have serious financial consequences for farmers. Farmers are united in their opposition to these proposals but the opposition is fragmented. Once again when the CWB would have mounted a strong and united campaign to speak up on our behalf, there is no one. The NFU Save Our Seeds campaign, conceived by a very dedicated group of our members who have

volunteered countless hours to organize it, is evidence of the importance of the NFU to farmers in Canada. We owe much gratitude to this group. Telling farmers that they do not have the right to save seed does not even sound right when it rolls off your tongue.

And then there is the provincial election in Alberta this spring. Disturbing to so many of us is that the United Conservative Party, a motley collection of old conservatives and hard-right Wildrosers, has a chance of winning. Politics in Alberta has always been very polarized but it has never been as nasty as it is now. Depending on the party elected, Albertans may once again see cuts to government services, tax breaks for corporations, resistance to federal government initiatives and a move away from green energy.

The road ahead looks very bumpy indeed. ■

NEW!

NFU now has an online petitions policy

Online petitions operated by third-party providers have become a common form of activism. The NFU sometimes gets requests from members and others calling on us to use online petitions in our campaigns. These petitions have both benefits and drawbacks, so the NFU has adopted an internal policy to ensure we use online petitions in a responsible manner so as to avoid pitfalls, protect the reputation of the NFU and advance our organizational goals in a positive way.

This operational policy will help us use online petitions to raise our profile, educate the public about the problems we are fighting and bring about the change we want. To make sure that any online petitions using the NFU name and/or branding are done according to this policy, they must be approved by the NFU's Vice President of Policy. **If you have an idea for an online petition, please contact the national office at nfu@nfu.ca for the guidelines.**



Region Eight:

Province of B.C.

— by Seann Dory,
Coordinator

2019 is shaping up to be a busy year in BC. Thanks to the work of the Young Agrarians (who also happen to be NFU members), the BC Ministry of Agriculture launched a program to help new farmers access land through a land-linking program. The project has hired Land Matchers in every region of the province to help farmers access land from owners who want to see the land continue in agricultural production. An online database of all available farms and of farmers looking for land has been created to help match farmers to available land. The program was launched in the fall with a press conference on our farm on Vancouver Island.

A number of other programs have been launched recently including:

- programs to deal with agricultural loss due to wildfires;
- hazelnut tree renewal;
- local food purchasing programs in government run health facilities;
- the FoodMesh program to reduce food waste;
- a program to support new food processing hubs and;
- work coming out of the University of British Columbia around bee species that have a higher resistance to disease.

A group of livestock-producing NFU members in the interior of British Columbia, including Julia Smith, have been in communication with the Ministry of Agriculture office around programs to support small livestock holders. They are using some of the supply management policy developed by the National Farmers Union.

Cannabis growing has seen a boom since the rule changes came into effect in Canada. Many of the greenhouse producers in BC have been converting their hot-house peppers and tomatoes to this newly

legalized crop. BC now has the largest industry for cannabis production in Canada.

In March, Jan Slomp and I met with the NDP Federal Agriculture Critic to discuss some of the issues faced by the members of the NFU. The conversation was fruitful and focused mostly on the Seed Synergy issue with the NFU policies seeming to have general support.

The saga of the Site C dam continues. Earlier this year the UN made a statement that the dam could be in violation of First Nations human rights. As of March 1st there are still efforts, mostly through the courts, to halt construction of the dam.

The most hotly debated policies have been around land and new rules for the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and incentivizing it to be farmed. This includes new legislation limiting the size of homes that can be built on ALR land. It is hoped that these programs will help ease the inflation due to speculation on food lands. The new rules have stricter regulations and enforcement. Submissions for agricultural land removal must now be made through government entities so land can be part of a broader agricultural land use plan for the province.

The lead off to spring has been exceptionally warm and dry on the West Coast. Rainfall is over 75% less than normal this time of year. This has been great for early tractor work but it looks like we will need to manage water carefully this season. We are expecting rains to fall in April when we will have more rainfall in a week than we have had in the last sixty days. Here's to a great spring for all the farmers across Canada, no matter the weather. I encourage all of our members in BC to reach out to find out more or get involved with the NFU in BC. You can get in touch at seann@saltandharrow.com.

—In Solidarity, Seann

Celebrate
with Us!

NFU Annual Convention

See page 14 for information.

Seed Rights for Vegetables and Fruit

In late 2018, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC) rolled out consultations on two options for new *Value Creation* regulations. Both would require grain farmers to pay yearly royalties if they plant farm-saved seed (the Trailing Contract option) or harvest a crop grown from farm-saved seed (the End Point Royalty option). These options would apply to new varieties of broad-acre crops such as wheat, and are being promoted by the *Seed Synergy* group. The *Seed Synergy* group is made up of six Canadian seed-related organizations heavily influenced by the multi-national seed corporations that would reap the benefits of such a system.

Royalty collection on farm-saved seed for crops, such as wheat, provides an immense profit potential for this group, and it is not surprising that they decided to concentrate on the money. What neither AAFC nor their corporate collaborators expected was the intense pushback they received against the two proposals they were peddling.

So, while government and industry regroup to reformulate their message on broad-acre crops, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), which houses the Plant Breeders Rights (PBR) Office, is preparing an online consultation for horticultural crops. They are looking to bring in regulations under the *Plant Breeders Right Act* (PBR Act) to completely remove the farmers' privilege for new varieties of vegetables, fruits and ornamental crops. If successful, the regulatory change will make it illegal for farmers to save and use seed or other propagating material (cuttings, slips, tubers, etc.) for horticultural varieties that obtained PBR rights since February 2015.

This whole story started in 1961, when the *International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV)* was formed. UPOV is an intergovernmental organization created to establish and promote rules for intellectual property rights for plant breeders. It has steadily implemented measures that place increasing restrictions on the use of new varieties, putting ever more control into corporate hands.

Under UPOV '91 it is the exclusive right of the breeder to produce, reproduce and condition propagating material; sell, export or import propagating material; use the variety to produce hybrids; store seed for future planting; and to authorize conditionally or unconditionally, anyone to do these acts with varieties for which the breeder holds the plant breeders' rights. Until Canada

passed UPOV '91 into law on February 27, 2015, growers of new varieties could use harvested material to grow a new crop unless they had signed a contract that specifically forbid them from doing so. Now, the law considers this practice a "privilege" which may be revoked or made subject to restrictions by means of a regulatory change. Regulatory change can be a fast-track legislative process as it does not require a vote in Parliament.

Using the same rationale as they tried on broad-acre farmers, the CFIA and PBR Office are telling growers that Canada's public plant breeding system is inadequate to the task of providing the varieties they need. Successive governments have privatized many of our public plant breeding institutions and starved the rest of money and resources via ongoing cutbacks. AAFC is trying to convince growers they will be better off if multinationals take over the entire plant breeding process, and are pinning their hopes on the idea that fruit and vegetable grower organizations may not organize resistance.

We anticipate an online consultation process will be rolled out this spring to take the public's temperature in regard to eliminating farmers' privilege on horticultural crops. No doubt it will be worded to make it sound like a good thing to confer exclusive seed rights on breeders. But we know that eliminating farmers' privilege, and thereby, granting vast powers over seed exclusively to plant breeders could extend their control beyond the farm-gate and into the food system, including the supermarket.

All of us, commercial producers and hobbyists, growers of broad-acre crops and market gardens, orchardists and back-yard gardeners, must be aware of the threat that we all face. Allowing control of our seed supply to pass to the private sector means that we allow the basis of our entire food system to be placed under the domination of multi-national seed corporations.

None of this is inevitable. Our government has complete control over what it funds and what regulations, if any, are brought forward – and what powers are ceded from the public realm to corporate ownership. It is up to us, as farmers and citizens, to ensure that our voices are heard, and that our right to freely save and reuse our crops to raise food is recognized.

For updates, more information and ideas on what you can do go to www.nfu.ca/campaigns/save-our-seed/. ■

NFU *50th* Annual Convention *Celebration*

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! We will celebrate our achievements, honour the members whose dedication and wisdom helped us achieve so much, pass on the lessons we've learned along the way, and help shape a vision for what the National Farmers Union and agriculture in Canada will look like in our next fifty years.

Please celebrate with us in:

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

Monday, November 25

to

Wednesday, November 27, 2019

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If you have a piece of NFU history to share with convention-goers, whether it be a news clipping, a story to tell, memorabilia, or pictures, you are encouraged to **email nfu50@nfu.ca or to call the national office at 306-652-9465.**

*In Solidarity,
The 50th Anniversary Convention Planning Committee*

Honouring the Spirit and Intent of the PEI Land Protections Act

—by Doug Campbell, Region 1 District 1 Director

The primary focus of Region One, District One of the National Farmer Union this past year has been centered on the increasing intensity of the land grab on Prince Edward Island. The history of the Island is steeped in the land question. For generations Islanders have fought to have the right to own and control the Island's primary resource – the land.

Because of a man of foresight in the person of Angus MacLean¹, and those who surrounded him, the 1982 PEI Lands Protections Act was legislated to protect Island land from off-Island and corporate ownership. But MacLean's insight was greater than the passing of provincial legislation. He ensured the Islanders right to determine the ownership of their limited primary resource for current and future generations was part of the Canadian Constitution. MacLean gave to Islanders the Gift of Jurisdiction.

MacLean's foresight has been an irritant for many. If MacLean's legacy was being honoured the current land grab would be a non-issue for Islanders. But from the moment the legislation was passed there were those with self-interest who set about to undermine the Act's spirit and intent. The spirit and intent of the Act is to prevent large consolidation of Island land holdings by outside individual, corporate, and state interests; to prevent processors from being in direct competition with farmers in crop production; and to prevent the ownership of our shore frontage by non-Islanders. In their own self-interest, many have searched for and found loopholes in the legislation to exploit, and successive governments have signed away our gift of jurisdiction while maintaining their opinion that the letter of the law is being carried out.

Suddenly, and better late than never, many are coming to the realization that the Island is at a crisis point in the land grab. The NFU has been sounding the alarm bell for the past thirty years about the violation of the spirit and intent of the Lands

Protections Act. Successive Island governments have let this issue simmer like a pot placed on a side burner, but now the pot is boiling over and the damage caused by the scalding liquid is rolling across the stove top. We are seeing what ignoring the intent of the Act for almost forty years has brought us.

There are those who say the Lands Protections Act no longer fits the times of a free marketplace. They say farming continues to become an industry with fewer and increasingly larger scale operations, some which operate as vertical integrated corporations. They believe the Act should be pushed aside and let the marketplace unfold as it will.

The NFU argues such ideology is leading to a monopoly on food production, processing and distribution, and land resource ownership by an elite few. We argue legislative and regulatory support for this concentration is leading to the demise of the health of the land itself as it is forced to overproduce for the corporate bottom line. The very viability of the land is at risk, as is our water supply which is essential to life for every species. The infrastructure and social vitality of rural communities is being destroyed.

The NFU believes the need for the Land Protections Act has never been greater. The ideology behind the Act has never held more importance when it comes to protecting our economic, political and social stability. Instead of moving away from the Act, it needs to be strengthened, and it needs to be honoured. The only way governments will get on board is if the people demand it. Many of our citizens now live in urban PEI and have lost that direct link to the land and the knowledge of food production. But they do relate to water. They need to be informed that the accessibility, quantity and quality of Island water are tied to the health of the land.

(continued on page 16...)

Successive Island governments, and many individuals, have bought into the ideology of corporations who play on the politics of fear. I have asked our Island politicians the following question, "Is handing over our primary resources a fair return on a small percentage of jobs or capital investment?" Governments seem to forget corporations are about making profit, not building sustainable social systems for the public good. Politicians of all stripes need to gain an understanding of the ideology underpinning the Lands Protection Act. They need to educate themselves on the philosophy of the Act - not just hide behind the loopholes in the laws which governing parties have not strengthened. It needs to be remembered that executive council makes the final decision on a land transaction. Both the minister and the cabinet have a great deal of power. They need to remember they have a responsibility to represent Islanders, not corporations, and not off-Island investment.

It is apparent something more is needed alongside the Land Protections Act to protect our land for the good of Islanders. Forward, innovative, outside the box thinking is needed as Islanders look for additional ways to protect our land ownership, and maintain productivity to ensure food production and stability on our Island for both current and future generations. Land banking is one viable option that can work to protect our land and make it accessible to current and future farmers.

It is time our Island government started investing in Islanders rather than in corporations and foreign interests. Yes, it takes money. In March, the Island government loaned 4.5 million dollars to an Island corporation to make capital equipment purchases. If that same 4.5 million dollars had been used to buy Island farm land at an average price of three thousand dollars per acre, approximately 1500 acres could have been bought, banked in a land bank, and rented back, at the going rental rate, to individual farmers, who yes, do create jobs and keep rural communities intact. Not only would it be a sound economic investment, but it would be an investment in Islanders and their futures. Our provincial government should be able to see that if outside

Standing against the land grab, large land consolidation, and unfair exploitation of legal loopholes is not about keeping legitimate people out of PEI. It is about ensuring Islanders can live in their own province, and afford to own, work, and care for the land, and water.

interests are so eager to grab up our land, it is a valuable investment. They should be making the investment to protect our land in whatever ways necessary. The NFU is sure Islanders working together can come up with other productive solutions to engage policy makers in a robust debate around progressive solutions to this crisis.

Island politicians of all parties have not addressed the land grab issue happening on Prince Edward Island. The NFU would argue some have even stood in the way of enacting the Land Protections Act. With time running out, I hope some of the wrong can be undone as Islanders lay claim once again to their land. Strong, creative government leadership is needed now. The NFU held two land forums in recent months that showed awareness and concern is growing. We need to keep laying the truth out in front of people so they can call elected officials to account. We need to amplify the discussion among Islanders in a search for solutions to put a stop to the land grab on PEI. We need to make farmland an accessible resource for Islanders.

Standing against the land grab, large land consolidation, and unfair exploitation of legal loopholes is not about keeping legitimate people out of PEI. It is about ensuring Islanders can live in their own province, and afford to own, work, and care for the land, and water. ■

¹ Angus MacLean was a PEI farmer, politician and the Premier of PEI from 1979 – 1981.

Regional Meeting – La Via Campesina North America

January 26-30, 2019

—by Joan Brady, La Via Campesina North American Regional Co-coordinator

Eight of ten member organizations of La Via Campesina (LVC) North America met in Mexico City to discuss priorities, develop an action plan and explore elements of the shared struggle. The North American region which encompasses Mexico, Canada and the USA, is one of nine regions in LVC. There are two Canadian member organizations – the NFU and l'Union paysanne – one Mexican member organization and seven member organizations from the USA.

The event began with a Women's and Youth Assembly which included additional participation from the host Mexican organization – Union Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autonomas (UNORCA).

The Youth shared their experiences in farming and some of the issues and challenges they face. The NFU youth spoke about their organizing strategies and activities and were asked to support other youth organizing in their respective organizations. A youth articulation meeting is planned for the autumn of 2019 and will likely be held in Canada with the objective of capacity building, political training and advancing the construction of the youth articulation.

During the Women's Assembly, women shared their challenges, struggles and organized around the important days of struggle: March 08 – International Women's Day and March 25 – a day to recognize farmworker campesinas. The concept of popular peasant feminism was discussed and plans were made to focus on increasing understanding and developing a regional practice. Regional women leaders will attend an international school on popular peasant feminism in 2020 and will begin to disseminate the knowledge after that time.

The regional meeting, attended only by delegates of the member organizations and a limited number of guests, was an important opportunity to build political agreements and work plans for the region, to ensure democratic functioning and to share struggles and solidarity. An application for membership from Pastoral Indigena de Mexico was received and the region will assess the group according to membership criteria. An invitation from the Coordinadora Latinamericana de Organizaciones del Campo (CLOC) to collaborate on peasant rights, migration and general solidarity was accepted.



Photo: Mistica

Mistica honouring the struggle of Migrant Workers – one of seven ceremonial tributes during the Meeting

Mistica is a reflection on the struggle and a celebration of the strength of the movement. It is ceremonial and often involves the participation of everyone in attendance. It is used to open each day and to close the final day of the event. The practice comes to us from our Latin American comrades.

Mistica varies in tone and subject. From honoring mother earth and our traditional seeds in a serene and reverent manner to mimicking the violence and oppression felt by campesinas across the world, these dramatic presentations set the tone of remembrance and respect for the shared values that unite us in LVC.

(continued on page 18...)

(La Via Campesina North America, from page 17)

Highlights of the work plan include the creation of a team of translators/interpreters to support the region as well as designating a *political committee* made up of the Regional Coordinators and a representative of each member organization to set the direction for the region. Other priorities include the establishment of regional collectives including:

1. Agroecology, Seeds and Biodiversity
2. Migration and Waged Workers
3. Public Policies for Food Sovereignty (Trade and Markets as a sub group)

4. Peasant Rights
5. Climate Justice

These collectives are a focal point for regional activity and for moving regional priorities forward. They are connected by representatives to the international collectives of the same foci. Regional collectives are open to members of the NFU with an interest in the topic. NFU members are also welcome to join the International Program Committee which oversees the NFU participation in La Via Campesina. **Contact IPC Coordinator Carla Fehr for more information at ipccordinator@nfu.ca.** ■

La Via Campesina – Meeting of Regional Secretariats Brussels, February 11-13, 2019

—by Carla Fehr, NFU IPC Coordinator and La Via Campesina North America Regional Secretariat



Photo:

Setting off on a 'revolutionary tour' of Brussels. Karl Marx, expelled from France, moved to Belgium in 1845. He wrote his Communist Manifesto in the bar of a 17th century house on Grand Place and used the back room to educate workers about their exploitation. Today this spot is, oddly, a gourmet restaurant. Victor Hugo and other French revolutionaries also briefly lived in Belgium.

Throughout 2018 I had the opportunity to provide technical/administrative support to La Via Campesina's North American (LVCNA) region after previous regional staff had left and communication was being dropped. At the recent regional meeting in Mexico City the end of January, the decision was made that I will continue to support the region part-time until LVCNA is financially able to build a full-time secretariat. Thus, a meeting of all the regional secretariats within LVC in Brussels in February was very timely and helpful for me to better understand and fulfill this role.

At the meeting we discussed the advances, strengths and challenges of LVC's regional secretariats. There is a large diversity of organizations, languages and cultures in our regions – this is an important richness but also a challenge. We have many people with political and technical capacity in the secretariat that are helping to build this movement, however, the capacity of LVC's secretariats is often related to funding. All of us felt challenges in communicating with our member organizations, often in several languages. We left the meeting with the goal to strengthen the political formation within our secretariats and to continue these face-to-face meetings once a year.

Regional secretariats coordinate meetings, communicate with member organizations and the International Operating Secretariat of LVC, write reports and assist with organizing regional collectives and the regional youth and women's articulations. Ultimately, we support our region in following the plans laid out at LVC's International Conferences, held every four years, and the smaller Midterm Conferences held in between the International Conferences. Peasant Rights will be a dominant focus for LVC in 2019 as well as preparing for the Midterm Conference to be held in Zimbabwe late August/early September.

It was wonderful to gather with my comrades in Brussels and to enjoy a 'revolutionary tour' of the city led by folks from the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) in between meetings. I consider it a privilege to serve in this role and I look forward to helping the North American region move forward with its plans for 2019. *Globalize the struggle, globalize hope!* ■

Protecting the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas

The 49th Annual NFU Convention took place just days after the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly voted to adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) – a key step towards the formal adoption of the Declaration by the UN in December 2018. So it was fitting that the keynote address was a celebration of La Via Campesina's (LVC) years of work to finally have the rights of peasants and rural people recognized by the United Nations. The keynote speaker, Romanian peasant leader Ramona Dominicioiu, was unable to get a visa into Canada, so she spoke electronically from her home in Romania with two NFU members, Jessie MacInnis and Annette Desmarais, joining the presentation from the stage in Saskatoon. Desmarais provided background on LVC's motivation and initial work towards the creation of the declaration. MacInnis shared stories of her work at the UN in New York to gather support for the declaration during the lead up to the November vote.

Along with providing an initial introduction to UNDROP at the convention, Nova Scotia peasant farmer and NFU Youth Vice President, Jessie MacInnis wrote about her lobbying experiences at the UN in New York in the Winter 2019 Issue of the Union Farmer Quarterly (page 9 and 10). This report will focus on the information shared by Annette Desmarais and Ramona Dominicioiu.

Annette Desmarais is currently the Canada Research Chair in Human Rights, Social Justice and Food Sovereignty at the University of Manitoba. She has experience as a small-scale cattle and grain farmer in Saskatchewan and has worked for the NFU. She is an active member of the NFU's International Program Committee, and has written about the history of La Via Campesina.

Desmarais told the convention delegates and visitors that there were 17 long years of hard work leading up to the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. When LVC decided to take on the work during a meeting in Bangalore, India in 2000 there were many doubts as to whether they would succeed. The initial impetus for the declaration came about as a result of an increase in human rights violations suffered by LVC member organizations. Desmarais said

these human rights violations were part and parcel of the imposition of a global, industrial, neoliberal model of agriculture. In deciding to move ahead with the declaration, LVC organizations were fighting for their right to exist as peasant farmers, for the right to make a living from peasant farming and for the opportunity to build food sovereignty. The work towards the declaration was led by an Indonesian member organization.

...UNDROP demonstrates LVC's capacity to dream, its capacity to imagine, and its capacity to do a lot of hard work to build a different world, a better world and a more humane world.

A Canadian non-governmental organization, *The International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (Rights & Democracy)*, provided critical support at the initial stages of developing the declaration, according to Desmarais. Rights & Democracy may be remembered by some for the criticism and withdrawal of funding it received from the Harper government. Prior to its work on UNDROP, LVC had no experience working with UN Human Rights programs in Geneva and no experience working with lawyers to write international documents. It needed training and it needed to hold international meetings to determine what should be in the declaration and how to make the declaration a possibility. A small but critical financial contribution from Rights & Democracy set LVC on the path to getting the declaration.

In closing her presentation, Desmarais referred to *The Right to Dream*, a poem by Uruguayan poet and historian Eduardo Galeano, saying UNDROP demonstrates LVC's capacity to dream, its capacity to imagine, and its capacity to do a lot of hard work to build a different world, a better world and a more humane world.

Ramona Dominicioiu, from the Transylvania Region of Romania, was introduced by Jessie MacInnis. She noted that Romania has the highest percentage of peasants in Europe and its rural population is around 46%. Dominicioiu is one of the LVC leaders

(continued on page 20...)

closely involved in the work to bring about and implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP). She opened by saying how important it is that a country like Canada, which is important in UN and global policy making, has a strong and informed small farmer and peasant movement. She thanked NFU members Joan Brady, Nettie Wiebe and Jessie MacInnis for the work they undertook in the fall of 2018 in Rome and New York to help gather support for the Declaration. The adoption of UNDROP is a historic moment and a moment to celebrate – but Dominicciu said that the hard, real exciting work is just starting.

According to Dominicciu the importance of this declaration is well understood in the Global South but the reasons for it do not seem so obvious in the Global North. She explained that there are not enough instruments in our international public policy to protect the interests, the rights and the freedoms of peasants and rural people. Over the last decades our rights as peasants have been degraded in an accelerated way while the rights of corporations have increased. As peasants and small farmers there is no legislation in court that protects us when corporations sue us for infringing on their intellectual property rights on seeds – seeds that are based on our knowledge and on our genetic resources. In the Global North, she says that people have been pushed away from agriculture, especially young people if they want to continue the farming activity of their parents or if they want to enter agriculture, because land has become a commodity. Dominicciu suggested that the degree of the loss of small family farms in the Global North has put our food security and food sovereignty at risk. And she said that countries in the North are acting in a shameful way in regard to the movement of people who are oppressed or are pushed away from their countries of origin due to a lack of economic opportunity especially in rural areas.

Much negotiation was required to garner support from the UN General Assembly for UNDROP. In the process LVC had to protect a number of *red lines*, or items they would not remove from the declaration. Although, they were not able to keep the term *food sovereignty*, LVC's definition of food sovereignty is included in the declaration. According to Dominicciu some of the key articles or *red lines* in the declaration are:

- **Article 4:** the rights of peasant women and women working in rural areas, a recognition that women have always had an essential role in agriculture;
- **Article 15:** the right to adequate food which includes LVC's definition of food sovereignty;
- **Article 16:** the right to a decent income, livelihood and means to production;
- **Articles 5 and 17:** the right to land and the right to land and other natural resources. These two articles together recognize that land is not just a commodity or a means to production. It is the basis of our livelihood and the basis of our community. Without land our existence as peasants is not possible.
- **Article 19 and 20:** these two address the right to seed and the right to biological diversity.

As peasants and small farmers there is no legislation in court that protects us when corporations sue us for infringing on their intellectual property rights on seeds – seeds that are based on our knowledge and on our genetic resources.

Dominicciu said that UNDROP is entirely based on existing instruments, such as the UN Human Rights Council, which were not developed enough to include LVC's vision. Too often, she said, governments decide and discuss global policies about us without involving us. This new declaration comes from the bottom up, filling gaps in other instruments and putting human values in human rights.

At a global level, LVC has three main spaces or centres of decision to push for the implementation of UNDROP. These are the UN Human Rights Council and other human rights bodies in Geneva; the food and agriculture related organizations like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN and the World Food Programme in Rome; and the UN General Assembly and Security Council in New York. In addition, LVC has a special relationship with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and the opportunity to advocate for a Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Peasants. 2019 – 2028 is the UN Decade for Family Farming. While LVC works to implement the declaration in these international spaces, she said that as peasant farmers and rural people in Canada it is our responsibility to work with LVC to increase awareness of the declaration within our country, including with our governments. ■

DON and the Dilemma of Ontario's 2018 Corn Crop

—by Don Ciparis, NFU Region 3 Board Member and Region 3 Coordinator

Grain corn producers in parts of southern as well as eastern Ontario experienced a 2018 harvest they hope they will never have to experience again. Especially frustrating to affected producers was the fact that record corn yields were within their grasp. Mycotoxins, a natural chemical produced by certain fungi, some of which cause ear rots in corn, appeared because of excessive rain and moisture at the tasseling and pollination stage of crop development in late July. Continued large amounts of rain in August and September helped build expectations of an unusually large crop in the fall but also resulted in unprecedented ear rot infections.

Neighbouring producers in Ohio and Michigan, as well as producers in pockets from Nebraska and Iowa to New York State, experienced the same phenomenon with varying levels of infection. Neither conventional nor organic crops were spared.

The 5 major mycotoxins associated with ear rot diseases in corn include: aflatoxins, zearalenone, fumonisins, ochratoxin and deoxynivalenol (DON). DON is the vomitoxin that plagued the Ontario crop. Vomitoxin in corn has detrimental effects to both humans and animals if they eat contaminated food or feed. DON affects the gastrointestinal tract, which often makes animals vomit and refuse to eat. The presence of DON can render a crop un-saleable, if levels are too high.

As of January 30, 2019, 3042 farmers out of 8600 in Ontario with corn insurance had reported vomitoxin damage. About 12,000 acres were destroyed. The Grain Farmers of Ontario (GFO), a producer association, estimated that market losses from discounts and rejected corn totalled \$200 mil. (CDN). They further estimated that 1.2 million acres (half the entire crop), had a detectable level of vomitoxin. Around 600,000 acres had vomitoxin levels high enough that corn discounts would apply.

Producers were faced with two dilemmas:

1. The unreliability of testing.
2. Marketing of high-VOM corn.

1. Testing:

Testing for DON was difficult because the vomitoxin levels can vary wildly between kernels and is rarely distributed evenly in a load of corn. Representative sample collecting is essential since 90% of the variability associated with vomitoxin results comes from incorrect sample location. Processing the sample quickly was essential because the longer the sample sat, the greater the chance of inaccurate results.

Producers dissatisfied with first results could elect to have a second test for vomitoxin performed, without charge, sometimes with considerably different results, even with the same variety and from the same farm. Producers learned that coming back to the elevator the next day could result in a totally different testing result.

2. Marketing:

Marketing had its own challenges. Producers looked to the province's ethanol industry to accept Ontario's infected corn. But many ethanol plants produce dry distiller's grains (DDG's), which is used as a feed for animals. Vomitoxin levels in corn are multiplied three times in the DDG's.

Grain receivers took corn under 3 ppm without discount because it could be easily blended. If corn was over 3 ppm the result was an escalating series of discounts until 8 or 10 ppm, at which point most corn was rejected. At 6 ppm in Ontario, the discount was \$1.00/bu., but when reading 8 ppm, the discount was \$2.00/bu., or about half the normal price of the corn. In neighbouring Michigan, corn was discounted about 27 cents (CDN)/bu. at 5 to 7 ppm. The Ontario discount schedule for DON-infected corn was trending 9.5 times higher than that of the identical ppm infection in Michigan for a major period of the fall's corn harvest. By the end of the harvest, the spread had reduced considerably.

As astounding as the corn harvest was for Ontario producers, some lessons were learned including:

- the importance of hybrid selection;
- some silks are easier for spores to attach;
- the importance of crop rotations; and
- higher populations may be a cause. ■

Getting to know our members

In this issue of the *Union Farmer Quarterly*, we continue to highlight some of the NFU members who are new to either an NFU Board or Advisory position. Although Stewart Wells is not new to the National Board, he served as NFU President prior to this tradition of introducing some of our active members.

MARCELLE PAULIN

Region 3 Women's Advisor



My name is Marcelle Paulin. I am the co-owner of Sleepy G Farm, which I co-founded with my husband Brendan Grant. We run a certified organic, small-scale farm in the community of Pass Lake, about 50 kilometres from Thunder Bay in Northwestern Ontario. The region we choose to farm in is not only rural but geographically remote. Since 2010 Sleepy G Farm has been producing vegetables, beef, and eggs for direct sales in the greater Thunder Bay area.

Having neither grown up farming nor living in the North, starting a mixed farming operation from scratch has been an exciting adventure with a steep learning curve. My path to a career in agriculture took a circuitous route after graduating from Lakehead University in Thunder Bay with an Honours Bachelor of Social Work. My interest in agriculture began while working as a camp cook in forestry camps. I later gained market gardening experience at Mackin Creek Farm in Williams Lake, British Columbia. Upon my return to Northern Ontario, I worked in food security programming and assisted the development of the Food Charter for the City of Thunder Bay.

Now a full-time farmer, I manage our farm crew by directing my staff and volunteers in the market garden. I also manage the field operations, greenhouses, crop planning, and product sales. Both my husband's and

my income are derived solely from our farm, which has grown to become a vibrant piece of our rural community. The success of my farm has been particularly celebrated by older residents in my community who remember with fondness the days when the family farm flourished.

It is my belief that “family farming” is the next agricultural revolution, and as such, I eagerly took out a membership with the National Farmers Union since our farm’s inception. I am currently the secretary in my local, NFU-O North – Local 333. I have also served on NFU-O/Region 3 council since 2016, and am currently the Region 3 Women’s Advisor. I am passionate about producing, cooking, eating, and sharing good food. I believe that farming is a professional occupation and that family farms are essential to achieving food sovereignty and recreating vibrant rural communities. I continue to contribute to my rural community through my work as a volunteer firefighter and first response trainer in Pass Lake. I also teach Yoga at my local community centre each winter. Most recently I became a new mom to a baby boy who was born on February 7, 2019. He is a welcome addition to our mixed farm and as all things on the farm, I look forward to nurturing and watching him grow. ■

Indigenous Solidarity Working Group Webinar Series

On February 27, the Indigenous Solidarity Working Group (ISWG), a subcommittee of the NFU's International Program Committee, hosted their first webinar in a series of webinars on Indigenous Food Sovereignty and Settler-Colonialism in Canadian Agriculture. The goal of these online discussions is to build relationships of solidarity with Indigenous Peoples. About 40 people joined the meeting while the two presenters Danielle Boissoneau and Adrienne Lickers Xavier responded to questions and asked questions of the farmers on the line.

The ISWG will be hosting several more webinars over the course of this year, with the financial support of the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation (SCIC). If you are interested in taking part in these webinars, contact Carla, IPC coordinator at ipccordinator@nfu.ca or watch for announcements on the NFU website and Facebook page.

STEWART WELLS

2nd Vice President (Operations)



I was born and raised on our family's farm in south-western Saskatchewan. The only time I was really away from the farm were the 4 years I spent in Saskatoon acquiring a B.Sc. in Agricultural Engineering. I returned to the family farm in 1976 and have been farming full-time since then.

In 1989, Terry Toews moved to the farm and started a discussion about organics. In 1991, we began the transition to organic production. We currently produce organic cereals, legumes, oilseeds and alfalfa on the 3500 acre farm just east of Swift Current. We do not have any livestock unless you count the dogs and cats, so 1200 acres of the 3500 is rented out to the neighbours.

In 1990 I got involved in farm politics and was elected as a farmer delegate to Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, at the time the largest farmer-owned and operated co-operative grain handling company in the country.

First elected to the Board of the National Farmers Union of Canada in 1997, I served on the Board for 12 years including 8 years as National President from 2001 to 2009. During that time I represented the NFU on an advisory committee hosted by the Canadian Grain Commission, chaired an NFU committee working with a prominent Mexican farm organization, travelled to the UK to speak with farmers and farm organizations about genetic modification, attended the World Trade Organization (WTO) talks in Hong Kong in December 2005, presented numerous papers to provincial and federal politicians, and worked in various coalitions with Canadian farm, civil society, and environmental organizations.

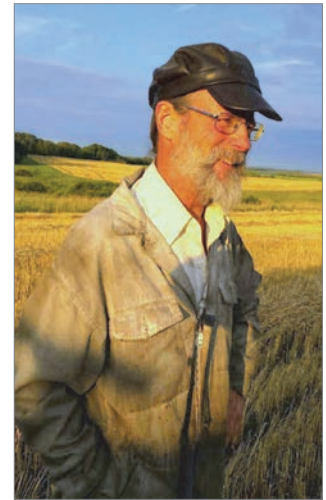
In 2010, farmers in southern Alberta and southwest Saskatchewan elected me to serve as their Board member at the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB). At the time, the CWB was marketing \$6 billion worth of Canadian wheat and barley into 70 different countries.

In November 2018, delegates at the NFU's Annual Convention elected me to once again serve on the NFU Board.

By way of hobbies, I would have to include watching baseball and curling - several decades ago I played a lot of softball in the summer and curled and played hockey in the winter. Some time is spent playing the fiddle and occasionally tinkering in the shop. Terry and I are both enthusiastic watchers of the latest *Star Trek Discovery* series. ■

LYLE ORCHARD

Region 6 IPC
Representative



I grew up on a mixed farm in central Saskatchewan in an era when 640 acres of cereal cash crops, feed crops and marginal land as pasture was considered a fairly large farm. Yet, to feed a family of four, my parents still relied on the sale of some beef cattle, hogs and occasionally cream and eggs, as well as produce from a large garden for our own use.

My father and oldest brother participated in the tractor demonstrations against the suppressed grain prices and marginalization of the rural population that led to the formation of the NFU in 1969 under the leadership of Roy Atkinson.

As a youth, I did not want to spend my life with 'the mill-stone' of a subsistence family farm around my neck so in the era of 'get big or get out', I went into the self-employed building trades. Nonetheless, I retained some connections with the home farm, which we transitioned to organic in 1975, often helping my brother at harvest.

Ten years ago my partner, Cathy Holtslander, and I bought our own small farm 100 miles north of Saskatoon where we grow organic cereal and legume crops, and an abundant garden. On summer evenings we listen to the loon's call across the Little Boreal Lake. My concern about the rapid destruction of wildlands, forests and wetlands rivals my concern about the disappearance of another increasingly scarce entity on the prairies - the ecologically sustainable small farmer.

Although the NFU was 'in my genes', I only became a member about 10 years ago. With a partner who is as engaged with, and committed to the NFU, as Cathy is, it has been difficult to avoid becoming involved in the farm movement. The more I engage, the greater my respect is for the history and wisdom reflected by the membership, board and staff. I am learning a lot about democratic governance and seeing reward in organized struggle.

Although the landscape and mechanisms of corporate control over farmers, appears quite different to my eyes than to those of my dad in 1969, the necessity to fight as a Union for a better future, is little changed.

Best Wishes to all of you on our 50th Anniversary! ■

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- Youth (14-25) \$113.00 / year **

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 - Monthly donation **
- ___ \$25 ___ \$50 ___ \$100 ___ \$500 ___ Other

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