



The Brief

Vol. 8 No. 2

A publication of the NB Media Co-op

October 2016

nbmediacoop.org

Momentum growing to reopen Dorchester prison farm: advocates

BY NAJAT ABDOU-MCFARLAND



Campaigns to save prison farms in Ontario and New Brunswick have included creative public displays.
Photo from Project Soil’s website.

Start the Farms Dorchester 2016 is a New Brunswick-based group hoping to reopen the prison farm at Dorchester Penitentiary, a Canadian federal corrections facility located in the village of Dorchester.

The advocacy group is promoting awareness of the positive benefits of the Dorchester prison farm. Prison farms in Kingston, Ontario, Joyceville and Collins Bay, are being considered for re-opening after being closed in 2010 by the former federal government.

Start the Farms Dorchester 2016 is hopeful the drive to re-open Ontario prison farms will bring about change in New Brunswick.

Before the Dorchester prison farm was closed in 2010, the facility maintained several operations simultaneously. These operations included greenhouses, honey bee colonies, an egg hatchery, a dairy herd, a beef herd, a piggery, a butcher shop and a distillery for processing milk and juice out of their own harvest.

According to Mel Goodland, farmer and former mayor of Dorchester, it was quite a loss to the community when it closed. The facility employed several farm people from the community and it regularly donated some of their produce to several community functions.

For 20 years, Vince Zelazny has been involved in the Alternatives to Violence Program at the Dorchester Correctional Facility, a rehabilitative program to facilitate better relations between inmates.

Zelazny heard several positive comments about the farm from inmates during his time at the prison. The inmates told him that the prison farm helped them to achieve some of their program goals and allowed them to live a more productive lifestyle.

“Being sent to the farm was an important signpost on an inmate’s road to recovery. It demonstrated that the system was starting to trust you. The prison is a very intense, stifling, violent place. It’s not hard to imagine what a relief it would be to get outside—to get some space—and to work with your hands in the soil, or in some other way with animals and plants,” said Zelazny.

Likewise, Goodland has seen firsthand some of these beneficial effects through the interaction he has had on the prison farm.

Community-focused researcher and scholar, Hilary Lyons, has laid out the benefits of empowering, stimulating and self-fulfilling labour in correctional facilities in her research. In general, growing one’s own food allows one to have agency over the nurturing, preparation and consumption of the food in their diet. This is particularly true for inmates working to achieve positive control over their lives.

Lyons and others promote rehabilitative labour. What she and others envision is dramatically different from exploitative farm labour, which reproduces existing inequalities and divisions, and fails to equip inmates with usable skills post-release.

Rehabilitative labour benefits include therapeutic effects such as work satisfaction and stress release from working outdoors and developing a positive connection with other living creatures and plants. Rehabilitative labour also involves a personal work ethic of responsibility and diligence and provides inmates with work-ready skills such as problem-solving and teamwork. All of these benefits are in addition to specific vocational skills in farming and animal care.

As for the possible role the Dorchester prison farm might play in the regional economy, Goodland affirmed that there was no competition conflict with other agribusinesses in the region. In the past, the majority of the produce was used to supply other correctional facilities in Atlantic Canada. He says a number of local agribusiness stakeholders are interested in becoming involved in the Dorchester prison farm should it reopen again. He and other interested parties who have spearheaded this initiative are waiting to hear the results from two feasibility studies in Ontario.

Goodland, Zelazny, and like-minded advocates are hoping the momentum to reopen the farms will take seed as Canadians learn more about the potential of these types of farms to rehabilitate inmates’ inner and outer lives.

Najat Abdou-McFarland writes for the NB Media Co-op and is a former editorial board member.

Plants & Animals taking the government to court over Mount Carleton park

By TRACY GLYNN

The NB Media Co-op interviewed Jean Louis Deveau with the newly formed advocacy group, Plants & Animals, about their lawsuit to protect Mount Carleton Provincial Park.

What is happening at Mount Carleton? Who are the Plants & Animals and why are they taking the government to court?

Deveau: The Gallant government, in partnership with ACOA, the NB Federation of Snowmobile Clubs and the Village of St-Quentin are developing a snowmobile grooming hub at the park. This is not what New Brunswickers who participated in the 2013 Parks Act review said that they wanted for this or any of our other provincial parks. New Brunswickers told the government that they wanted to have management plans focused first and foremost on the conservation and preservation of the ecology and biodiversity of our parks. The Plants & Animals, representing the biodiversity of Mount Carleton, are taking the Gallant government to court because it has failed to fulfill its legislated requirement of developing a management plan for this park.

Why is Mount Carleton special? Why should it be protected?

Deveau: Mount Carleton is special not only because it has the highest mountain peak in the Maritimes but because it provides us with over \$ 63 million worth of ecosystem services annually. Ecosystem services include such things as water supply, air filtration by trees, water filtration, erosion control/sediment retention, pollination, wildlife habitat, and so on. According to a report called the “Peace Dividend: Assessing the Economic Value of Ecosystems in B.C.’s Peace River Watershed,” ecological economists have estimated that Canada’s boreal forest provides \$3,400 per hectare in ecosystem services. Using those figures, Mount Carleton Provincial Park’s 18,628 hectares provide us with ecosystem services worth almost three times the \$ 21.5 million that the snowmobile industry purportedly brings to the entire province annually.

Who is behind this initiative to protect Mount Carleton? What is the Peace and Friendship Alliance?

Deveau: The Peace & Friendship Alliance is helping the Plants & Animals of the park prepare for their day in court. Established in 2015, the Peace and Friendship Alliance’s mission is to protect Mother Earth. Consisting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, the Alliance meets monthly wherever Mother Earth is threatened. The next scheduled meeting is at Mount Carleton Provincial Park, Sept. 30-Oct. 2.

How can people support the initiative to protect Mount Carleton?

Deveau: My first recommendation is to Google “Plants & Animals take on N.B. Gov’t,” and to make a donation to the group’s gofundme campaign. Unlike the controversies surrounding shale gas mining and the proposed sale of NB Power, there is no critical mass of people opposing the grooming hub at Mount Carleton. So, this controversy can only be resolved in court where the playing fields are levelled out for both sides. Litigation is not cheap so any donation, large or small, is appreciated by the Plants & Animals. My second recommendation would be to provide feedback on the Environmental Impact Assessment document that was registered for this project on September 9th. It is available in its entirety from the Department of Environment and Local Government’s website as project 1444. Or, you may want to wait until some abbreviated version of it is made available on the Canadian Parks and Wilderness—NB chapter’s website at www.cpawnsb.org. Either way, please make your concerns and comments known to both Carl Lavigne (Carl.lavigne@gnb.ca) and Sheila Goucher (Sheila.goucher@gnb.ca) on or before Oct. 9, 2016.



Canoe/Kayak NB organized a re-opening of the ancient Portage trail in Mount Carleton Provincial Park on Sept. 10, 2016. Photo by Nelson Cloud.

Journalist Kevin Donovan dishes on breaking the Ghomeshi scandal

By DAVID P. BALL



Kevin Donovan will speak in Fredericton on Nov. 4 at 12 p.m. at the Kinsella Auditorium, McCain Hall at St. Thomas University in an event organized by Jan Wong and supported by the NB Media Co-op. Photo of Kevin Donovan from The Tyee.

The reporter who co-wrote the scoop on fired CBC radio personality Jian Ghomeshi said old-fashioned legwork and lots of patience helped him break the story with freelancer Jesse Brown break the story.

Kevin Donovan, the *Toronto Star*’s investigations editor, has just published a book, *Jian Ghomeshi: Secret Life*, that promises to reveal previously unpublished details on the former Q host’s alleged violence against women. It will also provide details on how the reporting pair broke the story.

Prosecutors dropped two of seven sexual assault charges against Ghomeshi, saying there was a low chance of conviction. Ghomeshi will stand trial next year on the remaining five charges of sexual assault and one of overcoming resistance by choking. His lawyer said he will plead not guilty.

Brown, who hosts the podcast *Canadaland*, brought the story to the *Star* after several women approached him with allegations that Ghomeshi was sexually and physically violent with them without consent. Donovan interviewed the women himself and launched a months-long, unsuccessful attempt to get comments from Ghomeshi, who, at the time, was one of the most popular radio hosts in North America.

“I preach constantly about going to people you’re investigating very, very early,” he said, recounting his repeated attempts to ask Ghomeshi to respond to the *Star*’s investigation. When Ghomeshi refused to comment, the paper shelved the story until it could verify the allegations.

That moment finally came when Ghomeshi commented on the unpublished allegations on a Facebook post in October 2015, effectively giving the *Star* the green light to publish its story, Donovan said.

“He scooped us, really,” Donovan said. “We were not sure we had a story that met our standards. We were babysitting it, trying to find other ways to move it forward, but published it after he published his Facebook post.”

It wasn’t just Brown and Donovan’s hard work that advanced the investigation, however. There was some unexpected luck.

In a bizarre turn of events, after many failed attempts to

obtain Ghomeshi’s side, Donovan found himself assigned a seat beside the target of his investigations at a gala supper. After making small talk for several courses, he again asked Ghomeshi to comment on the sexual assault allegations. He was surprised that the celebrity radio interviewer had little understanding of how journalism works. Marie Henein, Ghomeshi’s lawyer, had previously told Donovan the allegations were a non-story. That night, the radio host asked Donovan why he would continue to investigate in the face of that advice.

Surprise gala meeting

“I was at the dinner with him trying to interview him, and I found myself explaining to him how reporting goes,” Donovan recalled. “I sort of assumed he knew how it works. Yet he didn’t understand why I’d still be asking questions after his lawyer told me there was no story. Jian, one of Canada’s top interviewers, didn’t know how journalism works.”

But, Donovan’s forthcoming book is not without controversy. Donovan’s former investigative teammate, Brown, penned a scathing column in *The Guardian* alleging Donovan may have inadvertently revealed the identities of Ghomeshi’s accusers and should have consulted them about the interview details that could be published. Others on social media have accused Donovan of disrespecting sexual assault survivors, allegations the *Star* reporter insisted are “understandable” but nonetheless “unfair.”

“Some of the people I’ve interviewed will say, ‘You don’t have the right to tell our stories,’ even though a lot of their stories have already been told in media,” Donovan said. “I respectfully disagree with that. My promise has always been to never identify anybody – and I know people disagree with me on this – but I don’t think journalists should be partners with anybody they’re writing about. Journalists should be critical thinkers and provide stories that attempt to tell as much of the truth as is possible given the constraints of law and any promises not to identify anybody.”

The self-described “player-coach” of the *Star*’s investigative team joined in the mid-eighties when, as he puts it, there were scarcely any investigative reporters in daily newspapers. Today, that team at Canada’s largest circulation daily paper has burgeoned to nine reporters and an analyst, he said.

In an era of cuts and newspaper downsizing, Donovan said other dailies haven’t put the same kind of resources into investigative reporting as the *Star*. He wishes they did.

“If more people did investigative reporting, then other people will join in and do it,” he suggested. “Although I would hate to be beaten, if the big papers in our markets did more, then my editor would come over and say, ‘Donovan, get a move on!’”

According to Donovan, “The newsroom cutbacks we’re seeing everywhere are to blame for it. If you’re faced with declining revenue, advertising, circulation or viewership, what are you doing to do? Put more money into covering daily news or investigations? It’s more likely you’re going to put it into the daily news.”

Another change in the media landscape is the explosion of online media, including blogs, Twitter and podcasts doing investigative-type reporting.

Case in point: U.S. gossip site Gawker first revealed that a video existed of former Toronto mayor Rob Ford apparently smoking crack. Donovan and former *Star* colleague Robyn Doolittle watched that video but did not publish the story until they could gather more proof about the mayor’s drug use.

Era of blogs and tweets

“Gawker scooped us as far as the existence of the video,” Donovan said. “But the stories we did broke other news. Our concern about being wrong outweighed our desire for a scoop. It was the same thing with Ghomeshi.”

Does Donovan resent a media landscape where stories are increasingly brought to light thanks to blogs, podcasts and tweets, without the same level of editorial rigour as traditional print media?

“I caught the tail-end of the typewriters... I used to think it had to be on newsprint,” he admitted. “But I don’t anymore. I don’t care where journalism is produced.

“Certainly on the Rob Ford story, things happened so quickly that with much of our investigative coverage, it happened online.... The thing with investigative reporting is that to do it well, you need to be really, really sure that you’re right, that you cross your T’s and dot your I’s. To do that takes time and resources. That costs money. It’s difficult for a small organization anywhere to do that.”

As for Donovan’s advice for aspiring muckrakers to be patient, it’s not just about giving people time to respond. It also means building the reporting and research skills, even if it means slogging it out in the trenches of municipal council or local garden shows. Ultimately, he said, good journalism is about relationships formed over many years.

One of the earliest stories about Rob Ford’s battles with addiction was a *Star* report on how the mayor was kicked out of a military fundraiser because he was drunk. Donovan asked to see the event’s guest list, and spotted the names of sources he’d known for decades. He phoned them and they confirmed the scoop. It’s what he calls “relationship journalism.”

“As you go forward in your career, get to know people who will be your sources in 20 years. Get to know the lawyer who’ll become a top prosecutor or the doctor who ends up running a hospital,” he said.

“You can only do that in person. I don’t think you can do that on Twitter. It’s way easier to get somebody to be a trusted source if they already are one.”

David P. Ball is staff reporter with The Tyee. This article was originally published by The Tyee.

Community Calendar

To list your community event, email info@nbmediacoop.org. For an updated listing of events, check nbmediacoop.org.

Migrant Dreams. A Maritime film tour of *Migrant Dreams* will make a stop in in Fredericton on Friday, Oct. 21 at 7:00pm at Conserver House, 180 Saint John St. The documentary, by award-winning filmmaker Min Sook Lee, follows women migrant workers in Canadian agriculture struggling for permanent residency status and decent working conditions and rights. Tzaznà Miranda of Justice for Migrant Workers - Ontario will be present for the film screenings. For more venues/dates, contact: fredericton@cinemapolitica.org.

Time As Money. Students at the School of Social Work at St. Thomas University invite all to a free public screening of *Time as Money* at the Fredericton Public Library, 12 Carleton St. on Thursday, Oct. 27 from 7-9 pm. “From small town neighborhoods to cities, the shift in the economy and continued financial struggles are having an adverse effect on communities and creating devastating isolation for its inhabitants. While lying in a hospital bed after a major heart attack, Edgar Cahn, a civil rights lawyer and speechwriter for Robert Kennedy, was feeling helpless - similar to the disenfranchised and unemployed. This experience gave him the idea to create a new system of money as a tool to connect people and neighbors called Time Dollars.”

Cinema Politica believes in the power of art not only to entertain but to engage, inform, inspire, and provoke social change. Cinema Politica Fredericton screens films on Friday nights at Conserver House, 180 St. John St. at 7:00pm. Check out the films and venues at: cinemapolitica.org. Contact: fredericton@cinemapolitica.org.

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In Brief

Canada’s public health care system under attack. According to the B.C Health Coalition, a legal challenge currently in motion threatens Canadian Medicare. Dr. Brian Day, owner of Vancouver’s for-profit Cambie Surgery Centre, launched a constitutional challenge in 2009 that entered the courts in Sept. 2016. The challenge aims to strike down provincial health legislation that limits the for-profit delivery of medically necessary services, claiming that these rules violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. While the case is being heard in B.C., experts agree that the case will likely be appealed and end up in the Supreme Court of Canada. If Dr. Day wins, a US-style health care system that relies on private insurance and allows providers to set any price on care could follow

Shots fired at home of Angelica Choc. While Angelica Choc and her family slept, shots were fired at her house just after midnight on Sept. 16, 2016. Choc is a Mayan Q’eqchi’ land defender in El Estor, Guatemala, and the widow of Adolfo Ich, a teacher and community leader murdered Sept. 27, 2009, by the head of security for a Canadian mining company Hudbay Minerals. Since 2010, Choc has been a plaintiff – along with 12 other Mayan Q’eqchi’ victims of mining related repression – in the high profile civil lawsuits in Canada against Hudbay Minerals. Her house has at least four documented bullet

impact holes in the outside wall. Choc and her family have denounced the attack by unidentified assailants to the police and public prosecutor’s office. The Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network, Rights Action and others believe this act of intimidation is linked to Choc’s work and struggle for justice against the crimes of mining companies both in Guatemala and Canada.



Angelica Choc with her son at the grave of her husband, Adolfo Ich, in May 2016. Photo from Rights Action.