

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Pam Carnochan

BY PAULA BOON

Pam Carnochan is very much a farmer at heart. "I believe in following the rhythm of the earth," says the owner of the wind- and solar-powered Morgan House Bed and Breakfast.

Carnochan grew up on a farm in Seaforth, Ontario, not far from Stratford, which had been in her family since 1832. "It was magical," she says. "I would explore all the time. I knew every nook and cranny."

Her three siblings still live on farms within three kilometres of each other. "I'm the only one who left," Carnochan says, adding it was inevitable for her to end up with some chickens, sheep and horses to care for. "I may not be working the land, but I need a connection to it."

Carnochan studied cartography at Sir Sandford Fleming College and, a few years afterward, met and married teacher Jamie Honderich.

In 1991, the two took leaves of absence from their jobs to do wolf research at Peter Lougheed Provincial Park in British Columbia. "We volunteered in exchange for housing," Carnochan says. "From November to June we were out there tracking wolves. It was amazing."

When they returned to southern Ontario after an additional two months in the Yukon, the couple missed the wild spaces. "You don't spend that kind of time wandering around the mountains tracking animals to live in London," Carnochan says.

On weekends, they would take their bikes and drive

north until they found a place to escape from urban life for a few hours. Honderich started checking every northern school board for available jobs and was eventually hired to fill a one-year contract at Huntsville High School. He and Carnochan gave up their full-time jobs and headed north in 1993. "Everyone thought we were crazy," she says. "We just believed it would work out and it did."

The couple bought 77 acres and a run-down stone house just outside of Huntsville and set to work restoring it as a home and bed and breakfast. "I needed a place where I could put down roots," says Carnochan. "This is it. They went deep even though it's rocky soil."

Carnochan, who sits on the executive of the Muskoka Bed and Breakfast Association, loves what she does. "The guests are part of the family," she says.

When her children Eli and Sadie were born, they just became part of the whole experience. "Eli came a month early, and we had to knock on our guests' doors and say, 'Sorry, you'll have to get your own breakfast. We're having a baby,'" says Carnochan with a laugh. "We had a full house."

Those first years were hectic, and in 1999, when the children were one and three, the family spent a year in New Zealand on a teaching exchange. "That was a good break for me. I only parented. It was lovely," Carnochan says.



Back in Canada, the kids eventually started attending Riverside Public School's French immersion program, and Carnochan joined the parent council.

Recently she has turned her attention back to the artistic pursuits she enjoyed when she was younger. "I always liked painting, and I'd been doing some felting and things with wool. Recently I've been combining the two and doing landscapes with wool," she says, adding that she offers workshops in this technique. "It's so fun and easy and liberating."

Once or twice a year, Carnochan goes on painting retreats at the Limberlost Wilderness Reserve. "I love that area. It fuels me up, and the group I paint with there are fantastic and encouraging," she says. "It's intuitive art. I'm not trying to make a photo, I'm trying to represent a feeling."

Carnochan, who has also begun dabbling in pottery, has dreams of converting an old barn on the property into an artists' co-op someday.

When asked about the future, Carnochan says she hopes for more of the same. "I'll just see what life hands me, but right now I feel so blessed," she says. "I'm where I want to be."

Thanks to Anne Lindsay for recommending that Pam Carnochan be profiled.

LETTERS

Harper's carbon reduction policies are inconsistent, ineffective and convoluted

Over the past months, I have been puzzled by Stephen Harper's seemingly random approach to dealing with carbon emissions. Near as I could tell, his strategy could be summed up as "reverse direction whenever possible."

Here's the chronology of my confusion: When Harper took office in 2006, he opted Canada out of the Kyoto agreements on limiting carbon emissions. It's overly simplistic to assume he was just following the lead of George W. Bush. I believe Harper was protecting the oil industry in his home province of Alberta.

Then, when Obama visited Canada a few months ago, Harper was happy to stand beside the new American president and talk tough on the need to limit carbon emissions. Again, I think it might be over simplifying to say Harper was just mimicking the Americans. In this case he was mimicking Obama, specifically. Regardless, it seemed a complete reversal.

Earlier this month, while negotiating a free trade agreement with the European Union, Harper refused to accept 1990 as the baseline year to measure greenhouse gas emission reductions. It seemed he had reversed again, returning to his original stance, which puts Canada out of step with the vast majority of the world's governments, including the United States.

Which left me saying, "What the"?

Then it all became clear to me when I saw a news article on environment watchdog Scott Vaughan's latest report on the environment. According to the report, Environment Canada is overstating cuts to greenhouse gases projected in the Conservatives' "Turning the Corner" plan, and cannot show how it arrived at its numbers.

Apparently, the politicians are able to predict the emission reductions, but staff can't measure them after the fact.

In short, Environment Canada is claiming it's too costly and technologically cumbersome to track the amounts by which particular policies lower greenhouse gases. This isn't surprising, given the overly complex regulations, the baffling Green Technology Fund parameters, and the complicated processes the Conservatives have put in place.

So it seems to me that perhaps the approach all along has been the same: Mr. Harper makes great efforts to appear to be concerned about carbon emissions and climate change, but in fact his tangle of vague policies, convoluted commitments and inconsistent statements ensures nothing constructive is being done to help prevent this impending crisis.

Doug Banwell
Huntsville

This reader will probably just stay home on election night

I'm not normally a very political person, but these new attack ads put out by the Conservatives have made me so upset that I felt the need to write a letter to the editor.

Is it too much to ask that politicians focus on the important issues like the economy and jobs rather than playing these silly political games?

Tony Clement and Stephen Harper need to stop wasting time worrying about their popularity and more time actually running our country. I voted for Tony Clement last time around, but next time I will probably just stay home.

William Bates
Bracebridge

Clement's outrage is misplaced

Re: *Tony Clement always ready for an election/Mr. Clement's remarks re: outside funding for elections*, letter to the editor - May 11 Examiner.

I give Mr. Clement full marks for acknowledging the "sabre rattling" bluster from the Ignatieff coronation/leadership convention, as he well knows that his government coalition partners, aka the Liberal Party of Canada, have supported his government 71 confidence votes in a row, and knows, barring some drastic surprise, that they will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, newly minted Conservative attack ads aside.

As for Mr. Clement being outraged for someone daring to point out that a huge amount of the CPC fundraising machine for his election comes from outside of the riding, is anyone really surprised? His neo-Conservative Mike Harris buddies on Wall/Bay Street know whose corner he's in, and while the actual year-round people who live here suffer inadequate Muskoka wages, the

death of the manufacturing sector, a recent budget that does nothing to help local people in the worst recession/depression since the '30s. All the while the Conservatives are furthering the greatest wholesale sell-off of critical Canadian industries, because everyday Muskokans and indeed Canadians suffer mass layoffs, as Mr. Clement now allows foreign-owned businesses to not even honour what little concessions they have to make to the Canadian government as they move their business elsewhere, while doing nothing to help the 68 per cent of Ontarians who don't qualify for EI.

Finally, while Mr. Clement crows about raising money for environmental scholarships, he recently appointed a well known climate change denier and big oil (Husky Energy) shill (John Weissenberger) to the board of Canada's Foundation for Innovation... Oh yeah, he also happens to be Harper's former chief of staff.

Dave Ungar
vice-president, Parry Sound - Muskoka NDP

Let's make Muskoka artland

Just want to draw the attention of your arts-oriented readers to a wonderful manifesto from Newman Wallis, Dean Emeritus of Seneca College and a "new kid on the block" as a full-time Muskoka resident. As speaker at the Arts Council of Muskoka's annual general meeting at the Port Sydney Community Hall on Thursday, April 16, Newman knocked our socks off with his vision for Muskoka as artland.

"Dream no small dreams, for they have no power to move the hearts of men," he quoted Joannes Wolfgang von Goethe, with his vision for Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach from way back in 1775. The sleepy rural German community, about the size of Muskoka, would in the wake of that declaration become an artistic and intellectual powerhouse in the mold of Venice or Florence, home to Martin Luther, Richard Strauss, Johann Sebastian Bach, Richard Wagner, Marlena Dietrich and Arthur Schopenhauer.

Muskoka today, with its pristine freshwater beauty, wealthy tax base, plethora of artists and much more, is even better positioned than Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach for

such a transformation, Wallis suggests.

"If (art) can be shown to employ ordinary folks, to draw crowds, to sell products, to utilize raw materials, to advance culture, to attract tourists, to advance marketing, to educate and train and enhance civility, to truly stimulate a cultural destination, a cultural "hearth," now is the time to do it and here is the place where it should be done: Muskoka, artland!"

Amen to that. Let's dream no small dreams and make Muskoka as artland a reality.

Read the full text of Newman Wallis' speech at, http://artscouncilofmuskoka.com/images/Muskoka_as_Artland_by_Newman_Wallis.pdf.

The Arts Council of Muskoka is a nonprofit organization that anyone can join dedicated to enriching Muskoka through the arts. We can be reached at info@artscouncilofmuskoka.com.

Tamsen Tillson
Co-ordinator
Arts Council of Muskoka

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: E-mail: letters@huntsvilleforester.com

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