

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Doug Howell

BY PAULA BOON

Doug Howell's connection with Pow Wow Point Lodge runs deep.

"This place has a personality," says the Peninsula Lake resort owner.

Howell's parents bought Pow Wow in 1969, when he was eight years old, and he says it was an ideal place to grow up: "Boats and water: what could be better for a kid?"

For the past 20 years, Howell and his wife Dee have owned the resort and raised their now-teenage children Brett and Dara there. "I watch some long-time guests pinch the kids' cheeks and tell them how much they've grown, and I remember how I used to hate that," he says with a laugh. "But it's wonderful how close we are to many of our guests. In fact, just last week we got a wedding invitation from one of them. As much as they're guests, they're also friends."

Howell attended Irwin Memorial Public School and then Huntsville High School. He enrolled as a student at Wilfred Laurier University, but that didn't last. "I hated Waterloo," he says. "It was too flat and there was no water."

Then, he says, it was a few years before he figured out what he wanted to do with his life. He spent one year working at Pow Wow, then got into Ryerson College's four-year Hospitality and Tourism program in 1982.

There, he became reacquainted with Dee, who he had first met on the Hidden Valley ski hill around age 14.

During his last year at Ryerson, Howell went to an interview at Georgian College and emerged with a teaching position. "It was December and I thought we were talking about a job for the following September," he says. "Then the interviewer said, 'Great. Can you start on Jan. 4?'"

With the support of his supervisor at Ryerson, Howell managed to teach while completing his thesis. He stayed at Georgian for three years, and he and Dee were married in 1987.

In 1988, Howell's parents told him they were ready to move on. "Dee and I jumped at it," he says. "November 1989 was to be the official handover date."

However, things didn't go entirely according to plan. In May of 1989, Howell's mother called and told him his father was sick and he needed to come home.

"That first summer I was trying to figure out what I was doing. The business was running me," he says. "Looking back, the transition was awesome, the best way it could have happened."

Howell chose to carry on much the way his parents had. "The setup was good and mode of operation excellent," he



says. He made sure to keep up with the wants and needs of his customers, but with an eye to keeping Pow Wow's unique flavour. He notes, "The biggest changes in consumer demand happened in the early 1990s. People suddenly expected jacuzzis, fireplaces and ensuites."

Nowadays, high-speed wireless, which the resort has had for three years, is high on people's priorities. "But the most important thing is still the personality and hospitality," Howell says. "Pow Wow is a warm, friendly place, relaxed and carefree."

During the winters, Howell teaches downhill skiing and snowboarding at Hidden Valley. "Teaching is great," he says, noting that he particularly enjoys working with the many elementary school children who come to Hidden Valley as part of their winter elective programs.

Howell says he doesn't know what the future holds for him — or Pow Wow Point Lodge. "It's tough for small resorts," he says.

But for now, he and his family are very happy. "At the end of the day we have a roof over our heads, food on the table and are looking at the lake," he says. "The sunset two nights ago, mist over the lake two mornings ago: that's what it's about for us."

LETTERS

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Do some soul-searching before casting your election ballot

I have the great privilege to travel with my work. When I'm abroad, I've always been grateful to say, "No, I'm not American. I'm Canadian!"

I've been proud to be, in my own little way, a voice and representative of this unique and beautiful country. I fear now that if the new Conservative right wing is to get what they are wishing for, that I won't be able to rely so easily on the progressive, tolerant image of Canada I've taken for granted. I really believe this is a pivotal election, maybe the most important in my adult life.

This is a tactical election called by an opportunist government a year ahead of the legally scheduled date. The Conservatives have been so glib and arrogant about this, they've not even bothered to issue a platform.

And really, why should they? It seems quite clear through the gathered commentary, of a party and its members, that a fundamental shift in ethos and ideology is what is in the works. It is a clear and open invitation for American-style social policies and principles to become the adopted direction for Canada. I look back over very recent times to the last Conservative government in Ontario, and the current Republican government in the USA.

I think if Ontarians were given the chance to go back, we would not have given Mike Harris a second term to continue his sweeping mandate of social destruction. If Americans were given the chance, we could be almost certain they would have chosen a far less destructive leader too. Yet, here we stand, in a very similar situation. Somehow, Canadians

are seriously considering re-electing a government ambivalent to culture, troubled youth, women, the environment and health care.

Which brings me to our local representative, Tony Clement. The poor, luckless cottager has had a less than glowing record as health minister in both the Ontario legislature and the House of Commons. His one recent moment of grace is that the investigation on Listeriosis isn't due until well after Canadian ballots are cast. And let us not forget the Walkerton crisis while under the thumb of Mike Harris.

It seems quite clear to most Canadians now, that old economic and social systems are beginning to crumble. The word "change" is gathering collectively on the

lips of Canadians and many people in the rest of the world. "Staying the course" as the Conservatives are suggesting is a very misguided approach. Canada and the rest of the world are beginning to feel the actual cost of the perpetuated irresponsibility, both socially and economically.

We have the minds, resources, and wealth in Canada to be leaders in emerging shifts in economy and technology, instead of followers of losing ideas, and "tried and failed" American-style political paths. Of the three elections in the past four years, this is the big one. I strongly urge passion and soul searching. I also strongly urge everyone young and old to make your voices heard on Oct. 14.

Hawksley Workman
Burk's Falls

A vote for the Conservatives

It's easy to be cynical about politics and elections, but when one looks at what is going on around the world, one realizes there is not much that is more important. Politics is the main difference between countries like ours that are doing well and those that are not. It is important to study the issues with an open mind. Over the years, I have voted Liberal and Conservative, both federally and provincially. In each election, one has to look at three things: the local candidates, the party platforms, and the party leaders.

I attended the local all-party debate. In terms of qualifications, experience, and the ability to do good things for our riding, I believe the Conservative candidate is the best choice this time around. I would rank the NDP candidate second, and the Liberal, Green, and Independent tied for third.

I watched the national leaders' debate, and taped the US vice-presidential debate that was on at the same time. There was a clear difference. Sara Palin and Joe Biden had a spirited, but always a respectful debate. Our leaders' debate looked like amateur hour in comparison. Four opposition party leaders ganged up on Prime Minister Harper like a pack of angry wolves. The Green Party leader, whose party has not a single fully elected seat in the house, had the audacity to call the prime minister a fraud. In spite of all this, Stephan Harper never once lost his cool. He always conducts himself in a dignified and statesmanlike manner, whether at home, or representing Canada abroad. He may not have as much charisma as some, but I will choose smart and cool-headed over charisma.

All parties are ideological. The left NDP,

and centre-left Liberals believe that more government is good. The centre-right Conservatives believe more in fostering individual responsibility and initiative. The ideal is in the true centre. In order to afford top-notch social programs, we must have a strong economy created by a strong business base. Starting and running a business (small or big) involves financial risk and 100-hour weeks.

Our situation is different from the USA, Europe, and Asia. Canada contributes three per cent of the world's greenhouse gases. It would be very easy to bankrupt our economy and our social programs with an overzealous approach to carbon reduction that would have no real impact on the world. A carbon tax is only one way to make environmental progress, but it would require an overhaul of the tax system that would bring problems to as many people as it helps. If the long-gun registry is an example, a change like a carbon tax could take years and billions to do. There are less disruptive approaches that can work faster.

At the end of the Trudeau Liberal era, Canada was almost bankrupt. The Conservatives then brought in the unpopular GST and NAFTA. That cost the Conservatives the next election, but in fact enabled the Liberals (who promised to cancel both and did neither) to look good by eliminating the deficit and reducing the national debt. We have recently had a long run of centre-left Liberal governments. I think Canada could benefit from a few more years of centre-right, to swing our political pendulum more to the ideal centre.

Hugh Holland
Huntsville

Harper's agenda is dangerous

We should all be asking why the PM didn't release his platform and share his vision with millions of Canadians before the national debates. The only reason I can think of is pure Stephen Harper: keep one's cards hidden until the last moment and cut down the time for voters and the media to react to three business days (and a long weekend) prior to Election Day. It's a calculated and cynical move that I hope comes back to haunt him.

Harper's reluctance to present his platform at the logical time plus his stand-pat, nothing-to-worry-about-here approach seems to have finally shaken voter confidence. In a recent Canadian Press Harris-Decima rolling survey following the televised debate, Conservatives sank to their lowest support level of the entire campaign and Harper's personal popularity rating did likewise.

At a time of great economic turmoil that may soon become a full-on recession (according to a new Bank of Nova Scotia study) Harper still claims that things are fine, and we are on the right track. On track for what? The economy is approaching a shambles. When the other leaders at the debate suggested the government should do something to protect savings and pensions, Harper responded with his signature steely, thin-lipped stare masked as a smile. The U.S. approved a \$700 billion government bailout to stem the tide of a meltdown, but Harper continues to argue that \$50 billion in corporate tax reductions will save us.

For the past 10 years right-wing governments and business have been preaching the gospel of tax cuts, deficit reduction, cutting red tape and an unfettered free market, and it

set the stage for the mess we are in now. An under-regulated economy is not the key to capitalism. An ideology that proclaims that government intervention blocks prosperity is the pathway to social ruin. Government should not be run like business.

Stephane Dion is a sincere and honest politician who actually has an action plan on the economy. True, it's not completely adequate. The fact is that Ottawa's options are limited in part by Harper and Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's squandering of the \$12 billion budget surplus they were handed when they took office. As journalist Haroon Siddiqui wrote, "The real rap against Dion is that he does not inspire people. Harper inspires fear. Take your pick." He added, "Vote against him (Dion) because you do not like his policies, not because he is socially awkward or that he reads books."

Stephane Dion gave Canadians a fully-costed, fiscally responsible platform, "A Richer, Fairer, Greener Canada," from the start. It lays out a progressive, inclusive vision to make Canada a stronger country for the next generation. He didn't wait as Harper did for a time that was more politically expedient.

We have a front row seat to observe the result of an unfettered free-market economy run amok.

Harper was correct when he said (at the debate) that Canada, which has been slower to deregulate, has fared better than the U.S. What's ironic is that if he and other supporters of laissez faire economics had been in charge earlier, Canada's financial system might be in even more trouble than it is.

Dale Peacock
Huntsville



HEALTHCARE HEROES

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My Spa - My Hair

"My Hair" is a salon operating within "My Spa" located at 76 Centre St N. "My Hair" owner, Lorie Young is highlighting Breast Cancer Awareness month by donating proceeds from pink hair extensions sales during October. Her gift will support the mammogram program at Huntsville Hospital

Debi Davis stopped by "My Hair" this week to make her appointment for pink hair extensions to go with her President's Ball couture. "My Spa" owner Helena Montoya filled in for a busy Lorie for the photo.

Call 788-9766 to book your pink hair extensions during October. Thanks Lorie for supporting mammography right here in our community.

Huntsville District Memorial Hospital Foundation continues to support:

- Huntsville District Memorial Hospital
- Fairvern Nursing Home
- Burk's Falls & District Health Centre



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