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"who dares not offend, cannot be honest"

One Manitowaning Road

opinion

editorial

Hunting is not a sport in the North—it is a way of life

There are those who decry the annual hunting season on Manitoulin Island, characterizing it as an inhuman blood sport geared solely on the boasting rights inherent in a big rack trophy on the rec room wall.

Each season, The Expositor finds itself in the sights of those who oppose hunting and being excoriated for covering, and even encouraging, the hunting and killing of God's gentle creatures. Usually, but not always, these folks are transplants to rural living—used to hunter-gathering their groceries at the local supermarket or through online delivery services.

Certainly, the boasting rights inherent in a successful hunt are part and parcel of the experience, but for many Islanders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, the annual hunt is an opportunity to fill the larder with a healthy store of protein. There is a reason that hunting is a right enshrined in the treaty rights of First Nations and other Indigenous peoples—it is far more than just a "sport."

For Indigenous peoples, hunting is an integral part of the culture and lifestyle, one that non-Indigenous governments have long tried to suppress in an effort to separate the people from their traditional interactions with the land and to force those communities into a more settled and agrarian lifestyle. Much of the rationale for those efforts comes from the self-serving propaganda of colonial governments seeking to find land for incoming settlers—ignoring the fact that most Indigenous communities on Turtle Island were primarily agrarian in nature.

Corn, beans and squash are the "Three Sisters" that formed the cornerstone of Indigenous diets and, along with fishing and hunting, sustained Indigenous peoples for countless generations.

Hunting is also an important part of Northern Ontario culture for non-Indigenous peoples as well, albeit one that has faded somewhat as they have become ever more separated from the land and the source of their sustenance.

For both cultures, hunting is a rite of passage, where older genera-

tions bond with succeeding generations to reaffirm those weakening bonds with the land.

In a time when the eyes of our youth are increasingly focused on the small screens in the palm of their hands and less and less on the world around them, hunting and fishing provide opportunities to get out in the fresh air and communicate with those around them in a meaningful way.

While primarily a male-dominated activity, it is true, hunting is not limited to only those of the male gender. There are plenty of Island women who take to the hunting camp each season as well—and not just to cook!

For many Island landowners, particularly farmers whose constant struggles with a livelihood that depends upon the vagaries of the environment, the annual hunting season provides a welcome source of income that helps offset continually rising property taxes.

Finally, there is a certain hubris in our advanced Western societies that suggests that the technologies that sustain our otherwise unsustainable existence, with huge concentrations of our populations piled storey upon storey in urban centres that produce no food yet consume immense amounts of vegetable, meat and fish each and every day, will continue unabated. Hunting passes on survival skills that, should the unthinkable come to pass and humanity's seemingly growing insanity destroys the very technologies that sustain us, will once again come into their own.

Hunting in Northern Ontario is far more than "just a sport," it is an integral part of our joint heritage and provides an important connection to the land in a world where those connections are becoming more and more tenuous. It must be conducted in a manner that protects our natural resources for seven generations into the future and beyond, but it must remain protected as part of our Northern identity.

We may be Canadian, but when it comes to supporting hunting, we offer no apology. Sorry—not sorry!

'Avid Hunter' pursues his passion internationally

by Margery Frisch

MANITOULIN—It's that time of the year, when women all over North America become widows... of sorts. Their husbands abandon them for a week here, possibly a week there, and then longer if bow hunting and black powder are part of their repertoire. It's deer hunting season.

When given this assignment, my subject, or interviewee, was an obvious choice—I live with an avid hunter. I sit him down, which is itself a difficult feat. The avid hunter is a rather large Boy Scout and the packing and sorting, and re-packing starts early and continues 'till he's heading out the door.

Interviewer (I): So, when did you first begin to hunt?

Avid Hunter (AH): Sixty-nine years ago.

I: Wait, what? That's crazy. You're 75! Do you mean to say you began hunting at the age of six?

AH: Yes.

(He's a man of few words. His eyes roam the room, he makes notes of objects he still needs to pack.)

I: What were you hunting when you were six, and where were your parents?

AH: I hunted squirrels and rabbits with a BB gun. I didn't hunt with a rifle til I was older. I got my hunting licence when I was 12 and I hunted with a bow.

I: What did you hunt when you got your licence?

AH: Deer and pheasant. Pheasant in the Columbia Valley, in Washington State and deer on the Kettle River Range, with my dad and my brothers (he



Avid hunter Leon Frisch and his nephew Sean Frisch in eastern Washington State's Kettle Ridge Mountain Range.

has four brothers, three older). I hunted elk with my brother, Al, when I was in my first year of university, on the east side of the Rockies near Cle Elum, Washington, but just the one time.

(The Avid Hunter is originally from the State of Washington and has continued to join his brothers, but lately his

nephews, to hunt there.)

I: What are the differences between hunting out in Washington State and hunting here in Ontario?

AH: Well, fortunately, the dates don't conflict. Washington's hunt is in October. And there are significantly higher altitudes in Washington. You're going 3,000 to 7,000 feet above sea level in a day of

hunting. It's so quiet, meditative; you're looking for signs, stalking, watching the hillsides. Here in Ontario, you're either sitting in a blind or tree stand, waiting for the animals to come by, or you're dogging the bush, pushing the deer out, while your partner sits (freezing to death) in the tree stand. Both Washington and

Ontario have their appeal. The fun in hunting is being with people who like to hunt, sitting around the campfire and sharing experiences. For a lot of guys, of course, drinking is a big part of it too, but for me, now, it's the camaraderie.

I: When did you 'bag' your first deer? Is that how you say it? (I get a look.)

AH: When did I shoot my first deer? Not until I was hunting in Ontario, in South River, 1989.

(This is something I probably should have remembered. It must have been a huge deal at the time. We had been married 11 years by then. When I first met this wandering hippie, hunting was not a subject that had ever come up in conversation.)

I: What brings you back to the sport year after year?

AH: The joy of seeing and being able to observe deer up close, in their natural habitat.

I: What would you say makes a successful hunter?

AH: Years of experience passed down from the old to the young. I hunted with my father and brothers when I was old enough to carry a gun. Then our sons followed and took up hunting with me. Now our 12-year-old granddaughter is eager to take up the sport. The cycle continues.

(When he's released from the chair, he's off and running, packing, repacking and reorganizing. And I sit down to plan my week of widowhood...which, as most women know, is not as bad as it sounds. Happy Hunting Week, everyone!)