

# The Pioneer

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Photo by Jeremy Mckay

## Blockade in support of missing aboriginal women

Shawn Brant, along with fellow First Nations protesters, sit by a bonfire at a blockade at Airport Parkway and Shannonville Road in Tyendinaga on Sunday night. “We’ll be here as long as it takes,” said Brant. “It’s not about us, it’s about the missing women,” said one protester. The protesters are looking to draw attention to the hundreds of murdered and missing aboriginal women. The protesters are calling for a federal inquiry to address the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women. For more on the protest, go to: <http://www.qnetnews.ca/?p=35093>

# Letter has special meaning to recipient

By Natalie McMullen

When Rhonda Lummiss was a teenager, she found a kindred spirit in Holden Caulfield. She related to the enigmatic protagonist from *The Catcher in the Rye*, because like her, he was awkward, self-conscious, and a bit of a misfit.

“I made up my mind, as soon as I opened the envelope — before I’d even read what he said, I thought, ‘I don’t think I want to tell anybody.’”

These were the private musings of 19-year-old Lummiss, standing at the mailbox in front of the house where she grew up, holding a letter from J.D. Salinger. The year was 1979.

A few years earlier, Lummiss’ English teacher handed her and her classmates copies of *The Rivals*, an 18<sup>th</sup> century play by Richard Brinsley Sheridan. He then looked up at his students, and said, “This is just an impossible thing. Let’s see what else I can find.” He left the classroom and returned with a box of copies of Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*.

“I loved the book, and as I read more of Salinger ... there was just this common thread through his work about sensitivity, and not making judgments about people on superficialities, and really trying to connect ... on a deeper level,” said Lummiss.

After completing her last year of high school, like many young people caught between childhood and looming adult responsibility, Lummiss was sensitive to the passage of time, and preoccupied with existential questions.

She decided, despite his by-then infamous reputation as a recluse, to reach out to Salinger, whom she considered a kindred spirit.

“I just thought, well, I’m going to foolishly write this letter to this author that I respect so much.”

As it turns out, many people wrote to Salinger over the years and received responses.

He stopped publishing in the 1960s, and gave his final interview in 1980 — 30 years before his death in 2010.

“He was a prolific letter writer,” said Declan Kiely,

department head of Literary and Historical Manuscripts at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York City.

“We’ve been offered many letters over the years — some more interesting than others.”

Kiely recently curated an exhibit called ‘Lose not Heart,’ displaying a correspondence between Salinger and a young aspiring writer from Toronto named Marjorie Sheard.

Lummiss doesn’t have a copy of the letter she sent to Salinger, though she remembers composing several drafts, and thinks there is probably a version stowed away somewhere.

But she recalls the sentiment behind her correspondence.

“I just basically said, ‘I hope I don’t lose touch with those really important things you talk about in your book — because I feel so connected to them now. But I’m getting older.’”

Salinger responded within two weeks. Lummiss was protective of Salinger, and didn’t tell

anyone, except for her mom and brother, about the letter for decades.

“Even if he’d been the kind of person who didn’t care if he had a lot of publicity around him, even though I knew he didn’t like that, I thought, ‘It’s so special, why would I want to spoil the moment?’”

Lummiss once read an article that claimed he often disposed of his mail without even opening it. This detail only deepened her loyalty.

But when her mother fell ill, Lummiss needed money to cover the extra costs of her care.

Her brother, who knew about the correspondence, and had recently heard of a Salinger letter selling for \$40,000, suggested she consider parting with it.

He told her about the CBC program *Four Rooms*, a show on which members of the public try to sell valuable items to Canada’s top buyers.

“I didn’t want to sell it. I didn’t even want to talk about it. I didn’t want to expose it. I said, in the circumstances, ‘I’m going to do it.’”

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# Organic vendors share and sell goods

*Seedy Saturday event focuses on information and education about non-genetically modified food*

By Melyssa Gloude

“We grow garlic, tomato, beans, watermelon, sunflowers,” said Reagan Johnstone, the eight-year-old entrepreneur behind Reagan’s Seeds.

“When the financial world collapses, people are going to need to know how to grow their own food,” said Johnstone.

“It’s just better for you. You know what you’ve done to it.”

Johnstone was just one of the 13 vendors selling and swapping organic goods at Quinte West’s Seedy Saturday last weekend. The event, sponsored by The Bauta Family Initiative For Canadian Seed Security, focused primarily on the information and education regarding the growth of non-genetically modified food, and to keep diversity in farmers’ fields. And, in the dead of winter, seeing some growing greens was refreshing to most.

“This is our first event and we’re pretty pleased because we have lots of vendors and lots of workshops. We really managed to pull it together,” said Colleen McKenzie, one of the volunteer co-ordinators for the event.

According to the Bauta, in regards to seed diversity, Canadians rely on only four plant species — wheat, maize, rice, potato — for 60 per cent of the calories in their diet. This statistic relays an alarming loss of agricultural biodiversity in Canada, according to the group.

Bauta, among other sister organizations such as USC Canada, Seeds of Diversity and The W. Garfield Weston Foundation, believe that this reliance on a shrinking number of crops and the lack of diversity in farmers’ fields will make

Canadians vulnerable to crop-destroying factors such as: severe weather storm, drought, floods, pests and rising soil salinity.

“The idea is to keep growing seeds, seeds that are non-GMO,” said McKenzie. “To keep growing diverse types of food, flowers and other plants.”

The goal of these organizations is to broaden the range of crops and crop varieties grown in Canada to increase the resilience of our agricultural system.

Amanda Hill, event vendor and owner of GreenHill Greens in Prince Edward County, grows her own fruits and vegetables and sells all the excess at farmers markets and events.

“We think that growing your own food is really important, and that’s what Seedy Saturday is all about,” said Hill, who also helped co-ordinate the event.

“Especially meeting people who have never grown things before, you can convert them to organic!”

The seed exchanges were previously held in Picton, but for the first event in Quinte West, it exceeded expectation in the eyes of the co-ordinators.

“I was involved in the Picton event as a vendor, and we decided one should be held further west, and we’re really thrilled with how many people have turned up today,” said Hill.

“We already have more volunteers signed up to help at next year’s event.”

According to the volunteers, the driving force behind Seedy Saturday was Colleen O’Reilly, who organized the demonstrations and vendors.

“The focus was supposed to be the Seed Exchange table,” said O’Reilly, who added she was happy with the turnout for the first annual Quinte West event.

“But everything seems to connect. It’s about healthy living. It’s about knowing where our food is coming from,” she said.

“It’s about knowing what’s in our food. Being able to promote that is fantastic.”



Photo by Melyssa Gloude

Stacey Hubbs is the owner of Edible Antiques, one of 13 vendors who were selling and swapping seeds at the Seedy Saturday seed exchange in Trenton last weekend. Edible Antiques is an heirloom seed company that is based out of Prince Edward County that specializing in open-pollinated, heirloom, non-GMO and heritage garden seeds.

# Hydro rates frustrate citizens

By Michelle Heshka

Citizens of Belleville are unhappy with the rising hydro delivery rates.

“Prices of so many things are going up, and you can’t really expect things to stay the same. At the same time, it’s not necessary to charge residents extra hydro delivery charges. The smart meters were a good idea. Now I can see where my money is going. But now this extra delivery charge? It’s ridiculous,” said Belleville resident Rachael Ossel.

As of Jan. 1, 2014, Hydro One customers across Ontario started paying more for hydro delivery.

The Ontario Energy Board said the distribution rates are increasing due to inflation. This is one outcome of inflation that citizens of Belleville are not interested in paying.

Ossel isn’t the only Belleville resident who is unhappy with these new fees.

Philip Scott, a first-year radio broadcasting student at Loyalist College, said he believes the rates are unnecessarily skyrocketing to keep up with other parts of the economy.

“The hydro rate increase is annoying, but it is keeping to the rest of the economy. The raising rates are probably justified by the rising gas prices,” said Scott.

The rates are increasing by at least 1.1 per cent, and bills are expected to rise. The new long-term energy plan shows that the average monthly bill of \$125 will rise to \$178, meaning hydro bills will increase by 42 per cent over the next five years.

In 2013, Ontario released smart meters — hydrometers that track both when and how much energy was used. The smart meters go hand in hand with the varying prices of electricity, depending on what time of day it’s used. The idea of the new meter is to encourage people to look at how and when they are using electricity, according to the Ontario Energy Board website.

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