A Prairie Harvest

Despite being at the mercy of weather and machines, the harvest season, says one Prairie farmer, is a time of unrivalled pleasure.

By Wayne Schmalz

It started as a low, rumbling,这个名字 audible above the roaring engine and clattering chains. I decided to stop the combine and check it out. Walking slowly from front to back and then to the front again, I detected an unfamiliar sound coming from somewhere deep inside the shuddering machine. Maybe it isn’t anything serious, I told myself. Or maybe it’s something that has always been there, but I just haven’t heard before. Maybe I can continue working and do a thorough inspection at a more appropriate time. But after a few minutes, the rumble graduated to an insistent squeak, along with a foreshadowing rattle. My heart sank. I wouldn’t be getting anything more done that day.

I operate a 160-hectare organic farm in Saskatchewan and had been amazed throughout a difficult fall to bring in my crops (barley, flax, canola, oats, peas, and sweet clover). For weeks, the region had been plagued by overcast skies and showers, making harvesting impossible. It was now the end of October and getting dangerously close to snow. And then, just when it looked like this year’s grain would have to spend the winter outside in the field, the weather broke and the area was flooded with warm sun.
While spring and summer on the farm have their special charms, it is harvest time that is truly magical.

I stand before you, my hands clasped, my heart pounding with the anticipation of the moment that will surely change our lives forever. The air is thick with the scent of harvest, the earth beneath my feet yielding up its bounty. I have waited all year for this moment, and I will not let it pass me by without careful observation.

The fields are golden with the ripest of crops, ready to be harvested. The sun shines down upon us, Its rays illuminating the world with a warmth that is both comforting and exhilarating. The sky above is a canvas of blue, with fluffy clouds dotting the horizon, adding to the beauty of the scene.

With the sound of machinery in the distance, I step forward, my mind focused on the task at hand. The mowers are buzzing, the combine hums along, cutting through the rows with ease. Each blade of grass falls to the ground, a sacrifice in the name of the harvest.

As I turn my attention to the crops themselves, I am struck by their beauty. They are a vibrant green, their leaves shining like jewels in the sunlight. The aroma of ripe corn fills the air, and I cannot help but smile as I think of the delicious meals that will be created from these bountiful crops.

I am reminded of the countless hours and hard work that have gone into bringing these crops to fruition. The early mornings spent in the fields, the late nights spent in the workshop, and the long days spent in the combine. All of these sacrifices have led up to this moment, and I will not let them be in vain.

With a deep breath, I reach down and pluck a single ear of corn from the stalk. I hold it in my hand, admiring its beauty. It is a symbol of the harvest, a reminder of the work that has gone into making this moment possible.

As I look around at my colleagues, I can see the same joy and satisfaction in their eyes. We have worked hard, and it is finally paying off. The harvest is upon us, and we are ready to reap the rewards of our labor.

And so, I raise my hand, signaling the start of the harvest. The machinery moves into action, cutting through the crops with precision. The ears of corn are gathered up, ready to be transported to the silos and stored for the winter.

With each passing moment, I am filled with a sense of gratitude. I am grateful for the hard work and dedication that has gone into bringing this harvest to pass. I am grateful for the beauty of the crops themselves, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this moment.

As I close my eyes and take a deep breath, I can feel the power of the harvest, the power of the land, and the power of hard work. I know that this moment is only the beginning of a new chapter, a chapter filled with new opportunities and challenges. But for now, I am content to simply be a part of this moment, to witness the beauty of the harvest, and to celebrate the hard work that made it possible.
And there before him, mile after mile, illimitable, covering the earth from horizon to horizon, lay the Wheat.

ground. There it lay, a vast, silent ocean, shimmering a pallid green under the moon and under the stars; a mighty force, the strength of nations, the life of the world... What were these heated, tiny squabbles, this fervid, small battle of mankind, this minute swarming of the human insect, to the great, majestic, silent ocean of the Wheat itself? Indifferent, gigantic, resilient, it moved in its appointed grooves. Men, alluvipans, grazers in the sunshine, buzzed inexplicably in their tiny hives, were born, lived through their lit- tle tales, died, and were forgotten; while the Wheat, wrapt in Nirvana calm, grew steadily under the night, alone with the stars and with God.

Rerouting those lines recently, I was both amused and slightly embarrassed that my youthful self could have been captivated by such grandiose sentiments. But then I thought for a moment. How does one explain an overpowering feeling without sounding maudlin or melodramatic? How, for example, would I describe what happened when I first walked into a field of flax. Each step through that tangled, course stand caused the seeds to vibrate in their hulls, setting off a percussive rhythm that stilled something deep within me. And when I tickled this smooth, silky grain through my fingers, I felt a connection with an ancient world. Quicker than you could say Rompetshlink, all those fairy tales with flux and straw and gold suddenly spring to life. Their magic seemed plausible, and I had a strange sensation of being part of the tales. Since then, it has never been possi- ble for me to think of flux without being reminded of those stories from long, long ago.

Flax is from another time, a time of castles and wizards and golden dreams. It's also from a time when harvesting was a community affair, when people came together to bring in the crop. Harvesting as a social event persisted in Canada until the mid-20th century. Large threshing crews made up of men from the Prairies, Eastern Canada and Britain would move from farm to farm in convoys of horses and wagons, gathering the grain and manually feeding it into a threshing machine. Those men, in turn, were sustained by groups of women who rose before everyone else to begin a grueling day in the kitchen. Talk to old-timers about those days and you'll hear of brassing 'stirers' and weary boxes. But underneath it all will be a wastefulness for things for ever gone: farm tables hoisted with giant platters of steaming food, eccentric char- acters with funny accents, and practical jokes that kept everyone in stitches.

I often regret that I was born too late to experience these harvests. I think I've missed something very significant. Instead of being sur- rounded by the animated chatter of group effort, I find myself in a world of metallic objects and individualendeavour. My co-workers are my machines. I appreciate them for what they do. I marvel at the beauty of their construction, which enables me, with a simple adjustment of a lever, to convert a standing field of grain into kernels, chaff and straw. There is an undeniable poetry to their movement, which I think has best been captured by Robert Stead in his novel Grain. Although the book focuses on the early 1900s, when harvesting was performed by steam engines and threshing machines, the cadences of his account resonate today.

The drive belt had not yet been put on, but Gander had watched the careful Pownes run his engine idle a few minutes every morn- ing to warm the bearings before applying the load and to clear the cylinder and valve chest of the night's condensation. With infinite pride and responsibility he climbed to the driver's position, and throte in hand gently eased the first gash of steam into the cylinder. There was a set hiss from the rear cylinder- cock; then, almost imperceptibly, the driving- arm began to lengthen forward, the eccentric housed on the shaft; the governors began to rise, the idle bludgeon stirred into motion... Gander let her plod gently for a few revolutions while the exhaust bore its pleasant tattoo inside the stack, then slowly gave her more steam while he watched the quick- ening flicker and knew the thrill that comes only to those who hold great power in the hollow of their hands....

Out from the great iron framed at the back of the machine warned a cyclone of straw; up from the intervals of its digestive apparatus arose a cloud of dust. Chaff and straw and dust – they poured into the still morning air, catching the glint of fresh sunlight, realm their moulded shadows across the brown stubble.

And some grain. It tumbled down the iron tube; it plunged in half-baked gusts into the waiting wagon box. bright and clean and res- tanent, singing as it danced on the hard boards... Chaff and straw and dust – and some grain!

Fall is when things mature, when nature prepares for the deep slumber of winter. It's a time of completion and decay. But it's also a time of life and heightened senses. When the languid shapes of summer become more focused in the sharper light of autumn. When the nerves detect and the heart quickens as harvest approaches. When a fluffy layer of straw covers a newly harvested field, so soft and inviting that you could curl up in it and go to sleep. When the first frost hard of autumn releases a rich, sweet aroma that is unlike any other smell in the world. It's all this time of year that I feel connected to the earth in a way that I don't feel at any other time. And despite all the anxieties, harvest is an event I feel very privi- leged to be part of; it's a bounty for which I am truly grateful.

Oh, and by the way, if you're interested, I did manage to get my combine fixed and fin- ish harvesting before the snow arrived.
Meet the Author

Since 1977, Canadian Children's Book Week has been bringing authors, illustrators and children together across the country

BY SHONA MCKAY

The audience is spellbound. Gathered in the gymnasium at R.B. Dickey Elementary School in Amherst, N.S., the group of grade 2 students is giving the author and illustrator Kim Fernandes its undivided attention. The winner of numerous awards for her books, Fernandes, who has travelled to Nova Scotia from her home north of Oshawa, Ont., is telling the children that she learned the art of storytelling at her mother’s knee. Literally.

Her mother is Eugenie Fernandes, who is also a celebrated Canadian children’s writer and illustrator. “When my mom was in her studio, I used to work alongside her, painting or drawing with whatever was at hand,” recalls the 11-year-old. The children listen intently as Fernandes explains how she draws upon her own life experiences to create her books, and how they too can create stories using the plasticine with which they have been supplied. (Fernandes uses Fimo, another modelling material, to make the magical reliefs that bring her stories to life.) Fingers busy, minds dancing, the children spend the next half-hour creating their reliefs, their efforts encouraged and applauded by Fernandes.

Every year for eight days in early November, variations on this scene are repeated in schools and libraries from Salmon Arm, B.C., to Inuvik, N.W.T., to Come By Chance, Nfld., as the authors and illustrators of Canadian children’s books travel across the country to meet tens of thousands of young people. This annual tour of authors takes place during Canadian Children’s Book Week, the flagship program of the Canadian Children’s Book Centre.

Based in Toronto, the book centre is a national nonprofit organization that was founded in 1976 to promote and encourage the reading, writing and illustrating of children’s books in Canada. “Our aim is to bring the magic and excitement of Canadian children’s books to young readers across the country,” says Charlotte Treeple, the book centre’s executive director. “We know that children who enjoy reading and who embrace books as close companions begin an adventure that will last a lifetime.”

Funded by the Canada Council as well as a number of major corporations, including Imperial Oil, book week has been a Canadian institution since 1977. That was when the book centre invited a handful of Canadian authors, including Jim Wallace, author and illustrator of Morgan the Magnificent, and Dennis Lee, Canada’s foremost children’s poet, whose 27-year-old Alligator Pie remains a favorite with children and adults around the world, to become pioneers in the unique literary road show.

Over the years, book week has evolved into a multifaceted program that, apart from the tour of authors, includes a national writing contest for children and a book giveaway. Last year, for example, grade 3 students across the country were given a copy of Nolinot at the Library, written by Hazel Hutchins

EUGENIE FERNANDES WITH DAUGHTER KIM AND GRANDDAUGHTER ROBYN

“A book is a heck of a lot of fun”
and illustrated by Ruth Ohi. Says Teeple: "The free book program ensures that every child has a book of his or her own to treasure and brings every school in the country into book week."

Last year saw the introduction of storytellers and educational guides for parents and educators. Book Week 2000, which was organized around the theme of sports ("Score big with books"), featured a roster of 24 authors and illustrators and three storytellers. Among them were established book creators like Eugenie Fernandes, as well as relative newcomers like Rohanmun Khan, whose work ranges from tales for toddlers (Bédéme Ba-á-a-ák) to a collection of short stories and poems about growing up as a Muslim in North America (Muslim Child).

This year, thanks to a partnership with Communication Jeunesse, the book centre’s Montreal-based French-language counterpart, book week will become a bilingual affair. As a result, 31 English-speaking authors, illustrators and storytellers, among them Dennis Lee and Robert Munsch, will visit schools and libraries across the country with 22 of their francophone colleagues, including Sylvie Detorres, author of Père-à-deux un sourire / and Francine Pelletier, author of Les étoiles de Jade.

"There are so many benefits to making book week bilingual," says Barbara Hepdik, president of the Imperial Oil Charitable Foundation. "It will introduce Canadian children to a broader range of our writers, deepen their understanding of Canadian culture and provide a tremendous opportunity for children and teachers in immersion programs." When Hepdik heard that the book centre was planning to include French-speaking writers and illustrators, she recommended Imperial’s annual contribution be increased from $20,000 to $25,000. "It’s a pleasure to support such a valuable program," adds Hepdik.

"Book week is highly successful and does a great deal to promote Canadian literature and encourage literacy among young people."

The Canadian Children’s Book Industry has come a long way since the mid-1960s. "Thirty-five years ago, very few Canadian children’s books were being published," notes Ken Setterington, a child and youth advocate with the Toronto Public Library system and a member of CBC Radio’s influential Children’s Book Fund. "Back then, young readers had little choice but to choose books written by foreign authors."

Figures confirm Setterington’s observation. Even in 1976, when the book centre was established, just 5 children’s books by Canadian writers were published in Canada; last year about 500 were published. It’s an evolution that owes much to both the talent of the nation’s authors and the rise of independent and innovative publishers, including Toronto’s Groundwood Press, Kids Can Press and Annick Press, and Montréal’s Dominique et Compagnie and La courte échelle. The book centre can also take some of the credit; in addition to organizing book week, it publishes Our Choice, an annual catalogue of new books recommended by the centre, and hosts a biennial art auction, at which original book artwork donated by illustrators is sold to raise funds for book week.

"The creation of the book centre was seminal to the successful development of our industry," says Valerie Hussey, chief executive officer of Kids Can Press, publisher of the un SUCCESS the Franklin the Turtle books. "At a time when our industry was at a nascent stage and had very little money to promote itself, the book centre helped to create the visibility we needed to grow."

For an author, being involved in book week can be an exhausting undertaking. "A writer can give up to four readings a day in one location and then spend the evening travelling by car, train or plane to the next stop," says Carol McDougall, the book centre’s officer for Nova Scotia. "I’ve had participants tell me that the tour is both the most exhausting venture they’ve ever undertaken and the most exhilarating."

Chief among the benefits to authors and illustrators of participating in book week is no doubt the national exposure it offers. But this by no means the only benefit. "To begin with, book week is a hock of a lot of fun," says Eugenie Fernandes, a veteran of four book tours. "As well as telling stories, I get the children to draw with me. A favourite part of my show is when I close my eyes to do drawings of people or monkeys or alligators. The kids always end up screaming with laughter." The author also notes that book week provides a unique opportunity to connect emotionally with her readers. "It can be a very touching experience," says Fernandes, who creates her stories and illustrations in a studio overlooking a lake not far from Peterborough, Ont. "I recall one young boy I encountered in Nova Scotia last year. He approached me as my visit to his school was ending. He didn’t speak, just touched my arm. I was as though he wanted to make sure that I was real. I quite moved."

The value of connecting with children is something that Dennis Lee also appreciates. "Children come out of such a different world now," he says.

"Kids’ sense of fun, their love of play, sound and celebration, their loneliness – those are the things that have not changed"
from his home office in midtown Toronto. "In some ways, the children I will visit in British Columbia this fall will be quite unlike the children I met 24 years ago, when I did my first tour. But the emotional lives of children has remained the same. Kids' sense of fun, their love of play, sound and celebration, their loneliness - those are the things that have not changed. Being able to connect with all that is wonderfully invigorating."

The author and illustrator Marie-Louise Gay shares Lee's enthusiasm. "We Canadian children's book writers are an incredibly lucky bunch," says the Montreal-based Gay, whose award-winning best sellers include Rainy Day Magic and Sticks, Queen of the Snow. "I compared with Canadian authors for adult readers, we are very well known, and that's largely because of book week. It's quite special to travel to a small town in Prince Edward Island or to a remote aboriginal community in the North and be greeted by an eager audience."

Gay has another reason for treasuring book week. "I find touring and meeting children incredibly enriching in terms of my own creativity," she explains. "As an illustrator as well as a writer, I am influenced by everything I see. For me, book week is a travelling art class." To make her point, Gay relates the story of a visit she paid to a school in Thunder Bay, Ont., some years ago. "There was a little girl in one of the classes who was wearing a pink party dress," she recalls. "Among all the other kids who were wearing the usual jeans and tops, she was like something out of a fairy tale. She was such a remarkable sight that I asked the teacher about her. Apparently the girl had received the dress for her birthday the week before and was so proud of it that she had worn it to school every day since. The image of this child shining like a light in the corner of the classroom stayed with me until eventually she became the heroine of a book I wrote called Princesse Pamberie, which tells the story of a young girl who thinks she is a princess."

The greatest beneficiaries of book week, however, are Canada's children. Says Johanne Guadet, executive director at Communication Jeunesse: "Having the opportunity to meet and speak with an author helps our children to discover the pleasure of reading. Moreover, words are the first step to discovering oneself and the world."

Ken Surratttung agrees with this sentiment. "Book week adds a richness to the lives of children right across the country," he says, adding thoughtfully that it is particularly beneficial for children living in high needs areas.

For the past 27 years, Nancy Binette has coordinated programming for special needs children at Sir Alexander Mackenzie School in Inuvik, N.W.T. As part of her work, she runs a visiting authors program. Through events like Midnight Madness, an annual fun fair that takes place on the summer solstice (when the sun doesn't set in Inuvik), the students, parents and teachers raise money to help fund the program, which costs $12,000 annually. "Because of travel costs, the program is quite expensive," says Binette. "But it's worth it. In our area, many children do not have a lot of books at home and literacy levels are lower than the national average. So providing a literary experience and exposure to the written word is extremely important."

Last year, Binette was able to take advantage of book week's author tour, arranging for Rukhsana Khan, who was reading at the public library, to give three one-hour readings at the school. Binette says there's evidence that the visiting author program is having a real and measurable impact on literacy levels at Sir Alexander Mackenzie.

"An author's visit so often inspires our children to go to the library or even buy a book during our regular book fairs. And that's helping to improve overall writing and reading levels here. When we first started a regular writing assessment program three years ago, none of our children achieved a rating of excellent and only 15 were classified as proficient, the next highest level. A large number of students, 80, fell into the insufficient category - the lowest of the five categories - as they were unable to write enough to be assessed. The results were much more encouraging this year. Seventy of our children received an excellent rating and 33 earned a proficient. Only seven students did not write enough to be assessed. Given that a full third of our student body are designated as special needs children, such results are very encouraging, and I believe can be credited in large measure to reading initiatives."

"Compared with Canadian authors for adult readers, we are very well known, and that's largely because of book week."
entertaining Canadian peacekeeping troops in the Middle East and appearing with George Burns on a television special. In 1967, after performing at Expo 67, the sisters went their separate ways, and Andrea, then 28, turned to classical music, first joining the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and then, in 1977, the Toronto Symphony.

It was in September 1987, during the Toronto Symphony's Canadian Odyssey tour of the North, that Hansen first fell in love with the Arctic. The orchestra split up into three groups (brass, winds and strings), with each performing in a different community. Hansen and four other string players presented a repertoire of classical music in a high school gym in Aklavik, N.W.T., and afterwards launched into some foot-stomping fiddling. When they played a Scottish reel, Hansen noticed youngsters bouncing in their seats and tapping their toes. She was moved by their appreciation of the music. After the performance, a young girl tapped at her sleeve. "Are you ever coming back?" she asked pleadingly.

"Too far I am," Hansen promised.

Fiddling had once been a strong Arctic tradition, brought to the North in the 19th century by Scottish whalers, sealers and Hudson's Bay Company workers, but it died out, and Hansen wanted to know why. After the concert, at her hotel in Inukjuak, she asked her host, Frank Hansen (no relation), the reason.

"Today there's television, videos and a lot of other things that have captured kids' interest," sighed Frank, one of the few remaining Arctic fiddlers. "As well, school music budgets have been axed, but I've always had a dream that I would see the fiddle come back."

"Well," said Andrea firmly, "we'll just have to rekindle the tradition." And on her return to Toronto, she went straight to the string instrument dealer George Heib to beg him to donate used child-sized violins. She then asked the Toronto Symphony if it could help out with travel costs to the Arctic, and the orchestra applied to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, which donated $10,000. Frank also searched for funding, approaching the territorial government as well as Imperial Oil (he worked for the company as a bulk agent), which donated $10,000 to help set up the nonprofit foundation Strings Across the Sky.

Among the Inuit there was initially both indifference and resistance to Hansen's teaching violin to the children; at first, she was considered just another woman "snowbird" who would come briefly, raise the children's expectations and never return. But as the months passed, parents began commenting on the changes in their children that had occurred after they had taken up fiddling. They noticed that their motor skills and coordination had improved as well as their ability to focus. "I'm not up here to create violinists," insists Hansen, who, over the years, has developed a simple, effective three-day course. "I'm providing a method of gaining self-esteem, which will help these youngsters succeed in whatever field they choose."

Hansen goes north as often as possible, on average three times a year, using up her annual paid vacation time and taking a further two weeks of unpaid leave from the Toronto Symphony. She has borrowed trucks to drive from one remote community to another, often on slick ice roads in 24-hour darkness. She has eaten muktuk — whale skin with blubber — at traditional feasts and been greeted with drum dances. "I feel extremely privileged to have experienced so many Inuit traditions."

In April 1994, a group of 35 Strings Across the Sky students performed in Inukjuak, accompanied by the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. In early 1997, when Andrea was asked by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra to be the soloist at its highly successful Saturday Afternoon Youth Concerts, a series of performances for young people, she immediately suggested her northern students play with her. The following months saw a flurry of fiddle events and concerts across the Arctic, while the bands and councils of eight communities struggled to raise the $75,000 needed to send 40 children and 10 chaperons to Toronto.

But Hansen's proudest moment was to come in June 1999, when, beneath the stained glass windows of the 12th-century St. Magnus Cathedral in the Orkney Islands off the north coast of Scotland, she raised the bow to her violin and 34 northern youngsters followed suit. Playing the haunting notes of "Amazing Grace," they walked single file down the aisle towards the altar. She had brought her students back to the very spot from where the ancestors of the Arctic fiddler had set out more than a century earlier.

Since the founding of Strings Across the Sky, hundreds of northern children have learned to fiddle, and remarkably, more than half of them are still playing.

Next spring, Hansen plans to take her love of music and children across Canada. On what she calls her 2002 Sound Odyssey, she will drive from Newfound-land to Vancouver Island and then to Inukjuak, touring schools and organizing events and workshops to bring music to children. "Before I kick the bucket," she says in her gravelly, determined voice, "I want to see a nonprofit foundation in each province and territory to ensure that kids have access to musical instruments. Kids need music to grow." — Marg Ophoff

She had brought her students back to the very spot from where the ancestors of the Arctic fiddler had set out more than a century earlier.
Neighbours

With operations throughout Canada, Imperial is part of many communities. Building and maintaining a strong relationship with these communities is a priority for the company.

BY RUSSELL FELTON

As a child growing up in Dartmouth, N.S., in the residential area known as Woodside, Veronica Gutard liked to pick blueberries with her friends in a wooded field behind her family’s home. The field was owned by the Imperial Oil petroleum refinery beyond it, but that didn’t deter the children, eager for an illicit feast.

“There was a fence, but we always found a way to go over or under it,” the 51-year-old Gutard recalls today with a laugh. “There was a guard at the refinery gate, but it was too far away for him to reach us before we’d picked our handfuls of berries and slunk back over the fence. He’d keep an eye on us, but we never stranded from the edge of the field and he let us have our fun.”

Today, Gutard is principal of a local elementary school and continues to live in Woodside, along with her mother, near the refinery that has been a constant presence in her life. The refinery, she says, has been a good neighbour. “The people there are very involved with the community and work hard to keep local residents informed about their activities,” she says. “For example, a newsletter lets people know about activities at the site, such as any future construction that might lead to increased traffic or noise, and the meaning of sirens, as well as what to do if there’s ever an emergency and who to contact with a question or concern. I know that if I call the refinery for any reason, I’ll get a quick response and an honest one,” says Gutard.

Living close to the refinery has not been without incident, however. Gutard recalls one sunny Saturday morning in August 1995, when a mechanical breakdown at the refinery resulted in a cloud of a powdery, silica-based substance being spread over the surrounding neighbourhood. The material, a catalyst used to accelerate a chemical reaction, was not hazardous to health, but local residents didn’t know this at first and were understandably alarmed.

“The response by refinery personnel was very impressive,” recalls Gutard. “It wasn’t long before they had local radio and television stations broadcasting information on the substance and had walkie-talkie teams to all area homes to provide specific details and to warn vehicles, windows, patios and outdoor furniture. They then held a community meeting to provide further information and to respond to concerns.

“I wasn’t pretending it was a pleasant experience, but I don’t know if any company would have done what Imperial did in terms of keeping people informed and clearing up the mess. In the end, I think it actually helped build our trust and confidence in the refinery and its people.”

Corporations exist to provide a financial return to shareholders by producing and selling needed products and services. And communities where industrial corporations operate major facilities can reap significant economic benefits in terms of employment, wealth generating investment and local spending on goods and services. Imperial’s integrated petroleum refinery and petrochemical manufacturing plant in Sarnia, Ont., for example, has about 1,200 full-time employees with an annual payroll of approximately $45 million; spends around $75 million locally each year on materials and services and $50 million on maintenance and upgrading; and pays annual municipal taxes of $6 million.

A responsible company will also recognize that its host communities have legitimate expectations regarding the corporation’s operations and overall behaviour. For example, they expect companies to operate safely, protect the environment, comply with laws and regulations, keep community members informed about matters that could affect their lives or economic wellbeing, and generally conduct business with adherence to high standards of honesty and integrity. In addition, some corporations accept that they have a responsibility to help improve the quality of life in the local community by supporting deserving groups and causes.

Imperial has long recognized its responsibility to meet the legitimate expectations of the communities in which it operates major facilities. “The company’s primary responsibility is to be successful in all aspects of its relationships and business undertakings,” says Bolt Peterson, Imperial’s chairman and chief executive officer. “Only by being financially successful can

“I know that if I call the refinery for any reason, I’ll get a quick response and an honest one.”
"The first operating priority at Imperial, bar none, is safety — nothing is more important."

seasonal. The importance of safety and emergency response is paramount, they constitute the main area of the community's involvement with local communities. It is important to recognize that we are part of the community and we are very much about it," says William Burton, site manufacturing manager at Imperial's Sarnia facility. "In addition to our 1,200 employees, we use as many as 1,500 local contractors on the site each year — almost all of these people live in the community. It's not a question of them and us — it's all us.

"The refinery has been a part of Sarnia since the 1890s and has played a major role in the development of the city and the surrounding area," says Burton, who serves as president and board chair of the Sarnia-Lambton Council for Economic Renewal. "I think people have high expectations of Imperial as a leader in the local business community, and we have the same high expectations of ourselves.

Like the Duxfort refinery and other major company facilities, the Sarnia operations communicate with their neighbours through newsletters, brochures and occasional direct mail correspondence. In addition, media news releases and newspaper advertisements are used to inform local residents about minor incidents or maintenance work that may increase traffic, noise and flaring. An annual report detailing the operation's safety, health and environmental performance and progress is distributed throughout the community; site tours are arranged for area schools and, about once a year, an open house is held for residents not only of Sarnia but also of Fort Huron, Michigan (across the St. Clair River), and includes presentations on safety and emergency response procedures.

Carolyn Harris, administrator of the Residence on the St. Clair, a retirement home situated just a few hundred metres from the Imperial plant, feels that the company genuinely cares about its responsibilities to its neighbours. "And I wouldn't say that about all corporations in the area," she says. The retirement home has about 70 permanent residents, many of whom have physical limitations. "If there were ever an emergency and we had to move people quickly," Harris says, "we'd face particular challenges." Still, she is confident that these challenges would be met successfully. "Imperial has worked with us," she explains. "Apart from organizing workshops for our staff and residents, refinery personnel have walked us through our various emergency response plans and drills. And I have a plaque by my bed with telephone numbers to call in the event of a number of different incidents. It's very helpful and reassuring.

More reassuring still, perhaps, is that official records, which are available for the past 50 years, reveal that during the period covered, no incident at the site has resulted in the need to evacuate neighbours.

The Turner Valley area of Alberta, not far from Calgary, has been producing crude oil and natural gas on and off since 1914, when it was the site of Canada's first — albeit short-lived — oil boom. It remains a significant natural gas-producing area today.

Situated in the Turner Valley, the rural community of Millgrove is home to Imperial's Quirk Creek gas-processing plant (where I), the use of impurities and compressed for transportation by pipeline). It takes its commitment to the community very seriously. For 25 years, the area has had a joint committee made up of members from the companies and provincial environment and energy agencies as well as members of the local community, says Imperial's Cathy Roberts, who is responsible for the operation's community liaison. "The committee meets twice a year, and meetings are open to all local residents, who can raise any issue they wish. Minutes of the meetings are distributed to residents within 14 kilometres of the plant — some 375 homes.

The Quirk Creek plant also publishes a community newsletter, which covers health, safety and environmental matters as well as activities at the facility. Says Roberts: "We mix news with general information about the plant, feeling that the more our neighbours know about our operation, the fewer concerns they'll have.

To increase its understanding of the views of local residents, the plant recently conducted a survey of some 400 community members. "We wanted to understand our neighbours better," says Roberts, "to know our strengths and weaknesses in communication with them." The survey revealed that older people view the industry more favourably than younger people and that men are more favourably disposed than women. "We need to address this imbalance," says Roberts, "and now that we are aware of it, we can." The survey also established that residents feel very positive about Imperial's contributions and community support programs.

The Quirk Creek operation devotes considerable attention to local schools through a program that
Involves sponsoring student science fairs, providing regular plant tours and open houses for local schoolchildren as well as participation in school career days. Educational partnerships are an integral part of Imperial's community relations efforts across the country, and the company has received wide recognition for its work in this area. It recently received a Lighthouse Award from the Calgary Board of Education for a partnership program with the city's Bowmont High School aimed at enriching the academic curriculum, enhancing students' work skills, and fostering social responsibility. And a similar program at Grand Centre High School, near Imperial's Cold Lake operation, won the company the prestigious Conference Board of Canada's Royal Bank Partners in Education Award for Alberta.

In place since 1996, the Grand Centre partnership focuses on enhancing the relevance of education and preparing students for the future, says Imperial's Sue Trefry, the program's coordinator. "We try to help students make the connection between school and the real world by helping them to develop their work skills and by broadening their exposure to potential careers."

As in any good relationship, sensitivity, openness and honesty are essential in working with aboriginal communities on whose traditional lands some of Imperial's oil-and-gas producing operations are located, says Roy Steinbauer, manager of aboriginal affairs for Imperial's Calgary-based natural resources division. "The issues are sometimes very difficult, and often revolve around aboriginal traditions, culture and social imperatives, so it's important that we be aware of, and sensitive to, those considerations. We try very hard to demonstrate that we are trustworthy, consistent and ethical in our dealings with First Nations groups across the country and that we are willing to contribute to the community in a variety of ways."

Paula McMillan serves as aboriginal affairs and community liaison adviser at the Cold Lake operation. "This facility is built on the traditional hunting and trapping land of the Cold Lake First Nations," she says, "so it's critically important that we share a close and communicative relationship with the local aboriginal community. We need to understand all concerns they might have and work together to resolve them."

McMillan explains that one of the company's objectives is to provide employment to members of the local First Nations community. "To help us do this, we have established an internship program for aboriginal people that provides up to 24 months of paid work and includes training to develop the work skills required in permanent positions with the company."

Imperial's relationship with the aboriginal community in the Cold Lake area is not new. In the early years of the operation, more than two decades ago, Imperial worked with six local First Nations bands to form Pimee Well Servicing, an aboriginal-owned-and-operated company that today serves not only Imperial's facility but also those of other oil companies.

Instrumental to Imperial's relationship with the First Nations and other indigenous peoples in the vicinity of Cold Lake is the Lakeland Industry and Community Association, which is made up of members of the First Nations, other area residents and communities, and representatives of industries operating in northeastern Alberta. The association's objectives are to resolve long-standing issues associated with the development of industry in the area, such as the environmental impact of operations and how new projects will be integrated into the community.

The remediation and reclamation of oil- and-gas-producing sites after their productive life is over, wherever they are located, is obviously a significant concern for all. "Imperial's Bonnie Glen oilfield in Alberta, for example, is partly on land owned by four First Nations groups," says Steinbauer. "The field has been in production since 1951 and will be depleted by approximately 2053. The First Nations groups have been closely involved in our abandonment and land-reclamation plans, and we will make every effort to satisfy their expectations."

Helping improve the quality of life in Canadian society, particularly in communities, has been a tradition at Imperial since 1984, when the company donated $100 to a woman's mission in Newfoundland. Today, the Imperial Oil Charitable Foundation's annual budget of more than $65 million helps to support hundreds of organizations across the country, with emphasis on education, especially in mathematics, science and technology. "Not that areas other than education aren't important -- they are and we continue to support them," says Barbara Heydjik, president of the foundation. "But education is our primary focus. We believe it is an area where we can make a significant difference. Our vision is to help build a lifelong learning system in Canada that ranks among the best in the world."

Sometimes, explains Heydjik, a link can be forged between education and local community needs when at first one might not be apparent. For example, Imperial recently made a contribution to the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre in Halifax that went towards the creation of a beautiful hillside garden at the Camp Hill Veterans' Memorial Building. Heydjik explains that it was agreed that the garden would be used to stage an annual intergenerational science fair, involving veterans and students from local schools. Add Andrea Waters, a recreation therapist and project coordinator at the health sciences centre, "The aim is to provide a milieu for different generations of Canadian youth to come together to discuss emerging trends in science."

Other Imperial-sponsored projects have filled cultural needs. For example, the Sarsi area was without a performing arts centre from the 1950s to 1995, when the Sarsi Little Theatre group began raising funds to restore and renovate a rundown movie theatre. Imperial committed to donate $250,000 over five years for renovation, in addition to another $50,000 for the refurbishing of the marquee. Named the Imperial Oil Centre for the Performing Arts, the theatre is now used to stage productions that have ranged from high-school dance recitals and musicals to a presentation by the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. "The centre is used by a wide range of groups in the community," says Richard Plack, the facility's general manager. "So Imperial's help has given a major boost to our city's cultural life."

In addition to direct contributions, Imperial supports other programs designed for not-for-profit groups with which company employees, contractors or family members are personally involved. Under the company's Volunteer Involvement Program, employees, contractors and their spouses and surviving spouses can apply for grants of up to $1,000 for not-for-profit organizations for which they provide volunteer services. And Ethno-bridled retailers can receive funds from Imperial that will match, up to $1,000, their own contributions to local community groups.

Clearly, the community at large and local communities in particular have a right to expect any corporation to be responsible citizens -- to comply with laws and regulations, to operate safely, to safeguard the environment, to disclose all relevant information and to choose the path of highest integrity in all its business dealings.

Throughout its 120-year history, Imperial has tried to meet these expectations through a combination of formal policies and programs, regular ongoing communications and support for deserving causes in the community.

But as many residential neighbours of corporate operations will attest, it is not the formal programs that solidify relationships between communities and industries operating in their midst but the day-to-day interactions of people with people. Veronica Gualtieri reports that at the time of a recent temporary shutdown at Imperial's Dartmouth refinery, a shift foreman from the plant came to visit her mother to reassure her that there was anything to worry about. "Someone from the refinery often calls or visits my mother when they think she might be concerned," says Gualtieri. "It's perhaps a small thing, but it's thoughtful. And that's what helps to make a good neighbour."

"Our vision is to help build a lifelong learning system in Canada that ranks among the best in the world."

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One of the reasons my wife and I decided to make our home in eastern Ontario’s Prince Edward County was that we would be within a mere hour’s drive of Kingston, a beautiful old limestone city that I take every opportunity to visit.

And when I do, I generally make a point of going to Market Square, where local farmers and market gardeners have been selling their home-grown produce for more than two centuries. Kingston celebrated the 200th anniversary of the formal establishment of the market in July. Every month brings its own long-awaited treat. In mid-May comes the first of the local asparagus, then, in early June, strawberries, followed by garden peas and new potatoes. During the summer months, there’s a veritable cornucopia of pickled—morning vegetables on offer, from zucchini, cucumbers and cabbage to chard, bush beans, peppers, tomatoes, peppers and eggplants.

And then, as summer shades into fall, come the many varieties of local corn and squash and every kind of jam, jelly, condiment, relish and pickle that one could possibly dream of by tradition and local lore, all vendors must live within 100 kilometres of Kingston itself.

The market is one of the oldest in Canada, its informal origins reaching back to the arrival of Empire Loyalists in the 1780s and the founding of the city itself. It was in Market Square on July 8, 1792, that Governor John Graves Simcoe proclaimed the creation of Upper Canada. It was here, in 1812, that the outbreak of war between the United States and Britain was announced. Here, too, Kingstonians gathered to celebrate Confederation Day in 1867, and, in 1885, soldiers assembled to head west to fight Louis Riel.

And last century, the square served as a marshalling point for soldiers from the area who went to serve in the two world wars.

Market Square has also seen disaster. In April 1840, a huge fire swept through the waterfront area of Kingston, destroying many buildings, including those on Market Square. But the city was determined to rebuild, and four years later, Kingstonians celebrated the completion of a splendid new complex on the square, which included not only a market building, known as the Shambles, but also a magnificent city hall adjoining it. Constructed of local limestone, like so much of Kingston, City Hall is today regarded as one of the finest examples of classic municipal architecture in Canada.

In 1863, the Shambles was partially destroyed by another fire (what remained of the structure is now home to the city’s corporate services department, for over the years, Kingston has grown in municipal consequence as it has grown in cultural, industrial and economic significance).

Throughout the years, however, there has been one constant at Market Square—the farmers’ market. Today, Kingston’s downtown is being revitalized, and the market is at the heart of a bustling commercial revival.

That’s another reason why I find the square so pleasant. Not only can I find marvelous fresh and varied produce at country prices, but the square is bordered by friendly stores offering everything from second-hand books to African antiques to exotic foods as well as a number of most agreeable restaurants. But today, thank you, I’ll pass on the curio— I’ll settle instead for a dozen cobs of that delicious peachy-yellow corn that was picked no more than a few hours ago... -- Wynn Thomas
World Reflections

At Canada’s Couchiching Conference, people from all walks of life have been gathering by the shores of an Ontario lake to address some of the world’s most important issues.

BY BARBARA WADE ROSE

It is a breeze-buffed and sunny morning on the tranquil shores of Lake Couchiching near Orillia, Ont. At the YMCA’s Geneva Park resort on the east shore of the lake, a few hundred strangers greet one another as they help themselves to a breakfast buffet. Outside, sunshine sketches the water and children attending camp on the lake brace themselves for the first swimming lessons of the day.

It is a typical morning at the Couchiching Conference, Canada’s longest-running, internationally famous public affairs forum. Started in 1932, the three-and-a-half-day event takes place in mid-August (occasionally, there are smaller conferences or “round tables” at different times of the year) and focuses on a specific topic. Keynote speakers, panel discussions, debates and question-and-answer sessions all help illuminate the chosen theme. Since a group of devotees to adult education, who were also members of the YMCA, began the conference nearly 70 years ago, visitors from around the world and all regions of Canada have been coming to this spot to exchange ideas about important issues of the day and give thought to the future. There are other public affairs conferences (Pugwash, which is held at different locations around the world, and Montebello, named after the Quebec town in which it takes place), but they are by invitation only. Couchiching is unique, because anyone may attend. There is no public forum quite like it.

All Couchiching Conferences have reflected topical concerns. The first, held at a time when Canada and the United States were trying to decide whether government intervention was necessary to stem the growth of widespread poverty, had as its theme “Depression and the Limits of Capitalism.” One speaker at the conference was J.S. Woodsworth, a member of Parliament from Manitoba who at the time was marshalling his resources (and his colleagues) to found the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, Canada’s first social democratic party. No doubt by the time his talk was finished, Woodsworth had gathered a few new believers.

For the next three years, the conference focused on the Depression and social change. Participants searched for a solution to the world’s ills, discovering that there was no easy answer. Socialism was a magnet for discussion; at the 1933 conference, the writer and economist Stephen Leacock, for one, called it “a dream altogether utopian and absolutely impossible.” While clear solutions to social, economic and political problems may not have emerged, interest in the concept of discussing ideas and policy was keen. Canadians come by the hundreds and pitched their tents – there was no conference facility in those days.

“People had radio or newspapers,” reflected Trevor Purton, who served as president of the Couchiching Institute on Public Affairs, the organization that puts on the conference, from 1998 until his death last year, “but access to informed opinion and debate was very limited or three generations ago. Couchiching answered a real need.”

In 1938, “Contrasts and Cleavages in Canadian Life” looked at the social changes wrought by the Depression; in 1939, “The Crisis of Democracy?” dealt with the challenges in

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confronting democracy from the Fascist movements in Europe. And there were not merely idle discussions – Couchiching quickly became a testing of the waters for new political directions. Britain tried to garner allegiance for its stance against Hitler during the conferences of the late 1930s, while, also at Couchiching, Canadians such as Liberal MP Paul Martin (St.) urged the country to subscribe to America’s Monroe Doctrine and stay out of Europe’s troubles. One conference guest-speaker, the historian Frank Underhill, advocated Canadian neutrality in the Second World War and was threatened with expulsion from the University of Toronto as a result. His job was saved by Donald Creighton and Harold Innis, who defended Underhill’s – and Couchiching’s – right to the free exchange of ideas.

Despite its controversies, or perhaps because of them, the conference impressed foreign journalists. S.M. Keeny, an Associated Press writer from New York who covered the conference in 1935 ("The Common Concerns of Canada and the U.S. in Domestic and Foreign Policy"), reported that he found Couchiching "among the most valuable experiences in recent years – experiences which have included ... a month of observing the work of the League of Nations itself."

Another unique feature of the Couchiching Conference is that its debates and sessions have never resulted in a prescriptive policy paper. Transcripts of proceedings are shown available (now both in printed and electronic format), but the conference never takes an official position on anything. This is for two reasons: one, it dovetails neatly with Couchiching’s goal to be a public affairs policy forum for everyone; and two, it is not likely conference participants could ever reach consensus on a subject.

Even with a diversity of opinions, the conference’s effect on Canada and the world has been singular and lasting. When the Second World War was over, it was at Couchiching that E. E. just Reed of the Department of External Affairs first publically expressed the idea of an alliance linking the democratic countries of Europe and North America.

Louis St. Laurent, as minister of external affairs, picked up the idea, which was fleshed out at secret talks with the British and the Americans. The result was the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, in 1949. It was here in 1953 that the Harvard historian and writer Arthur Schlesinger felt it appropriate to confess what “grievous damage to the fabric of freedom” McCarthyism was doing in his native United States. Schlesinger’s remarks were a key signal to both conference participants and visiting journalists that Senator Joseph McCarthy’s Communist witch-hunt was finally going to be openly attacked. The 1960 conference, whose theme was “The Latin Americas,” provided on-the-spot coverage of rapidly occurring changes in Latin America, touching on the Cuban Revolution. Among the featured speakers and panelists were José Figueres, a former president of Costa Rica, and the Peruvian philosopher Luis Alberto Sánchez. It also yielded two defections: a professor from the University of Havana spoke at the conference, attended the debates, and then, with his wife, promptly applied for asylum in the United States.

The prestige of the conference resides in the prominence of those who think it is important to attend. Dr. Ralph Benche, a U.S. analyst at the first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, discussed that fledgling organization here in 1946, his second Couchiching Conference. The Chinese author Han Sui Jen defended Mao’s “great leap forward” to participants at the “Changing Asia” conference in 1959.

Former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau used to ride up to the convention centre on his motorcycle. The former premier of Quebec René Lévesque went for a late-night dip in the lake one evening after a much-heated debate. Pierre de Bellefeuille, the founding editor of Maclean’s francophone edition, Le Magasin Maclean, remarked in 1957, “Couchiching attracts a very wide range, from high-rank- ing officials through university professors and churchmen to ordinary citizens, schoolteachers, businessmen, social...
workers and others whose lives are dedicated to the betterment of mankind's lot."

Sometimes well-meaning people have been pitted against one another. The 1980s brought the Quiet Revolution, and indeed separation, to Churchiching. In 1964, the Canadian Institute on Public Affairs, forerunner of the Churchiching Institute on Public Affairs, scrapped its plan for a theme on education in favour of "Order and Good Government." The next year, "Concepts of Federalism" won on the agenda, and with Churchiching's usual openness, many futures for Canada were entertained.

"When Quebecers went to Churchiching, they didn't encounter resistance," says the journalist Peter Desbarats in Patrick Pearson's book Churchiching: The First Fifty Years. "The big question posed to them was, 'What do you want?"'

While agreement at Churchiching has always been an elusive, and perhaps unsought, goal, the conference "has always been attended by people who believed that the world of the future is going to be quite substantially different from the world of the past," notes the historian B.K. Sandwell. "It has now become practically impossible to believe that the world is not going to be different, however much one may wish it to remain the same."

Recent themes emphasize this. "Science, Ethics and Human Destiny" was the 1999 theme and the most philosophical to date, urging participants' minds from national and international matters to the universe itself. One keynote presenter was Australia's Paul Davies, whose expertise is a blend of both scientific and religious issues and who travelled to Churchiching (without a speaker's fee, since no one is paid anything beyond their expenses) to discuss extraterrestrial life. Davies is Australia's best-known scientist and travels widely, speaking on ethical and religious issues to both groups and universities, including Pope John Paul II and the Dalai Lama.

In his audience at Churchiching were the kind of everyday Canadians that make the conference more than a council of elite. Dave Sheu grew up in Montebello, Que., in the years before the First World War. A university education was out of the question for most people in the community. It was still the early days of settlement in much of the Prairies, and children were routinely pulled out of school at 15 or younger to help support their families by either working on the farm or finding jobs. When Sheu was nearing the end of grade 8, the time he was expected to leave school, he begged his parents to let him keep learning. Two extra years, grades 9 and 10, were all he was permitted. After that, his education came from whatever job he had — a clerk in a store, a labourer, and eventually, with his wife, owner of his own service station and lunch counter in Tilden Lake, Ont.

From the time of his retirement in 1974 until this year, when ill health kept him at home, Sheu was an avid participant at the Churchiching Conference, reveling in the opportunity to think and learn. "It wound me right up," he says. "It gave me so many ideas."

His wife, Ida, a vigorous woman, found herself equally intrigued. "I started coming just to keep him company," she says. "Then I got interested myself. I've enjoyed every one of them."

Professionals such as Green Burrows, director of the national grants program at the Hospital for Sick Children Foundation in Toronto, have also found themselves energized by the Churchiching Conference. "My boss's philosophy is that if something stimulates you to think about broader issues relevant to your work, you'll be in better shape to do your job," says Burrows. "At the conference, I meet people from many streams of Canadian life." The journalist Jan Wong, who has been a speaker at a Churchiching Round Table, a regular brainstorming session held in Vancouver, Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal throughout the year, credits the round table sessions for professional stimulation. The participants were, she says, very attentive and interested about her evening's chosen topic. China, and, she adds, "I got a story idea from one of them."

Last year, the Churchiching Institute chose to focus...
In Closing

Getting Started

Several months ago, I sat with the Review's designers, Jim Ireland and Carol Young, looking through 20 or so pieces of art, all of which illustrated Wayne Schmal's essay, "A Prairie Harvest," which appears in this issue. The artwork had been done by students of Toronto's Ontario College of Art and Design as an assignment, with the understanding that the best piece would be used in the magazine.

I was fascinated by the many different approaches the students had taken. There was an etchinel, sensual piece that made use of delicate leaves and subtle colours; a clever sketch that combined a farmer and various mechanical and agricultural images; and a charming picture of a farmhouse set amid fields that seemed to stretch for ever. But one piece stood out. Not only was it a very fine piece of work, but it captured perfectly both the mood of Schmal's essay and the style of this magazine. It was the work of John Perlock and appears on the cover of this issue.

Deciding that more than one illustration was needed, we commissioned Perlock to do a second piece. The result was the finely executed Kandinskian-like illustration that appears on pages two and three. No doubt the remuneration Perlock received was very welcome, but for a person about to begin his career as a freelance illustrator, the greater reward was having his work published. "Art directors don't seem interested in you unless you've been published," said Perlock. "I'd been to see a few art directors about doing work, but they wanted to know where I'd been published. I had done a few pieces for Websites but nothing for print. I hope this will open some doors.

Perlock isn't the first student from the Ontario College of Art and Design to be published in the Review. In 1999, Marcos Chin, who was then in his final year, did a wonderful illustration for the cover of the fall issue based on Al Purdy's essay, "A Sort of Human Triumph." Chin went on to receive an APEX (Awards for Publication Excellence) from a U.S. communications organization for the work, and has since established himself as a respected illustrator in both Canada and the United States, working for such publications as Flare & Co., New York magazine and the Los Angeles Times Magazine.

Jim Ireland receives many portfolios from young artists and photographers eager for professional experience. "It would be impossible to assign all of them work," says Ireland, "but when I see young people with great potential I like to help them if I can.

Ireland recalls the help he was given in the early years of his career. Born and raised in England, he came to Canada in 1967 after working as a graphic designer in London for two years. "I got a job in a small studio in Toronto doing layout, but I didn't feel I was getting very far," he says. "So I decided I'd go and see some art directors." One of them was Ken Rodmell, a former art director of the Review who was then designing the Canadian, a weekly magazine distributed with various newspapers across the country. Obviously impressed with the young designer's abilities, Rodmell offered him a job with the Canadian, and, in Ireland says, he never looked back. "Ken made such a difference to my life, and I've always been extremely grateful," he remarks. "From that first meeting, he guided my career, coached me and generally looked out for me." Over the years, Ireland has designed a number of Canada's best-known publications, including Maclean's, Toronto Life and Canadian Art, and in 1997 was the recipient of the National Magazine Awards Foundation's lifetime achievement award, becoming the first art director to be so honoured. Since then, only one other art director has received this award—Ken Rodmell.

It was a teacher at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute's graduate journalism program who opened a door for me. He had taught me magazine writing and knew that I was hoping to work in the area. After completing the program, I received a call from the teacher. Maclean's magazine had asked him to write an article, he said, but he was unable to and would, if I liked, suggest the assigning editor that I write it. It was only a short article on a topic of no great significance (electronic checkout at grocery stores, as I recall), but it led to another (lucrative and another) new article for a television writer. I found these articles to approach other magazines, and it wasn't long before I found I was earning my keep as a freelance writer and editor. How grateful I've always been to that teacher.

Remembering the value of having a door opened for one, I find it satisfying to see the work of people like John Perlock in the Review. But publishing the work of newcomers is not an act of altruism. Emerging writers and artists provide fresh ideas, they are essential to the continuance of our magazines. Certainly, John Perlock's work for the Review will not gain him instant success. It does, however, provide this talented artist with his first appearance in print, which, I hope, will be instrumental in helping him to secure further assignments. As Jim Ireland reflects, "A little help can last a lifetime."—Sarah Lawley