

Meet Our Farmers

by Joanne Patience-Strome



Peter Buschmann at the Mabou Farmers' Market

At one time, Nova Scotia, and specifically Cape Breton, was a net food exporter, but that changed gradually during the second half of the 20th century, and we now import most of our food, much of it from other countries. However, we can choose instead to support locally grown food from the 24 per cent of Nova Scotia farmers who sell directly to us via farmers' markets, CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub, and at their own farm gates.

While writing about our local farmers this past summer, we identified some whose family roots go back many generations on Cape Breton, but also "un-earthed" others who have moved here from other provinces across Canada and even from as far away as New Zealand! We are fortunate indeed to attract people to our province who build or purchase small farms and sell locally in our communities. **Peter Buschmann** and his wife Sibylle immigrated from Hamburg, Germany, to Canada in 2005. While they bought land initially in British Columbia on the west coast, they attended a conference where they met Nova Scotians and saw pictures of the Inverness and Port Hawkesbury area. They soon sold their land in BC and purchased 50 acres in Cleveland, near Port Hawkesbury.

Peter had been a power engineer in Germany, running his own heating and air-conditioning company with 24 employees, but his hobby was smoking meats and making sausages. While he originally did some maintenance and repair work for various companies here, he also continued his hobby, but soon realized he would have to raise his own pigs to get the quality he sought in his smoked and processed meats. So, after acquiring 54 pigs, he began what developed into a thriving farm as well as a sausage and meat processing business, which they named **Buschmann Free Range BIO Farm**.

Much thought went into the naming of their farm, says Peter: "BIO" is the German expression for feeding and treating animals and plants in a responsible and natural way, resulting in high-quality food products. We also want to express that we have foreign roots and try to enrich our products with our knowledge and German recipes and extraordinary spices. All in all, we want to produce for the people of lovely Cape Breton delicious quality food products and try to contribute to a healthy environment."

Their farm philosophy is based on the principles of permaculture and a belief that at its heart, a farm is a dynamic organism with all parts interconnecting.

Their free-range pigs clear the land for their gardens. Composted pig and chicken manure feed the gardens and "hugelkulture" beds, which are raised garden beds in the German tradition, built from the bottom up with logs, sticks and branches, wood chips, grass clippings, manure, leaves, food scraps, egg shells, and even coffee grounds.

Peter attributes Sibylle's love of animals and gardening, as well as her skills as a master baker, as key in getting the farm and farm markets established. Unfortunately, Sibylle passed away a few years ago, but Peter carried on with the farm and markets, continuing to serve our communities with the philosophy of farming they established together.

Then in 2019, he found love again with Leslee, a

customer in Antigonish, and they were recently engaged. Leslee is a midwife in Antigonish, but is also now a full partner on the farm. Peter credits her with making significant and remarkable improvements to the farm, planting more gardens, raising chickens for meat and eggs, adding bedding plants and their most recent foray - honey bees - to the mix. They both enjoy the challenge and excitement of learning and developing new farm products.

Peter believes that when we treat our environment with respect, we reap what we sow. All of their animals are hormone and antibiotic free. While their pigs and chickens are raised in a free-range natural environment where they feed on grass from the rich soil on the farm with regenerative farming practices, he supplements their diet with vegetables like potatoes and corn, salad greens, apples, and breads and other grain products. Basically, the pigs and chickens on Peter and Leslee's farm eat what they do!

On their free-range bio farm, they breed high-quality pigs from breeds such as Berkshire and Duroc. A sow gives birth to an average of eight piglets, but as many as 22! Some of the piglets are processed and sold whole after three months (for BBQ), but the majority are raised on Peter's farm for a minimum of one year, living a natural outdoor life, before they are brought to provincially certified local abattoirs to be butchered. The pork meat all goes into the sausage and other processed or smoked meats, like bacon and ham. He also purchases grass-fed Angus beef for some sausage recipes.



Buschmann Free Range BIO Farm pigs eating their vegetables.

Their meat products are all processed by hand in the German tradition in a fully insulated environment, which they built in 2012 entirely of stainless steel - mixers, grinders, choppers, slicers, tables, sinks and water supplies, as well as kettles for boiling sausages, a vacuum machine for packaging and a walk-in refrigerator. It is certified by the provincial food inspector and is a fully licensed and inspected meat processing facility. They also have a smoke shop to smoke their meats and locally sourced fish.

Their processed meats, labelled **A-1 Sausage**, can be found on the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub, which they joined several years ago, and in small local retail outlets such as Bonnar's Meats (North Sydney), Farmer's Daughter (Whycocomagh), B & E General Store (St. Peters), Village Grocery (Brook Village), Freshmart (Mabou), Trofel's (Cheticamp), and Jeantie's Mini Mart (Arichat) Peter and Leslee love selling directly at their farm gate as well, but please call first. They are proud to serve several local farmers' markets in Antigonish, Arichat, Baddeck, Mabou, and Whycocomagh. This allows them to be in direct contact with their customers and can respond to their feedback and requests.

They produce a variety of sausages, loaf meats, salami, and hunters sausage, including vegetarian sausage. They sell smoked bacon, ham, pork jerky, and schnitzel (a German specialty), whole chickens, eggs, and smoked fish.

You can contact Peter at pb@nova-scotia.org, or check out their website at www.free-range-bio-farm.com.

Town reminds NSCC that it owes \$130,000 for sidewalk

-by Bill Dunphy

The Nova Scotia Community College Strait Campus will soon have a friendly reminder for an overdue bill in its mailbox.

Port Hawkesbury Town Council voted at its virtual meeting last Wednesday to send a letter to Strait Campus president Don Bureaux, asking him to honour the school's commitment of \$130,000 to the Destination Reeves Street project.

The money was the school's share of a sidewalk running from the campus to the town via its active transportation trail system.

Deputy mayor Blaine MacQuarrie said former president Tom Gunn made the commitment in 2017.

"The trail is complete, but there has been no movement by NSCC to fulfill their commitment," said MacQuarrie. "It's time the town receives confirmation."

Councillor Hughie MacDougall agreed. "I remember sitting in the conference room when that commitment was made. If it takes a letter, then it takes a letter."

Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton noted that COVID-19 has had its effect on all business transactions and that a letter would be in order.

Added town chief administrative officer Terry Doyle, "We fully expect (the commitment) to be honoured."

Voting list discrepancies blamed on human error

-by Rankin MacDonald

Last week, when the Inverness County candidates received their voting lists there was an improper inclusion in the mailout.

The voters' birth dates were included and this could have led to fraud, but once it was noticed all eyes were set on the lists so no harm could be done.

The lists are destroyed by the candidates after the election.

No one seemed overly concerned.

CAO Keith MacDonald said it was a mistake, "human error with the Excel program."

Only the candidates have the voting lists and, while it could be serious, MacDonald said the voting will be monitored closely and a review will take place after the election.

Candidate Gerard Gillis pointed out that the electronic voting system was compromised, which could lead to cheating.

MacDonald said the birth dates should have been removed and it will be checked up close after October 17th.

The municipality provided an update:

"The Returning Office for the Municipality of the County of Inverness provided an Amended List of Electors to the candidates running in the 2020 Municipal Election

that displayed the birth dates of the Electors. The List of Electors is a confidential list that is not available for inspection or distribution and is to be used solely by the candidates as a reference guide for campaigning, upon the conclusion of the election all electoral lists and copies are expected to be returned with an affidavit completed by each of the candidates that confirms they deleted or destroyed any electronic and physical copies.

"Personal information contained in the list of electors is protected under the *Municipal Election Act*. The use of this list for any other purpose would be considered a corrupt action under the Act.

"Like other municipalities in Nova Scotia, the Municipality of the County of Inverness is allowing electronic, telephone, and in-person voting. The Municipality has made every effort possible to make voting more accessible during this pandemic in order to ensure the health and safety of residents, staff, candidates, and election support workers.

"The Municipality is utilizing phone and e-voting systems that have incorporated a rigid validation process and format to ensure the continued integrity and

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