

# In support of hunters

## OP ED

WHAT'S UP MUSKOKA

By Galen Eagle

I was aghast to read a letter to the editor in the April 9, 2014 edition of this newspaper that characterized hunters as "barbaric," and even worse, appeared to call for the death of hunters taking part in legal hunting activities.

Nina Sokol writes about her distaste for a neighbour who hunts moose and said she hoped hunters would take the next bullet next time they enter the bush.

What an appalling thing to say. I know a plethora of hunters who take their young sons and daughters on the hunt to teach them the importance of harvesting their own food and to foster an appreciation and connection to the natural environment.

Ms. Sokol's words paint hunters in a dark light, and worse, advocate for their harm.

Fortunately, Ms. Sokol and her misguided views are part of a shrinking minority. More and more young people are joining the hunting ranks in an effort to reconnect with nature.

As a society we are more disconnected from the food we eat than ever before. Hunting an animal in its natural environment and harvesting it humanely is part of a growing trend that embraces a 100-mile diet free from toxins and hormones.

I am a recent addition to the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH). Our organization is the voice for hunters and anglers in the province, but we're also the largest non-profit conservation organization in Canada and we have countless conservation successes, both past and present, far too numerous to name here.

We believe in stewardship. We enjoy nature's bounty and recognize it's our responsibility to ensure our environment remains a healthy home to fish and wildlife.

Whether it's our Bring Back the Salmon program, the Invasive Species Awareness Program, the Community Hatchery Program, DeerSave, Community Stream Steward Program



Photograph Courtesy OFAH

Galen Eagle says a recent letter to the editor missed the mark on hunting.

or our many youth conservation programs, the OFAH remains as dedicated to preserving the environment as we did 86 years ago when Ontario hunters and anglers joined under the banner of conservation.

What Ms. Sokol misses completely with her vitriolic, one-sided attack is that hunting is part of a tradition that is older than our nation. It's hunters and the fees we pay for licences that fund wildlife management and ensure the health of species such as deer, elk, moose and bears for generations to come.

Hunters don't hunt game frivolously. We do it with as much skill and compassion as we can.

I urge readers to talk to one of our 100,000 members about why they hunt, about the satisfaction and sense of responsibility that comes from harvesting your own food.

Talk to hunters about the appreciation gained for nature as they sit for hours alone in the forest. You will likely be left with a new appreciation of the merits of hunting in a day and age when society's connection to the natural environment is all but fleeting.

*Galen Eagle is the manager of communications with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. He can be reached at galen\_eagle@ofah.org*



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