

Editorial

An animal's best friend

An Edmonton attorney is under public scrutiny for abandoning two horses on a snow-covered mountain in McBride, a town west of Jasper, last September. The animals survived, though they were in rough shape when a group of volunteers rescued them recently.

In an interview with the *Fitzhugh* on the weekend, owner of the horses Frank Mackay was remorseless and said he did all he could to either rescue the horses or put them down.

The horses belonged to him, so part of his argument was that he should be free to do what he'd like with them. However, the SPCA has stepped in, and he may face criminal charges.

Whose responsibility are animals? Mackay said that after his attempts to rescue the horses failed, he decided to let nature take its course.

Unfortunately, it's too late for that. Humans stepped in long ago, fencing and caging animals as our belongings and bringing them into our homes as pets.

People who suddenly decide they no longer want to care for an animal must act responsibly and in the creature's best interest. Many animals have come to depend on people like a child does its mother, and abandoning that charge is unjust.

To say nature will take its course is just not true, and that's something people changed long ago.

Another interesting aspect of this story is the language Mackay used during his interview with the *Fitzhugh*. Every second word was an expletive, though he was aware the conversation was being recorded. Mackay clearly stated that he's not interested in what the public – or the media – thinks of him.

Often, when subjects of public criticism are contacted by news outlets, they polish themselves up to present a compelling version of their side of the story as a way to incite sympathy.

Though his manner was unbecoming, it's difficult not to appreciate Mackay's candour. Whether people agree with his actions or not, his forthrightness makes it easier to believe what he said, or at least that he believes what he said.

Would anyone have believed him had he sobbed and pleaded to have his horses returned?

Will public perception have an effect on the outcome of this story, and should it? As a successful lawyer, is it possible Mackay played up his persona, to give the impression he's a confused and frustrated hillbilly?

Savvy media consumers take their information with a grain of salt, but if everyone was as candid as Mackay the possibility might grow for not only more reports of truth, but also some entertainment.

Public opinion will likely remain divided as this story continues, but it's difficult for anyone – even those of us who aren't "horse people" – not to feel sorry for those creatures that were stranded out there in the snow.



Lost Opportunity

It was Albert Einstein whose definition of insanity was doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results.

If ever there is a good time to restructure our whole economy and energy systems, that time is now. Instead, we are witnessing the same old mentality that has gotten us into trouble in the first place. Bailing out the big automobile companies will only delay the inevitable crash that will come from our unsustainable lifestyle.

This is the time when we must build resilience into our whole society. That means more small-scale, localized production of everything from food to energy, from clothing to culture. With globalization, and the mass production of goods in large factories by faceless faraway workers, and with dinosaur energy systems, we humans have made ourselves extremely vulnerable to the shocks of wars, global warming, food shortages, energy and water shortages.

Wouldn't it be nice if the economic stimulus package had the long term public good and the well-being of the ecosystem (which we are part of) at its core.

This is the time for the green economy. Imagine if all those billions were spent on energy efficiency retrofits on homes and public buildings, wind and solar power development, and public transportation infrastructure. Imagine countless small scale localized industries in renewables, creating jobs across the country. Imagine if we rewrote agricultural laws giving advantage

to local food production. Imagine Canada becoming a leader in green technology, then exporting our expertise. Imagine the long term benefits to be had in localizing our economy -- more jobs, less greenhouse gases, less fossil energy required, greater resilience.

That's why we need green voices in parliament. Same-old-same-old does not work anymore.

On a different but related note, I have yet to figure out the purpose of the article by Daniel Z. Jacobs called "Can't we all

just get along" in "The Last Word" in the December 18th *Fitzhugh*. The article insults, dismisses, and provokes in a most negative tone, to what end? Interesting that someone so new to the community sees fit to insult longer-term residents. Humour and irony could have been appreciated, but this brand of sarcasm combined with the dismissive tone diminishes the quality of the *Fitzhugh*. It was most unhelpful. If the motive was to get people onto solutions to the problems facing us, might I suggest a less insulting article could go a lot further. I for one saw little merit in your "Last Word" in that article. Sounded more like pre-Christmas Scrooge to me.

Monika Schaefer
Green Party of Canada
candidate of record, 2006, 2008

Editor's note: *The Last Word* is an opinion piece on life in Jasper written by a rotating schedule of editorial staff.

Dear Fitzhugh Readers write

the fitzhugh
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PUBLISHER: Karen Young
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Melissa Montrose
ADVERTISING: Jan Schneider
EDITOR: Kaitlyn Cahalan
REPORTER/PHOTOGRAPHER: Amy Wilson-Chapman
REPORTER/PHOTOGRAPHER: Daniel Z. Jacobs

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CONTACT US: PO Box 428, 426 Connaught Drive, Jasper, Alberta T0E 1E0.
PHONE: 1.780.852.4888; FAX: 1.780.852.4858;
E-MAIL: publisher@fitzhugh.ca, editor@fitzhugh.ca, advertising@fitzhugh.ca

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