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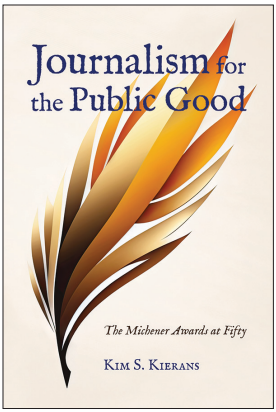

JOURNALISM FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD: THE MICHENER AWARDS AT FIFTY

Kim S. Kierans

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New Media, Old Media Under the Microscope

As the twentieth century came to an end, miles of column inches and hours of airtime had been spent speculating and mostly predicting doom and gloom about what would happen when the clocks rolled over to 2000. Computer technology would fail, and in a flip of a switch, our wired world would shut down — Y2K. Canadians woke up on January 1, 2000, perhaps a bit tired, maybe hungover, but their coffee makers still worked, their cars started, and emails were still popping into the inboxes on their desktops. The Y2K threat never materialized, but over the following decade, the Internet would drastically change the media landscape and disrupt everything they had long taken for granted.

Indeed, the 2000s produced a constellation of challenges for Canadian media, especially newspaper outlets. The creation of the *National Post* in 1998 sparked a newspaper war, the introduction of free dailies produced further stiff competition, and — the most significant change of all — the growth of the Internet created virtual competition for news and information and siphoned off critical revenue streams for broadcasters and classified advertising for newspapers. As a whole, this loosely regulated landscape caused unprecedented closures and concentration — thus fulfilling the worst fears of the Davey and Kent reports. Media managers reacted to the massive disruption by putting business and profits to shareholders ahead of public service journalism. Of course, the Michener Awards Foundation — through its awards and fellowships — did its part to encourage media organizations to dedicate their limited time and resources to journalism that focused on system and policy issues. But given the industry's challenges, investigative journalists were forced to find innovative ways to continue producing public service journalism.

The Michener Foundation also had to find new ways to provide leadership and validation for this work. It recognized journalistic collaborations among organizations, as they became an increasingly common way to conduct in-depth projects. It invited journalism students and educators to the awards ceremony to spark interest in public service journalism. And it expanded the fellowship program to encourage best practices and reflect on the state of the industry and its workers.

The new century had ushered in mean times for editors and reporters trying to make a difference through their journalism. If ever the flagging profession needed encouragement to remember its purpose, it was now. Media organizations and journalists turned to the Michener Awards for validation, and the Foundation looked to Rideau Hall for support.

Contest, Collapse, Converge

In the late 1990s and 2000s, media organizations, particularly newspapers, fought to keep audiences and advertisers. The twenty-four-hour news channels — CNN, CTV and CBC's Newsworld — were luring people away from newspapers with instant news updates and 24/7 opinion. Readers were more computer savvy and went online for fast, free news. In the newspaper world, 1998 brought the first of several waves of intense competition, starting with the launch of a new daily, the *National Post*.

Newspaper baron Conrad Black's saucy conservative-leaning national broadsheet unleashed a two-year bare-knuckle sidewalk fight among Toronto's top newspapers for circulation numbers, readership and advertisers. The *National Post* was designed to be "more intelligent, more fun, and racier than the *Globe* could ever be."[1] It offered a new reading experience. "We came out with a lot more visually appealing product and a lot more noisier product in terms of the number of voices we had," said Kenneth Whyte, the founding editor-in-chief.[2]

When it came to news coverage, Whyte, a western come-from-away, had been well-schooled by his former boss, Ted Byfield of the *Alberta Report*, whose journalistic approach was "pitting different points of view against one another" as a way to work things out. "Ted was all about debate, rather than the resolution of the debate," Whyte said. This confrontational style of journalism in the *National Post* was encouraged by Whyte's deputy editor-in-chief Martin Newland, imported from Black's UK paper, *The Daily Telegraph*. "The *Post* was a lot more in your face and aggressive. We decided what our

stories were, and we chased them relentlessly and didn't give up on them when the news cycle changed," Whyte recalled. The *Post* had "a handful of issues that we were determined to own," such as fiscal policy and government debt, Unite the Right and personalities. [3]

Instead of foreign bureaus, the *Post* had a huge travel budget, and editors used it liberally. "When the Concorde flew its last fight from Paris to New York, it was the end of an era," said Whyte. "We paid $14,000 and got Christie Blatchford on. I remember that flight and that we got a week's worth of journalism out of it. It was a big expenditure, but again everyone was reading it." Audiences were getting sizzle along with their journalism of substance. "It was our belief that most of the really good investigative opportunities came out of diligent reporting on particular stories or following beats." Whyte pointed to Andrew McIntosh's complicated investigation that became known as Shawinigate.[4] It exposed the dealings of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien involving "taxpayers' dollars and how millions of dollars found their way to ethically challenged businessmen in the prime minister's home riding."[5]

The competition — *Globe and Mail, Toronto Star* and the *Toronto Sun* — responded to the upstart *Post* with redesigns, colour pages, newspaper giveaways and bargain basement bulk sales to hotels and airlines. It was a golden moment for readers "The look and sound of the newspapers changed quite substantially in a fairly short period of time," said Whyte. So did the editorial content of the main competitors — the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star.* "The *Post*'s stable of writers, its capacity for dramatic display, its access to superb foreign stories, and its eclectic story selection all combined to forge a formidable competitor. We knew we were in for a real battle," wrote John Honderich in his memoir, *Above the Fold*.[6] The *Star*'s editorial strategy to keep subscribers and advertisers and win the newspaper war was to continue "to provide groundbreaking investigative journalism."[7] Honderich wanted *Star* reporters to tell stories that "revealed malfeasance, neglect or wrongdoing" and resulted in positive changes. "I felt all our investigations should aspire to this level," he said, referring to Michener Award-winning stories.[8]

It wouldn't be long before the fierce competition with the *National Post* would ebb. The writing was on the wall in late 2000. In three years, the paper lost an estimated $190 million.[9] In a shrewd move, Black put his wallet ahead of his heart and sold 50 per cent of his beloved *National Post,* along with thirteen metro dailies, 126 community papers and the website for $3.2B to Canwest Global Communications, owned by the Asper family of Winnipeg.

Nine months later, in August 2001, he sold the rest of the *Post* to Canwest. "The management and directors of Hollinger find this a painful, but a sensible decision. The *National Post* has been successfully launched and established, but now requires an intimate association with an indigenous Canadian media company to take it through the next competitive phase of its development to profitability," Hollinger said.[10] With that, the newspaper war ended, but it had lasting effects. It "was a confrontation that, by some estimates, would cost the three papers combined more than $1 billion — a crippling burden for all three," wrote Chris Cobb in *Ego and Ink*.[11] The *National Post* newspaper war would be the first blow to hit print in the 2000s.

The second blow came in 2000 when *Metro*, a Swedish company, announced it was entering the Canadian market. Its first free commuter daily would be launched in Toronto that July. *Metro* had plans to expand to other Canadian cities. While the free paper posed no threat to the *Globe and Mail,* Canada's national newspaper, the announcement sent off alarm bells at the *Toronto Sun* and *Toronto Star.* GTA was their turf, and no newcomer was going to siphon off their audience and advertisers. Thus began the second newspaper war.

In Toronto, reaction to the impending competition came quickly. Within weeks of the announcement, the tabloid Toronto *Sun* was on the streets handing out its new free daily *FYI Toronto*. "It's a quick read of top news you have to know on your way to work," said Lou Clancy of the *Sun* in an interview with CBC's *The National*. "It's information on what to do today and how to do it [and] where to go."[12] Three days later, *Toronto Star* carriers were handing out its free daily *GTA Today* at GO train and bus stations. That didn't deter *Metro,* which launched in July 2000 and expanded to eight other cities. Over the next twenty years, the free newspaper craze would see other commuter handouts such as *Dose*, *t.o.night* and *24 Hours* arise and disappear. There were mergers and renames in the fight for circulation and advertisers in the commuter market.

It all added up to yet another financial hit to the struggling newspaper industry. For the *Toronto Star*, "We knew that on an annual basis we would lose close to $4 million, but we figured *Metro*'s deficit would top $7.5 million."[13] John Honderich was prepared to go to the mat with *Metro*, but in March 2001, he had to settle for a draw. Against his advice, the parent company, Torstar, announced a merger between *Metro* and *GTA Today*. Three months later, the *Sun*'s owner, Québecor, pulled the plug on *FYI Toronto*, only

to revive it in 2003 under the new name, *24 Hours*. In November 2017, Torstar acquired *24 Hours* in a newspaper swap with Postmedia and shuttered the Toronto and Vancouver editions. It would be another two years before Torstar ceased publishing its free newspapers, now *Star Metr*o, in Halifax, Ottawa, Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver. The free newspaper frenzy in English Canada ended, and when everyone looked around, the media world had changed.

While the newspapers had been fighting over dead trees, the Internet had become the marketplace of the twenty-first century with free news, classified ads, videos, music, games, weather, sports and a steady stream of opinion. The newspaper wars that began in the late 1990s had served as a distraction to the industry's growing problem — how to adapt their business models to the digital age. From the industry's point of view, the Internet was stealing their audiences, advertisers and profits, and it seemed no one knew how to monetize this new platform.

In the 2000s, it seemed as if everything was in play. Mainstream media were unprepared for the multimedia, interactive and social online universe of bloggers and citizen journalists. Newspaper publishers were stunned when the cash cow — classified advertising — all but disappeared, in what seemed like an instant, from the back pages and flooded onto web services such as Craigslist and eBay. While traditional media panicked, communication companies such as Bell Canada Enterprises, Québecor, Canwest, Rogers and Astral Media saw opportunities to grow and cash in on the so-called Information Highway. They moved quickly to gobble up radio and television networks like CTV, TVA, City TV, Global and Standard Broadcasting, along with long-established newspaper groups like Sun Media, Osprey and the *Globe and Mail*. The convergence frenzy led to unprecedented buying and selling, mergers and consolidations, and closures and failures.[14] Between 1994 and 2017, communications and media companies spent about $45.43 billion buying and selling properties to leverage companies "in an ill-conceived attempt at communications and media convergence," wrote Dwayne Winseck of the Global Media and Internet Concentration Project.[15] This was about business, profits and shareholders, not about providing journalism in the public interest.

If they were lucky, journalists like those at the *National Post* found themselves working under new management in slimmed down newsrooms with fewer resources. Those less fortunate found themselves hunting for new

jobs in an ever-constricting and changing media world. In 2000, journalists had come face-to-face with the ghosts of Senator Keith Davey and political mandarin Tom Kent, who, in 1970 and 1980, had predicted an increasingly concentrated and converged media that would collide with public interest. Volume 1 of Davey's Special Committee on the Mass Media report, "The Uncertain Mirror," set out "a hypothetical extreme" where "one man or one corporation could own every media outlet in the country except the CBC."[16] There were those in the industry who believed that this prediction would soon be a reality.

Once again, the concern about the lack of diversity and media concentration would find its way back onto the federal agenda. On March 19, 2003, the Senate of Canada authorized an investigation into the state of Canadian media industries — the third federal study in thirty-five years. In the chair at the start of the inquiry was Senator Joan Fraser, a former reporter and editor with the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Financial Times of Canada*.

The assignment of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communication was to examine "emerging trends and developments in these industries; the media's role, rights and responsibilities in Canadian society; and current and appropriate future policies . . . "[17] Even then, no one could predict the profound effect the Internet and social media would have on the functioning of Canada's legacy media and how the disruption would undermine their role in society. As Fraser would write in the introduction to the interim report, "No real democracy can function without healthy, diverse and independent news media to inform people about the way their society works, what is going well and, perhaps more important, what is not going well or needs to be improved. The news of the day is . . . often the only such guide that can plausibly claim not to be self-interested."[18] Fraser recognized the fragility of news within an unstable information environment.

Two years later, at the Ottawa news conference to release the *Final Report on the Canadian News Media,* deputy committee chair Senator David Tkachuk quipped, "The horse has left the barn. You can't change all that." To which Senator Jim Munson, a former CTV parliamentary reporter, added, "There's no going back."[19] The Senators had travelled to ten locations across the country and heard testimony from 304 individuals and groups. The two-year study painted a grim picture in which "concentration of ownership has reached levels that few other countries would consider acceptable."[20] Their forty recommendations were "guided by the conviction that the more owners,

the better." The report called for policy changes to the *Broadcasting Act* and the *Competition Act* "to develop a mechanism that allows discussion of the public interest in media mergers." This was not a radical proposal. As the committee pointed out, "it is not uncommon for restrictions to exist with respect to concentration, cross-media ownership and foreign ownership"[21] and pointed to such policies in countries like France, the United Kingdom and Australia.

The response from the minister of Canadian Heritage, Bev Oda, was in keeping with the Conservative free-market party line. "It is important to reiterate that Canada has a highly diverse, dynamic and economically viable news media sector," and that "the current legislative, regulator, and policy frameworks, supported by the various government programs, has served Canadians well." Furthermore, she emphasized it was the job of the media sector — not the government — "to provide independent and diverse news and information and also adapt their business models to today's new technologies and media environment."[22] The message was clear. The government of Stephen Harper would let the marketplace of news and information play out.

The result was that the roller coaster of mergers, closures and downsizing continued throughout the 2000s with dizzying speed. Media organizations bloated with debt from acquisitions took a crippling hit after the markets crashed in 2008. With an exodus of advertisers — the primary source of revenue — and inflated expectations of shareholders, media conglomerates pulled back. They laid off massive numbers of media workers, and, in some cases, that was not enough to stay solvent. In 2009, nine years after paying $3.5 billion for Hollinger Inc., Winnipeg-based Canwest Global Communications declared bankruptcy. The papers, now part of Postmedia, were sold for $1.1B; the majority owner is Chatham Asset Management, a New Jersey hedge fund.

Despite closures and mergers, journalists in newsrooms across the country persisted. They found innovative ways to tell stories that mattered to Canadians. It was a matter of professional pride. As media managers tightened the purse strings, news producers, editors and reporters from different media outlets started to put journalism in the public interest ahead of competition.

Putting a Glow on the Awards

The appointment of Adrienne Clarkson as the twenty-sixth Governor General of Canada in October 1999 came at an opportune time for the industry and for

the work of the Michener Awards Foundation. A former journalist, Clarkson was a familiar face to CBC viewers. She had a thirty-year award-winning career, starting as a host of *Take Thirty,* a national public affairs afternoon television show, before moving to CBC's flagship current affairs show *the fifth estate*. After a term as Ontario's Agent-General in France, Clarkson returned to CBC to create and host the cultural program, *Adrienne Clarkson Presents.* She was the first person of Asian heritage to become Governor General of Canada. She stepped into the role of governor general as if she were born to do the job.

Her predecessor, Roméo LeBlanc, had stepped down a year before the end of his term due to ill health. His Michener ceremonies had been low-key celebrations with a stand-up reception with drinks and hot and cold canapés. That austere menu alone spoke volumes about the health of His Excellency, who normally enjoyed entertaining his former colleagues. When Clarkson took over, she saw an opportunity and took on the Michener Awards as a pet project. She was sensitive to the effects of the media crisis and set her mind to making the Michener Awards ceremony an evening to remember. "I said it should be celebrated because freedom of the press is one of the glories that they're providing society," she said. [23]

Clarkson, like LeBlanc, held fast to the tenet that journalism was one of the four pillars of Canada's democracy and should be elevated and celebrated, especially in these tough times. It was a matter of great pride to ensure the work of media in a time of great stress was valued. She did that by giving the annual ceremony *panache*. That meant evening gowns and black tie, a sit-down four-course dinner, dancing and special guests, authors and journalists "who helped to shape our country and helped to shape us into the kind of people we are."[24] The invitation list included like authors Doris Anderson, Farley Mowat, June Callwood, Margaret Atwood, Graeme Gibson, Trent Frayne and Pierre Berton, who was called upon to be guest speaker at the 2002 ceremony.

At her first awards ceremony — the thirtieth anniversary of the Michener Awards — Clarkson reminded the gathering at Rideau Hall why journalism is so important. "We Canadians are well educated. We have a high standard of living and a huge amount of space in which to live, yet injustices occur here as do abuses of our systems and structures. So we need the press in all its forms to alert us to our situation, to awaken our indignation and to keep us uncomfortable. The recounting of greed, negligence, indifference, corruption and callous carelessness renders us psychically itchy, and perhaps, although that is

not the journalists' responsibility, we will have to scratch."[25] Her enthusiasm for journalism would be the boost that enterprising media organizations and the Michener Foundation needed to navigate the choppy waters of disruption and technological change in the industry.

The Michener Award winner at the April 2000 ceremony, CBC National Radio News Winnipeg, was a great example of what Clarkson meant in her speech. The public broadcaster had exposed an illegal vote-rigging scheme in Manitoba. Reporter Curt Petrovich spent three years chasing down rumours and gathering evidence. CBC's stories proved that senior Manitoba Progressive Conservative party members, including some of the Premier's top advisors, had spent thousands of dollars, including some from the PC party bank account, to bribe three Indigenous people to run as 'independents' in NDP ridings with high Indigenous populations. The goal was to split the vote in the 1995 provincial election to favour the Conservatives. Petrovich said his big break came when one of the three unsuccessful independent candidates, Darryl Sutherland, finally broke the silence. Because of the gravity of the allegations, Petrovich went on to contact or interview another half dozen people to judge and verify the reliability of the information.

Petrovich wrote that the potential consequences of the story weighed heavily on his conscience. "The allegations, once public, could devastate careers and likely affect the political balance in Manitoba, which had been governed by the Conservatives for a decade."[26] When the story broke on June 22, 1998, Petrovich said the political reaction was predictable. "Premier Gary Filmon at first denied anything about the story was credible. He suggested it was NDP sleazy-mongering (*sic*)." But after CBC released more details, the premier called a public inquiry. The report of Commissioner Alfred Monnin confirmed CBC's findings of corruption among PC Manitoba party officials. The retired judge did not mince words: "As a trial judge I conducted a number of trials. As an appellate court judge I read many thousands of pages of transcript in a variety of cases: criminal, civil, family, etc. In all my years on the Bench I have never encountered as many liars in one proceeding as I did during this inquiry."[27]

The journalism and subsequent inquiry had a huge and lasting impact on the policies and practices of political parties, the government and associated groups in Manitoba. Monnin's recommendations tightened loopholes in the Manitoba elections laws and gave the Chief Electoral Officer broad powers of search and seizure of election records. Candidates and parties were required

to keep election financial records for five years. Auditors had to resign if their professional judgement or objectivity had been impaired. The three main parties voluntarily adopted codes of ethics "to prevent anyone from believing they have tacit approval to cheat at an election." Voters also had their say. "The dark stain on the previously scandal-free Conservative government had influence on voters when they went to the polls again in September 1999. The Conservatives, after eleven successful years in government, lost to the NDP," wrote Petrovich.[28]

The 1995 vote-splitting scandal was huge, gigantic, said Cecil Rosner, head of CBC's investigative unit. "They actually tried to rig an election. How often does that happen that you get the proof of it and trigger an inquiry and all the rest of it," he said. "It took the Conservative party more than a decade to recover from that."[29] This is the kind of watchdog journalism that was under threat from the churn in the industry.

Despite the industry difficulties, the Michener Award was an incentive for media outlets still investing in time-consuming investigative journalism. It validated their work and the crucial role of journalism as a pillar of democracy. For example, persistent reporting over four years by the *Globe and Mail* uncovered allegations of fraud within the federal Liberal party. Reporters Daniel LeBlanc and Campbell Clark used access to information requests, government documents and interviews to put facts to rumours of patronage and uncontrolled spending at senior levels of Jean Chrétien's Liberal government following the 1995 Québec referendum. Their ongoing coverage earned the paper a Michener citation of merit in 2002 and a Michener Award in 2004. The journalism resulted in a scathing report by Auditor General Sheila Fraser, the recall of Canada's Ambassador to Denmark, the firing of three heads of Crown corporations and the launch of the public inquiry headed by Mr. Justice John Gomery.

Gomery's report revealed that "$100 million of federal government funds were paid to a variety of communications agencies in a complex web of transactions, involving kickbacks and illegal contributions to the Liberal Party in Canada."[30] The story of political patronage that started under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien came to rest with the defeat of his successor, Prime Minister Paul Martin, in the 2006 federal election.

Twenty years later, the impact of the reporting about the sponsorship scandal is evident in the way Ottawa handles outside contracts. After leaving the *Globe and Mail*, Edward Greenspon became President and CEO of

the Public Policy Forum, an independent Ottawa public policy research firm. In 2016, he was looking for sponsors to fund research into "The Shattered Mirror," a report examining news, democracy and trust in the digital age.[31] He approached two federal departments and was quickly mired in a complicated process. "The hoops you have to go through," Greenspon recalled. "One day I complained to somebody senior in the government and I said, you want to work with people outside, but we're a small organization and we don't have 500 lawyers on staff and you make it so difficult. And he looked at me and said, weren't you the editor of the *Globe and Mail* when you did the sponsorship scandal? And I said, c'mon. The idea was to root out the bad guys, not make it impossible to do anything in future. He said, well, that's how it turned out."[32] The lasting effect of the reporting of the sponsorship scandal is that the federal government is ultra-cautious in engaging outside groups. "It keeps people on their toes because there are journalists watching the system and making sure that the system operates as it purports that it will operate," Greenspon said.

These vital investigations show the value of the persistence of the work of journalists — and their "personal pride and general journalistic excellence," Michener Foundation president Russ Mills said.[33] Without the journalists and the support of their editors, producers and publishers, important stories of the day like the vote-splitting scheme and the federal sponsorship scandal would likely have remained hidden from the public.

These were not comfortable stories. Her Excellency Adrienne Clarkson drove home that point when she said at the 2000 awards ceremony that Michener stories challenge "self-interest and mediocrity . . . which as fallible human beings, content in our own lives, we would really not have asked to know about. In afflicting us with the truth, they make it impossible for us to turn away, and our lives, as citizens of Canada, are better for it."[34] The publisher and CEO of the Ottawa *Sun*, Judy Bullis, was so moved by Clarkson's words, that she wrote to thank Clarkson for her "poignant and important" presentation. "The award ceremony is a testament to the excellence for which the media should constantly strive. . . . In fact, your words taught me the significance of the writer's obligation to inform first without bias, then, and only then, with input."[35] At a time when media organizations found themselves undermined on all fronts, the awards were a touchstone, to remind journalists of their important role as watchdogs of public interest in a democracy.

The industry would look to the Michener Awards and Rideau Hall to validate the importance of investigative journalism through this time of innovation, disruption and profound uncertainty in the industry.

Competition versus Collaboration

The fierce competition from the *National Post*, *Metro* and, most importantly, the Internet left media organizations struggling to remain financially solvent. A direct result of smaller news budgets and fewer journalists was a move toward journalistic cooperation and collaboration, within news organizations and even among competitors.

Because of the buying and selling, many organizations owned more than one media outlet in different locations. Cooperation among sister newsrooms made sense. For example, Torstar, Postmedia, CTV or CBC could draw on the expertise and resources spread across their organization to produce an in-depth story. In 2006, the *Hamilton Spectator*, *Toronto Star* and the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* — all Torstar newspapers — received a citation of merit for their joint series "Collision Course" that documented 800 incidents where planes got dangerously close, putting 80,000 passengers at risk.[36] The joint submission of the *Edmonton Journal* and *Calgary Herald* — both Postmedia newspapers — was a Michener finalist in 2013 after the shocking series "Fatal Care" found that over fourteen years, half of the 145 children who died in Alberta foster care were of Indigenous heritage. As a result of this investigation, the Alberta government restructured the system, opened death records, and updated legislation.[37] While company cooperation happened with increasing regularity, it was rare, even unthinkable, for competing media outlets to work jointly on a story.

Michener records show that before 2007, only two such entries had made it to Rideau Hall: the 1971 Michener Award winner, *Financial Post* and CBC-TV for the "Charter Revolution" and the 1990 finalist, *Le Droit* and *Sault Star*, for their joint coverage of bilingualism. Plummeting profits and new technology, the Internet and social media saw former rivals becoming collaborators. In 2007, the Michener judging panel started to receive joint entries on a regular basis. Print and broadcast newsrooms pooled journalistic expertise and limited resources to produce big cross-media investigations that would reach larger and more diverse audiences. Take, for example, the investigation involving the financial relationship between former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and German-Canadian businessman Karlheinz Schreiber. For

years, *the fifth estate* and the *Globe and Mail* had been independently chasing the story before deciding to pool resources. The combined print-broadcast effort earned them a Michener nomination in 2017.

At the awards ceremony, Linden MacIntyre reminded journalists why he and CBC's Harvey Cashore collaborated with Greg McArthur of the *Globe* to chase down the Mulroney story. "For me the over-arching significance of the story is its power to remind us of the crucial importance of transparency and accountability in high places — not just for elected officials, but also regarding the conduct of the many people drawn to them by the magnetism of power and the prospect of easy personal enrichment at public expense."[38] It was a partnership that worked well, said then editor-in-chief Ed Greenspon. "Journalistic organizations are going to have animal spirits, and that's great that they want to win, that they want to be the ones that get the story. But, particularly in a world of limited resources, throwing your lot in with each other and not giving up your freedom to report the story as you feel like it, but sharing the base of information so you could put more firepower into the story."[39] While collaboration broadens the source base for journalists, it also brings the stories to a wider audience and as a result they have a bigger impact. The Schreiber coverage resulted in a public inquiry and hearings by the House of Commons Ethics Committee.

In 2008 the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, its French counterpart *Radio-Canada* and the national news agency The Canadian Press won the Michener Award for their multimedia analysis of Taser stun guns, and in particular, their use by police services following the death of Robert Dziekanski, who died at the Vancouver airport after the RCMP used a Taser to subdue him.[40] The impetus for the collaboration came from the journalists CBC's David McKie and CP's Jim Bronskill, who co-taught a reporting methods course at Carleton's School of Journalism. "We are competitors, but we are friends and colleagues, as well. Both of us were accessing the same information through access to information," explained McKie. "I said, Jim, wouldn't it be great just to get beyond your limited sample and do it for all of them."[41] With approval from their managers, Bronskill worked on the digital, and McKie did the data to analyze RCMP Taser reports.

They found that, from 2002 to 2005, more than two-thirds of the people police Tasered were not armed with a weapon, contrary to the police narrative. "At the time the RCMP were saying that this [Dziekanski] is a one-off, this never happens," McKie said. The RCMP resisted handing over the

next tranche of 4,000 RCMP Taser reports through 2007. "It was a long battle under the federal information law. The public outcry eventually forced the RCMP to release more data about how and why they were using Tasers."[42]

In his acceptance speech at the 2009 Michener Awards ceremony, Bronskill said. "And we found the RCMP were firing their Tasers multiple times in almost half of the incidents — despite an internal policy that warned multiple jolts may be hazardous." Frédéric Zalac of Radio-Canada, who did a lot of the national broadcast stories, picked up the story from there. "The RCMP immediately removed from active service all of its M26 Tasers across the country — 1600 in total and about half of its entire Taser arsenal — to get them tested.[43] He said the tests found close to 200 faulty Tasers and have resulted in new independent testing standards for Tasers being developed. Several police services adopted mandatory and regular testing of Tasers. Such joint investigations are, in most cases, the only way in-depth, time-consuming investigative stories will get done these days.

Sometimes media organizations produce independent but complementary coverage of an important story. For example, in 2017, the judging panel recognized both *Globe and Mail* and *La Presse* with a Michener Award for their combined coverage of the complicit role Canadian armed forces played in the abuse and torture of prisoners in Afghanistan. Canadian soldiers in Kandahar were handing detainees over to the feared Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS), where many reported extreme torture and abuse. In reflecting on the situation, reporter Graeme Smith wrote, "None of the abuse was inflicted by Canadians, and most Afghans captured — even those who clearly sympathized with the Taliban — praised the Canadian soldiers for their politeness, their gentle handling of captives and their comfortable detention facility."[44] While sympathetic, *Globe and Mail* reporters Smith and Paul Koring provided evidence that Canadian forces knew that once the detainees were in the hands of the local authorities, they faced torture in Afghan prisons, and Canadian soldiers could do nothing about it.

In his acceptance speech at the Michener Awards ceremony, Koring spoke about why this story was important. "It's about all of us and the dangers of turning a blind eye. Fodor Dostoyevsky [*sic*], famously said: 'The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.' If our coverage of the abuse and torture of detainees deserves merit, if it has forced a recalcitrant government to make changes, if it has compelled Canadians to consider whether we are asking our soldiers to be accessories to war crimes,

it is because the *Globe and Mail* deserves its reputation as a great news organization."[45] The *Globe*'s reports in March and April of 2007 led to a public inquiry, a new defence minister and an agreement with Afghan authorities that gave Canadian investigators access to detainees.

The 2007 Michener co-winner, *La Presse,* had followed up on the *Globe* story, only to find that the agreement was in word only. Canadian soldiers were still handing prisoners to local authorities for torture in the notorious Sarpoza prison in Kandahar. Three suspected Taliban members told foreign correspondent Michèle Ouimet that Canadian troops gave them a document to give to local prison authorities that stated torture is no longer used in Afghanistan. "The people from the secret service tore it (the document) up and threw it in my face. They tortured me for twenty hours. I protested and said the Canadians had promised that nothing would happen to me. They replied: 'We're not in Canada, we're at home. The Canadians are dogs!'" one detainee told Ouimet.[46]

Following the *La Presse* series, the Canadian government stopped transferring prisoners to Afghan authorities. "One of the important and enduring values of journalism is that people get due process, and it's not for us to judge if they're necessarily good or bad people. They still deserve due process," said the *Globe and Mail*'s Ed Greenspon. "The post 9-11 world has reinforced our sense of importance that we keep our eye on, that society doesn't fall down on its commitments to human rights and due process."[47] Combined, the two series took Canadians beyond the day-to-day conflict in Afghanistan to expose larger issues.

Collaborative stories these days are national, even international in their scope. In 2016 one of the Michener finalists was a collaboration involving the *Toronto Star*, Global TV and CBC. They pooled resources — dollars and staff — to produce the multi-faceted series, the "Panama Papers" that "put a Canadian face on a global story" about offshore tax haven in Panama.[48] Their in-depth stories identified Canadian lawyers, accountants and financial consultants involved in aggressively structuring offshore businesses to avoid taxes, with Canadian banks playing supporting roles," the citation of merit noted. Following the series, the Canada Revenue Agency received millions of dollars to hire more staff to investigate individuals identified in the papers. Two years later, the *Toronto Star* teamed up with CBC and Société Radio-Canada to expose "lax approval, regulation and oversight of Canada's medical device industry."[49] The Michener citation of merit noted the shocking

revelations from "The Implant Files." "Since 2008, defective implants have killed 1,400 Canadians and sickened another 14,000. Health Canada has approved the marketing of breast implants that are now associated with autoimmune diseases and a rare form of cancer."

Toronto Star investigative reporter, Rob Cribb, who could be called Mr. Co-Pro, has been a lead on these series and most other major national and international co-productions over the last fifteen years. He speaks about this move towards collaboration with the conviction of the converted. "Nothing beats a lot of brain power in the same room, mobilized and focused precisely on that thing. You know, that, that changes the game," he said. "Not on every story, but on the big ones where you think there is true injustice or a lapse or an oversight or a legislative glitch that is doing true harm to a significant number of people."[50] Given the constraints that emerged out of the 2000s — reduced budgets and fewer journalists in the newsrooms — collaborations were one way that journalists found the time and money to produce major stories that exposed wrongdoing and effected change.

For the journalistic watchdogs in the newsroom, a Michener Award nomination was more than just validation of a job well done. A Michener was the ace up the sleeve for a journalist and their editor to get more funding from managers to do stories that strengthen the social safety net for vulnerable groups and change laws, policies and practices of our fundamental democratic institutions. The idea of journalism as a public good, once a fundamental value of most newsrooms, was becoming an ideal as media organizations put all their efforts into the survival of their businesses.