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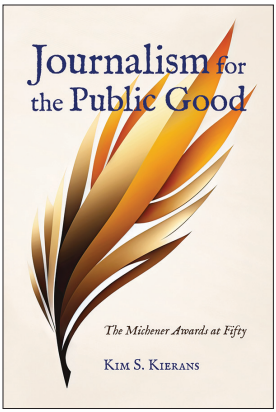

JOURNALISM FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD: THE MICHENER AWARDS AT FIFTY

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The Michener Dream Takes Shape

The Michener Award came into its own in the 1980s as journalism organizations ramped up hard-hitting reporting in the public interest. Up to this point, the award had been run primarily by two postwar Ottawa newspaper veterans with support from former governor general Roland Michener. Despite annual money problems, they had made the Michener the top journalism award in Canada, coveted by both media managers and reporters. "It's the highest level of journalism award in the country," said the *Toronto Star*'s John Honderich. "The fact that the public service journalism part has an impact, that it's in fact done something and brought about change and is something journalists feel very proud about, something we think about. So when you put that all together to get to that place, it is the highest honour a journalist [and organization] can have to win a Michener or be nominated for a Michener."[1]

As the award entered its second decade of operation, the number of entries started to grow. Investigative journalism was maturing, resulting in higher quality and more hard-hitting Michener-type stories in the public interest. A nomination would mean an invitation to Rideau Hall and the prestige that the gala ceremony brought.

In 1981, a record forty-nine entries were submitted, up from thirty the previous year. "The striking increase in numbers and the equally striking improvement in quality vividly reflect the award's success in fostering and developing meritorious and disinterested service in Canadian journalism," wrote Fraser MacDougall, now in his tenth year as chief judge of the award. "The judges, all with long experience, found special merit in every entry, agreeing upwards of a dozen could easily have won the award itself, and still others would have achieved honourable mention or citations of merit."[2] The ceremony that year showcased investigations into land swindles, double-dipping on farm equipment fees, mismanagement of funds for *la Fête Nationale du Québec*, and fraudulent studies into the safety of pesticides, drugs and

other chemicals. All were important and valuable stories for audiences and their communities.

This trend continued throughout the 1980s. The number of entries for the year 1986 hit an all-time high of seventy-four, a year before the 1987 stock market crash. The Michener Award was not only for big media such as the CBC, *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star* and *Le Devoir*. Smaller outlets like the *Manitoulin Expositor* (1982) were competing and winning Michener Awards for their community journalism. "For a small newspaper to present something for this award requires guts. It requires a darn good story, the conviction that it's of national importance," said Pierre Bergeron, president of the Michener Foundation from 2000 to 2004.

The growing participation and excellent entries were a testament to the dedication of founder Bill MacPherson of the *Ottawa Citizen* and Fraser MacDougall of the Canadian Press. Under the auspices of the National Press Club, these two firekeepers kept the Michener flame lit. Working out of MacPherson's spare bedroom, they single-handedly ran the Micheners — organizing the annual call for nominations, coordinating judging, planning the ceremony at Rideau Hall and handling communications — all on a shoestring budget. But it was unsustainable, especially as the stature of the award grew and entries continued to multiply.

The Michener Awards would soon find a firmer footing. Its longevity and expanded scope were born out of profound internal and external uncertainty. Consolidation and concentration in the media industry, and the consequent release of the 1981 Royal Commission on Media put the spotlight on the quality of journalism. The Michener Awards presented an avenue for media executives to address the report's concerns. The awards were widely respected in the industry but lacked sustainable infrastructure and financial support. Under the leadership of Maclean-Hunter vice-president Paul Deacon, leaders in the industry created a charitable foundation for the Michener Awards to give the organization stability, the ability to raise money and opportunities to think bigger.

At the tenth celebration of the Michener Award in 1980, there was plenty of competition and an excellent slate of finalists from Alberta and smaller centres in Ontario. Three of the five finalists were Alberta newspapers — the *Edmonton Journal, Calgary Albertan* and *Calgary Herald*. They had written about crooked cops in Calgary, military families on welfare, and solitary confinement for children in detention centres.

The Michener Awards gala ceremony had become noteworthy enough to capture the attention of Ottawa political columnist Allan Fotheringham, who devoted his widely read Monday morning *Toronto Sun* column to "the western invasion" of Rideau Hall. "The black-tie affair was absolutely awash with publishers, editors and reporters from alien Alberta, assessing the grape and noshing the pheasant as if (as the Liberals apparently don't believe) they were full-fledged Canadian citizens." With acid wit, Fotheringham had fun at the expense of the central Canadian elite as he mused about how "the absolute absence of the heavy journalistic hitters of Toronto and Montreal in the envelope category might indicate a certain lassitude, a weary decline, in their attitude toward innovative work at the typewriter — and evidence, perhaps, of other symptoms of the Family Compact."[3]

One might almost have heard Fotheringham, after a good feed and watering at Rideau Hall, clucking dyspeptically at the absence of the big hitters as he penned how the award went "to the *Whig-Standard* of Kingston, a sleepy town reputed to be even more paralyzed than Ottawa (presuming that unlikely state to be possible)."[4] But there was nothing sleepy or paralyzed about the *Whig-Standard*'s series about the devasting effects of fluoride poisoning on the Akwesasne lands of Cornwall Island (Kawehno:ke) and Wolfe Island from aluminum smelter plants across the St. Lawrence River in nearby Massena, New York.

Journalist Sylvia Wright along with Karl Polzer and Penny Stuart exposed an "environmental nightmare and bureaucratic scandal."[5] The toxic fluoride pollution four times the legal limit, coming from a ring of chemical plants in the United States, was killing livestock and making farmland infertile.[6] Federal and provincial officials had known about the threats for five years yet had ignored the requests for studies and action from the Indigenous community — a community which had been isolated geographically and linguistically, as most residents at the time spoke Mohawk (Kanienkeha).

The *Whig-Standard*'s Michener Award-winning stories put a human face on the science. In this article, Penny Stuart profiled long-time farmer Elijah Benedict:

> All Benedict knows is that since Reynolds opened in 1959, he has been watching cattle and vegetation die. . . . "What usually happens on Cornwall Island is a calf is born stunted. The proportion

of the head to the body is smaller and the head is elongated because of the accelerated bone growth," says Henry Lickers.

Lickers, a Mohawk biologist in charge of the St. Regis Environmental Division, an Indian-financed research centre, has seen a lot of cattle, including cows on Benedict's farm, die.

"With fluoride ingestment over a long period of time, maybe three years, the teeth start to wear down. The animal loses condition. It won't be able to eat as much food. It loses weight.'

In its final stages, three or four years later, the teeth fall apart, the enamel seems to dissolve, and the teeth become like chalk.

In time, all the nerves are exposed. The cow can't chew. Benedict carries warm water to the barn. It is less painful to drink. . . .

"They can't drink. They lap like a cat," said Lickers. "I have seen animals lying down on the top of the hill, knowing water is just down the hill and crawl on their knees to drink and then crawl up again to sit on the field."

Instead of 10 to 12 years of life, a newborn calf has a life expectancy of about four years.[7]

The Michener Awards judges wrote that the *Whig-Standard* series "jarred a lethargic Canadian government into action on a problem it had known about for five years, embarrassed the Ontario government into clumsy acts of secrecy, and shocked an apathetic public into an awareness of the dangers posed by an industrial pollutant usually looked on merely as a beneficial tooth decay preventative for children."[8] Through a "first-class pursuit" the *Whig-Standard* brought to the public's attention scientific research that had been shelved by governments on both sides of the border. It forced authorities to compensate the community and begin the long process of remediation.[9] This was enterprise journalism that not only uncovered wrongs but got action.

The *Whig-Standard* was on fire with the Michener values during the fourteen-year tenure of editor-in-chief Neil Reynolds, a person with "cool intelligence . . . and a sense that he was three chess moves ahead of his opponents."[10] Under his leadership, no issue was too big for the small daily. "Hearing of an injustice with or without some local implication, the paper would investigate in such a way as to provoke other, richer journalists and shame and embarrass some arm of government into correcting what it, the poor little *Whig*, could only bring to public attention."[11] That zeal resulted in another Michener and

two honourable mentions for national and international stories.[12] This was the kind of enterprise journalism that the Michener Awards wanted to stoke among media organizations.

At the ground level, journalists were delivering stories that exposed, informed, changed laws and improved the lives of Canadians. But that kind of journalism was under threat. A series of economic recessions starting in the mid-1970s led media managers to cut newsrooms and consolidate their holdings. Companies closed papers such as *Montréal-Matin* in Québec in 1978 and the *Montreal Star* in 1979, and merged others. For example, on Vancouver Island, the *British Colonist* and the *Victoria Daily Times* became the *Times Colonist* in 1980.

This trend of "takeovers, mergers, agreements, and closings"[13] took on national importance only when it hit Ottawa and slapped parliamentarians in the face. On August 27, 1980, just three months before the tenth anniversary awards ceremony, four major cities lost competing English-language newspapers. In Winnipeg, the Southam newspaper chain shuttered the ninety-year-old *Tribune*. Within hours, the Thomson newspaper chain closed the almost ninety-five-year-old *Journal* in Ottawa. Instantly, the capital of Canada and a major western city became one-newspaper towns. On the same day, Vancouver and Montreal became newspaper monopolies. Southam News bought out the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Province* in Vancouver from owners Thomson and Pacific Press respectively.[14] The closures and takeovers were sudden and unexpected for Ottawa MPs, the public and many in the industry. This "rationalization of 1980"[15] foreshadowed enormous challenges media would face in the 2000s from the Internet and social media.

"Black Wednesday," as it was called, set off a chain reaction. Deprived of two competing daily newspapers, Ottawa politicians of all stripes were suddenly crying foul. The Ministry of Consumer and Corporate Affairs launched an investigation into Canada's two largest newspaper chains, Southam and Thomson (both entities no longer exist), that led to eight charges of conspiracy under the *Combines Investigation Act*. The chains were acquitted in 1983, but in the House of Commons, the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau faced cries of collusion and demands for action. Within a week, Governor General Ed Schreyer signed an order-in-council to form a Royal Commission on Newspapers. Its mission was to look at the condition of the country's newspaper industry and make recommendations.

Tom Kent, a lanky, well-connected former newspaper editor and Liberal mandarin turned academic, was appointed to head the investigation. Kent was known as "an elitist reformer, no fan of corporate concentration, and a proponent of government intervention."[16] He was not about to sugar-coat the growing concentration of media ownership in Canada. The report found that in Québec, Québecor, Gesca and UniMedia controlled 90 per cent of French-language newspaper circulation.[17] The situation was not much better in English Canada. Southam, Thomson, the Sun group and smaller chains such as Irving in New Brunswick and Armadale Corp. in Saskatchewan controlled more than 74 per cent of newspaper circulation. "Chains accounted for 77 per cent of all copies of newspapers published in Canada in September 1980, an increase from 58 per cent 10 years earlier" when the Davey report was released.[18] Such data contributed to Kent's grim conclusion that "newspaper competition . . . is virtually dead in Canada," which "is clearly and directly contrary to the public interest."[19]

In the pre-social media world of 1980, the extent of public engagement in the issues addressed by the Kent Commission was impressive. Over the eight months of hearings, hundreds of citizens, community groups, media workers and municipal officials submitted briefs about the quality of news and information in their local media. At the public hearings, they lined up to complain about the shortcomings and stress the value of a vibrant local media. Everyone had something to say about the need to preserve a multiplicity of media and diversity of news and opinion.

The Commissioners grilled media executives, some of whom appeared with their lawyers. The executives defended the independence of the media and their businesses, arguing against any government intervention. The Kent Commission's focus, however, was to protect the interest of the public, not business.

The final report recommended legislation to limit monopoly and cross-ownership between newspapers and broadcasters. It suggested the formation of an independent national Press Rights Panel to oversee the industry, similar to the Press Ownership Review Board suggested by the Davey Commission ten years earlier. In 1983, Jim Fleming, minister of multiculturalism in the Liberal government, incorporated those recommendations into a private members bill — *The Daily Newspaper Act*. Bill 226 faced vehement opposition from both the industry and Conservative members of Parliament because it would limit media consolidation and cross-ownership. The bill

never made it past second reading in the House of Commons and died with the election of the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney in 1984.

With the free market firmly in control, publishers promised action to ensure the quality of journalism. The Ontario and Québec press councils increased their membership, and new councils were established in Atlantic Canada, Manitoba and British Columbia.[20] While the press councils adjudicated citizen complaints, they did nothing to address the fundamental concerns raised by the 1981 Kent report (and the previous 1970 Davey report) about the decline in diversity of news sources from the spate of takeovers and closures. The race to consolidate would continue unabated through the next four decades.[21]

The release of the Kent report made media executives from Southam, Thomson and Maclean-Hunter sensitive to criticism and eager to prove Kent wrong. The newspaper chains were suddenly keener to invest in investigative journalism — and it was at this point they started to take a direct interest in the Micheners. It would be another way to allay fears that a smaller, more concentrated media pool would lead to a lack of diversity and public service journalism. Involvement in the administration of the Michener Award could be their public service — evidence that media conglomerates were committed to encouraging excellence in journalism.

Their involvement turned out to be a good fit — one that came just in time. In its first ten years, the Michener Award had established itself as the premier journalism award and was an incentive for newsrooms of all sizes to set their sights higher. But by 1981, Michener administrators MacPherson and MacDougall desperately needed support, structure and firm financial footing. Each year was a struggle to pay for new trophies, travel for the judging panel to meet in Ottawa, printing and postage. The award was heading towards a premature death.

At the end of 1981, a group of influential, high-powered media executives from Southam News, Thomson News, Canadian Press, CBC and CTV — many of the same outlets criticized in the Kent report — swooped in to save the Micheners. The award and its focus on public service journalism had become too important to fail. It also provided a way for media executives to show that, despite all the cutbacks and consolidation in the industry, media organizations were prepared to give reporters the time and resources to produce investigative journalism in the public interest. For these executives, it was a matter of professional pride that they were still producing important

journalism that had an impact. It was also good business. Big stories attracted bigger audiences and advertisers. Reporters and editors regarded the journalism that the Michener Awards prioritized as their highest calling.

Media executives met with MacPherson and MacDougall in 1981 to begin the process of setting up a charitable foundation to ensure the survival of the Michener Award. While the 1980s were by no means smooth sailing, the creation of The Roland Michener Foundation/*La Fondation Roland Michener* provided the structure necessary to sustain the award and expand its public service mission for journalism.

The catalyst in this intervention was Paul Deacon, vice president of Maclean-Hunter. He had been editor and publisher of *The Financial Post* when the *Post* won the first Michener Award in 1970. "So I know how much they mean to everyone involved," he said in a speech at the 1983 ceremony.[22]

"Paul Deacon was a lifesaver," recalled Clark Davey, founding director and former *Globe and Mail* editor and publisher with Southam News. "The thing was very close to expiring. There was a feeling that if we didn't do something about it, it was going to die."[23] Deacon was a visionary who saw possibilities for the Michener Award that went beyond an awards gala and self-congratulations at Rideau Hall, and he was prepared to work hard to realize that vision.

The executives gave Fraser MacDougall — "a pillar" and defender of public service journalism — the responsibility to lead the transformation.[24] MacDougall was the perfect choice. He had been a Michener judge since year two and was known at Canadian Press to be a stickler for detail. A hard-bitten journalist with ink in his blood (MacDougall's father was a printer at the daily *Beacon Herald* in Stratford, Ontario),[25] MacDougall junior started as a cub reporter for a small daily, *The Sault Star,* in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, before joining the Canadian Press in 1941. He quickly rose to the position of Ottawa bureau chief, where "he was instrumental in building the news wire's key service: quick and accurate election coverage."[26] In 1972, at age sixty-five, MacDougall retired from the *Canadian Press* and threw himself into setting up Ontario's first Press Council, where he became known as the "journalistic father-confessor,"[27] a reference to his early years as a student minister at Baptist churches on the north shore of Lake Huron.[28] He brought that same zeal to the role of the chief judge of the Michener Awards for 18 years.

A New Beginning

On September 20, 1982, six lawyers met in a law office where John Manley, later a Liberal cabinet minister, assumed the chair and presented the Letters Patent. The document set out the mission of the Foundation: "to foster journalism which promotes the public interest and demonstrates high social values," to award "meritorious and disinterested public service in journalism" and "to advance education in the field of journalism.[29] The first act was to elect officers. MacDougall would be the founding president, a nod to the tedious backroom work he had put into creating the Foundation. He presided as the lawyer-directors passed bylaws and set up the structure and operations for the Foundation's governing body. In April 1983, a board representing the stalwarts of Canada's media industry — publishers of newspapers and magazines, national broadcasters, wire service editors, independent journalists and journalism educators — took over.[30] Their ongoing support would be crucial to the success of this new foundation.

With the endorsement of Roland Michener, now long retired, the new board of directors immediately changed the name from Roland Michener Foundation/*La Fondation Roland Michener* to the Michener Awards Foundation/*La Fondation des Prix Michener*. The board understood the value of keeping the Michener name while at the same time putting the journalism award front and centre. On August 31, 1983, Fraser MacDougall stepped down from his caretaker president role. According to plan, Paul Deacon was elected president. Over the next eight years, Deacon would lead the Foundation through tumultuous times, never losing his singular vision to build a culture of public service in the industry.

Deacon was regarded by his colleagues and competitors as "soft-spoken, mild-mannered, and elegant."[31] Starting as a reporter in 1947, he rose through the ranks of *The Financial Post* to become investment editor in 1952 and FP editor in 1964. Deacon had worked his way up to vice president of Maclean-Hunter in 1979. At that time, it was the biggest media conglomerate in Canada, with broadcast and print interests across North America and Europe. Deacon was a master juggler, keeping up with and moving forward on many disparate projects. "He had a comfy chair in the bedroom where he'd sit after dinner and before going to bed," recalled his son James. "It had loosely sorted stacks of paper and files piled on either side — what he called his 'homework'."[32] He

was known as "a nut for accuracy and a believer in objectivity."[33] His leadership was exactly what was needed to propel the Michener Awards forward.

The first annual meeting of the newly expanded board of the Michener Awards Foundation was held in Ottawa on a cold, cloudy Saturday morning on November 12, 1983. Roland Michener travelled from his home in Toronto to join the media executives gathered in the boardroom at the National Press Club on Wellington Street. The minutes from the annual general meeting record Michener's pleasure that he was "the 'inspiration' for the award in 1969, and that he had served a sound and useful purpose in its encouragement of the journalistic media across the country."[34] After twelve bumpy years, Michener said he was encouraged by the creation of this new charitable foundation. "I now think that the organization might outlast me!"[35] He also paid tribute to his successors as governor general for their continued support for the award. The endorsement of the award by the Office of the Governor General sent a strong message to Canadians about the pivotal role of journalism in democratic institutional life.

At the awards ceremony in November 1983, the newly formed Michener Awards Foundation broke out champagne to celebrate a new beginning. It was a night for another first. A small family newspaper from the north shore of Lake Huron, the *Manitoulin Expositor,* had defied the odds to become the first weekly to receive a Michener Award for its reporting in the public interest, "proving that bigger isn't necessarily better," said Fraser MacDougall, chair of the award jury.[36] The win was evidence to the hundreds of smaller news organizations across Canada that they, too, could win a Michener.

The *Expositor* took on the sensitive topic of suicide and the lack of social services on the island. In such a small, tight-knit community with a year-round population of around 10,000, the number of suicides was about two times the national rate of twenty people per 1,000. Suicide on Manitoulin Island was endemic. For over a decade, the *Expositor* had hammered away, week after week, at the problem. Back in 1975, the publisher had faced scathing criticism from Indigenous leaders of Wikwemikong First Nation over the *Expositor*'s coverage of a rash of suicides of young people. "The Council were really angry that we were drawing attention to this," publisher emeritus Rick McCutcheon said.[37] When another cluster of suicides happened in 1982, this time in white communities, the *Expositor* gave the issue the same attention as in 1975.

The paper's dogged coverage stirred the community to action. An elementary school teacher started talking about the issue with her students. "They all wrote letters to the editor expressing empathy with the families of the people left behind and we ran them together," said McCutcheon.[38] Mary Nelder, "a Haweater" as the locals call themselves, led a campaign to get a toll-free twenty-four-hour distress phone line. "She should get an award, too," said Peter Carter, a former editor and reporter at the *Expositor*.[39]

In Manitoulin, the *Expositor* team was thrilled to be invited to the ceremony at Rideau Hall. Carter and his girlfriend Helena, who later became his wife, took the seven-hour bus trip to join publisher Rick McCutcheon for the ceremony and "to meet all the people I looked up to," said Carter. During a bathroom break, Carter recalled running into Ottawa journalist John Fraser, who asked if Carter had his acceptance speech ready. "Yeah, right, Mr. Fraser," Carter replied and laughed. Both Carter and McCutcheon were so convinced the paper was not going to win that neither had prepared a speech. After all, the *Globe and Mail* had the Donald Marshall story. Carter said he thought the nomination was tokenism, "throwing a bone to the community newspaper world."[40] They were wrong.

McCutcheon and Carter ended up ad-libbing their acceptance speeches that night. When Carter, a gangly twenty-three-year-old, got up to the podium, he found the words. "I guess we got this award for community service in journalism. It's not pleasurable reporting suicide rates, but I think we did something by reporting them, and that's what journalism can do."[41] McCutcheon said it was "very, very cool" to receive the Michener Award, but maybe a little too cool for some of the big boys. Before the announcement, he said, "Everybody was quite chummy, and all of a sudden, they weren't, they were quite cool. They [the *Globe and Mail*] stopped speaking to us."[42] Hurt egos mended quickly. The following week, the *Globe* sent a reporter to Manitoulin Island to do a feature story on the *Expositor*. The story was published the following March.[43]

The Michener win didn't hurt Carter's career. At a celebratory breakfast the next day, the publisher of the *Ottawa Citizen* tried to lure Carter away with an offer to work in the big city, but Carter turned down Russ Mills. "It would have been a game-changer, but I went back to the Island," Carter said. "I like working for Rick. I like being on the Island. I liked my life."[44] McCutcheon enjoyed the congratulatory notes, but "the next day you've got to go to work and prove you're doing a good job all over again, just like always."[45]

The *Expositor* win was an example to other smaller outlets. It showed the value of courageous reporting on sensitive and often taboo topics, and how sustained reporting about uncomfortable issues like suicide can lead to measurable change. In the case of the *Expositor* coverage, the suicide helpline brought the issue to national attention. In the first few weeks of operation, the helpline was credited with saving two lives. The win also showed the value of not letting a story drop. Over ten years, the paper's ongoing coverage of mental health issues connected to suicide activated the community and resulted in more social services becoming available in the area. It was a prod to small publications to dig deeper and do more than the routine reporting of police reports and sports scores. If the story was good enough, it could win the top prize in Canadian journalism.

The tiny *Expositor* had shut out five other larger media outlets who went home with honourable mentions and citations of merit. Every story nominated that night had impact. For example, the *Globe and Mail*'s exclusive interview in 1982 with Donald Marshall, a Mi'kmaw man from Membertou on Unama'ki [Cape Breton Island] who spent eleven years in prison for a murder he didn't commit. The judges wrote that five days after the *Globe and Mail* interview, the federal justice minister instructed the Nova Scotia Supreme Court to hold a hearing. "The succeeding *Globe and Mail* stories gave Marshall the support he urgently needed to deal with the transition to civilian life. The climax came in February 1982, when Marshall won acquittal and became a fully free man," read the citation of the judges.[46]

The success of the Michener Awards tempered concerns about media concentration. It was evident that the system was working just fine. Smaller independent media were producing investigative stories and competing with larger media outlets, and both had not abandoned their watchdog role. They were exposing pressing social issues and holding those in authority to account. Journalism was making a difference. It was a matter of professional pride. The Michener Awards tapped into that ethos.

For example, *Toronto Star* Sunday features writer Frank Jones thought he was going to the Yukon to do a cut-and-dried story about a twenty-three-year-old former cross-country ski champion who had shot and killed her husband after a night of excessive drinking and violence. Khristine Linklater lived in Old Crow, an isolated fly-in community. She had been convicted of second-degree murder and was in the Whitehorse jail waiting to be shipped

south to serve a minimum ten-year life sentence in the Kingston Penitentiary for Women.

When Jones arrived in Whitehorse, he found the pages of the local daily newspaper filled with angry letters from Yukon women. They were outraged at the guilty verdict by an all-white jury because the women "had experienced what it was like to live with booze and violent husbands in remote communities, a lifestyle almost impossible to escape."[47] Being sent to serve time in the South was like a double punishment, Jones said in an interview.[48]

While he was in Whitehorse, two courageous women — one, an Indigenous court worker, the other, the wife of Yukon's health minister — pulled strings and got Jones into the jail. He interviewed Linklater in the laundry room with two guards listening to every word. She was pining for her ten-month-old son Norman. "I'm scared stiff," Linklater whispered to Jones. She was convinced she "would never live to do the 10 years."[49] Jones's sensitive, thoughtful account of Linklater's night of tragedy resulted in an outpouring of offers to fund the appeal and pay for her to go to Toronto for addiction treatment at the Donwood Institute. Civil rights lawyer Clayton Ruby helped her lawyer prepare the appeal.

The story took an unusual twist. Jones was vacationing in the United Kingdom with his family when the Yukon Supreme Court released Linklater on $10,000 bail with the condition that she be under the supervision of Jones. "Without being consulted, I came back to find out that Khristine was my charge. I was responsible for her, which is a bit unusual when you're doing the story," Jones said.[50] Linklater flew south to live with Jones, his wife and six kids until a place opened at the Donwood Institute. When she finished addiction treatment, Linklater moved to an Indigenous-run residence. As her guardian, Jones kept an eye on her. Jones wrote that when the word came that Justice W. A. Craig of the Court of Appeal had reduced her conviction to manslaughter, Linklater "sobbed and threw her arms around me."[51]

Linklater was returned to the Yukon for the sentencing hearing. The same judge who released her into Jones's care gave her a suspended sentence and probation. She went free.[52] It was one of the most unusual stories Jones ever covered because it became personal. "It certainly committed the paper [*Toronto Star*] to being right on the story and following it all the way through," he said.[53] Jones said the story put spousal abuse on the national stage and contributed to overall changes for women in abusive relationships. Today the

Star would trumpet such a story on the front page with the sub-head: "*The Star* gets action."

Michener Award nominees were often the first to identify emerging trends and under-reported issues. A nomination alone was enough recognition to catapult stories onto a national stage and engage citizens and decision makers in a discussion. For media executives, it was a demonstration that they had not abandoned their public service role and were putting time and money into stories with impact. A Michener nomination or win also offset criticism that media concentration and cross-ownership diluted the quality and diversity of news and information.

In the 1980s, the Michener Award-winning journalists drew attention to changes involving immigration and multiculturalism, trends that would become hugely political and socially important for Canadians. These stories emerged as the country welcomed people fleeing natural disasters, conflicts and violence, persecution, and political and humanitarian crises. Refugees came from Sri Lanka, Uganda, Chile, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Others migrated from Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago and Bermuda.[54] Most made their homes in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. These new communities signalled a marked change from past patterns where newcomers had come mainly from the United States, Europe and the Eastern Bloc countries.

The national adoption of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework in 1971 meant that Canada, unlike the United States, was no melting pot, but rather a country that aspired to celebrate differences. The influx of newcomers was changing Canadian communities. In 1985, Toronto's two largest newspapers — the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* — each received a Michener Award for their investigations into problems refugees and immigrants faced getting into and staying in Canada and how new ethnic communities were changing the culture of cities like Toronto.

The *Toronto Star* "explored the rewards and disappointments of life" among the seven largest ethnic communities — Black, Jewish, Italian, Chinese, Portuguese, East Indian and Pakistani — in Canada's biggest city. Reporter Olivia Ward interviewed 1,400 people over three months in 1985. She discovered the city had moved light years in just fifty years, from a city of two solitudes, who greeted Jewish immigrants with signs that said, "No dogs or Jews." In her final installment, Ward observed:

It's Sunday morning at the Mars Cafe and taxi drivers of assorted shapes and sizes are carrying on their verbal war against "young guys."

"Ever notice you can't get a decent bagel anymore?" one adds. What kinda town are we living in?"

Nearby, a Japanese waiter serves coffee and muffins to a young black woman and her French-Canadian boyfriend. Behind them, a dark-haired student dips a donut into his tea and bookmarks his homework with a page from a Chinese newspaper.

"Merry Christmas," an elderly man shouts.

"Happy Chanukah," Somebody calls back.

This is Toronto in the 1980s. A multicultural metropolis striking an uneasy balance between integration and suspicion, where open doors and closed minds exist in inverse proportion. A city that brings a unanimous verdict from visitors and residents: "It works."[55]

The series was used in schools and by community service and research organizations. "When you look back at it, the series was in its infancy of covering multiculturalism. It was doing the snapshot and we gave a lot of effort and we felt very proud of leading the way on what was obviously to become a huge issue," said John Honderich. "It was way, way ahead of its time, cutting edge and carving out what matters, and what this city is about."[56]

Since 1985, coverage of diverse communities has evolved. Newsrooms have hired racialized journalists, added columnists who write about equity, diversity and inclusion in communities and created reporting beats focussing on newcomers, diversity and immigration.

The other 1985 Michener Award winner was the *Globe and Mail*. Investigative reporter Victor Malarek documented the government's inability to process a flood of illegal immigrants and refugees seeking to stay in Canada. Malarek, who prides himself on being a "crazy guy who is not afraid to take people on,"[57] unmasked dodgy lawyers and immigration consultants and exposed government refugee detention centres in Toronto for violating United Nations human rights laws:

> There is no privacy; doors to the rooms must stay open. "It's a depressing situation to be in detention for a long time," an Immigration official said. "We don't want a suicide." The main activity is watching television. There were no books or magazines and an exercise bicycle stood unused.
>
> When a few detainees said they get only a half-hour of fresh air time when the regulations call for an hour, a security guard said, "The reason you get a half hour is because it is cold outside and we are concerned about your health." One detainee from Liberia said he doesn't go out at all because he has no winter coat.[58]

After the stories came out, the refugees in detention were released to church groups and the centre was shut down.

The win propelled Malarek to dig deeper into the problems immigrants to Canada face. Three years later, the *Globe and Mail* received another Michener Award for a series of stories that included Malarek's investigation into a federal entrepreneurial immigration program, designed to fast-track wealthy immigrants wanting to move to Canada. The goal was to entice "economic migrants" to start businesses and create at least one job. Malarek's Michener Award-winning stories debunked the government's claim that the program was a success:

> Two Hong Kong brothers, Philip Kwok-Po Lee and Kenneth Kwok-Hon Lee, said they would inject $500,000 into a Toronto knitting mill. They received their landed-immigrant status, returned to Hong Kong shortly after their arrival in Canada and did not follow through with their business proposal.
>
> Louis Hin-Kuen Chan said he would invest $300,000 in a beauty supply company outside Ottawa. The investment was not made.
>
> Joseph Shao-Kong Wu said he would set up a shipping company at Pearson Airport in Toronto with an initial investment of $150,000. The business venture was never realized.
>
> None of the landed immigrants could be reached at their Canadian addresses.

> Entrepreneurs are under no obligation to follow through with their proposals unless such a condition is imposed by immigration officials on the applicants' visas. . . .
>
> The federal Immigration Department has yet to prosecute or deport any entrepreneur who has not established any kind of business venture in Canada.[59]

Malarek's sources led him to one of the top Bay Street law firms — Lang Michener. Immigration lawyers there came under RCMP investigation for "allegedly creating false Canadian residences and bogus business intentions so that as many as 149 of their wealthy Hong Kong clients could get landed status and, eventually Canadian citizenship."[60] One lawyer faced criminal charges and nine partners in Lang Michener faced disciplinary action from the Law Society of Upper Canada. As a result of the *Globe* series, the Law Society adopted stricter oversight and transparency rules, and the Canadian government tightened its control of the immigration entrepreneurship program.

Paul Palango, an editor at the *Globe and Mail*, accepted the 1988 award. With Roland Michener sitting in the first row, Palango did not shy away from noting the story's connection to the law firm Michener had founded. "It's more than a little ironic that we have been recognized by the Michener Award Foundation for our work on Lang Michener. The audience laughed."[61] Victor Malarek recalls his conversation with Michener at the stand-up reception after the ceremony. Michener said, "You know it's a different group of people working there now. I don't understand them. It's very embarrassing and I am glad that I am no longer there." Malarek said he gave Michener no quarter, reminding him, "Well, they carry your name on the masthead."[62] The fact that an exposé of a law firm with ties to the principal benefactor of the Michener Awards could be nominated — and win — attested to the independence of the judging panel from external influences, including the Foundation board and Rideau Hall.

The two other finalists that year also looked at issues surrounding legislation and policies that affected refugees and immigrants to Canada. The *Calgary Herald*'s special report that revealed the Alberta government was not enforcing labour laws prompted a major review. The *Vancouver Sun* produced an in-depth look at Canada's immigration laws and refugee policies with a

particular focus on the Sikh community, since 90 per cent of India's immigrants to Canada came from Punjab in India, and many had settled in the Vancouver area.

In successive years, Canada welcomed victims of conflict, religious persecution and climate from such countries as Bosnia, Burma (Myanmar), Syria, Iraq, Nigeria and Afghanistan. While the faces and names had changed, the horror stories of exploitation had not. CBC-TV's Toronto and Winnipeg investigative unit received the 1991 Michener Award for reports that "exposed how the director of immigration in Manitoba was in league with an immigration consultant in various practices."[63] After the story aired, the manager was fired, and new processes were adopted. Global News, a 2017 Michener Award finalist, reported on how Canada's Department of Citizenship and Immigration was using faulty criteria in considering permanent resident applications for newcomers with medical conditions. Following the news reports, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration found "overwhelming evidence" to repeal Section 38 – 1 (C) of the Act. Instead, the government revised financial thresholds, which came into effect on June 1, 2018.[64]

Evidence-based journalism such as that recognized by the Michener Award defends those who have no voice, holds those in authority to account, and exposes and pursues issues and problems to get action and change. This is the kind of enterprise journalism that the Davey and Kent Commission reports in 1971 and 1981 feared would shrink in the face of increased cross-ownership and concentration.

The Lustre of Rideau Hall

The creation of the Michener Awards Foundation in 1983 had given the award some administrative and financial stability. This hard-won stability and new initiatives depended on the involvement and support of the governor general and staff at Rideau Hall. The annual ceremony presided over by the governor general at Rideau Hall sent a clear message to media outlets that this award was different from other industry-based recognition. It elevated "disinterested and meritorious" journalism that resulted in measurable change. Moreover, the state recognized the essential role of journalism as a pillar of democracy. Any threat to that relationship with Rideau Hall was a threat to the Michener Award.

The appointment of Jeanne Sauvé, a Saskatchewan francophone and first woman governor general, in 1984 had garnered wide praise among media pundits and the Michener Awards Foundation. They expected another smooth five-year term. After all, Sauvé was one of them. She had spent more than 20 years as a broadcaster and political analyst with the CBC and Radio-Canada. She had freelanced for CTV, American networks and major Canadian newspapers before following her husband Maurice into politics.[65] As a Liberal MP, Madame Sauvé held several cabinet posts, including Communications. She followed in Roland Michener's footsteps and was serving as an effective Speaker of the House of Commons when she received the call from Prime Minister John Turner to succeed Ed Schreyer.

Her first Michener Award ceremony in November 1984 was promising. Like her predecessor, Sauvé and her husband Maurice opened the doors to Rideau Hall and picked up the tab for journalism's social event of the year. She had invited about 120 journalists and media executives to honour and celebrate journalism in the public interest. The event brought together big names and journalists from big and small media outlets. It was the place for small-town print journalists to meet national journalism icons. "Among the guests at the dinner were author Doris Anderson, busy in Toronto writing another book, *The Journal*'s Barbara Frum, glittery in a black sequined dress, and her husband Murray, Global TV anchorman Peter Truman and his wife Eleanor, and sculptor John Matthews who created the original Michener Award," wrote columnist Margo Roston in the *Ottawa Citizen*.[66]

"Hobnobbing" was an unofficial but very appealing aspect of the award ceremony. Once a year, in a most auspicious setting, it was an opportunity for top-notch journalists, editors, producers and publishers to put aside linguistic, geographic and professional barriers to share in a celebration of their best work. This was not lost on any of the governors general who had experience working in the media. For one of Sauvé's successors, it was close to being an underlying purpose of the awards. "It provided a place for engaging with other journalists from across Canada," recalled Michaëlle Jean, the Radio-Canada journalist who served as governor general from 2005-2010. "So for networking it was quite important. It was for a moment among us."[67]

Sauvé would have understood this dimension. She regarded the award as "our Canadian Pulitzer Prize for Journalism."[68] But in year three her enthusiasm for the gala Michener ceremony appeared to cool. In 1986, Rideau Hall proposed a scaled-back ceremony. Paul Deacon appealed to Esmond

Butler, secretary to Her Excellency, reminding him that "The presentation ceremony has become an important vehicle for recognizing and encouraging, at a national level, high standards in journalism."[69] For media organizations and their employees, the ceremony at Rideau Hall not only validated the public service role of journalism but also served as a demonstration to reporters and editors that their work was important and made a difference. "It's a very powerful moment, a very powerful signal," said David McKie, journalism educator and deputy managing editor of the *National Observer*. "I think it's an important symbol and a recognition of how important our work is, like what we do matters. To me that is the ultimate recognition of that as far as awards and ceremonies go."[70] Rideau Hall acquiesced. Deacon won a reprieve for the 1986 ceremony, but for the last three years of Sauvé's tenure, the ceremony was a modest affair that harkened back to the days of Roland Michener and Jules Léger — the presentations, followed by a brief reception.

Rideau Hall gave no reason for the change except that Her Excellency wanted a simpler ceremony. Could it have been financial restraint or health issues?[71] Before taking office, Sauvé had suffered a severe respiratory illness. Her health remained a topic of media interest. Sauvé refused to comment after an Ottawa television station reported on the six o'clock news that according to "informed sources, she was receiving treatments for Hodgkin's disease," a treatable form of cancer.[72] Later, she told her friend Shirley Wood "I don't want sensational stories in the press — I'm not a sick person and I don't want the country to have that kind of image.[73] No doubt that helped to chill her enthusiasm for celebrating.

Another possible reason for the change in ceremony was that over the years, going back to the mid-1960s, Sauvé had weathered and deflected her fair share of media criticism. A Conservative MP accused Mme. Sauvé of conflict of interest because she was working at the CBC and Radio-Canada when her husband was a Member of Parliament and held a cabinet post as Minister of Forestry in the Liberal government of Lester B. Pearson. After becoming governor general, she faced criticism over what was termed an extravagant expenditure of $700,000 for kitchen renovations at Rideau Hall,[74] a criticism other governors general would face.

The attitude of the Rideau Hall staff could have influenced Sauvé's cooling toward the Michener Awards ceremony. Her secretary, Esmond Butler, a retired naval officer who had served the previous five governors general, had no love for the scribbling class. In a note to Her Excellency, he advised

Sauvé that "The media is traditionally sophist in philosophy. . . . Good news is no news. Bad news is good news for them. Thus, it's a constant game for the media to try and embarrass the government, no matter the political stripe. And what better way to do this than through the governor general."[75] With support from her staff, Sauvé decided to host the Michener Awards ceremony in 1987, but there would be no gala.

Her Excellency Jeanne Sauvé opened the late afternoon scaled-back ceremony in 1987 by acknowledging the finalists. Still, her speech hinted at the sting from the media scrutiny over her health. "This occasion obliges each governor general once a year to stand before you and sing the praises of our national media pundits, a chorus which does not, as a rule, roll easily off the tongues of those in public life who rarely find such accolades being issued in the opposite direction. But I'm happy to acknowledge your talents. Through the example of these acclaimed articles, there is established a standard of journalism and a goal towards which each journalist can strive in their pursuit of professional excellence."[76] Sauvé set aside personal grievances and focused on the purpose of the Michener Award and recognized excellence in journalism, She took time to commend Roland Michener "for having perceived the need to establish some system of formal recognition of the print media in this country and for affording us an occasion to reflect on the positive and constructive service which is rendered to the Canadian community through the efforts of those whom we honour here this evening."[77]

After a brief reception, everyone went on their way. It was a huge disappointment to Peter Moon, the lead reporter for the *Globe and Mail*'s Michener Award-winning story. While he was impressed at the ceremony in the ballroom at Rideau Hall, he had anticipated a lavish gala dinner in the style of former governor general Ed Schreyer to celebrate the newspaper's aggressive and groundbreaking series. Moon left Rideau Hall disappointed that the Sauvé had not done more to recognize journalism in the public interest.

The *Globe and Mail* had devoted its news and editorial pages throughout 1986 to a court challenge against a December 1985 amendment to the Criminal Code of Canada that denied journalists and the public access to information in police search and seizure raids — one of investigative journalism's most important tools when it came to covering the police and courts. Section 487.2(1) made it illegal for media to identify search locations, people in the premises and "the identity of anyone named in a search warrant as a suspect in the offence under investigation."[78] The only way around this was

if "the publisher obtained the permission of those searched or named as suspects — an unlikely scenario . . . " wrote legal media historian Dean Jobb.[79] Privacy was about to butt heads with press freedom.

In January 1986, the *Globe and Mail* and other media outlets launched a challenge to the amendment. "It was intended. It was planned," said Moon, the story's lead investigative journalist.[80] Toronto lawyer Clayton Ruby eagerly took on the case to get the Criminal Code amendment thrown out in the Supreme Court of Ontario as a violation of Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Winnipeg *Free Press* had launched a similar challenge in Manitoba.

The *Globe* tasked Moon to hit the streets and find a search warrant that had not been publicized. His managing editor Geoffrey Stevens wanted an example of how this amendment curtailed press freedom and stood in the way of Canadians receiving information about an important part of the criminal justice system. It was a fight for journalistic freedom and citizens' rights.

Moon says he lucked out. "I stopped to have a coffee with Gerry McAuliffe, who was working for CBC Radio at the time, and I told him what I was doing. 'Oh fuck,' he said, 'look at this.' He went to his drawer, and he pulled out a search warrant to seize his home telephone records and his work telephone records because he was exposing a lot of things involving the Niagara Regional Police," Moon recalls. "It was perfect. The [Ontario Provincial] police executing search warrants against a CBC reporter who was investigating the [Niagara Regional] police."[81]

McAuliffe and the CBC gave Moon permission to write about the warrants. So did a businessman from St. Catharines who had had his business records seized. But the Criminal Code amendment required the consent of all parties. Moon still needed permission from Bell Canada to use the phone records before he could legally publish the story. When Bell refused, "we jumped up and down with joy," Moon said. "This meant we had a great story."[82] It also meant the *Globe and Mail* would willfully defy the search warrant section of the Criminal Code and risk prosecution and a fine of up to $2,000 and/or six months in jail.[83] The stories started to roll out in February 1986, with Moon writing the news stories and the editor-in-chief, William Thorsell, the editorials. In a front-page story Moon wrote:

> "I would be very surprised if the Attorney-General of Ontario were to charge us with breaching this new provision of the

> Criminal Code," Globe managing editor Geoffrey Stevens said in an interview.
>
> "Any law officer of the Crown would be embarrassed to have this provision in the code. It's so obviously at odds with the Constitution, particularly in this instance. I think this is a particularly clear-cut case.
>
> "I don't think we are breaking the law in any way publishing this story. In fact, publishing this story is entirely legal and constitutional. Section 2 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees the public's right to know through the device of the freedom of the press. You cannot separate the freedom of the press and the public's right to know."[84]

In June, the Manitoba Queens Bench ruled that the amendment was "much wider than necessary." Two months later, based on the warrants Moon received from CBC, the Supreme Court of Ontario struck down the amendment as unconstitutional under the *Charter*. "The big thing is newspapers very rarely get to change the Criminal Code or any major legislation the way we did. And then we went up to the Michener Awards ceremony and we won. We were all ecstatic."[85] For Moon, the Michener Award remains the single outstanding moment in his journalism career. "I won the Michener Award, as did the *Globe* and [William] Thorsell. It was a big event in my career, and I've used it."

Geoffrey Stevens used his acceptance speech to send a message to Rideau Hall about the importance of the ceremony. The following day, he wrote a letter to Sauvé to thank her and reminded her that "The continued patronage of the governor general distinguishes the Michener Award from all other journalistic honours and prizes in Canada."[86]

Relations with Governor General Sauvé never warmed. For her final three years, 1987-1989, after the Michener Award ceremony there would be no gala dinner at Rideau Hall for the finalists and winners. After the disappointment of the 1987 ceremony, where journalists left feeling unrecognized, the *Ottawa Citizen* stepped in. Its publisher, Clark Davey, a founding director of the Michener Awards Foundation, hosted a dinner and dance at the National Arts Centre for the last two years of Sauvé's tenure. But an industry-hosted dinner was anti-climactic for the Michener Award winner and

finalist nominees who had come to expect an evening at Rideau Hall. That gala would return with the appointment of Ramon Hnatyshyn in 1990.

Twenty years after the *Globe and Mail*'s win, the importance of the story still resonated. William Thorsell reminded readers that the *Globe* "fought against the 'secret knock on the door in the middle of the night.' If the police were going to use that power against citizens of any ilk, we argued, they should use it in public. We won."[87] While section 487.2(1) remains in the Criminal Code, Dean Jobb writes in *Media Law for Canadian Journalists*, "the ban is no longer considered to have the force of law." This is journalism at its best and clearly deserved the top Michener Award.

While the annual Michener Awards ceremony at Rideau Hall was the Foundation's *raison d'être,* the Foundation was committed to outreach and education — to build capacity through elevating exemplary people and educational opportunities for working journalists.