

Arts & Entertainment



Milton authors Allison Griffiths and David Cruise have taken time away from their recent horse-rearing endeavours to pen their latest book 'Working The Land'.

New book gets up close and personal with Canadians

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

When Milton authors David Cruise and Allison Griffiths set out to research their seventh book 'Working The Land', they weren't looking for ways to bring the country together.

But after scouring the nation for those whose livings are fused to Canadian soil, they found it anyway.

"The thing that struck us from doing the book is that Canadians don't really know a lot about each other," said Mr. Cruise. "We just don't really understand each other."

And that's a tough obstacle to overcome for average Canucks, who with bills to pay and families to feed can hardly rush off to get to know their fellow countrymen.

Instead, it's the job of writers like Mr. Cruise and his 20-year partner Ms Griffiths to spread the word.

And if they were asked, they might say that 'Working The Land', which features intimate portraits of Canadians who eke a living out of this nation's soil, is a good place to start.

"There's issues in the book but they're not presented as lectures," said Mr. Cruise. "They're presented as being part of their lives."

That should also be a mandate of the country's news outlets, he said.

"This is where the national media has really failed us miserably," said Mr. Cruise. "We don't get a real feel for what's out there."

Much of Canadian history unknown

And history lessons haven't done much better.

"We've written this sanctimonious pap. We have a fascinating history, but most of it is unknown," said Mr. Cruise. "Just to tell the truth is more exciting. Most of our great figures are nothing like how they've been presented."

Now that he mentions it, the history of Mr. Cruise and Ms Griffiths is also pretty fascinating.

Their acquaintanceship began in Edmonton, where both had fallen into careers as freelance writers.

Both were enmeshed in ill-fated marriages when they decided, separately, to extricate themselves and try their luck in Vancouver. There they met and deepened their friendship enough to conceive a child.

So they were. One partner was staring age 30 in the face, the other was already there. They were at crossroads.

Though both made enough to support themselves as freelance writers, they didn't earn enough to support a child.

But they were writers — neither wanted to give that up. So they teamed up instead.

"We started editing each other's work and that really sped things up," said Mr. Cruise.

And when Ms Griffiths got banged up playing rugby, Mr. Cruise did a few interviews in her stead, handing her the information so she could write the story.

But their book writing began as a fluke.

In what he describes as "a writer's nightmare," a friend of Mr. Cruise's had no sooner forsaken a freelance writing career for the bigger bucks of public relations when he was offered a book deal.

In a Vancouver bar, it was decided that the solution was for the friend, Mr. Cruise and Ms Griffiths to co-write the book.

"It all blossomed from that," said Mr. Cruise.

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