



Steve Durand, the visionary behind LeTerrain, and his dog Inook.

LeTerrain reimagining wilderness stewardship by Connor Lalonde

All photos submitted

"When I first moved up here, people had thought I'd lost my mind," Steve Durand said incredulously. "This whole off-grid, cabin culture movement was still in its infancy and I don't think many people understood what I was trying to do."

Durand is the owner of and visionary behind LeTerrain and as it turns out, he hadn't lost his mind after all.

With the stated mission of "protecting wilderness by sharing it" LeTerrain is a nature stewardship project that transcends convention. Made up of 430 acres of pristine woodlands deep in the Pontiac wilderness, LeTerrain is a private wilderness sanctuary that seeks to offer an alternative to the traditional provincial or federal approach to land management and protection.

Durand was at one time a practicing professional musician. Songwriting, performing and producing music throughout Montreal and Hudson, New York, Durand had made a thriving career for himself in the arts. Someone whose zeal for life is palpable from the first time you meet them, Durand has possessed a rich assortment of hobbies since his youth. A vigor for dirt biking, hiking, BMXing and snowboarding prompted him to

move to the Val-de-Monts region in his late 20s. Here he spent seven years living in a rented lakeside property by himself.

It was this experience that cultivated what was to come. Fostering an impassioned affinity with the natural world, Durand knew that he wanted to live amongst it. Relishing the simple

pleasure of roaming unobstructed in the midst of nature, Durand recognized that it was amidst the wilderness that he belonged. This epiphany resulted in Durand searching for a tract of land where he could live out his off-grid, sustainable calling.

"In 2015 I came upon this property and fell in love with it. I was living here a month later."

Steve Durand

The land that makes up LeTerrain is representative of the Ladysmith region in which it resides, and yet fully unique at the same time. Dense mixed forests blanket craggy terrain. Wolfpacks roam unimpeded by human encroachment. Meandering creeks flow patently into untouched wetlands. Owls sit upon tree branches and hoot as eagles soar effortlessly above. Towering peaks overlook the landscape, offering panoramic views of the vast sea of wilderness that envel-

oped LeTerrain.

Durand readily admits that living amongst such expansive wilderness was at first an adjustment. While the first year was novel and exciting, the realities of isolated, off-grid life quickly set in. Living alone amongst such a vast wilderness, with only the company of his dog Inook, Durand experienced the totality of solitary life.

"Year two, three, four - it was just so hard," Durand said reflectively. "So isolated and physically demanding. I didn't have the internet or cell phone service. There's being alone, and then there's being disconnected. I essentially had no contact with anyone. So there were some very, very tough years where I didn't think I could make it."

Nevertheless, Durand stuck it out. In a sort of trial by fire, Durand familiarized himself with solar power, 12-volt systems, woodfire heating and all the necessary skills of off-grid living and gradually became more comfortable with the isolation. Through his explorations amidst it, he further connected with the land and found solace in its company.

As his outlook improved, an idea entered his mind. What if the best way to protect this land was to share it? Having always wanted to first and foremost safeguard its wilderness, what if he could invite others of like-mindedness to take part in

his stewardship project? With three off-grid cabins nestled throughout his expansive property and a large trail network ideal for hiking, snowshoeing, biking and really whatever else, Durand decided to list his cabins on Airbnb. They were an immediate hit. Searching for off-grid experiences of their own, people jumped at the opportunity to experience wilderness unadorned by human disruption. With this rush of interest, LeTerrain was born.

"Everything started to kind of come together. I wasn't so alone, I wasn't so poor and things weren't so hard," Durand said with visible relief on his face. "I felt like I was on the upswing of a blossoming movement rather than people thinking I went crazy and moved to the bush to be a hermit."

LeTerrain would exist in this capacity for a number of years. Durand would facilitate an off-grid experience for those seeking one and would use the earned money to steward the land. While this model was undoubtedly a success, Durand began conceiving of ways to take LeTerrain to the next level.

With a desire to make LeTerrain more than an Airbnb, short term rental venue, the wheels of Durand's imagination began turning. Possessing a vast stretch of land blessed with an extensive trail network, world class stargazing and a healthy, diverse ecosystem, Durand envisioned

a wholly unique endeavor that would offer an alternative to the undoubtedly important, yet often overcrowded and over-bureaucratized provincial and federal parks.

Rather than rent out cabins, Durand would make LeTerrain an access-by-membership model. For a fee, a limited number of members would be empowered to use LeTerrain at their leisure, whilst also ensuring it would always be protected. Bypassing the supposed need for government regulation, LeTerrain would become a communal, grassroots stewardship project that invited members to enjoy the wilderness they were collectively protecting. This new framework will be launching shortly.

"The idea is to have a group of people that I can get to know and are really invested in the wilderness and to be a custodian like I am," Durand said. "I don't feel like I own this. I'm just a custodian, I invite people here and anyone that comes here should have that same kind of feeling of wanting to protect."

When push comes to shove, Durand's primary concern is the protection of a landscape he has come to deeply connect with. What started out as a solo enterprise to live more sustainably and in tune with the natural world has morphed into a new approach to wilderness stewardship. "Not everyone's just gonna

go out off trail," Durand said "Not everyone's just gonna go to crown land and explore. So they need to be invited to a place with trails and a map and somewhere they feel safe."

To learn more about LeTerrain, you can visit their website at www.leterrain.land or their Instagram @theland.

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Summer Job Opportunity at THE EQUITY

REPORTER

We are seeking a reporter to join our small team of journalists at our office in Shawville for a full-time position over the summer, May through August.

The position involves interviewing, researching, writing and photography in covering multiple news and community events throughout the Pontiac for our weekly publication.

Candidates should be outgoing and have an excellent command of English. The ability to converse in French is a distinct asset, as is familiarity with Mac computers.

They should also own a digital camera, be a licensed driver and, ideally, have their own car.

Salary is competitive and will depend on qualifications. Low-cost accommodation in Shawville may also be a possibility.

Please send your application letter and résumé by email to Charles Dickson, Publisher of The Equity, at charles.dickson@theequity.ca.

THE EQUITY

Writing the history of the Pontiac one week at a time for 140 years

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Steve Durand's off-grid home in the Ladysmith area.



Made up of 430 acres, LeTerrain is surrounded by thousands more acres of crown land.

The Parents' Voice

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- You should introduce one new food to a baby at a time. Introduce the same food two to four days in a row to be certain this food doesn't give baby an allergic reaction. Watch for signs of constipation and gas.

- Allergic reactions can show up in the form of a rash, diarrhea or vomiting, at which case you should contact your doctor or pediatrician immediately and stop feeding baby that food immediately. If the allergy is severe or anaphylaxis baby may show signs of wheezing, difficulty breathing or facial swelling, (babycenter.com). You should call 911 immediately for help.

- It may take baby a few attempts at a food before they enjoy it. You can try again in a week. Sometimes the foods you're most excited to have them try out are a miss, that could change in time.

- Morning is the best time to introduce a new food. This is usually when baby is happiest and most hungry, this gives you the whole day to watch for signs of discomfort in your baby.

- Babies prefer food lukewarm, not too hot, and not too cold.

- If introducing purees, try introducing smooth consistency foods at the start.

- Watch for a reaction, did they love it, are they looking for more, did they swallow it or push it out? Talk to baby about how well they are doing trying a new food. Congratulate them on this new skill they are learning.

- Watch for a signal, wait until they are looking at you and open their mouth ready for more before you put more food in their mouth.

Enjoy this stage with your babies, I remember the excitement of starting this exciting milestone with my kiddos. Each one reacted differently, I can still remember the foods they loved and hated.

The Way We Were

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100 Years Ago

May 24, 1923

Local news: The Renfrew flour mills were practically destroyed by fire early Monday morning incurring a loss estimated at two hundred thousand dollars, well covered by insurance.

What is claimed as the world's smallest calf was born on May 13th on the farm of John Daly and sons near Quyon village. This minute specimen of the bovine family when it first saw the light of day, weighed 9 pounds, measured 15 inches high and was 18 inches long. The calf is said to be very healthy and thriving well and may be seen by any person so desiring.

Wet weather interfered considerably with the attendance at the entertainment given by the Eckards in Wilson's Hall on Wednesday evening last. Those who were present say the performance was appreciably better than that presented by the same company a couple of years ago.

Sunday afternoon gave this section the heaviest deluge of rain it has experienced in years. At church hour in the evening, the streets became channels of rushing water, rendering the progress of the lackless pedestrian anything but pleasant. Motorists who happened to be out in the country had a sorry time of it getting home. Some did not make the grade til the next morning. Even the little jog-along Fords, which are reported to be capable of going through anything or everything, in some instances, were held up as a result of the downpour.

Ad: New grocery store in Shawville. The undersigned desires the people of Shawville and surrounding country that she opened a grocery store in her building next door to dwelling house on Main Street west of Grist Mill and has now in stock a supply of choice

fresh groceries and confectionery. By offering goods at reasonable prices and courteous treatment of customers she hopes to merit a share of public patronage. Mrs. M. Langford, Main Street, Shawville. P.S. Bread kept on hand.

125 Years Ago

May 26, 1898

Local news: Sharbot Lake village suffered a \$15,000 fire last week.

Messrs. Smith and McDonald of the *Pontiac Advance* announced in last week's issue that they have sold the paper and plant to Mr. Wm. H. Meredith of Quyon, who has since removed the type and machinery to that village with the intention of their continuing the publication of the *Advance*.

Six persons are known to have perished and six others are missing as the result of the burning of the St. Hyacinthe hospital on Monday morning. The little village of St. Anne de Parade, made famous by the landslides of 1892, was again thrown into excitement last week by the occurrence of a landslide at St. Hurbe, a few miles distant, in which two farmers lost their buildings and entire belongings, including the five-year-old daughter of one of the parties.

The 28th meeting of the rural Deanery of Clarendon was held at Aylmer on the 11th and 12th inst. The meeting of the 11th was of a business nature.

Reports of mission work amongst lumbermen were given and arrangements were made for the visit of the Bishop of the diocese in August and for missionary meetings.

Mr. Henry White has been appointed postmaster of Portage du Fort, vice Mr. John Amy resigned.

Mr. J.W. Eades of this town has acquired the aerated water manufactory of Burroughs and Co. We wish "Jim" success in his new undertaking.

Career opportunity

Editor

Founded in 1883, The Equity has been a welcome weekly guest at kitchen tables throughout the Pontiac for generations.

We are now welcoming applications for the position of Editor.

In this role, the successful candidate will lead our small team of reporters, each week assigning, writing, editing and publishing stories that reflect life in the Pontiac.

We are looking for someone who is friendly, outgoing and who would value the opportunity to meet some of this area's extraordinary people and tell the stories of their deeds, great and small, through the pages of our newspaper.

The position requires an excellent command of English, a keen eye for detail, a commitment to journalistic integrity, fairness and fact-based reporting, and an appreciation of the role a respected weekly newspaper plays in the progress of a community.

An ability to converse in French is a distinct asset.

The candidate must be a licensed driver, preferably with their own vehicle, and be familiar with Mac computers, Microsoft Office, Word and InDesign.

Our offices are in Shawville, centrally located amid the beautiful, rolling countryside, friendly villages, farms and forests in the area known as the Pontiac, nestled between the foothills of the Laurentian Mountains and the Ottawa River along the western edge of the province of Quebec.

We offer a studio apartment at very modest rates to assist in relocating to Shawville, if needed.

The entire team at The Equity is committed to maintaining a pleasant and respectful workplace.

If this sounds like a place you would like to work, we would like to hear from you.

We invite you to email a letter expressing your interest accompanied by a résumé detailing your qualifications to charles.dickson@theequity.ca

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