



**Article for promotion of
Dale Hamilton's
One Woman Show
"She Won't Come in from the Fields"**

My name is Dale Colleen Hamilton and I grew up on my family's farm in southwestern Ontario, near Guelph. My Celtic ancestors came to Canada in the 1820s, settling on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron and Mississaugas of the Credit Indigenous peoples. My family farmed that land and it's where my four siblings and I grew up. The latest "crop" of grandkids is the 7th generation in the Guelph area.

As the result of a farming accident, my father had to have one of his legs amputated, so, to cut a long story short, he decided to sell the farm. He sold to a rich man from Toronto who said he wanted to be a hobby farmer, but it turned out he had executive estate development plans. I simply couldn't stand back and watch that happen, so I, along with others, spent about 4 years fighting the development plan. And we were successful, even upon appeal, and that land remains agricultural to this day. Quite recently it was purchased by a wealthy woman who has made the transition to organic and regenerative practises. This brings me joy.

The main tool we used in successfully fighting the development is a creative community development tool called Community Engaged Theatre. I studied it in England and then wrote and produced a community-engaged play in my home community, Eramosa Township. This kind of theatre is inclusive – in other words, anybody who wants a part gets a part (on stage or back stage). In the case of the Eramosa Community Play in 1990 we had over a hundred people in the cast and three hundred or so involved in various ways over a two-year period. The play was about the history of our community, focusing on the Farmers' Revolt of 1837 and also about contemporary rural land-use issues, including the development proposal on my family's farm. Staged in the ruins of a local mill, it played to sold-out audiences and received national media attention.

Closing night was in some ways like an opening night, with the play sparking community spirit and activism, resulting in a series of intense public meetings about land-use. It soon became clear that there was a strong drive to prevent the suburbanization of farm land, but that the only way it was going to happen was if some of us entered onto the political stage. So, several of us involved in the play project got ourselves elected to township council, constituting the voting majority, and were able to rewrite the township's Official Plan to better safeguard farm land.

This experience made me realize the power and potential in this approach to social activism and so community-engaged theatre became my passion for the next 30 years, as I undertook similar theatre projects or facilitated workshops on the topic in Canada, the US, the Netherlands, Kenya, South Africa, Brazil and Australia.

This brings us to the here and now and my latest adventure: a 20-minute one-woman show and conversation about regenerative farming and climate solutions called “She Won’t Come in from the Fields”. Very recently, I received a Canada Council for the Arts travel grant to tour my show across Canada, including the far north.

The basic premise of the play is that a feisty farm woman is fed up with the conventional way her son is farming the family land. So, she stages a one-woman protest, refusing to come in from the fields until he agrees to try farming regeneratively. In the process, it hits home to both of them that working together is the best way to regenerate their farm and help mitigate climate change.

Performances will be followed by a conversation with the audience focussing on challenges and solutions in sustainable food production and food security, exploring ways to dovetail different approaches for the benefit of farmers, consumers and the planet. I’m strongly encouraging those planning to attend a performance to invite a farmer/gardener who uses **non**-regenerative food-growing methods to come with you, recognizing the importance of not “singing to the choir”.

“She Won’t Come in from the Fields” grew out of my Masters work at York University. Two years ago, after a 45-year break from academia, I received a Masters in Environmental Studies, focussing on regenerative food production and arts-based environmental education. As a result of this research, and the ever-deepening climate emergency, I could never again see open tilled land and fields of corn the same, and made a commitment to becoming part of the growing movement towards regenerative agriculture.

As part of this commitment, my Indigenous son and I, in collaboration with members of the local Indigenous community, are presently developing a program of Indigenous and regenerative land-based learning on our 16 acres near Guelph.

My cross-Canada tour dates are still being finalized, but the date range is from October 22, 2024 to the end of February 2025, with a second tour in the summer of 2025.

If you’d like to attend (or host) a performance, please contact me. Or if you have connections to local gardening/farming/food security communities, please forwarded this article to them or send me their contact information. Hosting a performance can be as simple as a gathering in somebody's living room or in a multi-purpose room at a library or community centre. I'm also happy to perform for classes at universities and/or colleges and/or high schools. The performances will be free, but I'll accept donations (not expected from students) to help cover my tour costs, given that the travel grant only covers transportation.

Contact me at:
etc.dalehamilton@gmail.com
519-546-5610