

# EDITORIAL

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## Here we go again



MIKE McDEVITT

Yesterday, we once again awoke to the news of a mass shooting in our neighbour to the south. Over 100 people were killed or wounded in what is now recognized as the worst mass shooting in a country with a history of horrifying mass shootings. It is also one of the most politically encompassing as, although we have no information regarding the motives of the lone shooter, his identity and that of his victims open the door to numerous scenarios. None of them is particularly pleasant.

In the first place, the shooter's name and ethnic heritage immediately brought the term 'terrorism' to mind, with all of its religious and ethnic connotations at a time when this subject is high in the public consciousness. The subsequent jumping to conclusions was

fortified by the announcement by public authorities that the incident was being investigated as one of 'domestic terrorism,' which could mean many things, but which is almost exclusively seen as an act against America by Islamist terrorists. This despite the fact that we know the shooter acted alone and has no known connection to any terrorist group, although ISIS, as it usually does, has taken credit for the attack.

The term 'domestic terrorism,' however, does not necessarily refer to Islamic extremists. Once, it referred to groups like the Weathermen, who used violence to protest the American capitalist system and its global imperialism or individuals like Timothy McVeigh, whose right-wing Christian fanaticism led him to kill 76 mostly women and children with a home-made bomb.

There is, of course, the recent example of Cliven Bundy and his followers who recently engaged in a pathetic armed uprising against the federal government in a National Park, leading to a death, several arrests, and a new awareness of the extremes to which right wing 'patriots' will go in an attempt to force their views on others.

In this case, the xenophobic assumption that religious/political fanaticism against America lies behind the assault is thrown into some doubt by the nature of the gunman's target - a popular gay bar. According to the shooter's father,

the action was more likely motivated by his son's homophobia rather than by any religious fanaticism, although the former is easily related to the latter in most organized religions, as is the violence against abortion providers by the 'pro-life' Christian movement.

Naturally, the LBGT community has its own interpretation of events, seeing this as a hate crime against their community, just the most recent example of aggressive homophobic violence that they experience daily.

As if to reinforce this interpretation, the religious right dutifully invoked its vision of a brutally unpleasant god in declaring the attacks as an act of divine vengeance against the 'abomination' of homosexuality and the nation that tolerates it. This comes after the recent invocations by a preacher who fraudulently refers to himself as a 'Christian' to put gay people to death.

There is also, of course, the issue of mental illness, which is generally assumed to be the cause of terrorist attacks by privileged white people, but which by nature of the shooter's ethnicity is unlikely to be considered as a factor in this case.

Another factor that will definitely not be considered in any meaningful way is the issue of the easy availability of firearms. Over the last few decades, representatives of the right, with the gleeful collaboration of the gun industry has

used what was once a gun safety organization advocating for sensible gun control into a weapon of mass destruction and a marketing gold mine. There will of course be calls for 'reasonable' control from much of the country, but the political reality is that 'reasonable' gun control is no longer possible in the United States. Calls will be made for legislation on gun control, of course, but history tells us that such calls generally lead to increased hysteria among those whose hallucinations include Obama stealing their guns and selling them to ISIS and a mass rush to gun dealerships to stock up before the tyranny starts. Until America comes to terms with its extremely unhealthy cultural relationship to firearms, no progress there is likely. People will die, but the massacres of children, horrendous rates of gun-related deaths among responsible gun owners and their families, and the ability of the mentally ill, criminals, and terror suspects to purchase such weapons will remain one of the nation's most serious public health crises.

As the American general election unfolds, this event takes on more complex and nuanced meaning as politicians scramble to determine how it should be interpreted and how it is reflective of the emotional intensity of the current political scene. The Donald, of course, has already embraced the tragedy and taken credit for warning the country of the

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## Eastman celebrates Neighbours' Day

### THE SCOOP



MABLE HASTINGS

On Saturday, June 11, Neighbours Day was held in neighbourhoods all over Quebec bringing neighbours together in their yards, in common areas and in the streets to share in the celebration of living close to one and other.

According to the Neighbours Day website: <http://fetedesvoisins.qc.ca/home.html> the principal objective of Neighbours Day is to take people who live in the same area and bring them together. Since neighbours organize and host the day themselves, it is an opportunity for them to play an active role in developing a sense of cordiality and solidarity in their community.

On June 11, the Municipality of Eastman held its "La Fete des voisins," neighbours day at the Salle La Missisquoise de L'Age d'Or (an initiative of the Lions Club of Eastman), where different groups and organizations from the region were invited to present information to make their services and organizations better known in the area. Representatives came out, despite the soggy weather to exchange with the people as well as with their sister organizations for this wonderful initiative. Organizations present represented services for seniors, youth, government, social, and many more. According to attendees, a delicious barbecue lunch was also available.

Representatives Suzanne Gallagher and Norma Clifford from the Missisquoi North Volunteer Centre (CAB) located in Potton were extended the invitation to join in the day and were happy that they did.

"Despite the weather, this was a great opportunity to meet other groups from our region and gather information while making some great connections," said Clifford in regards to the CAB's participation.

According to Clifford, organizers hope to repeat the event next year and if the weather is better, likely, the attendance will be higher. A minimal fee was charged for each table and the small investment was well worth the opportu-



ANGELE HAMEL  
Suzanne Gallagher and Norma Clifford represent The Missisquoi North Volunteer Centre CAB at Eastman's "Fete des Voisins" on Saturday, June 11.

nity shared and information gained. Whether you celebrated at a big event like the one organized in Eastman or took part in a barbecue on your street, Neighbours Day is a wonderful opportunity to remind ourselves of the support system we have in the neighbourly folk living on our street, on our block or in our region.

For more information about Neighbours Day activities held in your area, visit your local Municipal website.

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