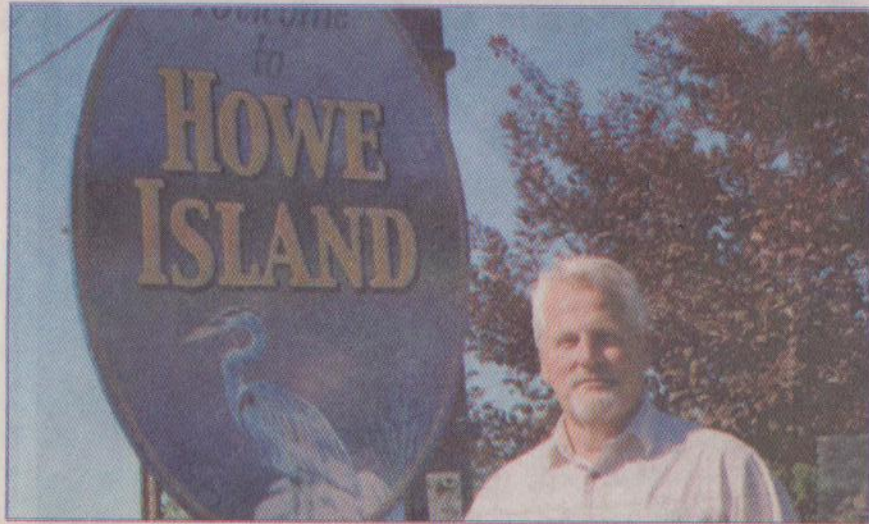


Local writer releases new book



Howe Island author Rick Doyon has released his new novel.

Wayne Lowrie
Gananoque Reporter

Growing up in Ontario, Howe Island resident Rick Doyon always knew he wanted to be a fiction writer.

He started writing a bit at the age of 18 but, as he puts it, "making a living kind of got in the way of writing books."

That need to make a living led him to Ottawa where he worked for about three decades - first as a print journalist covering the Hill, then as a speech writer for various politicians, and finally into public relations where he ended up with his own successful firm, High Road Communications.

But Doyon never abandoned his dream of returning to his true love,

fiction writing. After selling High Road in the early 2000s, he started writing full time, first churning out a play about Pierre Trudeau and then two movie scripts with his wife, Shelley. One of those scripts became the basis of his first novel, *Upcountry*, published in 2010.

Last week, Doyon, who recently moved to Howe Island, released a sequel to *Upcountry* titled *Thou Torturest Me*, a novel partly based on the Amish in the hardscrabble farmland of northwestern New York State. The novel tells the story of a bigotry-fuelled clash of cultures between the "English" and the old-order Amish who have settled in the area with a desire for cheap farmland and the need to be free from temptation.

The "free from temptation" part doesn't work out so well. Reintroducing some of the characters from *Upcountry*, the nubile and alluring niece of one of them falls in love with a handsome young Amish man. The cultural turmoil eventually leads to violence and strife.

Like *Upcountry*, *Thou Torturest Me* is based in upper New York State, an area that Doyon knows well from his nine summers in their cottage on the U.S. side of the St. Lawrence River.

There, he and Shelley made friends with some of the thousands of Amish in the area, and learned about their speech and culture.

In an interview, Doyon tells of a knock on their cottage door one night. It was an Amish friend

and his wife, pregnant with her 13th child at the age of 38. The Amish man couldn't use the telephone so he asked the Doyens to call the hospital about the difficult birth. The Doyens ended up driving the couple to a hospital in Watertown, N.Y.

Doyon said his new novel attempts to explore and explain the secret, ultra-conservative society of the Amish, while telling a story of "temptation, principle, violence and passion."

Writing as R.M. Doyon, his book is available at Leeds County Books in Brockville, Corbin's River Heritage in Clayton, N.Y. or online through his website rmdoyon.com or at amazon.com.