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2 years of defamation, damage to business reputation, & harassment continue

January 16, 2012 by [troutpoint10](#)

UPDATED For **2 years** now Trout Point Lodge and its proprietors–Vaughan Perret, Charles Leary, and Daniel Abel–have born the brunt of constant Internet **defamation** and injury to **business**

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reputation from bloggers. This has raised questions and concern from friends, guests, professionals in the travel industry, neighbours, employees, and **business** associates.

It's time to set the record straight in public as well as through the judicial system.

BACKGROUND

From 2000 until 2010, a prominent Louisiana politician named Aaron Broussard, who is of Acadian French descent, owned a vacation home on a lot on the Trout Point Road, in East Kemptville, NS, near Trout Point Lodge. Perret & Leary had known Broussard for many **years** and Abel once worked for him, so when Broussard visited their new project in the Acadian homeland, he fell in love and decided to build a vacation home there, near the dining and recreational facilities offered by Trout Point.

Broussard loved Nova Scotia, vacationed and brought friends there. Never, however, did Mr. Broussard own any part, or have any management role in Trout Point Lodge—he was simply a neighbour and someone who visited once or twice a year. The Lodge also managed rentals of his property, and has never denied this fact. That Aaron Broussard owned a cottage near Trout Point was no secret or mystery—the Times-Picayune newspaper published just this fact in a July, 2001 travel article. Broussard also had friends in the local community. When a privately-owned postage-stamp lot next to his became available sometime around 2007, Broussard bought that also and built a 2nd, smaller cottage there. He called the two cottages “Black Bear” and “Cub.”

In January, 2010, Broussard had risen to be the elected President of Jefferson Parish and his administration was under federal criminal investigation, particularly related to the activities of Broussard's Chief Administrative Officer, Tim Whitmer. Broussard was under a great deal of media scrutiny, and news stories about him were popular in the New Orleans area. Mr. Broussard—like many Louisiana politicians—was a colourful and controversial figure. He was in office during Hurricane Katrina, and many blamed him for actions resulting in flooding within the Parish. Nevertheless he was re-elected by the citizenry of Jefferson Parish after the disaster.

On January 6, 2010, in what appears to be a classic example of [gotcha journalism](#), an investigative reporter for New Orleans Fox 8 TV News named Val Bracy arranged to interview Broussard on camera related to the investigations. What she did not tell Broussard was that the President of the [Metropolitan Crime Commission](#)—a state-funded Crime Stopper Organization—provided Bracy with access to a complaint letter against Broussard that the Commission was sending that day to the Louisiana State Ethics Administration, which oversees the conduct of public officials.

The complaint letter raised, among other things, an allegation from anonymous, confidential sources that Broussard owned a “lodge” in Nova Scotia that he had rented to government contractors. The complaint never mentioned Trout Point Lodge. The implication was that he had committed ethical and/or criminal violations by using his Nova Scotia property in behind-the-scenes money transactions with government contractors, ie, kick-back or “pay to play” schemes. For the news media, this was sensational.

Never informing Broussard about the existence of the complaint, Bracy started to interview him about the complaint's contents, including his Nova Scotia properties, and if any government contractors had ever rented them or been there. Broussard made clear in the interview that he did not own or manage Trout Point.

Unfortunately for the Lodge and its proprietors, during its January 6, 2010, 9 pm news broadcast, Fox 8 broke the ethics complaint story, and decided to illustrate Broussard's Nova Scotia properties using

video of the Trout Point Lodge web site, including showing images of the lodge, the name “Trout Point Lodge of Nova Scotia,” and a slideshow of images of the hotel. Fox 8 continued to use images of the Lodge for the next 4 days on every news broadcast about the ethics complaint, federal investigation, and Broussard’s January 8, 2010 resignation from office, not only in its TV emissions but also on its web site. Those broadcasts and Internet publications are now the subject of a **defamation** law suit in Nova Scotia Supreme Court. Fox 8 claims that its publications did not refer to Trout Point Lodge, but only to Aaron Broussard. Trout Point Lodge says it was defamed. Fox 8 has refused to retract.

An important aside is that the Metropolitan Crime Commission—funded by monies from the Louisiana criminal justice system—was actually committing a crime by making public an ethics board complaint. Louisiana Revised Statute Title 42, Chapter 15 e reads:

(12)(a) It shall be a **misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of not more than two thousand dollars or imprisonment for not more than one year, or both**, for any member of the board, its executive secretary, other employee, **or any other person**, to make public the testimony taken at a private investigation or private hearing of the board **or to make any public statement or give out any information concerning a private investigation or private hearing of the board** without the written request of the public servant or other person investigated. <http://www.ethics.state.la.us/Pub/Laws/Title42Ch15.pdf>

Soon after Fox 8 News broke their “scoop” on the ethics complaint, a multitude of other New Orleans area news media picked up the story, including with the mistaken information that Trout Point Lodge belonged to Aaron Broussard and was implicated in the complaint. The President of the Crime Commission also gave numerous interviews about the complaint. It appeared on the Times-Picayune newspaper web site, including a photograph of Trout Point Lodge, on the evening of January 6 and was on the front cover of the paper (with photo), above the fold, the next morning. The Ethics Administration, by the way, did not even receive the complaint until the afternoon of January 7, 2010.

Needless to say, Trout Point Lodge was widely confused with being Aaron Broussard’s property, used in criminal activity, and the subject of an investigation. Nowhere was this more true than in online forums and blogs.

Trout Point, Charles Leary, and Vaughan Perret did also sue the Times-Picayune and its affiliated companies in Nova Scotia Supreme Court. The matter was amicably settled out of court last year. Over time, the Pulitzer Prize-winning newspaper has issued a correction and 2 retractions about its reporting, which can be seen [here](#) and [here](#).

Ultimately, the Ethics Board filed charges against Broussard in December, 2010 ([which can be seen here](#)), however none of them related to Trout Point Lodge or even to his own Nova Scotia properties. As reported by the Times-Picayune [here](#), the statute of limitations period has now long run on the Crime Commission’s complaint.

Despite the retractions, the criminality of making the complaint public, and the fact that the allegations proved groundless, the blogosphere has continued to attack Trout Point Lodge and its principals, including going way beyond the original false allegations of involvement in government corruption. Mr. Broussard was indicted on federal charges unrelated to anything in Nova Scotia in December, 2011.

DEFAMATION ON THE BLOGOSPHERE

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The most persistent, egregious, and conspiratorial of the bloggers has been someone named Doug K. Handshoe, a Mississippi Certified Public Accountant who writes on and publishes the blog [Slabbed](#). Other anonymous contributors to his blog have also defamed the Lodge, Perret, Abel, and Leary. Slabbed has continued the false story that Trout Point Lodge and its principals are involved in Jefferson Parish political corruption. He has taken the law suits against the Times-Picayune and Fox 8 News as proof that there is a coverup underway. He is also mad because the parent of the Times-Picayune, Advance Publications, discovered that he was republishing copyrighted articles in their entirety on Slabbed, including material about Trout Point that had been retracted. When Advance reportedly served a [DMCA](#) take-down notice on Mr. Handshoe's new web host for his url [slabbed.org](#), Wild West Domains/GoDaddy, they froze his account and denied him further service, causing him to return to the blog's original host, WordPress (which, ironically, is also the host of the Trout Point Lodge blog).

Perhaps most importantly, Trout Point Lodge has for **years** advertised itself on the web site [Purple Roofs](#) as being gay-owned and gay-friendly. Mr. Handshoe and his blog contributors don't like gay people. Handshoe saw the Purple Roofs listing, and started to attack. According to one of the blog's publications, Abel, Perret, and Leary are "queer fag scum," and they are repeatedly referred to on the blog as "bitches," "bottom boys," "wives", "blow-buddies," and "girls."

Abel, Leary, and Perret do not know Handshoe.

They ignored Mr. Handshoe and his blog for over a year, but when threats and anti-gay hate speech started to appear in a never-ending stream in the Spring of 2011, they served on Handshoe a legal Notice that unless he took some remedial action, they would sue him too in Nova Scotia Supreme Court. Handshoe continued to defame and harass.

In May, 2011, in the context of the law suit against Fox 8 TV, Trout Point Lodge had the occasion to have a judge review the Slabbed publications. One of Handshoe & Co's journalistic heroes, it turns out, is Val Bracy—the reporter who interviewed Broussard.

The judge looked at the blog publications up to that time and returned a reasoned judicial decision, holding at least **2** important things: First, "Trout Point has established a *prima facie* case that they [the blog's words] were published and were defamatory." He also said: "Generally the public interest in not allowing individuals to distribute defamatory materials under the cloak of anonymity will outweigh the public interest in protecting such a person's right to privacy and freedom of expression."

Second, the judge stated:

in the case at hand, the blogs contain comments based on the actual or perceived sexual orientation of the intended targets. Those comments are clearly meant to be derogatory and insulting. I will not reproduce them here. It is the type of expression that engenders harmful results such as discrimination and hatred. It is not the type of free expression that deserves protection and fostering. . . . Considering these factors, I am of the view that the public interest in disclosure outweighs the legitimate privacy interest and interests and freedom of expression of the anonymous bloggers.

As Mr. Handshoe would not stop, Perret, Leary, and Trout Point Lodge did—as promised—sue Handshoe, alleging multiple instances of **defamation**, intentional interference with economic & contractual relations, injurious falsehood, intentional infliction of mental distress, invasion of privacy, and civil assault.

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He was twice served with a Notice of Action in accordance with [The Convention on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial Matters](#) and then served with an Amended Notice of Action personally at his accounting office in Wiggins, Mississippi. Mr. Handshoe's reaction to being served the first time was to publish a video clip for the movie *Blowback* on his blog, and then to scan and publish the whole Statement of Claim against him on Slabbed. (Handshoe frequently publishes violent and/or threatening movie or video clips in reference to Perret & Leary.)

When he was served with the Amended Claim, his reaction was to publish a post entitled "Oh yeah and by the way Charles and Vaughn, Fuck you, fuck you very much."

This type of venom is very common on Slabbed. One Slabbed contributor named "unslabbed" wrote to Abel, Leary, and Perret:

If I were you BOYS I would keep my head down, not bend over to pick up the soap and ride my horses into the sunset on Brokeback Mountain.

I, one Slabbed Nation member, vow to search you all out to the ends of the earth (Yes in Switzerland, Hawaii, France, Italy, Canada and Spain) anywhere any of you have any connections.

I have the time, temperament and now the impetus to set myself to this task. Hold on, it may be a bumpy ride for some of you.

See ya soon, Cowboys.

Handshoe has not confined himself to **defamation** on Slabbed—which purports to be a legitimate news outlet and a "legal affairs" blog—he has pursued Trout Point Lodge, Perret, Abel, & Leary relentlessly across the world and across the Internet. This includes the following:

- writing with defamatory allegations to reporters who publish positive articles about Trout Point Lodge in mainstream media; this has included the Atlantic Bureau Chief of the Globe & Mail and a **business** reporter for the Halifax Chronicle-Herald. He accuses Trout Point and its principals of buying positive publicity, and the mainstream media of being on the take. Conspiracies abound for Mr. Handshoe.
- publishing "comments" on the online version of positive articles, repeating false allegations and linking to his blog. This has included on positive articles in [The Independent](#) and [The Telegraph](#) newspapers in the UK. Fortunately, the English newspapers have been very responsive in removing the offensive words.
- using Twitter to defame.
- Publishing defamatory comments on the Nova Scotia Travel Forum of TripAdvisor.com (removed after many weeks in publication)
- Publishing—on the balance of probabilities—a negative review of the Lodge on TripAdvisor (removed)
- Publishing **2** fake complaints about Trout Point Lodge on RipOffReport.com (still there—RipOff is notorious for not removing fraudulent materials and sells "arbitration" services)
- Publishing on the blog WolfvilleWatch that Trout Point was somehow involved in a local Nova Scotia scandal involving the Southwest Shore Development Agency (removed)
- Publishing defamatory remarks and links to his blog on Reddit.com (still there). In most of these publications, he disparages the Lodge's services and alleged policies and accuses it of fraud in addition to linking it to crimes.

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In addition to the allegations of involvement in Louisiana corruption and the mafia, Handshoe has also published that Trout Point Lodge is on the verge of bankruptcy and that Charles Leary lied to and misled the Nova Scotia judiciary. He has also repeatedly published Leary & Perret's photographs next to defamatory blog posts as well as publishing photographic montages with offensive anti-gay themes. The photographs of Leary & Perret used by Handshoe are the copyrighted material of the National Geographic Society and the Ashoka Foundation, taken while they were delegates to the 2010 Geotourism Summit at National Geographic Society headquarters in Washington, DC. Both National Geographic and Ashoka served DMCA take-down notices on wordpress.com's corporate owner last fall, but the photographs have simply been republished by Handshoe.

Mr. Handshoe had 45 working days (nearly 2 months with weekends and holidays) to defend the Amended Statement of Claim against him in Nova Scotia Supreme Court. This expired on November 18, 2011.

Mr. Handshoe had even more time to respond, but eventually Leary & Perret received a [default judgment](#) order against Handshoe on December 12, 2011. This means that he is deemed to admit all of the charges against him, and the only issue remaining is the assessment of damages by a judge.

It is not too surprising that Handshoe did not defend himself in Nova Scotia Supreme Court. He has publicly called the lawsuit a "**defamation** scam," and has referred to Canada and Nova Scotia as judicial "hell holes." He recently called Nova Scotia judges "pinheads." Perret and Leary are preparing for the assessment of damages hearing. Though Handshoe calls the lawsuit a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP) and states that he is protected by the United States Securing the Protection of our Enduring and Established Constitutional Heritage (SPEECH) Act, as another [sympathetic blog](#) has noted, he likely will not be so lucky. Perret and Leary are steadfast in seeking legal redress, even if Slabbed and others call them "litigious." Chapter One of this horrendous and taxing affair is drawing to a close, and Chapter Two will soon begin as Leary, Abel, & Perret begin their journey to have the Nova Scotia judgment enforced in a U.S. court and to file new claims against Handshoe & Co. in a competent U.S. jurisdiction where he can test out his theories about SLAPP and the SPEECH Act protecting his egregious behaviour from legal redress.

UPDATE: Handshoe is determined to use intimidation and extra-legal tactics to deprive Leary, Perret, and Trout Point Lodge of their day in court. Since being served in mid January with Notice of a damages assessment hearing in Nova Scotia Supreme Court, Handshoe has amplified his **defamation** and **harassment**. One has to wonder how someone with a CPA designation, graduate of a Catholic high school, and the University of Southern Mississippi can misread and misconstrue documents and facts to such a degree—the only answer being his express malice and his fervent hatred of gay people. This includes misrepresentation of the words of the US Attorney in New Orleans, misrepresentation of court documents, attempted intimidation of witnesses in another civil court action, and overall a continued attempt to link Abel, Leary, and Perret to crimes and criminal conspiracy without an ounce of justification—pure fabrication and innuendo. When there is an ongoing federal criminal investigation, this is a very dangerous game for Handshoe & Co. to play. Unfortunately for all those touched by his venom, Handshoe is someone with the mentality of a schoolyard bully using the power of the Internet for **harassment** and intimidation, taking joy in injuring others.

OTHER BLOGS

Other blogs in both Louisiana and Nova Scotia have unfortunately picked up and given credence to the Slabbed **defamation**, including South Coast Today, published from Shelburne, NS, by a friend of disgruntled former Trout Point Lodge employee Joyce Case-Harlow, who was fired in 2004. (It

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should be noted that Mr. Broussard has since sold all of his Nova Scotia property holdings). The innuendo on South Coast has included:

- that Leary & Perret have “a **defamation** claim” against South Coast’s publisher related to “a blog related to SCT” (untrue);
- that “New Orleans [sic] corruption charges” have their roots at Trout Point in Nova Scotia (untrue);
- that Louisiana “officials named in court documents and media stories own properties adjacent to Trout Point Lodge and/or have stayed at the lodge over the **years**” (untrue, except for Mr. Broussard);
- that “Broussard is the subject of several complaints before the Louisiana Ethics Commission, some of them reportedly connected to charges that he may have operated a ‘shake-down’ scheme in which he enticed vendors doing **business** with the Parish to rent vacation property he and wife Karen Parker-Broussard owned in the East Kempt Wilderness in Nova Scotia” (untrue, see above and this [report](#));
- that Broussard and his ex-wife rented their Nova Scotia properties directly to third parties (untrue);
- the Broussard’s Nova Scotia partnership Public Works Investments is still active (it has been revoked by the Registry of Joint Stocks since mid 2010);
- that “properties owned by the Broussards and others have been rented at times through a Nova Scotia firm called Kempt Wilderness Lodge Services, whose registered office doubles as a caretaker’s cabin for Trout Point Lodge nearby” (untrue—Kempt Wilderness Lodge Services has never conducted rental activities at Trout Point, nor is it the Lodge’s caretaker’s residence);
- that one of Kempt Wilderness’ partners “had been recently granted land in the area by Trout Point Lodge Ltd.” (untrue);
- that the Times-Picayune only retracted “some of thier [sic] published statements” (untrue, there were **2** blanket retractions, including on the front page of the print edition, above the fold, in bold face font).

In classic bloggers fashion, Handshoe quotes South Coast Today as a Canadian journalistic source, and, visa versa, South Coast quotes from and uses Slabbed as a source of journalistic authority from Louisiana in a stunning whirlwind of false statements of fact.

We at Trout Point have written the above to clarify the questions and concerns that some have raised about the blogosphere allegations, to correct some erroneous online reports, and to set the record straight. We welcome any questions or concerns and can assure that none of this nasty controversy affects the peace and tranquility of the Lodge.

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5 Responses

1. on [January 16, 2012 at 4:33 pm](#) / [Reply Trout Point Lodge et. al. break the silence « SlipperySlabbed](#)

[...] new post has appeared on the Trout Point Lodge blog that tells the story of Slabbed quite well. It gives new [...]

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2. on [January 18, 2012 at 11:00 pm](#) / [Reply](#) [2 years of defamation, damage to business reputation ...](#) « [larrymatthews](#)

[...] any management role in Trout Point Lodge—he was simply a neighbour and someone who visited ... Via [troutpointlodge.wordpress.com](#) Share this:TwitterFacebookLike this:LikeBe the first to like this post. Posted in [...]



3. on [January 27, 2012 at 7:10 am](#) / [Reply](#) [troutpoint10](#)

Reblogged this on [Trout Point Lodge of Nova Scotia, Relais & Chateaux](#).



4. on [February 2, 2012 at 8:54 am](#) / [Reply](#) [Peter Denton](#)

Hey. My partner and I have enjoyed three memorable stays at the Lodge. Reading about the terrible, frightening and frankly bizarre experience you have had at the hands of this blogger, who is obviously a very troubled human being, is staggering. I just wanted to congratulate you on your success in moving forward with, as you say, the first stage of legal action against this reptile and wish you continued success. You should be commended for your diligence in pursuit of your good name. It saddens me that you have been forced to go to such lengths to secure that. Your lodge is a true gem and my partner and I look forward to our next opportunity to visit.



5. on [February 2, 2012 at 10:20 am](#) / [Reply](#) [troutpoint10](#)

Hello Peter! Thanks so much for your kind & supportive words from everyone at Trout Point! We hope to see you again soon at the Lodge, and look forward to further legal victory in the U.S.

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