

**Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY
Nelson, B.C. Canada**

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Title: Fred Eaglesmith / Cross-Canada Trike Tour IV

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Jon Steinman: And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner – a syndicated weekly one-hour radio show and Podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY in Nelson, BC. My name's Jon Steinman and I'll be your host for the next hour.

We have an exciting show lined up for you today with the first half of the episode featuring the long-awaited final leg of the Cross-Canada Deconstructing Dinner tour. For any of you who listen frequently to the show, you've likely become quite familiar with Ontario's Darrick Hahn and Sinisa Grgic, two devoted fans of the show who, on May 7th, embarked across Canada on recumbent tricycles and used their trip to spread the word about Deconstructing Dinner.

Well, on July 24th, Darrick and Sinisa arrived at their final destination of St. John's Newfoundland with many more stories to tell. Last we heard from the cyclists, they were at the Quebec border, and so on today's broadcast we hear about their route between Quebec and the Maritime Provinces.

And into the second half of the show, we will feature a unique segment from Port Dover Ontario's Fred Eaglesmith. Fred is long-time bluegrass musician who has developed a cult following around the world and who conveniently passed through Nelson in July of this year while on tour. With a long history in farming, Fred's lyrics capture many of the issues raised on Deconstructing Dinner each week, in particular, the plight of the Canadian farmer. I had a chance to sit down with Fred in the studios of Kootenay Co-op Radio where he shared his thoughts on the current state of agriculture and food. And you can expect an exclusive live recording of one of his most moving songs – John Deere.

increase music and fade out

JS: If you do miss any of today's show it will be archived on our website at deconstructingdinner.ca. Over 100 of our episodes are archived there with a wealth of additional links to information on the many topics covered each week. We also from time to time like to remind you as our listeners that this radio project relies on the financial support from listeners, and our website is the best place where financial support for this weekly broadcast can be donated. Either

one-time donations or monthly subscription options are available, and it can't be stressed enough how important listeners support is to keep this show on the air and every amount helps. You can also help support this program by purchasing a CD which is made available on the main page of our website along the right hand column of the page.

Now what has also been an ongoing presence on the website since May of this year has been a link to the Cross-Canada Trike Tour page where updates and information on the two Deconstructing Dinner cyclists is located. On May 7th, Darrick Hahn and Sinisa Grgic departed Mile 0 of the Trans Canada Highway and used their trip to promote this radio program. Both of them are avid listeners and supporters of the show and with Deconstructing Dinner signs affixed to their unique and attention grabbing recumbent trikes, the cyclists have stayed with farmers, hunted out local food, spoken with media and shared many stories through their on-line blog linked to from our website. The two cyclists have since returned to Southern Ontario where they both call home but last we heard from them here on the show, they had only just left Ottawa. Upon entering into Quebec, the two cyclists were greeted with a much more friendly route to travel than found in other provinces, because as it appears, the entire province of Quebec is connected with what is called the green route – a set of paved or well-kept path designed for cyclists wishing to stay off the dangerous roads. After many close calls and frustrating road conditions, the path was a sigh of relief and so too was the culture. Darrick Hahn quickly recognized that there is a lot the rest of Canada could learn from Quebec with respect to food, farming and optimal well-being. Darrick believes that the language barrier between Quebec and the rest of Canada has prevented many inspiring examples of more responsible and engaged living from reaching the rest of us. Darrick spoke to me over the phone from their final destination of St. John's Newfoundland.

Darrick Hahn: One problem being with the language barrier, we failed to appreciate a lot of the things that are going on in Quebec because I think we are dealing with a really progressive province and I think there is a lot that we could be learning about them. With that said though, one of our hosts, in Gatineau we had someone put us up for the night and they explained to us that they have some CSAs and box programs that are going on and there is a lot of youth, young people, just out of university or in university, along that age, 20 – 30 something that are all really interested in getting back to the simpler life style, getting away from all this industrialized processes that seems to have dominated our food supplies as of late. You can see that side, but you can also see the side where the old school or the old way of thought is a lot more common here as well, like when I'm biking on the road on any given day, you can see fruit and vegetables stands, you can see about five of them on the side of the road. Unfortunately right now, the only things that are really in season are Hot House tomatoes, some cucumbers, and mainly strawberries. That's all that I've seen so far. Maybe some onions. You see a lot of cheeseries, there is a lot of farmers that are creating there own cheese and, in fact, our first guest explained to us

that there was time not so long ago where, I believe it was the provincial government, was looking at phasing in a mandatory pasteurization for cheese products and that met a lot of resistance in the community because a lot of people were like 'why are you doing this?' 'why do you think it's going to make our food safer when this is the way we've been doing it for hundreds of years while Europe still does the same thing?' It didn't last too long, I don't think it was ever regulated or put into regulation.

JS: As the two cyclists made their way through Quebec, they arrived in the town of Montmagny where a slight detour took them to an inspiring example of urban agriculture.

DH: Yes, there is one thing I just saw yesterday. I went through the town of Montmagny, I just stumbled across it by accident. I hopped in one of the town's bypass and I went through this little area. And I found the most beautifully well kept vegetables garden that I've seen and I had to assume that it was some sort of a community initiative that was going on. And the land that it covered was at least 1 acre of just vegetables and some flowers and what not, to add some color. In my limited French that I do know, I asked one of the cyclist that came by, and tell me if that was indeed a community garden and he said 'yeah it was'. While I was there I saw some people in there, gardening, weeding, and taking care of things. And for me just to see that kind of thing, to see at the scale that I saw it's something more that I've ever seen before. But too, with all the municipalities in the country that have this open land, you know, what are they doing? Right now they're probably spending money putting down some pesticides to keep the weeds under control and/or are mowing it. And you know what?, if you just have a couple of people that are interested in doing some gardening and start something up and you'll be able to turn this into some more useable land and more productive land and less expensive for the municipalities to maintain.

JS: During our last instalment of Deconstructing Dinner, the topic of strawberries came up and did yet again during my most recent conversation with Darrick. Darrick and Sinisa made a substantial effort to eat as locally as possible while crossing the country, and if the foods that were available to them are any indication of what foods should be representative of Canadian cuisine, well strawberries should be one of them. Even though most Canadian grocery stores *never* carry *any* Canadian strawberries, they were one of the *only* foods that the cyclists could consistently rely upon while travelling through the rural areas of central and eastern Canada. You could say that Darrick and Sinisa were literally fuelled by strawberries.

DH: I'd say, right up till we started heading south to New Brunswick, especially along the St. Lawrence Seaway, there were strawberry stands every couple of kilometres, we totally took advantage of that. Usually we tried to get them later on in the day, so we didn't have to log them around or bounce them around too

much. I would say average we were buying strawberries once every two days or so.

JS: Following their time spent in Quebec, Darrick and Sinisa descended into the North Eastern corner of New Brunswick where they soon after arrived in the City of Bathurst. It was there that the two received what likely amounts to the most extensive media coverage to date on their trip after being interviewed on CBC Radio. The interview happened so quickly that they forgot to ask when and where the segment was going to air, but when they arrived in the town of Shediac they learned that the segment aired throughout all the Maritime provinces. And here's Sinisa Grgic.

Sinisa Grgic: I didn't know that what time or what date it was going to air. We forgot to ask that or just overlooked it at that time. But, I guess, it did air right the next day and we found that out when we were at Shediac after our meal. I stepped outside of the restaurant for a second and met a gentleman who recognized me right away 'cause our trike was nearby. He kind of put 2 and 2 together and addressed us as celebrities, which it was kind of funny. Basically, he came up to me and said 'you must be the celebrities that are biking across Canada.'

CBC interview

Alison Northcott: From mudflats to mud tires, it's a dream Darrick Hahn and Sinisa Grgic have been working on for years. This summer they finally made it happen. The two men from Ontario are cycling across the country from Victoria, BC to St. John's, Newfoundland. And they're doing it to raise awareness about food issues. They are also promoting a syndicated radio program called Deconstructing Dinner. The pair started their journey on the west coast in May and they were in Bathurst early this week. There's where they spoke with CBC reporter Alison Northcott.

SG: My name is Sinisa Grgic from London, Ontario and this is our big trip that we've been planning for a couple of years.

DH: My name is Darrick Hahn and I'm from a little town called Moncton, Ontario. I am a millwright by trade and passionate about food issues.

AN: Can you describe this interesting looking bicycles for me?

SG: They're called recumbent trikes. Basically it's the same idea as a bicycle but with an extra wheel, same parts as a regular bike would have, but a lot more ergonomic. They travel at about the same speed as a bike, they're just as hard to push them up the hill as it is a bike and so.

DH: To create a little visual for listeners, we've got two wheels located on the front of the trike and one wheel at the back which increases stability. And if you can picture yourself sitting on your lazy boy with your feet out in front of you, where your feet are is about where the pedals are.

AN: And let's have a look at this. Which one of these is yours Darrick?

DH: This one, the first one here is mine and.

AN: Can you describe for me what you've got at the back here?

DH: Well, I'm carrying two bags and a bunch of kayaking bags. They all contain my tent, my sleeping bag, my clothes, food for a couple of days. I carry a laptop for my online blog, and tools for the bike. This is pretty much it. This is our moving house for the time being. I also keep a solar charger, to recharge batteries for our lights and stuff like that if we need them.

AN: So can you tell me a little bit about what it is you guys are doing?

DH: Yeah, we are raising awareness, essentially. When we started this trip, I talked to lots of people and they're like 'you should do it for a cause, you should do it for cancer or something like that.' And I agree that those kind of issues are really important and raising money and funds for this research and betterment of humanity is important but one thing that has always struck me is what about the *causes* of these diseases? And, are we looking closely enough at what may be causing them? We are promoting a radio show about food, food issues. It's called Deconstructing Dinner. You can find it on www.deconstructingdinner.ca. This show discusses exactly that. Where does food come from, what energy was used to get that from the field to your table? Was a chemical, pesticides, fertilizers put on to them? And what is the better way or 'a' better way to get our food? and more importantly, let's think about a less industrialized food model. Food isn't a product, it's something we grow, is something that is inherent to our survival. We should be thinking about it a little more in depth than 'what's convenient?', 'what's quick and easy?', 'what can we pop into our microwave for five minutes, so then we can carry on with our hectic lives?' We should stop and appreciate it a little bit longer

AN: Well, speaking of stopping and appreciating, I think that you guys have some pancakes waiting for you inside?

DH: We certainly do.

AN: Do you mind chatting with me a little bit more, while you enjoy those pancakes?

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner – a full recording of that CBC interview with Deconstructing Dinner cyclists Darrick Hahn and Sinisa Grgic will be linked to from the website for Deconstructing Dinner at deconstructingdinner.ca

With such great exposure found through that CBC segment, the two cyclists did encounter other residents of communities who did too hear about them on the radio.

Now one of the highlights of the trip in New Brunswick for Darrick and Sinisa was their stop in Shediac. Having grown up in landlocked province, the two had never before indulged in lobster – and as luck would have it, Shediac refers to itself as the lobster capital of the world.

SG: Ah, yeah, we've kind of rolled into town. You can see that it is a very touristy location right out the bat. First of all, there is a huge statue of a lobster and a bunch of tourists gathered around taking pictures and things like that, and as we drove through there, just a lot of nice little restaurants. The restaurant that we stopped in was really, really nice. We figured we treat ourselves to some lobster since neither one of us had ever had a full lobster. So we ordered that and we had a little bit of a struggling fest with the lobster, but it was delicious nevertheless, yeah.

JS: From the province of New Brunswick, the cyclists made their way to the Confederation Bridge where they boarded a shuttle and made their way across to Prince Edward Island.

It was there in the capital of Charlottetown that the two visited the city's Saturday market and they received a pretty warm welcome. A number of vendors donated food to them because of the goal of their trip. And it was also there at the market that the Province's main newspaper The Guardian interviewed them while they loaded up on local foods. The article featured a photo of them showing off their local tomatoes, cucumbers, breads and cheeses all of which was later washed down with local P.E.I wine.

SG: It wasn't necessary that big. I'd say it's about an average market for most of the cities that we've been through. I'm used to, years ago, I used to go to St. Jacobs market which is north of Kitchener, Waterloo in Ontario, where we both lived for a while. This market was not nearly to that scale, but it is a very nice market anyway. It was all indoors for most part of it. There were a few vans and vendors outside, but we received some greens as a gift from some people that found out about what we were doing and they were really impressed by that and they show that by donating some of the local greens to us. Which is great!

JS: After departing P.E.I, Darrick and Sinisa took the ferry across to Pictou, Nova Scotia and spent the night in the town of Antigonish. And as they made their way across the north eastern part of the province, their mission to eat locally became

rather difficult as they were amazed at how dominated the landscape was with fast food chains. Here's Darrick Hahn.

DH: Yeah, you know what? I noticed that the most there, and even in Antigonish as well, it is the amount of fast food establishments. They dominate the landscape. I saw less mom and pop restaurants or even organic, local focused restaurants and saw many food chains. Especially in Antigonish, it seemed like our selections were limited. I don't know if it has to do with the landscape and minimum farming or what? I think there is a motive there to get local, but it is definitely in its earlier stage than other parts of the country.

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner where we're listening to segments from my interview with Deconstructing Dinner cyclists Darrick Hahn and Sinisa Grgic. The two completed their cross-Canada Deconstructing Dinner tour on July 28th. They spoke to me over the phone from St. John's Newfoundland.

Stay tuned for the second half of the show when we'll meet with Ontario bluegrass musician and Juno Award winner Fred Eaglesmith who I sat down with here in the studios of Kootenay Co-op Radio to learn more about his farming conscious lyrics. We'll also hear an exclusive recording of a solo performance of his tune John Deere, recorded live here in our studios.

And back to the two Cross-Canada cyclists - Just before they hopped on the ferry to their final destination of Newfoundland, the two did meet a fan of the show while they ate at a restaurant in the city of Sydney. The fan approached them after noticing the sign affixed to their trikes. It was a promising sign that this show is indeed making its way across the country through the Internet because there are no stations on Cape Breton Island that we know of that air the show.

And shortly after arriving in Newfoundland the cyclists embarked on their final stretch into the capital of St. John's. As Darrick put it to me over the phone, the landscape of that last leg was symbolic of their entire trip across the country. And as fate would have it, they stumbled across a patch of wild strawberries en route.

DH: I think it turned out to be a six or seven hour ride, but you know what, it was the perfect cap to the whole trip. Newfoundland served to act as a review of the country. When we first got up in the morning and we were still on the west coast of the island in Argentia, and we went down into Placentia for breakfast and it is just so beautiful because it is just right down on the water and you get to see the boats and it's like a fishing community. And then you climb some steep hills and we got into areas that were hilly, trees reminded me of B.C. in the interior. We had a section of land there that just looked like northern Ontario, where we were going up and down. And everywhere we could see on the landscape was dotted with little lakes or what they call ponds, I think they're a little bit more shallow than a regular lake in Ontario. You go to the highest point on the way in into St. John's and you see where the glaciers have deposited large boulders. Just

stunning! And seeing the pristine views, Sinisa and I both went and stopped at one pond and had a swim. We found a whole bunch of wild strawberries. So we took some time to pick some wild strawberries. And then when we finally did make into town, it was all good, we had people honking all over the place. We found mile 0 and now we are just celebrating and soaking in everything.

JS: One of the highlights of their time in St. John's was their celebratory meal at one of the city's finer restaurants. Known as Bianca's, the restaurant was generous enough to donate a meal to Darrick and Sinisa in honour of their efforts going across the country. Bianca's menu and philosophy was a fitting cap to a trip focused on local flavours and local foods because that's exactly what the restaurant strives to offer its customers.

DH: Oh, that was a wonderful experience there. We showed up at Bianca's, it was a very nice atmosphere restaurant. The interior's got some old brick on the wall with some art and on top of that we just had some great service and real positive servers and the hostess came by and shared with us the history of Nova Scotia, no! Newfoundland, not Nova Scotia. The meal itself was just amazing. Sinisa had some crab cakes, well we both resolved ourselves to having this Atlantic based meal. And like I said, he had the crab cakes and I had some scallops, finally! So I got to taste some of those since I never had them. And they were just the most delicious things. Literally, the first bite I had of those scallops, took me back to the first strawberry of the season and the exact same feeling I had. Just pure delight and then we both had a halibut with real fresh springy organic greens with a delicious sauce.

JS: And that was Darrick Hahn speaking about their celebratory meal at Bianca's in St. John's Newfoundland. More information on the restaurant can be found at biancas.net. Big thanks to the restaurant for supporting their trip.

And in closing out this final segment of the Cross-Canada Trike Tour, here once again is Sinisa Grgic – reflecting on his entire trip. Sinisa acknowledges that through promoting Deconstructing Dinner along the way, he now has a wealth of new knowledge to take home with him and apply to his daily life.

SG: Yeah, Some is starting to sink in slowly, I think I'm still kind of in shock, that we actually managed to do it. I had no doubts the whole time that we would, but the way it played out it was well beyond anything that I expected originally. The whole experience, just the biking, the scenery, the people, promoting your show and talking with people about the food issues all the way across Canada, I mean, I've learnt a great deal and I really can't wait to go home and start applying that in my own life more than I have been. And using those great ideas that we heard all the way across and maybe even starting some of those in local communities in through London where I am. So I know I will have I definitely have my work cut out in front of me. Searching out what's available around London food wise, what is local and looking into my habits and improving on those as well.

JS: And that was Sinisa Grgic speaking to me over the phone from St. John's Newfoundland. Don't forget to check out more information on his and Darrick's trip across the country by visiting our website at deconstructingdinner.ca and linking to the Cross-Canada Trike Tour page from the main page of the site.

soundbite

JS: Deconstructing Dinner has long incorporated music into many of our episodes. From Phil Vernon's tunes about Percy Schmeiser, biotechnology and terminator seeds, to Terry Winchell's "Pesticide Song" and Todd Butler's "Farmer Dan," there is clearly no shortage of tunes out there that help add to our weekly content. But in this next segment we will meet with one musician who has long been writing pieces farming and rural life in southern Ontario. And that is well known blue grass performer Fred Eaglesmith. His song "John Deere" has been played here in the show before, and I finally had the opportunity to sit down with Fred in person and learn more about his personal history with farming and what inspires some of the heartfelt content making its way into his songs. A few tunes in particular do a great job at capturing the many crisis facing Canadian farmers today. And while farmers did once flock to hear Fred perform, the messages in his music are unfortunately confirmed by those who attend his shows today. To use a title of one of Fred's songs, "Things is Changin" - as he points out - because farmers are no longer in regular attendance at his shows because there are hardly any farmers left!

(Fred singing)

JS: Hailing from Port Dover Ontario, the Juno Award winner has been compared to such icons as Woody Guthrie and Bruce Springsteen and is the only Canadian musician to have ever held a #1 spot on the Bluegrass charts in the United States. His intensive touring schedule has earned him a cult of followers who are known as 'fredheads'.

(Fred singing)

JS: Fred joined me in the studios of Kootenay Co-op Radio while on tour here in Nelson B.C.

FE: I was born and raised on a farm, a chicken farm. We had between 30 and 60,000 chickens when I was a kid, and then we lost the farm. That was when I was very young. And then we moved to a mixed dairy farm and I would live in that mixed dairy farm until I was about 15, 16 and that started to go south.

(Fred singing)

JS: After leaving home and taking up a passion in music, Fred Eaglesmith released his first album at the age of 22 in 1980. And then returned home to begin farming on his own.

FE: Then I left home for a long time and then I came back in my late teens, early twenties. And I started to farm on rented farms myself. Just to, sort of, figure out what I could do. And then I bought a farm in the early '80s, just a small 20 acre farm. And then again a lot was just experimenting. Raised mostly buckwheat and I raised some cattle and some hogs.

JS: Fred continued with his farming experiments until only a couple of years ago when he gave up on farming and passed the farm onto his kids.

FE: And then I went into horticulture a little bit and then I took the whole thing off the grid for seven years. That was just the focused of it. I built a little hydro plant and I built a wind plant and a little solar thing and then I ran it. Like that for seven years. And then I moved out of that farm when my wife and I split. And then we just gave it to our kids about two or three years ago.

(Fred singing)

JS: Fred's part time career as a musician was not so different than many Canadian farmers today who struggle so much with staying afloat that they are pushed into taking second, even third jobs, in order to remain in the business of farming. Along side the writing and performing of his music, Fred discovered that buying and selling products is more lucrative than growing them.

FE: Yeah, I was playing music in between and with farming, if you don't do 'sales' when you're farming, you can't farm. So I was always working on 'sales', I was working on my music, I was working on the farm. Eventually the 'sales' took over on the farm. It happens to farmers, happened to me, I got caught on this trap where I could make more money buying and selling products than I could actually raising them. And I was 23 years old and I started this business to support my music and five years later it was a \$6,000,000/year business. And I had 28 people working for me and I hated my life. But that was sort of what circumvented the farming ... I just wanted to have this little cool farm, raise a couple of cows... just do the thing ... live off the land sort of thing... and it just took off and next thing I got this 15,000 sq. ft. building, 20 miles away and it caught me up and this is a real bad thing that happens to farmers all the time.

JS: The song that pushed Fred Eaglesmith to the top of the bluegrass charts in the United States was entitled "Thirty Years of Farming."

FE: I wrote the song called "Thirty Years of Farming," which is a bluegrass song, it is the only number one bluegrass song in America ever by a Canadian.

(Fred singing)

JS: Port Dover Fred Eaglesmith and his tune “Thirty Years of Farming” which first appeared on his third album released in 1987 entitled “Indiana Road.”

You’re tuned in Deconstructing Dinner in a brief showcase of Ontario musician Fred Eaglesmith. With a long history of farming, Fred’s music can often be a captivating image of rural life in Canada. I sat down with Fred in our studios here in Nelson, B.C. to learn more about his thoughts on farming and the state of our food system. Fred has seen the demise of the family farm first hand and has captured this in his music. Now, we don’t often hear from many large scale industrial farmers here in Deconstructing Dinner and contrary to many of the farmers whom we heard from here in the show, Fred Eaglesmith is a firm believer in large scale farming. And he sees small scale farming as simply a life style choice and not a real business.

FE: It’s really about the way I feel, ‘cause there is two kind of farming: there is the corporate farm, of course, who feeds us apparently. And there is the little farm. And the little farm that’s a lifestyle. That’s a lifestyle, It’s not really a business. The bankers always said that to me: ‘it’s a business... not a life style...’ So ...it’s a life style...so, there’s two kinds of farming, the *life-style* farming and *business* farming. Some guys manage to cross the line and make it work, but it’s very difficult.

JS: Like many *back to the land-ers* and people looking to explore alternatives to industrial farming, Fred Eaglesmith did too dabble into the romantic image of what a farm could look like. But as he sees it, it was both this alternative approach to farming and the unrealistic demands from consumers for perfect looking food that led to the demise of the conventional Canadian farm.

FE: There is a real, and I had it too, I had the bug of romanticism. And there is a whole romantic interest in farms, especially from fringe society. French is a nice idea of how farming should be. The whole hemp scandal was the greatest mockery of farming that ever existed, so we could just grow this thing that grew hundreds of years ago and we’re all going to make this work. And we’re gonna pay a mortgage to buy a pair of pants. And all this stuff when people think of the alternative crowd is going to help the farms and it really hurts it all the time. They drive 40 miles to get a cup of fair trade coffee and think that that makes sense... My mother used to say this wonderful thing... she used to say: ‘there is fast food, there is junk food, there is health food... and there is prayed for food’. And prayed for food will always be healthy. What really did hurt the farm a lot was all this people moving out to the country and raising our taxes. And when I left our farm, there were just houses all around us. You couldn’t touch a neighbour within a mile when we first move there. There is always this sort of ..., just a little bit of interest: ‘I just gonna dabble at this and if this is not gonna work out, I’d just

gonna go back to town.' This is what really hurt agriculture a lot, because serious agriculturalists can't do it.

(Fred singing)

FE: Yeah, it was ground zero. It was so hard, it was just clay and terrible land, and everything... and this people, all just moved out and when people move out from the city, a lot of times it's because they've got problems in the city. So buddy's got an alcohol problem and buddy's got this problem or that problem... and marriages are not working out... let's just move to the country, it'll work out... All of the sudden, we're getting calls, 'would you please, please send the police, my mother just got knocked out by my father'... We didn't know about this... we only went to church twice on Sunday and that was as far as we ever went. And we just worked and lived at the farm... and all of a sudden it was brought to us... and then ... nobody protected us, but I didn't care. I really think it was ... I totally think, the whole thing, I'm not a conspiracist, but I think, it was meant, they wanted this. Farming is so *uncool*, real farming... 'pretend farming' is really cool. But 'real farming' is really *uncool*. You're up to your knees in manure every day, it's not fun, is not good. And I really think it was the Trudeau government that started it 'we don't want this, we want to be a *cool* country, we're not gonna be a *farming* country, we're cool!' Trudeau was happening, cool and I loved him and all that. It went from the second largest employer in Canada to number seven during the Trudeau years. They wanted it gone, they wanted us to be wholesalers, that's what we are now, we're purchasers, we're importers.

(Fred singing)

FE: But we were just farmers and they should've just let us just be farmers. And in Europe, if you're just a farmer, they protect you. You're God's gift to the world. And every freak that came out and flashed my dad a P sign... if he'd known what the finger was, he would've given it back to them, he'd said 'go back where you came from, we've got work to do here,' you know what I mean? '... It's like, I just think that we were invaded, the whole thing was invaded by *coolness*, and you know... everybody started importing food. We've got to have that fresh green pepper, we've got to have no spots on our apples... we knew this... my father loved chemicals. He sprayed them all over. My father thought that DDT was straight from Christ himself. He thought this was a blessing and we're going ... because this people wanted this, then ok, we'll deliver this, we'll do *this* because *this* people wanted it... that's parts of the demands... because the demands were, and are *still*, so unrealistic... All this people that are so in agriculture, why aren't going to the farm down the road and say 'look I'll give \$500/year if you grow my food', if they're *really* into it... that's what they'd do... that guy down the road?... that's what they do in Europe. They support their agriculture. It's all talk man, it's all talk.

(Fred singing)

JS: Fred Eaglesmith and his 1993 release, “Things Is Changing” part of the album of the same name. And just before that was his tune “Go Out and Plough” released in 1991 on the album “There Ain’t No Easy Road.” And you’re tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner in a featured segment on Ontario musician Fred Eaglesmith. We featured Fred’s music here on the show before because of as someone with such an extensive history in farming his lyrics have long been about many of the issues covered here in our show each week. I spoke with Fred Eaglesmith while he was on tour in Nelson, B.C. One of Fred’s more interesting responses to my questions was on the topic of his fans. I had expected that many of his fans would’ve indeed been farmers who can connect and relate to the messages in Fred’s music. But according to Fred, that was once the case, but not anymore. There just simply aren’t enough farmers left.

FE: Not anymore. I used to all the time, like in the ‘80s, when farming was really tough, but you know they all lost their farms in the ‘90s, there is no more. It used to be that only farmers came to my shows, sometimes in rural towns, now it’s like ‘my grandfather had a farm’ or ‘I used to farm’ people say ‘I used to farm’. But nobody wants to talk about it. They shrug and just go ‘how could’ve this happened?’ I got a job as a real estate agent now so I don’t meet them like I did in the ‘80s and early ‘90s.

JS: And here is Fred Eaglesmith recorded live in our studios at Kootenay Co-op Radio.

(Fred singing)

FE: It’s a true song. Every word in it is true. It’s exactly what I wrote this letter to my dad saying I’ve got this tractor from you. When he left his farm, he gave me the tractor and I had to sell it and so, that song is and there is a “McAllister” and all those people like that and “Mary Got a Job in Town” and the song is almost word for word true.

(Fred singing)

JS: Fred Eaglesmith performing his tune ‘John Deere’ live in the studio’s of Kootenay Co-op Radio in July of 2008. ‘John Deere’ was first released on 2001 on the album “Ralph’s Last Show” and you can learn more about this Juno Award winner from Port Dover, Ontario by visiting his website at fredeaglesmith.com. I spoke with Fred while he was here in Nelson B.C. on tour, promoting his new album, “Tinderbox.”

soundbite

JS: In taking us to the end of today’s episode of Deconstructing Dinner, I do have here an audio segment from an interesting film we came across that nicely ties in

with the content of that last segment with Fred Eaglesmith. The film is titled, 'People and the Land: Farming and Agriculture' and was produced in the 1980s as an examination of the farm crisis that Fred was speaking of and the film sends a message that the way out of the crisis is to not view the land and people as resources to be consumed, but as part of a spiritual whole. This is just going to be a 10 minute segment of a 55 minute long film. This film was produced by Wade Britzius and Marilyn Klinkner of Whitehall Wisconsin and is now being made available through Deep Dish TV out of New York City.

Farmer: As farmers we don't want to get bigger. The government is driving us to be bigger farmers, it's what it is.

Reporter: So the question isn't whether is it going to be enough food, the question is a social question of what kind of society we want.

Farmer: And I told that FDIC man: 'Hey, I want you to know that I liberated a manure sprayer (people cheering in the background) and I've given it sanctuary in St. Anthony's and if y'all want it, y'all will have to come and get it! (people cheering in the background)

Reporter: The crisis in agriculture shouldn't just be seen as a 'crisis in agriculture' but it is actually a crisis in our culture at large.

Reporter: Every eight minutes, a family farm is lost in the United States. US Office of Technology Assessment says that if the present trend continue, by the year 2000 most of our food will be produced by 55,000 huge factory farms instead of the 650,000 smaller farms still operating today. In spite of farm subsidies and rhetoric that the crisis is over, the trend continues, with 'efficiency' and "business" being the catch words of the day. In the following program we will see responses to this situation. Through the eyes of media producers nation wide, working at the grassroots levels as we move closer to understanding the concerns of farmers, we will see how their concerns are related to those of native Americans, migrant workers and to all of us who consume the food, drink the water and breathe the air on this planet. If we are ignorant about farmers, we remain ignorant about land, about hunger and about the source of our very existence.

Farmer: My parents moved here in 1950. I grew up here, graduated in 1972. Went into partnership with my father in '75, from there we made numerous improvements, added on to the barn and so it would support two families. We needed it, so we build a heifer barn, we converted an old heifer barn down below the road into a grainery put up a barn for grain storage. We were doing well for up to about 1982. And at this point for now on everyday is a financial struggle. Every morning when you get up, you wonder if you should continue on or not, or whether is even worth it or not. I got three kids and I'm not about to encourage them to go into farming.

Reporter: Despite heavy investment and hard work farmers fight to continue, sometimes protesting government and market policies that favour large producers.

Farmer: We are losing a great deal of farmers in New York and I know it's the same here in Vermont. Apparently the politicians they rather listen to each other than listen to the farmers.

Reporter: So, is the story in New York pretty much the way it is in Vermont?

Farmer: Within twenty miles of my farm we've lost about 1,500 cows in the last two years. That would translate into a loss in the economy of probably somewhere between \$2,500,000 and \$3,000,000 being brought into the area.

Farmer: Like Larry said, that the whole point is that we're not getting our cost production back. When you don't have cost production, you're losing money. Most of us are good managers, although we're giving our farms or what not. We are excellent managers and the point is that we cannot operate at a loss forever and we need more money now because we are not even meeting our cost of production. Like Larry said, the contingent here today, eight of us. So we're usually portrayed as farmers that are losing their farms from FHA and we're portrayed as the bottom of the heap, but we're not. We are all good managers, I think the average herd average of most the fellows that are here today is somewhere around 20,000lbs. Which is in the top higher echelon of the dairy industry. So, we are just saying, not that makes any difference, you know, but the point is, we feel that we're managing our farms well, we've got our families working on the farms, that's why we came here today. This is the first day most of us have taken off in two or three years, just to come here to this hearing. And we have to be home tonight to milk 200 miles away. So that's the way we operate, you see?

Reporter: In Iowa, the whole farm community goes beyond mere protest and civil disobedience. They resist the foreclosure sale of one of the best run farms in Harlan county.

Farmer: I don't why I'm here to start this of. I happen to be the 'baby daughter.' (laughter in the background). To any of you that were in church this morning and saw that mass going on, that was a funeral mass people! And the dead was that of the family farm!

Farmer: We are victims of a policy! A deliberate policy that is designed to take family type farmers out! And they even told us how to do it. They said we've got to lower our prices and force these resources, and they called us 'resources' – make it the economic incentive, so that they won't stay in agriculture anymore. And we had Secretary of Agriculture like Earl Butz who says: there are too many

farmers, many have outgrown it's time to do something useful. One of his assistants, he said a few farmers going broke each year is one of the most healthy things there is? (background 'no')

Farmer: As far as producing food, we can produce food any way we want. We can produce food with large corporate farms, we can produce food with wide spread family farms. So the question isn't whether there is going to be enough food? The question is a social question of what kind of society we want?

Farmer: Folks at my right, there are 19 of them, they have put their bodies between the sheriff and the sale in a civil and peaceful way. The statement for them is that they're bodies. The sheriff will proceed now to arrest each one of them and take them into the courthouse at 10 o'clock. And then he will come down here, amongst us, and attempt to sell Dominic's farm. At which point we will make so much noise... (loud noise in the background)

Reporter: When rural people are driven from the land, a way of life is left behind. A growing body of land is being taken over by corporate farmers, absentee landlords, insurance and other investment companies who control the lands resources as they see fit. Only 25% of the farms produce 80% of the farm products. In the words of Wendell Berry, author and farmer:

Wendell Berry: The question of the survival of the family farm and the farm family is one version of the question 'who will own the country?' which is, ultimately, the question of 'who will own the people?'

ending theme

JS: That was this week's edition of Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded at Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I've been your host Jon Steinman. I thank my technical assistant John Ryan.

The theme music for Deconstructing Dinner is courtesy of Nelson-area resident Adham Shaikh.

This radio program is provided free of charge to campus/community radio stations across the country, and relies on the financial support from you the listener. Support for the program can be donated through our website at deconstructingdinner.ca or by dialing 250-352-9600.