

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

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**Title: The Local Grain Revolution III**

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*Keith Huscroft:* I'm really excited about this because I can see the potential for me hauling one of my kids home and taking over that farm, 'cause it'd be nice to have sixth generation on there. I've got generation seventh playing on the farm but he ain't working 'cause he's like this big. I'm excited maybe there is a future for my family 'cause if this does not work I guarantee you as soon as they plant me, the farm is for sale.

*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, British Columbia. This show is heard on radio stations around the world including CHUO Ottawa and CHSR Fredericton. I'm Jon Steinman.

Without too much time passing since we aired part II of our ongoing series titled *The Local Grain Revolution*, today, we air part III. Since March 2008, this series has been documenting the creation of Canada's first Community Supported Agriculture (or CSA) Project for grain.

For part II we joined the first farm tour where CSA members from Nelson and Creston, British Columbia descended onto three farmers in the Creston Valley who were, throughout the 2008 growing season, cultivating grains for local consumption – a rather revolutionary yet surprisingly simple project.

Now because one of the goals of this series is to create a resource for *other* communities who may be inspired to take on a similar project, on today's part III, we'll listen in on segments from the July 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CSA steering committee. The meeting took place the day *after* the CSA tour that we listened in on on part II, and hopefully the segments will lend a better idea of what it takes for a community to begin working with farmers to supply locally grown grains.

We'll also visit with Nelson resident and volunteer extraordinaire David Everest, who, upon hearing about the CSA's formation in 2007, stepped forward and volunteered to become the local miller so that members could get freshly milled grain upon request. David is in the process of constructing a shed in his Nelson backyard where the mill will be located.

And what's now generating incredible excitement throughout the community is a group of people who have come forward and offered to also be part of this exciting initiative – and that is a group of *sailors*. You see Creston is a good hour and 45 minute *drive* from Nelson, but both the Creston Valley and Nelson are connected by Kootenay Lake – one of the larger inland lakes in the province. And so we'll hear from someone from the Kootenay Lake Sailing Association, who upon learning about the CSA gathered a group of other sailing enthusiasts to sail some of the grain from Creston to Nelson – and in doing so *reduce* the fossil fuel requirements of this exciting and blossoming local food system.

### **increase music and fade out**

*JS*: And another quick reminder that if you do use the Internet and have a Facebook account, Deconstructing Dinner does now maintain a presence on Facebook – and we've made a link to our Facebook page from our website at [deconstructingdinner.ca](http://deconstructingdinner.ca)

It's also important to acknowledge that today's broadcast is being recorded on World Food Day – October 16<sup>th</sup> – and so a happy World Food Day to everyone listening in.

So back on Part I of this local grain revolution series, we did listen in on segments from the *first* CSA meeting that took place in December of 2007. The group convened once again on July 14<sup>th</sup>, and I can say from a personal note how exciting it has been actually being able to sit in on these meetings and not only record the dialogue taking place, but to also be a part of it.

Now we won't get around to hearing *all* of the important discussion that ensued at that meeting, but you can be assured we'll get to it in the upcoming weeks when we air part 4 and 5 of this series.

So there were about a dozen of us sitting around a table in Creston to discuss the current and future direction of the Nelson-Creston Grain CSA. The three farmers were of course in the room (Keith Huscroft, Drew Gailius, and Roy Lawrence along with his wife Sherri). Also in the room were CSA coordinators Matt Lowe, Brenda Bruns and Donna Carlyle, the Creston Food Action Coalition's Gail Southall, Foodshed Animator and familiar voice on Deconstructing Dinner Abra Brynne, The Kootenay Bakery Co-operatives' Cindy Olivas, and Karen Powis, who is helping document the CSA's evolution.

Among the many items on the agenda, the first item was with respect to the organic growing practices being used by the farmers. One of the three farmers, as an example, is using the CSA as a way for him to help ease the transition from conventional practices to natural ones and this year all three farmers were growing crops that they had never grown before. So there were a lot of new experiences all around and one of the concerns was of course weeds – and whether or not weeds were, at the time of the meeting – posing a problem. In the following discussion we learn how important long-term forecasting is

when growing *naturally*. In this segment you'll hear from Keith Huscroft, Drew Gailius and Abra Brynne.

*Female voice:* So the first item we wanted to talk about for the short term is the weeds in the grain that we are now growing. Are weeds an issue in any way whatsoever?

*Keith Huscroft:* They were for me this year, but they won't be next year just because the short notice that I had last year I planted grain in the same field twice. So the first year you can get a good control of them, but the second year you can't get a cover or I didn't have any cover crop or anything. I have a lot of weeds in with my grains, but I also have a lot of grain so all it is, is just one more process, an extra process in harvesting. You have to cut it ahead of time and then have the combine pick it up. I don't see any problems and by next year it won't be an issue for me.

*Drew Gailius:* I think the same thing as Keith, that the weeds are there and until you grow a crop sort of to suppress the weeds the year before and plow it under, kinda work with that, but you're always having to work a year or two ahead all the time which is kinda hard for me, anyway, I find to do that ahead of time, get enough time ahead and that's the way to control the weeds

*Keith Huscroft:* The weed problem is not so much for the consumers. The weed problem really is that as a farmer you look at the weed as something that's taking the nutrients out of your ground. It's robbing us so you want to get rid of the weeds. And weeds are a long term thing like wild oats, that seed will stay in the ground and will germinate 20 years later. So you know it's a long term thing that you're looking at.

*Drew Gailius:* Which we had a tremendous flush of this one type of weed and it was just ground plowed and it would never have that weed in it at all, but somehow when we flipped it over, it just released this weed. It must have been ready to halve and then sprout and away it went.

*Abra Brynne:* So if I can address the 1B –What do we tell investors? I really do think this is an important opportunity for us to do the education of the consumers 'cause they don't have a clue that weed management, particularly with grain crops, is a long term issue. And the weeds, basically, are taking from the soil so you're always trying to find a way to manage them so that you can get a good crop. So most of the CSA's that I know, do have a regular newsletter and I'm not suggesting that we offload that on you guys, but amongst the various people that are supporting this, even amongst the membership there may be people willing to pull together some kind of newsletter and it certainly doesn't have to be fancy. I have seen a lot of them that are still done on typewriters. But you know someone who's got a computer could throw together a monthly little newsletter that tells the members some of the basics about growing. They learned a lot on that tour but that was probably only half the shareholders and they need to learn more so I think it would be useful to do that.

*Unidentified Male:* Well I still have your book, yes, and in there they all still talk about, with organic farming of grains, weeds are a problem. You know weeds are your big thing because you're letting them go. The grains growing and growing and growing and you're not getting on cutting it early or anything. So that is one of the biggest things to deal with and that has to be dealt with, with cover crops, green manures, plow-down - stuff like that. And you're always got to be working a year or two ahead.

*Abra Brynne:* But you know the exciting thing for me is the fact that we've got people bugging mad about what's happening next year means that it's not just the farmers who are looking ahead, but the consumers are actually starting to think ahead. And so I think this is just a really fertile time for us to be doing that kind of education. And I've got a bunch of Drew's wheat and there's lots of stuff in it. I just throw it all in the hopper and grind it up. It's just fine. So I think we've got a pretty tolerant and excited shareholder group and doing that education is gonna just increase that tolerance and support I think.

*Keith Huscroft:* Generally, you know your wheat's going to be clean. There's not going to be any weed seeds after we clean it, 'cause if we see any we'll clean it again. But I mean, theoretically speaking, when we go to seed we don't want anything else. We check our product. If you're there when we're cleaning the seed you can see how it works, but nothing gets through, especially the small weed seeds. Weed seeds tend to be very small.

*JS:* And this is Deconstructing Dinner. As the grain CSA discussion continued, one unexpected barrier was discussed. Shortly after the seeds went into the ground, it was discovered that Spelt has a much harder hull than the more commonly grown varieties of wheat and the Spelt was, therefore, going to require special equipment to de-hull the grains. With no equipment of that kind in the Creston Valley, it was decided at the meeting that the Spelt could be brought to a group in the Okanagan Valley of the province who was willing to take the task on. Since the July meeting though, the three farmers were somehow able to de-hull the majority of the harvested Spelt with the equipment they did have, and so the trip to the Okanagan was never required.

Also brought up at the July meeting was another important topic regarding whether or not the grains grown on the three different farms should be blended or remain separate and thereby the product of an individual farm.

*Abra Brynne:* Would it make sense though to have all... 'cause I've seen your bins, would it make sense for all the wheat to go to your place?

*Keith Huscroft:* No, we have to keep it separate because aren't we gonna put our own labels on our own products so they know which farm it came from?

*Female voice:* We hoped for that, just to have the face of the farmer with the food the people are eating, really connecting people with the food.

*Female voice:* The unfortunate thing about that though is if you can combine the wheat you'll wind up with a better wheat product because of the various gluten contents.

*Male voice:* Well, I can see the advantage to keeping them separate and I can see the advantage to keeping them together.

*Keith Huscroft:* The only problem is that I don't have any...I really didn't figure on transporting anything off the farm and I'm self-sufficient on the cleaner. And I'm not worried about using Drew's or Gord's, though if it turns out to be a whiz bang and we can figure out how to sac it all in 25 minutes it's gonna go there, 'cause it's gonna take me a week or two to do all my grain.

*Drew Gailius:* You won't really be blending them anyways to my way of thinking because when you put things in they're gonna come out the same way and your probably going to have a lot of the one product going through even if you tried to dump them all in the bin.

*Female voice:* Well, I'm thinking Drew is saying did all three of you grow Red Fife?

*Drew Gailius:* Yeah.

*Female voice:* So if the shareholder is going to get Red Fife, are they gonna get yours, Roy's or Keith's or are they going to get a blend of all three?

*Keith Huscroft:* No, 'cause even like Drew said you're not going to be able to lift up three tote bags and put one of each guys. Blending is probably easier done at the bakery with one of each bag of everybody's or a bag of each others product because for us to hold up three tote bags and have a steady stream of the equal amount of each grain to give an equal blend isn't something we can do.

*Female voice:* Then if you do a blend, what comes to mind is, that's another piece of machinery because you dump all these into a bin and then you...

*Keith Huscroft:* Well, I mean you have to take the sunset seed and put it through a mixer which would mix it.

*Female voice:* And we wouldn't want to do that because it would be contaminated. We're trying to keep this organic.

*Female voice:* Really clean. So it strikes me then for this year, the consumer will get a bag that's labeled with which farm. And perhaps because their bin, at the end, is going to have four products, we can try to make sure that we have at least one bag of product from each farm going into it so they might get your Hard Red Spring and somebody would get your...and in most cases, I mean we've got all this Spelt coming from Roy's. Am I correct on that?

*Female Voice:* Yes.

*Female voice:* So it may be not too big of a challenge to put something from each farm into each bin and then we'll see how that works.

*Drew Gailius:* And I think part of the reason why we're doing this a little bit is because to see what areas grow which product better, in a way.

*JS:* Yet another important logistical issue discussed at the meeting was packaging. It was decided early on that for the *first* year of the grain CSA, members would receive their grain in individual bags. This and other related issues were discussed at the meeting.

*Brenda Burns:* I'm hoping to order the 10kg and 22lb. bags and we're going to need, I'm thinking, minimum of about 1200 bags. And then Drew, you and Joanne had come up with labels already and I was gonna ask if you could help Keith and Sherri so that we have some sort of consistency, but of course everyone will have a different label, but does that make sense?

*Drew Gailius:* Yeah, we just went to Imagine Ink.

*Brenda Burns:* Oh, OK, and it's also an interesting opportunity if two neighbours just happen to get two different farmer's wheat then they can share. And on the bulletin board for the website I really wanted to give people the opportunity to chat with each other. I've had a lot of people, as they send in their cheques say, 'Well I really am not going to use this Spelt, so could I get extra of this?' And I've been saying to people, 'No, I'm sorry you get your bin but you may find...' 'Cause I'm finding some people don't want Spelt and some people want extra Spelt and somebody wants no oats and so I'd like a bulletin board where people can actually trade with each other without me or this group having to be involved in that.

*Female Voice:* I'm getting the same kind of questions as you, Brenda, so...

*Brenda Burns:* So, let's get a way that they communicate amongst themselves to do their swapping.

*Female Voice:* Or like you say, you're going to do a newsletter or recipe sheet or an insert in their bin, get them to try it, it's not bad, it's good.

*Brenda Burns:* But I mean for those that can't eat wheat, for example, and that want to swap with someone. Then I'd like to take us out of the picture and just the conduit of a website bulletin board to let people...and I don't like giving out other people's phone numbers and emails so I'd rather have somebody post that they're looking for somebody to swap with this and somebody can find that and they can match themselves up. And then, they have the opportunity on that bulletin board if they get Huscroft's wheat and somebody else gets Gailius wheat and if they want to swap half a bag – great!

*Female Voice:* I think it's important in terms of consumer education to also clue-in to people that might not be able to eat conventional wheat, that everybody eats the only

variety, but they might be able to tolerate the Red Fife just fine because Kamut and Spelt are both wheats as well. So the likelihood of them also being able to tolerate the Red Fife if they can handle the other two is probably fairly high.

*Female Voice:* Good point.

*JS:* There was also discussion around whether or not the grain should instead be supplied in bulk the following year with members supplying their own containers or bags for the grain.

You're listening to part III of the *Local Grain Revolution* series on Deconstructing Dinner. If you missed part I or 2 of the series, they have both been archived on our website at [deconstructingdinner.ca](http://deconstructingdinner.ca).

On today's episode we're listening in on the July 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CSA steering committee, with the hope that this new and innovative project can provide a resource for other communities wishing to take on a similar model. But before we get back to the meeting that took place in Creston, let's first travel to Nelson where 75% of the CSA members call home. Located within Nelson city limits is David Everest, who, since first hearing about the CSA in late 2007, came forward and volunteered to become the Nelson-based miller – in other words, when members receive their whole grains in late October, they'll have the option of taking their grain once a week to David's home where he's offered to mill those grains into flour. I caught up with David in the backyard of his home on September 27<sup>th</sup> where he was in the process of building a shed that would soon be the home for his mill.

Now it was only during my visit with David, that I realized how synchronistic my visit to his new shed was, because David was the key volunteer who recently led a team of *other* volunteers to build our new radio station here in Nelson at Kootenay Co-op Radio. And so there *I* was, recording David in a shed that he was building for the grain CSA, which would shortly be broadcast from the very radio station where I now sit, that David *also* had an important hand in constructing.

*(power tool noises)*

*JS:* I guess one of the nice stories, the connection between you building this shed for the grain CSA is that you also were pretty integral in building the radio station that will be airing the show about your shed that you're building. *(laughter)*

*David Everest:* Well, I love to build things. *(laughter, power tool noise)*

*JS:* So what left do you have to do in here?

*DE:* Just finish off the wiring. The rough wiring is all in. Get some light here and power. It's one of those ideas that you get, or dreams that you have and then you realize other people are having the same idea or the same dream.

*JS:* So what was your dream?

*DE:* Well, just that we could grow. I actually tried once growing wheat in my garden and the rabbits ate it all, but it grows. It's like a no-brainer. If you start thinking 100-mile diet and you can't have grains, I exist on grains. I love bread. My mother told me bread was my first word and that was after when I started talking. And I started baking bread on a small scale. I would bake for our family and then I got in touch with someone, he called himself the 'Barefoot Baker'. He came through the Kootenay's here a few years ago and helped people build ovens and things. So I built an oven, a brick oven in my back yard and was using it to bake for the family and then I started thinking, well this could be a business. So I built it up into a business. The first oven I built was too small and then I built a 36-loaf and did it as a part-time job, especially in the winter. It was a good business.

*JS:* So now you've taken on a pretty significant role as part of the grain CSA, what's your role going to be once these grains are ready?

*DE:* Well, that remains to be seen how many people...like I don't know how many people have their own little grain mill, but anyone who doesn't, I will grind. From my bakery I've still got my stone mill and all it's ever been used for is organic grains.

*JS:* So we're standing out here in front of a shed. How long have you been constructing this shed here?

*DE:* Oh, it's been a couple of weeks here.

*JS:* And is the purpose of this shed for your mill?

*DE:* Yeah.

*JS:* Yeah, so this will be a milling shed?

*DE:* Yeah, it seemed better to do it this way than to do it sort of in my house. The milling is noisy so we'll keep it out here. We'll keep it isolated and keep everything clean. It's like a single purpose.

*JS:* So what's the hope? That members will come here whenever they want? Or will there be a set schedule?

*DE:* I think we'll try and keep it to one day a week and that day has yet to be determined. It's going to be arbitrary and it probably won't suit everybody but I'm thinking Friday right now. Then the weekend baker's can have fresh flour for the weekend. I imagine it more that I'll build a dry box out by my front door. People, in the morning, will drop off their pail with their grain in it and what they...



*JS:* How much they want...and you'll leave it for them.

*DE:* It'll be quite obvious. They'll just have their name on the pail and they'll just want it ground and then I'll put it back out in the box and they'll pick it up later that day.

*JS:* So, for you building this shed and doing this with your mill has been just something out of passion. I mean it's a volunteer effort.

*DE:* At 15 cents a pound I'm not gonna make my fortune. (laughter) But I keep my hand in. I'm always grinding grain for myself, so why not do it for other people too?

*JS:* So you say you do have your mill here somewhere.

*DE:* Oh, it's in the basement right now.

*JS:* It's in the basement?

*DE:* Through that doorway.

*JS:* Should we go check it out quickly?

*DE:* Sure, yeah. (sound of door opening) Of course, the lights off down here. (sound of footsteps and removing cover) So just a fairly big hopper on the top here. You put the grain in and this controls the feed.

*JS:* So it's pretty small. It's about the size of a television set.

*DE:* Yeah, something like that, but it's heavy. It's all I can do to pick it up and walk around with it. It's got to be 160lbs. or something like that.

*JS:* And what's the story behind this? Was this made locally or...?

*DE:* It comes from Denmark. It came air freight over from Denmark right to Nelson. I had a smaller mill before and it just was not keeping up to what I needed.

*JS:* So how much can this mill do in one go?

*DE:* Hmm, let's see, about...I'm trying to remember. It's been awhile since I used it because it was loaned out there, but I think it grinds about a pound every twenty seconds or something like that.

*JS:* Oh, wow.

*DE:* Yeah.

*JS:* So it's going to be a quick processor.

*DE:* Yeah, it's pretty good.

*JS:* And what is the mechanism in here that's actually gonna be grinding it?

*DE:* There are two stones. The fixed one is on top and the lower one raises and lowers to get the fineness of flour. Whatever that is, a two horsepower motor or something. And it grinds it into this pail here.

*JS:* And this is Deconstructing Dinner – and you're listening to a recording of my visit with David Everest – the Nelson British Columbia resident who has volunteered to become the local miller for the members of Canada's first Community Supported Agriculture project for grain. And before we continue listening in on segments from the July 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the grain CSA steering committee that we were listening to just earlier, here's one more segment from my visit to David Everest's backyard. While I was there I inquired into why the shed he was building was so much larger than the mill itself, and upon hearing his response, it became quite clear that David is thinking *well* into the future of what exciting possibilities are in store for this CSA project.

*JS:* You had another idea that you were talking about at one point too, about having a silo back here, right? For grains?

*DE:* Well I was thinking, yeah. When I was thinking of rebuilding my garage. It was in that spot right there. I would build it with a flat roof and put a grain silo on top. And also, maybe an oil-press.

*JS:* Wow.

*DE:* That's one reason why I made that bigger, so I thought, well if we ever get into pressing oil.

*JS:* What kind of oils are you thinking?

*DE:* Sunflower, whatever we can grow around here.

*JS:* Flax or...?

*DE:* Yeah...hemp.

*JS:* Hemp, yeah.

*DE:* Anything that's pressable for oil because it's a few thousand bucks for an oil press...but that's something that I don't know where we'd get oil if we're trying to eat locally.

*JS:* And that was David Everest – a Nelson, British Columbia resident, who, along with being integral in building our new *radio* station here at Kootenay Co-op Radio – is also now finishing up the shed where members of Canada’s first grain CSA will be able to each week. They’ll be able to bring their whole grains to be milled into flour.

You’re tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner, a weekly one-hour radio show and podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY in Nelson, British Columbia. I’m Jon Steinman. We always appreciate it when those of you devoted listeners help spread the word about our show, and you can do so by directing colleagues, friends or family to our website at [deconstructingdinner.ca](http://deconstructingdinner.ca) and we also encourage speaking with your local independent radio stations to encourage *them* to air our weekly broadcasts.

Later on today’s show, we’ll briefly meet with *another* enthusiastic volunteer who has, too, been inspired by the grain CSA. Jay of the Kootenay Lake Sailing Association was *so* enthusiastic about the CSA that he gathered a group of other sailing enthusiasts to travel to Creston on the weekend of October 25<sup>th</sup> to haul some of the grain back to Nelson via sailboat.

But before we hear from Jay, let’s come back to the July 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CSA that took place in Creston only a day after the tour when members first visited with the farmers and the grain.

Among the topics that we’ve already heard discussed, there was also talk about seed saving – and how much seed should be saved for the following year. There was also talk about the incredible demand and interest from businesses and residents who are eager to become part of the CSA. Some of the CSA organizers have felt overwhelmed by this demand, and farmer Keith Huscroft raised the question.

*Keith Huscroft:* When do we get to the point where how many, how big do you think this CSA is gonna get? I don’t know how much. How much of your land are you willing to put into grain every year?

*Male Voice:* I’m not really willing to go too much bigger because I want to be able to grow some other...

*Keith Huscroft:* How about you?

*Male voice:* I have 60 acres to do something with.

*Keith Huscroft:* And I’m going to max out about 20 on that piece, although I do have rental pieces I could do it, although I’m not really excited about doing it for good with horses because I want to stick forward, we’re only talking 80 acres. I don’t know how many. If it grew ten-fold you’ve already outgrown us if we all went to the max.

*JS:* Now this important question of growth will be expanded upon at the next meeting of the CSA, so you can stay tuned to learn more about how big the CSA will grow into next

year. But another important topic of discussion that took up a significant part of the meeting was structure – how should the CSA be structured and should it become a more formal entity instead of what it is right now, which is simply a group of eaters, farmers and one business. Abra Brynne who has been involved in the local food movement and the administration of co-operatives for quite some time, lent her thoughts on what she thought should happen with the CSA's structure. Abra believes that the farmers should develop their own co-operative that is separate from the CSA itself. Here's the chair of the meeting - Donna Carslyle.

*Donna Carlyle:* So we have an hour or a bit to talk about what we're going to do in the future and one of the things that we talked about is forming a co-operative, a legal entity, and how that would work if we want an advisory board, if we want a co-ordinator, how do we carry on with the values of the CSA? And is there a business model that we can do? And talking about the advantages and disadvantages overall. And of course, Abra is our resident expert on co-operatives, is that...?

*Abra Brynne:* I don't really assume the role of expert about really anything, but I have a lot of experience with the Kootenay Co-op and with exploring agricultural co-ops as a possible business form that could be a benefit to farmers. From observing various types of co-ops who have different kinds of members I personally feel that a co-op has a greater possibility of success when all those who are members, who are shareholders, have the same basic need and vision for that entity. So for instance, there was a co-op that was formed on Salt Spring Island where they attempted to have consumers and the farmers all be members and make it move forwardly effectively where they are all benefitting but the pressure on the farmers to have low prices was quite intense and I don't know if it's still struggling along or not but I know it was a real challenge. I'm not actually in favor of trying to do that thing, like I do think the link the consumers with educating them is really important, but you all know, most people don't really have a clue about what it really is to farm and so it could muddy the process. It could make it much more difficult to just simply move forward in the direction that you need to. So I think that it makes the most sense for the farmer/producers to be the only members of this co-op. I mean you could have an administrative support that would basically be a paid position or something along those lines and that pay could be compensation in food or something, like it doesn't have to be a cash exchange. It could be, 'here's your tonne of grain for the year, dear' or something like that. So I would encourage you, I know that most of the farmers I've worked with hate paperwork. A certain amount of paperwork is necessary to maintain an organization like this and there are other ways to make it happen other than just a monetary exchange 'cause I know you may have a lot of grain but you may not have a lot of cash for it.

*JS:* Also at the table was CSA administrator Matt Lowe who asked Abra what advantages a farmer co-operative would have.

*Abra Brynne:* I'm not in favour of arbitrarily forming another society, another co-op, another council, another whatever. They seem to sprout out up quite frequently and often die a natural death. However, for your purposes, I don't know how well the three of you

work together, how well all of your different farming values coalesce or not, but the three of you have all committed to participating in this CSA. So there's enough commonality that your working together this year but be really clear. By forming a co-op, for me the benefit for you three and anyone else who wanted to join to expand the production, would be being really clear on the boundaries, being really clear on the expectations about what you're each doing and what you're providing and what's acceptable and not acceptable farm practices and stuff like that. 'Cause I mean, just word of mouth and trust maybe just fine, but where there's some problems, and I mean farmers by nature, you have to be pretty...you know, it's a tough business and so most of the farmers I know are fairly ornery and opinionated. *(laughter and agreement)* I don't know maybe you're not at all, but just having those real clear boundaries it makes things a lot easier. So to me that would be the advantage of a co-op. It doesn't have to be particularly onerous to set up. There's a co-op act. You can take your bylaws right out of it.

*Keith Huscroft:* So, I'm confused here. You don't want to have anything to do with the CSA? Or the CSA is a different entity from the co-op?

*Abra Brynne:* The CSA would be one of the products of the farmers in this co-op. So let me just jump ahead to lower down. A lot of CSA's, and I'm sure Cindy can correct me if I'm wrong. But a lot of them supply their shareholders, but hey also will have other market outlets on the side. So it's quite possible. I actually think it would not be good to incorporate businesses into the CSA, although I know Au Soleil Levant currently is, but there's challenges with trying to bring in a business that's going to want that much more volume of product than a consumer and how you'd make that work. But there would be no reason why you as a co-op, couldn't be going for a CSA, where you start out the year, just as you did this year. We're growing so many acres. We have an expectation of approximately this volume and each member will get approximately this based on Mother Nature. Separate from that you've thrown in another ten acres of whatever that you'll make available to Jenny and to Cindy or whoever based on the crop. And what you would do with your commercial contracts, like you could enter into a contract agreement in advance of the season so that they know those ten acres is theirs whatever it produces. And you know those ten acres are theirs whatever it produces and you might negotiate a price or try to set something in advance in terms of some kind of security.

*Keith Huscroft:* Correct me if I'm wrong. If the CSA involves all these different parties including the farmers, then shouldn't we have like a Board of Directors that are overseeing where this is gonna go? Not everybody from the Food Action Coalition is here, just a representative. So there would be a farmer representative here who we are still part of the CSA but to deal with us we'll have a co-op where we'll look after, I don't kind of understand. I mean what I'm getting at is here we have three farmers. If it's gonna grow like it's gonna supposed to grow I don't suspect there's going to be three farmers here next year. There's gonna be more. Who decides who those farmers gonna be? What criteria are we gonna let in? Where are we headed with this? If we start adding too much and all of a sudden the farming philosophy in our co-op isn't our farming philosophy, we're out-voted, where's the...?

*Female Voice:* But that's the advantage of having the legal structure because what Abra was saying is you've got bylaws that you have to write.

*Keith Huscroft:* Yeah, that we would write?

*Female Voice:* Well, yeah.

*Male voice:* A board writes.

*Keith Huscroft:* Or a board would write, whatever.

*Female Voice:* Well, they can start, being the board.

*Keith Huscroft:* Yeah, I don't need to know all the technicals, but is that sort of where we're headed?

*AB:* So I'd like to just unpack it a little bit and I'm sorry if I mix it up too much so that it's a bit confusing. I mean you each individually are interested in growing a small scale production of grain which is a really interesting idea. You have various market options as small-scale grain producers. What I see you forming would be a co-op of small-scale grain producers who could have various market options. One of which would be a CSA. And I think your point about making the decisions about how the CSA goes, grows, expands, what all would be produced, etc. It is good to have that kind of diversity of representation at some level on a board or council or whatever you want to call it, having those kinds of discussions, but in terms of small-scale grain producers, farmers, you forming that co-op and then participating in the CSA and participating in contracts with your various retail options, etc, commercial options, that would be something that might be to your benefit to be working collaboratively. And then if the CSA came to you and said, 'hey look we've grown ten-fold, can we negotiate for you guys planting more volume dedicated to the CSA?' Then you as a co-op could look at a membership drive to expand your production base, could look at cutting back your commercial vendors in order to support the CSA. Saying to the CSA, 'sorry this is all we're willing to produce for you at this point', but it would be you as farmers making those decisions about what's in your best interest for your business liability.

*JS:* And this is Deconstructing Dinner. You've been listening to Abra Brynne sharing her thoughts at the July 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Nelson-Creston Grain Community Supported Agriculture Project. Among the many issues discussed at the meeting was what form the CSA should take as it evolves from its first year of operation.

Now two things that stand out from Abra's suggestions were the formation of a farmer co-operative that is separate from the CSA members, and the other was the ability for the farmers to then access other markets such as businesses (that is keeping businesses and members separate).

Now as someone who was also at the meeting to lend my own thoughts, I did have my reservations regarding such suggestions. I do believe that a co-operative where eaters and farmers are part of the same entity can indeed work, and so I did share my opinion with the group.

*Clip of JS:* If I could just make maybe two observations. What one is just to re-visit what founded this group in the first place which was to create a model that would link eaters up with farmers and that's the CSA model. And just from this conversation, the past maybe forty minutes or so, I'm hearing two meetings. I'm hearing a meeting of formation of a farmer co-op and I'm not hearing a meeting about the CSA. Not that they both can't happen at the same time, but you know, it was said early on at the beginning of the meeting that having a co-operative where there's farmers and eaters as part of the membership hasn't worked in the past and many examples, which is true and likely wouldn't again. I would disagree with because I think if this group is working right now where there's farmers and eaters together then there's no reason, in my opinion, why a co-op wouldn't work so long as those values can be maintained. And I think it's clear to me in this room that all of us are going down the exact same path. There's not much resistance in that, so I envision when it comes to a co-op, and I know I was initially speaking with Matt about this, I would envision a co-operative consisting of as members of the co-op: farmers, the CSA as a representative and businesses as also a part of that co-operative. All working together as the co-op.

And it introduces something that I was talking, as well with Brenda about yesterday, which is this idea of retail-supported agriculture, where the business just like Au Soleil Levant essentially they are retail-supported agriculture. They have taken the risk of investing twenty shares into the co-op. They were paying a little less per share because of the volume. And I think that's the route as well that businesses need to start taking. And I know I come from a business background. If I was operating a grocery store, bakery or a restaurant I would be more secure investing and taking the risk in this kind of CSA, this kind of program, than I would being reliant on the systems of food distribution right now and those rising prices and potentially two months from now, my grain being twice as much as it is today. I would rather as a business owner invest a year before or 6, 7, 8 months before that crop is ready to be assured that I'm gonna have that crop down the road. And what that means is businesses have to start planning a little more in advance and that's the direction I think naturally that businesses are going to have to take. It's not gonna be about just filling out the order form when you need something to fill the shelves. It's gonna be about investing in futures, investing down the road to ensure that you're gonna have stuff on your shelves. And so I do think that the idea of a retail-supported agriculture model, which is the same thing as what you've created for members could work. I just share some of the comments that have been made, like let's just not grow so quickly that it just starts to replicate the same models that have been existing. 'Cause that is incredibly easy. It's like we all know how to ride a bike and we hop on a unicycle and we're gonna have trouble doing that because we've been riding those two wheels the whole time. It's just natural that we're gonna be operating that way. I've seen it. I've seen co-operatives look just like any other business that do lose their value.

*JS:* And this is Deconstructing Dinner. Now we will get a chance to hear from the farmers what their current thoughts are on what structure the CSA should take in the future, but first let's come to another interesting topic that arose throughout the meeting, and it runs along a similar vein. As I suggested at the meeting, there are indeed risks when launching an alternative model of anything, that that model can, very easily, resort back to the same conventional models that in the case of food, are clearly not working. This brings us to the issue of maintaining the values and the vision that formed the CSA in the first place. Here's Gail Southall sharing a comment she received from a Creston fruit producer. Farmer Keith Huscroft responds.

*Gail Southall:* One of the fruit producer that I talked to in the valley said what she would really like to see, 'I see a trend. Everybody used to grow apples and then cherries became popular and everybody rips out their apples and plants cherries. Now we hardly have any apples in the valley. If we are going to truly feed ourselves then wouldn't it be nice if our producers could get together and say well you grow corn 'cause you have the best land for that and why don't you grow this and I'll grow this because I've got the best set-up for that and that way we're not all trying to compete with each other rather working cooperatively.'

*Keith Huscroft:* Which is exactly what the model of agriculture is right now, except they're undercutting or whatever. To me that's a step back, monoculture. Yeah, I'll grow the apples, you grow the cherries, you grow the beef. To me it's everybody can grow a little bit of everything and maybe I'm off in left field and it's just not attainable, but you are not working synergistically by growing apples. All of a sudden you have your apples and there and you say, 'By God, we've got a moth problem. We've got to spray or we're gonna lose them. We gotta spray.' Well I'm sorry, but if we're gonna make a difference, and maybe I should just go home and not worry about it or I'm having illusions of grandeur or whatever it is, that we can actually do something different here. I think we gotta do it different. I think it's, you know if you got a system where you can grow, everybody can grow a little bit of everything, you spread the risk. And if everybody had a little orchard and did a little cider here, fed it to their pigs there, whatever, you have ten different things coming off your farm. If something goes wrong on all the farms even one different thing, it's covered. We are all covered. Into the future we are covered. You are not gonna go to Costco and make up the difference 'cause Costco's not gonna be there. Or is that our vision? Or are we just trying to make money and we're competing with the same marketplace 'cause we have the same models. That's not what I want to do. I'm not going to do that. I mean I'm not interested. They're educated in the agriculture of today and I mean in this model I think we have to be, we're looking at things being different or at least that's why I was drawn to this CSA is because the charter, it seemed to me, was towards sustainability. A peak-oil civilization or a no-oil civilization? Are we gonna work to that or are we gonna...where are we going?

*JS:* Now one word Keith Huscroft used was that of charter – and Keith later addressed this idea of a charter – one that can ensure that regardless of the direction the CSA takes – the vision and values will be maintained.



*Keith Huscroft:* But I'm just saying when it gets larger it gets harder to control and so if we start the co-op with a mandate that says this is where we are headed off into fantasy land (*laughter*) what it might seem like now, but will work later. 'Cause if we do it and we make it work we have... 'cause like I said I've seen all those excited faces. We have a market. We could make it work. They're not gonna buy off us if they can buy exactly the same thing by walking down the street. If they see something unique and they taste something they've never tasted before, which means you have to keep it really small, 'cause you can't raise 2000 milk-fed pigs. You can get away with a dozen or whatever. I'm just saying not all the members are going to get all the products. It's gonna be...how you figure it out I don't know, but yeah, I guess you just keep jacking the price 'til you got 12 people left. (*laughter*) Honestly, because it is a unique...I'm saying we are gonna offer something very unique. All of us as farmers have raised animals or crops or something that are very high quality, but took an amazing amount of labour or time to do. And to put it out there on the free market and say a baker comes to me and my wheat and I just play with my horses all summer on that stuff and it's gonna be a low volume and they say, 'Well this is the market value for wheat. I can go to Alberta and I can buy my bread wheat for \$500 a tonne. I expect that price from you.' Then I'm sorry, I should have just left my horses in the barn 'cause I can't compete with someone who's doing 25 sections of wheat and I'm not saying that my product...it should be a little better, maybe it isn't. Maybe when it's all said and done their wheat's gonna taste just the same as my wheat but I'm doing something different, something unique in this area. And it's local. And yeah, it's not gonna be the same and I can't compete on a global level if that is sorta where we're headed. You know I'm just gonna park it right now because I'm not interested.

*Gail Southall:* You see the CSA as that natural entity to purchase your product.

*Keith Huscroft:* Yeah, and I see it as...you've got a connection. We have a connection. We can't go to 20,000 people. I don't know what we're gonna go to, but for who we are right here and right now I think there's a tremendous opportunity to do just about anything we ever want to do on a quality level.

*JS:* Now when all was said and done, it was clear that the meeting had created more questions than it did answering the ones the meeting started out with. To wrap up the meeting, everyone in the room shared their final thoughts, and here's a clip starting with Farmer Roy Lawrence, and followed by CSA administrator Matt Lowe and farmers Drew Gailius and Keith Huscroft.

*Roy Lawrence:* I can kinda see where the farmer co-op could take some of the responsibility off of the CSA, but I can't see them being two separate entities so I'm hoping that we can work this out and so that we're still very much congregated together.

*Matt Lowe:* I always come here with hoping that we're going to get some clear-cut answers and I always go away realizing that they just created more questions, but to me that means that we've had a good meeting. We really sunk our teeth into the issues more

and more and I think this group is working really well. We're really moving along and with each meeting I feel like it does bring us to the next stage and it's been great.

*Drew Gailius:* Yeah, I'm very happy with how things are going. I think it's a lot of hard work. We have a lot of decisions, hard decisions to make and I see the co-op as Roy, as small part to help the farmers work better but within the CSA because I really believe in the CSA model. I really believe in people finding out about their food and I like that community it makes. And I think that's really worth working towards. And I think everybody in this room has, I think the same idea and that's very...it's a good feeling. So I'm happy and I think we have lots of work to do, but I'm very happy with it and I would like to continue it basically the same way. Maybe a few minor changes, but.

*Keith Huscroft:* I'd like to be wrapped in the womb of the CSA because last time I left the womb it was a lot of work. (*laughter*)

*Unidentified Male Voice:* And not for you!

*Keith Huscroft:* And I'll leave it at that.

*Female Voice:* Thank-you.

### **soundbite**

*JS:* A reminder that if you missed any of today's show or would like to listen in on parts I or II of this *Local Grain Revolution* series – you can access these shows through our website at [deconstructingdinner.ca](http://deconstructingdinner.ca) where you can also subscribe to our podcast.

Now as mentioned earlier – a pretty exciting stage in the evolution of this groundbreaking grain CSA took place only a few weeks ago. It appears that some local residents who learned about the CSA through local media have decided to lend their skills and resources to the CSA as well – and have offered to take a fleet of sailboats down to the southern shores of Kootenay Lake and load up as much grain as they can, and sail it back to Nelson – fossil fuel free. Now this was an idea that had been floated around when the CSA was first formed, but it was unexpected that it would happen so soon. And what this new development helps capture, is just how impactful the move towards more localized food systems can be in bringing a community of people together. What's essentially happening here, is that a local food system (or a segment of a local food system) is building itself from the ground up. All it took was one eater – Matt Lowe, who was seeking out local grain, and what followed was a team of local food advocates, three farming families and a local bakery. We've now since met David Everest who we heard from earlier on the show and who stepped up to the task of milling the grain into flour for Nelson residents. There are also other bakeries, restaurants and grocery stores all expressing an interest in becoming involved. And now, here we have the *transportation* of the grain finding its place within this local food system. And the most beautiful thing of it all, is that for the most part, everyone is coming forward simply out of the passion to

see a thriving local food system –no one’s doing it out of greed or out of an interest to make a quick dollar – this *truly* is a community coming together.

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, Jay was invited into our studios here at Kootenay Co-op Radio. Jay is with the Kootenay Lake Sailing Association and is the sailor who spearheaded this idea. Jay was a guest on another one of our shows here at Kootenay Co-op Radio – the EcoCentric – a weekly one-hour production put on by the West Kootenay EcoSociety.

And so here’s Jay sharing how he first heard about the grain CSA and how the idea arose of sailing the grain from Creston to Nelson.

*Jay:* Kelly and I are fairly new to town. Basically, the first I heard about it was when the newspaper articles here locally came out and it sounded like a great idea and we spoke about getting involved with it the following season. And then didn’t really think too much about it more as the summer went along until I saw more articles that it was a success and the farmers were coming across with quite a crop. And I started thinking that the whole idea of folks getting their food locally, more sustainably and with a smaller footprint, why not use the transportation corridors that we have occurring naturally with the lake? By that time we’d been out sailing a lot this summer. We’d sailed up to the Kaslo Jazz Festival and spent several days up there and we’re able to sail almost the entire way except for a little past Kootenay Park there. We had to motor. So it just seemed like a natural progression to want to not try and get some more folks locally involved especially with the Kootenay Lake Sailing Association. It seemed like a natural progression to think about bringing a cargo back rather than just getting out there for fun.

*JS:* Jay also shares some of the details of the trip.

*Jay:* First off we couldn’t do it without the other members of the Kootenay Lake Sailing Association. So we put it out there to them and got an enthusiastic response. So I think we have right now potentially six boats going that can carry anywhere from 500lbs. to 1000-1500lbs. each. So we’re hoping right now to bring back potentially 5000lbs. of grain. All of the skippers in the boats are experienced out on the West Arm here on the main lakes so I feel we’re capable of handling any of the conditions that do arise. The group that’s going are really enthusiastic. Anytime you get more than two boats out on the lake there’s a race so there’s gonna be a little bit of competition heading the way down and then typically the winds are out of the south leaving Creston. So that would be a downwind run to Balfour. So we’re hoping for winds. With it getting a little later in the season here we anticipate that, especially on the main lake, we should be able to have some good sailing. And hopefully, I anticipate this is going to turnout really well so I think we’ll just generate more enthusiasm and support for it next year and the following years. And it seems like we’re seeing more and more sailboats out on the lakes, so the more folks we can get involved. It just seemed like a great way to involve the Sailing Association with the community at large and I hope it’s something we can build on.

*JS:* And that was Jay of the Kootenay Lake Sailing Association. The fleet of sailboats will be departing Nelson on Friday October 24<sup>th</sup> and loading up their cargo of grain in

Kuskonook – not too far north of Creston on Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup> and then will return to Nelson on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup>. You can expect more information on the trip in local media and CSA organizers are hoping for a crowd of people to come out on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> in Nelson to celebrate the arrival of the grain. And you can of course be sure that Deconstructing Dinner will be on board *one* of the boats so that all of you can also be part of the exciting formation of this local food system.

And so to end off today's part III of the *Local Grain Revolution* series – here's some final important and moving last words from Farmer Keith Huscroft – recorded back in July.

*Keith Huscroft:* But we have to change how we look at farming. The models of monoculture – just wheat, whatever, have been proven that it just doesn't. It has to be diverse. If we have 2000 members I just can't go out and rent 200 acres for them and say, 'Man, I'm getting into the grain.' That's not what I want to do. I want to work with my horses, but in order to work with them there's a synergistic way. And I mean there are models out there where they've got ten different things working with everything so the end result is pre-worked compost. You have hogs that work the horse manure into a compost that you put on your fields or whatever, but you have to have sale for that. Everything has to be able to provide an income for it all to work. Where do we want our society to go? I'm excited about it, but I think it's just unbelievable what we've created 'cause it's a whole people with the same mindset where if you treat them properly they're looking for change. They want change and we have to be there. We have to be the change. We can't just go ahead and do it the way everybody else is doing it saying it's organic. We're not going to do it with fossil fuels. We're gonna figure out a way to get around that 'cause the cost of equipment and fuel is just fricking phenomenal, unbelievable to the point where I don't care what they're paying us it's gonna be hard to make the living. 'Cause then they're talking about it going up more. It's to the point now where my tractor is for sale. Even if I only do the garden, I've just had enough of paying that kind of money. I really think it's important no matter how long it takes us, is that that we really get a direction of a charter or whatever it is of where this is gonna take us in the next generation because I'm really excited about this because I can see the potential for me hauling one of my kids home and taking over that farm. 'Cause it'd be nice to have sixth generation on there. I've got generation seventh playing on the farm but he ain't working 'cause he's like this big. I'm excited maybe there is a future for my family 'cause if this does not work I guarantee you as soon as they plant me the farm is for sale. Then it'll be gone. Just like every farm around me they're waiting for death. All the kids are waiting for the funeral and not one of them, there's not one person around me is gonna stay farming. Not to say that they might not get twenty excited younger farmers in there, which might be the best thing. Split it all up, but big farms are going down and more than likely it's people from Alberta are gonna come and retire and put a horse out there.

**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.

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