

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

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Title: The Local Grain Revolution X (Year 3 & Lopez Island Grain Project)

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Transcript – Pat Yama**

Jon Steinman: And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner and the 192nd episode of this weekly one hour radio show and podcast produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio, CJLY. Deconstructing Dinner is heard on dozens of stations throughout North America including KLOI, 102.9FM Lopez Island, Washington. I'm Jon Steinman.

For a few years now Deconstructing Dinner has been tracking the evolution of the Kootenay Grain CSA in the interior of B.C. It's Canada's first community supported agriculture project for grain and it's been shared here on the show through a series named the Local Grain Revolution. But, it's been quite a while since we've checked in with *how* that project is evolving and on this episode we'll focus in on year three of the project and go over some of the notable changes to the CSA's structure.

But also on this part 10 of the series, we'll briefly learn about the many grain projects that are underway *elsewhere* in Canada and the United States all of which have been inspired by this very Local Grain Revolution series that's been airing here on the show since March 2008. More specifically, we'll travel to Lopez Island, Washington, where one of those projects has completed its first successful year. In October of *this* year I visited Lopez Island to not only speak to the community there about the grain CSA in the Kootenay region of B.C. but to also learn how their *own* CSA and grain project has evolved as well.

We'll hear once again from farmers Roy Lawrence of R&S Lawrence Farms in Creston B.C. We'll hear from Joanne Gailius of Full Circle Farm in nearby Canyon. And on Lopez Island, Nancy Crowell who first introduced the idea of a grain CSA to Lopez residents; Rhea Miller of the Lopez Island Community Land Trust; and O.J. Loughheed of the Land Trust's Grain Project; and Kathryn Thomas of Horse Drawn Farm where the grain CSA's first harvest took place.

increase music and fade out

JS: It's nice timing to be airing this part 10 of the Local Grain Revolution series. More specifically it's nice because featured today will be one of the

many communities that has, because of this very series, become inspired to cultivate a more responsible local food system because of what was learned from content shared here on the show.

And I say the timing is nice because Deconstructing Dinner is in need of taking an indefinite break from producing new episodes with our final broadcast being the one following this 192nd episode. And so featuring a project that was in part inspired *by* Deconstructing Dinner is a nice way to approach this final episode. And so you can stay tuned for that *indefinite* finale when I'll share some of the reasons for the break, and why I think it's both a sad decision but also a good opportunity to hopefully ensure that this show can come back on the air in the near future. So stay tuned for that.

And so perhaps what has stood as one of the greatest *successes* of Deconstructing Dinner has been this Local Grain Revolution series. It's a series that has demonstrated the absolutely critical role of alternative community-driven media – media that can help support positive social, cultural, and economic change instead of media that simply entertains.

When part 9 of the series aired back in October 2009, we featured the wrap-up of year *two* of the Kootenay Grain CSA or Community Supported Agriculture project of which 450 families and about a dozen businesses invested approximately \$100,000 into the project made up of three farm families located in British Columbia's Creston Valley. It was on that episode when we heard audio from the three day journey along Kootenay Lake when 11 sailboats and their crews totalling over two dozen people transported *some* of those locally-grown grains to members in the City of Nelson.

So that's where we last left off and a *LOT* has transpired since then including some *significant* challenges that the project faced around that time. Challenges which did contribute to some substantial changes in how the project structured itself in year three. Because it was those challenges which in part burnt out some of the volunteer labour that the project had been fuelled by up until that point.

The first challenge came from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency – which, I have to say based on some of our recent efforts to try and access information from them about some of the recent stories that we've aired here on the show leaves me feeling quite comfortable in declaring that the CFIA is a fundamentally *broken* institution which in no way is working in the interests of Canadians. But, that's another stream of thought to save for our next episode.

As far as the *grain* CSA is concerned, well it was only a couple of weeks after the sailing of the grain in October 2009 when organizers of the project received an e-mail *from* the CFIA with the subject line: STOP LOCAL GRAIN MOVEMENT, all in capital letters. It appears that all of the media attention that the sailing garnered in late 2009 woke the CFIA up, similar to our recent

eggs investigation when it was discovered that the CFIA was asleep at the wheel for what now appears to be at least two years. But on the grain front, the media attention that was surrounding this grain project appeared to have encouraged the CFIA to *dig* up a 10-year old regulation *of* which farmers that we've spoken with in the Creston Valley were completely unaware.

Known as Directive 99-01, the regulation states that any grains grown in the Creston Valley destined for regions outside of the Central Interior of the province must *first* be tested for the fungus known as Dwarf Bunt, otherwise known as Stinking Smut – a soil-borne disease which poses no risk to humans but in large quantities can impact the health of some grains - primarily winter wheats. It's a disease that has only been observed in the Interior of B.C. and some parts of Ontario.

Now in order to ensure that the disease does not spread, the regulation requires that any grains destined for export *out* of the region must first be tested for Dwarf Bunt. But perhaps the most shocking discovery following this e-mail was that untested grains *had* indeed been shipped out of the region during those previous 10 years and a *lot* of grain for that matter. Yet somehow the presence of the small grain CSA woke the CFIA up. Offering the first evidence of the CFIA's seeming negligence was when Creston Inspector David Mutch who sent the e-mail, and who according to him had been directed by his superiors to contact the grain CSA, knew little to nothing of the regulation he was being asked to enforce.

So, just where was the directive coming from? Well, we don't know. But, it does lead one to believe that wherever the directive *was* coming from, that it seemingly had little to do with a well-managed quarantine, and *much* more to do with finding a reason to *halt* the development of the project. As the days following that e-mail transpired, CSA organizers scrambled to figure out the details of the regulation and inform shareholders what was going on. But even as *other* CFIA employees were brought into the dialogue, it became further clear that *no* one in the department at least those who were being directed to speak with the CSA, had any good understanding of the regulation and how the farmers and organizers should proceed.

What did finally become clear though only *days* later, is that the untested grains *could* be distributed to members in Creston and Nelson but not to shareholders in the East Kootenay region which happens to lie *outside* of the quarantined area. With approximately 100 shareholders in that region having already paid for their grain, this of course created quite the challenge to the mostly volunteer-driven project. When finally more information finally came to light, it was also learned that the regulation only applied to whole grains, which makes sense because the reason for the regulation was to prevent any of the grains being planted outside of the quarantined area.

With that in mind though, the CFIA informed the CSA that the grains destined for the East Kootenay *could* be milled or cracked and sent to

shareholders. But because freshly milled flour has a short shelf-life before it goes rancid just as most flour on grocery store shelves already is, this was *not* an attractive option for most of those shareholders. But it also occurred to the CSA organizers and farmers that none of the grains being grown by the CSA project were destined to be planted in the first place. Instead, all of it was for human consumption, thereby posing no risk to the possible spread of Dwarf Bunt.

And so, on November 16th, a letter was sent by the CSA to the Food Inspection Agency requesting that an exemption be made. But that request was not honoured. And so while the grains began to be distributed to Nelson and Creston members, the only way to legally transport the grains to residents in the *East Kootenay* region was to first get all of those grains tested, which, for a small-scale project made up of multiple grains and multiple farms – well that was a notable expense to say the least. Certainly much more of an expense than the many neighbouring monocultures of single crops planted on huge tracts of land. But figuring out where the grains could be tested took weeks for the CFIA to figure out. CSA farmer Roy Lawrence is heard here describing what transpired when the three farmers received that information and sent their grains to be tested. Despite Roy's grains being the only ones of the three farms that tested positive for Dwarf Bunt, his grains displayed no characteristics suggestive of the fungus.

Roy Lawrence: The Food Inspection Agency wanted us to test the grains which we all tested our grain and the guys on the hill, they were okay but I tested positive for Dwarf Bunt. And the way it's explained to me, Dwarf Bunt is in the ground and most likely we will have to deal with it forever. Some years it might show up, other years it might show up free. We had some pretty good yields and with Dwarf Bunt they say in severe cases you get this black spore when you combine, which we didn't have. Actually the grain looked as normal as, as anything. So it's obviously not a severe case that we had but it's something that we have to test for every year. And at the end of harvest we'll get post samples from everything and send them off and see where we stand.

JS: As all of this was unfolding, Deconstructing Dinner took a closer look into just what Dwarf Bunt is and how serious of a risk it poses to soils in areas never infected with the disease. I came across the work of Don Mathre, a Professor Emeritus in the College of Agriculture at Montana State University. With Don being an expert in soil-borne diseases and with Montana being one of three states where Dwarf Bunt *is* present, he was able to offer some interesting perspectives on the *supposed* risks posed by Dwarf Bunt. In our e-mail correspondence, Don wrote this, "Dwarf Bunt has certainly raised lots of issues over the past 30 years ever since the Chinese got excited about it. While I won't comment on the reasons why the Canadian officials are concerned about Dwarf Bunt in your area, I have always found it to be more of a *trade* issue than a biological issue. Dwarf bunt really does not move into new areas unless they have long periods of snow cover. Also, it's my

understanding now that the Chinese will accept wheat with limited numbers of spores on the grain. If this is true, then having a little bit of Dwarf Bunt on the grain should *not* be a big issue." Despite this expert opinion, the CFIA decided that the minute presence on Roy's grains *was* a big issue, and they restricted him from sending his grain to shareholders in the East Kootenay. Farmer Roy Lawrence *also* doesn't think Dwarf Bunt is a big issue, and he *especially* doesn't think so for grains destined for human consumption.

RL: I hesitate to say that I agree with them, no I don't necessarily agree with it because in our case when we're selling it for food consumption we should be able to have some means of either stamping it for food consumption only or some other means to market it as food consumption. Where their problem is is selling it and someone receiving it. So no, they told us at the time that if we cracked it in any way so that it wouldn't germinate again, we could send it anywhere we wanted. But then again that you start losing the food value out of the grains and if you go through the point of cracking it you may as well make it into flour and people could still buy it that way if they want. So we've restricted it to within our region until we find out what we tested.

JS: In an incredibly timely stroke of irony, at the same time this Dwarf Bunt concern was unfolding in British Columbia's Creston Valley, a similar situation was unfolding among Canada's canola sector. At that time in October 2009, China was restricting *all* shipments of Canadian canola due to fears of a fungus known as Blackleg. In an article published by Reuters on October 28th, Canada's Minister of Agriculture & Agri-Food's Gerry Ritz was quoted posing a rather interesting comment, keeping in mind that Gerry Ritz is also the Minister responsible for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. In expressing his *disapproval* of China's ban on Canadian canola, Ritz commented on *why* China should *not* be concerned with the possible presence of the fungus on Canadian canola seed, he said this - "The seed Canada ships to China is processed, not replanted." Seems as though Gerry Ritz's would disagree with the rationale by his very *own* Canadian Food Inspection Agency when dealing with the Kootenay Grain CSA.

soundbite

This is Deconstructing Dinner and part 10 of The Local Grain Revolution series.

So that was challenge number 1 facing the Kootenay Grain CSA following the transporting of grain in year two of the project.

But then came challenge number 2 when in late November after the grains had been distributed, a bag of Hard Spring wheat from the Huscroft farm was opened and which contained bright pink seeds. It was discovered that human error resulted in some of the Hard Spring wheat from the Huscroft farm having been placed into a large tote that had *once* contained a chemically treated barley seed – that is a seed coated with a chemical fungicide. It's

presumed that after that tote had been used some 10 years earlier, *some* of those seeds remained in a *fold* of the tote, thereby commingling with the naturally grown Hard Spring wheat destined for human consumption. Immediately, shareholders were warned to *not* consume any of the Hard Spring wheat from the Huscroft farm until more research was done on the risks associated with the presence of the treated seeds in that tote. Beyond the obvious human safety fears, the biggest fear was that *all* of the grain would have to be recalled. But through a careful tracing back of steps, organizers were able to discover that because some of the 20 pound bags of grain had been marked differently than others and because of the different distribution points in Nelson and Creston, it was thankfully possible to recall only some of the bags instead of all of them. Lesson learned - make sure a traceability system is in place when producing grains.

Another lesson learned is that the multi-farm model carries some great benefits. Because as luck would have it, another one of the three farmers participating in the project, Roy Lawrence, was able to offer a replacement grain from some of the surplus he had grown that year. And so CSA organizers offered *to* members the opportunity to either replace the recalled bags or issue a refund. Now most members took the replacement option but some did request a refund and some even requested a refund of their entire share.

In the end, it was this, among other reasons, that contributed to some of the volunteers simply burning out and choosing to leave the project unless some form of paid administration was put in place to deal with any future unforeseen challenges like the challenges mentioned here.

soundbite

This is Deconstructing Dinner. You're listening to part 10 of the Local Grain Revolution series. A series which, since March 2008 has tracked the evolution of an innovative project for producing and accessing local grains in the interior of British Columbia. In year 2 of the project, that's 2009, the Kootenay Grain CSA or Community Supported Agriculture project, the first of its kind in Canada grew from a membership of 180 families and one bakery to 450 families and a dozen businesses. And on this part 10 of the series, we reflect on the wrapping up *of* year 2 and some of the challenges the project faced in late 2009. Challenges which also help introduce how, in year 3, the Kootenay Grain CSA underwent some substantial changes.

In the winter, when the dust had settled from that exciting but challenging year 2, the CSA's steering committee and the farmers gathered to reflect on the year and discuss the outlook for year 3.

For Full Circle Farm's Drew and Joanne Gailius, well they decided that the first two years was a good experience that helped get their feet wet with how to operate and manage a grain CSA and chose to take that experience and

see how they could manage on their own with a small *single*-farm grain CSA. It was this decision by Full Circle Farm that sparked some interesting discussion among the steering committee on the pros and cons of a multi-farm CSA model versus a single farm model. One of the greatest advantages of a multi-farm model is the sharing of risk among the farms so that if *one* farm suffers a loss of a crop or multiple crops, there is another farm or farms that might be able to cover that loss. This benefit was as mentioned just earlier well-taken advantage of both in years 1 and 2 of the project. And from the perspective of the members, well that too would offer greater assurance, that instead of investing \$125 at the beginning of the season into *one* farm and therefore *greater* risk, the members could invest into three farms with more diversity and therefore less risk.

But there are advantages for the farmer for going on their own. For one - fewer meetings, and no more need to come to decisions as a group as was the case in years 1 and 2.

Almost one year later, Full Circle Farm in the community of Canyon has completed their first year going solo and operating their own small grain CSA, and in late August of this year, I sat down with Full Circle's Joanne Gailius and she describes the new model that they chose to adopt.

Joanne Gailius: So the new model was there was a little more administration for us to do but because we had been involved with the CSA part of that before, not that much more. We've had two farm home days where people were welcome and then this past Sunday had a potluck with everyone. So we were just a little freer but we missed the camaraderie of being involved with the other farmers and with the steering committee. The group of people were just wonderful. So there was less meetings, that was nice. And that we could decide for ourselves and with input from the members that chose to come with us this year with what they were interested in.

JS: As mentioned, for Full Circle Farm, launching a single farm grain CSA was an opportunity to have increased flexibility and more personal contact with their members. Joanne describes the size of the CSA that they chose to go with.

JG: We grew as if we had a 100 or so members - 100 to 125 and we chose to sign up 50 people. And that being 54 because dear friends and neighbours wanted (phew) after the 50 was reached to be signed up. And so we chose that because we wanted to be really sure we could do a really good quality job. We just wanted to keep it really low. There's a dozen more people that are on a waiting list hoping that they'll receive the full share of grain as well. And we're also because we just kept it at 50 we would have been able to be more flexible. So there are a number of celiac people that said they want all of their share in oats then maybe they could have some garbanzos instead of the rye or whatever, and so we feel like we can customize a little bit for people too. If all the grain goes well and people are just really supportive of

that, understanding the “if” part of it and being willing to take a risk with us but also really appreciative of just coming on the farm. And one fellow that was here with his family on Sunday wants just to come volunteer for a day so he can ask all of his questions and work in the garden with us or cleaning grain or whatever. So that personal side’s been neat. And a lot of personal e-mails back and forth – where do I get a grinder and what do you do with fresh rye and how do you make a sour dough. So there’s been more personal contact for us this year which has been neat too.

JS: Offered as part of Full Circle Farm’s 100 pound share of grain was Hard Spring wheat, Red Fife wheat, oats, rye and Khorasan wheat. Full Circle also offered some other crops as add-ons to the share. Joanne will speak about those later on the show. But first lets come back to that post year 2 meeting last winter. What about the other two farms? How did they choose to operate in year 3? Both the Huscroft Farm and the Lawrence Farm did prefer the multi-farm model and they chose to continue operating under the Kootenay Grain CSA umbrella, however, they did choose to operate their own independent grain CSAs. With the other members of the steering committee stepping aside, both farms maintained that Kootenay Grain CSA website on their own and in early 2010, all members were sent an e-mail informing them that they could either sign up with Full Circle Farm’s new CSA or one of the two Kootenay Grain CSA farms. To learn more about the new model chosen by Roy Lawrence, I visited his farm in late August.

RL: Basically we are all pretty much independent in the growing and the selling but Keith and I do work together especially with the cleaning because he doesn’t have a cleaner. We’ve marketed together. His share is actually different than ours. So you know if somebody wanted Hard Spring they would probably have to go to him because I, apart from the Red Fife I don’t have a Hard Red Spring.

JS: For those who did invest in grains from the Lawrence Farm, well members could *choose* from was Hard Red Winter wheat, Red Fife wheat, spelt, oats, and lentils while the Huscroft Farm offered Hard Red Spring wheat, Khorasan wheat, spelt, and rye. And notice I emphasize *choose* because in year 3, members of both farms were, for the first time, able to choose the composition of their share whereas in previous years, there was no choice.

So with those changes also come some new challenges, For the Lawrence’s that came in the form of more computer-based marketing and communication with members, something up until that year they had little experience with. Whereas before the three farm structure alongside a steering committee offered a lot of that administrative support, the farmers were on their own in year 3. And Roy described how marketing changed for them.

RL: Probably a little different because we are not computer people. We're kind of illiterate that way but as far as marketing goes we have to market everything we grow anyway. We've had to do that from the beginning so it's just a little different approach to it with the computer which we will get better at I'm sure (chuckles). But that's the big part of it I think is the computer has its pros and its cons. Like the part that I don't like about is I like the one-on-one communication.

JS: One of the biggest successes of the first two years of the CSA was developing a critical mass of members interested in supporting this innovative local grain project. This made the effort of reaching out to potential customers that much easier as there was an already-established list of people to contact. However in signing up those members, the Lawrence's made a rather interesting change to the CSA model which they had been a part of in years 1 and 2. In those first two years it was required that all members invest in the farms *before* the harvest as is the traditional model of a CSA. But the Lawrence's instead developed somewhat of a hybrid, a hybrid between a CSA and a more conventional 'grow it and sell it' model. Roy Lawrence describes the success in reaching out to the previous membership and how this new model was structured.

RL: When we posted at the beginning of this year, our plan was we wanted to fulfill approximately 300 shares but we wanted to have 100 shares sold upfront and then in the fall sell another 200 shares. Which we did reach, we reached a 100 shares. But that worked quite well so, you know, depending on how the fall goes because we didn't want to open sales for more shares until after we had the harvest off, to ensure that we have enough to cover actually what we sell.

JS: Indeed that's what happened – the harvest *was* a success and more shares *were* offered to people in the area and to those on the waiting list. But it was certainly an interesting choice for the Lawrence's to make – to, in 2007, prior to the CSA forming go from a very conventional system of selling their grain to, in 2008, shift to a much different and unique model, the CSA model in which their customers pay up front before any seeds are in the ground. And then, come 2010, step back a bit and find a more comfortable balance between the two models.

RL: Because it bothers me when we sell shares and then we have to go – ah excuse me but I'm sorry we're a little short. I really don't like that. I never have liked that and so that was the one change that we wanted to make was to ensure that we didn't sell more than we grew.

JS: Quite an interesting lesson to learn – that not *all* farmers might be comfortable with the CSA model with which the eaters pay up front at the beginning of the season.

But this does introduce an important factor for farmers when considering new and innovative models for producing and accessing local foods and local markets – diversity. Biological diversity on the ground of course and also diversity in the marketplace. Despite Roy Lawrence being capable of producing much more grain for the local market, at this point he’s also trying to ensure diversity in *how* he produces his product and how he sells it.

RL: No my farm could produce quite a bit more. But as far as the workload goes that’s what I’m comfortable with. Like I say I still grow barley and peas and I have 60 cows. I wanted to keep the farm so that it has more than one market so I have cows, I have grain and I have the CSA type of grain.

JS: A well-known impediment for many farms to shift to more natural growing practices is the increased labour required and the ability to pay *for* that labour. Enter one of the big questions always hovering over many new food production and marketing models - *are* they financially rewarding? Well at this point for the Lawrence’s, they’re happy with the price being offered to members and happy with the size of their farm but nevertheless, off-farm income has helped sustain what they do.

RL: I’m happy with the price. As far as what I get out of it I’m happy with the price. But you know you look at the shortages that are out there and the predictions of how the price of food is going to change in the next little bit and you go – it’s only going to go up. You know it’s like, typically like a hay customer comes along and goes – what’s the price of hay this year? I go – well the price of hay is at least the same as last year because the price of fuel and all the other costs never go down. So we can only anticipate that the price is going to go up or remain the same. But I am comfortable with the price right now. I feel pretty good. I’m not a person that wants to get the last penny. I would rather see everybody happy and that’s what the CSA started with and that’s what I’m quite happy with.

JS: As for Full Circle Farm’s financial health, well, like the vast majority of farmers in North America large or small, off-farm employment is too necessary to subsidize the farm. I asked Joanne Gailius what *would* it take for them to reach financial sustainability with their grain CSA and *not* rely on off-farm income.

JG: If we wanted it to be financially viable we would have to have more acres, probably, we farm 40, we’d probably have to have 80 would be my guess. And we would probably still need something to tide us through the winter months.

JS: For Full Circle Farm however, doubling in size is *not* an option, in part because of their intentions to farm *without* fossil fuels and instead use horses. Labour is also another concern.

JG: Our farm could certainly let it go bigger. Even though we dedicate at least a third of our acres to plato and crops and all that, the farm could go bigger. We personally can't. Our incredibly talented slave labour - our kids, are all leaving home and we're in our 50's and we can't do more than we're doing. We also have a real dedication to farming beyond oil, to reduce any amount of fossil fuel we use in what we do. So we've gone to a more electrical equipment, small equipment and we've been using the horses even more this year in harvest and we truly want to go more to that. So that will mean less acres.

JS: With Full Circle's fossil-fuel-free ambitions and their labour challenges spelling the likelihood of *reduced* acreage for their grain, Drew and Joanne Gailius do consider the possibility of seeking support from their *members*, similar to what's found at many vegetable CSAs.

Of course *another* option for Full Circle Farm to work towards greater financial sustainability is to increase the price of their share. And Joanne Gailius comments on this option.

JG: Well we actually just talked about that recently and we thought we'd talk to our shareholders about because we're going to reduce our numbers in all likelihood next year because we're going to more horse-drawn farming, how people feel about that and what their thoughts would be. We know some dedicated shareholders that would - one of them said I'll pay double, I want to really support the idea that there will be no fossil fuels used in making this happen. So there is that as an option. So yeah, that might be a way.

JS: This is Deconstructing Dinner a syndicated radio show and podcast produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio, CJLY. I'm Jon Steinman.

You've been listening to part 10 of our series The Local Grain Revolution. A series which since March 2008 has been tracking the evolution of Canada's first Community Supported Agriculture project for grain - the Kootenay Grain CSA. A project that has been producing locally grown grains to residents of the Nelson and Creston areas of British Columbia. On this latest episode, we're looking back on year 3, when some notable changes to the project took place, the most *significant* being the decision for the once *three* farm model to become what is now three farms operating *independent* grain CSAs.

I'll also note that today's broadcast and past episodes of this series can be found on-line at deconstructingdinner.ca.

As more and more communities seek to cultivate more responsible food systems, there's much to learn from experimental yet successful projects like the Kootenay Grain CSA and I'm sure there will be many more lessons to learn as the now three independent grain CSA's evolve. But upon reflection, Deconstructing Dinner continues to believe that the best model for a grain

project involves multiple farms alongside a group of *non*-farmers helping administer and coordinate the project. Farmer Roy Lawrence shares that sentiment.

RL: Well I'd say there's benefits both ways. I enjoyed working as a group and the risk factor is, it's a lot less burdensome. On the other hand, there's benefits of being independent in that you can dictate a little more of what you want to see. Well in particular for someone starting out if there was the opportunity to do it as a group I would suggest that that's the way to go.

JS: And here's Joanne Gailius, on the multi-farm model.

JG: I think it was a really good model. But I think having farmers work together is like herding cats. They're very, very independent people and you have to get them inside for meetings in busy times of year. So I think that was probably one of the hardest things of it. The model itself I think launched us and because we happen to be a computery house it was an easy launch for us to make into that as well as our daughter being a part of the administration willing to continue on with us for a year. So I think it's a really solid model to launch people. I can't see farmers staying with it well. Historically like the Lister-Hay Co-op, farmers worked together for a little while but they're such independent people - we are such independent people (laughs). Yeah, so I think it's a good launching model.

JS: Certainly that is perhaps the greatest success of the first two years of the project that it did incubate three farmers to eventually operate their own grain CSAs and at the very least this past year, both farmers were able to test *that* model out and glean whatever lessons might be learned from that.

Certainly one challenge of the multi-farm model in years 1 and 2 was the seeming lack of any clear distinction in duties between the volunteer steering committee and the farmers. In the end, it seemed everyone dabbled in a little bit of administrative work which, no doubt created confusion and some inefficiencies. And so *with* that, I asked Joanne if she thinks that through incorporating a very *distinct* separation in duties between the farmers and the volunteer organizers, that the multi-farm model might have worked better. Joanne doesn't think so, and instead supports *farmers* taking on those duties themselves.

JG: There's something in a farmer getting to the point where they are doing their marketing and they are doing the finished product. And this is talking to other organic farmers that have got to that point like Kootenay Alpine Dairy and stuff. That there's a real learning curve that's involved in that but it's a really valuable one. And because if you look at what a percentage a farmer gets from their growing versus what the end marketing gets, a farmer can capture all that income as part of how it goes. I think it's a neat way for a farmer to go and it's so farming of the future. It's us having a relationship

with our customers. It's eating locally and people knowing who grows their food. That whole part of it is a really important part to us.

JS: But what about the upsides to the new model for the three grain CSAs now operating in British Columbia's Creston Valley for Full Circle Farm and as introduced earlier, operating their own grain CSA has opened up the opportunity for closer relationships between their farm and their now smaller membership of over 50 shareholders. Joanne Gailius.

JG: So the members are welcome here anytime. That was our first thing. We did ask them to phone ahead so that we could be sure we were here when they were coming. I'm not particularly clean and tidy but we're out there on the farm somewhere. Then once a month we've had farm days and people came at two o'clock or so in the afternoon, had a farm tour and then we all spent the afternoon together. And you know that's kids playing in the hammock and sitting on the horse and people really asking questions. And some of the most time was spent around how do we grow most of our own food, most of our family's food for the year. A lot of big questions were around that. Not so much around grain as – we use 550 to 700 pounds of grain in a year as a family – we have five adults in the house. And you know, people wanting to know how to can and what do you do with your garbanzo, so a lot of the questions were around that part of our life.

And then on Sunday we had a potluck and it was just a whole bunch of foodies all bringing this amazing food (laughs). And everyone arrived around 4:00. We had a farm tour in the pouring rain and then we sat around and just enjoyed each other. And the youngest was four months old and the oldest was a retired biologist in his 70's and what a neat group of people. It was just really fun.

JS: Now beyond the grain CSA farms themselves, what about other farmers in the area. How has this now three year project influenced the region's farmers and food system. One thing is clear, the Kootenay Grain CSA and the more recent Full Circle Farm CSA have dramatically shifted just how people in the region relate to their grains. It's created a culture of grain in the West Kootenay region of B.C. Whereas grain was almost entirely accessed from *well* outside of the region prior to this project being launched, that's no longer the case, where hundreds of people in the region can now think of their breads, their pizzas, their baked goods or cereal as being the product of their own community. For other *farmers*, well the project has too sparked some interest among some of them to become part of this new culture of grain, while for others, it's also introduced resentment. Because grain CSA farmers are receiving a whopping \$1.25 a pound for their grains whereas many of the area's farmers who continue to sell into the *conventional* market receive on average \$0.15 a pound – a range in price that would no doubt introduce some jealousy among the farming community.

But overall, Roy Lawrence believes that comparing the two is like comparing apples and oranges.

RL: I think actually I think there's a growing number of people that would be interested in it. I believe that there's a growing number of people that would be interested in other things. You know like we did have I think two other farmers that wanted to be a part of the CSA but then when people understand what's all involved, it makes it kind of difficult. Like if we didn't have the seed cleaner we would be looking for a major expense to get a seed cleaner and most likely we wouldn't be here. We wouldn't be doing it. But we just happened into a seed cleaner and you know one big enough to do a fair volume which allowed us to get started. Now, knowing what we know now I would make the investment. But to start out it's really hard to make that decision and justify putting out maybe \$15,000 when you're thinking that you might make \$15,000 - it would take many years to pay for it.

JS: Roy Lawrence. In wrapping up my conversations with farmers Joanne Gailius and Roy Lawrence, we spoke about the future of their grain CSAs and what changes might be on the horizon. We also spoke about some of the spin-off benefits of the project which for Roy Lawrence have in part come from his shift to growing grains naturally, something he hadn't been doing until the CSA was formed in 2008. Roy has also been encouraged to begin producing his own chicken feed to hopefully create a more financially viable system of producing meat birds for the local market. Again, another *great* example of how a project *like* a grain CSA can act as great incubator for a healthier and more responsible food system. Here again, Joanne Gailius and Roy Lawrence with some final reflections and thoughts about the future.

RL: Well, I experimented this year because (laughter) I've got all this grain eh. And so I started mixing the wheat and barley and some of the screenings and what not and I would feed my meat birds half my grain and half store-bought from Sunset Seed. And in my mind I'm thinking because they do put some minerals and what not in their feed that might help out. I think next year being as I have peas I'm going to try to do it with just my feed because the peas will up my protein. So I'm kind of anxious to try it and see what I can do because if I can use my own feed then I can do chickens pretty cheap, you know fairly reasonable.

Well, the one thing I have noticed with doing natural or going with plowdown crops instead of your commercial fertilizer is that the first year I did 20 acres of a plowdown crop. Then I did the second year another 20 acres just moving down my place of plowdown crop. And of course this year is another 20 acres on the end here. But after seeding it, mid-season you can look and you can see the first year of plowdown crop has a noticeable amount of less weeds than the second year plowdown crop and again it just gets progressively worse as you get closer to the, you know. And everything I've read says that in time your weeds will become less of a problem. Well I was quite

encouraged to see that in the third year when I put the crop in, I can see the difference.

JG: Well we initially thought we would go to because we've done grains and last year we begun on beans and garbanzos and so we've gone with more beans and garbanzos this year. We've tripled acres, we're doing that. We're adding dried corn this year and we have some acres in buckwheat that we've used as plowdown crop but we now have two more acres in buckwheat as grain. It will be a plowdown crop in the end after we take the grain off for seeding. But the equipment that you need for each thing – buckwheat cleaners are totally different from oat hullers and the other seven cleaners we have now. So it's always knowing the full from start to finish equipment we need for each product. People want all kinds of things but we've discovered that we need to keep things really simple for our own sanity. And again to do each thing that we do well, that seems really important.

I think it always comes down to relationship for me and when we have the farm days and those little people, you know these little tykes who are, you know you teach them how to grab a grain stock and rub it between their hands and blow on it and they start chewing on wheat and you just see them, their eyes open up and just that awareness of this is where it comes from. And they wander through the garden and grab a tomato while they're walking along. And we realize how we are so use to always having our own food and it's such a natural thing for us. Our daughter going to university was phoned about doing a home-grown dinner when she gets there and Drew said – well won't that be an adventure. (laughs) You know, every nights a home-grown dinner but they're having this celebration at her university in the fall of home-grown food. And it's just neat for other people to really care and for people to be interested and maybe because I'm getting older to see that next generation really be awakened to how amazing good food tastes. And I believe it's really highly more nutritious and good for their growing bodies. I think it's all about relationship and these lovely young families who brought their little guys here. That is just so neat.

soundbite

JS: Taking us through till the end of this part 10 of The Local Grain Revolution series here on Deconstructing Dinner, we can reflect on the many projects *outside* of the interior of B.C. that have since this series began airing, inspired many more similar grain initiatives to be formed in both Canada and the United States. The first was the Urban Grains CSA that was launched for Vancouver residents and which linked up people there with Cedar Isle Farm in Agassiz. Then came the Island Grains CSA located at Makaria Farm in the Cowichan Valley of Vancouver Island. Also launched this past year, Kingston Ontario's Village Co-op and their Bread CSA which came into being following a presentation *about* the Kootenay Grain CSA that I shared there in early 2009. Other avid Deconstructing Dinner listeners have also launched similar grain initiatives in New York State, Idaho, Michigan,

and the one that we'll focus in on right now - Lopez Island Washington, a small island with a population of just over 2,000 people located in the San Juan Islands not far from Victoria B.C.

Lopez Island is also home to KLOI, 102.9FM – a community-run radio station that has been airing Deconstructing Dinner as part of its weekly schedule and its presence on their airwaves being thanks to Nancy Crowell, a resident of Lopez and the co-founder of the well-known organic fair-trade tea business known as Choice Organic Teas. Nancy became a fan of the show and specifically this Local Grain Revolution series. Fast-forward to October of this year 2010, I was invited to be the speaker at the Lopez Community Land Trusts annual harvest dinner. A huge community event which last year hosted another familiar voice to the show, Michael Ableman. At the dinner I shared the story of the Kootenay Grain CSA, a story of which resonated strongly with Lopez residents because for them, this was the first year of the Lopez Community Land Trust's Grain Project – inspired by the Kootenay Grain CSA.

Of course while there I received an introduction to this grain project that was started there on the island which according to the Land Trust maintains a number of key goals. One of them is to, "grow enough grain annually so as to have planting seed available for 100% island self-sufficiency and to encourage residents to store at least a one-year supply of grain and grain products". A pretty noble goal. As part of that project, the Land Trust helped support a research program that would identify the most ideal varieties of grains for the climate of the San Juan Islands, another interesting addition to that project.

And here first, is Nancy Crowell describing how the grain CSA first began.

Nancy Crowell: This was Kate coming out of the food share and sitting next to Ken for Strong Farms and having just talked about the Deconstructing Dinner series Local Grain Revolution and looking at Ken and saying – would you like to grow some grain for us? He said he thought he had about a quarter to a third of an acre and from there we went to O.J. and prepared some seed.

JS: One of my first stops as part of the many tours that I was taken on on Lopez was at the farm of David Zapalac. It's there that O.J. Lougheed had set up his home. O.J. was hired by the Land Trust to conduct the seed trials and he's quite the database of information on everything to do with seeds but especially grains. When we arrived at David's farm, O.J. had just left en route to the grain project's temporary seed vault but I was introduced to his truck, which has not moved since O.J. arrived on the island. His truck has since become a makeshift storage shed for grains and he transports those grains that he grows on the island using a bicycle and trailer. Heard here is Rhea Miller of the Lopez Community Land Trust.

Rhea Miller: He totally cleaned out his van and he's bundled them by type. And then he takes them in his bicycle by bundle down to the next place we're going to show you to thresh and put in the seedfall.

Nancy Crowell: We advertised at the Lopez Community Green Land Trust for an intern to do some grain research for us and this guy showed up who was like, oh my god, he knows everything about grain and he has all this experience. And he goes into Blossom Grocery and he's talking to the clerk, do you want to tell this part of the story?

O.J. Lougheed: Well sure. This is probably the second or third day I was here – June when 19, no 2000, what century is this.. (laughs) 2008 I was talking to one of the women there at Blossom, the natural foods grocery here telling her what I was doing, I kind of evangelized. And she says – oh by the way, do you know a guy named O.J. Lougheed from New Mexico? And she says – we bought some Beardless wheat from him back in the 70's or 80's.

Nancy Crowell: On Lopez.

OJL: And they were growing grain with horses at the time and I had sent them grain and I had actually the previous couple of months. I was trying to remember their last names, or the last name. And here I was talking to her at the store.

Nancy Crowell: He said I'm O.J.

OJL: And it was like – ah, that's me. No, I came here from eastern Oregon and actually six years ago I returned after living for seven years in sunny southern Siberia where they actually grow some nice wheat, which I have the varieties now. And next spring we'll start growing some Siberian wheat because they're a shorter season and that's what we need here because we just don't have the temperatures of, probably even the Kootenay but I would imagine the Kootenay. But in Siberia on Lake Baikal I have friends that live on the island in the middle of Lake Baikal and I was working with them on some different projects. So, I understand the climate there and how large bodies of water like the Sailor's Sea moderate or Lake Kootenay I would imagine could moderate temperatures.

JS: On the property where the temporary seed vault is located was a collection of antique farm equipment including a couple of steam threshers that were the size of small buses. One of the threshers had been modified with an electric motor and O.J. holds on to some unique visions of how the electric thresher might one day be powered with solar energy from the Land Trust's Common Ground solar-powered housing co-op.

OJL: This is how I take stuff out of my van with my little bike trailer, bring it over here because it's sort of pre-dried over there and then it's dried further in there. There's a dehumidifier and then threshed and then I'm taking the

straw back over to Zapalac's to put on the garden. But yeah there's this thresher and there's this one and note the - it's an electric threshing machine (laughs). But I'm trying to convince Steve to next year like take it down to Common Ground and like in front of the solar panels or something and plug it in. It'll probably have to be plugged into the grid because I don't think we can, I mean, I could wire it or maybe somebody could wire it to run directly off the panels. But you have to have it invertors into a three phase motor. But just plug it into the grid and on a sunny day we can thresh using solar power.

JS: So this is all this year's harvest?

OJL: Mostly. This, David and I built. It's a grain drying bed and this is about 330 pounds of Fortuna that we grew over at the winery. That's the same as the grain - have you been over the horse-drawn?

Nancy Crowell: This afternoon.

JS: Yeah. Later yeah.

OJL: Oh, okay so that's the same variety that I source out of Montana. Although I was just threshing, I mean just cleaning and this is just what's really here.

JS: What's the story for Fortuna, I'm not that familiar with it.

OJL: Well actually you could probably grow it up in the Kootenay.

JS: Oh I'm sure, yeah.

OJL: It's an old variety from Montana well actually bred in North Dakota. It's been grown for about 50 years in northern Montana. It's resistant to sawfly, it has a solid stem and that's why they grow it. It's also beardless and I prefer beardless wheats since it's so much easier with by hand. But here if we look at it, oh sunshine, let's go outside.

This other variety here - you can just see, so there here's the Fortuna which is considered a Hard Red wheat but look at it. Now look at that. That's Reward, that's an old Canadian wheat that was bred in Ontario and then found its niche and it's a very short season wheat that was noted for growing on acid soils and producing high protein. And the problem here is that we only got about 78% of the growing degree days as east of the mountains as Pullman. We really need short-season wheats for spring planting, for good bread quality. And this looks like a decent bread quality although I did chew up some of the Red Fife that we grew over the winter as gluten whereas all the other wheats that we've grown locally we're lucky to get maybe 10% protein.

JS: Yeah right so you can't really use it for baking.

OJG: No, I mean it's good for all-purpose kind of pastry and unleavened bread/breads. That is Sonora, that is the oldest, continuously grown wheat on the North American continent. Introduced by the Spaniards around 1700. It's been grown every year and this seed is from Native Seeds Search in Tucson and the Papago have been growing it for at least a century.

JS: With the amazing expertise of someone like O.J. Lougheed, the Lopez community Land Trust's grain project has done something that's so important among the local food movement. By becoming inspired by the Kootenay Grain CSA, the Lopez grain project has now certainly inspired *me* to encourage a similar type of research program to begin in the Kootenay region. Up until that point, there hadn't really been much of a coordinated research program in the Kootenay region to test seed varieties that are ideal to the Creston Valley and ideal for small-scale production. Again, this is another great example of the value that can be found from connecting with like-minded initiatives in other parts of the world, and co-inspiring each other.

O.J. Lougheed's seed trials took place on many different farms and gardens throughout Lopez Island and even the local public school grew some grain this past year. The CSA portion of the project on the other hand, which grew grain for about 40 shareholders was all grown at one location, a unique Lopez farm known as Horse Drawn Farm – which is, just that, a farm powered by horses. The Fortuna grain that O.J. spoke of was grown there for the CSA members and I stopped by the farm with Nancy Crowell to meet farmer Kathryn Thomas.

JS: And for grain, grain is obviously something you grow a lot of here already, like you're growing grains as cover crop?

Kathryn Thomas: No we grow grain as cover crop. We have only grown grain to harvest in the past to open up sod because the Buffon's come and plow it when we didn't have horses that could plow the sod and plant grain. And then they harvest it and took it away. I think we got the straw, they took the grain. But otherwise we've grown lots of rye as a cover crop and we've grown oats several times for the animals or for the animals and as a cover crop. And that's about it. We grew barley. Barley's kind of the traditional thing to grow in Lopez for animals when you grow the, you know you grow Bearded barley so the deer don't eat it all. But since this is all fenced, it's not much of an issue.

It wasn't so much, like growing grain is not the new thing, it's the variety. But O.J. had, you know, all these varieties that he wanted to try and thought might work and so really, you know, O.J. is the one that decided what variety to try. And it worked really well, we really didn't have any problems with it at all. We planted exactly what O.J. said to plant. We got exactly what he said

we were going to get which is really funny. But this is it, it was just this little section right here to over to where the...but it really came up well and didn't have problems with... There was a little bit of rush but not really bad enough to cause problems and they grew well and we had some wind and rain but it didn't lodge and so all in all it was great, how it was going so. It had a good year – (laughs) may not always be quite as good but it had a good go at it.

JS: Is there a plan for next year?

NC: No not at this point.

KT: Well we save seed. And we save more seed so I think this was about 50 pounds for a third of an acre. I think he saved at least 100 pounds, maybe 150 pounds so he's got that. And I guess you know we just need to talk to the Land Trust and see if people want to do a grain CSA again.

JS: Sounds like with the demand there might be enough people.

KT: Yeah, it didn't end up being... I think Fortuna can be wheat with a fair amount of gluten but it did not have a lot of gluten so it probably won't have a lot of gluten no matter what we do here so that could change people's interest in it, so.

And then there are lots of other possibilities if people are interested. Oats grow really well here, barley grows really well here and both those things O.J. has access to, said he had about 120 varieties of each kind. There are lots of barleys that humans just don't want to deal with you know, they're holed and their bearded and they're a pain in the neck so... But he says he has holeless, beardless barley that could be grown for flour. And I assume we have something equally palatable without...

JS: Kathryn Thomas of Horse Drawn Farm on Lopez Island Washington. Located on the Deconstructing Dinner website and part 10 of this Local Grain Revolution series, you'll find a collection of *unheard* audio from that visit to Lopez including a brief interview with farmer and inventor, David Zapalac who was inspired by the new grain interest on the Island to custom design a light-weight scythe – a hand-tool used this year to harvest the grain for the CSA and for the seed trials. So be sure to check out that extra audio to learn more about Island's unique grain project. You'll also find a number of links to more information about the amazing Lopez Community Land Trust as well as links to some of the other grain projects in Canada and the United States that have been inspired by this series here on Deconstructing Dinner. And if you're *new* to the series, also be sure to check out the previous 9 episodes of the series archived there. The web page for the series also includes *dozens* of photographs and dozens of links to *other* media attention that this series and the Kootenay Grain CSA have received since 2008.

And with that, we can wrap up today's episode. As mentioned at the top of the hour, be sure to tune in to our next broadcast which will mark the final episode of Deconstructing Dinner before we embark on an indefinite break. And you can learn more about that break on next week's show.

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 show 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 cjly.net/deconstructingdinner or by dialling 250-352-9600.