

**Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY
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Title: Livestock Lost III (Local Meat? "Not in My Backyard!" - Part II)

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Transcript – Pat Yama**

Kenyon McGee: "Something's changed and it's very hard to figure out what it is. My guess is, is that younger people or maybe even people my age have become so remote from their food that even if they live rurally, they don't have a clue. Basically when I started getting a lot of insults hurled my way for wanting this, it was couched in the terms of don't bring this to the Slocan Valley. And those words, it took me a few days to sort of figure it out and I thought - well wait a minute, the reason I joined this is not to bring something new but to save something old."

Jon Steinman: And welcome once again to Deconstructing Dinner – a syndicated radio program produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY in Nelson, British Columbia. Our broadcasts are heard weekly on radio stations around the world and are also available for download on our website or as a podcast.

I'm Jon Steinman and I'll be with you for the next hour.

As promised on our most recent broadcast, today we'll be continuing on with now Part-III of the Livestock Lost series here on the show – a series that examines the current state of livestock in North America including meat, dairy, and egg production.

On last week's episode we spent the full one-hour discussing a controversial project that was proposed in the Slocan Valley of British Columbia – a very isolated area in the middle of the province.

And so it may come as a shock to learn that the proposed project, which would *increase* the food security of the region, was met with heavy resistance. The proposal is for a small-scale abattoir, also known as a slaughterhouse. One that would serve area farmers and their small herds of cattle, pigs, goats or sheep, or their flocks of chickens and ducks.

Since first being proposed in the fall of 2007, the resistance to the abattoir effectively pushed the proposal out of the valley altogether.

And so continuing on with our examination as to *why* such an innovative project would receive such an unwelcome response, we'll hear from one

opponent – Marilyn Burgoon, the Director of the Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance. Also lending their voice to the show will be Bruce Davidson of Concerned Walkerton Citizens, a group formed in response to the water contamination tragedy that took the lives of seven residents of Walkerton, Ontario in the year 2000. And once again, we'll hear from Kenyon McGee, a spokesperson for the Slocan Valley Abattoir Co-operative.

increase music and fade out

JS: If you missed any of our previous broadcasts including Part I and II of the Livestock Lost series, all of our shows are archived on our website at deconstructingdinner.ca and we always welcome your feedback which can be sent to deconstructingdinner@cjly.net.

On last week's Part II of the Livestock Lost series and Part I of this feature on the proposed abattoir in the West Kootenay region of the province, we spent quite a bit of time going through the fierce opposition that has resulted following the proposal of a locally owned and operated co-operative slaughterhouse that would ensure that more ethically and environmentally responsible meat could be available to area residents. As of now, it is *illegal* for any resident throughout *many* regions in B.C. to purchase locally raised and slaughtered meat. The West Kootenay is one of these regions.

Now this project provides a great example to *other* North American communities of how such a project may be received if proposed elsewhere. And in an age where supporting more local food systems is receiving widespread support, localizing sources of meat is just as much a part of that shift as any.

Now while the critical questioning of any proposed development in a community is indeed a healthy process to undertake collectively, it became clear on last week's broadcast that much of the opposition to the abattoir were emotional responses of fear. Fears that in some cases were unfounded and which led to condemning instead of questioning.

Well in just a moment we'll continue with an even greater focus on one of the most important concerns for any community – water. The availability and safety of water is of course fundamental to life itself and ensuring the *safety* and *protection* of water sources is vital to the health of wildlife, humans, and our food.

And so it was this very concern over water that acted as one of the major setbacks to the slaughterhouse proposed in the Slocan Valley. But instead of entering into a process of questioning and working *with* the proposal, opponents used a swift and effective campaign of *condemning* in order to drive the proposed abattoir out of the area altogether.

There are however, a few problems. For one, there have been abattoirs operating in the Valley for decades, and not one incident of water-borne illnesses caused by their operation. Nor has there been any concerns ever raised over air pollution or noise pollution as were some of the fears of the proposed facility. And again, the only difference with *this* abattoir, is that it was being proposed in response to new provincially-set meat inspection regulations that came into effect in October 2007, ones that require *all* slaughterhouses in the province to be provincially or federally inspected.

And then there's what is perhaps an even greater problem and that is the seeming hypocrisy behind the debate. That here's a proposal that is being opposed because of fear of water contamination which has never before existed previously from similar facilities, and the alternative to localizing this source of food, is longer-distance transportation. And that, as of now, is reliant on fossil fuels - oil. And as we know all too well, the environmental and social impacts of oil - whether it be transporting carrots, apples, tofu or meat, is one and the same. And in the case of water, well, you can stay tuned to this broadcast when we'll explore just how much of an impact the Athabasca Tar Sands project as an example, is having on water and human health in the northern reaches of Alberta.

soundbite

JS: Examining the opposition to this project is quite the important topic for both meat and non-meat eaters alike. Because as economies become increasingly localized in response to health, economic, environmental, and social concerns, we will increasingly here in North America, have little choice but to see first hand the impact our lives are having on the world around us. We've long been afforded the luxury of assigning environmental, human, and social impacts to anyone and anywhere outside of our own backyards, and this has of course been to our peril. In the case of food, one of the most devastating consequences of this has been our inability to effectively manage how our food purchases impact the people and areas in which it's produced.

Adding *to* that, this *particular* small-scale slaughterhouse proposal was not only condemned without questioning, but it's now receiving the very same opposition in the Castlegar-area where the co-operative has since put forth the same proposal.

And so the focus of today's broadcast will be on the concerns raised over water contamination in particular and I spoke with Kenyon McGee about these concerns. We heard from Kenyon on Part II of the Livestock Lost series and he's the spokesperson for the Slokan Valley Abattoir Co-operative.

And while Kenyon does welcome the concerns raised over the impact the slaughterhouse would have on water, he was perplexed that people in the valley would believe that the *proponents* of the facility would not also be concerned over the health of their water. Because in the end, the proponents

are all local and this is a far cry from the usual state of affairs in B.C. because proposals for *most* economic activities come from people or businesses that are located hundreds if not thousands of kilometres away. And perhaps even from another country, yet again, in this case, they're all local.

Kenyon spoke to me over the phone from his hometown of Winlaw.

Kenyon McGee: Well the real issue is of course, water pollution. And we of course, we're all living and we don't want water pollution even if it's up the road a bit. And the plan of our operation is designed to prevent any kind of ground water contamination. But even better, our plan includes monitoring so that we will be able to tell if our containment and treatment works. So, we try to reassure before we knew these other rules - the Lemon Creek people, that there would be monitoring in place to prevent any contamination of ground water. And we were completely confident that there would be no contamination and that we would be monitoring at all times for that.

JS: One of the most vocal opponents of the slaughterhouse as it was being proposed in the Slokan Valley was Marilyn Burgoon, the Director of the Slokan Valley Watershed Alliance. Marilyn is also a resident of Winlaw and does *not* believe the benefits of *any* abattoir in the valley are worth the risk of water contamination. As an alternative Marilyn believes that *Alberta* has the proper infrastructure for raising and handling cattle. But with the closest slaughterhouse being around 645 kilometres away - that's 400 miles, it doesn't quite fit into the ethic of local food.

Marilyn spoke to me over the phone while visiting Nelson.

Marilyn Burgoon: Okay well the first attempt to find a location was in the city of Slokan. I live in the regional district so I didn't have a say in the decision-making of that community. However, I do know people within the community and their concerns were the impact to how the village itself would be impacted - how the recreation, beachfront, what they were trying to create as a sustainable economy based on eco-tourism and whatever they could do to replace the loss of logging in the area. They're looking at a vision of the Slokan Valley being a destination for people who want pure air, good water, and a place that a lot of other areas throughout the world still aren't holding onto. So I think some of it was related to that for the village because the village has been struggling with mill closures and cutbacks. So I think for the village, that was a decision - how would it impact the future of the sustainable economy around the smells, the drainages and the city of Slokan and the whole Slokan Valley has pretty complex hydrology and drainage and so that's how people started calling me in the Watershed Alliance was there concern about the impact to ground water.

JS: Now I can admit I was rather taken aback that some of the reasons in opposition to the slaughterhouse were to preserve, "pure air and good water"

and encourage a sustainable economy based on eco-tourism. Now unless these tourists to the valley plan on hiking or biking there, it's more likely that such a direction would place the community in the valley into relying upon a stream of fossil-fuel dependent cars, SUVs, and motor-homes, and well, that's not the most *sustainable* of industries to be relying upon. In fact tourism is probably one of the hardest hit industries since the price of fuel skyrocketed and since people have become more conscientious of their consumption patterns. As for pure air, again, unless the so-called eco-tourists are arriving on foot or bicycle, vehicle exhaust does not quite evoke a pure air philosophy. And as for good water, well as we'll hear later on today's show, the production of oil is having a devastating impacts on water, just not necessarily in the Slocan Valley.

Now while the abattoir did indeed address concerns over water as part of their proposal, such protections were of no interest to Marilyn Burgoon. And I asked her whether she believed the proposal itself was inadequate.

MB: I think it's just putting at risk a value that surpasses what the benefits of the slaughterhouse were. I think the benefit of the good, clean water and the domestic use watersheds of the Slocan Valley have a higher priority in terms of - you can find another place for a slaughterhouse; it's very difficult to find the kind of water we have in the valley anywhere else. So it was more that people weren't against something but they were for the purity of the water and for 30 years the citizens of the Slocan Valley have placed a priority value on their drinking water.

JS: Now the suggestion that a slaughterhouse can go anywhere is not as true as one may hope. As we learned last week, the co-operatives next effort to propose the abattoir was in the Ootischenia-area of Castlegar B.C. and that too has been met with stiff opposition.

And there's also something missing from this water equation. While good clean water is important to humans, we humans also need to eat. And so long as it's agriculture that we will be relying upon, well then our food needs good water too. In her defense, Marilyn suggests that the citizens of the Slocan Valley have been enjoying clean water for 30 years, there's one thing that's missing. Because the citizens of the Slocan Valley have also been enjoying meat for 30 years, and slaughterhouses have too existed throughout that period of time.

And so I asked Marilyn Burgoon why *this* particular *proposed* slaughterhouse would be worse than the others that have operated in previous years. And she insisted that no such facilities have ever existed.

MB: Well, they really didn't have houses. They did them on their farms and most of these farmers know their land and know the drainage of their land. Our concern was it was just going to be a big operation up one small valley, which would impact the whole valley.

JS: Now again, as we learned last week, the operation proposed for the valley was tiny - at roughly 40 feet by 40 feet in size.

And Kenyon McGee was perplexed that Burgoon would suggest that no such facilities have ever existed. While Kenyon was able to identify over 20 farmers who would slaughter their animals right on their farm, he was also able to cite a number of abattoirs some of which were even dedicated strictly as a slaughterhouse - that is no farm attached to the building. In fact you heard Kenyon mention the name Dave Anderson and Dave was interviewed on the first show we ever aired that covered the new B.C. meat inspection regulations back in May of 2006. Dave Anderson was the owner and operator of Legendary Meats, and it was on that broadcast that Dave described how his operation would not be able to adhere to the new regulations and Legendary Meats has since gone out of business. Now no controversy ever surrounded *his* operation.

During my discussion with Kenyon McGee he raised an interesting response that is similar to the reason behind the creation of Deconstructing Dinner itself. This show has long been designed to reconnect the *urban* populations of Canada with the rural areas growing our food, but as Kenyon puts it, this disconnection is even now extending into the countryside as well.

KM: Something's changed and it's very hard to figure out what it is. My guess is, is that younger people or maybe even people my age have become so remote from their food that even if they live rurally, they don't have a clue. But, basically when I started getting a lot of insults hurled my way for wanting this, it was couched in the terms of don't bring this to the Slocan Valley. And those words, it took me a few days to sort of figure it out and I thought well wait a minute, the reason I joined this is not to bring something new but to save something old. And at that point I started to think about how many different farms and people I had known over my period of time here, actually did this at their homes or at their farms. And I came up with 22 from Crescent Valley to Slocan City and Dave Anderson added four or five that I either hadn't known about or had forgotten to the list. So yes, over the years there were so many different places that did this either for a short time or a long time and it was just a non-issue. It didn't even raise an eyebrow.

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner.

We received quite a few responses following last week's Part II of this Livestock Lost series. It was then that the controversy surrounding the Slocan Valley slaughterhouse proposal was first introduced. And I'd like to read one e-mail in particular that was in response to this very topic that Kenyon was just speaking of. And the e-mail is from Bonnie Baker, who, between 1974 and 2006 was too a resident of Winlaw and a farmer, raising livestock. Her e-mail also refers to a commentary piece that Marilyn Burgoon

wrote in Nelson's weekly newspaper, "The Express" which we'll come to in just a moment. And here's the letter:

"A little history: When I lived in the Slocan Valley from 1974 until 2006, there were at least four abattoirs operating without incident in the Valley. Some are still in operation, some more secret than the other, serving their own butchering needs and those of their friends and neighbours. They operated within the regulations before this latest attack on small farmers came down from up high.

If the Co-op had just gone and done it, without asking for community input, it would have been a done deal and no-one would have uttered a word, but many would have used it, and many more would have been able to buy locally raised meat like they've been doing for many, many years. It's the publicity. There are a bunch of publicity seekers in the Slocan Valley that raise their voices on high anytime anyone wants to build something or improve something and makes the mistake of asking for community input.

My husband and I raised meat and chickens and depended on the services of local butchers for 30 years. If I were still there, I couldn't have farmed anymore. There's a feed store that's closed already and I don't know how many small farms like mine have closed, and my former butcher can't find locally grown meat to sell me, either.

I addressed Marilyn Burgoon's letter in the Express, since she and her NIMBY (Not In My Backyard Friends) can't tell the difference between industrial agriculture and Legendary Meats, and nothing you can say will ever, ever, ever change her mind. I also said in my letter that if I were still on my farm, I would let the proposed abattoir set up shop there!"

Sincerely pissed off,
Bonnie Baker

JS: So with such clear success of abattoirs serving the needs of farmers and eaters safely for decades, I did ask Marilyn Burgoon if she would even consider the *possibility* that such an abattoir could exist *at all*. And instead, she believes that *any* risk is unacceptable.

MB: I believe it puts it at risk given there was an accident, given some of the drainage problems, all of those kinds of things that even a small risk would really impact the whole area.

JS: Now the accident Marilyn is referring to is the tragedy of eight years ago in the community of Walkerton, Ontario – a town that has since made international headlines following the contamination of the town's drinking water with e-coli. Seven people lost their lives and 2,500 fell ill.

In a March 2008 issue of Nelson's weekly newspaper The Express, Marilyn Burgoon authored a commentary that used the Walkerton incident to relay the risks of the Slocan Valley abattoir to the area's residents. In it she wrote this - "Cattle are a source of water contamination whether they are situated on forest/range land or on private land. This problem is pronounced when it occurs within a major watershed, such as the Slocan Valley, where underground water channels are the source of water for domestic consumption."

One of the spokespersons for the town following the tragedy was Walkerton's Bruce Davidson. Bruce is the Vice-Chair of the group Concerned Walkerton Citizens, and he sits on the Board of the Canadian Environmental Law Association. He also works with his local source protection board.

Bruce has addressed people across the country on the Walkerton tragedy with the hope that the event not be repeated anywhere else. I spoke with Bruce over the phone, and asked him if the Walkerton contamination had anything to do with an abattoir in the area.

Bruce Davidson: No, not at all. There is no abattoir in the vicinity of Well #5 that allowed the contamination into the Walkerton municipal drinking water system. It was actually a beef farm that was adjacent to the field where the well sat and that was the problem. So we are looking at some very, very different circumstances.

JS: I asked Marilyn about this article that she wrote that turned quite a few heads and upset many people here in the region. Many of those reading the commentary saw it as an attack on raising livestock in general and not on the abattoir itself. And so I asked Marilyn to clarify what the connection was between the abattoir proposal and Walkerton.

MB: Well only that Walkerton's was a cattle contamination. It was contamination of water in the drinking and it was at the source of the water, it wasn't right where they take the water in the well. The source of the contamination was from farther away from the well site so I think what I was trying to get at is that contamination travels. It can start somewhere and then end up somewhere else.

JS: Now as Bruce Davidson indicated, the well was *not* far away from the contamination as suggested by Marilyn Burgoon but was instead *adjacent* to the farm where the contamination originated.

And this brings us to another important difference between the fears of cattle on a farm versus what happened in Walkerton, because Walkerton was a very complex event resulting from negligence and the ignoring of recommendations and safety precautions.

And here's Walkerton's Bruce Davidson.

BD: Basically the difficulty with our situation came from the fact that Well #5 which allowed the contamination into the municipal drinking water system was located at the edge of the town of Walkerton which was adjacent to some farmland. And despite the fact that the Ministry of Environment in a Certificate of Approval for the well suggested that there be a mandatory buffer zone so that the land immediately adjacent to the well would not be used for agricultural purposes to have cattle present on the land or in fact to spread manure in close proximity to the well, that was ignored. But yes, it was a problem borne of the waste from cattle that migrated through the soils and into the well.

And there were many, many other factors in terms of the Walkerton water problem. Everything from the location of that well that was inappropriate in low lying swampy land, to the lack of maintenance at the well, to the lack of training of the officials that were operating the well, to fraudulent recording of information, to lack of oversight both locally from the Public Utilities Commission to the Ministry of Environment which also failed to exercise its authority in a way that would prevent this tragedy. Right up to the whole Ontario government to the day that undercut a lot of the protection that was offered in a cost-saving effort which of course which proved to be very, very influential in the tragedy itself. Right down to the laboratory that tested the water and how they reported their effort results throughout. So Walkerton is a very, very complex tragedy with many, many factors. And the role that cattle played and the manure and bacteria in that manure was of course pivotal. But that and in of itself should not have caused this tragedy if the other safeguards were properly in place.

JS: Now I did fill Bruce Davidson in on the controversy surrounding the abattoir and the chronology of events that pushed the proposal out of the valley and now into the outlying areas of Castlegar – roughly 50 kilometres or 35 miles away. Bruce has extensive experience working with groups who are dealing with such concerns, and he agrees that questioning the proposal is an important part of the process, one in which Kenyon McGee indicated he welcomes. But as Bruce suggests, it does no good to condemn before questioning.

BD: I think that it's very, very important that people be keenly aware of activities and to question them is good. I think that sometimes we can jump from questioning to condemning before we have had that thorough evaluation. And when it comes to peoples health, they are very concerned and they have every right to be. But I think that if we just take a step backwards we can do that in a way that I think will render the very best decision for everyone.

JS: Bruce Davidson is too involved in a watershed protection group, and he describes the process that his group goes through when dealing with any proposed economic activity.

BD: On the committee looking at these issues, I sit on the committee as a member of the public, representing public interests. We have people from the environmental community, we have municipal elected officials locally, we have agriculture, we have industry. So we have that whole range and the idea is that we can look at these situations one-by-one and evaluate them rather than say – we won't have any of this or any of that. Maybe there are situations and I am sure there will be where various economic activities, agricultural activities, what have you and they're all I guess under the umbrella of economic in some way, can be allowed but this is what we have to do to ensure the quality of the water.

JS: And that was Bruce Davidson of Concerned Walkerton Citizens, a group that was formed during the aftermath of the drinking water contamination tragedy that took the lives of seven residents in the spring of the year 2000. Bruce spoke to me over the phone from Walkerton, Ontario.

soundbite

JS: Now Bruce's suggestion seemed pretty reasonable – have a discussion and a dialogue before simply condemning the proposal which is what happened in the Slocan Valley and which is happening now in their third attempt in the Castlegar-area. During my conversation with small-scale abattoir opponent Marilyn Burgoon of the Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance, I asked her if during the public consultation process, if the potential ever existed for dialogue, or if opponents just simply did not want the abattoir in their backyard.

MB: I think the meetings were that people were concerned about contamination and about the impact on their small businesses, lodges, kayaking tours. People didn't want to be impacted in that way that that there would be some way that the air and the water would not be useable for the kind of things people have sunk a lot of money into to create small businesses. So I think it has to do with the vision that people have for the valley and yes, part of that vision is sustainability. But the underlying key to sustainability is ensuring safe drinking water.

JS: Kenyon McGee of the Slocan Valley Abattoir Co-operative is quite upset at the blanket condemnation of the proposal without any meaningful dialogue, and he's encouraging those in areas *where* the abattoir is proposed, to instead get involved, rather than condemn it.

KM: Basically what we offered to the people up there and the offer is still out on the table for anybody who may live around the site if we can find one, is that they should join the co-op. And the reason that we picked the co-op model as opposed to a corporate model is that in a co-op, one share equals one vote. So, you're not going to be overridden by somebody who has a special interest. And it seemed to me that it would be, if it was going to be

near my house, that I would want to get together with my neighbours and join, maybe even just one of us. And we went a little further, we said – okay, if we’re going to put it in near your neighbourhood, then we will guarantee for you one or more seats on the Board of Directors and you’re going to be knowledgeable about every single thing that happens. And if as a member of the Board of Directors you say – look, at our monthly meetings I want the water metering results, then you’ll get them. And in fact we’ll all want them but you see what I mean.

JS: You’re tuned in to the third episode of the Livestock Lost series here on Deconstructing Dinner. This show is produced weekly at Kootenay Co-op Radio, CJLY in Nelson, British Columbia. And more information on this series can be found on our website at deconstructingdinner.ca.

It was in October of 2007, that the province of British Columbia introduced new regulations that were so poorly implemented, that their introduction has created some regions throughout the province whereby the purchase of locally-raised meat is, in all cases – illegal. These regions have since been scrambling to find alternatives including the proposed abattoir or slaughterhouse featured on today’s broadcast. Now while this is a very localized and province-specific scenario, for those listeners of Deconstructing Dinner *outside* of the province, this is too an important story to pay attention to. In an age where supporting more local food systems is receiving widespread support, localizing sources of meat is just as much a part of that shift as any. And this proposed slaughterhouse in the West Kootenay region of B.C. provides a great example to *other* North American communities of how such a project may be *received* if proposed elsewhere.

Now as would be expected, there are many farmers who would be happy to continue operating as they were prior to when the new regulations came into effect. There is on the other hand a hitch to such a prospect – the one person in the area who was providing on-farm slaughtering services was Dave Anderson. And he’s *not* interested to continue offering that service and he would also if approved, be responsible for the proposed abattoir.

And it’s these very fears that have many people including Kenyon McGee worried, that if such a facility is not built soon, the West Kootenay region of the province may lose the rearing of livestock for commercial sale altogether.

KM: Yeah, that’s a bigger thing. You know this, it’s a very complex thing. Right up until this point, any of us who had a small holding could have selected a form of livestock and if we could figure out how to raise it up from a young animal to a mature animal, we could do it. But if there is absolutely no economic incentive - for example, a normal course would be, let’s say I get three pigs. And I feed them garden scraps and pig food and wheat shorts I think was the old one or whatever you feed them nowadays. And at the end of the day I take them down to Dave Anderson’s or he comes and gets them. And I sell a couple of them which pays for all my expenses and I’ve got a

freezer full of pork for the winter. I'm good. But if I can not do that anymore, and none of us can, then any infrastructure that we have just for the rearing and that's actually quite a bit - fences and barns and containments, facilities and loading ramps and so forth and so on, is going to fall into disrepair and be gone. And the local knowledge about - well what do you do if your cow has scours. You can't call your neighbour like you use to, to say well geez I think one of my cows has scours what am I going to give it? That's going to be gone. And the people who, maybe even from around here or a little further afield who raised the young animals that you could go buy to bring back to raise up to maturity, they're going to go out of business. And, at the same time, the skills for - even how to barely deal with a slaughtering - are going to be gone also. So we're really facing quite a loss.

JS: Now we've been covering this quite a bit here on this series just how much *opposition* there has been to this project, and in an age where there is widespread interest in local food, it may come as a surprise to know that there has been little to no *active* support for the abattoir. Now this will be something to explore in greater depth on Part IV of this Livestock Lost series, but with not enough time to cover that on today's show, Kenyon shares his thoughts on what is needed from the *public* to ensure that the livestock sector of farming doesn't fall apart altogether.

KM: You know I know that stores like Ferraro's and Kootenay Market and maybe even in the co-op I don't know whether you sell any meat in there although it use to be in my basement at one point, I don't know anything about it anymore, who'd use this product and put it on their shelves. Our idea was that we would have a product that could be either non-organic and sold as a non-organic hamburger or organic that you could stamp "organic" and sell. And so I thought they would join and they haven't yet, probably because they're business people and they want to make sure that we're going to be a success before they join.

What I think needs to happen is is that the people of the Kootenay's need to really sit down and talk with their neighbours about what it is they want. And if the decision is - look we're happy with the way things are; we get stuff in to Safeway or another place, we don't know anything about it except that it says, "Grade A Beef" or whatever product it is and we're happy with that. Then, so be it. That's the way it will be. If they think to themselves - you know, I always was really happy to get those really nice meat chickens from so-and-so down the road or I loved that grass-fed beef from farmer MacDonald up the road or you know, gee what's his name was raising that very best lamb and I love that leg of lamb that we would sometimes get in the spring - then they've got to figure out, okay, what are we going to do to keep this. And one thing they can do is join the co-op. And if they did then they can not only help us to maybe convince a few other neighbours to join but they could help us to get the thing up and rolling. And if they don't want to then I think that there will be no alternative.

JS: Coming back to Marilyn Burgoon of the Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance who opposed the project, I thought it would be important to hear from her what she thinks or where she thinks people in the region should instead source their meat now that it's illegal to source it from local farms. And she had no suggestions.

However it was in during my interview with her that I chose to unravel this issue more holistically than simply a yes or no approach to this abattoir. Because whether someone is a meat-eater or not, unless that person is 100% self-sufficient, it's pretty clear that fossil fuels – oil, will be the input of choice to bring whatever food is being consumed to that table. And while no oil is being produced in the Slocan Valley of B.C. the people there along with the hope of an eco-tourism mecca are and will be reliant on oil. So what then are the water and human health implications of the oil that transports our vegetables, grains, and other food products. Well putting aside the death toll in Iraq and the social and environmental impact in places like Nigeria, let's take a look at the Athabasca Tar Sands in Northern Alberta which currently produce close to half of Canada's oil production and which is expected to boost production every year. The project is said to be the most environmentally devastating project in the world, and one reliant upon huge amounts of water. The air and water pollution from the tar sands has already had a toll on area wildlife and First Nations communities, and so I asked Marilyn Burgoon about this oil that she and others are currently reliant upon.

Interview:

JS: One person raised a really interesting comment throughout this process throughout a lot of the controversy that was being raised around this and in particular in the case of water. And their comment was that in the case of a lot of the foods that are say - those consumed by vegetarians, non-meat products, vegetables, fruits, whatever, that they're all travelling through one method which is of course using fossil-fuels – oil. Now that we live in a country where a good portion of the oil is coming from a place that is well the tar sands is producing incredible amounts of water pollution and using incredible amounts of water, what's your thoughts on that in juxtaposing I guess that water pollution in Northern Alberta which has had already impacted wildlife and health, human health.

MB: Well, I think that Alberta is a good place for cattle. I think that they have their infrastructure set up there. There's also the option is that the Lemon Creek people forward some sort of a transportation where you take them somewhere. I wasn't quite sure what the outcome of that was. But in terms of getting food from far away - I totally agree we don't want to bring it from out of the United States. Even the bovine hormones they use there is a difference. So yeah I think it has to be local but I also think that I'm not willing to trade clean water for local meat.

JS: And that was Marilyn Burgoon, the Director of the Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance. Marilyn spoke to me over the phone from Nelson before driving back to her hometown of Winlaw.

A number of links to information *on* the water impacts of the Athabasca Tar Sands will be linked to from the Deconstructing Dinner website. But one interesting and more visual resource and in this case an auditory resource, is a video titled, "The Tar Sands and Water" produced by Macdonald Stainsby of oilsandstruth.org, Dru Oja Jay of the Dominion Paper, and Maya Rolbin-Ghanie of msguided.org. The film features interviews with members of the Fort McKay and Fort Chipewyan communities, which are neighbours to some of the largest plants operating in the tar sands. Some of the comments from the interview do a pretty good job at capturing just how devastating our continued reliance on oil for food is to both water and human health.

Speaking here is Celina Harpe – an Elder of the Fort MacKay First Nation.

Celina Harpe: They ruin our water, the air, pretty much everything else, the animals, the berries, all our livelihood, that's what we use to live on. The fish, there's no more; we can't eat fish from the river, can't drink the water. We get sick from all that pollution, people are getting sick and people are dying of cancer whereas there never use to be like that. Since the plant you know I am very positive that this has got something to do with the air and the water. The pollution is doing something to our people. All these young people are dying at young age of cancer and it's just something unbelievable. There's hundreds of kinds of chemicals coming out of that stack and it's all toxic, deadly poison.

JS: And here's a clip of a former plant worker who also lives next door to one of the plants. This is Morris McDonald, also of Fort MacKay.

Morris McDonald: What they've done the last thirty or forty years is just shocking. Like the people that, like I live here right and I know and you can just go over and you can see Syncrude. That's where you can see - at night. We call it Stinkcrude, it's not Syncrude, it's Stinkcrude and it's the same thing with Suncor. Because under the cover of darkness they just, they let out all their major pollutants at night eh, that's what they do it. I know because I worked there for ten years and I worked a lot of shift work there and I use to watch that. Because I know that when it was dark that's when they let all that go.

JS: Fort MacKay Alberta's Morris McDonald.

Further downstream from Fort Mackay is the community of Fort Chipewyan, or Fort Chip. George Poitras is a member of the Misikew Cree First Nation and he was featured in the film.

George Poitras: The impacts are enormous, I mean they're astronomical in my estimation. And I think the destruction to the land, and the environment, the pollution to the water and so on, is probably on a scale that is probably larger than we've ever seen anywhere in the world. So, fundamentally, from a treaty rights group de facto extinguishment of our rights by government not consulting us to the environmental impacts, the degradation to the land that we're seeing, to the issues of water. Not only quality of water as an issue as far as environmental impacts, the multitude of oil sands projects but also the quantity of water because in order to produce a barrel of crude oil as an example requires anywhere from three to five barrels of water. So it's very water intensive as far as producing crude oil.

JS: George Poitras of Fort Chipewyan Alberta.

Also featured in the film was the University of Alberta's David Schindler. David is a professor of Biological Sciences.

David Schindler: Some of the shallow lakes in the Delta area which are important spawning habitats for things like Walleye will not be connected so that there'll be whole spawning areas that'll be cut off. We know that there are spots like Richardson Lake where just a few centimeters of change in the water level will mean the difference between fish being able to spawn or the fry that developed will be able to get back in the river or not.

JS: And here again is Celina Harpe.

CH: I went to that conference in Athabasca and when I found out that one of the tank ponds are leaking then I thought – oh my God this is really crucial. Because down the river from us people are living in Fort Chip's community, bigger than ours. People are dying like flies over there from cancer too. Because you know all that water from here, all this toxic stuff is going to Fort Chip. And their water intake from water treatment plant is right on the Athabasca River, that's where they take their water from. So they consume that water and I'm sure that's why those people are dying of cancer.

JS: And again, David Schindler.

DS: The incidents of these bile duct cancers that John O'Connor has identified, those are very, very rare. And five cases in a community of 1,500 people or whatever it is, is certainly well outside the bounds of what you'd expect. Now maybe it's natural. You can pull out a coin and flip it but if you flip it enough times you can flip five heads in a row. But it's certainly far enough outside of normal confidence limits that it ought to be grounds for a more detailed investigation, which is what he's been calling for.

JS: And that was David Schindler of the University of Alberta in Edmonton. And closing out these clips here once again is Celina Harpe.

CH: This is the lives of our kids. We're talking about water here, that's life. If you've got no water, there's no life. You got no food, how are they going to live? You know after they take all the oil out of this place, what is it going to look like. And what are our kids going to live on you know. You know our near future like my great, great grandchildren and so on, you know, will never be the same. Our lives will never, never be the same. It's ruined completely, everything is ruined. Our lives are ruined, our lands are ruined, our waters, the air, everything. Everything – nothing is good anymore. The oil companies have ruined everything for us, everything. Our culture way of life, our children – they are not the same, like it use to be.

JS: And that was Celina Harpe, an Elder with the Fort MacKay First Nation.

And those clips were extracted from a film titled, "Tar Sands and Water" which is available through YouTube on the internet.

Now this brings us near to the end of today's Livestock Lost segment. And coming back to Kenyon McGee of the Slocan Valley Abattoir Co-operative, before concluding my conversation with Kenyon we did speak at length about the lack of support the abattoir project has received from *eaters*. While it would be comforting to believe that farmers can take on such local food project themselves, farming is one of the busiest and most demanding occupations out there, and extra time is often not available. So what's required, well eaters. That sounds like a far-fetched idea that's *eaters* getting more involved than just buying local food at a grocery store. Well this appears like this may very well be the direction that those interested in more local food may need to head. Similar to the approach taken with the Nelson-Creston Grain Project that will be featured yet again on the show in the coming weeks, it was in that case a group of eaters that worked with farmers to make the project happen. And Kenyon McGee shares what he believes needs to happen to make the abattoir work.

KM: Maybe a bunch of people would call and say after your show and say – yah you know we're going to join and we'll give them the information. And I do know that we would really, really benefit from that and that would maybe by word of mouth and by commitment - maybe by people who eat meat, that would be to me the biggest constituency because, you know maybe as a farmer you can do just one animal for yourself, maybe. But when you get beyond that it gets pretty tough. You've got to really have a lot of stuff. You've got to have wrapping paper, and cutting tables, and weighing machines and you know, it's not something you just have on the farm anymore. So it's the meat eaters that I can't understand in this thing. And I guess - wouldn't you think that your meat is going to be better from next door than it is from some place you don't even know where.

JS: And that was Kenyon McGee, a spokesperson for the Slocan Valley Abattoir Co-operative. Kenyon spoke to me over the phone from Winlaw, B.C.

And as for contact information, well, there has been such a lack of active support for the abattoir, that Kenyon had forgotten the contact information for the abattoir when we spoke on the phone.

But now I do have it and the phone number to contact should you wish to get involved is 250-226-7071. And again that's 250-226-7071 and information will be on the Deconstructing Dinner website. And the Slocan Valley Abattoir Co-operative is *hoping* that area residents would even go so far as to get a petition together that is in *support* of the project, instead of the petitions he's currently receiving that are *against* it.

KM: Oh boy, that would be probably so encouraging for our little core group of as Dave Anderson calls us the Slaughterhouse Five. But yeah, we would probably jump up and down for joy and get all re-energized. I'd learn our phone number again, I'd learn our Post Office Box.

ending theme

CBC: But just as Ottawa vows re-election on climate change there are new questions about Canada's biggest producer of greenhouse gases – the Alberta Oil Sands. Our colleagues at Radio Canada's Zone Libre have uncovered plans for a dramatic expansion in part to satisfy an American objective. Guy Gendron has the story.

George W. Bush: America is addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world.

CBC: George W. Bush surprised many observers a year ago with his blunt assessment and his newly set goal to drastically reduce oil imports from the Middle East.

GWB: And make our dependence on Middle Eastern oil a thing of the past.

CBC: What was unknown was the fact that a week earlier in the days following Stephen Harper's election in Canada, a summit of the oil industry took place in this Houston hotel. Executives from American oil multinationals and Canadian Oil Sands producers met for two days with representatives from both governments. According to the minutes of the meeting obtained by CBC they made plans for a five fold expansion in the oil sands production in a relatively short time span. That would mean five million barrels a day - a quarter of current American consumption and almost half of all U.S. imports.

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

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

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