

Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY
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Title: HALIFAX AWAITS A WORLD CLASS FARMERS' MARKET

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JON STEINMAN: Welcome to Deconstructing Dinner, a syndicated weekly one-hour radio show and podcast produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio, CJLY. I'm Jon Steinman.

Deconstructing Dinner is fresh off its East Coast tour where I had the opportunity over two weeks to speak to audiences at seven events throughout New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and in between sneak in some interviews with farmers, processors and advocates of locally produced foods.

On today's episode we listen in on the first of a number of broadcasts that will feature stories from Canada's Atlantic provinces including today's very inspiring and exciting story about the Halifax Farmers' Market – the longest-running farmers market in North America - 259 years old.

While the market as it exists today is an incredible story on its own, even *more* exciting is the long-awaited *move* that if all goes as planned, will shift the Halifax Farmers' Market *out* of what has become a very *cramped* and over-crowded location and into the brand-new Seaport Market, a now-under construction building that is not only expected to *increase* the capacity for Nova Scotian food producers to respond to the rising demand in local food, but the building *itself* is also expected to become the most energy-efficient building on the eastern seaboard.

While in Halifax, I sat down with the General Manager of the Farmers Market, Fred Kilcup to learn more about the exciting move and *how* the new market is hoping to become a catalyst for a much broader vision of rural economic development, local and provincial food security, and a host of other community connections that the market hopes to form. I also spoke with Gordon Michael, the Executive Director of the Farmers Market Investment Co-operative – a unique strategy for raising the necessary funding from residents of Nova Scotia. We'll also meet a handful of the vendors at the market and hear from them *their* thoughts on the upcoming move.

increase music and fade out

Deconstructing Dinner has devoted a number of shows to the growing interest in farmers markets across the country. In recent years, farmers markets have come to represent a multi-*billion* dollar sector of the food system and are providing a much-needed and financially rewarding connection between producers and eaters. With only a handful of chain grocery stores now dominating the retailing of food, small-scale farmers and processors have looked to farmers markets as a more accessible means to move their product into the hands of ravenous supporters of local food and local economies.

And I can comfortably say that throughout my time visiting farmers markets across the country, I have never come across a market as rich in diversity and energy as the Halifax Farmers' Market which I visited in early October. As the largest city in Canada's Maritime provinces, residents of this urban centre have the opportunity to access *all* of their weekly food needs from one location, once a week. And all of it local. From dairy to meat, baked goods, grains, and of course seafood, the market provides multiple options of many staples. You can even show up to the market with an empty jug and receive a fill-up of freshly brewed beer from a local microbrewer.

But the Halifax Farmers' Market has outgrown its current space, which is a veritable maze of rooms set up throughout the Alexander Keith's Brewery building in the city's downtown. By 10 a.m. every Wednesday you'd be hard-pressed to find a space to maneuver through the crowds and even by 9 a.m. line-ups of 20 plus can be seen extending from many of the market stalls.

To learn more about the market, it's challenges, and the exciting project currently underway to respond to these challenges, I sat down with Fred Kilcup – the General Manager of the Halifax Farmers' Market.

FRED KILCUP: My name's Fred Kilcup. I'm the General Manager of the Seaport Farmers' Market in Halifax. And I've been involved with the market since 1986, first as a vendor, then as a manager, now as General Manager. We are the oldest farmers market in North America, proclaimed by the King in 1750 and we've been continuously operating since then. We've been in many locations around the city since then of course. But in the late 70's, early 80's, the vendors took control of the market and over the 10 year period, discovered how to turn it into a co-op and has been on a rocket ride to success since 1990 when we really went into that sort of co-operative venture.

JON: Now Deconstructing Dinner has devoted considerable time over the past few years to the role of co-operatives within the food system and rightfully so as we here at Kootenay Co-op Radio are a co-operative ourselves. And Nova Scotia has a rich history of co-operatives and it's hard to go anywhere in the province without interacting with at least one of the province's over 250 of them, with one of the co-ops being the umbrella organization known as Nova Scotia Farmers' Markets. It's also no surprise that the Halifax Farmers' Market is too a co-operative, and Fred explains how the co-op is set-up and what the advantages are of a farmers market co-op.

FRED: The vendors are members of the co-op. Not all vendors are members of the co-op but the mix of vendors ranges from primary to secondary producers, craft vendors, artists, that sort of thing. But we require that 60% of the voting members in the co-op be primarily producers as we find that it ensures that it stays in control of by the farm community and focused on farm issues and food production. It doesn't fall into a typical retail model which is often the fate of urban markets that need the support of artists and crafters in order to pay the rent and sometimes lose a little the focus on the food side.

JON My trip to Halifax coincided perfectly with the one-day of the week that the market currently operates, and I did get the chance to walk through the market, meet some of the vendors and taste some of their amazing food. From Nova Scotia's prized Gravenstein apples to Farmstead parmesan cheese, there was no shortage of unique Nova Scotian delicacies. Here again is Fred Kilcup and a sampling of just some of the many vendors operating at the market.

FRED: We would have on any particular day in the range of 145 to 150 vendors onsite. The overall vendor base would be in excess of 200 and that would fluctuate seasonally, of course different vendors, different seasons. There are many more that would like to get in, we're

continuously turning vendors away. We're currently in the Keith's Brewery on the waterfront, around 25,000 square feet. General space is seasonally spilt out onto the sidewalks and streets and wherever we can find space

Market music

RICHARD: My name is Richard Rand. Our business is Fox Hill Cheese House. We do an assortment of different products from cheese to yoghurt to homemade Italian ice cream. We vendor dairy products. We came this morning from Annapolis Valley, it's about an hour and a quarter away, the ride that is. We were up pretty early, about 4:00, and here we are. This business, this marks about 50% of our business as far as retail and selling direct to the public.

JOGI: My name's Jogi and I'm coming from the Blake forest actually in Germany. And my wife is a typical German baker making all this German baked goods. And typical bread, black forest squares.

JON: How important is the market for you, for your business.

JOGI: Very. Very important. It's my main market. I go to four different markets a week but this is my main market.

SASS: Okay well we're the Grainery Food Co-op and we're a member run co-operative. And everything that we have that that we can get local, is local. All of our grains and everything comes from Speerville Mills in New Brunswick. Personally I work just a couple of shifts a month and we get a nice discount on what we buy here. Anyone can become a member and we either work shifts here at the market or we work at our store which is in the north end in Halifax on Agricola Street. The market is very important to the co-op because this is where we do most of our selling. And at the store we do some you know but not as much as here. But there's other things that are done at the store such as bagging. There's bagging parties every Thursday night where a group of people will come in and put things in bags and get it ready for the Saturday market. So it's very important. And people can buy things in bulk also so that's a good thing.

JON: That was Sass Minard – a member of the Grainery Co-op – a small but unique member-run food co-operative operating in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The grainery co-op is one of the roughly 150 vendors who set up each week at the Halifax Farmers' Market. Sass mentioned another Atlantic business – Speerville Flour Mill, a business that I *also* had the chance to visit while I travelled throughout New Brunswick and you can expect an episode on them in the coming weeks.

Now as market General Manager Fred Kilcup introduced just moments ago, the physical constraints of the current market location has forced the market to turn away interested vendors who come from all over the province to sell their product to Halifax residents. And this has been accompanied by rapidly growing demand.

FRED: There's been tremendous growth. It's been constrained because of space. We cannot get anymore - customers cannot get into the market, like virtually cannot get into the market, it's just too full. I think right now we're running at somewhere between 7 to 8,000 visitors on a Saturday morning in a seven hour period.

JON: Having heard about the crowds from Fred, I made sure to get to the market early where I met a number of other unique vendors including Canada's first certified organic pet bakery.

Market Interviews

JUDE: I'm Jude Major from Katie's Farm Organic Dog Bakery. We were the first certified organic pet bakery in Canada. And we're also a certified organic farm so we grow most of our own ingredients. And we're located outside Halifax on the eastern shore. So we're farming in a non-farming area. It's been a bit of a challenge but we were the first certified organic farm in our section of Nova Scotia.

Client: Okay, my dog's allergic to chicken and he shouldn't have ... he just has like wheat and potato... salmon and potatoes.

Bakery: No meat in anything?

Client: No.

Bakery: 100% wheat free.

Client: Yeah.

Bakery: Because we have a lot of dog customers in your position.

Client: Okay.

Bakery: So, no meat, no salt, no sugar, no corn or soy.

Client: So, what can he have?

Bakery: Whatever you like.

Client: Really!?

Bakery: Yeah.

Client: Oh.

Bakery: Here we don't use wheat in anything. We haven't for like three years.

Client: Oh wow.

JUDE: On the farmer we grow all the vegetables that we use - eggs, garlic, herbs. So we're a tiny farm. Farms in this part of the country tend to be miniture so we're actually 2 ½ acres, which is pretty minimal. But we grow enough to supply the bakery business and feed myself.

JON: I imagine the main ingredient are grains – are you able to access easily – certified organic grains or..

JUDE: Yeah, really easily.

JON: Yeah?

JUDE: They come from the next province over, from New Brunswick, from Speerville Mills. So, basically we're 100% local Maritime product and I'm quite proud of that.

PETER: My name's Peter Darnell. Our business name is Indian Point Marine Farms and we grow mussels and we grow scallops in Mahone Bay off the community of Indian Point. And we've been doing it for 27 years and it's getting harder and harder to make a living at it.

JON: Why is that?

PETER: I don't know. Well we have some issues, you know some biological issues out there that make it difficult but mostly it's the fact that the prices are too low and we can't make any money. We compete with larger companies based both in Prince Edward Island and in Newfoundland. I think the emphasis over the years has been on production which people have gotten good at. And mussels in particular are a good crop to grow, you know they lend themselves to culture so a lot of people grow them and with relatively small investment – capital investments you can grow a lot. But when the investments haven't been made in marketing and distribution and introducing

the product to new people so there's more and more product out there and not more people eating them so the prices just drop and drop and drop.

JON: How important is the market for your business?

PETER: This market?

JON: Yeah:

PETER: It's important; not crucial. We don't depend on it but it is our marketing program. We get to meet our customers, we get feedback, we get to introduce products to people especially the scallops that we're growing which are a relatively new product and people are use to eating scallop adductor muscles but not use to eating whole scallops. So it's a great opportunity to meet people and introduce them to them. And you also meet the restaurant people down here and I think you also make your associations about being local and the local food movement and everything. You're acting it out, you're being a part of that movement which is so important really.

JON: Peter Darnell of Indian Point Marine Farms here on Deconstructing Dinner.

Today's broadcast is archived on our website at deconstructingdinner.ca and posted under the October 8th, 2009 episode.

So it's clear that the Halifax Farmers' Market serves many types of producers by providing them with many different opportunities. But what also became clear from my visit to the market and from speaking with the vendors there, is that the current space is far too constrained and no doubt limits the potential of the current vendors and those who are getting turned away.

Well in comes what I will say is one of the most exciting local food project that Deconstructing Dinner has come across and that is the new Seaport Market that will hopefully provide a fresh new space for vendors by the summer of 2010. The new market is introducing a number of innovative models and ideas on how to *finance* a new market and how a farmers' market can act as a catalyst for so many other food and non-food related initiatives. Sharing in the excitement is of course Market General Manager Fred Kilcup.

FRED KILCUP: We started looking for a permanent home for the market. The vendors wanted a permanent home for the market now since the early 90's. Ownership is a big deal for people that work the land – they like to own and have control. And so we did a process over a couple of years with the vendors saying – what do you want? What is it that you really want for this market? And it came down to two things. They wanted a permanent home and they wanted it on peninsular Halifax. That's really the two common things that everybody agreed on. So I set out to find a location for that and it took eight years and I don't know, four or five sites we looked at. We looked at a lot of different places. This location is the one that best suited our needs and was on peninsular Halifax, provided parking and it was a block and a half away from where we were. So it was the right spot.

JON: Fred Kilcup. Artist renditions both in images and video are posted on the Halifax Farmers' Market website at halifaxfarmersmarket.com. An image of the *current* construction site has also been posted on the Deconstructing Dinner website.

Now we'll learn more about the plans for the new market later on the show. But one question on the minds of anyone hearing about the plans for the new Seaport Market is "how has such a large project been funded?" Certainly that should be the question on the minds of any *community* wishing to build a market as world-class as the one planned in Halifax. And the answer is again a unique, innovative and inspiring model that has accessed funding from all three levels of government and launched an investment co-operative that has been successfully building up funds from the *residents* of Nova Scotia.

FRED KILCUP: We got support from all three levels of government. And what we did, we looked at government policies of all levels and said – where do we fulfill that policy? What are the things that the market does that we can actually go to government and say – look, you have an immigration policy. Well, we have, at the time I think we had 27 first generation immigrant businesses in the market. A few number of them were rural-based. I think that numbers up to around 34 now. And so we went to government and said – you have a policy to support immigration and retain them in the world community, we do that, you need to support us. And we did that through all levels of government and to all various aspects of things that the market developing business – supporting art and culture, all those various policies. And so they all said – wow! That's what they said, they said - oh, we didn't realize that. We didn't know that. From people that you thought probably would know that.

And so I think that what we learned from that was government makes assumptions and the community makes assumptions but they're often not the same and they need to be explained. They need to be told. They need to be shown where what we do intersects with their policy and that's how you can get resources from government. So that's how we did our government resources.

On the community side, we developed a farmers market investment co-op and that coupled with government policy around support for local investors which is unique to Nova Scotia allowed us to access in excess of 400 local investors in excess of a million dollars for the project. So that has – between government support and community support, that's where our financing came from as well as from Farm Credit Corporation and the other organizations that are involved in the supporting development of agriculture, business and immigration and all those kinds of policies.

JON: In just a moment we'll learn more about this unique Farmers Market Investment Co-operative that Fred Kilcup introduced but first, let's take a listen to the 2007 announcement of the 2.25 million dollars that the Province of Nova Scotia provided to the new Seaport Market project. Here again is Fred Kilcup, introducing the then-Premier of Nova Scotia – Rodney MacDonald.

Nova Scotia Announcement

FRED: We're really pleased to have the support and partnership of the provincial government. I'd like to call upon the Premier, the Honourable Rodney MacDonald to share some very exciting news with us. Mr. Premier. (applause)

RODNEY MACDONALD: This is an exciting day for everyone involved with this historic market. And it's an exciting day for everyone who cares about a sustainable future for Nova Scotia. Ladies and gentlemen, I believe everyone here understands the foundation for our long-term prosperity is built on Nova Scotia's natural assets. Our quality of life flows directly from the environment and of course agriculture and protecting both will mean fundamental changes to the way we live. The consequences of inaction are too great. We must meet the inevitable change head-on with innovation and resourcefulness. So today I am officially proud to announce that the

province of Nova Scotia are proud to commit \$2.25 million for a state-of-the-art facility for the new Seaport Farmers' Market. (applause)

The new farmers market will be one of the most environmentally, friendly buildings in North America. It will displace more than 340 tons of greenhouse gases annually and reduce energy consumption by 85%. Energy from the sun and the wind will power the market and Nova Scotia's farmers and vendors will bring it to life. Many products travel a long way to reach the average Nova Scotian's home, leaving much of the profit outside our borders. The Seaport Farmers' Market will help fight that trend. The food visitors buy will be locally grown and that's good for the economy and good for our environment. Their purchases will support Nova Scotia's farming families, support rural communities, and strengthen our own businesses. By shortening the distance food travels to our homes it will cut down on greenhouse gases.

Over the coming weeks, we'll be announcing more buy-local initiatives which is great for our farming community here in Nova Scotia. (applause) Consumers and the people of our province want to know how to identify food that is produced right here at home in Nova Scotia and by God we will help them find it. There are many other benefits as well to today's announcement. New jobs, both constructing and operating the new facility; healthier living from nutritious organic vegetables, fish, meat and fruit; support for new Nova Scotians with 24 first generation immigrant businesses in the market, ten located in rural Nova Scotia; and the Seaport Farmers' Market will make a stunning impression on the nearly 200,000 cruise ship travelers will take their first steps past the market and possibly make their first purchases.

This building will be a landmark. A meeting place for buyers and sellers for rural and urban dwellers. A meeting place for our talented farmers and energy innovators will combine their expertise to bring food and power to the oldest farmers market in North America.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure, on behalf of our province and on behalf of our government to commit this funding to the new Seaport Farmers' Market. And on behalf of all Nova Scotians, I wish it great success. It's my pleasure to be here this morning. (applause)

JON: Former Nova Scotia premiere, Rodney MacDonald, speaking in 2007 in Halifax.

You're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner, a syndicated weekly radio show produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio, CJLY. Deconstructing Dinner is heard on radio stations across the country including CKDU Halifax, Nova Scotia and CHSR Fredericton, New Brunswick. Stations that I had the opportunity to visit during my October, East Coast tour.

I'm Jon Steinman and on today's episode, we're learning about the Halifax Farmers' Market – the oldest farmers market in North America, 259 years old. More importantly though, we've been learning about the market's plans to move into what amounts to a world-class building that will provide Nova Scotian producers with greater capacity to market and sell their product to the large urban population of Halifax. Of the many unique components of this project is one of the funding models being used, which, since January 2008 has raised over a million dollars from the residents of Nova Scotia themselves. The model is called the Farmers Market Investment Co-operative, FMIC. And I spoke with the organization's Executive Director to learn more about this unique model for accessing funds to construct a state-of-the-art market.

GORDON MICHAEL: My name's Gordon Michael. I'm Executive Director of the Farmers Market Investment Co-op. What I've been doing along with that is the whole area, I call it market support development, of looking at how the market connects the community. I can look at jobs around

this as well. But what FMIC specifically as Fred mentioned, this organization was created to access the public's money to invest in the market. There's a program in Nova Scotia, it's called CEDIF, Community Economic Development (Investment) Fund. And by, for example, investing \$1,000 or more into any structure like this in the province, you get, it's 60% equity tax credit on a provincial income tax over 15 years. And it's 30% the first year which is going to go up to 35% starting in January 1st 2010. Then it's 20%, year 6 and then it's 10%, year 11. So if you leave your money in for 15 years, that's it. You can also make it an RRSP as well. So from a tax incentive, it's a great saving.

So this organization, what we have is a Board. It had an interim Board at first and then over the past year, closing in May we've raised almost \$1.2 million of a goal of \$2.5 million. We then had an AGM to elect a new Board. Out of the investors, of the 430 people that invest in the market, we now have a Board made up of investors and we have a connection back to the city market by having a Board member from the city market sit on it, Farmers Market Investment Co-op Board, and vice-versa. So we have a relationship there.

What we're doing now is looking at our next campaign and one of the things we're finding is that we've had people come to us and say – here's some money, go build a new market because I want a new facility. It's too crowded where I'm going. Very positive. So the night we had the annual general meeting on September 1st, a lot of positive people want to see this market work, they want to support local food and they want to see economic growth. And so, what we're doing now is looking at, we've done a number of public meetings where we go to a business or an organization, they host a meeting, we go in and talk about the investment. And Farmers Market Investment Co-op could be a model that goes across Nova Scotia so the other markets could use the FMIC as a tool to raise money for the local investment. And so, what I think this does, it gets a tool to allow people to figure out how they can get involved in this whole process.

JON: The Farmers Market Investment Co-op hopes to raise the goal of \$2.25 million by the time the market is expected to open in June 2010.

Now clearly this is a unique and innovative model for acquiring funds to build a new farmers market, and I asked Gordon Michael if they had come across any other similar models that have raised funds in this way.

GORDON MICHAEL: Not that I'm aware of. As a matter of fact there's an article that was written by this model by the Canadian Co-operators. They have an article about this whole thing and I think it's unique in Canada. Because I'm not sure if the CEDIF is outside Nova Scotia. It's not so that model is a Nova Scotia model. What I think is really interesting is that again, it's people buying into a model. They see the local connection and they see that this is supporting rural Nova Scotia as well. I think it's pretty positive.

JON: Gordon Michael.

Now coming back to the details of the market itself – one of the other substantial differences that the new Seaport Market in Halifax will provide both vendors and eaters are increased opportunities to sell and purchase food. Instead of only being open once a week as is the case with the current market, the Seaport Market will be open on multiple days throughout the week and will also provide fixed unit space to some vendors who wish to remain open every day. This shift is a great example of the way in which a farmers market can more adequately evolve to the needs of producers versus the seeming inability to do so among the handful of chain grocery stores operating in North America. While chain grocery stores often close the door to small-scale

local producers or require them to ship their product to a centralized distribution centre, farmers markets seem to provide much easier access to producers and eaters.

FRED KILCUP: We're under construction now. Lots of concrete being poured and steel being stood. We'll build that through the fall and winter and into the spring and hopefully we'll be on target to open in June. And we'll move in and begin to operate on a week-long basis which is something we haven't done before. The demand for local food is just growing by leaps and bounds and trying to fulfill that demand on one morning a week in an urban environment just doesn't make a lot of sense. We need to have greater access. So we've established around 4,500 square feet of the building itself will be fully demised and sort of like shops, retail shops, fun shops but they'll be run by market vendors and co-ops of market vendors. The vendors that have been in the market for, some for many years, others are fairly new that are ready to really grow their business. And they can scale-up into a level where they can still maintain personal contact with their customers but they have greater capacity. The success of the market has been built on the personal relationships built between the customer and the consumer. That's where our success is built on. That's our challenge moving into the new market.

Now we'll also move to multiple market days a week so that we will have a market down Saturday and Sunday and one day through the week. The key to keeping the local nature and the direct nature of the market is to increase production and supply by increasing the number of producers. So that the producer on Wednesday may not be the same producers there on Saturday and Sunday. Or a producer may determine that they can come every day of the week for six weeks at their peak season. It's not economical for a plant producer. I mean they've got to be in business year round but their sales window is two or three months. In the current model, well that's only six or eight sales days. If you've got a storm in there, that's a serious effect on your business. So if you can have access to a market at your peak season for three weeks every day, then you've got a much better business model. The market provides the opportunity for a producer to scale-up within the market environment, maybe I'll put in a new greenhouse this year and I'll come for an extra three days a week. And now if that works maybe I'll scale-up a little bit next year. So there's the ability for the producer to scale without betting the entire farm. So, those are the kinds of sort of relationships and opportunities that we're going to create between the vendors and customers on a week-long basis.

JON: Fred Kilcup. Following my interview *with* Fred Kilcup and Gordon Michael as heard earlier on the show, I had the opportunity to meet some of the roughly 150 vendors who currently set up at the market each week. When asked about the new market building, the response from vendors was, for the most part, very positive, although a small number of vendors are cautiously optimistic.

Market Interviews

VENDOR 1: We look forward to the new Seaport market. It's going to run six days a week. I'm very excited about that and we're very excited about that and we want to bring more products as well such as fluid milk and butter products. We intend to be there six days a week. Hopefully, I mean there's a selection committee of having a storefront, bringing a complete line of dairy products. So yes, six days a week instead of one day.

VENDOR 2: Oh, I'm concerned about it. I'm concerned about the amount of money that it's costing and I don't understand how that can be paid back by a farmers market. So I assume that it's going to morph into something else other than a real farmers market in order to pay for itself, whereas I just thought we needed a new building. We need a new space. This space is expensive and this room is great because it stays cool down here where the rest of it gets overcrowded and

overheated. We need the new space. I don't think we need a cadillac of a new space. We just need a big empty building somewhere to be in. But, I'm a minority in that so I accept the majority's opinion on these so.

VENDOR 3: When they first said I was really sad because I love this market. But I think the new market is going to be great. You know I've kind of come to terms with the fact that we are going to be moving out of this building and I'm really happy about it because we are going to be able to be there every day, which is a good thing.

VENDOR 4: I can hardly wait. I think it will be great. I mean this old market has a lot of atmosphere in a way but it also has like six million mice and no heat in the winter and it's really crowded and it will be great when there's room for more vendors. And maybe I'll have an electrical outlet and I can sell my other product line which is food. So, yeah, looking forward to it.

VENDOR 5: I can't wait until the new market is open. I think it might be a lot better for people because of the parking space. Might be better for the vendors because of space and more people coming, so I'm looking forward to it. I'm actually planning on being there three times a week.

Flannery Brothers Chorus

Gonna go, go, go, go, down to the farmers market

Gonna go, go, go, go, down to the farmers market

I'm going to ride, ride, ride, ride my bicycle and park it

When I go, go, go, go, down to the farmers market

Down to the farmers' market.

JON: That last clip was of the Flannery Brothers, a musical trio from just across the Bay of Fundy from Nova Scotia in the state of Maine.

Links to the market vendors interviewed for today's show are posted on the Deconstructing Dinner website at deconstructingdinner.ca and under the October 8th 2009 episode.

Now for the most part, farmers markets across North America have served a pretty specific purpose - to provide a venue for the exchange of food between producer and eater. But the possibilities of farmers markets to extend their influence and impact beyond this one purpose, is something that Fred Kilcup and Gordon Michael are very keen to explore. To learn more about these possibilities, here again is Gordon Michael of the Farmers Market Investment Co-op.

GORDON MICHAEL: The connector program that we had that Fred talked about was – what we did is last fall we looked at the business plan of the market and said – okay, there are four broad areas that Fred talked about that the market has been doing.

- It's the culture of HRM, the different immigrant groups. Okay that's one thing. The market board is made up of a number of immigrants already. I mean it's a real interesting model here.
- The second is food and health. The whole issue of healthy food, local food is the second one.
- The third one was the environment and food and this building, a unique building.
- And the fourth, the market as an art centre.

Now the research they've done in this eight month period and we have a report ready to go online, the universities – many programs want to use this market as a study of the building. We have, in the whole environmental piece, a whole lot of pieces I can have in here. In the area of

health and food, we're starting to look at how we have nutritionists where we're starting to work with producers and how do we get people looking at healthy food and what products should we have. In the area of immigration we met with immigrant groups and asked them – what are the foods that you would like to see grown in this province that you don't get. And then we're going to go back to producers and show them there's a target market for you through the market. And the fourth of course is the arts community.

But what grew out of two projects, of two of these streams are two projects. One is we're going to design programs for immigrants of how to get them involved in the food business whether its growing it, processing it, selling it. And that is going to be developed this winter and then hopefully start to bring them in next spring to do a training program. And the second one is looking at value-added food products. That is the fastest growing sector in the food sector we saw. So we have a proposal waiting to be funded. We take unemployed young people. We have a kitchen, a commercial kitchen and they would make value-added food using local food at the kitchen and sell it at the market. We think this could create a wide range of business opportunities for young people.

So, you see this market is going to be a unique facility to help grow the economy and tie it into health as well and all these other sectors. And so, as Fred said earlier, by looking at what governments are trying to do, this market can actually implement some of those strategies in a pretty interesting way.

JON: Gordon Michael, Halifax Farmers' Market General Manager Fred Kilcup also sees the market as a catalyst for many innovative food and non-food projects. As Fred suggests, a different mindset has been necessary to not only conceive some of these ideas and possibilities, but a new mindset to actually go out and walk the talk.

FRED KILCUP: What the market is and what it does is a catalyst. It provides a focal point for the community where ideas are generated and it can begin a process and people begin to take ownership of it. And then the community will take action on it and the market can do what the market does. The market is really there to provide a place for farmers to sell the food at a profit. The market's a business. It's always been a business, the original business, well maybe not the original business. And it needs to stay focused on that. But it uses all these other activities to market itself and also to create the community that we all need to survive. And it's the real – I see it all the time – the catalyst that makes ideas possible to actually create a concrete project. It's about action. The market's about taking action because the people that migrate to markets are not interested in being part of a huge structure. They're usually independent thinkers that like to rely on themselves and if you take that philosophy and you put enough of that group together, if you can figure out a way for them to co-operate, then you get exciting ideas come forward. And then they become the kinds of projects that you see happening here now. And it all goes back to the rural root, the self-reliance, the independent thinking. What makes sense. We don't have time to do things that don't make sense, that's the mindset. And so we tend to not create a whole lot of bureaucracies. One of the biggest challenges of this whole project has been bringing together the practical can-do mindset of operating around a trust model. You know we can do this – we're not exactly sure of all the pieces in between but we know we want to get to a particular point and we believe in one another that we're going to get there. And that model which comes up against the international business model which is frankly built on distrust and all the cost of that and so bringing those two ideas together has been a challenge. And hopefully, the two groups have learned from one another through the process that we going on right now.

JON: Both Fred and Gordon also added that they see the Farmers Market Investment Co-op might also act as an investment vehicle for vendors themselves – that is being able to direct funds to any producer wishing to scale-up their business. So we can see that there are some pretty broad visions accompanying this new project in Halifax.

In closing out my conversation with Fred Kilcup and Gordon Michael, I introduced one of the concerns that any skeptic of such a capital-intensive project might have. While farmers markets are indeed one positive response to the many challenges facing our food system, farmers markets are certainly not the *only* response. And there are many *external* threats beyond the control of the market and its vendors. While both Fred and Gordon recognize these threats, they point to the benefit of diversity that any farmers market fosters and facilitates. It's this, as Fred and Gordon suggest, can *allow* a farmers market to remain resilient and be able to weather any of these external threats. If this is indeed true, then farmers markets as a venue for the exchange of food appear to represent a significant departure from the status quo – in which the conventional food system *lacks* this diversity and is seemingly more at the mercy of economic, environmental and social concerns.

FRED KILCUP: The strength of the market is its diversity. We have, like I said, we have vendors that travel from all over the province in all kinds of categories. When economic conditions or whatever might cause a decline in a particular area, there's somebody else that has another idea that they want to bring forward to the market. Or often that idea is already there. Somebody's coming in – well I think I would like to test this product or this idea and as space becomes available then their business grows a little bit. So there's this continual, dynamic exchange in the market that's been going on for 250 years. It's not going to go away. I guess in the 60's and 70's there was, it's an anachronism. We don't need markets anymore. It nearly did die through that neglect but it survived through that and it can survive through anything that is thrown at a farmer.

GORDON MICHAEL: I think on top of that when you look at the bigger picture of what's going on, the market is going to provide a consistent space for a producer to say – I can now viably get into this business because it's going to broaden it from a one day a week to many. So all of a sudden now I can say as a producer – I can grow my business, literally and it's safe to plan this, okay, that's one thing. The other thing it's going to do because I know, you're right, there's many issues there with the food. We need more people eating more local food, the market will give that venue to do that. That's why the connector project, what that was about was getting different populations coming down to the market, to expose them to this. So that's the second part.

The third part is, we need more people in the business. There's not enough food produced when you think about it. So that's why some of these programs we're looking at and saying – well, this is a sector. It's like IT, it's like carpentry, like any other sector and we have to start viewing it that way and valuing it. Because all the meetings I'm going to – everybody wants this. The question is who's going to do it? And if we don't get our young people in schools looking at - this is a career path. Well what's the economic viability of this thing? That's what has to be looked at. And I think we have to be looking at new ways of growing food and what's that going to look like. So, the market is a real beacon to say – oh, now we can sell it. Now let's go produce it all.

soundbite

JON: And that was Fred Kilcup of the Halifax Farmers' Market and Gordon Michael of the Farmers Market Investment Co-operative. You can learn more about the market by visiting halifaxfarmersmarket.com where contact information for anyone wishing to become an investor is also listed. You can also view artist renditions of the new Seaport Market building that is

expected to become the highest rated building on the east coast of North America for energy and environmental design.

BILL MCKIBBEN: It was only fifty years ago that everyone in America ate locally and 80% of the people on the earth still do. What's weird and unusual is the last fifty years in American history when we've just decided that since it's always summer someplace we might as well order take-out from there every night you know. And that's an idea that only works in an age when you're paying no attention to energy costs or environmental implications and that's passing. So I was really pleased to see how pleasant, how easy our winter of eating locally was and to have confirmed my suspicion that, among other things, the best by-product of this would be the number of new friends that we would make. All the farmers and people that we came in contact with, all the ways in which we came to see the kind of cultural and economic geography of our place in a whole new way.

JON: That's Vermont's Bill McKibben – author of the book, *Deep Economy*. Bill was interviewed in 2007 by *Corporate Watchdog Radio*, a show produced at WXOJ, Northampton, Massachusetts.

Corporate Watchdog Interview

BILL BAUE (CWR): You know what I'm hearing is, is that this is the radicalism of your book is that you're essentially proposing localization as a solution to our problems when everybody else is suggesting globalization. Do you see that localization as a radical idea and as a viable solution?

BILL MCKIBBEN: I think it's very viable, partly because I'm pretty sure that globalism isn't viable (laughs) and it's beginning already to run adrift of it's own weight. We spent the last 100 years making our supply lines ever longer. I think if we're smart we'll spend this 100 years slowing reeling them back in, at least to some extent. And you know, you can see it already happening. Farmers markets are the fastest growing part of the food economy in America. Sales are growing 10, 12% a year. That's faster than Walmart. And you know, farmers markets aren't quite as big as Walmart yet but they're gaining and it's not only because they offer good, fresh, delicious food, it's because they offer a different experience. A pair of sociologists followed shoppers last year, first around the supermarket and then around the farmers market. And they found that people were having ten times more conversations when they went to the farmers market than to the supermarket.

soundbite

BILL BAUE (CWR): You're talking right now about people getting food locally and we're doing this on a community radio station and in your book, *Deep Economy*, you talk about people getting their information locally from a community radio. What role do you see community radio playing in the big picture that you're laying out here.

BILL MCKIBBEN: I think radio is a perfect example of how we've centralized things past the point where it makes any sense. Clear Channel, Infinity, those two companies own some enormous percentage of the radio stations in America and they're terrible. You know they just broadcast schlock from some central office someplace. They're not part of the local community. And so I'm always incredibly happy to see the resurgence of interest in public radio, in community radio, in low power FM radio, even in commercial radio that responds to its local community. I write in the book some about the quite wonderful commercial station here in Vermont, Vermont's oldest radio station, that carries Amy Goodman, then carries Red Sox, and then has broadcasts three girls basketball games a night during the winter and has its own

bluegrass band on Saturday mornings and does the birdwatching hour and has Bernie Sanders on on Fridays and you know on and on and on. There are real possibilities if we don't make the pursuit of 20% return on investment the only possible measure of whether something's successful or not.

FRANCESCA RHEANNON (CWR): You know, these are all examples I think of something you talk about and that is technologies of community.

BILL MCKIBBEN: You know we talk all the time about all the cool new technologies that we're going to get – hydrogen and cellulosic ethanol and yadda, yadda, yadda. It's all good, some of it better than others, it may be necessary. But none of it is anywhere near as important as rebuilding what I've been calling the technology of community – the ability to do things with each other. And if that doesn't sound like it's a very practical thing to be talking about, just consider, you know your average Western European per capita uses half as much energy as the average American. It's not because they've got some different technology. It's because they've made slightly different choices on this continuum between community and individuality. They've been willing to pay the taxes to, provide medical care and education and also to provide good public transit. And as a result they've had less spending money. They live in smaller houses and they keep their cars longer and so on and so forth. It hasn't left them unhappy, in fact the opposite. They're satisfaction scores, happiness levels are higher in all the surveys than Americans and as I say, it's produced a workable energy structure. One of the big questions for the world right now is whether China and India will evolve more in a European direction or more in an American one. And if it is an American direction you can't make the math work. And if it's a European one, it's still hard but at least there's a fighting chance.

FRANCESCA RHEANNON (CWR): You know one point that you make very strongly in the book is that as difficult as this may be to turn around, doing it will actually increase what you call our satisfaction, our pleasure, our enjoyment in life. Say something about that.

BILL MCKIBBEN: Every year since the end of World War II one of the big polling firms has asked Americans – are you happy with your life. The number of Americans who say “yes, I'm happy” the percentage “very happy with my life” peaks in 1956 and goes downhill thereafter. Now that's weird because in that time we've about tripled the amount of stuff that we have, our average individual affluence and yet somehow, we've become less satisfied which among other things belies the notion that more really is better at least in our time and place. The reason for this as far as we can tell is that Americans feel a great loss of community and social connection. And that makes sense. I mean what have we done since the 50's? We've spent most of our money building bigger houses further out in the suburbs. We just run into each other less than we use to. The average American has half as many close friends. Eats meals with friends and family half as often. And all that extra stuff just hasn't been enough to compensate. So what we need to do, are build local economic institutions like say the farmers markets that we were talking about that bring us back into connection with each other.

BILL BAUE (CWR): In the book you say that inefficiency may be a solution and you know what's driven us towards centralization and globalization is this almost maniacal drive towards efficiencies and that's what some people suggest is going to solve the global warming. But you suggest something radically different. You have tolerance for inefficiency and even celebrate it to a degree. Could you talk a little bit about how that works?

BILL MCKIBBEN: Well, inefficiencies are particular kinds. Our problem is that we've allowed scale to get out of hand because we've measure everything by how efficiently it produces more

dollars. Okay, so the most efficient farm is the one that produces the most food per dollar and you do that by having an enormous farm with nobody working on it substituting oil for people, driving your tractor over 10,000 acres at a time. As it turns out the most efficient farms in terms of how much food they produce per acre, are ones with more people not less working on them and are smaller, you know. Ten or twelve acre farms are the most productive in America according to the USDA which makes sense. The farmer can know the whole farm, have a good sense of what's going on everywhere. That kind of efficiency is one that we haven't celebrated in the past and we need to.

JON: This is Deconstructing Dinner and that was Vermont's Bill McKibben, author of the book Deep Economy. Bill was interviewed by Bill Baue and Francesca Rheannon in 2007 by Corporate Watchdog Radio, a show produced at WXOJ in Northampton, Massachusetts. The show has since changed their name to Sea Change Radio and you can learn more about their work at corporatewatchdogradio.org.

ending theme

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, Jon 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 deconstructingdinner.ca or by dialing 250-352-9600.