

Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
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Title: Farming in the City XIII / Updates on 'Norway, British Columbia' & 'A Dinner Date with the Olympics

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JON STEINMAN: And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner and episode number 164 of this weekly syndicated radio show and podcast out of Nelson British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I'm Jon Steinman and today we revisit with a popular subject here on the show – FARMING IN THE CITY – an ongoing series that we've been airing since 2006.

On *today's* episode we'll listen to a sampling of recordings from a panel discussion hosted in November 2009 at the University of Guelph. The event was called "Opportunities for Action: An Urban Agriculture Symposium." We'll listen to *two* of the panelists who spoke at the event, the first, Mark Gorgolewski of Toronto's Ryerson University and who is also the co-curator of the school's Carrot City exhibition – a collection of conceptual and realized ideas for sustainable urban food production. And we'll also listen to Katherine Pigott of Kitchener, Ontario. Katherine works with the Region of Waterloo Public Health and has played a key role in demonstrating just how regional health authorities and local governments can support and implement local food system and urban agriculture planning. And in the last quarter of the broadcast, segments of a *regular* contributor to the show – Bucky Buckaw and his "Backyard Chicken" broadcast. Today, Bucky will *dispel* the myth that backyard chickens attract *rats* and he shares insights on raising roosters – an often *prohibited* presence even within municipalities that *do* allow backyard chickens.

And *leading off* the show some updates on a couple of *recent* topics covered here on Deconstructing Dinner, including the ongoing and heated debate over farmed salmon in British Columbia's coastal waters.

increase music and fade out

Over the past four years, Deconstructing Dinner has been examining the open-net salmon farming industry in British Columbia – an industry where 92% of all fish farms are owned by Norwegian multinationals.

As can be expected, a lot has transpired since our *last* episode of the series aired in July 2009 including another *significant* step following the BC Supreme Court case which wrapped up in January 2009 when Justice Christopher Hinkson made a landmark decision that *removed* the regulating of open-net salmon farms from the hands of the *Province* and placed the industry into the hands of Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (the DFO). The decision was made following the work of biologist Alexandra Morton and others who submitted that *because* the salmon farms are in the open ocean, that salmon farms are not farms at all and instead *fisheries*. Because Justice Hinkson agreed, the Constitution of Canada specifically requires that all fisheries be under the jurisdiction of the *federal* government thereby nullifying the Province's longstanding authority over the industry.

While many salmon farm opponents don't hold any greater hope that the federal government will do a better job, those same opponents often agree that the Province has failed in protecting wild salmon from the known and unknown impacts of salmon aquaculture and because the province was *never require* to protect the marine environment there are many who believe that because the DFO is responsible for protecting wild fish, it's only natural that they also regulate salmon aquaculture.

As part of his January 2009 decision, Justice Hinkson gave the Province and the DFO *one* year to transfer the regulating of the industry from provincial hands into federal hands. Fast forwarding to more *recently*, it was agreed that more time was needed for the transfer of power. And so on January 26th 2010, Justice Hinkson granted the federal government a suspension order until December 18th 2010, so that the DFO can further prepare to assume control. As part of that decision and what many salmon aquaculture opponents are now celebrating, was Hinkson's decision to forbid *any* expansion of salmon farms during that period – and he's also prohibited the issuing of any new salmon farm licenses by the Province.

That decision *also* came on the *same* day that box store chain Target, which is the second largest retailer in the US after Walmart, announced that they have eliminated all farmed salmon from its fresh, frozen and smoked seafood products. A move that will no doubt shake up the industry even more than it already has been.

soundbite

Also on the legal front in the salmon farm debate is another concern that was first brought to our attention when we last spoke with biologist Alexandra Morton – but it was *not* one we had time to share on the show. It's an issue that has placed Alexandra Morton *back* into a legal fight with the pressing of criminal charges against her greatest foe - multinational Marine Harvest. Shortly before we spoke with Alexandra back in July 2009, she had been informed by someone in Port McNeil on Vancouver Island of a rather upsetting event. According to witnesses, a Marine Harvest boat was observed unloading farmed fish destined for a breeding facility. After witnesses snapped images and took samples of some of the cargo that was falling out of the nets, it was discovered that lying dead on the ground were juvenile, wild pink salmon. Here's Alexandra Morton of the Raincoast Research Society explaining what happened in mid-2009.

ALEXANDRA MORTON: Recently a fish farm packing boat came into Port McNeil and was carrying broodstocks from a salt water site and loading them in soft buckets into a truck with tanks. And then these fish were going to be taken to a fresh water facility where they would ripen and they could harvest the eggs and start all over again. And the spilling out of this operation were the small little salmon. And a friend of mine was there and took pictures thinking these were Atlantic smolts but when I got the picture it was like "no these are pink salmon fry." And so it took a lot of querying as to how these pinks got there. Well what happened was when they scooped the Atlantics out of the pens these little fish apparently were in the pens. Then in the process of moving them they spilled out because they were too little to be contained by the nets that they had for the big fish. So, this is telling you that there are a lot of wild salmon in this pen if this scoop would catch these fish. It's very hard to catch these little pinks, you know they move fast. So if a scoop of farm fish caught hundreds of these little pinks, one really has to wonder what's going on inside these pens. And I think, you know, fishermen and people of this coast really should be all asking this question "what exactly is in your pens" and are they feeding on our own fish or even if they're not feeding on them they're interrupting their migration. You know you're not allowed to do this in Canada and you can't just have these fish....

JON STEINMAN: As Alexandra went on to explain, illegally possessing juvenile wild salmon is a serious offence in Canada, and she knows all too well the penalties involved when the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (the DFO) finds out.

ALEXANDRA MORTON: When I first found sea lice, I caught some of the fish and the DFO they asked me to catch some for them because they wanted to see the life. So I did that and as soon as I delivered the fish to them they came and sent an enforcement officer and wanted to charge me with I think it was fishing without a permit, which surprised me because I had a fishing license. But they're like nope, for the juvenile fish you need a scientific permit. And so after a long and kind of scary process where you know I had a young baby at the time and the woman who was investigating me said there was a good chance that I was going to go to prison for this. In the end they just gave me a warning and they said for now on you better have a license to do your research and since then I do.

And so when I tried to get a permit two years ago to medivac the wild salmon past the farm and put them out in the ocean they wouldn't give me a permit for that because they said it might damage the fish. So here, Marine Harvest possessed the fish without a permit I'm suspecting and were also transporting and dumping them on the road which clearly isn't a good thing. Now they wrote a report about the incident and the person, the witness wrote a report also, I got to tell you these reports do not jive (laughs). However, I can't really go into it because I wasn't there.

It's really boring to have to continually be tracking these guys down because DFO won't do it. Nobody went and investigated the pens where these fish came from to see if there was more in there and so it seems always to fall to me and others to do this work and we'll see. I mean I'm going to push this issue because I know there's also black cod in these pens and then I know that there's herring. A lot of fish farmers talk to me and they don't want to be identified but when you get the same story for 15 years, I believe it's true.

JON STEINMAN: Alexandra Morton in July 2009 vowed to "push this issue." And since then she has, by requesting that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans investigate this alleged unlawful possession of wild-salmon by-catch. The DFO investigated but never did indicate whether they would lay a charge against Marine Harvest. And so, Alexandra Morton laid the charge *herself*. In December 2009, she found herself in front of a judge in Port Hardy where the Department of Justice indicated that they needed more time to investigate the charge. On January 5th 2010, she was in front of the judge again and the Department of Justice had still not come to a decision on whether to prosecute Marine Harvest and so the Judge requested that the Department of Justice declare their intentions within thirty days. But again, on February 2nd, the same response - more time was needed.

And so at the point as *this* broadcast goes to air on February 11th, it remains unclear whether the criminal charges filed against Marine Harvest will proceed. But, according to Alexandra Morton, she remains optimistic in light of there being witnesses to the alleged crime, samples of the wild juvenile salmon and as she says "written admission from Marine Harvest that they had wild salmon in their possession." Alexandra is also encouraging Canadians to write to the Department of Justice and request that the laws of Canada be upheld to protect wild fish from capture as by-catch with no record of how many fish are being taken. Alexandra invites that those emails be sent to her, and she will then forward them on. More info on how to do so is at deconstructingdinner.ca and posted under the February 11th 2010 episode.

soundbite

Also on the salmon farming front are a few other updates to share including a letter sent to the King of Norway dated January 29th. The letter sent from the Pure Salmon Campaign and was inviting the King who will be visiting Vancouver for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games to learn more about the impacts of Norwegian salmon farms on British Columbia's *wild* salmon. The invite was to a February 16th luncheon where eight Indian Chiefs from British Columbia will be

ending a 29-hour hunger strike opposing Norwegian salmon farms, with each hour representing one of the 29 Norwegian fish farms located within their territories. The event is to also coincide with the February 16th Olympic hockey match between Norway and Canada. The King of Norway has declined the invitation.

And the presence of the Olympic Games are also encouraging the presence of *another* event to be held in Vancouver on February 20th. The event will be a rally to Save Wild Salmon and will feature speakers such as former DFO biologist Otto Langer who lent his thoughts to Deconstructing Dinner last year, Don Staniford of The Pure Salmon Campaign, Chief Bob Chamberlain of the First Nations Leadership Council Aquaculture Working Group, and others will be speaking as well. Again that's Saturday, February 20th and more info on the rally is posted online at wildsalmoncircle.com.

And if you have *not* yet heard previous episodes of our Norway, British Columbia series, links to the series are found on *our* website at deconstructingdinner.ca.

soundbite

This is Deconstructing Dinner. In just a moment we'll listen in on part 13 of our ongoing FARMING IN THE CITY series and listen to recordings from a November 2009 urban agriculture symposium held in Guelph, Ontario. But before we get to that, another update on a more *recent* topic that we covered here on the show - the Olympic Games themselves and our Dinner Date with the Olympics broadcast that we aired back in January. That broadcast aired only days *before* the Olympic torch passed through the home of Deconstructing Dinner, Nelson, British Columbia. And the City was provided with a first hand opportunity to view the very visible presence of soft-drink manufacturer Coca-Cola and their exclusive sponsorship of the torch relay.

The City of Nelson helped organize a long line-up of events showcasing local talent, but, according to one of those performers, *their* event was not without a brief dispute with the Coca-Cola sponsors. With the Coca-Cola trucks being accompanied by their very own light show, one Nelson performer who was commissioned to display a visual performance of his *own* on the side of a nearby building ran into difficulties with interference with his projections coming from the lights emanating from the Coca-Cola trucks. When the artist approached the Coca-Cola employees requesting that they turn their lights off for the duration of his installation, the Coca-Cola employee was disgruntled and concerned that if his boss found out that they had turned their lights off and lost important advertising time that he'd be quite upset. The exchange was certainly reaffirmation from our January episode that some of the Olympics major sponsors have seemingly little concern with the celebration of local culture and are far more concerned with celebrating their brand.

But the Coca-Cola Olympic torch relay spectacle didn't stop there. According to those who attended the full day of events in Nelson, Coca-Cola employees, just as they have across the country, were handing out cans of coke to anyone in sight. When some Nelson residents refused the offer or requested that their *children* not be offered free soft drinks, one Coca-Cola employee expressed *shock* and even challenged anyone who refused the free coke.

And then there was Coca-Cola's *exit* from the City as they headed south towards the Cities of Trail and Rossland. According to Nelson residents, the parade of sponsor vehicles travelled right *through* the residential areas of the city in the very early hours of the morning. One Nelson resident reports that the Coca-Cola employees were shouting through loudspeakers at 4:30 in the morning and not surprisingly, woke them up. We've received similar reports from people in other BC communities who were too woken up at early hours in the morning by Coca-Cola Olympic floats.

And perhaps the most shocking irony of the Olympic events held here in Nelson, British Columbia was the location of the performance stage itself – the traveling stage that Olympic torch relay organizers set up in the various communities along the route. Of course one of the most controversial issues of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games is the abject poverty and homelessness that exists within the province but has *not* stopped British Columbia from investing billions of dollars into the Games. And so perhaps it was no coincidence at all, that the stage in Nelson BC was erected directly in front of the local Salvation Army thrift store, food bank and periodic shelter for the homeless. The stage was so large that for any of the *thousands* of people who gathered that evening, not *one* would have been able to notice that *behind* the spectacle and the shouting MC who was encouraging the community to chant the names of Olympic sponsors, was the Salvation Army – one of many symbols representing the most disenfranchised people in our communities.

soundbite

You can expect *more* updates to past episodes of Deconstructing Dinner in the coming weeks including updates on the status of the University of Guelph's Organic Agriculture program, the 2009 consolidation that took place in Canada's beef packing sector, and the progress made by entrepreneur Martin Gunst and his pedal-powered grocery delivery service in Vancouver.

But on to the focus of *today's* episode and part 13 of our ongoing FARMING IN THE CITY series, we arrive in Guelph, Ontario, home to one of the many stations airing Deconstructing Dinner – CFRU. Thanks to volunteers there, we have two exciting stories to share with you from a November 2009 event hosted by Backyard Bounty – a community-based agriculture project and the University of Guelph. Labelled as an Urban Agriculture Symposium, the event hosted a panel of speakers from throughout southern Ontario who shared unique urban agriculture success stories. One of those panelists was Toronto's Mark Gorgolewski of Ryerson University. Mark is a Professor and Program Director for the graduate program in Building Science in the Department of Architectural Science and was recently the co-curator of an exhibition titled "Carrot City – Design for Urban Agriculture." Carrot City is a collection of conceptual and realized ideas that use design to enable sustainable urban food production, helping to re-introduce urban agriculture into our cities. The exhibition explores the role that designers can play in strengthening the links between urban environments and food, and the impact that agricultural issues have on the design of urban spaces and buildings.

And although it's not necessary to view while listening to his talk, we have posted Mark's slide presentation on our website that you can follow along with for any of you near a computer or mobile device. And that presentation is linked to on our website at deconstructingdinner.ca and posted under the February 11th 2010 broadcast.

MARK GORGOLEWSKI: (applause) Thank you. I'm going to run fairly quickly through quite a lot of ideas and projects here. They build on a number of points that have already been raised. Carrot City was initially an exhibition and it's now grown into a book and a whole larger project on the ideas of how cities may change over time in response to the needs of production of food within the city. So I'm going to say a few introductory words and then I'm going to run through the projects that we have been looking at and that we featured in the exhibition as a taster for you.

So really the whole idea of the Carrot City came from various sort of ideas and the background which I'm sure you're familiar with the thinking behind transition cities, transition towns, localist movements and thinking about what would happen in our cities in a post-eco, post-carbon world and with concerns about health, resource availability and so on. And this was also part of the underlying ideas behind Carrot City. If you look back at cities I think it was already pointed out by Karen, cities used to be very closely related to the agriculture and to the food production and that link has been broken in the last century or so. And with the movements such as transition

towns and localist movements there's a move back towards trying to re-establish those links and there's going to be a necessity to try and re-establish those links in the future.

So what does that actually mean for our towns and our cities. The fact that we've ignored these links in the past century has really developed an urban form which doesn't presuppose that we do need to provide the resources from local sources. Just looking very briefly at Toronto population of around 2 and ½ million, growing at a very large speed of numbers of people every year and with an ecological footprint of something of about 200 times its actual land surface - estimates suggest that about a third of that ecological footprint is due to the food supply into the city. So what can we do about that? What are the opportunities within the city to actually make changes about that? If we look at Toronto and the green spaces in Toronto, probably around about 15,000 hectares of the city could be used for food production. I don't know how much is but it's certainly not a large proportion and that's excluding people's backyards. That's relatively publicly available land or waste land and so on, rooftops, underused waste and public spaces. Estimates suggest that we could potentially possibly feed up to half of the city's needs through that supply. Now, we didn't go into great detail with that sort of analysis. We were looking more at sort of the implications on spaces and places within the city.

So Carrot City developed into this series of ideas about considering how we're going to increase supply of food locally and really what does that mean to the built form of the city. What does that mean to the spaces within the city? And what is the role of the creative individual in actually providing for this sort of potential for food production in the city? So Carrot City, the three curators of the exhibition that are involved in this, we come from different backgrounds. Some of us come from an urban agriculture background. Some of us come from a design background. I come from the sustainable design interest background. It was bringing those ideas together to see how cities could evolve and what could design professionals and urban agricultural experts, what could marrying those two sets of ideas lead to in terms of future for...what would a city be like? What would food production in the city lead to in terms of the sorts of spaces that we would produce?

So I'm going to run through some of the ideas that were shown. It's a mixture of ideas both conceptual and realized which re-imagined some of the spaces in the city. And we looked at it in different scales. So we started the big scale, the scale of project which would affect the city as a whole or could potentially affect large areas in the city. And one project, this is a project in San Francisco by Topher Delaney a landscaper architect where she planted sunflowers in and around waste spaces around traffic intersections. And this project was not only about food production - it was more also about trying to make some social comments about the potential of food production to start to bring societies and communities together. It actually was quite a controversial project because a lot of the people objected to the fact that she hired some fairly disadvantaged people to look after this area and to actually grow this food. And some of the local businesses were objecting that she was attracting the wrong sorts of people into the area.

So it raises whole issues about how we use spaces and what is acceptable use of spaces in the city and so on. Another project, and I apologize that I have to run through these very quickly because I only have a few minutes, but this is an ideas project by Chris Hardwicke, a designer in Toronto about the use of ravines in the city. Here he's proposing that some of the ravines in Toronto, both the existing ravines and some of the ones that have been lost over time should be reinstated as what he calls Farm City, Ravine City as food production spaces. And so he's developed some indicative ideas about how buildings could be integrated and how the Don Valley for instance, could be actually integrated into a growing space with energy production with these vertical axis wind turbines and food production within these urban spaces.

Another similar concept - looking at the larger scale - looking at the Gardiner highway and the potential for actually growing food in and around the Gardiner highway. Now this project actually

imagines greenhouse spaces – you can see a cross-section of the lower level. Since the Gardiner runs east-west, on the south side you can put glazing and capture sunlight and grow food underneath the Gardiner highway. And the project actually envisages little wind turbines running along the top of the highway which with the wind movement of the trucks and cars generating energy which would be used within the greenhouses. And then on the north side there's a food preparation and processing spaces and administrative spaces. Again just a conceptual idea but it could be rolled out in a range of different raised highways in Toronto, in other cities and around the world.

And just quickly this is an idea from the Netherlands which is thinking about connecting different types of activities together into closed loop systems. So the idea of taking greenhouses – they have a lot of greenhouses for growing tulips and other flowers and so on in the Netherlands – linking the energy, the waste and the water cycles with dwellings and with other industrial installations to create these closed loop systems. So the waste from the dwellings, the waste water and other sewage waste and so on would go to the greenhouses, be processed and used as a facility for helping to grow food while heat from the greenhouses would be used for collection of energy and waste heat which would then be fed to the dwellings and so on.

At the scale of the community a series of projects – this is a community greenhouse in the north of Canada which used to be an ice hockey arena which was converted into a growing space. And this is very far north so this climate is not very conducive to growing but they produce a significant amount of food and flowers in this space.

This is a re-imaging of a community food centre in the Fort York region of Toronto by a student looking at how a community food centre could be integrated into an urban environment, into a residential area and actually help to feed that residential area and provide the food resources and other community resources to that location.

McGill University campus actually does grow food within the campus and they have an edible campus campaign where they actually take waste spaces and grow food within those spaces.

A number of projects which we looked at about the potential for roof spaces and growing on the roof. This is actually Trent University where students grow food on the roof of one of their buildings and then that food is offered through a café space on the university grounds to students as healthy food.

We then looked at home and work space and very quickly just talking about some of these. Fairmount Hotel has now built productive roof spaces on their roofs. The Royal York Hotel was one of their firsts, they started doing this. They now do it in a range of their hotels because they find that it helps with producing many herbs for their kitchens.

The Carrot Common in Toronto is looking to put a green roof on their space. I think some of Karen's students actually worked on some designs for this project. You may be familiar with Fritz Haeg, the Edible Estates project where he's fighting against campaigning against the front lawn and the potential that the front lawn has as for food production. And he's done a series of these interventions around North America showing the potential for the front lawn for food production.

On a larger scale, Mole Hill in Vancouver is a whole co-operative community that has amalgamated a whole range of their back spaces around this back lane to introduce community food production. So this is the back lane with a series of productive spaces along the side of the space. And it produces a whole different type of urban environment. And we now even have condo buildings, which is looking to integrate food production so this is one in San Francisco with food production spaces on the roof - very limited but nevertheless there. And this is one

that has just been finished in Toronto which is a co-op that has a food production. It also has a catering school within the space and a restaurant within the space so that the student cooks can actually produce their own herbs and vegetables and cook them and serve them in the building.

And just finally a few images where we looked at the component scale – so the actual little bits and pieces. These are bee hives which were proposed for Detroit to introduce bees and more honey production into Detroit. And it's about the actual components - designing a component that could house the bees but actually provide the sort of design interest in Detroit.

This is an urban chicken house, the egglu, (audience laughs) specifically designed for urban chickens. As Karen was saying everybody's into chickens these days. I'm not a chicken expert. I don't know if it really works but it's the idea of actually designing these special components that help encourage people with food in the city.

Special green roof technologies which allow for putting green roofs on buildings which weren't originally designed for green roofs so that they're lighter than a normal green roof and so they don't require the weight that would normally be required for the supporting of that weight. The vertical integrated greenhouses – so it's the concept of a double skin wall system where you allow growths in between the two glass skins of a building and potentially on a large racking system so they could actually move around so that you could get access to them for maintenance and also so that they would all be equally exposed to sunlight. This is a concept which is being developed by a firm in New York and they're actually trying to put it into a building at the moment.

So I think it's just a very quick run through. Some of the ideas of bringing urban food production and design together to produce new ways of stimulating creative spaces within the city and what the city might look like in the future.

JON STEINMAN: This is Deconstructing Dinner – a syndicated weekly radio show and podcast produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio, CJLY. I'm Jon Steinman and we were just listening to Mark Gorgolewski speaking in November 2009 in Guelph, Ontario. Mark is a Professor and Program Director at Toronto's Ryerson University and their Department of Architectural Science. Mark is also the co-curator of the Carrot City exhibition spoken of there. And you can view the slideshow of Mark's presentation on our website at deconstructingdinner.ca and posted under the February 11th 2010 broadcast. And Carrot City also maintains their own web presence at ryerson.ca/carrotcity.

On today's broadcast and part 13 of our FARMING IN THE CITY series, we're listening in on recordings from a November 2009 Urban Agriculture Symposium held in Guelph, Ontario.

Also at the event and sharing yet *another* ongoing success story in urban agriculture was Kitchener, Ontario's Katherine Pigott. Katherine has worked at the Region of Waterloo Public Health since March 2000 and she's been involved in work that is successfully demonstrating how regional health authorities and local governments can help support the growth of urban food production. Katherine is the Manager of the Region's Healthy Communities and Policy Team and she also sits on the steering committee of Food Secure Canada. Her panel presentation focused on the Region of Waterloo's Diggable Communities Collaborative.

KATHERINE PIGOTT: The perspective stage, now I'm talking about the Diggable Communities Collaborative, is I am speaking from - wearing my public health hat. So I do work at the Region of Waterloo Public Health and specifically we have worked since about 2000 with the notion that food is a broader determinant of health. That was considered fairly fringe at the time but we sort of maintained that food has a huge effect on community health at large because it affects the environment, the economy and social conditions. Also coming from Waterloo Region we are

deeply concerned about the health of our rural communities and certainly food is integral to strengthening our rural communities.

So in about 2005 we came up with a goal for a healthy community food system in Waterloo Region and I'll just read it to you. The goal of the food system is that all residences have access to and can afford to buy safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable food that is being produced in an environmentally sustainable way and that sustains our rural communities. And the role of Public Health in this is to be a facilitator and a catalyst of a healthy community food system. So we've done about six things – we've helped raise awareness; we've built capacity for economic development; we've developed policy; cultivated partnerships; built system-wide networks; and created a plan. I'm very much just concentrating on cultivating partnerships today.

So the partnership to help promote access to healthy food that I would want to talk about today is the Diggable Communities Collaborative. And you'll notice that indeed it is a partnership and I'll just go over those in the partnership. First you'll see Opportunities Waterloo Region – it's the Region for Waterloo's antipoverty organization. It got involved in the partnership because it's concerned about addressing the issue of poverty in Waterloo Region. It's interested in community gardens because it can help give those who are on limited incomes a source of good healthy food. But more importantly is interested long term in looking at urban agriculture as a means of giving people income through growing food and selling it. Region of Waterloo Public Health – we're interested because of our commitment to a healthy community food system but also chronic disease prevention. The Community Garden Council of Waterloo Region is interested because it's the voice of gardeners. These are the people, excuse the pun, they're on the ground doing the gardening all through the spring, the summer and the fall.

So the goals of the project were to consolidate and expand community garden plots, strengthen efforts of Garden Council and volunteer gardeners, and to creatively address systems and policy issues. So we received \$102,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation in 2008. I've already gone over the project partners. We received though further resources from the Together For Health Coalition – we received \$10,000; City of Kitchener pitched in another \$5,000. And I'll be telling you about our work with the University of Waterloo School of Planning and they pitched in a lot of resources in terms of design in making our community gardens successful.

So just some fast facts around community gardens in Waterloo Region. In 2009 we had 40 community gardens which provided over 747 plots to garden and grow food. There were six communal gardens where gardeners plant and harvest their garden together. All these gardens are managed by volunteer co-ordinators who gave about 12,628 hours of their time in 2008. And I have to stress again and again, I mean when we think of this community garden movement in Waterloo Region and elsewhere, it's really the folks who are on the ground who are taking the time, their precious time to build community through building these gardens. And I think it's a pretty staggering statistic and I think that's why we wanted to come together as a collaborative because we really wanted to build on that incredible volunteer commitment.

So briefly, some of the things that have happened with the Diggable Communities Collaborative is we strengthen volunteer efforts by improving communications. Gardeners told us quite clearly they'd like to better ways to chat with each other and communicate. We offered training opportunities, we raised the profile of community gardening, we celebrate successes and we address system and policy issues.

So I am just going to go through these rather quickly. There's now a community garden website that's sponsored by Together For Health and it links gardeners to all kinds of information that they may find useful in terms of managing and organizing their gardens. There's a mailing list and a listserv now so people can ask questions and get responses. There are two discussion forums – one is on the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable and one is through the

Waterloo Region Community Gardeners Facebook group. There was a rather large community gardenfest in May 2009. There were 17 exhibits and 12 gardening workshops and this sort of goes back to the desire of the volunteer gardeners to have opportunities to learn how to run their gardens better and actually have a garden better. In terms of raising profile we had a Waterloo community garden cycling tour in August of 2008 and we cycled from community garden to community garden.

So here I just wanted to comment a little bit about some of the work that the Community Garden Council has done in relation to policy development. And this where I think partnerships can be helpful. Members of the Community Garden Council got together and they took a look at the Regional Official Plan which was recently passed by our Regional Council in June of this year. And the Regional Official Plan is a really important policy document because it really lays out, at a broad level, how the Region will grow the next number of years. And key to that who are interested in healthy food systems is how the regional official plan talks about the whole notion of access to healthy food. So the Community Garden Council got together and it reviewed the Regional Official Plan and it went to Regional Council and did a deputation. And it was really quite well-received by our Regional Council and I'll show you in just a moment some of the results of that and what our Regional Official Plan says.

Secondly, the Community Garden Council has now been thinking about the next step of our Regional Official Plan. I work in a regional government so there's a Region of Waterloo but then there's also the cities of Guelph and Kitchener and Cambridge and we have townships as well. The Regional Official Plan asks that those cities and townships do their bit in terms of helping out with urban agriculture. And again Gary, who's in the audience has been working quite hard developing a policy platform for the Community Garden Council and they will go and speak to all these various levels of government. So, with my Public Health hat on that sort of thing is just enormously helpful for us because I can't, as a bureaucrat or a public servant, go myself. And it's just really quite rewarding and helpful to have volunteers from the Community Garden Council take this on.

However, as a member of the bureaucracy I can certainly discuss in my own way with my colleagues in planning about these issues. So our part is this is that we worked quite hard with the Regional Planning department to try and get them to incorporate access to healthy food and preservation of agricultural lands into the Regional Growth Management Strategy and into the Regional Official Plan. And I guess what I'm just trying to stress is that in a partnership like this, it's just enormously helpful to have different people from different places get involved in the policy process. So I would be doing it internally with my colleagues and the Community Garden Council is doing it as citizens.

So in terms of our Regional Official Plan and what it says, it says "support community gardens wherever feasible by granting access to regional lands and by providing rain barrels, composting bins, compost wood mulch or other forms of in-kind support." And I would like to say that we actually have our first garden now on regional land. The Waterloo Regional Police Services at their Hespeler Road detachment has created our first community garden under the guidance of police officer Jonathan Paton. And it's really quite impressive because we now had this saying that the Region should support community gardens wherever possible but now the Region is actually given some land for that purpose. And our facilities went out and actually dug up the garden and our liability officer has provided liability for the first regional garden.

And this is what I mentioned – the Regional Official Plan also says that area municipalities will establish policies to permit temporary farmers markets, community gardens and rooftop gardens. But again through the Regional Official Plan there it is and so now the Community Garden Council members will go and speak to all these people and try to make sure that that comes to life.

So just a testimonial from one member of the Community Garden Council – “We are able to donate 664 pounds of food to the food bank in 2008. Our church is surrounded by apartment buildings, townhouses, and subsidized housing. Our goal is to have the garden plots used by our neighbours and so empower them to grow food, to grow relationships, to grow in community and with us and each other.” And that’s from Mary VanderMunnick from the Giving Garden in Cambridge.

So, successes and lessons learned. I’m just going to skip down to the third point immediately which is community partners play complementary roles and strengthen collective action. I did at the beginning explain to you who the partners were but what I think what’s really important in this, at least for me is it’s really, really important to have various people working together to promote community gardens wherever you might be. From Public Health where we’ve been able to be helpful as we’ve been able to lend staff support, we’ve been able to work within our wider municipality to promote these issues. Opportunities Waterloo Region has been able to actually take in money and to manage staff and sees this as integral to its mandate of preventing poverty in the Region of Waterloo. And then of course the Community Garden Council which are really the citizens - have been able to take on that role of citizenship by getting involved in policy development but also guiding the project because the whole point of this is to make sure that it’s easier to garden in the Region of Waterloo.

JON STEINMAN: Kitchener, Ontario’s Katherine Pigott. Katherine is with the Region of Waterloo Public Health department and is their Healthy Communities and Policy Team Manager. She spoke in November 2009 in Guelph, Ontario at an Urban Agriculture Symposium. The event was hosted by Backyard Bounty and the University of Guelph, and a thanks goes out to CFRU 93.3fm for recording the event.

For the last quarter of today’s episode of Deconstructing Dinner, we’ll revisit with a regular contributor to the show, Bucky Buckaw and his Backyard Chicken broadcasts. They’ve helped shape this ongoing FARMING IN THE CITY series here on the show. Bucky began producing his 8-minute episodes from Boise, Idaho and has since moved to New York City where his show is now produced. On this first of two segments that we’ll listen to today, Bucky shares his thoughts on a common fear among many urbanites, that backyard chickens attract rats. According to Bucky, that’s just a myth.

Bucky Buckaw show theme

BUCKY BUCKAW: This is Bucky Buckaw with the Backyard Chicken broadcast. I hinted on an earlier show that I was considering moving from Boise, Idaho to New York City. Boise is a good place to learn to raise chickens in the backyard. I raised chickens in two parts of that city and found supportive neighbours and an environment that was well-suited to urban agriculture. I’m still in close contact with the Boisian who adopted both me and my flock and incorporated the original Buckaw hens into his life. My shows will continue to reflect his experience which has been very positive but also reflects many of the challenges that all shrewd urban chickeners must overcome in order to be empowered by the benefits of pesticide-free bug control, vastly improved soil conditioning and composting and of course, fresh eggs.

New York City has fewer outdoor spaces suitable for chickens than Boise and some other cities but it’s still done in backyards throughout the city, particularly in the boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, Staten Island, but also in Manhattan. New Yorkers on the whole are well-educated about food security issues and most of the people I’ve talked to are curious if not downright excited at the prospect of living near agricultural enterprises, including chickens. Many want to experience food production firsthand. There’s an explosion of green markets that sell vegetables, honey, handcrafted cheeses and eggs grown just outside city limits.

Increasingly, the markets feature food grown inside the city limits. After all according to a recent census of agriculture the most productive farm land in the United States is in the borough of the Bronx.

Community gardens are all the rage in New York with over 600 recognized gardens with public hours and at least ten members plus many unofficial community gardens, individual gardens, and a few gorilla gardens planted in abandoned lots or unused public spaces, semi-legally. Several organizations helping to co-ordinate their efforts through education, co-ordination and help with resources, like Green Thumb which was established during the 1978 fiscal crisis to promote productive use of abandoned lots which is now the nation's largest urban gardening program. New York's Food Not Lawns chapter is strong as is Green Gorillas. Food Systems Network New York City is a year old group that promotes food security for New Yorkers through networking and collaboration. And Just Food is a non-profit organization that works to develop a fair and sustainable food system in the New York City region. Through their work on urban livestock it's now become more well-known that New York is one of the many sizeable cities in the United States where owning chickens, at least hens, is legal under city code.

So I finally moved to New York City with my goal of promoting the Bucky Buckaw agenda of replacing non-productive lawns and weed patches with gardens and chickens throughout the nation and breaking down the perceived barriers between rural and urban life. My aim is to show how much food production is possible in North American cities. After all chickens were common in New York and other American cities until the middle of the 20th century. On most of the planet, Europe, Asia and Africa, chickenry never truly disappeared from village and city life the way it has in our region. So I moved and found a job. And after just a few months of handing out my Bucky Buckaw business cards I've been approached by several community gardens and some individual gardeners who are keenly interested in working with me to incorporate chickens into their operations.

And I recently moved to an apartment where I have command of a backyard that I think would make an excellent site for a small city flock. Still, fears and misperceptions crop up when it comes down to making the transition from "yeah chickens would be neat" to "when can we start." That's one reason why I haven't yet talked to my landlord about my desire to eventually have chickens. I'm just starting with a garden in my own space while I work with others who are ready to get started with chickens. Once my landlord has a chance to get to know me, I'll broach the subject.

When I told a friend of mine, a New Yorker for nearly 30 years, originally hailing from St. Louis about my plans, she said "Don't get chickens. Your neighbours will hate you." I replied "but everyone loves chickens. All my previous neighbours loved chickens." To which she replied "Chickens attract rats." Of course I said "No they don't" and started to list off all the small to medium-sized chicken operations I had visited, in addition to my own, that had no rats. But she interrupted me to say that when she was growing up she had neighbours that kept turkeys and chickens and they had rats. Of course her example is purely circumstantial. More importantly, her reasoning is what sociologists call spurious. Just because there were chickens and rats doesn't mean there's a causal connection. Maybe the rats were there first. Maybe they came after the chickens but for another reason.

The truth about rats is they're attracted to messy, smelly situations. In fact, that's their niche in the ecosystem – to clean up after other critters messes, filth and decay. A few rats here and there are not a bad thing especially if there are rat predators around to keep their population in check. However, if there's really a lot of mess, filth and decay in one place, it'll support too many rats in a concentrated area which will lead to the spread of disease. Just like having too many of any critter in one place like chickens in industrialized egg farms, cows in a feedlot or humans in a dirty city or warfare trench.

So when flocks of fowl attract rats, that's a sign that there's too many fowl and they're not being properly cleaned up after. But chickens are not, absolutely not some kind of rat magnet. That is a myth. Just think about it. I saw some rats last night sitting in a park in New York City's Chinatown. Wouldn't a rat rather be in a place like that where weed patches sit inches away from garbage cans filled with containers of partially eaten takeout food – a smorgasbord of hours old Lo Mein, General Tsao's chicken and beef stir fried rice than in my backyard where the organic chicken poop of three small hens will be gathering composted and the eggs gathered daily and where the chickens will spend the night inside several inches of a rigorously tested predator proof egglu.

I live thirteen miles from Chinatown but three miles from a similar trash situation in downtown Flushing, Queens and less than a mile from the waterfront. I don't think rats will be flocking to my place. Coop and yard hygiene is key and keeping a clean coop is so straightforward for small flock birders that it's all but impossible to find references to rat problems on any of the backyard chicken message boards that are so popular on the internet. In fact the only people who seem even aware of the chicken and rat myth are people like my friend. As intelligent and well-read as she is who grew up in that unusual blip of time and place of mid-20th century North America where the notions of rural and urban became so dogmatically segregated that city dwellers have come to imagine that all food must inherently be grown in filthy situations and scrubbed clean in factories before they hit the Hard Rock Café.

But I never finished telling my friend is that not only are chickens bred in urban settings across the globe and were here until relatively recently without attracting rats but that one chicken breed, the Buckeye is actually known as a rat controller because this largest of all chicken breeds eats newborn and juvenile rats the way my miniature Seabright eats large beetles. Even on a less sensationalistic scale I would argue that all chickens when kept properly are in fact a rat preventive because they eat scraps as soon as they see them and are part of a balanced urban ecosystem that helps prevent the proliferation of festering garbage. I'll remember my own speech in case I get the same objection when I approach my neighbours about getting chickens in a few months. In the meantime I'll keep my listeners posted as I spread my agenda and set up flocks like a modern day Johnny Chicken Egg here in New York City. For now, this has been Bucky Buckaw. I had a good time.

Bucky Buckaw ending theme

JON STEINMAN: This is Deconstructing Dinner.

In this second and final Bucky Buckaw segment for today's episode he speaks to another concern raised by many on this topic of backyard chickens - roosters, which, are most often not allowed in cities that do permit chickens. And if you're interested in hearing more Bucky Buckaw segments on your own time, there are many archived on the Deconstructing Dinner website including links to a *complete* archive of shows posted at radio4all.net.

BUCKY BUCKAW: The Bucky Buckaw agenda seems to be progressing. The prognosis is good that I'll see the day when there's a chicken or three or more in every suitable outdoor space nation-wide and globally for that matter. More than ever when I talk about backyard chickens to people I meet, I often find that they've already been thinking about having chickens or know someone who is most people say something about wanting eggs. But they also know at least one other reason to have chickens. Maybe they've heard about how effective chickens are at eating up pesky bugs or how their poop makes excellent fertilizer for whatever food or ornamental plants they'd like to grow.

Just to make sure the people I'm talking to are onboard I tell them that I do my broadcast because I'm convinced backyard chickens are part or all of the solution for everything from urban neuroses to energy and resource shortages, global warming and public health crises. Backyard chickening promotes strong communities, esthetically and nutritionally superior food culture and it just plain makes people happy because chickens are cool. After I deliver my quick speech, I usually ask why they don't have chickens yet or if I can tell they're not really sure chickens are such a good idea in urban areas I ask "why not?" Lately, the answer I've been hearing most has something to do with roosters – urban and suburban chickening does not have to include roosters. Indeed while owning hens is legal in more US cities than not including a broad range from small cities like Montpelier, Vermont and Boise, Idaho to New York City and San Francisco, owning roosters is prohibited. Where it's not explicitly prohibited, chickeners with nearby neighbours often run into problems with complaints. The main conflict with urban roosters, if you haven't already guessed is that the normal behaviour for a rooster is to crow at key points in the day – when the sun rises, when the sun sets or when the rooster thinks its territory might be threatened. That might not be so bad except roosters who live in densely populated areas are likely to be confused about the sunlight situation due to light pollution from street lamps, porch lights, car headlights, stores that never turn off their illuminated signs and people who stay up late with their lights ablaze. And the territory of an urban rooster seems pretty much constantly under threat I imagine - what with automobiles, bicycles, pedestrians, noisy neighbours, airplanes and more through *their* territory. So they crow a lot and that keeps people awake.

There are other reasons not to have urban roosters. For one, estimates of the ideal rooster to hen ratio vary but few people recommend anything less than eight hens per rooster. Roosters will insist on mating frequently and if the ratio is too high the poor hens won't have a chance to recover physically. And since backyard flocks are usually more like three chickens, there really isn't room for a rooster. Another potential problem is rooster aggression. Reports of roosters being overly aggressive with humans or other pets vary and I suspect that roosters who were handled a lot are less likely to attack strangers, children, or cats and dogs, especially those from varieties bred to be docile, like Silkies or Cochins. But clearly the safe bet is not to keep roosters in the city.

I want to assure potential chickeners that they can enjoy all the major benefits of backyard chickens without having roosters around. Truthfully it probably does make things a lot easier. Hens get along fine without roosters. They will lay eggs without a male presence just as female humans and other animals will go through their reproductive cycles regardless of whether they engage in reproductive acts. People who understand this think it's obvious but I have run into a lot of people, even a couple who were raised on farms, who didn't understand this basic point of biology. The only thing you won't be able to do without roosters is run your own breeding program which is fine because there are plenty of people living outside city limits who can provide the rest of us with baby chicks or fertilized eggs. Still some city folks do wind up with roosters, more or less unintentionally. Either they buy what is called a "straight run" – chicks who are a few bucks cheaper by the dozen because their sex has not been determined or because they get a mistake due to the inaccuracy of most methods of sexing baby chicks.

When you wind up with a rooster, which you won't find out for sure until you've raised the animal for a few months – most of the way through its adolescence, you don't have a lot of choices. You could try to find a home for it – a possible but notoriously difficult task. You can humanely slaughter it, which is pretty difficult for a lot of us softhearted urban chickeners to handle and then make a soup stock out of him because the meat is not going to be tender or even chewable. Or you can try and keep the rooster and see if it works out. If you want to try and appease complaining neighbours there are several approaches that might or might now work. Some have had success with constructing lightproof coops which could discourage a rooster from crowing before dawn – maybe. Or a soundproof coop which will keep it from feeling

threatened from the sounds of passerby and will muffle its crows – maybe. The thing is there's not much that a 21st century urban chickener can do to make a place for backyard roosters. And that's a pity because in defense of roosters, they really do deserve a place in the urban landscape. Why? Because they're beautiful – always the more colourful and fancifully featured of their breed. Because they've got their own roostery, cocky charm. Because they'll help defend your yard and hens from urban predators. And most of all because a sound of a rooster crowing is only annoying to the ears of someone who has decided to be annoyed by it.

Everyone who has complained to me about a rooster keeping them awake or the fear that a neighbour *might* get a rooster who will keep them awake will admit that they can sleep through dog noise, traffic noise, jet noise, partying hipster noise. And yet the sound of a crucial part of the food chain, signifying the agricultural roots our nation has all but lost – sounding the clarion call to the return to food security and self-sufficiency, pisses them off. Or maybe they were in the Peace Corp once or did an ecotour or a year abroad in one of the many civilized countries on the planet where backyard agriculture still exists and they lived in a village where the roosters kept them awake their whole stay. And yet, somehow the rest of the village managed to get their rest. Not that I suggest annoying your neighbours. But I do believe we can transition to a day when people incorporate roosters into their expected noise range. The first step is for those of us with the chicken inkling to go ahead and get hens and get our neighbours use to the idea of backyard fowl. Once we've gained massive acceptance of hens, that's when we'll move in with the roosters. And that's the advanced Bucky Buckaw agenda.

This Bucky Buckaw. I had a good time.

ending theme

JON STEINMAN: 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.

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