

Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY
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Title: Exploring Ethnobiology I - Preserving Traditional Foodways Among Indigenous Youth

Producer/Host: Jon Steinman

Transcript: Nicole Dawkins

Jon Steinman: And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner – produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY and heard on radio stations around the world including CICK 93.9FM Smithers, B.C. I'm Jon Steinman.

In May 2010, Deconstructing Dinner immersed itself into the field of ethnobiology – ethnobiology being the scientific study of relationships among peoples, plants, animals and environments. It's a field of research that Deconstructing Dinner has come to recognize represents an *invaluable* depth of knowledge for anyone interested in the subjects of food security and food sovereignty. As peoples throughout the western world increasingly are seeking to *reconnect* with their food, there's a lot to be learned *from* ethnobiologists and in particular their research subjects – most often indigenous peoples around the world who are *too* seeking to protect and maintain their relationships with their environments and their food. These relationships are in almost all cases incredibly dynamic and can offer all peoples some critical wisdom and knowledge on how we can all responsibly preserve existing food systems and build new ones.

Having spent many days attending two ethnobiology conferences held on Vancouver Island, we now have in our possession and ready to share an inspiring series of recordings which, over the coming weeks and months, will make up this Exploring Ethnobiology series here on Deconstructing Dinner.

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In the coming weeks and months, we'll be learning about many topics that revolve around this subject of ethnobiology. We'll be listening to a one-on-one interview with well-known Canadian ethnobiologist Nancy Turner of the University of Victoria who describes in detail what ethnobiology is, where the field of research is going and how ethnobiology can play a role in supporting the principles of food security and food sovereignty. To share a list of upcoming topics that we will be covering, here are just a few....

- the ethnobiology of beekeeping,
- commercial harvesting of bushfoods in central Australia,
- reinstating indigenous food practices in an urban landscape
- the immaterial components of food sovereignty
- traditional harvesting of eelgrass off the northern coast of Vancouver Island

- the use of salt and salt substitutes among the Cherokee
- and, cereal grain farming in Iroquoia

So those are just some of the topics that we'll be featuring as part of this "Exploring Ethnobiology" series.

But launching the series today, we'll hear audio from what might stand as *the* most inspiring session that we recorded... it was a forum of indigenous *youth* who have recently been engaged in a digital storytelling project. As is now commonly found among many indigenous communities worldwide, many youth have become significantly if not *entirely* disconnected from the traditional ways of their ancestors. One of the *responses* to this threat that *some* of those youth have employed is found among the Nuuchahnulth people whose territory stretches 300km along the Pacific coast of Vancouver Island. Nuuchahnulth (which translates to "all along the mountains and sea") are a family of 15 First Nations and connecting some of their *youth* has been the Nashuk Youth Council a project of Uu-a-thluk – the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council's Aquatic Management Board. Uu-a-thluk enables 15 of their First Nation communities to work collaboratively with other governments and groups for the sustainable management and economic development of ocean resources within their territories. Involved in carrying out that role has been the Nashuk Youth Council who have been seeking out stories and knowledge from their elders about their people's traditional foodways. Those stories and knowledge are in turn being shared digitally *by* the youth through short videos that each of them have since produced.

In May 2010, the Nashuk Youth Council took to the podium at the 12th International Congress of Ethnobiology hosted in the community of Tofino. The gathering brought together ethnobiologists and others interested in the field from around the world to share their research and stories.

For the next hour we'll hear *from* those youth, we'll listen in on their digital stories and we'll *also* hear from others at the forum who shared their heartfelt comments on the importance of young people like the Nashuk Youth Council who are seeking out their heritage and their way of life through food.

The forum was launched with introductions from *some* of the youth council members including some introductory words from the chair of the Nashuk Youth Council – 18-year old Nickie Watts of the Tseshaht First Nation in Port Alberni. Nickie also introduced and shared her short film titled "Pool of Cheap Labour," which, like the many clips we'll be listening to today are all linked to in their original *visual* format at www.deconstructingdinner.ca.

Nickie Watts: Hi everyone, my name is Nickie Watts and I'm from the Tseshaht, Port Alberni area, and I am the chair of the Youth Council.

Keenan Jules: Hello and welcome everybody, my name is Keenan Jules. I am from Tseshaht and Kyuquot and I am part of the Nashuk Youth Council.

Herbert Mountain: Hello my name is Herbert Mountain but I would rather be called Tony. I am from Alert Bay in Stoney Creek. I have been a part of Nashuk for a couple of months now.

Damon Van-Tarrant Rampanen: Hello everybody and good morning. My name is Damon Van-Tarrant Rampanen. I am from Ahousaht and Hesquiaht and I have been a part of Nashuk Youth Council since it began, for a couple of years now.

Nickie Watts: So basically what we are going to talk about today is youth participation and leadership and youth being more active in their communities and in everything that involves our future— because most of you guys are working towards the future and the next generation. We are going to talk about just being involved, especially with our Youth Council, we have been jumping into things that usually youth aren't involved with. A lot of people have been coming up to us and asking for youth voices. Part of our Youth Council is about learning about our heritage and where we come from. A lot of youth today, especially from the communities don't know where they come from and about their heritage. So I will be showing my digital story up next. It is about me, my family and where I come from, my daughter and traditional foods. When the digital story comes up, you will see that my daughter will not be eating the traditional foods— instead she'll be eating something else.

Nickie Watts' digital story: Our elders talk about how, with the new generations, we are losing the knowledge— that it is disappearing before our very eyes. With every elder who passes, the stories pass with them. Along with the stories, we are losing traditions. The way we used to live as First Nations. With our new houses, our cars, and our drive-thru food, we as First Nations people are losing who we are. When the white man first came and built the residential schools, he wanted us to change so that we acted like them, to change everything about us as people. They wanted us to be a pool of cheap labour for their industries—and if they could they would have changed our skin colour too.

The whole purpose of the schools was to change who we were, to change the way we live, to kill our culture— and we fought it. We as people fought it so hard. Then finally, when the potlatch ban was over and the last residential school was closed, we celebrated— we were accepted, finally.

But now our young ones are refusing to learn, to keep everything we fought so hard for. So after all this time, we may lose what we have tried so hard to keep— and it's our children who are going to change everything. Now which way they go? It is up to us and not them, *us*. Now today, as the tradition dies what happens to our children: the new generations?

I am a teen mom. I can date my heritage back eight generations, back to when we lived on the Broken Group Islands where we had no electricity and we hunted, fished and harvested our own food. There was a recent exhibition of painted ceremonial curtains at UBC where my family's traditional curtain with me and my daughter was depicted. That curtain contained all the women and the generations on it.

My name is Nickie Watts and I am Tseshah First Nation in Port Alberni, BC. My native name is Hit-a-ook, which means "into the fire." I am 18 years old; I was 15 when I had my daughter. She is 2. Before my daughter, I didn't see what was important and what I needed to do for my community. Now I am part of a First Nations Youth Council. I am the Chair, actually. I am one of those few First Nations youth who is trying my hardest to keep this culture alive— to see it going strong, even after the Elders have all gone.

My mother grew up with my great-grandmother and because of that she holds onto a lot of the old values and traditions. My great-grandmother's name was Elizabeth Gallick and my mother lived with my great-grandmother because her mother was an alcoholic. And normally you wouldn't think that would be a blessing, but because of it my mother holds a lot of knowledge and brings it down to me and my daughter. When my mom was still a teenager, she was acknowledged by an old man from Ahousaht named Camina. During a tribal council meeting he gave her a carved and painted paddle and said, "you are the best dancer of your generation of Nuu-chah-nulth women. We still hold that paddle in our house today.

I come from a very respected family because we still hold many of the traditions brought down from generation to generation. And because we still hold many of the traditions, we still use medicine found around us and harvest right from our home land. When we get sick we drink tea from certain tree bark, we pick berries in the summer, fish in the spring, herring eggs right after winter. We pick cedar bark from May to June, and crab all year round. (*applause*)

Jon Steinman: That was the audio from the digital story produced by Nickie Watts of the Nashuk Youth Council. The video was presented in May 2010 at the International Congress of Ethnobiology held in Tofino. The visual version of her story along with the many others we'll be hearing on today's show are archived on-line and linked to from the [Deconstructing Dinner](#) website.

Another digital story shared at the forum was produced by Waylon Andrews and titled, "Taking the Sting out of Nettle." The story was introduced by Keenan Jules who first shared *his* thoughts about the digital storytelling project.

Keenan Jules: I am going to talk about how great of a tool it is for youth, being that we live in a technology-based society— everyone is on computer and uses them for everything. It's a great tool for youth because it is easy. We can simply take pictures and edit them on a computer, and use that to present to other youth what we have learned in a simple manner that we understand and show it on the internet, iPods. There are just so many ways we can present and show what we have learned to everyone out there in the world.

Last month, we went to Victoria to do this. It is where we made all of our digital stories. It was a fun experience, very easy and you can see how youth would enjoy doing this.

I would like to introduce videos that other youth, along with us, in Victoria— I would like to show their videos.

Waylon Andrews's digital story, "Taking the Sting out of Nettle": (guitar in background): My name is Waylon Andrews, I am the son of Jesse Chennery. One bright sunny day, the two of us, my little brother and two of my friends, Andrew and Carl, went to harvest sting nettle. After a few stings and more than a few groans, we startled to get into the swing of it. Walking deeper and deeper into the forest, we found larger patches of nettle. Taking just as much as we needed, we decided to start heading back. After falling and sinking into many mud pits, we were all covered in dirt and grime, my brother most of all. We finally made our way back home and started researching uses for nettle. We found that you can

use it to make surprisingly strong rope, very healthy tea, you are able to steam it and eat it, use it as a strong energy drink, or help for arthritis, it is a great natural fertilizer and it is one of the healthiest greens in the world. We also found a way to bring down the sting of the nettle with another plant called plantain. After chewing the leaves of the plantain into a paste, you rub the paste into the area where you have been stung. Within a half hour you should begin to feel relief.

Stinging nettle grows in larger quantities in areas that have been disturbed: clearings, rich soil areas, ancient villages and median areas. It is an uncertainty between many people if nettle is indigenous or if it was introduced from Europe. Both may be true: North America has types of nettle that are not found in Europe and vice versa. Named “Indian Spinach” both coast Salish and interior tribes ate the young leaves and stems, but no one is sure if this had always happened or if it was introduced by Europeans.

As a rope stinging nettle is incredibly strong; the First Nations would use it to make fishing nets, snares and lines. To treat arthritis with it they would whip the plant across the area that had hurt, and it was said to help. But maybe you just don’t notice the arthritis when you were stinging all over. The flavour of the nettle is similar to spinach and eaten almost the same way. The boiling or steaming of the plant softens the stinging hairs to the point that they are ineffective, though I always found that my mouth buzzed a little bit after eating it. Elders would use the water from boiled nettles as a weak but very healthy tea. The nettle plant can vary from three to seven feet high, and is covered in very fine, soft hairs as well as harder, stinging hairs tipped with a barb that comes off when brushed against. It then injects three different chemicals with really long names, so they must not be really great to have in your body. Nettle today is one of the most valuable herbal remedies, and can treat anything from excessive bleeding, to breaking down kidney stones. This is a plant that we will all want around, and hopefully it will be for a long, long time. *(applause)*

Jon Steinman: Waylon Andrews and his digital story titled, “Taking the Sting out of Nettle.” Nickie Watts and Waylon Andrews’ digital stories are great introductions into the *other* youth productions that we’ll be listening to on today’s show, but also speaking at the forum and providing another great introduction into the work of the Nashuk Youth Council was John Rampanen of the Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations. John has worked closely with the youth *on* their digital storytelling project. He believes that the battle that these youth are taking on is the toughest one his people have ever undertaken, because the departure from traditional ways that so many indigenous communities are struggling with is most noticed among youth.

John Rampanen: The Nuu-chah-nulth People are proud people: we are a whaling people; we are warriors; and perhaps under all of that we are storytellers. Since time immemorial, since the first days of creation for our people, our teachings have been passed on generation to generation through the form of storytelling. We call it haahuupa, the teaching stories. Traditionally it was our grandparents who would sit with us and haahuupa young grandchildren, up to the age of about 5 or 6. They would spend day in and day out with their grandchildren, teaching them through many, many stories we had—stories of their own life experiences, stories with colourful characters, stories that had all these wonderful underlying morals. And these stories would be told repeatedly throughout our lives. They would be told to us at different intervals, different stages of our life, and would bear with them different meanings and different purposes. We would interpret them different depending on what stage of life we were in. So as a child we may hear

one story and we would gather certain pieces of knowledge and information from it. As an adolescent we would hear that exact same story and we would again interpret it differently and carry with us a different message and a different moral. And again as adults, we would listen to the story and we would again receive different teachings and information from the same stories. And of course when we became Elders ourselves, we would pass those teachings back on in the continuous cycle of the stories, and the impact of them, the meaning of them would continue to move forward.

So, for thousands of years our people had formed this way of life that was crafted here, in this specific region of the world. We established this relationship, this connection with the environment around us, with the land. We became masters of the sea. We established a spiritual connection and recognition with all life that was around us, and started to appreciate the interconnectedness that we hold as human beings with all of life that surrounds us, whether it's a rock or a tree or an animal or a fellow human being. We appreciate and respect that there is a spiritual aspect to everything around us. And that spirituality has been integral to our survival as First Nations Peoples. Our ability to prepare ourselves, to cleanse ourselves, to protect ourselves, has staved off disease, and illness and sicknesses and other things for thousands of generations. But over the matter of just a few generations, that has all changed.

It has changed very abruptly for our people. And now we are living in a time, and in a reality where we need to reflect back on this recent history and start to identify what is it that changed. What are those fundamental pieces within our way of life that changed? How has that change impacted us? How can we shift back to a more traditionally-based lifestyle?

Through some of the work that we've been doing with the Nashuk Youth Council, we recognize that we can't go back to a completely traditional way of life. But we appreciate that there are some fundamental strengths and values that exist in the teachings of our grandparents that need to stay alive. But they need to be told in a different way. We have also recognized that many young people today do not connect very strongly or meaningfully anymore with their grandparents. We recognize that this is an area that needs to be strengthened.

So Nashuk Youth Council has done their part to shorten that gap between the elders and the youth and they have used a series of different tools. You've heard of some of the impacts of colonization that my nephew Damon shared earlier, the onset of disease like measles and smallpox when Europeans first started to arrive; the development of the Indian Acts system, the incorporation of the Residential Schools system, the banning of our potlatch and our ceremonies which lasted for approximately 67 years. There were many, many hardships that were put in front of our people in the last short little while in our history. What really encourages me is the fact that our people still remain. Our people, our cultures, our spirituality are still there. It has survived through all of these hardships, and there is something that is still intact, that our Elders carry with them in their memories. They need to pass that off to the next generation, so that they can use their voice, so that their voice becomes stronger so that they can share it, not only with their peers within their communities but with people worldwide. To say: this is who we are as Nuuchah-nulth people. This is our ancestry, this is where we come from. This is what makes us who we are, this is what makes us proud to be who we are.

And they've done a wonderful job of this so far. One of the tools that they have been using we call digital storytelling. We recognize that the generation of today is born into a technologically advanced society compared to even the generation that I was from, and definitely from that of my parents and my grandparents. We've also recognized that that lifestyle contributes to that gap that exists between Elders and youth. Many of our Elders are computer illiterate and have difficulty accessing internet opportunities that are out there, and yet the youth are very well versed in that and engage in a lot of social networking and other measures within that particular realm.

So we recognized that this is a weakness, this is a deficiency but this can also be turned around— a double edged sword. It can also be used as an opportunity for our people. What we've done over the last few months is, we've brought Elders and youth together here in Tofino, from around Vancouver Island and we have encouraged those conversations to take place. We've encouraged the Elders to share teachings, with a theme around traditional indigenous foods, the knowledges and practices around those foods, and we've encouraged those conversations to happen. And not only for those conversations to take place between the Elders and the youth, but we've encouraged the youth to document those conversations, to record it with audio equipment, with digital cameras and to edit it later on, and to share those teachings with their peers and their communities.

And perhaps even more importantly than that, is not just having those conversations, documenting and sharing it, but it is taking it back into your community and breathing life back into those practices. We feel it is very important to not only talk about who we are, who we were, what our practices were what the knowledge is that our ancestors have passed on to us, but even more importantly, we need to bring those practices back and make them alive again. These youth are doing a wonderful job of providing that service to our communities.

I mentioned earlier that we are whaling people, we are warrior people, and I recognize these young people as being warriors among our communities. I really commend them for the work that they do because the battle, the confrontation that they are taking on is probably the hardest one that we have had to endure as First Nations peoples because it has absorbed right into who we are. Internally, we are struggling to maintain a connection with our spirituality, with our culture and with our language because there is a dominate society that surrounds us, and influences us, and has instilled those changes within our way of life. And yet these young people bravely take it on, on a day to day basis and encourage others, and in fact, there numbers continue to grow. It is really optimistic and hopeful to see that that is taking place.

So digital storytelling is one of the tools that we use. We use it to build our communities, and re-build our culture, and to tell these stories. These stories that young people have to share are important to be heard, and be shared afterwards. So I'd encourage all of you, as witnesses and observers to the stories that they share, to continue that gift of generosity that they are sharing today and share it with others. Pass it on to other people, especially to other young people in other indigenous communities. So that they may learn from some of the efforts that are taking place here, or vice versa, that we may learn from other efforts that are happening in other places as well.

With that, I just want to again commend the work that Nashuk Youth Council has been providing to our communities, and I look optimistically and hopefully towards a much brighter future for these young people, for my young children, and for their next generations as well. Thank you. (applause)

Jon Steinman: This is Deconstructing Dinner and that was John Rampanen of the Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation addressing the 12th International Congress of Ethnobiology held in Tofino, British Columbia.

Deconstructing Dinner attended the congress and today's episode marks part 1 of our series Exploring Ethnobiology – ethnobiology is a scientific field of research involving the relationships among people, plants, animals and ecosystems. On this part 1 of the series, we're listening to recordings from a youth forum where all delegates at the congress listened in on the work of the Nashuk Youth Council. Shared as part of the forum were the digital stories described by John Rampanen – two of them we heard earlier on the show...and yet another digital story produced as part of the project was created by Belinda Lucas.

Belinda Lucas: Hello, my name is Belinda Lucas, and I am a young lady from Hesquiaht First Nation. I am a student attending the VAST education center, and a member of the Nashuk Youth Council. Our youth council was brought together about a month and a half ago. We came together because all of us wanted to do the same thing: we wanted to learn more about our culture, language, traditions and where we come from. We also wanted to get more youth involved in learning about our Nuu-chah-nulth ways.

Our very first gathering was held in Ahousaht and it was a really good turnout. Our second gathering was held in Bamfield, and the third was held in Tahsis. This past year we have travelled back and forth to Tofino for retreats, we have learned a lot in the past couple of months. The Ahousaht singers met us in Tofino to teach us some songs and to share dinner with us. That same evening Tom Curley came in and talked to us about our traditions. He told us, "Don't be scared to speak out loud because everyone wants to hear what you have to say, don't worry about making mistakes because no one will care."

Our youth council learned a lot together, such as: how to harvest fish eggs, we learned little bits of language, a few songs and dances, we learned about medicines, and we learned of the role of Tyee Ha'wilth, the chief. We went for some forest walks with Gisele Martin and learned about the plants you can eat. We learned a lot of different traditions from Elders who are from different tribes. We are now learning how to host a conference.

Being a part of this youth council has really made a big change in my life. I have learned how to respect myself, others around me and the environment. It has shown me that I am not alone and that we are all one. This youth council has helped me to remember who I am as a young Nuu-chah-nulth lady. Being a part of a group like this just helps me to understand just how important it is to learn our language, culture and traditions, not only for me but for the younger generations of kids. I love teaching my little brother what I have learned and what I am still learning today.

Traditional foods are a big part of my life, I have learned a lot from my Elders. I love listening to my Elders because it is so important for our future. The Nashuk Youth Council has brought me joy and pride to be who I am today. (applause)

Jon Steinman: This is Deconstructing Dinner, produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY. I'm Jon Steinman. You were just listening to a digital story produced by Belinda Lucas of the Nashuk Youth Council.

Another of the youth members sharing their thoughts at the Ethnobiology Conference in Tofino was Damon Vann-Tarrant Rampanen from Ahousaht and Port Alberni. Before Damon shared his *digital* story with the congress, he spoke about colonization and residential schools, stories of which remind us of some of the key points in time when traditional indigenous foods and practices were lost. His recounting of events also helps reinforce why the work of sharing stories on traditional foods is so important among indigenous youth.

Damon Vann-Tarrant Rampanen: I'm going to be talking about the topics we have been covering over the past years, 3 years which means passing on the grandparents teachings, and with that I am going to be talking about colonization and residential schools. But before I get into that, I just want to say that the first step in engaging youth and hearing their voices, is getting youth involved and informed. One way to do this is through peer-education. We first got involved with the Uu-a-thluk, and learning about our culture and shaping our future through peer-education. We learned about Nuu-chah-nulth history and culture and then taught it through nanaiqsuu haahuupa, which means sharing the grandparents' teachings—through the past years we have been studying culture, such as traditional ways to gather food, medicine, everyday tools and language. We have gone back as far as the Europeans and have made our through a timeline to present day. We have talked about colonization and about when Europeans first arrived here and put First Nations people on reservations and started the residential schools.

Residential school had one of the biggest impacts on our history when Europeans first arrived. The effects of colonization on First Nations people were big. They made us change who we are, from the way we dress, to everyday life and slowly downsized First Nation people populations. In 1778 Captain James Cook was discovered by Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations. In 1868, the Act for the Gradual Civilization of Indian Peoples was passed, also known as the Indian Act. With that, there was the creation of Reserves, the puppet Band Council was established — The Canadian government defines Indian based on blood quantum. In 1884, a law was passed prohibiting face painting, potlatches, smokehouses, sundances, marriage ceremonies etcetera.

In 1890 the residential school system was put into effect. When the residential schools started children were taken away from families and forced to learn and adapt new teachings of the Europeans. They were told to forget everything that they know: their language, songs, dances, and teachings from the grandparents. First Nations kids were beaten if they spoke the language, and highly punished to the point that kids shut down in fear. They didn't have names in residential schools, they were given numbers—and to this day there are people who still know their numbers. Young children were raped by the people involved because they couldn't do anything about it, and if they tried, they would be punished and beaten.

To this day, youth are colonizing ourselves by the clothes we wear, the games we play and how we must buy something because so-and-so has it; and if you don't have it, you don't want to be known as the kid who doesn't have Call of Duty or an iPod.

Jon Steinman: Damon Vann-Tarrant Rampanen speaking in May 2010. Damon also shared his *digital* story which he produced as part of the Nashuk Youth Council's efforts to share stories about their traditional indigenous foods. Damon's digital story is about his grandfather and titled Veres Alku or New Beginnings.

Damon Vann-Tarrant Rampanen: I'd like to introduce my video, and it means a lot to me. My video is about a man who moved here when he was seven years old from Finland. He was born in 1943, during World War II. It was very hard at that time, so he migrated to Canada. That man would be my grandfather, John Rampanen. His Finish name is Calivi Johannes Rampanen. I'd like to show you my video.

Damon Vann-Tarrant Rampanen digital story "Veres Alku or New Beginnings": My name is Damon Vann-Tarrant Rampanen. I am a Nuu-chah-nulth youth from Ahousaht. My First Nations name means "whale jumping out of the water" and I live in Port Alberni and I'm part of a youth council who are getting back in touch with their history and culture. I want to talk about a man who means so much to me and has given me teachings throughout my life. When I think about traditional foods, I think about my papa. He has helped my family carry on tradition: he fishes, he sets out traps, he hunts deer, he knows what's good to use from venison and what's bad. He's an altogether, everything kind of guy.

Although he's not Nuu-chah-nulth, he has acquired a lot of skills and knowledge of our people and he passes this on to his grandchildren. My papa is a very unique person. Although he was not born here, he has made a very strong connection to the land. This is his story.

My papa was born in Loviisa Finland during World War II. His given name is Calivi Johannes Rampanen. He was born December 25, 1943. After World War II, Finland was in war debt with Russia and life was hard. After the war, Calivi's father Joel was a mason and sauna maker. One day a healthy Finish-Canadian was admiring a sauna that he built and invited Joel and his family to move to Canada. Calivi moved here to Canada with his family. His father Joel Rampanen, his mother Lampi Rampanen, his sister Silka and her husband Oka, and brothers Eric and Danny. They wanted a new beginning but adjusting here at first was difficult because the new culture, the new language and new change. That prompted Calivi to change his name to John.

His family took a vacation to British Columbia and fell in love immediately because it reminded them of Finland. Through the 1960's and 70's, John travelled throughout B.C. as a logger and fisherman. As an outsider to Canadian culture, he was always closer to First Nations people. His willingness to learn and connection with nature provided him the opportunity to gain teachings from the First Nations people.

John married Charlotte Seitcher in the mid 1970's and they have been together for 39 years, and legally for 35. They started a family together: Tamara, Joe-James and John Rampanen. Each has been taught traditional culture and food; and to this day John still teaches his family the traditional ways.

One day John went to a restaurant and they were waiting to order some food when the waitress brought out a bottle of ketchup. Not knowing what this red, thick liquid was, because there was no such thing as

ketchup in Finland, he still wanted to be polite and eat it. Soon after they had finished having some of this mysterious red stuff, the waitress came back and saw they had finished it, and so came back with an even larger bottle of ketchup. They all started to shout, “no more, no more!” When my papa told us this story, it brought back joyful memories of his past with his brothers and sisters— I haven’t seen my papa laugh so hard in my entire life.

My papa has been a big inspiration in my life, because he proves how you don’t need to be First Nations to live the lifestyle and culture. I am grateful for all the teachings my grandfather has passed down and continues to teach me every day. And I will continue his teachings to the future grandchildren when I am older. (applause)

Jon Steinman: This is Deconstructing Dinner and that was the digital story produced by Damon Vann-Tarrant Rampanen and shared with delegates of the International Congress of Ethnobiology held in Tofino, British Columbia. Damon is a member of the Nashuk Youth Council.

The digital story which is also available in video format and linked to from the [Deconstructing Dinner](#) website, was presented in May 2010 to the 12th International Congress of Ethnobiology held in Tofino, B.C. Deconstructing Dinner attended the congress and today marks part 1 of our Exploring Ethnobiology series which will be featuring recordings *from* the Tofino gathering and another conference held just prior to that one in Victoria.

The Nashuk Youth Council is a project of Uu-a-thluk – the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council’s Aquatic Management Board. The Nuu-chah-nulth people are made up of many First Nations whose territory comprises much of the Pacific coast of Vancouver Island. With many of those communities losing touch with their traditional ways of life (and as is the focus of today’s show, their traditional foods), many Nuu-chah-nulth youth are learning about those traditional foods by accessing the knowledge from their elders and sharing those stories *digitally*, producing short films made up of photos and recorded storytelling.

Another of the youth who spoke earlier and who *also* shared *his* thoughts about the Nashuk Youth Council before sharing *his* digital story was Keenan Jules.

Keenan Jules: I’ll just start off by listing a couple accomplishments that we have achieved. So, last month we were in Victoria and we were named 2010 Food Champions for all the hard work and dedication towards learning traditional foods and traditional ways of getting this food and fishing.

We have organized and planned a youth conference for a year— it has taken a year to plan and prepare. We have been learning the importance of our culture, what it means to us and how important it is to keep that tradition going throughout the generations.

For the past few months we have been learning song and dance from our teacher Greg Charleson. He has been teaching us the Nuu-chah-nulth anthem and dance, the Kwiqutha. We are going to be doing those songs and dances in our youth conference coming up, so it should be exciting. (applause)

So basically our future goal is to learn all our traditions and hopefully learn our language more—maybe eventually fluently— and pass this on as we grow older and there is more youth around us, and influence other youth to learn the tradition too. To learn where they come from and how important it is to keep this tradition alive as it is fading as time wears on. (applause)

Jon Steinman: And here's Keenan Jules digital story.

Keenan Jules: My name is Keenan Jules and I am from Port Alberni. I come from Tseshahat and Kyuquot First Nations and I am part of the Nashuk Youth Council.

Over the years many factors have come into play that have affected our resources for gathering our traditional food. Factors such as: the arrival of the Europeans, the introduction of newer, unhealthy foods, and our ecosystem taking an enormous impact over the years. Fast food has played a huge role in the way that we, as First Nations people, live and eat. Overtime we have almost completely stopped eating our traditional foods, and eat fast foods that are affecting our health almost daily.

Environmental contamination has been a long standing concern for First Nations peoples since the early 1960's. Mining, energy and forestry projects, chemical pollution from industries, toxic waste management, depletion of the Ozone layer, and global warming have disrupted ecosystems and have caused climate change affecting species populations, endangering wildlife and disrupting natural cycles.

Before Europeans arrived Oolichan grease was a prime trading item and the Kwakwaka'wakw people eagerly anticipated the arrival of Oolichan each year. First Nations people could fish and hunt without any laws forbidding us to hunt and fish.

When the Europeans arrived, it wasn't long before Europeans had begun to trade foods from their homelands. Foods like flour, beef, chicken, pork, sugar, molasses, and other items such as alcohol and tobacco were shipped in by the ton. In short time, all of the indigenous foods our people ate were quickly replaced with the foods that Europeans introduced.

Now, in present day, we are affected more than ever by the excessive consumption of unhealthy foods. Where we once gathered food on a daily basis and interacted with the environment, we have now become dependent on grocery stores for our daily food.

Before the colonization of our territories and the introduction of new foods, there was little to no accounts of critical diseases among our people.

Jon Steinman: The digital story of Keenan Jules of the Nashuk Youth Council.

On today's episode of Deconstructing Dinner, we're launching our series titled Exploring Ethnobiology – a series that was sparked by our *new* interest here on the show to take a closer look into this relatively unknown field of research. Ethnobiology is the scientific study of relationships among peoples, plants, animals and environments - a subject that Deconstructing Dinner has come to recognize represents an invaluable depth of knowledge for anyone interested in the subjects of food security and food sovereignty.

As peoples throughout the western world increasingly are seeking to reconnect with their food, there's a lot to learn from ethnobiologists and in particular their research subjects – most often indigenous peoples around the world who are *too* seeking to protect and maintain their relationships with their environments and their food. In May 2010, Deconstructing Dinner travelled to Vancouver Island to attend two conferences on ethnobiology – one in Victoria and one in Tofino. On today's part 1 of the series, we've been hearing from indigenous youth who spoke as part of a forum at the International Congress of Ethnobiology *in* Tofino where they shared their successful efforts to access traditional food knowledge from their elders and share it through digital stories – stories that we've been listening to on today's show. The youth are part of the Nashuk Youth Council – a project of Uu-a-thluk – and organization of the Nuuchah-nulth people. The Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council represents 15 First Nations spread out throughout the Pacific coast of Vancouver Island.

Taking us through to the end of the show today, we'll listen to three more digital stories of Nuuchah-nulth youth and another from a youth of the Kwakwaka'wakw group of First Nations on Northern Vancouver Island and who lives in Victoria. We'll also hear some remarks made by the President of the International Society of Ethnobiology who, like many of the delegates at the congress were deeply inspired by the work of these youth and who were left inspired to return to their countries and communities and share the work of the Nashuk Youth Council with their youth at home. But first, another digital story produced by Letitia Rampanen about a 3-day digital harvest gathering in Tofino where youth and elders met to discuss the digital storytelling project that we've been showcasing here on the show today.

Letitia Rampanen: My name is Letitia Rampanen. I am a young First Nations woman from Nuuchah-nulth territory, Ahousaht and Hesquiaht. I am also a mother to a one-year old boy named Maddexx, who is from Hupacasath.

The last few months I have been given the opportunity to assist the youth and elder digital harvest workshop at the Botanical Gardens in Tofino, B.C. on February 24th-26th. The workshops started off with introductions and warm-up games for lunch we were lucky to have the boy's basketball team from Ucluelet cater almost every kind of traditional seafood.

The gathering, making and sharing of traditional foods brought us all together and created a family like environment. It was quite the experience for some of the youth where it was their first time trying some of the traditional foods.

The facilitators shared stories of our traditional teachings and the Elders shared their knowledge as well as different kinds of plants and herbs and their purposes.

The traditional food that we had ate was so fulfilling and energizing; a group of us went for a walk along Long Beach. Some had so much energy to burn, that they went for a dip in the ocean. The beach was full of different creatures, excitement and exploring. None of us wanted to leave, but it was getting dark and close to dinner. For dinner we shared some more great traditional foods and enjoyed our time playing games and singing, watching short videos and other activities.

The next day was the colonization day. Our workshop got into depth about colonization and how it affected our traditional ways of living. We ate food such as bacon, eggs, hash browns, hotdogs, chilli, Kool-Aid and more. We were blessed to have been supplied a lot of traditional foods, so we did not eat all colonization foods the entire day. By evening, almost everyone was exhausted. Most of us had noticed the difference between traditional and colonizational foods, the impact it has on our bodies, energy level and our appetite.

The workshop was a great way to bring youth, the next generation and Elders with traditional teachings closer. Together we can make a stronger and brighter future for our culture, our land and most of all our people.

Jon Steinman: And that was the digital story of Letitia Rampanen a young woman from Nuuchah-nulth territory. Another story produced as part of the digital storytelling project was by Leonita Jimmy titled “Good Feelings.”

Leonita Jimmy: Hello, my name is Leonita Jimmy, I am 18 years old. My mom is Else Jimmy from the Carrier Nation in Burns Lake, my father is Leonard Henry from Pakwichin.

I have noticed that my generation’s version of traditional foods has changed from foods such as sea urchin, Oolichan, halibut, and so on to foods such as Red Robin’s, McDonald’s, Wendy’s and good home-cooked meals. But food still has the same effect of bringing people together, whether growing it, shopping for it, preparing it, or eating it.

Food is also used to celebrate at birthdays, anniversaries, and potlatches. Potlatches are a cultural way of bringing people together, to celebrate life, to give names, memorials and other cultural things. I am also learning to traditional dance with the Nuuchah-nulth group, which allows me to dance at potlatch parties.

Growing up I have learned how to cook some traditional foods and lots of non-traditional foods from my mom, grandma and other family members. I have a huge family. I have always been told to cook with good feelings because whoever eats your cooking will feel your feelings. I love to bake things such as cookies and cupcakes. My favourite traditional foods are salmon, moose, elk or deer meat.

I believe that it is very important for youth to become connected with Elders to learn about the traditional ways of life and foods. I also believe that youth and children should eat healthier and become more active.

Jon Steinman: Good Feelings – a digital story produced by Leonita Jimmy.

And the last digital story we’ll listen in on was produced by James Dakota Smith a Kwakwaka’wakw youth from Northern Vancouver Island living in Victoria. His video is titled, “The Way of Our Elders” and reflects the way in which digital storytelling efforts by youth can be equally applied among those living within urban centres.

James Dakota Smith: My name is James Dakota Smith and I am a Kwakwaka’wakw youth.

This being said I would like to say that I am thankful and grateful for the Coast Salish people whose territory I live in and feast in. This is the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) in Victoria B.C. I got involved here in the youth department doing volunteer work and attending conferences through the youth mentor here.

The mandate of the VNFC is to encourage and promote the wellbeing and health of urban aboriginals. The VNFC is a place to gather information about many different things like traditional foods, which has been a way for our people. We gather it, then process it, smoking fish and drying berries— these are just some examples.

This is Carrie; she is the cook at VNFC, which means she is in charge of the food here. Our community garden was too small and Carrie had a vision for a bigger more accessible garden for our community. The new community garden has potatoes, strawberries, raspberries, broccoli, fresh herbs and plenty more. They even have a little smokehouse by the new community garden.

Carrie and the Friendship Centre provide lunch to the community and dinner at drop-in every day. We also have vegetarian cuisine for all those non-meat eaters, as well as water, apples, radishes or even bread that you are welcome to pick up anytime. The Friendship Centre also has people coming in from the community such as fishermen that sell traditional foods like crab to the staff and anyone who happens to be around at the Friendship Centre at the time.

The VNFC is a gathering place and what this gathering place offers us is a place to share knowledge— what all this information can provide us with is better eating habits. Fast food versus our traditional eating habits: it's become almost too casual to go eat a Big Mac at McDonald's.

For our people, food is more than edible energy— it's a medicine. We are genetically geared towards our traditional diet, so it should be easy to understand how the drastic change in our eating habits has had a negative effect: causing a rise in diabetes, heart problems and obesity.

We need to quit polluting our oceans; we need to go back to our old ways, the ways of our Elders.

Jon Steinman: “The Way of Our Elders” – a digital story produced by James Dakota Smith.

Again, all of these digital stories are available in their visual form by linking to them from the Deconstructing Dinner website at www.deconstructingdinner.ca and our June 3rd, 2010 broadcast.

Many of those digital stories were shared at the 2010 International Congress of Ethnobiology held in Tofino British Columbia with many of the people in attendance coming from all over the world some of whom were also indigenous peoples and others who research the relationships indigenous peoples have with their environments.

What was clear following the forum where the Nashuk Youth Council presented their digital storytelling productions was how inspirational their work was and is to all of those in attendance. People from South Africa, Australia, Peru, and other nations *all* mentioned that they would be bringing that inspiration *back*

to *their* communities and their youth. One of those comments came from the President of the International Society of Ethnobiology – the host of the Congress. Maui Soloman is of the Moriori people from Rekohu or Chatham Island east of New Zealand. Maui now lives in Wellington, New Zealand.

Maui Soloman: I just want to thank the young people for your awesome presentation. My name is Maui Soloman, President of the ISE. I just want to say how inspirational your presentations were today, and that we've all learned a tremendous amount from what you've had to share with us— not only in terms of the knowledge and the courage and the vision that you, young people are showing, but you've also taught us about how to give presentations. Short and succinct, heaps of variety, humour, and how to keep everyone awake. So I thank you for that, as well.

As an indigenous person a Moiriori from Rekohu, a little island down in the deep of the South Pacific, just east of New Zealand. My people have been struggling to revive their culture and identity for the last 25-30 years, because we were considered to be extinct— we've had a pretty big struggle. We have been sitting here, taking notes on some of the things we can do with our youth down on our Island. So I thank you on behalf of the Moiriori people for giving us inspiration and knowledge and ideas that we can take back to our own community. (applause)

Jon Steinman: Maui Solomon – the President of the International Society of Ethnobiology.

Today's broadcast has been archived on our website at deconstructingdinner.ca and posted under the June 3rd, 2010 episode and part 1 of our Exploring Ethnobiology series. You can expect many more recordings from the conferences we attended so stay posted either to our website, our Facebook page or to your local radio station airing this weekly show.

I should also acknowledge the support of Norine Messer in helping facilitate the work of the Nashuk Youth Council. Norine is the capacity building coordinator *for* Uu-a-thluk. Also to be acknowledged is the Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Indigenous Food Network for supporting this work we heard today and it's on their YouTube page where all of the digital stories we heard today are archived in their original visual formats.

And to close out today's show, here's one last *short* clip of one of the *cutest* digital stories shared as part of the youth forum at the Tofino congress and it features the youngest participant in the digital storytelling workshop, Tseeqwatin Rampanen – the son of John Rampanen who we heard from earlier on the show. The production is titled, "Deekers in Seitcher Bay" and we have just a few clips from that production followed by the song of the Nu-chah-nulth peoples.

Tseeqwatin Rampanen's Digital Story "Deekers in Seitcher Bay": (Sounds of birds) My name is Deekers. I go to Seitcher Bay. I have a Papa and a Daddy. I get crabs and I get oysters too. I go home and share food.

song of the Nu-chah-nulth Peoples

ending theme

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

I thank my Technical Assistant, John Ryan. The theme music for Deconstructing Dinner is courtesy of Nelson area resident Adham Shaikh.

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