

Canadian Association for Food Studies



The panel: Cathleen Kneen, moderator, Patty Williams, Sandra Nicholas, Jamey Coughlin, and Fraser Hunter

Food Security: Making the Nova Scotia Connection

CHARLES Z LEVKOE

ON MARCH 8th, 2007 over 90 representatives came together to join in the inaugural gathering of the Nova Scotia Food Security Network. The diverse representatives included academics, activists, business owners, chefs, non-profit organizations, farmers, fishers, First Nations, government, public health and community members. The goal was to publicly and formally launch the network and begin to ask questions about how the network should look and function in Nova Scotia.

The event's keynote speaker, Cathleen Kneen, Chair of Food Secure Canada, opened the event by inspiring the group with her experiences building networks, connecting farmers with eaters, strengthening agricultural communities and addressing the food issues globally and locally.

Cathleen emphasized the idea of 'food sovereignty' and the imperative for both producers and eaters to take ownership and be active and engaged in the food system. Following Cathleen, a panel of four individuals active in food security development discussed issues in Nova Scotia. The first speaker, Jamey Coughlin, the Business

Development Specialist with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture focused on the current state of agriculture in the province. He emphasized the importance of fostering sustainable connections between food producers and consumers as a way to strengthen this vital sector. Fraser Hunter, President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, spoke passionately about the current agricultural crisis. He questioned why farmers struggle when corporations are making record profits. He noted that Nova Scotia is unique in size and agriculture commodities and that the province is at a crossroads where agriculture will either take off or fizzle.

Next, Patty Williams, an associate professor in the faculty of Applied Human Nutrition at Mount Saint Vincent University and incoming Canadian Research Chair Food Security and Policy, discussed some of the leading edge research and innovative food security projects and partnerships that have been developed in the province.

NOVA SCOTIA continues on following page

Williams Awarded Canada Research Chair

DR PATTY WILLIAMS (Mount St Vincent University) has been awarded a Canada Research Chair in Food Security and Policy Change. According to the CRC programme's website, the five-year appointment was awarded to allow Dr Williams to further study "the economic, social, political and cultural factors involved in food security, for example recommending policies that will ensure Canadians always have access to nutritious, healthy and culturally acceptable food."

Dr Williams will lead a team of researchers at Mount St Vincent University who will explore food security across life span and contribute to effective policy building in Canada and internationally. This appointment is of great importance to both food studies scholars and food security activists.

We are pleased to see that Dr Williams' dedication to issues of food security and her exemplary research are being recognized in this manner.

Food Culture in Spain

DAWN JOHNSTON, LISA STOWE, AND GWENDOLYN BLUE

Faculty of Communication and Culture, University of Calgary

"HOW DO YOU GET these jobs?" That is the general response from colleagues when we tell them we are taking 23 undergraduate students to Spain for three weeks this May to study the food culture of one of the hottest "foodie" destinations in the world. It sounds suspicious, but this is no university-funded vacation. It is part of the University of Calgary's Study Abroad program and a highly sought-after academic experience. We (Dr. Dawn Johnston, Ms. Lisa Stowe, and Dr. Gwendolyn Blue, all with the Faculty of Communication and Culture at the University of Calgary) have been organizing and planning this program for the last year, from proposal phase to curriculum development. Though the workload is heavy, it has also been inspiring and energizing.

SPAIN continues on following page

Critical Spaces of Food: Theory and Practice Workshop

Queen's University, March 2, 2007

ALISON BLAY-PALMER

THE ONE-DAY WORKSHOP featured Queen's University Visiting International Scholar Dr. Kevin Morgan from Cardiff University, Wales. Kevin spoke about the moral economy of food and new public procurement initiatives in the EU. Additionally, Roger Keil presented his work on SARS in Toronto, while Wayne Roberts discussed the challenges to growing food systems in multiple contexts. We were also fortunate to hear about two local food initiatives in Kingston – the Farmers' Market @ Queens and Food Down the Road. The latter is a new initiative to educate and con-

sult with the public in a year-long set of workshops and discussions. The goal is to develop a made-in-Kingston blueprint for food security.

The workshop included practitioners, academics (both faculty and students) and citizens. It is anticipated that the day's discussions will form the basis for an edited volume, as well as provide content for an edition of the syndicated radio show 'Deconstructing Dinner.' Lively discussion and good food were important components of the entire day. There were ample opportunities for sharing and comparing.

SPAIN *continued from previous page*

On May 5, 2007, we leave for Madrid and we are anticipating that the students are going to travel and see a country through the eyes of a food theorist and enjoy every minute of it.

Food Culture in Spain falls under the special topics category in the Faculty of Communication and Culture at the University of Calgary. Dawn Johnston and Lisa Stowe created and began teaching a fourth-year Communications Studies course in Food Culture in 2002, and each year, there has been increasing demand for a more advanced, specialized Food Culture course. In 2006, Gwendolyn Blue joined the faculty, bringing another strong research interest in the area of Food Studies. Among the three of us, and with the University of Calgary's emphasis on international academic experience, we had the perfect recipe for a Food Culture Study Abroad program. This specially focused course on Spanish Food Culture will take some of the topics cov-

ered in the existing Food Culture course – food and politics, food and history, food and regionalism, food and nostalgia – and apply them to the Spanish experience. The itinerary for the upcoming trip includes a detailed study of the Basque regional food experience, including tapas bars and gastronomic clubs. Students will also tour a cheese making facility, an artisan olive oil press and the medieval enclaves of Toledo and Cordoba to see, first-hand, the Moorish influence in Spanish cuisine. Because Spain has the highest number of Michelin stars per capita in Europe, we'll also be exploring the culture of haute cuisine in Spain, to try and understand what makes the Spanish restaurant scene the darling of the Michelin Group.

While we will all enjoy the benefits of eating and drinking our way through Spain, students will nevertheless face the rigours of academic study – lectures in the field, papers written outside of the comfort zone of their libraries and computers, and field research "on the fly". Students are responsible for a research presentation in Spain, a food-focused travel journal, and three research papers upon return to Canada.

We will be pleased to share our curriculum, readings, and "road stories" upon our return. Even with the inevitable challenges of group travel, and the inevitable extra pounds that will come from three weeks of Spain's best food and wine, we are looking forward to what we hope will be the ultimate pedagogical adventure in Food Studies.

NOVA SCOTIA *continued from from previous page*

She acknowledged how important it is to strive towards food sovereignty in order to make real change. Finally, Sandra Nicholas, the Director of Advocacy with FEED Nova Scotia raised concern about the number of Nova Scotians who are struggling to put food on their tables. She noted the need to increase the minimum wage to a level that ensures all Nova Scotians can live healthy lives.

One of the main desired outcomes of the gathering was to get input and feedback from the speakers and participants around how a provincial network could be useful, relevant and beneficial. Responses were diverse and included ideas of connecting people and organizations, sharing and disseminating information, knowledge and stories, promoting openness, inclusiveness and diversity, being a voice advocating at a provincial level and of course celebrating.

For more information on the Nova Scotia Food Security Network contact foodsecurity@msvu.ca or rita.macAulay@cdha.nshealth.ca.

Biologique Canada Organic

IRENA KNEZEVIC

In the fall of last year the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) released a draft of their regulation for the new national organic label. The regulatory framework is to be phased in over the next two years and is intended to eliminate much of the confusion surrounding organic products. Consumers have found it difficult to decipher how organic products are tested and which are legitimate. The CFIA decided to keep the current regional certifying bodies in place, but those agencies will now have to seek federal accreditation. Producers certified by accredited agencies will then be able to label their products with the Biologique Canada Organic label. The label will allow for consumer-friendly organic products and at the same time resolve some of the issues in international markets, which have traditionally demanded a national Canadian label. Critics, however, argue that this label is yet another form of mediated information about food, and that it will allow for further disconnection between consumers and producers.

Volunteer Editors Needed

We are looking for volunteer editors of future newsletters. Please contact Alison Blay-Palmer at palmera@post.queensu.ca

REVIEW

La Vía Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants

Annette Aurélie Desmarais

With foreword by Walden Bello
Spring 2007

Fernwood Publishing

THIS IS AN INSIDER'S LOOK at one of the most important rural social movements of recent times. La Vía Campesina has become a powerful and radical opposition to the globalization of a neo-liberal model of agriculture. This book analyzes La Vía Campesina's strategies and actions as peasants and small-scale farmers engage in a desperate struggle not only for survival as producers of food and cultivators of rural culture, but also to keep people on the land and to build viable rural communities everywhere.

Nettie Wieb, a professor of Church and Society at St. Andrew's College and former president of the National Farmers Union, describes the book as "... a comprehen-

sive, informative, and intelligent analysis of the current global agrarian resistance to the industrialization and corporatization of farming. The book takes us inside the organizational dynamics to reveal the courage, commitment, and imagination it takes to build coherent resistance. This book offers invaluable information — and articulates hope."

Farm leader Paul Nicholson says that, "La Vía Campesina captures the struggles, proposals and actions of a movement that embraces a new understanding of solidarity among farmers, peasants, farm workers, indigenous peoples, and rural women in the North and South as they engage in a common struggle against neo-liberal, free-trade, and pro-corporatization policies."

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ANNETTE AURÉLIE DESMARAIS was a farmer in Saskatchewan, Canada, for many years. She has a Ph.D. in geography and



teaches in the Department of Justice Studies at the University of Regina.

New Brunswick Partners In Agriculture

Mission: We are an agriculture producer organization dedicated to the advancement of New Brunswick Farm Families through Education, Awareness, Communication and Advocacy.

New Brunswick Partners in Agriculture is a provincial non-profit organization affiliated with the Canadian Farm Women's Network (CFWN). It was founded in 1986. In our day-to-day work we focus on three integrated components of the farm family business, which are:

- Science (Food-safety, Genetically Modified Foods, Environment & Sustainable Agriculture)
- Business (Cost of Production, Net Farm Income, Return on Investment, Marketing, Globalization)
- Lifestyle (Farm Family Succession Planning, Agri-Culture, Unpaid Labour, Stress, Family Violence)

Every year the organization hosts one Annual Provincial Spring Event according to interest of its members. 2006 marked the 20th anniversary of the organization, and the Spring Event explored some of the concerns surrounding the science area from food production to food consumption, including the application of agricultural biotechnology on food crops. We also wanted to show any possible links between food safety and a potential pandemic outbreak with its implications to food security in New Brunswick. The chosen 'Future of Food' theme also highlighted the importance of the film 'Future of Food.' The film is one of a series of nine DVDs that will be used by our organization to educate the public about the impact of GMO foods, patenting, plant breeders' rights and their relationship to food security and food sovereignty. The forum part of the event, with the focus of a possible New Brunswick pandemic outbreak, proved to be the most valuable segment that made all participants aware of the complexity and unpredictability of the current situation within our food chain from farm to fork.

If anyone is interested in more information about the report and/or our organization please contact Gabrielle via e-mail at bigkranch@nb.aibn.com

CAFS Mission Statement

The Canadian Association for Food Studies (CAFS) promotes critical, interdisciplinary scholarship in the broad area of food systems: food policy, production, distribution and consumption. CAFS recognizes the need for coordinated interdisciplinary research efforts in response to societal needs for informing policy makers, assessing the outcomes of community-based work, and demonstrating the environmental and social impacts of changes affecting food systems and food policies. Members are drawn from an array of disciplines including (but not limited to) adult education, agriculture, anthropology, economics, environmental studies, health studies, home economics, human nutrition, geography, philosophy, policy studies, public health, rural studies, sociology, social work and urban planning. Membership is open to academics, students, professionals and others interested in food studies research. CAFS encourages research that promotes local, regional, national, and global food security, but does not advocate or endorse specific policies or political platforms.

CAFS Second Annual Conference

Bridging Food Communities: Making Public Knowledge, Making Knowledge Public

Monday, May 28th to Wednesday, May 30th

University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon

This year's CAFS conference will feature a dozen sessions and more than 40 papers. Peter Andr e, Maria Campbell, Nettie Wiebe, and Patricia Williams will address the conference theme in the opening plenary on Tuesday morning. The sessions will cover a variety of topics, from alternative agriculture to genetically modified foods, from food policy to food security in Northern communities. Martha Stiegman will be screening her documentary about the struggles faced by small-scale fisheries in Nova Scotia titled *In The Same Boat?* The Association reception will take place at 6pm on Tuesday, the 29th. Special events are planned for Monday, the 28th and they include a walking tour of the University of Saskatoon campus, *A Taste of Saskatchewan* – an evening event at the Wanuskewin Heritage Park, and an all day rural field trip that will highlight current issues in agriculture, food and rural life in Saskatchewan.

For more information and to register for the special events, please visit <http://www.foodstudies.ca/>

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