

ACCESS

BRITISH COLUMBIA

October - December 2003

Ancient Grain Making New Shoots

by Cassandra Chowdhury

Out of a desire to break free from the “tyranny of rice cakes,” Janet Féirín’s **Arán Foods Inc.** was born. After starting life at the East Vancouver Farmer’s Market, the spelt bakery at Venables and Commercial Drive is now in its sixth year of business.

An ancient cousin of wheat, spelt provides not only a solution for those with wheat intolerance, but an organic, non-modified and high-protein grain alternative.

The move from Farmer’s Market to bakery was aided by a loan from the **Women’s Enterprise Society of B.C. (WESBC)**. Of her experience, Féirín says, “They would be a little bit forgiving...in terms of the money that I owed them. Part of how I made that work was I was constantly on the phone with them, saying, ‘Here’s my plan.’ ”



Janet Féirín's aim is to help people eat in a way that is both healthy for them and good for the world around us.

Business is brisk, but the bakery on Commercial Drive is quiet much of the time.

“Growth, for me, is relative,” says Féirín, in an online video produced by the Open Learning Agency — www/ssfp.ca/video.html. “For me, growth was to scale down, and to have the bakery open one day a week, and to be doing wholesale.”

Wholesaling allowed Féirín to reach a much wider range of customers, with other local retail and distribution businesses

benefiting mutually from the network.

For more information about Arán Foods Inc., call 1-888-551-2726 or visit their Web site at www.aranfoods.com. ♣



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A Link to the Past: K

by Karl Yeh

Tourism in the Okanagan is getting a boost from an old abandoned railway line — the Kettle Valley Steam Railway. This historic rail line was completed in 1915 as a primary transportation route from the Kootenays and the southern Okanagan Valley to the rest of B.C. However, with the opening of the Hope-Princeton Highway in 1949, the rail use declined until its eventual closure in January 1964.

In 1989, the **Kettle Valley Railway Heritage Society** was established in partnership with the Royal B.C. Museum, the B.C. Forest Museum and the B.C. government. The Society managed to save 16 kilometers of the old track from Trout Creek Bridge to Faulder, just west of Summerland. Through countless volunteer hours, the non-profit society repaired and maintained the remaining tracks, while acquiring a fully restored 1924 Shay steam engine and two 1950 vintage CPR rail cars.

September 17, 1995, marked the first steam train to run along the Kettle Valley Railway in 40 years. The Shay steam engine traveled on the tracks between Trout Creek Bridge and West Summerland.

The **Okanagan-Similkameen Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC)** has been actively

involved in the Kettle Valley Railway by providing funding and assistance in financial planning. This assistance allowed the Society to construct an engine shed, acquire a second engine and rail car, and develop a fundraising program to help extend the track. They also helped the Society leverage additional funds from the provincial government.

“The Okanagan-Similkameen CFDC has been very supportive in the railway’s efforts to become a viable historical tourist attraction,” said Debbie Kinvig, general manager of the Kettle Valley Steam Railway.

Now in its eighth season, the railway is well on its way to becoming a major tourist draw, attracting more than 22,470 passengers last summer and providing \$3.5 million back into the local economy. The Kettle Valley rail line is on a scenic route frequented by hikers and cyclists alike, with steam trains running over the last remaining portion of the old railway.

For more information about the Kettle Valley Steam Railway, call 1-877-494-8424 or visit their Web site at: www.kettlevalleyrail.org.✻

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Kettle Valley Railway



L to R: Kettle Valley Railway Heritage Society's Rick Valenti, Summerland Mayor Tom Johnson, Conductor Ron Belisle and Western Economic Diversification Secretary of State Stephen Owen enjoy the day at the Kettle Valley Railway Station.



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WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION CANADA

Candy Brings New Life

by Laura Francis-Lamb

Salmon and candy — two tastes you wouldn't normally put together. But when you combine them and mix in the business savvy of three enterprising youths and traditional Aboriginal recipes, you have a combination for a great business and a surprisingly tasty treat.

With business guidance and mentorship from Adams Lake Indian Band youth coordinator Craig Duck Chief and band member Ralph Wilson, 16-year-old Charmayne Jules and 17-year-olds Calvin Arnouse and Naomi August started **adams lake indian candy inc.** to gain first-hand business experience manufacturing, marketing and distributing their unusual product, *Indian Candy*.

Duck Chief describes the special treat, made of Sockeye salmon, brown sugar, spices and a “special ingredient” as “a high quality healthy alternative with an unusual taste.”

Depending on the spices used, Indian Candy can taste very sweet, spicy-hot or smoky. “Indian Candy can be a good snack on its own,” Wilson assures, “but it also goes well in macaroni, chili, soups – even in chocolate too.”

The youths approached the **Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) of Central Interior**

First Nations looking for financial assistance for their business idea. With business planning and marketing advice from the CFDC and funding from the federal First Nations and Inuit Youth Business Program and the Adams Lake Indian Band, their 100% Aboriginal-owned and operated business is quickly becoming a thriving success.

“Without the full support of our community and band, it would have been very difficult to start the business,” says Jules.

Started in August 2002 and incorporated in May 2003, the company's products are already carried in five major grocery outlets. The youths market their goods locally through word-of-mouth, tradeshow and Pow Wows. They've received requests from as far away as Japan, the U.S. and Europe.

The three young partners hope to remain true to their traditional roots by eventually creating a joint venture with their band to start a licensed fish plant in the area and use fish from local waters. The company currently has a joint agreement with the Scowlitz First Nation in the Sto:Lo First Nations territory to manufacture, package and smoke the salmon in its federally-licensed fish plant. “Demand was increasing and our band has no commercial license so we have to buy our fish elsewhere,” says August. “We

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Life to Traditional Taste

wanted to help create jobs in other First Nations communities.”

While their main product is Indian Candy, the company has branched out to other areas as well, including First Nation design chocolates shaped like forest animals, and sweaters, shirts and hats bearing their business shield. They routinely experiment with new flavors and products.

Currently working out of the youth centre on the Adams Lake Indian Band Reserve, the three have big plans for the future. “Our goal is to become an international company doing business in a whole new way,” says Arnouse. “We believe our company is ready for distribution on a large scale.”

For more information on adams lake indian candy, call (250) 679-4481, or visit their Web site at: www.geocities.com/adamslakeic/.

For more information about the programs and services offered by the CFDC of Central Interior First Nations, call (250) 828-9833 or visit their Web site at: www.cfdcofcifn.com.✻



L to R: Charmayne Jules, Kalvin Arnouse and Naomi August holding their Special Achievement Award for Best Oral Presentation, won at the Business Development Bank of Canada's 2003 E-Spirit Aboriginal Youth Business Plan Competition in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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A Network of Professionals Ready to

Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) established the Western Canada Business Service Network to ensure that western Canadians have direct access to products and services that support their economic success. The network is a partnership of organizations with over 100 points of service across the West where entrepreneurs can find what they need to establish a business or make it grow, with services ranging from practical information and funding options, to counselling and support.

In addition to WD offices in Vancouver, network partners in B.C. include:

Canada/British Columbia Business Services Society

601 West Cordova Street
Vancouver BC V6B 1G1
(604) 775-5525 or 1-800-667-2272
www.smallbusinessbc.ca

Société de développement économique de la Colombie-Britannique

#200, 1555 – 7th Avenue West
Vancouver BC V6J 1S1
(604) 732-3534
www.sdecb.com

Women's Enterprise Society of B.C.

#103, 1635 Abbott Street
Kelowna BC V1Y 1A9
(250) 868-3454 or 1-800-643-7014
www.wes.bc.ca

Community Futures Development Corporations

CFDC of Alberni Clayoquot, Port Alberni
1-877-724-1241
CFDC of Boundary Area, Greenwood/Grand Forks
(250) 445-6618 / (250) 442-2722

CFDC of Cariboo-Chilcotin, Williams Lake/Bella Coola
1-888-879-5399

CFDC of Central Interior First Nations, Kamloops
(250) 828-9833

CFDC of Central Island, Nanaimo
1-877-753-6414

CFDC of Central Kootenay, Nelson
(250) 352-1933

CFDC of Central Okanagan, Kelowna
(250) 868-2132

CFDC of Cowichan Region, Duncan/Sooke
(250) 746-1004 / (250) 642-1510

CFDC of Fraser Fort George, Prince George
(250) 562-9622

CFDC of Greater Trail, Trail
(250) 364-2596

CFDC of Haida Gwaii, Masset/Skidegate
(250) 328-5594 / (250) 559-4499

CFDC of Howe Sound, Squamish
(604) 892-5467

CFDC of Mount Waddington, Port McNeill/Port Hardy
(250) 956-2220 / (250) 949-7888

CFDC of Nadina, Houston
(250) 845-2522

CFDC of Nicola Valley, Merritt
(250) 378-3923

CFDC of North Cariboo, Quesnel
(250) 747-1212

CFDC of North Fraser, Mission
(604) 826-6252

CFDC of the North Okanagan, Vernon
(250) 545-2215

CFDC of Okanagan-Similkameen, Penticton
(250) 493-2566

CFDC of Pacific Northwest, Prince Rupert
(250) 622-2332

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to Work for You

CFDC of the Peace Liard, Fort St. John/Dawson Creek

(250) 785-6794 / (250) 782-8748

CFDC of Powell River Region, Powell River

(604) 485-7901

CFDC of Revelstoke, Revelstoke

(250) 837-5345

CFDC of Shuswap, Salmon Arm

(250) 832-2118

CFDC of South Fraser, Abbotsford/Chilliwack

1-877-827-8249 / (604) 793-0196

CFDC of the S.E. Region of B.C., Cranbrook

(250) 489-4356

CFDC of Sto:lo, Chilliwack

(604) 858-0009

CFDC of Strathcona, Campbell River/Courtenay

1-877-338-2775 / (250) 334-4415

CFDC of Stuart-Nechako, Vanderhoof/Fort St. James

(250) 567-5219 / (250) 996-0112

CFDC of Sun Country, Ashcroft

(250) 453-9165

CFDC of Sunshine Coast, Sechelt

(604) 885-1959

CFDC of Thompson Country, Kamloops

(250) 828-8772

Nuu Chah Nulth Economic Development Corporation,

Port Alberni

(250) 724-3131

16-37 Community Futures, Terrace

(250) 635-5449

Provincial CFDC Association:

Community Futures Development Association of B.C.,
Vancouver

(604) 681-7130

www.communityfutures.ca/provincial/bc/

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WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION CANADA

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A Sweet Tooth Doesn't Require Sugar

by Robyn Cyr

Community Futures Development Corporation of the Shuswap

On the north shore of Shuswap Lake is the quiet community of Scotch Creek, home to a thriving business with monthly sales soon to reach \$1 million. **Ross Chocolates** produces premium, sugar-free chocolates that are sold around the world.

Seven years ago, Bob Ross discovered he was a diabetic. Although not a big chocolate eater, "Once you've been told you can't have something, you crave it." After searching with no success for good quality, sugar-free chocolate, he decided to make his own.

Bob and his wife, Lynda, approached the **Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) of the Shuswap** in Salmon Arm for help. The couple participated in the Self-Employment Program that helped guide them through the process of building a business plan and marketing strategy.

The Ross's originally began making sugar-free Belgian chocolate bars and truffles at the commercial kitchen located



Ross Chocolates employs 35 staff during peak times in a community with a population of less than 500.

Photo courtesy of CFDC Shuswap.

in the Shuswap Business Development Center. But, as demand increased, they required more space. They again visited CFDC Shuswap and obtained a small loan to purchase equipment needed to move their business into their two-car garage. As business continued to grow, the CFDC extended the loan to allow them to build a new 5,000 square foot manufacturing facility and mechanize production for a

capacity of about 50,000 bars per shift.

Today, Ross Chocolates are made in a dozen flavours ideal for diabetics and those on low-carb diets. They are available in food stores and pharmacies across Canada, the U.S., England and Europe. Best of all – they taste great!

For more information about the sugar-free chocolates available from Ross Chocolates, visit their Web site at: www.rosschocolates.bizland.com. 🍀