Stop Greenwashing: How to Truly Support Regeneration & Heal the System with B. Lorraine Smith Transcript

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Introduction and guest background

Welcome back to Everyday Ancestral. I'm your host, James Berry. My next guest is a deep thinker. She brings up things that, man, they really do blow my mind.

B. Lorraine Smith is my next guess and she has a gift for reimagining economies, agriculture and business through a regenerative lens for over two decades.

She's turned corporate metrics into meaningful action. She has worked across mining, energy, chemicals, banking and tech in North America, Europe and Brazil.

Throughout the world, she is a perfect fit to bridge ancestral values with future forward regenerative thinking. Because regeneration isn't just for farmers, it's for boardrooms, cities, classrooms, and kitchens.

We need to expand this thought because her mission is an economy that serves life, not just quarterly earnings, which is really what we're all experiencing.

So please join me in welcoming my next guest, Bea Lorraine Smith. Loraine, what a pleasure. Uh, it's so cool too, because this is probably a little meta for you because you shared with me that you actually listened to the podcast.

So eventually you're going to be listening to your own self-talk on the podcasts. That's, that's super like, I just felt honored and that super exciting.

Thank you. It's even more meta because in the last week I've had two amazing meals that featured pluck that were excellent and got rave reviews. All right.

So I have to ask this first question as you are Canadian. What is, how do you feel about, you know, this kind of Trump and just in general, people starting to talk about Canada becoming the 51st, you know, state of the U S I know in a lot of Canadians, just the Canadian pride is like, no way, we're not going to let that happen.

But you come at it from a totally different perspective. Cause you're looking, your forward thinking. So you were like well, I'm really curious. Like what is your opinion as a forward thinker?

Yeah, let's start small, James. Let's just tiptoe into these little tulips. I love the question. I don't know how forward I am, but I kind of have maybe a different view of what's happening.

First of all, I really do respect people's concerns and discomfort. And in some cases, it's very real lived experience. So my sister, for example, runs an amazing microbrewery here in Northern Ontario.

Canada, tariffs, and borders

The tariffs and some of the sort of financial dynamics that are playing out between our two fine nations. has a real everyday impact on her ability to run a profitable business.

And I could play that scenario out in many people's homes right now. So I don't mean to trivialize the severity and in some cases really challenging nature of what's happening.

But if I stand back and think about what the difficulties mean between our two countries right now. I want to add a few things before we try to have one opinion on this.

First is this notion of Canadian pride makes me a little bit uncomfortable. It forgets some really important internal challenges. Forget inter-provincial trade, which has its own tariffs and has for decades.

it's a very strange trade environment domestically in Canada. Let's set that aside. I noticed that we have a whole nation within a nation called Quebec that considers itself in many ways a standalone nation.

And so I lived in Quebec for many years and it took me living there as an Anglophone who speaks French and getting to know the dynamic there, that isn't just like, oh, there's a part of Canada that speaks French.

It is a separate nation, period. And so this Canadian pride thing gets a little confusing when you cross over into Quebec. Then let us not forget that we are actually a nation of many, many nations, often called our First Nations, our Indigenous communities.

many of whom are alive and well. I go over a ridge just a few miles to grocery shop into the first nation of Shigging. It's the closest village to where I live.

And I see teachers, lawyers, farmers, regular everyday people who are of a different nation within this country. who are alive in spite of, not because of Canadian pride.

So I have an uncomfortable feeling when I hear people talking about Canadian Pride and forgetting the existing domestic opportunities for more grace and generosity across the many nations that are here.

But if I get a little technical on an economic point around tariffs and the the financial drama that's playing out. Again, not to minimize the pain that it's creating.

It's definitely creating some gain for others, let's not forget. I'm really loathe to see oversimplification with these things. Like, tariffs have been around for a very long time.

And I have talked to a lot of people, including economists and people involved in international trade, about tariffs over the years. consensus I hear is it's really complicated and nobody can explain the real effects of tariffs.

We can talk about some of the basics, we can look at a little bit of cause and effect, but most of what we're dealing with here is drama, not real knock-on system effects.

And so anybody who tries to turn it into a kind of Canadian pride story or we just have the wrong economic lever, I feel I feel like that's an oversimplification that may be being fed by a media propaganda.

And if I can throw one last zinger in here, what I really think about borders is we made them up. It's a human construct and any other species that we might collaborate with or be aware of.

If they could speak our language, they might tell us how funny they are. One of my main mentors are migratory birds and other migratory species. For them, the idea of borders, is an absurdity.

And I long for the day, and I think we might be moving towards it, where we become much more bioregional in our thinking and set aside this kind of jingoistic warmongering or whatever it may be, because I don't think it's really serving most of us.

So that's what I thing about the 51st state. I'm not even sure there's- I love this. But I loved this because I think this is one of the reasons I was so excited to speak with you is, you know, on this podcast, we're really trying to take these kind of ancestral values from the past and bring them forward, bring into our present.

And I feel like in many ways that's what you're talking about. One of things, one word you use a lot is regeneration. And so I'm kind of curious, what is the difference?

And that's a word we see a lot in the, you know, the food systems here, regenerative. That's really catch all word

right now. But what the is difference for you between regeneration and sustainability?

Yeah, sometimes the difference is honestly just the choice of jargon. Certainly in the corporate space, if you look at large food companies' disclosures or communications, you will see a lot of both of those words.

Sometimes they're used a little bit interchangeably. But if I were to say what I would like the different to be, I'm going to very literal. The term regenerate proposes that something is created that wasn't there before.

So there's a change of state. Going from, let's talk about soil for a moment, going from perhaps a soil that's very degraded, possibly even contaminated, that growing healthy, nutritious foods might be very constraining, might not go very well.

And then if we regenerated that soil through different practices, and there are lots of different practice to regenerates soil, we will see a change where that soil enables better, healthier, more continuous, perhaps even more nutritious food production or production of fiber or fuel or flowers or whatever all the fun things are that we might grow in soil.

So something has changed when it is regenerative and in principle it's changed for the better in terms of some purpose that might be aiming to serve. Sustainability is, again, what it says on the tin, it's sustained.

So then we could ask, well, What is being sustained? And it kind of proposes, if you go really literal, that nothing's really changing. It's just staying the same.

We're sustaining our ability to produce food. we're Sustaining our Ability to have a certain yield from a crop or a And the word sustainability is probably one of the most misused in the English language.

I used to work for a firm called Sustainability, and that seemed like a really gutsy name when I worked for them. And starting in 2012, I was the director of The New York Office of Sustainabilty.

People used say, that's kind of bold. You named your company The Field. It'd be like being a food company and calling yourself food. like that'd be a weird name for a company.

That was sustainability. But they made the point, long before my time there, that the company was founded when sustainability was like an avant-garde business term.

They bought the URL for $200. So it was, like, these are early days. The word has slid around a lot. Meaning is what matters. If I could encourage your listeners, which includes me, hi, future self, to hold one thought with the word regeneration, it's what has changed as a result of this regenerative activity?

And is it better? Is it more desirable? If nothing has change or if we can't tell, we probably need to go a little deeper. We need inquire a bit further.

Well, that's a lot of businesses hire you to do, right? They hire to you go deeper for them and to Really, I guess, in a sense, like look at the metrics, because they're all very metric centric, right?

And they are looking for you to provide not only how they were doing, so kind of give them a report card, but also how, how should they move forward, correct?

Yes, that is correct. Although I'd love to put a slightly finer point on it. Can I geek out for a moment with like sustainability terminology? Can i go there?

Yeah. Yeah, so in sustainability, somewhere along the kind of early 2000s, the 2018s another jargony term emerged to try to clarify sustainability because things were getting really jargony and a bit green washy and vague.

So along comes another term, which some of you might be familiar with, ESG, environmental, social and

governance. And it's a weird term because it is kind of an adjective.

Like you need to put something after it, like ESG reporting or ESC investing, right? But a lot of people just talk about ESJ like a general thing. Again, a bit like we might talk food.

It's big topic. What do we mean by food? ESD is its own category. Getting kind beaten up in its way these days. Sometimes I think for good reason, sometimes just out of reaction or like lots of triggers being pulled these So I grew up in the field of ESG.

Regeneration vs. sustainability

I entered the sustainability and what is now often called ESJ field in 2003, so over a quarter century ago. Back then, the words were already a bit like, wait, what are you even talking about?

It was very niche. No, it's super mainstream. Anybody talking, if you have investments and you talk to your investment advisor or you go onto the website to rebalance your 401k, you will, I'm fairly sure you'll see the term ESG somewhere in there.

Maybe also ethical, maybe also sustainable, lots of fun jargon, but ESGs a big one. So for about 20 years, my focus was on enabling companies to apply best practice in ESG and sustainability strategy, disclosures and reporting, and increasingly looking at investor discosures.

But I want to be really clear on what I do now because that's actually very different. It took me about 20 years. I'm kind of slow. And I try to be respectful to my past self and to any other selves out there sort of working through career questions.

We can't necessarily do it overnight. it took 20 me years to realize that even though there are very real frameworks with very, real data, these are metrics that are based on true scientific principles and you can see them with your own eyes and write them down and compare you over a year.

But even then, I saw that really companies weren't having a better impact. And remember that regenerative notion, like what is changing from what to what?

And is it getting better ecologically? Is it making us healthier as humans or as communities and society? And over and over, I'd be involved in these strategy projects and engaging stakeholders from around the world.

I'm kind of lucky that I speak a couple different languages, a few European and Brazilian Portuguese. So I could have quite a wide range of global conversations.

And, over an over I was hearing, we're trying really hard. We're setting up these amazing goals. Were measuring them. Were managing them, were doing all the things we were told in business school and everywhere else.

But things aren't getting better. And so in 2021, after a couple decades sort of realizing I was beating my head against the wall, I stepped away entirely and I gently fired all of my clients at the time I freelancing.

And I had seven projects on the go and gently let them go. I'm still very good friends with most of the folks involved there. They understood. In fact, they agreed.

invited myself to stop complaining about the problem and ask, well if I could do things differently, if it were up to me, If I were scoping and budgeting and making all the decisions, what would I do differently?

And so I set out on that course and that is what I Which is, I should be very candid. It's different than companies calling me up and saying, hey, can you help us with these metrics?

In many ways, now what I'm focused on helping people do, either within companies or others who've stepped away

and are trying to innovate in different ways.

Still within business. I help them see why those metrics fail. and what we need instead to be truly regenerative. And how do we apply our skills in discernment, our awareness of what's really happening ecologically and socially, and make fundamentally different decisions so that business is a force for healing, that it's a for wellness.

I feel like you're so privy to very global awareness due to precisely what you are saying. You're working with businesses throughout the world and in different languages and you've seen in what I would say is a very holistic perspective or at least you striving towards, right?

A very wholistic perspective. So what are you finding? I know this is a very general question, but let's just focus on the food systems. Like, so what are you finding is broken and what your thoughts on how to fix it?

Yeah. Well, let me give an everyday example of something that I see that feels way bigger than me, But also really obvious to anybody who sort of decides to pay attention to this or becomes empowered to I don't know what it's like where you are, but where I am, that grocery store that's the closest grocery that I could go to that has, you know, aisles and you could have a cart and push it.

So I know grocery stores could mean a lot of different things and there's a lotta different places to get food these days. But let's just say the average person in North America who's going to buy food for themselves and their family, they're likely at some point in the week to be in a grocery Well, there's no headline that the way grocery stores are arranged is to enable you to be more likely to buy certain products over others, right?

And companies buy shelf space and they collaborate, that might be known as they incentivize the grocery store managers to put things at a certain height.

It's not by random coincidence that the really bright, shiny candies in very delicious, exciting packaging is right at the eye level of a toddler. If it were based on health decisions, it would be way out of the high level the toddler where only the grownup could see it and make decisions.

And you go a step further. Again, if I walk into the grocery store here, I have to sort of run a gauntlet of really unhealthy food decisions from just highly processed breakfast cereals and really sugary snacks.

Even the bread, which you'd like to think could at least be something viable there. It's not, it's like all bleached flour, you know, very, industrialized.

So one of the biggest problems we have is that for everyday people who have a lot on their minds, like how many hundreds of thousands of decisions do most people have to make every day, that just to meet their basic needs, which, eating is one the only things we really do need to do, they have to make a series of very difficult decisions to wade through the store that's been set up to provide them with their food.

And there's so many industrial forces in place to makes that harder than it really should be if our only priority as a society or as food industry was to ensure we all have healthy guts and plenty of energy.

We'd just be looking at an entirely different universe. So that's probably problem number one. But let me turn the table just for a sec, just to see where, what might be useful.

Cause there's a lot I could say about what the food industry is doing, but I just want to check something. Can I ask you a question? Could I do that? Yeah, of course.

Okay. So have you ever heard of the expression like we're a bunch of lemmings?

ESG, metrics, and why companies fall short

Is that familiar? Like we want it. Yeah. Sure. Followers. Just looking for answers. Yeah, or even, like, if you were to

explain, let's just say I just arrived from another planet, which sometimes I feel like I did, and I'd just heard somebody using that expression, And you're my Earth interpreter, thank goodness.

And I'm like hey, James, they just used that expressions about lemmings. Can you just break that down for me? What are they saying? what would you tell me.

Yeah. I would say that they're, it's lemming are individuals looking towards the given answer, they want the answer. They want to be directed what to do, where to go, what, to eat, whatnot.

And they just want a follow. Okay. Maybe you're too smart for this question. I gotta, I got to make it even simpler. Why Lemmings? What's the story with Lemming's?

Oh, well, cause they will walk off a cliff, right? Isn't it some animal that will actually walk of the cliff for, you know, yeah, that's, as much as I know about them.

Perfect. That was invented by Disney. for a film that was positioned as a documentary. They were, it is not real. Lemmings were gathered from their natural habitat and brought to an entirely different part of the North where the film was made and pushed or thrown off the cliff.

No kidding. So why, why did you think they created that narrative? Well, one of my rules of thumb is to not ascribe motive because every time I've done it, I learned that there was something I just didn't understand.

So I can't say why. It was an award-winning film, it did go on to win and I believe it was understood to be a documentary. I'm going to set aside the why because I'd be speaking on behalf of others, which I am not invited to do and not privy to the way.

But I will tell you the, I'll tell you why that matters to me and why I raise it here. Because we have so many ingrained beliefs about how nature works and even how human nature that are not only wrong, they were constructed to be understood a certain way that is wrong.

So it's one thing to just not understand. It's another thing to be trained to believe something that is wrong. Disney is easy to pick on. And, you know, as one of the largest media companies in the world that has a tremendous amount of mind share of my nieces and nephews and, Disney matters.

I'm going to just set all of that aside. I've gone backstage on several of the largest media companies in the world in their ESG capacity. I had a chance to see what we might call news or entertainment from a very different angle.

And the result of that is for most of last decade I have taken in practically zero mainstream media. Or if I do, I take it in as like an archaeological or anthropological artifact.

The same way I'm interested in looking at a fossil or like understanding how a basket is made. But I am not taking it like Oh, this is how I'm going to educate myself or this how we're going find out what's going on.

Because it's quite simply very far from the laws of nature. And so I want to, This may sound very conceptual, but it is actually very relevant to how eat and how industry treats us as eaters.

The laws in nature aren't really up for discussion. I am not going call it science because I think that word is almost as badly abused as the word sustainability.

and look at regeneration and heads up, bioregionalism, you're next. But the laws of nature use whatever words you want. It's like, it's not, I don't get to decide, how a meniscus forms on a water drop surface.

I may be able to affect it with chemistry. I may observe it or I might not. But it is just how nature works. And there are changes. Evolution has happened.

It is continuing to happen, so things will continue to evolve. But even evolution responds based on nature's laws. These aren't arbitrary things, and they're definitely not up for industry to decide.

We, for the most part, as modern, industrialized humans, have been protected from the laws of nature. protected might be the wrong word there. We've been, we don't get to see them.

If we do, it's like a little field trip or like an eco-vacation. Oh, let's go to the cloud forest in Costa Rica. It'll be beautiful. Yeah, Let's do that.

There's nothing morally wrong. In fact, It's a longing we have. Where I do have some moral concern is that industry makes it hard and expensive for us to experience the laws of nature just as we go about our days and then confuses us with broken laws over and over that are incentivized and by that I mean these companies make great profit.

Or if they don't, they get in trouble from their shareholders and they adapt so that they do make profit. So if even, and I say this with all the love, it was a little bit of a trick question.

If even you highly educated, brilliant, wise, sage, grown-up human didn't know that that was lie put together by a company that is respected and in fact loved by many people, how can we begin to make proper discernment and decisions about what we eat.

We're so full of mixed up, like meat is so bad, it's ruining the environment. No, you just need to eat meat. You know, soy is the devil, no, we need more soy, more protein.

Yeah, that's a bit of a preach about where we need help. Hey YouTube fam. 80% of you watching aren't subscribed. If you're digging these episodes and haven't hit that button yet, now's the time.

Every sub helps us grow, land bigger guests, and keep the good stuff coming. So hit subscribe and stay curious. Yeah. Well, this is a hot topic right now because this really what we're talking about is like, so who's expert?

If we are looking at the experts to give us the answers, but the Have been following something that was someone co-opted many many years ago and you know which you can argue everything has been caught it you really could then.

You're either going back a few weeks or a couple of years for information, or you're going even further. But either way, wherever the information is being pulled to garner your decision, you don't actually know if it's a pure source, if its true.

You're just assuming it's true because it is being passed down from enough people saying it or from someone who is labeled an expert or someone that wrote a book or has some tangible media that you actually watched, read or listened to that they are now this expert and it very much could just be Like I said, either co-opted or just someone's opinion that they're passing off as expert advice.

So this is something I've been thinking a lot about. Um, so I'm really excited that we're delving in this and you're like the perfect person to bounce this off of.

But so the question then becomes, well, then what do you trust? Who do. Yeah. Yeah.

Food systems, grocery stores, and media myths

I mean, I do have some answers to that in terms of how I guide myself, because you can make yourself a little crazy, like just trying to have breakfast, frankly, or trying have a conversation with friends.

But of course, i'm not the knower of all things. So I'll share my guiding principles on this ever evolving. The number one that I have for discerning information that comes at me, and recall I said I did about two decades in

mainstream ESG and sustainability.

Well, I stepped out of that in 2021. It's 2025. So it's been almost a quarter century, very focused on corporate disclosure. corporate communications and dialogue with stakeholders around the world across sectors.

A lot of food, a lot forestry, manufacturing, including food and energy. I've been in very deep trenches in industrial conversations and in boardrooms and factories and plantations, and then just researching, squirreling away.

But one of my main sources has been the corporate disclosures themselves. So not what the journalists say, sometimes yes, but mostly What is the actual company saying?

And I want to just insert something very important here because it's very easy to dismiss. Well, companies, they're like, full of shit. They're going to say what they need to, blah, Maybe, but rest assured, a publicly listed company, which is where most of my industrial expertise has been, they have very strict rules and they're very risk averse about what they can say publicly.

And I've been at those conversations with legal counsel, like if they are even slightly itchy about something, They do not want to get that rash. They will not publicly state something that they cannot stand behind.

It doesn't mean It's good information. It doesn't mean we like it, but we can rest assured that it's at least true to them. They can back it up because if they can't, they do not want to run that risk.

We're seeing some interesting greenwash cases in a few places. So that's going to be interesting, but it doesn't mean the words they said weren't true.

It might mean they're like misleading in various ways. But all to say, I actually believe most of the information that companies are saying. How do I make a decision about what to do?

What to buy? My number one principle is, can I discern if anything is changing? So what do I mean by that? If a company says, you know, we're committed to environmental sustainability, that's why we are dot dot, right?

Insert whatever amazing thing they're doing. But I can't actually see something changing as a result other than a paper statement. We reduced our greenhouse gas emissions by 30%. What changed as the result of that other then your electrical bill went down?

Did you reduce just because you switched fuel sources? And did that fuel source actually reduce in your region? Or did you just divest a bit but somebody else picked up The rest, it could be both, but if you can't tell, then as far as you know, nothing changed.

And so that's just blah, blah blah. That's letters on a page. But if can actually see the impact of something, like real impact that if had your own eyeballs right there, you'd be able to say, oh yes, this soil now retains moisture, right?

It's less likely to be in the path of fire. because fire goes out when there's sufficient moisture, right? When we make tinder boxes in monospecies plantations and then call it a wildfire, we got the wrong word.

So we've got to use our discernment. What is changing? And if you can't answer that, this maybe isn't as fun for everyone. I actually find it really interesting to try to find out, well, what would, first of all, do I want to change?

I wanna be healthier, I don't want my family to be healthy, or I won't everybody I know to to healthier. All of that ecosystem that keeps me alive around me to me healthier was a few other things I wanted, but that kind of sums it up.

And this company is telling me they're doing things around that. What can they tell me that actually means something changed? And the vast majority of those disclosures They're not out there.

They don't exist. Because if they did, what they showed that changed is, oh, we paved more roads. We made higher margins on lower food value products.

We made it more likely that more kids are going to sit in straight lines in school and memorize a bunch of crap. Those are the metrics. But I want to watch for what's changing and look for where can I find that out.

I guess the punctuation mark on that is if I can't find it out through a company's own literature, I just try to sense it using my own mind and body. That usually brings me pretty close and pretty local.

When I think that is what we're seeing a real uptick in is that particularly over the last few years where you know people were blatantly lied to and science was used against itself and You know, where now people mistrust what, uh, government agencies say, what you know what corporations say.

There's just, there's this overall sense of mistrust. And yet I think where people are putting the trust is in their own experience. Does, do I feel better eating this way?

Do I, Do feel like I'm helping the world by buying organic? you know, whether you have the proof of it or not, do you, feel like it's working? Do you feel, like, so I feel that, that feeling, the feeling of something is taking over the actual proof, or maybe that is the, it is like a social proof now.

I, I super agree with that. So one of the most powerful things we can do is change our minds, right? And, you know, it's kind of a cliché, mindset is really important.

It's one the highest points of leverage when we look at places to intervene in a system. There's lots of great systems thinking that looks at, where can we intervene and assist them?

The highest places you can intervene is in the mindset and the worldview in which we experience the system? I'm going to borrow myself as an experiment here talking about the importance of feeling.

For quite a while, when I was very immersed in the sustainability world, I'd say I sort of at peak enthusiasm, like, we're going do this. These are leading companies.

Name a food company that you might have heard of, household names, Food and Bev. I probably worked with them and or my colleagues sitting a couple desks away did.

And these are like multi-billion dollar companies and they were ambitious. I'm like, yes, we're seeing more and more really meaningful investor frameworks coming out and I can talk more about the investor piece if you like.

So I'm really enthusiastic and I am also going deep into food systems. I was living in the U. S. at the time in New York City and i'm horrified by industrial egg.

This is so not okay on so many levels and in particular the meat industry was just just catastrophic from so many angles, certainly the environmental impacts, the moral and ethical impacts.

The impacts on the human workers that's just gross. So overnight, I went from a very omnivorous eater, very sort of meat friendly to essentially plant-based.

And it literally happened overnight. It was a visceral feeling. I was like, "I can't eat that. " I feel like I'm eating my own leg. Like I just can do it.

For the ensuing 10 years, i was very plant based. And I felt great. Meanwhile, in parallel, I also got back to serious marathoning. I got into ultra-marathoning, and I ran a five-day ultra marathon as a plant-based athlete at age 50. Right?

Like I was doing great, right? I think there's a lot of power in how your mind is. And and and i was eating clean

whole foods for the most part. Your wonderful wife, Margaret, was a great guide in helping me navigate some health issues that emerged on the tail end of that plant-based decade.

Fast forward and I'll skip lots of very uncomfortable gastric experiences to say, Then I changed. I don't judge myself for being plant-based in those years.

It was the right decision for me at that time. And there were certain wider contextual things that I couldn't see at the time. For me, it was as simple as the meat system is catastrophic.

I don't want to invest in it, and I do not want ingest it. And then as my work, as I was stepping out of mainstream sustainability and starting to see like, whoa, there's a lot more going on, which by the way, partly happened because I on the ground in Brazil, meeting a of very grassroots, what we would call regenerative farmers.

They're actually just people growing stuff who aren't in the news, who are on Instagram. There are just human beings living well and they get missed by mainstream system.

And I was experiencing their approach and seeing so many things with my own eyes. I'm like, oh, this matters. And in that context, along with some gastric evolution, I shifted back to practically a paleo diet now.

As much as I can, i'm grain free. That's kind of hard, but I work on it. Certainly process grain-free if I could. So where I am going with this is, there was a lot of inner recognition, like re-cognizing things that I didn't understand.

And I needed to experience them with my own body, with own eyes, my trusted friends. Margaret is one of the most trusted people in my life, so she could tell me something.

that maybe would have been harder for me to hear from others. And incidentally, the sustainability community that I was very much in, a corporate sustainability committee, when you aren't plant-based, it's a little bit like being a smoker, right?

You're kind of quiet about it and you know, you got to step outside, can I get some, do you have gravy too? Whereas when come out as plant based, oh, welcome, thank you.

We're so glad you're finally here, Right? It's very kind a culty situation. Yeah, very hypocritical as well, yeah. Right? I mean, there's a lot we can say there, but honestly, genuine, truly believing as I did.

I truly believed that I was making a positive decision for my own personal wellness and for anybody I cooked for and from my wider community. So a lot had to change in my own mind to realize like, no, you know where I really want to get my food from?

Farmer Nick, who's delivering a little, in fact, my ringers are all off, so I won't hear him. But he's going to be leaving the most incredible food at my front door from his biodynamic regenerative, give it whatever label you want, just real, healthy, truly regenerate food.

Yeah. I mean, what I hear you saying is basically that, We only know what we know.

Trust, discernment, and following the money

And then we need to honor our process as we, as, we go throughout life is we learn and, you know, and you just honor or whatever that process is. But I have to think, I mean, you have been privy to sides of industry that most people don't know.

And I hear you saying that that is also dictating some of your choices. You know, sometimes it's moving you away from eating certain things and then, and, then you know your own life kind of brings you and your on health journey brings back to where it needs to go, but is there anything Like even if you pick three things in your 20 years, I know I'm asking a lot here, but are there, are they're like three that you think the people listening or watching this podcast

should know about the systems that will help them make decisions moving forward?

Yeah. There's one that's really prominent for me. This is uncomfortable. Can I kind of go into an awkward space? That's the only space that I like. Take a deep breath, swallow your liquids.

I really encourage people to follow their money. And it's actually more doable than you think. It's, it, how do I put this generously? I appreciate why people say, oh, that's so complicated.

I don't have time, I dunno where to look. Have you tried? Like, for instance, if you have a 401k plan or you any, you know, an IRA or some kind of investment that in the, let's call it the market, It is your money.

It is yours. If you wanted to, you may or may not want to. But if you want it to you have legal and fiduciary right to walk up to that institution or call them or get in touch in whatever way you do and say, I'd like it all right now, please.

It's yours and if literally don't know what it is invested in, and let's be clear what investments are. They're money that somebody else is doing something with.

What is changing? Awkward admission, I decided to follow my own up here in Canada. We call it an RRSP, a registered retirement savings plan functions very similarly to an IRA or a 401k tax incentivized and all of the rest of it.

I've only been in this field for 25 years, right? So last January, 2024, get the prospectus. It's like a frigging phone book lands on my doorstep and I ignore it Oh, close people.

Right? Because like, oh yeah, good. Someone's doing their homework. Right. And then this little bell went off in my head as I was getting ready to pitch it into the recycling bin, which by the way, don't even get me started on recycling, rarely gets streamed into any meaningful marketplace.

Oh, the Recycling in Portland gets shipped to China. Probably doesn't anymore because they closed their door anymore. Well, that's another story. It gets shipped back.

Like I have no joke. This happened when we used to live in Portland. They shipped the recycling to China and China sent it back because it had too much food waste on it.

That's right. How that to me is like insane in the name of recycled, you know, in name, of the earth. We are. We're like see also lemmings. I promise I'll come back to the investor thing, but I will go on a 30 second segue here.

We believe that if there's a recycling symbol and we put it into the right receptacle, something good is going to happen. For example, in Canada, wealthy, well-governed Canada at a minimum 91% of recycled materials end up in landfill or incinerated.

Only 9% is actually turned into something else, which is what the word recycling means. We believed the lemming story. Oh, they hurled themselves off the cliff every once in a while.

we believe the recycling story we are being lied to. That material is not being turned into picnic tables. It is going into landfills and ultimately leaching into our water or crumbling into oceans.

Right, which is why microplastics are such a huge thing. And people jump on it. So let me come back to the investor thing real quick. I just want you to hold the invest thing.

Cause I do want to just say this one thing cause I'm curious about your reaction or your response to this since it has to do with cycling. You know, we're kind of shamed residentially, you know?

And when I say we, I'm talking about people in general. We're shammed, like you have to recycle, in your home.

But in my judgment and my experience, and to your point, it's meaningless that it is actually corporations that are moving the needle around, you know, planetary issues with energy and water or whatever, toxins in the air, that it's more them that need to move that needle first, because the residential quarter wouldn't move the need enough, even if all of us did it.

It's, well, the real challenge in my view is even if all of us did it, there is no it for all us to do. Like it isn't, we've been given a known- There's not a system for it.

So here's the paradox there. The them there is corporations, but corporations are run by people. And they're run people who believe the lemming story and think there's an away.

Like when you recycle, it goes away, But there no away is inside your body. Away is in your river, your ocean, you seagull. You know, we are away. Welcome to away." So the human beings that run companies, and I've never met a company run by anything other than human being.

I'm in favor of companies being run something other then human. Like a river. River would do a great job. And I don't buy the whole, like, oh, now there's companies with rivers on the board.

Sorry, but fuck that shit. When they run the company, call me. Otherwise, it's a little nominal, yeah, they get some stakeholder input. No, a river would run a company very differently, and it would be like, what the fuck are you doing putting things in plastic?

We have nowhere to put that. No. Find something else. And it's very awkward, James. I'm one of your customers. It's brilliant. But you, as the creator of this incredible product, you have to get it to people safely, conveniently, stored in some way that human beings can do something with.

So we do have a very real challenge. But we are smart, smart people, and when we're told, these are your design constraints and by the way, they follow the laws of nature, which are the only laws we all are beholden to from birth to death and beyond, Then we go, oh, well, let's think about that.

But right now, we're believing the lemming story. We're believe the recycling story, and our laws, our jurisdictional laws that human beings pretend to enforce, don't follow the laws of nature.

One of the hints that we've still got the wrong economic paradigm is that have laws. You don't need a legal structure. You do not need judges and all this whacked out private prison system when you follow the laws of nature.

That is a symptom of a broken paradigm. Let me just quickly underscore this point by following my own money, if I may. I took that prospectus and I said, you know what, if the human being who has over two decades experience creating and analyzing investor and ESG disclosures can't follow her own investment, then we have a problem.

So, and, I wrote about this, by the way, And I'm happy to make it available to anybody who's curious. I followed my own money. It was in one of the most ethical funds in Canada, pioneers, all the language was around global sustainability, blah, James, one of the companies, most of it you can't even see.

You follow it and it goes to the IMF and the World Bank and all this like Goldman Sachs who then invests in Deutsche Bank is like very musical cherries.

So that's already a big problem with the financial system, perhaps a chat for another time. But the ones where you could follow, you say, oh, here's an actual company name.

And then you go look at that company. One of them is an industrial ag feedlot company, I was like, wait, that's the most, you would, I felt sick. I fell sick and you know what I did?

So this is my one, and I could come up with more, but my thing that everyone can do is be really honest about what

you're paying for right now. When I saw that with my own eyes, with own skillset going, yeesh, I divested from the whole thing.

And that's not wise financial advice. Your financial advisor wants you to have as much money as possible when you retire. Which, why do we retire? Like, we're tired enough.

But anyway, I put it all into cash, which is financially dangerous for a whole bunch of reasons, but I was like, well, i'd prefer financially-dangerous than walking around knowing I'm paying for the very system that I am calling out and saying, "I don't want this.

I think we can do something better." This is why I said it's uncomfortable. There's a lot of, yeah, but, what about, I got kids and I've got healthcare and…

I get it. We have real lives that we are trying to live in the best way we can. But one thing I believe we all can do is make very honest, grounded in-the-change-we-want decisions based on where we put every single penny we work hard to earn.

It is such a hard discussion for people. I mean, you know, this is, we get inundated with people saying, Oh, pluck is so expensive. All this stuff. We're literally right now creating this kind of map of savings just to inform people like we are always trying to make it cheaper for.

The issue, and this the truth, the issue is. that if we charge you what we really want to charge, which is the lowest we can go, we won't have enough money to buy ads, to make sure that you know the product exists, and to do the things that bring your attention to us.

So we actually have to set it at a higher cost to ensure that there's enough money so that someone else doesn't come in. So this has to do with this competition.

Basically we are protecting ourselves and our brand from, in a sense, like espionage from someone coming in who has a lot more money who can just like.

replicate what we do and then pay for ads. Because nowadays most small businesses, specifically e-commerce, are run by ads, like social ads or online ads and the winner of that game is whoever has the most money.

And that's the truth. It's like, and, then of course, here's, the other hard truth, is that when people say to us, this is so expensive, the thing I really wanna say people and I don't, but what I wanna really say is, well, why is this expensive?

But yet your cell phone bill is not. Well, why is this expensive, but you're, you, your, You're paying for three streamers that you previously never paid for.

You know, remember we used to people paid cable and it was, let's just say $20 a month. Now they're pain 40 to $60 because they are paying separate streamer.

Yeah. So there's lots of expenses that people, I mean, to me, when I hear someone say, well, this is expensive. What I really hear is I don't want to choose my health over.

Personal food choices and regenerative living

Or, so that's me assuming that they think, you know, organ meats are healthy, or the more accurate question could be, well, You clearly don't know that this is probably one of the best decisions you could make for your health.

You don' understand the value of what organ meat could provide for you health, and you haven't felt that yet. you have not felt sick enough to know your food choices matter.

Yeah. So there's lots of things, but the reality is, is priorities, right? It's the story we're telling and it's that mindset you're talking about. It is like the path that we have decided, this is what it is.

This is it means instead of, and I think you beautifully brought this up, that maybe what we think it is actually a falsehood, or is something, is a truth that someone shared a long time ago that was made up, but we've now converted that narrative into a true, and it never was.

Yeah, it's tricky. There's another layer of trouble. I'll just make sure your listeners aren't fully off the hook, even when they're like, okay, I will follow every penny, We have this saying in some of the kind of hardcore sustainability circles where you say it's hard to be a clean fish in a dirty ocean.

So even if you said, okay, I'm going to make sure I only fund things that I truly care about. I am going clean up my diet. you're still stuck in this world where, you know, so as an entrepreneur, my business model was very simple before I fully stepped away.

My business was I'm a freelance consultant. I can be a hired gun on your ESG and sustainability consulting work. That was really easy because demand was booming and I could be as busy as I wanted and for the most part, pick my clients.

that's an easy business when you are not trying to disrupt anything. But now I see my job as enabling business decision makers that might be folks in an executive role or in some role where they're implementing change.

My real job is to enable them to not only think it's a thought, but to think, it is a desirable thought that the economy works in service of life, that it follows nature's laws, and that, of course, a viable business is one that makes us healthier within a healthier ecology.

That's my Job. And to do that job, I do a number of different things. That's actually not what most people think they want. And so my own business model, I am actively, this very week I had to blow up something that was actually going really well, great feedback, but it was not profitable.

It was serving my ability to be sustained, much less regenerated. I function on planet earth. When I do hike over the ridge and go to get groceries, wade past all the toxic stuff and try to some good local stuff, or when I hand over my farm share, amount to The Amazing Farmer Nick down the road.

You know, that's got to be in a fiat currency that they can recognize and exchange. I can't just be like, oh, I think really erudite thoughts, you know.

Give me some great food, right? I gotta pay them. So we are We are in a very exciting time and folks who do not have a lot of excess cash, which is most human beings on this planet.

In fact, most don't even have excess, they have negative. Most people in this modern economy are into some kind of debt, at the very least a mortgage, if not other like college or other debt.

So we are cash scarce in an economy that's getting more expensive for day-to-day survival. And that's not by accident and that is a constrained and kind of creatively crimping.

energetic space to be in. So we're like triply called. We have to figure out what the truth is, like what would be good food? What would a good way to put my money?

We'd have the kind of equanimity and serenity, and calm to able to enact those decisions. Those are already two really big missing pieces for many people.

But then we need to find ourselves in a system that's at least got those choices that isn't going to beat us over the head when we try to live that way or marginalize us or call us something really weird, you know, just for trying to be healthy and make choices, that aren't what the mainstream industrial system that's very harming promotes, makes

easy and makes most profitable.

So it's a bit of a triple whammy, but lots of us are working on it. And I think we're having more fun anyway. That's my view on this fine Friday anyway, Well, I feel like as we wrap it up, we have tapped into the red pill of pulling back the curtain and just saying, hey, what you think may not be what is accurate, but at the same time, you have to you have to find your own dignity of your life.

You have defined your path in this life with the idea that you are in a toxic soup and that things may not be what you think they are. So I guess as we, as, we close, like, is there something tangible?

Is there's something that people can walk away from this conversation with besides just pulling back the curtain, but something they can actually do? Cause I, I know I given that you did say, okay, follow the money, What's something that the minute they stop listening to this, what can they do then?

What is the next moment after listening that they can actively do that might help find some peace from this new awareness? Yeah, what comes to mind for me is that, in fact, there is a lot of amazing, very powerful regenerative work going on across systems, across regions, fairly locally and beyond.

And so if I had one piece of guidance for folks, it would be, use your amazing innate senses. We're all born with them, right? We are sensory and sensitive.

Let your senses highlight one of those things that you have access to. It might be a great regenerative farmer that, you've been thinking about checking out.

How do you get a farm share? It may be your book project. There's no one thing. But whatever it is that when you bring it to mind, it offers that heart opening, reaffirming, human health reinforcing, and or ecological health-reinforcing pathway And energize that.

Put time to it. If it calls, put money to. It's happening all around us. That is, by the way, what wakes me up every morning and lets me sleep peacefully at night is this, except for the odd, very disturbing dream these days, but there is so much really, really beautiful stuff going on.

And the more we energize it, A, the better we feel, but B, The more energy it gets.

Practical takeaways and closing remarks

So just pick one of those things and bring your power, whatever that is, your attention, you're pension, and let that be your gift today. I love it. Yeah, that's such a great takeaway.

For anyone that struggling to find that superpower or that beautiful thing around them, that is that your work right there, you know, is to find the gratitude even when things feel toxic or even they feel like the world's on your shoulders kind of thing, it's to that some sort of beauty or gratitude in a moment, in in an experience that can carry you to the next moment.

So that's a really great takeaway. Lorraine, I realize that you've written a lot of fantastic pieces. Where can people read some of these thoughts, these meditations you have shared here 25 years?

Where would they go to read them? Yeah, thanks, James. I appreciate that. My blog, BeLorraineSmith.com, there's a blog there where I share my weekly letter.

You can also sign up to get that weekly in your inbox if you like that kind of thing. So there is a place to signup on my website at BeLaureanesmith. And I really enjoy corresponding with folks who are on this path, I call it the path to industrial healing.

So really the best place would be my website. And I'd love to see folks there and hear questions, comments, and

also what you're seeing, because there really is so much rich stuff out there.

I love hear people's ideas. Yeah, you are a deep thinker and I'm deeply grateful for not only your presence in our life, but just that you exist, that your out their and that I think even how you delicately answered the Canada US question really shares how you look at a situation that you don't look it from the very surface.

You go as deep as you can with it and you brought up some really a lot of points that even I wasn't thinking about or considering. Because I think it is easy to get used to, you know, the media trap, if you're only hearing that perspective and forgetting that there's so many other layers to every topic that we're learning or hearing about.

So thank you for bringing that awareness. Thank you, for doing what you do. And thank you for joining me today. And Thank you all for listening or watching the everyday and social podcasts.

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