

**Interview: Joey Hartman (JH)**  
**Interviewer: Ken Novakowski (KN)**  
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**Transcription: Pam Moodie**

**KN [00:00:05]** Good afternoon. My name is Ken Novakowski, and I'm here to interview Joey Hartman at the B.C. Labour Heritage Centre. It's April the 19th. 2024. Good afternoon, Joey.

**JH [00:00:18]** Hi Ken. Nice to see you.

**JH [00:00:20]** So can we start, Joey, by having you tell us where and when you were born?

**JH [00:00:25]** Yeah, I was born in Vancouver, Grace Hospital in 1957.

**KN [00:00:31]** Okay. And can you talk a bit about your family, your parents particularly, and what impact your family might have had on you shaping your support for unions and progressive politics?

**JH [00:00:42]** Well, first of all, they didn't have any impact on me in my support for unions and progressive politics. I had kind of an unusual upbringing in some ways. I grew up in Kerrisdale, in Vancouver, and my parents came from very different backgrounds. My mother had been born in England to a very sort of wealthy, British aristocratic kind of family. Her father and her grandfather. Her grandfather was Robert Horne-Payne, who, even though he never lived in Vancouver, had a huge impact on Vancouver. He was the first chairman and founder of BC Electric, which is now B.C. Hydro. He owned the transit system, enlarged the transit system out to New Westminster and the whole grid that existed in Vancouver. He owned the railway, the tram line in Victoria just before the Ellis Street train disaster, where the whole bridge collapsed under a full train, and I think 130 people died. And it turned out that the trestles hadn't been repaired properly, things like that. So he wasn't responsible. So even though he never lived in Canada, he had a big impact here. And, there's a town in Ontario, Horne-Payne, Ontario, and Brentwood Bay on Vancouver Island is also named for him because he was from Brentwood. And so, that was my mother's origins, and she was moved when she was nine to Vancouver with her family, because my grandfather realized the war was going to break out, Second World War. So he brought the family to the in-laws' in, on the Crescent in Shaughnessy. So, you know, very wealthy, very.

**JH [00:02:24]** My mother was not in line with her family. She was considered to be a radical because she was kind of a liberal. She was an artist. And she went to art school at the Vancouver School of Art. Became pregnant when she was 24, as an unmarried woman, and went to, secretly to Toronto, pretending to go to art school there. And three days after giving the baby up for adoption, met my father.

**JH [00:02:50]** My father, on the other hand, was from a farming southern Ontario family. The family was Hartman, United Empire Loyalists, first Pennsylvania Dutch, so into the US, but sided with the Brits and so in around 1776 came up to southern Ontario. My father was considered by his family to be a ne'er do well, certainly considered by his in-laws to be a ne'er do well. My parents were married three months after meeting. Obviously a really

vulnerable time in my mother's life, and ended up having two kids in Ontario and then moving to Vancouver and buying a house for \$13,000 on half an acre on West Boulevard in Vancouver in 1953. Of which my great grandmother funded most of that.

**JH [00:03:41]** So we were a family with, you know, my two parents, two older sisters, one younger brother in the heart of Kerrisdale, but neither of my parents worked, nor did we take welfare. So we were really, really very poor. My great grandmother died when I was six and left each of the kids \$20,000 and enough money for my mom to rebuild a house on the same property. So we had a nice house to live in. But, I mean, our family income— my mum convinced the trustees to give 50 bucks per kid to the family to raise us. So our income through the 60s and the early 70s was essentially \$200 a month for a family of six, which is not a lot of money. Right? There was still, you know, we grew a bit of food. But even things like, we had pet guinea pigs, so the grocer had an arrangement that my brother and I could go in the back and just rifle through the box of thrown out vegetables. And so we never bought vegetables because, you know, beet tops were as good as spinach.

**JH [00:04:49]** And so I knew how to be very, very frugal, but also had a very uncomfortable relationship with my dad. Like, he wasn't a violent person, but he was very — he had a violent temper. He was somebody I avoided being in the same room with from a very young age. And he made it really clear that he had us kids to take care of him. And I didn't want to do that, so by the time I was 12, I decided to be financially independent of my parents, in that I started working, mostly babysitting and making my own money. But the last time I took an allowance or let my parents buy my schoolbooks or pay for a movie or any of that kind of stuff, I was 12, and that was a very decided moment of independence. Of not ever feeling like I had to owe. And I probably still carry that. It makes me hard to be a partner with in a lot of ways, because I have to have that, that security of myself.

**JH [00:05:47]** My parents were also pretty apolitical. And, and so the environment I was in was with people who believed that the wealth that they had, that they were entitled to and they deserved and that they worked hard for. And, you know, I went to school with David Saba from Saba Shoes, the Bentall family. It was the rich families of Vancouver, at McKechnie first and then McGee was the high school I went to. But I personally was not particularly motivated. I remember having trouble with math and my mom saying, "That's okay, I was dumb too." My parents were very laissez faire parents, you know, nor did they work. But they also didn't push us as kids. They didn't try and encourage us to, to do well or do better. And so I really wasn't a very ambitious kid. Didn't really try hard in school or any of that kind of stuff. I just kind of bummed along. It was, it was much later, it was in my '20s that I discovered politics and labour activism.

**KN [00:06:51]** Given what you've said, it seems like you developed fairly early, a bit of an understanding of how your life differed from a lot of the other young people you might have been coming in contact with. How did that sort of affect you? Do you want to talk about that for a bit?

**JH [00:07:05]** Well, I think. I mean, I assumed that everybody but us was pretty wealthy. I didn't actually realize that there was people who didn't live in nice homes with, you know, gardens around them and stuff like that, you know, and people somehow hinted that there was people who lived in apartments as families. That seemed odd to me. We didn't, we didn't generally have a car or be able to go very far. So we didn't really see anything except for the neighbors. But, I did, I think, especially as I got a little older, have a sense of

how the impact money had in people's lives and the influence that came with that, and who was seen as having value in the school, for example, was often based on who their, especially who their father was, those kinds of things I was very aware of. But, yeah, it was, I think it gave me a sense of, first of all, that I didn't need that, like I could do without that. But also, I didn't really value it either. I didn't want to aspire for that.

**KN [00:08:13]** Do you want to talk at all about your school experiences? Were you a good student? How did you do?

**JH [00:08:17]** I was a mediocre student. I liked, I loved English, I was a good English student. I was terrible in the sciences. I, at one point in high school thought I wanted to be a Home Ec teacher. And, because I was good at sewing and cooking, and I thought that was my aspiration. But my teacher in grade ten, I guess, said, "Well, then you have to take, you have to take the sciences. You have to do the, the physics and chemistry particularly." And, so I took those and failed physics, failed chem, like those were just not subjects I could, was good at. So, yeah, I would say that I was a kind of a C plus kind of a student most of my school years.

**KN [00:09:06]** You indicated earlier that, in your move to become independent, that you did a lot of babysitting. Was that related to your move to become a childcare worker or?

**JH [00:09:18]** Yeah. I mean, I think at the time it was because I didn't know anything else to do. You know, later on, I realized, gosh, there was so many other, much better paying jobs I could have had, but it was just what I knew I could do. And then, just fell into it. You know, people would ask me to babysit, and I said, sure. And actually I did, my summers, I'd answered an ad in the local newspaper for somebody to do summertime babysitting. So that's how I spent my summers in high school. I always liked kids. I always like working with kids. And I later on, did end up as a daycare worker.

**KN [00:09:55]** And when you did become a daycare worker, what was that experience like? You, you became involved in the union as well at that time.

**JH [00:10:01]** Yeah. Well, so I decided. I was motivated to become a daycare worker because my boyfriend's best friend's mother ran the Berwick Centre, which is a UBC preschool for special needs children, and I had volunteered out there. My high school, Magee, was on a semester system at the time, and so I graduated in January and spent the next semester volunteering out at the preschool, and had really committed myself to the idea that I was going to learn to be a daycare worker. Daycare teacher. I intended to be a special needs daycare, childcare worker. My friend Wanda Justice had recommended the program at Capilano College, which was at the time the only two year program with a special needs option on it. And so I went to Capilano College for '76 and '77, 1977. Then, finished that program with an early childhood certificate, worked for a short time in a program, a daycare that had just been set up that was half deaf kids and a half hearing kids with the idea that, there would be some cross pollination.

**JH [00:11:14]** And then ended up answering an ad for a daycare substitute teacher at RayCam, which is attached to the Raymur Housing Project and, it was actually a real hotbed of activism over the years. The Militant Raymur Mothers, for example, who had — this housing project that had been built, I think, as a very failed social experiment of taking the people that no one else wants to be neighbors with and building a really inferior building structure with this very large, low cost, subsidized public housing complex, on, just off of Hastings between Raymur Avenue and Campbell Avenue. And that's why it's called

RayCam. And the families who lived there, the Militant Raymur Mothers, (particularly after having gotten a railway overpass after having camped on the railway tracks to make that happen after many failed promises) then turned their minds to what else they needed for that community to be something of a community, and decided a Centre that had a Co-op food store, childcare, recreational services and a lounge for people to, communicate, to commune with each other. And so the daycare needed a substitute. I showed up one day for work and kept getting called back. And then when a full time position became available, I was hired for that. And it was because the funding was all three levels of government, but primarily there was some municipal funding. It became attached to the municipal sector, City of Vancouver, the union being the Vancouver Municipal and Regional Employees Union, VMREU. Now that's evolved into CUPE 15, they joined CUPE in 1994. So in 1978, I became a member of the VMREU, my first union experience and totally fell into it. I knew that it was unionized because my supervisor was a woman named Roberta, Roberta Hawkin, now Roberta McCann, who was on the union executive. And I kind of noticed that she kept a nice set of clothes hanging on the back of the office door, because the days she had union meetings, she changed out of her grubby daycare clothes and put on something nice to, to take to wear to the meetings.

**KN [00:13:42]** So that you referred to the mothers organizing a protest to stop this railway overpass. Was that and were there other, were there other things that happened, in your experience, in the way of protests that led to begin to shape your politics actually?

**JH [00:14:01]** Yeah, very much so. Working at RayCam was a huge eye-opening transformative experience for me. The other people who worked there, particularly in the day care, people like Roberta, who was involved with the union and had been very involved with politics much of her life. And then, I would say my biggest influence there at the time was a woman who was my colleague and then later became my supervisor after Roberta left, named Gael Koob. Gael, more than anybody I've ever known, practiced what she preached. And so, a couple of things. One was that she really started to interpret for me the things about what does this mean to have this huge housing complex? Understanding the dynamics between people who lived there, who were oppressed themselves, but always look for somebody else to be lower down on the rung. Things like if people had fights with each other, RCMP and a social worker would knock on the door and their kids would be required to strip down to make sure there's no bruises on them, because it was a way of getting back at people if you had a disagreement. So if you had a fight, the next thing you do is you phone and call the authorities to, just to create pain in somebody else's life as a form of retribution. There was just an awful lot of things that I was so naive about.

**JH [00:15:28]** They told me—years later we'd get together and they'd say, "Joey, you were just so green. You said things like, 'you know, the government would only do things that are good for people because that's what government is for, there to make things better. And that's of course what they would do.' " And they were like, "we had to teach you quite a lot." Because I had no political upbringing. I really just didn't know. I mean, to the point that my parents said it was a secret how each other voted. They did vote, but they believed in the secrecy of their individual votes. So it just wasn't part of my reality up until I started at RayCam.

**JH [00:16:09]** And then Gael did things like, invited me to come to a protest at Red Hot Video, which was the first protest I ever went to. Red Hot Video was a very, very popular pornography video rental store because, you know, people didn't have internet back then, and it was sort of the first— I'd been a soft feminist for a number of years, but it was my

first time really having other women talk to me and sharing with me this idea that, you know, the oppression that goes with pornography and the exploitation. Not A Love Story was a relatively new movie out by Bonnie Sherr Klein. It was just that kind of introduction to feminism, and most of the women I worked with were involved with the women's movement and mostly were lesbians and very political lesbians. And so introducing me to the world of women's community and all of that, was really huge for who I became in that period.

**JH [00:17:17]** Gael also invited me to a protest at Army and Navy Department Store on East Hastings, where she said a bunch of women are going there on Saturday because Army and Navy is breaking the law. The law had been for decades, by that point, equal pay for equal work. And most employers knew that if you were going to break that law, you put the men in one area and gave them one thing to do, and you put the women in another area and gave them something slightly different to do. Army and Navy wasn't apparently smart enough to figure that out, so they had men and women shoulder to shoulder, stocking the same items on the same shelves, and paying the women significantly less for doing that work. And, those women were non-union and didn't have a voice themselves to be able to take up that issue. But women, the women's community took it up for them. And I think we probably went out three Saturday afternoons with some protest signs and marched around in front of the building and had success. And I was like, well, this actually makes a difference. This, I wouldn't have known what to call it then except a protest, but, you know, direct action. And, and so the idea that community has responsibility and opportunity, and Gael was the kind of person— she went to the Kenworth picket lines, and I didn't know anybody else who was doing that kind of stuff. And the other thing that she did that I would really say shaped my values, was when she became my supervisor, she made \$90 a paycheck more than my other coworker Ann and I, and we'd sit every second week, payday, on those little daycare chairs and tables. And she would say, here's your 30, here's your 30, and here's my 30. She shared her paycheck with us and her values said, work is work and titles are not significant when we're all contributing with bringing our full selves to this work. I mean, can you think of anybody else who does that? Made a huge, huge impact on me. And I still thank Gael to this day, you know.

**KN [00:19:29]** So you moved from there to actually being involved in direct action with strikes. And in 1981 the VMREU, along with CUPE, engaged in a major 14 week strike in Vancouver. Can you talk about that strike, its outcome and the role that you played in the events leading up to and during the strike?

**JH [00:19:52]** Yeah. Again, transformative. I would say up until that strike in, in 1981, started early in January. Up until then, I was a union member. Had some sense of, you know, I had a collective agreement. Didn't really pay much attention to it. But I was at a stage, and largely because of people like Gael, that I was just a sponge. You know, I was really soaking up all this, this activism and really inspired to be part of something. And, and, RayCam had its own contract as part of this cluster of collective agreements that the VMREU bargained, something the City of Vancouver, RayCam, Britannia, police at that time support staff, GVRD support staff. And I think the Planetarium as well at the same time and the Vancouver Museum. So, I'm just trying to remember if some of those were separate. Anyway, it was a massive bargaining, and CUPE was in bargaining at the same time for all of the Lower Mainland municipalities. So Rick Gates, who was on the union executive, came to RayCam one day and said, "We need a bargaining committee and you folks have your own collective agreement, so you have representation on this master bargaining table. Who would you like to send?" And so we had an election, and, you know, there was only about 25 of us who worked there in total. And we elected a woman named

Mary Plant to be our representative. And somebody said, well, we should have an alternate too, just in case. And so someone turned to me and said, "What about you, Joey?" I was like, "Oh, sure, whatever." You know. Had no idea what that meant.

**JH [00:21:40]** And, I think that was like in September. And bargaining started up soon after, and in December, I was called up to the bargaining committee because Mary got sick and, and then I think I was at three full days of negotiations. And I remember being totally green, I didn't know, I mean, they must have wondered where I came from because I leaned over to somebody and said, "What? What's a pay grade? What's an increment?" I didn't know anything about this stuff. And, but it was also fascinating because the woman representing the employer, the GVRD, at the time, Greater Vancouver Regional District, they had contracted their HR folks to do all this bargaining. And a woman named Diane Bell was their spokesperson. And I remember her turning to one of our members of our bargaining committee, David Cadman, who is a well known name, saying, "David, that's not what that demand means. You know that that's not what that demand means that you're putting forward. I know what that means." I you know, basically, she said, "I wrote it." I was like, this seems very strange to me, like this. I kind of thought that there would be a different kind of dynamic in negotiation. So at the break, I asked, like, "What's going on?" And someone said, "Well, Diane Bell used to be our senior staff person for the VMREU, and she'd been bought over by the employer. We later found out that she'd been bought over on the premise that she could put us out on strike for six weeks and bring us back after six weeks, which would match the budget deficit. That was very calculated. And it wasn't just Vancouver, but the whole lower mainland municipal structure wanted to basically capitalize on six weeks of saved wages by forcing the unions on strike. So they came at us really hard on, concessions on our benefit structure.

**JH [00:23:44]** And, I guess I would say in retrospect, I think unions have become more sophisticated, now, because we bit. We took the bait. You know, we had this huge rally meeting and, you know, this we weren't going to stand for it. And we all went out on strike. Everybody just hit the bricks all at once. And we were out until it was going to be finished. And at the six—five week mark, apparently the employers started to kind of soften on their benefits issues. But by that point, somebody in Communications in Ottawa for CUPE had said, "Well, let's have a look at the list of demands." And of course, it was still a pretty long list of issues outstanding. Took their finger down the page and said, "Oh, what's this pay equity one? That might be something we can work with.

**JH [00:24:31]** And, and so the next thing we knew, pay equity had become a major, major issue that had to be resolved in order for us to go back to work. And for people like me as a daycare worker, when I took that job, I was grossing \$750 a month. Now I, I mean, obviously inflation would have changed those numbers, but it was, it was a low number then. And so for those of us in low paid, particularly female dominated jobs, we were like, right on this. We had a button that had a hard hat sitting on a typewriter. I still have one of those. And, and it caught fire. Particularly among the women. And we weren't going back to work until we got this pay equity stuff that sounded really right to us. A lot of the CUPE outside locals were, kind of felt like the rug had been pulled out from under them. They felt like the issues were changed. This isn't what they went out for. So there had to be a lot of kind of internal negotiations that went on to continue the support. But, the result of it, after 14 weeks on the picket line, was for people like me who made less than a garbage collector, which was the lowest male dominated position in the sector. For outside workers, that anybody who made less than that would have the difference times 12 months. So a year's worth of that gap was filled. And I think there was a \$500 back to work settlement, and the picket pay I'd received while I was out, which I think amounted to \$20 a week or

something. That meant that the day I went back to work, I broke even. And what that means is how low my pay was, right? In order to have bridged that gap. So it established the principle. In a way, it was redress.

**JH** [00:26:29] The other thing was it was a period of incredibly high inflation, and our wage settlement was 26% over the next three years. And so I was like, "Wow, I mean, if this is union, I'm in." But the other thing that I think was even more important was those 14 weeks on the picket line where I was out walking every day, all sorts of locations and meeting and talking to women, particularly, who were in their 50s and 60s, the ages. I am long past that now. I'm 66 now. That encouraged me and said, "You know, you're asking good questions. You seem to have some good gut instinct. You seem to have pretty good values." I mean, I don't think they articulated it this way, but they really said, when this is over, you need to get yourself involved. And so, so that was the beginning of the rest of my working life was in that whole. I was bit. I had the union bug.

**KN** [00:27:30] Great! So, you also, you had a particular experience in bargaining, as you became more involved and I want you to touch upon your experience involving tech change and in particular, some reference to what you referred to as the Joey Hartman clause, and what that was. But just, part of an agreement that you helped to negotiate.

**JH** [00:28:00] Right. So the next time I was at the bargaining table, we had something called the joint negotiating committee, JNC. And this was an attempt to try and have a more cohesive approach to bargaining this whole public sector, lower mainland. So this is the story about the Joey Hartman clause, which came before the tech change. The bargaining structure was absolutely unwieldy. We had, I think, a negotiating committee of the VMREU and I think 14 CUPE locals with a bargaining committee of about 65 and the employer's bargaining committee, of course, had the managers from all of those municipalities. I think they had about 40 people. So when we had a bargaining session, there was about 100 people around this massive rectangular table with the two spokespeople at the front of the table or the end of the table. And that was, for the VMREU, our business manager Bob Donnelly, who people may know more from his years with the Telephone Workers, and their lockout when they locked out the management. And then Neil Bradbury was the union rep for CUPE, and he was the spokesperson for the CUPE issues.

**JH** [00:29:21] And one of the issues that came up was the ability for RayCam staff to bid into positions for the City of Vancouver. We were considered as two very indep— there was a firewall. There was an independence between the two contracts and, lots of parallels, but they were distinct from each other. And we, one day, succeeded in negotiating that people, those 25 people who worked at RayCam, could be considered as inside employees in applying for and competing for positions with the City of Vancouver. No special preference, except that we were something other than members of the outside public. Still had to qualify, still had to compete for the job. And so we finished that up at the end of one day, and we came back the next day and, and reviewed the proposals that were now ready to be signed off. And the employer said, "Oh, no, we we, we didn't. You misunderstood. That wasn't agreed to yesterday." And, and Bob Donnelly said, "Well, actually you've misunderstood. Yes, it was. And I have notes to confirm it." And the employer, Malcolm Graham, said, "No, no, you know this just, sorry, but that's not the case." And we went back and forth a little bit and Bob Donnelly said, "Well, we'll just sit here until your memory comes back on that.".

**JH** [00:30:45] And they locked eyes and you know how long a minute feels in silence with 100 people around the room. And after about five minutes of them staring at each other, these notes started to come, you know, in bargaining people will send a note to the the spokesperson asking for a caucus or something, and Bob would not even look at them. He just whipped them off the table, whooshed off to one side or the other, and you could see people starting to get really edgy. A full 20 minutes. A full 20 minutes of 100 people sitting in this room in silence. And eventually Malcolm Graham said, "We'll take a brief caucus." He came back after ten minutes and said, "We still think you're wrong, but it's not a big enough issue for us to make it, you know, to let bargaining fall apart over it. So, okay, you get it." And my whole union side, everybody knew it was about me, because, I had had a really difficult time as a daycare worker and RayCam is a special needs daycare, so its kids in crisis. So my coworkers were suffering and the kids were suffering as a result of my union activism, which was really my passion and my future. And so we all knew that the job I needed to get was to move from daycare into the City of Vancouver, and to be able to let somebody else do the daycare work who could devote themselves to it. So it was the Joey Hartman clause as far as we were concerned.

**JH** [00:32:14] Years and years later, Neil Bradbury's funeral, actually, or memorial, I bumped into Malcolm Graham and he doesn't remember who I am, but the guy next to him did, and he was at the bargaining, too. He says "This, you remember, this is Joey Hartman, the VMREU days." And he said, "Oh, we named a clause after you." I said, "I knew we had. I didn't know you realized that too." So it was kind of a funny moment, but what that did was allowed me to be hired by the VMREU, in 1985, to be the coordinator for a Tech Change Grant.

**JH** [00:32:49] There was something called TIRF, T-I-R-F, Technological Impact Research Fund. It was federal grant money. There was a whole bunch of them out in Vancouver, with different people I know who were working on them. Elaine Bernard had one. Joy McPhail, Bill Saunders, Larry Stoffman, these were all people who were very active in the labour movement, who were involved with using this federal money to look at ways to enhance technology for the benefit of workers and, and population. How can we use tech better? And so I worked on a project to look, for a year and a half, to look at ways working with people who were VMREU members, working for the City of Vancouver to say, "How can computers be used for something to benefit?" So, I'll give you one just real quick example. One was about synchronizing street lights and the red light, green light system. Another was for, if a road was going to be dug up, thinking about using the technology to say what is, what's under that road? If we're going to be opening up the sewer, can we also see if the water pipes are going to need work in the next two years? In which case let's do it at the same time. So less disruption to traffic and population, those kinds of things that we worked on and put forward a whole series of proposals to the City and some of which they actually did adopt.

**JH** [00:34:14] But it allowed me that when that year and a half long job finished, the Joey Hartman clause gave me the opportunity to then bid in a job to the City of Vancouver. I became a, parking, what was I called? My coworkers called me, the clerk from hell. But, I had two main jobs. One was, I was the receptionist for the parking department engineering. But I also routed oversize vehicles through the City of Vancouver. So I had this huge map on the wall, and people would phone with oversize loads. Like, if you're bringing a crane through the city. And this happens like, many, many times every day. And I had to look at the wall and, route them through the truck routes. But remember things like, on a hot day, the teleph—or the bus lines, trolley lines on Powell Street, sag because the poles are too far apart, so you can't route anything down Powell Street on a hot day. If

it's high. It was a really hard job to learn, because I also had a switchboard with five lines that were constantly ringing, and I had to issue permits over the phone. So, it was really hard to learn, but once I got the hang of it, it was pretty fun. So yeah, I did that for a while.

**KN** [00:35:31] Did you get more involved in the union at some level?

**JH** [00:35:36] Very much. After that strike, I became a shop steward within a matter of weeks. The following November I became elected to the VMREU executive because there was a vacancy. So a by-election to fill that and became very, very active. It was really my other life. I'd have to say, you know, I talked about not being very motivated as a kid. I became extremely motivated as a union activist. Every opportunity that there was to kind of learn something new. So, you know, I helped lay out the newsletters on Wednesday nights, and Tuesday nights we might have a steward educational or I joined the Steward Education Committee and started being involved with organizing retreats as well as monthly sessions. I still have some of the posters that I did and literally, I mean, I would take a Sharpie and a felt pen and write a notice on a piece of letter-size paper saying, you know, "Union Training. Tuesday, April 22nd, 7 p.m." with the address, "Pizza provided. Come one, come all." And we'd put it on the mimeograph and the office would send them out in the mail. Literally just to hammer out a notice and have it sent out. Yeah, I got involved with, you know, there was a pay equity committee that I was involved with called EPIC as well, which was multi-union. Our plan was to write a book—I still have the manuscript, never published. And so, yeah, in terms of both VMREU activism, virtually every night of the week, I would go and do something.

**KN** [00:37:21] Okay. Well, then eventually you, got involved with the Hospital Employees' Union, and you took a job as the assistant to the President of the Hospital Employees' Union. Can you talk about how that happened and what the job involved?

**JH** [00:37:38] Sure. I'll just finish saying that at the VMREU I did end up as the full time Secretary Treasurer, which was pretty significant too. I was able to hold that position for three years, which was the maximum. We had a maximum of three one year terms allowable. And so I did a lot of growth in that. I would say it was one of the reasons I was able to later be the, the assistant to the President of the Hospital Employees' Union.

**JH** [00:38:03] So after being the coordinator for the Tech Change project, worked briefly at City of Vancouver as this permit clerk from hell, then became elected as the Secretary Treasurer for the VMREU, which was the one full time position at the time, and the British model of Secretary Treasurer versus President. And then, I was still active in the union and took a job as a rep for the Compensation Employees' Union. So I worked for them for three years. That was my first full time rep position. And I ended up though finding out from Fred Muessen, who was the president of the Hospital Employees' Union at the time, that he'd just gotten approval to hire an assistant. He didn't have an assistant, and he persuaded the provincial executive that that would be a useful role for him to have somebody who supported his work. But he only got approval for a 0.3 position. I was working at the Compensation Employees' Union. We'd just negotiated our first contract, which had an allowance for unlimited unpaid leaves of absences without reason. So I took a 0.3 leave of absence to go and work for the Hospital Employees' Union, and for about six months — well, I have to say, I mean, it really felt like I was working two full time jobs for the duration, but for about six months I did both jobs, and then HEU decided to make that position full time permanent. And so I left the Compensation Employees' Union and became the president's assistant at HEU, which was largely a desk job in a lot of ways. I did a lot of — I virtually wrote all of the correspondence, and I read the correspondence

that came in and drafted responses, I wrote speeches, did the research necessary to support resolutions, wrote resolutions that went to convention, did a lot of revisions on constitutional work. A lot of essentially supporting the role of the President in the union. And again, the, the HEU structure is that you have the spokesperson for the union in all sort of external matters and with management is the Secretary Business Manager, and the President is the political spokesperson for the union within the organization. And so there's always this feeling that the Secretary Business Manager has all of the staff except the Assistant to the President. And so it's kind of a unique role in the way it's carved out that way. But, I did that for nine and a half years.

**KN** [00:41:00] So after doing that for nine and a half years, you went on to become a union rep at the HEU. Are there any highlights or events that you were involved in with the HEU at that time while you were working there that you'd like to talk about?

**JH** [00:41:16] I think very significantly, while I was the assistant to the president was a very, very difficult period of Bill 29 that was passed, which really reached into a standing collective agreement mid term, and ripped it up. Gordon Campbell hated the fact that HEU had protections against contracting out and literally with 20 minutes notice, told the union that they were going to the Legislature that night to table and pass legislation that said that not only did they no longer have any prohibitions against contracting out, but it was illegal for them to try and renegotiate them. And, it was a historic intrusion into free collective agreements, resulted in the layoffs of 8000 of our members. These were people who were already at that point making about \$19 an hour who were offered work, if they hadn't been a union activist, with a contracted-out international company. The main ones were Sodexo, Aramark and Compass. They got those contracts, with the understanding that workers would be paid no more than \$10.25 an hour, 18 days of sick leave, working in a hospital — environments was reduced to three days of sick leave in the first six months of the year, and three days in the second six months of the year, non-accumulative. They lost their pension, they lost their benefits. Their vacations went from four weeks minimum to two.

**JH** [00:42:51] It was multi-generational. I know of people who took their kids out of high school. They'd been saving for the university, and instead took them out of Grade 10 to go to work. I know people committed suicide. I know that the folks who were rehired were called scabs by the other workers, by many of the other workers. But the lesson that, to their credit, that HEU took from when this had happened (privatization in England), they asked people who had been from the union that had represented those workers. They said, "You've been through this. What should we do?" And the answer was, "Above all, start organizing right away." They had left those people for about ten years saying, you know, we're so angry that you took the jobs that were contracted out and that our colleagues or our brothers and sisters had lost, that they ignored them for ten years. And when they went and tried to organize them and said, "You know, we realize that we're stronger with you and you're stronger with us." By that point, the resentment was huge, and they were seen as just really trying to put more and more dues income.

**JH** [00:44:01] So HEU took that lesson and, it was hard. A lot of members were very unhappy about it. They said, no, you should be fighting to get our members back. The ones who lost their jobs, not these new people, because anybody who could went and got another job, they weren't going to take that kind of a reduction. And so it was a really, really difficult thing in so many ways. And of course, the companies resisted terribly. And, and there was also other unions who made it very difficult by having... How much do I say about this? But, it wasn't raiding at that time. It was that they made deals. We actually got a union rep on a telephone conversation with one of the companies saying, we agree we

won't try and get the wages above \$10.25. And they actually had a set up where there was these job fairs and people would go and apply. And if they were approved by the company, they would be given a piece of paper to an address at the end of the block, which was this union, and they had to sign the union card before they actually come back and then be confirmed for the job. And so we filed, you know, labour practice violation complaints and stuff like that. And it was a very difficult internal political problem for the union. It was IWA at the time, was a local of IWA, who is now no longer on their own as a union.

**JH [00:45:43]** I mean, you can just imagine, as we're trying to deal with this whole issue of contracting out, to have that, that level of collusion, really felt like a really difficult slap. And then we'd also gone through raiding, the B.C. Nurses Union was able to raid the Licensed Practical Nurses from HEU. And so it really felt like HEU was going through a very long period of— it just felt like every time we turned around, something else happened that made it even worse. But in my role as supporting the President I really tried to make sure that, you know, to make that job go as smoothly as I could. That was part of my role and responsibility was to at least make sure that the office end of things were good.

**JH [00:46:32]** But after nine and a half years, I really felt like I really missed the activism or the fact of working and representing with members. And so I went back to being a rep, but with HEU, and before too long was asked to lead up a group of three other reps and myself as the team responsible for the privatized sector. And the reason for that is because many HEU reps come out of the master HEU agreement, which is a very mature collective agreement with decades of building and improving and has a lot of rights. And, so many of the reps that have come to HEU from their own activism in their local had become so comfortable with what the collective agreement said in their workplace that they assumed it also applied to these new contracted-out workers, the privatized sector. And in fact, were getting some people into trouble because they were just sort of saying, "Well, of course the employer can't do that to you." And so the person would go back full of piss and vinegar and get themselves fired. And so HEU said, "You know, well, maybe what we need is people who haven't come out of that experience."

**JH [00:47:49]** And I, you know, my collective agreement experience was quite varied. VMREU had 19 different collective agreements. So I had this understanding that you never assume what's in any particular agreement. You go read it. And so my habit was to take two, give one into the hands of the member and one myself and say, "Let's figure this out together." So I ended up leading this team of three very novice reps. One who had just been hired from Sodexo, had been an activist there, but really had a couple of months of repping experience. Another one who I think had been on staff for about three months, and another who had just come out of the research department. I felt really proud about the way we approached it, though, because it was very collaborative. We sat down with each other and said, "Okay, well, we've got, I don't know, 30, 40 locals, how should we distribute this?" And we had province wide responsibility as well because that's, you know, this was all over the province, but we were all based in the Burnaby office. So we just put it on sticky notes where we agreed that, the folks with young kids of the four of us, shouldn't have to travel as much. You know, there were going to be times that they have to. But let's minimize it for them and let's make sure that we have sort of roughly the same amount of tough ones and easier ones. And, you know, we just we put them all on sticky notes and just move them around on the wall and said, "Okay, well, here's your responsibility and here's mine and here's yours." And, we worked really well together.

**JH [00:49:26]** It was tough, tough work, but really probably the most purposeful work I've ever done in my life, because those people who were hired into those jobs had so much,

like, so much oppression. It wasn't just about the wages and stuff. Their managers were also oppressed. I mean, it was all part of the same system. I mean, the managers only got two weeks of vacation a year too, and they were treated like crap by their bosses. And so, you know, it kind of kicked it all the way down the line. And it was mostly new immigrants. It was folks who really were trying to find their way in, living in, working in this environment to start with. And the whole structure changed.

**JH** [00:50:09] You know, before that (for cleaners, for example), in a hospital if there was a hazardous spill or a body fluids spill on the floor, (you know, vomit would be an example) whoever first saw it would go clean it up. Like, health care really functioned as a team, you know. After the privatization, they were really worried about common employer and looking like anybody was directing the work of a cleaner who worked for Sodexo, Aramark or Compass. And so they put these ridiculous systems in place where if a health care worker saw a spill, they would have to phone a call Centre to arrange to have somebody radioed who may be in a totally other part of the hospital and have to, you know, figure out their way to where it was and then find out where, what room are we looking at and all that kind of — and all of that was structurally just to try to make sure that they could avoid a common employer complaint from the union. But it also meant that those people were not part of the team and they became more and more invisible all the time. And as new immigrants, they were invisible already. And it just amplified that. So for us to work with them, it was a lot of building the locals. It was a lot of making sure that they understood that the union was there to work with them and that they had a lot of the responsibility, but also opportunity to voice what were the issues as they saw them and to define that. But we would sometimes have, I think, sometimes three locals under the same roof, like in the same hospital because you had the master agreement and then you'd have— maybe there was Sodexo worker and, and also Compass workers who had a different contract. And so we'd actually, like structurally as a union, it was it was really awkward. And these people had no communication with each other. And so it was only at convention that we were able to bring them together often.

**KN** [00:52:11] So from what you've said, Joey, clearly the HEU took a real hit with Bill 29, beginning with Bill 29, and it seemed as though the B.C. Liberal government was really out to actually try and destroy the Union, but it survived. And grew back into a fairly significant strong union. Can you talk about that? I mean, obviously some of the stuff you've talked about organizing the privatized sectors and so forth, but can you talk about what happened?

**JH** [00:52:44] Well, I think, there was a point that I would say it was really hugely at risk of collapsing. The first opportunity to go back to bargaining, in 2004, or 3? Yeah. And the union tried to reestablish itself and the settlement was the best the union was able to negotiate under the circumstances. There was a strike that, at one point was going to, like the next day, there was a plan in place to escalate with other unions stepping in and potentially building up to being a general strike in support of HEU. And the members were very, very invested in this. It was still a very fresh wound, Bill 29, and they lost all their coworkers who had been privatized. And, there was a real sense that this was the opportunity. What you could never talk about was, of course, the vulnerabilities. Like, you know, the top leadership knew some of the places that the strike was crumbling and some of the issues where they were extraordinarily vulnerable, but of course, you couldn't expose that because you'd be telling the boss about it, too. But the decision was not to proceed with the illegal strike and to, in fact, work with the settlement that was possible to achieve without it, with the absolute belief that they were doing the right thing and that had they proceeded to a general strike, that they were not going to be successful and that the

consequences of it were going to be more damaging than the damage of accepting that agreement at that point.

**JH** [00:54:48] I would say that as close as I was to it, I've never felt like I have the answer about if they made the right decision or not. I don't have that kind of retrospective on it. I do know that the consequences of it were pretty difficult. Like extraordinarily difficult. The day after the members picketed the headquarters. You know, basically said you're not going into work 'till, like, you are going to hear how angry we are about this. There was many, many months that virtually every day was "How is this union going to get through this?" We had a convention, I guess, about four months later and the resolution passed to strike a task force, to basically say, "What's the future of the union and how are we going to get there?" And I was selected as one of two staff people to accompany that task force in that journey.

**JH** [00:56:04] So we traveled all around the province and had meetings with locals and local activists. And some meetings only one or two people came, or if anybody. I think there was a couple of meetings where nobody showed up, which just showed the sort of flatness and despair. There was no energy in terms of trying to bring this back together, except some of them, there was people who came and just really wanted to vent how angry — we actually set a limit of ten minutes of, okay, get this out of your system, but then we're going to move on to what are we going to do, where are we going? And the task force members were mostly rank and file members — like activists, shop steward level, maybe local chair, not members of the provincial executive. The idea was to have it at arm's length from the sort of top political level of the union, and my job was really more to be a scribe and to help to facilitate it. The conclusion was to come forward with some restructuring and— to some degree it was a healing process. But there was also just this kind of like, "We can't just continue with this anger as it's destroying us." To be able to then move forward.

**JH** [00:57:23] And I think one of the very significant things too was, the Secretary Business Manager who had been through that period was Chris Allnutt. And I think, you know, Chris did the best he could under the circumstances, but he still wore it. And so he left. He chose to leave. And Judy Darcy was hired as a Secretary Business Manager to replace him. And Judy brought a credibility of having been the National President of CUPE. She was known as somebody who really listened and understood people at a very human level. She put a huge amount of work into really turning the tide, in terms of how the union saw itself and its willingness to move on. And also to embrace those privatized workers as brothers and sisters in the union. I think Judy's leadership through that actually is what was the turning point for HEU to come back as a really very strong and vibrant union.

**KN** [00:58:34] Okay. Now, eventually in 2011, you were elected to the presidency of the Vancouver and District Labour Council. You were the first woman ever to serve in that position. Can you tell us how you got to be elected to that role and what the job involved?

**JH** [00:58:53] Sure. It was a huge pleasure for me to finish my paid career as President of the Vancouver and District Labour Council. I had been a delegate (as a member of the staff union at HEU) I had been a delegate to the Vancouver and District Labour Council. And even when I wasn't a delegate, before that, I had always attended the meetings because I felt like it was the place you got the pulse of what's the labor movement in British Columbia, or in Vancouver particularly. It was a very social hub, and it was kind of a, it was the place to be on Tuesday nights, the first Tuesday night of the month. The current president, Bill Saunders, had let it known that he was intending to retire in 2011,

and I'd been approached by a few people saying "Would you be interested?" And I was like, "No, I love my job at HEU! I'm doing really important work there." And I was asked again, you know, sounds kind of interesting. And anyways, I was persuaded to put my name forward and I was elected in 2011.

**JH [01:00:08]** One of the first things I realized was how the finances were sinking like a stone. There was a bit of money in the bank, but it was to the point that there was, you know, let's hold back payment on this in order to make sure that this other thing is—meet payroll, for example. And so the very, really the very first thing I did was to figure out how much money we needed to float and essentially reached out to all of the affiliated unions and said, "I think you elected me to be a certain kind of a Labour Council, and I want to deliver. But to do that, I need you to support us." And I think dues was \$0.35 per member per month at the time. So if a union affiliates with a thousand members, then you just do the math, and that's how much they would pay us each month. And, I mean pretty low budget, right? I think our total budget was \$250,000 a year or something. So you have to pay rent and two staff people and, you know, all that kind of stuff out of that. So, anyways, I figured out the math and I persuaded them that this was a necessity. So they supported that ask with agreement to, I think we went from \$0.35 to— there was a 25% jump. And then, and then one penny a year for six more years. And my message on that was, front end load this and give us what we need to give you what we think you need in the form of a labour council. But also, this is our promise. We're not going to be coming back to you over and over again. You can look six years into the future and know that you won't have another ask from us.

**JH [01:02:02]** The Labour Council role as president is really, to a large degree, what the president makes it. It's one of those positions where you are the leader of a federation of unions. You work with the delegates but also with an executive that is made up of representation from all of those unions. And so a lot of it is, what is it that they feel is interested? But the things that I felt most proud about was solidarity support. I've always felt it's a little backwards the way the labor movement does it's picket solidarity, strike solidarity. We have a tendency to say, "You go first, and only when you really are desperate call on us and we'll come in." And unions say that's the way they want it. They say, you know, "We need to do this on our own. But if we're really desperate, then we'll call on you." I think that as a movement, if we show up on day one, there might not be a day two. And we had one example of this where we'd organized a solidarity committee, and I can't even remember who it was, but they were picketing out in Richmond and they'd called us and said, "Hey, we hear you've got this Solidarity Committee." We put out the word, and the next morning, like at six in the morning, we had representation from probably twenty different unions with flags and picket signs of solidarity, and that strike was done that afternoon. And I'm pretty convinced that this played some role in that. That the boss looked out the window and said, who are all those people? And to see major unions, well known, recognized major unions in the B.C. Federation of Labour outside their front door on the first day of a strike, I think that's the way we should be doing it all the time. So the fact that we had the picket, the solidarity work, I thought was really important.

**JH [01:04:05]** I also established an education program, that has become very, very successful and continues. Very affordable; to the point that people can pay their own way if they want to. It's typically about \$100 for a full day course, with lunch and with top level education. Mostly the legal courses are taught by lawyers who do it for free. Everybody who teaches in the program does it for free. It's their way of both giving forward but also, it's invigorating for them. They actually get to spend the time with shop stewards and activists who are absolutely passionate about this work. And it re-inspires people who've

been around for a while, who'd kind of forgotten their old enthusiasm when they were first doing it. And they always come out of it saying, you know, "Thanks for asking me! This was great." And it's like, "Well, thank you for doing it." You know, it really makes— it's a really great program.

**JH [01:05:10]** There's a lot of things like organizing the May Day event, organizing Labour Day. We had an annual dinner to support a breakfast program at Queen Alexandra Elementary School, which is a longstanding solidarity action within the community. A lot of the work that the Labour Council does in terms of political support. So interviewing and assessing which municipal candidates we think deserve the support of working people, and to then put out communications to say, when you vote you know that this is a labour-endorsed list. You know, every once in a while somebody says, you're not supposed to tell me how to vote. We say, we're not. We're telling you who (if you care about these issues), this is who, through our very intensive vetting system, this is who we think best matches up with those values. So those are just a few things. It's a pretty intense job.

**KN [01:06:16]** Well, during your presidency I think you gave the Vancouver and District Labour Council a very significant profile, both within the labour movement and I think publicly. And some of the things you've mentioned are part of that, but it was a good seven years, I would say. At some point, though, during your union involvement and perhaps while you were president of the VDLC, you developed a keen interest in labor history. Can you talk about what that was? How did that happen? How did you get that interest?

**JH [01:06:48]** It goes way back. Fresh off the picket line, I think. So, very soon after that strike, I showed up for steward education, and one night looked for the steward training session and couldn't find it. And there was a boardroom open a little bit, and there was two guys sitting in the room and I said, "Is there some steward training tonight?" And they said, "No, it's the Steward Education Committee. Come on in." And that's how I joined the Steward Ed Committee, and became friends with those two people. Jim Gorman was one of them, and Steve Baker is the other. Now, Jim Gorman, as you all know, I just celebrated my 32 year wedding anniversary with, so obviously that turned into a relationship, although not until ten years later.

**JH [01:07:38]** But anyways, I think it was the very next year, Jim said "You know, I went to a labour history conference a few years ago, and it's back in B.C. this year at UBC, you might be interested." So a few of us attended this Pacific Northwest Labour History Association conference, and it was fascinating. It was really cool that the PNLHA brought together people from British Columbia, Washington and Oregon State, (was its main mandate area) and had these conferences that rotated through the three jurisdictions, so it came back to B.C. every third year. It was a essentially a combination of academics, people who study labour history, and worker activists and leaders, people who make labor history. The dynamic could be that you'd have some grad student who's just nervously doing the presentation on the research that they've done, and somebody at the back of the hall would say, "Sonny, I was there! And I'll tell you!" and give the real story from their perspective. And their eyes would get wide.

**JH [01:08:52]** It was just very neat to see that, you know, there tended to be a lot of divisions between those who research and study labour history and those who are on the line, and a sense that they don't necessarily understand each other very well. And this conference was a real eye opener to see that, through an organizational approach, the opportunity to kind of lift up those of those, the sources to hear from each other, but also to socialize and get to know each other and talk and hear the stories and all of the folklore.

And so I started going. And the next year I went to Oregon for one, and then the next year to Washington State, and then the next year coming back to British Columbia. Well, who's on the committee for the planning of the conference? And in those days, you know, we didn't have computers. And I mean, I'm talking about by this point, 1985. We would sort of get together and say, "Well, who should our keynote speaker be? What do you think? Who else should we get to speak?" And then we would write them a letter and hope that we've chosen the right address and maybe we'd wait for, you know, should we wait a month, two months, for an answer? And if they said no, then you'd have to go down the list. The ability to organize a conference that had like multiple workshops and stuff really wasn't possible until we had computer technologies and emails where you could get the answer fast enough to know whether or not you could do concurrent sessions and all of that planning. We were the first ones to do a conference that wasn't just a person, followed by another person, followed by another person to the end of the day. It meant for a much more dynamic conference. I was involved with organizing those conferences from then on. One year I was the chair, the president of the organization. But other than that I was kind of the lead person for British Columbia.

**KN** [01:10:59] And you must've done that for over 20 years, I would think.

**JH** [01:11:02] Well, from about 1980—I'm going to say I was on the executive from '85 until... Just a few years ago we really decided that the B.C. Labour Heritage Centre and the Pacific Northwest Labour History Association could operate better as support organizations. That the energy of the labor movement was really invested in the Labour Heritage Centre, by that point. There's not enough labour history for two organizations in this town, frankly. They still continue to exist, they put out a great calendar. And we're in touch with them, and they put some stuff in their newsletter from ours. And we make sure that people know about their conferences and other events.

**KN** [01:11:52] So you also, in addition to that activity specifically, organized and led the work around celebrating the acknowledgment of the 75th anniversary of the On To Ottawa Trek. Can you tell us a bit about that?

**JH** [01:12:06] Well, I was on the On To Ottawa Historical Society for a number of years. I was first inspired by having bumped into Bobby Jackson, who had been one of the trekkers. He had what he called his "Dog and Pony Show" that he'd brought to the Canadian Labour Congress convention that I was attending and got to talking. I thought, "Well, this guy's got a lot to say." He was (for anybody who knew Bobby) he was quite a character. And he really wanted to preserve the history of the On To Ottawa Trek of 1935. The organization had already done the film with Sara Diamond. But there was still more work to be done, so we did a number of events. So it was people like Tom Cozard, Julius Fisher, David Yorke, Larry Jackson (who was one of Bobby's sons), Joe Barrett. It was all guys, I was always the one woman in the room. It was funny. We would usually meet in somebody's kitchen. So we organized various activities and things around the On To Ottawa Trek. Videos distribution, all that kind of stuff.

**JH** [01:13:24] But the anniversary came up and we decided it needed to be marked for the 75th year. Organized at Crabb Park, a plaque, a bronze plaque, on the overpass, and got permission to mark it. And we chose that location because it was those railway tracks where the Trek started on June 3rd, 1935. A thousand young men, unemployed, climbing on top of the boxcars with the permission of the CPR because the City, of course, wanted them the hell out of town. The federal government—the idea was to take their case for work and wages after having left the work camps, the relief camps, they wanted to take the

issue to Ottawa. And after having been read The Riot Act by Mayor McGeer in Vancouver, the federal government was not concerned because they knew that that was an impossible thing to do, to get on top of the railway cars and make their way halfway across the country to Ottawa. Apparently the spiral tunnel, particularly in the Rockies, was awful. Like, you can just imagine. The visuals of this story are incredible to think about. These guys in military units, on top of boxcars, using your belt or a piece of rope to tie themselves on top to make sure they didn't roll off the boxcar. These are steam trains, right? All the soot and steam coming back, them totally exposed to the elements. But they did. They got as far as Regina, as you know. And they had the RCMP stop all eastbound trains. So it's a fantastic story. And I think one of the most amazing labor history events to narrate and to talk about, in a way, because the illustration that goes with it is stuff that everybody can imagine by just hearing those words and the story that goes with it.

**JH** [01:15:29] So we chose Crab Park because the overpass went over the railway where they had first embarked. The 75th anniversary was accompanied by having the plaque unveiling. Joe Hall organized a contemporary On To Ottawa. He took a bunch of folks from the Downtown Eastside, and they traveled 'on the cushions' inside the train to go to Ottawa themselves to kind of reenact and study the Trek of '35 on their way, and to think about the parallels between the life that they were existing in as people in the Downtown Eastside, and what had happened in the days that led up to the Trek. The sense of injustice, of structural poverty, those kinds of issues. And, and then we had a ceremony, I remember Jim Sinclair spoke and a couple of Trekkers who were still alive (I don't know if there's any still alive now. I don't think so) spoke about their memories, and it was a really lovely event just to mark that occasion. We subsequently rolled the On To Ottawa Society into this organization, the BC Labour Heritage Society. Again, because we felt like it was better housed here.

**KN** [01:16:51] I'm just mentioning that, Joey, you actually got involved in the Labour Heritage Centre by joining the board in 2013 and a number of years later, in 2019, you were elected as chair of the board. Can you tell us something of your experience with the BC Labour Heritage Centre overall?

**JH** [01:17:10] Well, it's been really dynamic. It was a guy named Ken Novakowski who asked me to come on the board. My very first board meeting was the last board meeting that the founder, Jack Munro, attended because his health was declining. And I was, you know, welcomed into the meeting. And I remember making one intervention that Jack didn't like and, "No God damn way we're going to do blah, blah." and I was like, "Okay." And, that was Jack. At the end of the meeting, he said, "So how did you like your first board meeting?" I said, "Well, I thought I'd get sworn in, but I wasn't expected to get sworn at." And he go ha, ha, ha. So, you know, it was just kind of a light moment. But, that was my introduction.

**JH** [01:17:57] You know, when I first came onto the board, the organization was functioning very well but in a way that was very intensive work for the president, or the Chair of the Board at the time, which was Ken (you) Novakowski. And what I would say about that is, is that what I observed was that you were probably putting about four days minimum of full time work in a week as a volunteer and overseeing the work of the various projects and the work of multiple contracted staff who were assigned to do those projects. And so, together, we said this is not sustainable after the life of Ken as the chair of this board. And so I expressed interest in assuming that role when you were ready to move out of it, but not to commit myself to that level of commitment. And so together we brought forward a proposal to the board to restructure in a way that said, we need the stability and

continuity of having some staff. And so we restructured, consolidated that work into hiring an executive director, Donna Sacuta. And, I think Bailey Garden came a little bit later. And Robin Fulvik was also working as a researcher at the time. And so it was a transition into reshaping the way that the projects were carried out.

**JH [01:19:41]** I also have taken a more hands-off approach. Partly because of my availability, but also because that's more how I work. I prefer to let other people develop their own leadership by not having me present at every meeting. And so, that's a choice. And I think has worked well. Just in terms of my style, that's a different way of doing things. But the projects that The Centre has taken on and the one that I was most directly involved with, was to be the lead for the Asbestos Memorial project, the mobile down at Canada Place. That is I think, beautiful, and is a kinetic sculpture that reflects and brings attention to the fact that asbestos continues to be the most significant killer of workers, and often family members of workers, that continues to exist. And because of the way the manifestation of the impalement of the lungs by asbestos fibers can be 20 years before the disease materializes. So we know that there's more to come, even though asbestos is banned, that those deaths will continue. So that was a really significant and very personal one for me. But I've also just taken such pride and delight in how this organization continues to excel. I'm just always amazed by the quality and the amount of project work that comes out. And then with the hiring of Natasha Fairweather a year ago, as the project director, again, seeing a flourishing of social media, virtual walking tours, extraordinarily good work and, is capturing people's attention. Natasha is in the background saying "Oh, pshaw." but I mean every word of that. And it's, you know, we're being noticed, and really appreciated. And it's resulting in more donations and more interest in people joining the board.

**JH [01:22:04]** We just added four new people to the board, all of whom bring extraordinary skills and passion for this work. We rely tremendously on volunteers, and things like the Oral History project, which is what I'm getting a chance to participate in today and get to see close up and personal. This is really important work. And for workers to be able to see themselves reflected in a way that tells them who they are and where they came from as workers, and the fact that the rights that they have been the result of struggle and collective action. We live in a world of very much on individualism. And as much as we can use things like the labour history and the Labour Heritage Centre to help people understand that collective action and to persevere because these things take decades to win and we're always being pushed back. And when we make wins, they're always compromised wins in terms of legislation and achievements, almost always.

**JH [01:23:11]** So, the other thing that I would say we've really emphasized in recent years is to lift up the voices of people who had not been part of the narrative traditionally. Whose stories were always there as part of labour history, but not in terms of how it's been written about, spoken about, lectured about, researched about. And so we make a pretty deliberate effort to look for those stories and to lift them up. And that's really evident in the podcasts, in the project, the Union Zindabad book: South Asian Canadian workers and their history in British Columbia. Looking currently at developing much deeper projects around Asian Canadian workers in history. So these are all, I think in some ways they respond to the vacuum that sometimes existed around those people not having a place to see, but it also gives unions something to share with their members that says: you're in our membership and you have a story here, too. That the people that you came from have a story, and were part of building who we are. And all of that is in summary to say that this is very, very important work. And it's really been a tremendous pleasure to be part of it. And I thank you for inviting me on the board.

**KN** [01:24:43] Okay. Another area that you've been involved in for some time is serving on the Labour Advisory Committee to the SFU Labour Studies Program. Can you talk a bit about that experience as well?

**JH** [01:24:56] Yeah. The Labour Studies Program at SFU has been somewhat of an academic— the structure of it is really suited for students. It's not so much a worker education program, but it deeply wants to have union input and to be connected to the labour movement and so the advisory committee that I sit in on is part of that. The other thing is that the Morgan Centre— so Margaret Morgan is the widow of Lefty Morgan, who is somebody who is a leftist labour activist who happened to have two homes in Deep Cove. That after Lefty died, Margaret reached out to Jim Sinclair (I think he was still president of the B.C. Federation of Labour) and said in Lefty's legacy, I want you to help me to to put the money out of these houses when I die to make sure that there's a legacy for Lefty. And the way we would like that to be is in the form of a degree-granting Labour Studies Program. And so Jim was able to negotiate with Simon Fraser University to have that, the two houses when they went for sale, to have the proceeds go to support that degree granting program at SFU. And, SFU wanted to take the money and put it into research grants, and Jim was like 'That's not what Margaret wants.' And he stuck to it. And he said it was actually really difficult to get it on those terms. But that program has evolved. And so, the Labour Studies Advisory Committee that I sit on helps to guide the program offerings, looking for co-op placement opportunities, looking for ways to better connect with the labour movement, make sure that the programs are reflective of the labour movement and the values and a pro-union approach. In a world that isn't— I mean, there's a lot of business management training and education, and so it manages to sort of carve out its niche and do some really, really good and important work up there. The director, Kendra Strauss, I would say has been remarkable. Really, really good work.

**KN** [01:27:24] Okay. Additionally, Joey, since you basically stepped down from full time work when you left the Vancouver and District Labor Council job that you had as President. You've done work in a whole variety of areas as well, in addition to the ones we've talked about. Is there anything you would like to say about that that work as well?

**JH** [01:27:48] Well, I've always liked doing governance and all the time I was working in those other jobs, I served on different boards. They all somehow were tangential to activism, solidarity. So I was the Chair of the Board for Co-development Canada, which does solidarity work with Latin America. At one point, I was on the United Way board when I was with the VDLC, which is — there was a labour partnership, and we were there to make sure that that was, our input was well used. Since retiring, I thought I was going to reduce myself down to two boards, but I got kind of persuaded to take all the skills I had learned over 45 years of activism and governance and to apply them to other boards. So I knew I wanted to stay on this one, the BC Labour Heritage Board and I also had been on the Council of Canadians, which is a national organization that does work around water protection, democracy, a lot of things in terms of— you know, we were the ones that actually called out the robocall case and things like that. Very much about grassroots activism and taking taking national issues. A lot of trade work too and that was NAPA and the MAI, it was part of defeating the MAI, Multilateral Agreement on Investment, back in the day. So, so lots of really important work on a national scale.

**JH** [01:29:28] I'm still on the board for the Council of Canadians, but I'm not going to be re-offering in June, so I'm pulling back a little bit, partly because I am very deeply invested in continuing my work here with the Labour Heritage Centre. But I also serve on the board for

the Pacific Blue Cross which is a co-op, believe it or not, of health benefits for the provision of things like extended health care, travel insurance and other plans. And that's been really interesting in terms of sort of seeing how the business world operates from an inside and having a shared responsibility around that. And then, the one that I also am very invested in is I chair the Vancouver Community College Board. That was something I was asked by government after I retired, I got a phone call saying, "Would you be interested in the VCC board?" from an organization called CABRO, which does government appointments to public sector boards. And I said, "I haven't thought about it, but I've always really liked VCC, so tell me more." There was a big change in the board at the time and so in my very first meeting, I became Chair. I've just been extended for another two years, so that'll bring me to seven years. Normally these appointments are six year maximum, but we're going through a big transition at Vancouver Community College, which I'm really, really proud of.

**JH** [01:31:01] We just had, on Friday, a ground blessing that Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh collaborated on how, in their view, this is overlapping traditional lands. We gave the responsibility to organize this over, to prepare the land and in a good way, for the building that's going to come on it. Our Broadway campus has a full city block parking lot, between Broadway and the Skytrain station on Great Northern Way. And that parking lot, the next building going on it is going to be the Centre for Clean Energy and Automotive Innovation. Catchy title, which will be the first training Centre west of Ontario for non-fossil fuel engines and that will be building also room for library space, the jewelry program is going in there. I think the dentistry program is going in there. Anyways, it's going to be a building that will be the anchor for a much more ambitious and bold program of campus redevelopment.

**JH** [01:32:07] We received provincial funding to the tune of \$271.3 million for that building. We have to come up with money ourselves, but that is the anchor point for it and will allow us to eventually tear down the buildings that face Broadway. And the objective is 3,300 efficiency units of housing with nobody being displaced, no renovation because there's nothing— it's our space and we'll not sell it. I mean, it's public land and we will not sell it, but we will find ways to make sure that that is as much affordable housing as possible of those units. Our objective is 40% to be affordable and, oh, an incredible location. Okay. Broadway between Clark and the Skytrain station right there and then the line to UBC on the other side of it. And the objective is some small studio apartments that would be suitable for students, but not dorms, all the way up to two and three bedroom units for families, so that workers can actually live and work in the city and go to school and all of that. So daycare space and community amenities is a really big, big project and a big deal. And pretty exciting to be part of.

**KN** [01:33:33] So I have a last question, which is sort of open ended, but I would like to ask you if there's anything else related to your overall involvement in the labour movement in B.C. that you'd like to comment on or talk about?

**JH** [01:33:47] Well, you asked earlier or you said earlier: I was the first woman elected to the VDLC, and as a feminist it's always been really important for me to help, to use positions that I've held to also make space for other women. I've moved out of positions I've held, sometimes earlier than perhaps I needed to, because I wanted to put that into action. And I go back to my colleague Gael Koob, who shared her paycheck with me. It really is so much about what I stand for, which is also about not just holding that space for myself, but how do I use it to— I stand on the shoulders of women who came before me. It only took 122 years for the VDLC to elect a woman. And so the question is, what took so long? I guess I was probably the first who ran. But once I was elected, I really... At first I

was kind of like, "Well, this is cool!" And then it sort of occurred to me that this comes with responsibility. And so I really took very seriously the role of being president of the Labour Council as an opportunity to also encourage and mentor and make space for, particularly younger women.

**JH** [01:35:09] And even now I do some just informal coaching, young women who are leaders in their union locals, who— nobody teaches you this stuff. You become a president of a union, you don't know what you're doing. Like there's nothing that prepares you for this. And even things like how to run a meeting effectively and how to make it interesting is not in most people's realm of experience. And so just, to support and walk through and I really, I've always believed that my role as a chairperson or a board member in all of this governance work that I do is to really support particularly the staff of any organization to do the best that they can and to help make— you know, sometimes there's a bit of tough love in there, sometimes there's some hard conversations. But it's always with the intent of making people know that they're supported, that they're there for a reason and their work is appreciated. And I think fundamentally, my trade unionism is about appreciating people and the work that they do and the contributions that we all make. And it doesn't matter what your job is, you know, the people who had to clean up vomit at HEU in their membership in the hospitals are no less important than the brain surgeon. Like nobody gets hired because the employer thinks that's a good idea to have somebody have a job for the sake of having a job and supporting their family, they only hire positions because they say that they're important to the functioning of the organization, and that means that job has value. No matter where they are. But, you know, we have a way of trying to put people on to tiers. And I've always seen that my positional responsibility is to make sure that people know that I see past that and I take that very seriously. So I guess that's my parting message.

**KN** [01:37:10] Okay. Well, thank you very much, Joey. That was, really appreciate it. That was great.

**JH** [01:37:15] Thank you.