

**Cathleen Kneen in Conversation with Brian Murphy:
Nine interviews recorded between September 2015 and February 2016**

September 28, 2015 – Brian Murphy's first conversation with Cathleen Kneen.

C: So my very earliest memory is of being shoved into a closet and glass breaking, in the guest room of our house in St. John's, Newfoundland. When I asked my mother, was that something I made up? She said "No." We were in London during the Blitz. I was a baby and she decided to move to the countryside to stay with a friend because she thought it would be safer there and that's where the bomb dropped. And so she had grabbed me, pulled me into the closet, and you could hear the windows breaking. And she said "I think the reason you remember it is that I was terrified because I thought we were safe."

B: How old were you?

C: Less than two. So that's one of my first memories. I also have several other memories from that period; we left England when I was two and a half – most of which involve sun, which I think probably was striking. And some of which I have photographs and I remember what it felt like. When I was small, the photographs elicit memories of the feelings like one when my sister was born. So I would have been maybe less than three, because there's two and a half years between us, and there's a photograph of me holding her in my arms with my mother hovering over so I didn't drop her and I remember the feel, the weight and the feel of the wool, the white woollen shawl she was wrapped in. So those tactile memories, but getting back to that first memory, I've often wondered since that memory came up, if that's why I've been anti-war all my life. If that's something that so early imprinted on me that fear of the completely irrational attack, I mean my mother and I were no threat to anybody, except that we were Jews.

B: That's it. In the era you're talking about especially.

C: Yeah but Hitler didn't know that we were Jews -- in rural England.

C: I just wonder, you know, I wonder where does it come from, this passion for justice, this passion for moving out of the mindset that induces fear and fear of the other and gets us to the point where we go to war.

B: Did your mom and dad have that commitment to social justice and to peace?

C: My mother by default as a refugee. They always argued. Their iconic argument was 'do you give the sixpence to the beggar or to the party?' My mother went for the beggar and my father went for the party. He converted to Marxism when he was 18.

B: Would that be pre-war?

C: Yes I was born in 1943. He tried to go to Spain but didn't get there. [Horace was born in 1914.]

B: Oh, okay. So you were a red diaper baby?

C: Well yes and no because we were living in the liberal dictatorship of Joey Smallwood and it was not safe to talk that kind of politics, so I never had a label. I never knew my father was -- I didn't discover my father was a Marxist until I went to Britain when I was 18 and my uncle explained that to me. Well, my father had three passions: music – he was a violinist and could have been a professional; he was also a lovely singer – Marxism, and medicine, and he finally made the decision that he could do most social good by becoming a physician and he did family practice in Newfoundland.

B: And he became a physician in Canada or before?

C: No, he got his degree in Scotland, which is how come I was born over there, because they met, my mother fled to England, my father was in Britain and one thing led to another. There was the Jewish connection; there was a woman at the residential Jewish school where my mother was teaching who had musical evenings and somehow or other, Dr. Rosenberg got wind of them and came down and met my mother and so on.

B: And would your mother have considered herself a Marxist?

C: No. Certainly, she was totally concerned about social justice, but not in any systematic way.

B: Did she contest your dad's Marxism or they just had their own views?

C: No. That was just the argument. There was no question about the fact that you've got to give the sixpence. You've got to change the system. No, what I remember, and this is one of my really important memories. I was the doctor's daughter living in downtown St. John's, not exactly a well-off area.

B: Identified as refugees?

C: No. Identified as Jews. I mean I remember one child saying to me on the street, "You know, I'm really sorry you're a Jew and you're going to go to hell because you're really a nice kid." It was the contradictions in Newfoundland as Catholic/Protestant, the Jews were outliers. We were weird. I was shocked to discover, when I went back to my high school reunion, that the one thing my classmates remembered about me was that I was Jewish. Which I shouldn't have been shocked by because for a couple of years until Paul Wilanski, who was younger than me, came up into the high school, I was the only Jew in the school – but I had left the synagogue when I was 13 because I was appalled with the hypocrisy (in the way nobody could be as self-righteous and as clean of tongue as a 13 year old) and so I didn't think of myself as Jewish being the main, the most important thing about me. It was much more about intellect. Anyway, so the memory is of coming in one day and I knew I was different from the other kids because I had roller skates and they didn't. You know, it was like that. But I came in and I reported at the dinner table that the kids had asked was I going to come out and play after dinner and I said no, my mother doesn't let me go outside after dinner. And my father hit the roof and he said, "Don't you dare. Don't you dare brag about having a mother at home. These kids don't. Don't you dare!" I mean he was just absolutely livid.

Because of course their mothers were working, one way or the other, as he once said, on their knees or on their backs, to keep the family together. Fathers nowhere in existence. It was that kind of neighbourhood.

B: How did he see that, this innocent comment of a child as bragging? He must have been very straight-backed.

C: Well he was a man of principle and that was clear and he was always deferred to. His thoughts were always deferred to in the family. A habit which stayed with me.

B: The outspoken part?

C: No. The deference to the adult male in the family (laughing).

B: We'll have to come back to that in one of these hours.

C: We do need to come back to that with reference to my son as well as my husband, but no, what was important about that was I think he realized that I did not understand, (even though I knew I had roller skates and the other kids didn't, they were the kind that clipped onto your shoes – your lace up oxfords. My mother never let me have saddle shoes – very, very fashionable, and I wasn't allowed to have them.) Anyway, that I didn't understand class. I didn't understand privilege and that was so important to him, that I should not only understand class, but that I should understand –and I should be in solidarity with people who were struggling and understand that I had privilege. And later, my understanding, I suspect, came from him too, that the purpose of privilege is to be able to serve. That's what it's for. If I'm articulate, then that is in order that I can articulate what others may be unable to articulate in such a powerful way. Maybe a bit in a way you hire a lawyer.

B: Those kinds of convictions are as much in the Torah as they are in Marxism. Were those religious convictions or convictions that came from his -- ?

C: God, I wish he weren't dead.

B: You could ask him that question. Doesn't the Torah say that anyone who sees an injustice and does nothing is the author of the injustice?

C: Oh absolutely. But he was brought up in a conservative shul. It was much more about the observances. I don't know if he ever really intellectually connected with Judaism. Emotionally, yes, of course, the music, always, but yeah, I don't know. Interesting. I should ask my sister that question.

B: Why would she might know and you not?

C: Because she lived in the same house and from a different perspective.

B: That's a point. If you have siblings, each sibling lived in a different family.

C: Yeah, exactly... The leadership question, you were saying that late in life, I realized that I was a leader and why did it take me so long? And I think the reason is that part of that teaching that I got from both of my parents very clearly was that to put yourself forward, to be egotistical, was wrong. So again, this notion of service is not because I'm better. The privilege doesn't make me any better. It just gives me another set of tools that other people may not have, it's like being multilingual. You can then translate. You were asking if our parents supported us in our political development and the answer is definitely yes, completely. They were - in fact I think one of the reasons that they wanted me to go away to Edinburgh for a year was so that I should have an opportunity to understand something other of politics and it was - I mean - it was amazing. I got there and people were debating politics. They had different political positions. They had parties. I mean this was not Joey Smallwood's Newfoundland where you were liberal or you lose your business. Liberal and corrupt. You know, really, it really was. I could tell stories. So I was always very conscious in everything I did, and yeah of course I was a leader. I mean heaven's sake, I came back from Edinburgh, went to Carleton since my mother was there, my parents had moved to Ottawa, so finished my degree at Carleton, immediately started a chapter of the Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which later morphed into the Student Union for Peace Action.

B: So you're about 18 now.

C: I think I'm 19. 18 or 19.

B: And how did you identify the people to do that with you when you were at Carleton?

C: Oh that's easy. You just put up a notice and people come along. You talk it up.

B: And they did.

C: Yeah. There's always a few odd bods and then those meet and if you can do something interesting, then other people will get attracted to it. And there's always people at a university who want to do something that's different from what everybody else does. Or even just to do something. And I didn't want to spend my time in the tunnels playing cards. I knew that if I learned how to play bridge, that would be my university degree gone.

B: I'm just thinking now when you describe this non-leader leadership and now I'm wondering, even as I think back on what I know of your career, whether it was very useful that you didn't see yourself as a Leader, capital L, and therefore didn't have some of the personality characteristics of people who see themselves as a Leader and are therefore always leading. The fact that you just saw yourself as normal. That actually gave you a leg up in being a leader.

C: Quite likely. Quite likely and of course in those days, leadership, a leader was male first of all, by definition. I certainly wasn't male. Secondly, I was having a lot of fun. Now remember this was the early 60s. We were having a lot of fun. We had the best music.

B: And therefore you were also offering a joyful activism for the people you were trying to attract.

C: I think so. You know, there's a bunch of things that have happened in my life like moving to the farm, for example, which was certainly Brewster's idea but I totally went along with it. And other people said that's very courageous of you. I said "Courageous?" We just left everything we knew and went to a different place. It was what we needed to do.

B: And you know in your family some very significant 'leaving of places' have happened.

C: What I knew from my family was that I was accepted. My mother was horrified when I brought home an American Christian theologian, she just couldn't see it. We struggled, struggled and she finally said to me, "He's a man of integrity. You'll be okay." And some years later, she said to me, "You have made your husband a happy man. It's a success." So she was a complicated woman, was my mother.

B: Yes. Which also means that that was a very high value for her.

C: Clearly.

B: And that was a role for a woman.

C: Yeah. I was brought up in the 50s, got married in '64, and still had the idea somehow that I should, you know, iron Brewster's underwear, which he never wanted and which meant that when we got to the feminist revolution and marriages were sort of falling apart all over the place because guys were saying 'this is not what I signed up for,' Brewster was saying the contemporary equivalent of, "You go girl. I never wanted my underwear ironed in the first place. This is fun." I mean, yeah, he did. He made space for me to do that, even though all my friends at the time would have described him as the ultimate patriarch.

B: He has elements of that.

C: He has elements of it anyway, and remembering my training, to see the man of the family as the authority, the one who knows more, and he's ten years older than me.

B: Although in classic terms, the patriarch, whether we want to admit it or not, is virtually always also a misogynist and my impression of Brewster is that he's never been a misogynist.

C: That's true. He didn't get it. He didn't get feminism for a long time. He didn't quite understand, you know, didn't see women as being so essentially other that feminism made any sense to him.

B: Although that would also mean then that he was not witnessing what was going on or continues to go on.

C: No.

B: The violence and everything.

C: Yeah. Yeah. Though, you know, he changed. But he was very focused.

B: And of course back then, there was always this notion that feminism was a lower order or ideal than socialism or the big picture politics. Once we've had the revolution, then we can start tinkering.

C: Yeah although I don't think it would be fair to accuse Brewster of that, though it certainly was there. It certainly was there. So, Stokely Carmichael's famous comment.¹ It took me a while to see it.

B: It took all of us a while to see it.

C: In '64, when we went to Prague and met Julius and Denise Tomin and one of the questions Denise asked me was what did I think of the woman question and I didn't know what she was talking about.

B: Who would you consider to be the first woman you would have identified as a leader that you were inspired by?

C: Leora Proctor. She was one of the leaders in the Student Union for Peace Action. -- Tough. Tough minded. One of my contemporaries. When Brewster and I met, this was because Brewster was an editor of Our Generation Against Nuclear War with Dimitrios Roussopoulos, who refused to come to our wedding because he didn't believe in marriage and I was a little bourgeois and it wouldn't work out. We invited him to our 50th anniversary but he didn't come either. But anyway, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was just emerging from the shell of the old Socialist Party in the States. In Canada, we had Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA).

B: That was the sister organization?

C: No. No, but it was parallel. It was a parallel organizing effort, so what Brewster and Dimitri felt was that these new, young bloods of SDS needed to meet their actual forebears, their ancestors. SDS was Students for a Democratic Society. And it was coming out of the Student League for Industrial Democracy. Brewster had been on the board of the League for Industrial Democracy and when the student league was formed, he sided with the student league when it critiqued the rigid, old left stance. Anyway, that's all in Brewster's book. (Journey of an Unrepentant Socialist) To meet their leaders, their ancestors, their grandparents, people like A. J. Muste and Bayard Rustin, Dave McReynolds of the War Resisters League and Homer Jack of the Society for a Sane Nuclear Policy, all these people who had been leading the peace movement in the USA -- you know, A. J. Muste was climbing over chain-link fences in his 80s. Yeah, amazing people. I don't think either of the Berrigan brothers -- Dan and Phil -- were there, but their shadow was certainly in the room.

B: This is history that young people today have to hear

¹At a Student Non-Violent Coordinating Council (SNCC) staff meeting, Ruby Doris Smith presented a paper on "The Position of Women in SNCC." SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) declared, "The only position for women in SNCC is prone." (1964) To be fair, others who were part of the SNCC have said that Stokely's record speaks to his deep respect and admiration for SNCC women.

C: That's why Brewster wrote his book, *Journey of an Unrepentant Socialist*. When I got home, I realized that if we had such a meeting in Canada, it would be Kay MacPherson and Ursula Franklin and Muriel Duckworth and Marion Kerans and Betty Anderson and Peggy Hope-Simpson and there was a woman out in the west coast who I never knew and I can't remember her name. But it would have been women. There would have also been men there, for sure. You know, Murray Thompson, Gil Levine, et cetera, et cetera.

B: And you knew those names already?

C: Oh yeah.

B: So they already had profile.

C: Absolutely. That was -- I don't remember what year it was that Ursula came up with the idea of gathering baby teeth across the country to show that there was Strontium-90 in the milk, in mother's milk, was one of the most brilliant things. And that put the Voice of Women on the map, but no, I knew those -- I met them probably just when I came to Ottawa. I think that's when I looked at them and I thought wow. I remember thinking when I have grey hair and wrinkles, then I can be powerful. (laughing)

So here I am with grey hair and wrinkles and we're talking about power and leadership. And I guess that's the other thing with the leadership. Why would I shrink from leadership? Because I do understand the power it carries and the responsibility and thought I don't know if I'm really up to doing a good job of that.

B: And it sounds like you admired these women so much to even aspire to their profile and their role. Was there humility there?

C: Yeah, and a matter-of-fact-ness. That's the thing that characterizes all those women. They're none of them "look at me." There was the occasional politician like Marion Dewar, and others, and somebody who was elected to parliament, after a couple of months came back to the women's groups and said "Look, you have got to keep me on tap with things because I can't do this now." Ellen Fairclough.

B: Of course politics was different in this country then.

C: Yeah, Conservatives were -- Progressive Conservatives.

B: Progressive, and many of them were far more red than the Liberals, especially the women.

C: I came back and I was busy with the CUCND [Carleton University Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament]. And then we got married and left for a year and when we came back, the CUCND had morphed into the Student Union for Peace Action because what it had picked up from SDS was the notion of base organizing. So I never went on any of the projects. My friend Joan Kuyek and others did. We had several projects. I stayed in the office in Toronto and ran the Gestetner, in an upstairs warren of rooms on Harbord Street.

B: These women leaders that you mentioned, do you recall were they very good at mentoring younger women like yourself and Joan and this woman Proctor that you mentioned? Or was it an inspiration at a distance?

C: I never experienced that mentoring until I went to Nova Scotia. Muriel Duckworth is famous for it, surrounded herself with young women. Marion Kerans is (was) very good at it....

B: You are very good at it. I think that if we eventually get around to interviewing people, you will hear yourself described as a mentor.

C: Yeah, which surprises me because I don't -- and maybe that is all part of what we're talking about here, a style of leadership which is really (pause)

B: It creates space, it leaves space.

C: Yeah and it's not egocentric, none of it's about me.

B: And probably you don't -- you're never -- it certainly applies to me because you and I are roughly contemporaries in our 70s. When I'm with the crowd, many of whom are two decades, even three decades younger than I am, I never think of that age difference.

C: No. No, it's quite shocking when someone mentions it.

B: And sometimes I become aware that there's not exactly a deference but where I am actually much older, I'm more experienced. In fact, I dread if I would ever be in the situation where I was working only with my contemporaries.

C: Well what you are aware of is the kind of energy they bring. They've got energy that we don't have any more, both physical and mental, and they have a different take on technology.

B: Absolutely.

C: Because they've grown up with it. And their understanding of difference, for me, is both exciting and deep.

B: Say more about that.

C: Well, I grew up in a white society. As I said, being Jewish was what was weird. There was one Chinese family in town. The only black person I saw was on a military base. This was not part of my growing up, whereas, the contemporary -- the kids now that we're working with -- kids (laugh), people in their 30s have grown up in a multicultural society. They've grown up with friends whose mother tongue is a different one, whose skin colour is different, whose culture is different, whose food is different, smell different, look different, taste different, I don't know. I've never tried tasting, but you know what I mean. And this is all okay.

B: They've also grown up with contemporaries who are quotes "visible". but visible people whose accents and preoccupations are exactly the same as theirs. They in fact are contemporaries. I certainly see it with my kids. Yeah, the complexion is a non-factor because of the society they've grown up with.

C: I'm not sure that's completely true because our society is deeply racist. I spent a lot of time over the last couple of decades working with the Community Food Security Coalition in the U.S., and in the U.S., the issues of race are front and centre.

B: Absolutely. White supremacy.

C: In fact, when I was working in Toronto in the early '90s in the movement against violence against women, the only politically correct thing that I could do would be to give up my job and give it to a woman of colour. Well, the fact that it wasn't within my gift to do that was completely irrelevant. You can't be correct and be white.

B: I remember women your age being...

C: Devastated.

B: Devastated, under attack.

C: Yep, devastated because what the hell do you want me to do? Well I can't do that. But I did come to realize that of course that was the box that they were in and they were just putting me in their box.

B: They weren't right, but they weren't wrong.

C: Exactly, exactly.

B: But they were demanding a class, gender suicide in a way.

C: Yeah, and in this last decade, the realization, the national realization of what has been -- I won't call it cultural, I'll call it genocide, the attempted genocide of Aboriginal peoples and the complicity of all of the power structures, which look like you and me, and I refuse to be saddled with white guilt. I refuse to be saddled with settler guilt. I've got enough Jewish guilt to go around. I don't need any more, thank you very much. Again we're talking about leadership and power. That's how we're getting into this and the whole issue of privilege and the kind of privilege I carry, which is privilege of race and gender and language, even though I'm unilingual. I can modestly say I have a certain facility with the English language, which can be very powerful. I'm capable of speaking powerfully. I only know one language, but boy, I know her good.

C: So the question keeps coming back to me, how do I use that in the service of those who are shut out from it by the structure in which I am comfortable or uncomfortably comfortable (thank you Pierre Berton, "The Uncomfortable Pew"). To comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. How do I act in solidarity? How do I use the privilege in an appropriate manner? How do I even identify the privilege in a way which is useful? Those are the questions that keep me from saying I am a leader because a leader is one, I think, who's got that worked out. And those women I was talking about, the Voice of Women women, they had that worked out.

B: And they had it worked out even back then?

C: I think instinctively there was a level of acceptance. I know for Marion, it comes from her faith. I don't know about most of the others, but they also had health. There's still many of them, thank God, still around, a wonderful ability to do serious work.

B: I think there also is some kind of political sophistication not to build a great big platform from which they knew already they would get knocked off so easy, not to do schoolyard stuff. But to understand how that cohort, that sisterhood which goes beyond even the names that you mentioned, and how they used the NFB and created the Women's Bureau of the NFB as a political tool which gave voice, which in a way was one step removed because it was in this magic media, cinema. Bonnie Klein created access but in a way, it's no mistake that my book is called the "Open Conspiracy". I think that these women understood that they could conspire openly. They could hide in the open and use these structures and they weren't ready-made for them. They created those structures and took advantage of a golden age when things could still be done. For instance, there was money for the NFB, there was money for the CBC, creating Project North and whatever.

Which is one of the reasons that I asked you about their mentoring, because there's a whole cohort of you that came along behind and it seems to me have similar attitudes, similar skills, but from what you're saying, it seems to have been done -- but by osmosis.

C: Well that's just my personal experience and it's partly a question of where I was at the time -- not in French Canada; to talk about the 70s in Canada without talking about French Canada, you're really missing something. And it's still an issue. Anyway, I met Bonnie because she was coming down to Nova Scotia making her film, "Making Our Peace," and she brought her 14 year old daughter with her and I've got a photograph somewhere of Naomi helping make hay on the farm. I'm sure she remembers. It's the kind of thing kids remember. But yeah, and so in terms of mentoring, we did raise our kids. Bonnie's daughter has turned out to be something of a powerhouse.

B: And that's true of a lot of families. You mentioned, when I was talking about leadership, when you were young, this woman Leora Proctor.

C: Oh I was frightened of her. She was just a tough thinker, she put herself out, she spoke first, she'd ride over the men. I admired her greatly, but yeah, she intimidated me. She's still around. I'm realizing as I'm talking, of course, some sense of insecurity on my part, you know, if I'm so easily intimidated... Still happens. I think it's more a question of style. It's that get out there and fight style versus being more...equally convinced but not as pugnacious. I'm speaking out more. I'm finding that I tend to speak out more now.

B: A movement has got to have its pugnacious folks.

C: Quite. I'm not critiquing Leora. I thought she was great.

B: No, no, but it seems to me you're questioning your lack of that quality. One of the things when I started hearing about you, my sense was I was hearing about you from people who saw someone doing and being, and being, you could put in brackets, behaving, in a way that "aha", that's a way. Right? That you actually created or invented or maybe not just alone but with others.

C: Adopted?

B: Adopted, probably all of those, a manner, a way of being, a way of politics, both the personal and the political, that people like a young Jean Christie -- okay, she's a pugnacious one, given where she had been.

C: So when Jean was going overseas, I was in Nova Scotia, in rural Nova Scotia and a number of things were happening. One was I was learning that you cannot become working class by virtue of being a worker. You can earn your living with your hands, it doesn't make you working class. The other was you could out-argue people easily and that's not what convinces them. So I was learning to shut up and listen more as I was with the women and then gradually starting to organize around women's issues, women's health. In '75, we got a little grant and the grant was supposed be to do a feasibility study and we said the hell with that and started a women's sexual health clinic so women could get pap smears from a woman doctor, because there was no woman doctor in our county, so we brought one in and had a travelling roadshow and taught women how to do breast self-examination, all that stuff; and as we were working at attracting women in the rural areas in our county, we were uncovering the hidden issue of violence against women. So we started a rape crisis line and we started a battered women shelter.

But all of that involved advocacy. Obviously we're out there talking, but you know, in the women's centre(which had started as a consciousness-raising group and then morphed into an actual centre which is still there) when we got into trouble because some right-wing woman did things that threatened our funding, I was the one who got to do that, because I was willing to put on a bra and pantyhose and go and talk to them. Some of the other women, some of them because they were lesbians and as one of them said once, you know, that's the one thing you could be tarred and feathered for in this town, and I clearly wasn't -- at least I on the surface wasn't because I was married

with two little children and you know, blah blah. But I was willing to put on the costume and go and do that negotiating work.

B: But that itself reflects an ego strength, a self-confidence. You didn't see it as a betrayal of your integrity. It was doing what needed to be done.

C: Well my integrity was pretty complex at that point. We're right bang smack in the middle of the Women's Revolution and all things were up for grabs.

B: It's interesting when you talk about being there and becoming even more conscious, I suspect you always knew it, that part of organizing was listening. I remember, this would have been shortly after I met Jean Christie, we started working together at Inter Pares in late 1980 and she had met you in about '78, '79, around that... [It was Jean who said,] "We want to do this work because it's important to us but because we work in projects, we go out trying to help, to get people to engage in the project and the project is supposed to be doing something for them. Just one step back. If we want to do this project, go out and ask for help and see whether this is something you're interested in and can you help me do it? And now I think back, is that the kind of lesson that she would have picked up from you? Because it sounds, not only from you but be affirmed by you, this different way of doing things, of listening, engaging, reciprocity, which are all feminist principles?

C: Well the lightbulb has to want to change. I don't want to be too grandiose about it. I'm just thinking back. You set up kitchen table talks because you have an idea that there may be some issue here about women's health in the rural areas and would you like to come and talk about them and then you just sit and listen. What are the issues for you? Are there problems? Are there no problems? What do you think your neighbours would say?

B: And it sounds like you really enjoyed it.

C: Yeah, of course. That's what life is -- it's really interesting. You go to a rural area in Nova Scotia and the Women's Revolution is just starting and you find that when you go to a party, the men are in one room and the women are in another. The men are in the kitchen where the booze is and the women are in the living room with tea. And you think I want to be in the kitchen. That's where the action is. The women are talking about mundane stuff about how you run households and it's only after a long time that you begin to pick up the subtexts because they're very subtle. Now, if you're Brewster, you just change the discourse. When we came to Ottawa in 2006, there were monthly or bi-weekly potlucks in our neighbourhood and all they were talking about was property values and fixing the road and all that kind of stuff. Brewster has zero patience for that sort of discussion. Within months, the discourse was changing and by the time the next election rolled around, we were having full-on political discussion at the potlucks and still are. Not always, but there was one potluck when I was sick. I actually had to come home because the conversation was so intense. I couldn't manage it. There were three or four different tables going on and they were all talking about Harper and how the hell we get rid of him, what's going on. And I don't have the energy for it. So you can change the channel.

B: But there is the other channel.

C: But the other channel is important because it makes a difference and the fact of the matter is that the personal, the human needs trump everything else. When you get right down to it, your sister is dying, that is the complete priority. Everything else goes by the way. Where things get difficult is like I'm trying to decide do I go to the next Ottawa Food Policy Council meeting where there's going to be some important decisions made and I'd like to be part of them and I'm the co-chair, or do I travel down to New Brunswick which is having their annual network gathering in the Miramichi, and as far as I can gather, it's going to be just a sit around and chat thing, which sounds incredibly creative. No keynote speakers or anything else and exactly where I should be if I'm trying to get my finger back on

the pulse of the food movement in this country. Which do I do? That's a much more difficult decision, though I think I've just indicated which way I'm leaning.

B: One of your concerns around this project of documenting your life, maybe writing a book is that it has to be true - and you have a distrust that once you start doing this, the truths widen and the stories become apocryphal and it can't be captured authentically enough.

C: I need a good editor. You're absolutely right. But it's a chance for me to try and understand where my experience can be helpful to other people. It has to be situated in a particular place and time. We have to be clear and honest about what the externalities were, the conjuncture and the context because that changes the way in which you do things. It changes the options that are available to you. So for example, growing up in a uni-cultural context, multiculturalism is something I've come to later in life and it's in the air I breathe but it hasn't been for most of my life, so there's realities that I just don't understand. I have nothing to say. Which is why issues like the niqab become so incredibly difficult for me. On the one hand, as a lifelong feminist, you know, nobody has the right to tell a woman what to do or not to do, but that includes the Canadian state.

B: Those are the kind of issues that drive us to think deeper. Another thing and some of this discussion, maybe we can have off tape, is around the contextual, is the extent to which you want to get into the personal part of the politics, sexuality, open marriage, the relationship with a husband and a son, other men in the leadership community, the personal experience, which is also context like when you mentioned that the women in [Pictou County], especially the lesbians who had to keep a lower profile because that was the taboo -- and then you put in brackets "apparently didn't apply to me" -- which is also a statement about how men and women experience their sexuality.

C: Yeah. When I said that, I said it quite deliberately because I knew you'd pick it up.

B: I don't know how much of that you want to talk about.

C: I've been giving it a lot of thought and there's a couple of people I need to discuss it with.

B: Yeah. Because my suspicion doing this but also socially, just when the four of us have been talking, clearly those elements are absolutely key in your life and I reflect, actually the key in everybody's life.

C: Well I'd like to -- what I'd like to do Brian is talk with you about it off camera, off word, and figure out / I don't think you can describe a life that went through that sexual revolution without talking about how the sexual revolution affected me.

[Unfortunately, there was no further conversation on this topic.]

October 6, 2015 – Brian Murphy's second conversation with Cathleen Kneen.

B: We were talking about documenting your life experience and perhaps writing and you said "I don't want to be grandiose." What does grandiose mean to you? What is your concern? (NB: she meant "pompous".

C: I was listening to the piece about Nova Scotia and being with the women in the kitchen and one of the things that I realized much more recently is that that conversation appeared to be all about who's sick and who's having difficulty with their marriage and what's going on, you know, all that stuff? It wasn't just housewifery. It was building community. That's what they were talking about and it was in a particular language or framework but that's what keeps the community functioning is that somebody is watching out, in this case everybody was watching out, for the welfare of everybody else.

B: And how conscious was that intention?

C: It would have been grandiose to have said we are providing the glue of the community. It's just what you do and it's what drives people crazy about rural communities if they live in them because there's no privacy but it's also what makes them very safe and secure places to be.

B: And why would it be grandiose to declare if it's true?

C: (sigh). Because it's not being done. That's not the self-consciousness. The self-consciousness is not of being the ones who create the framework for the community. They would be embarrassed if I said that. My friend Karen, who spends half her time driving people to or from hospital or shopping or whatever and takes care of Rosie and visited Geoffie in the hospital until he died and, you know, she doesn't do it to be the glue of the community. She does it because it's the right thing to do.

She was one of the women who got into the Women's Liberation Group who actually was born and grew up in the county, and that is, I think, bred in the bone. It's not something that the come-from-aways had and in fact, as I mentioned with the lesbian women, very uncomfortable with it, though the ones who have stayed -- most of us left for one reason or another -- the ones who have stayed have learned that way of being.

B: Why were they uncomfortable with it?

C: Some felt like an invasion of privacy and as I indicated, it wasn't where the action was happening. The action was happening out in the kitchen, where politics was being debated. This wasn't about politics. This was just about (laughs) community. It's a much overworked word, but that's what it was about. Anyway, I just wanted to sort of clarify that, and it does bear on grandiosity for sure because... It feels like when that's what you're doing, it's one of a whole bunch of little things that everybody else is doing too, so there's nothing particularly special about you.

B: So the grandiose connotes a special individual. I also sense that in a substantive way, the naming of it or the putting it in a halo or in a spotlight actually detracts from the essence itself.

C: Well exactly, exactly. And it's also about ego, which I discussed before. And I recognize that a certain amount of ego is essential. You can't be a performer as I am without having some ego. You have to believe that you've got something to say and in this instance, I'm having a very hard time being sure that I really do, to whom, to what end? So and these are questions we've talked about before. That's part of it but part of it for sure is I don't want to be egotistical. I don't want to / I don't hold myself out as being special. Well of course in the back of my mind, there's this niggling little thing that of course I do. Of course I do. Of course I think I'm special and of course I want that recognition. And that feels like a demon that needs to be confronted. It's not a simple matter, Brian.

B: No it isn't. Confronted and perhaps transcended.

C: Perhaps.

B: The way of it is as important as the doing of it.

And you're also uncomfortable, I've noted, when I indicate to you that people think you are special.

B: In a way, that's more understandable because all of us have this humility, some more falsely than others. Is there also, not distrust but your caution about people thinking you're special, a sense of, if you only knew? Or actually you don't know?

C: It actually happened to me the other day because I think I mentioned I'm planning to go, I decided, I'm going to the Miramichi gathering in New Brunswick [Food for All]. So I called up the organizer and said "I want to come and just wanted to check out what role there might be for me" and he sort of said, "Well, you know, the speakers are all assigned and everything." And I said, "I don't want to speak." And I finally said, "You don't know who I am, do you?" So he said "No." So I explained the role that I played in building the food movement in a sentence or two and he said "Oh, okay" and then we could talk. So it was the first time that had happened to me.

B: That's ironic.

C: "You don't know who I am, do you?" (laughing) Oh dear.

B: And I can just see the calculation, okay, how do I explain this without being grandiose?

C: Well I just said that I organized the B.C. network and that I was the founding Chair of the Board of Food Secure Canada and basically organized it. So, you know, I didn't say much more than that. I didn't need to. I came away from that, because that was since our last conversation, thinking hmm, okay, I do have a certain sense of myself as having done some things and having made some changes, though at the moment, I am in such despair about the federal election that it's hard to see anything else as being positive.

B: The story you just told me wasn't your ego that was making you explain. It actually was your work. Last time, we were talking, and I think I have the chronology right, you and Brewster came back from Europe, Czechoslovakia and places and the remnants of the student grouping that you had been part of here had discovered community organizing from the continental movement here and they were now starting to go organizing. You mentioned Joan was one of them among others. And then you said "But I didn't do that. I stayed in the office and ran the Gestetner." And frankly it did sound a little bit like denigrating your role, playing down your role. And I wondered what you actually did in the office that is captured in "I ran the Gestetner" and just talk about that period in the mid-1960s.

C: Okay, well one of the reasons I didn't go I'm sure was because I was married. The two of us would have gone and that's a very different / well as you know from all your work with NGOs, placing two people is harder than placing one person.

B: Absolutely.

C: So that was part of it.

B: I didn't realize that they had actually moved into communities and started to do base work. I thought that they were all kind of around Toronto and were going out and organizing.

C: Oh no, no, there was a project in Grassy Narrows. There was a project in Kingston, which is the one Joan joined.

B: Okay, so they actually embedded themselves in places as part of the community.

C: Yep. Joan corrected me the other day, by the way, that it was Pearson who started the Company of Young Canadians, not Trudeau. I thought it was Trudeau. In a sense I was peripheral to it. What happened to me? The thing about running the Gestetner, it's just I wasn't doing the writing. I was facilitating things happening. I wasn't actually taking on what would, what seemed to be any kind of visible leadership. I didn't make speeches. I didn't write papers. I took minutes and I organized. A very funny story about how I realized that I was pregnant. We had a gathering of the Student Union for Peace Action and the Student Christian Movement in a church basement in Saskatoon. I think we were staying at Ben Smillie's place, sleeping on his floor, as I recall. Ben and the church people were quite appalled at our behaviour, I recall too. We were a little too wild. But I remember being very tired. When I realized that I couldn't keep on taking the minutes after about midnight, one o'clock in the morning, I was toast. And then on the train on the way back, my pants were tight and I suddenly realized I'd missed a period. I was pregnant. So that's why I couldn't keep taking minutes at one o'clock in the morning.

B: And your role was within SUPA, not within the company?

C: I had nothing to do with the Company of Young Canadians. though my dear friends were involved with it. Those were SUPA projects, and CYC came in on top of them and said okay, we can provide the wherewithal for this to continue.

B: That would be ready-made for them because when they started, what were they going to do? They'd have to start where you guys had started.

C: My memory was that this was a way of co-opting the movement. Joan disagrees. She said she was in the middle of it. She said, "I should know. I was there."

B: Still, now, I look back on what they did under the CYC and say it was reasonable good work.

C: It was good.

B: Trudeau is seen as the author of it. It's very good information that you've just given me, that it was a quite conscious way of -- what's the word you just said? Co-opting, controlling...

C: One can be a little more charitable and possibly more accurate that the outcome of the whole thing was that a movement which had been going on our own energies, and remember those were days when you could get a job just by walking into a place and saying 'I'm willing to work,' so there was a practice of getting a job and feeding X number of people and then, when you wanted to get more into activism, somebody else would get a job. There was never a question of not being able to get a job. So we were able, in a sense, one way or the other, to fund our own work. It was 35 bucks a week and living on peanut butter sandwiches, which is what I remember. And then it got changed so that if you had an idea, you had to go look for money. You had to go get a grant.

B: Although it was interesting that the same government did create the LIP and LEAP grants to expedite that, and I've also heard that that was done because that was their way of keeping visible the eventually insurrectional.

C: Yeah, that's what I certainly believe, but there is the change that you can't just go and get a job anymore. You have to have a career path one way or the other or there really aren't jobs out there, which is very, very hard to believe when you've grown up with the notion that there always will be. That you have to be dependent one way or the other on charity or on the state in order to get anything done and that's a big change and it's very corrosive. The only other way you can do it, I guess, is if people are really, really, really, really, really desperate.

B: Do you think this is true of the young generation?

C: I don't know. I don't know the young generation, Brian. It's one of the things that bothers me.

B: My sense was all sorts of things are going on now where they would never think of the state as a possible funder when the structure's not there.

C: Well, Harper killed that.

B: But it's also going on underneath the radar of NGOs, like foundation funding is virtually gone. Foundations back in the old days actually some of them were providing that kind of money, but you see all this Anarchist organizing and Idle No More and Occupy Wall Street.

C: Those are different things. Idle No More isn't youth. Idle No More is a group of visionary Aboriginal women who said okay, this is it. We've had enough.

B: But younger than you and me.

C: Oh yeah, but the others, the Anarchists, they're down to their, I mean from their 40s but from their 90s down into their 20s. And I mean I pray God that we don't see it, but if Harper gets re-elected, there may be something -- there may be some very difficult times. There's an awful lot of people who are fed up. I've got an elderly friend who said "Well, I guess if I don't have anything left to live for, I'm just going to have to go out with a bang."

C: So back to thinking through the formation, if you like, I think your question was what was actually my role in the formation of the movement. And we talked last time about the sort of lifetime anti-war, not to say pacifist but certainly anti-war perspective and interest in, if not an incontrovertible commitment to non-violent action. Well, commitment to it but not an incontrovertible one. I didn't spend a whole lot of my own time doing that. Immense respect for people who did. People like the Berrigan brothers.

C: But I was trying to understand what was going on. I was a young wife and very quickly a mother. As we came back in '65 and Jamie was born in the summer of '66, so it was that winter, that first winter I got pregnant or discovered I was pregnant. And so immediately the question of the nuclear family and I did start writing. I wrote about the nuclear family, I wrote about breastfeeding and was very involved in issues of natural childbirth because it seemed to me that if, as I believed and still believe, the nuclear family was a serious cultural error, I think the metaphor I used at the time was it's like taking an egg, removing the shell and the white, and telling the yolk to grow into a chick.

B: That's not bad.

C: You know, this was long before whoever came up with it about the village and the child. But if you're interested in changing the power dynamics in a family, a really good time to change it would be when another person is entering that equation.

B: In this case, Jamie.

C: In this case, a child being born. So getting both parents involved in childbirth training was a way of rethinking what the relationship was between husband and wife in preparation for this.

B: I remember in my case, a few years later... Doing Lamaze was a transformative, nuclear -- well, not really in terms of our own relationship, mine and Rosemary, but because they were done in groups. And the groups, they weren't always totally mixed. So there were some women who would be there without a partner, but by and large, it was men and women, men and women, and you're right. I had

never thought of that.

C: Well that was quite deliberate.

B: How transformative that would have been as it began. Where were you doing this writing?

C: In Toronto.

B: The papers got published?

C: Oh, I think it was in the SUPA [newsletter], you know? We just published papers on the Gestetner.

C: So that took my energies. What I was doing was national childbirth, breastfeeding support, and thinking about the nuclear family and, oh, and starting a parent co-op daycare on the 17th floor of Rochdale College [on Bloor Street, close to the University of Toronto].

B: Rochdale?

C: Rochdale, yeah, because it was appropriate for Rochdale to have this. Day Nurseries people found out about us and closed us down because they said that the fire ladders wouldn't reach up to the 17th floor and of course we couldn't take the children either down the stairs or in the elevator, should there be an emergency. And of course, the way Rochdale was developing with certain amount of hard drugs replacing soft drugs and some of the original free university being lost in the shuffle of what turned into the 70s.

B: Did you live in Rochdale?

C: No.

B: That's just where the daycare co-op was?

C: Yeah, that was just the daycare, yeah. And so we moved it down to the church which is just down behind Rochdale down on -- I think it was Huron Street and I think St. James. Reverend Bull was the pastor and he offered us this - a nursery school where they had the Sunday school - for our daycare and we had it there. No, it was a playschool. It wasn't a daycare, that first one. So it just operated during weekdays.

B: Had the young girl who took off across the border to a meeting that changed her life, did she think about any of these things or was it in fact your material circumstances as a woman who is now married, who is having children that all of a sudden these things were coming forward? Or had you given it thought?

C: No. And that's part of what I was thinking of when I said being grandiose. I didn't have a grand plan how my life was going to go or what the theoretical issues were going to be that I was going to have to tackle. They just bubbled up. They just emerged.

B: Well a lot of women were having that experience in 1966. Things didn't bubble up, they buckled down. It wasn't because you were in an organic situation where everything was looked at critically?

C: Of course. And that was a habit of mind. I mean that I shared with the girl who went down to Nyack for sure. And the girl who went to Edinburgh. Yeah, you have to understand what's going on around you if you're going to do anything worthwhile. And I've also said I think the notion of social justice and of using privilege, whatever the privilege was, to serve a greater good in society was there since I was a child. It was always there. So it was just a question of figuring out what the context was.

B: Were you the first to experience motherhood? Or was it kind of a group of you that were going through it at the same time?

C: Bonnie Ward was three months ahead of me.

We were together. We were buddies. But I got more involved with that, I think, if I remember correctly, than she did, but I'm not sure I remember correctly. She and I were along with Valerie Hunnius and Anne Snell, all of whom were sort of in the movement, we were the ones who started the playschool and then what happened was that we moved and the Wards moved to a different part of town and going down all the way down to the Rochdale School seemed a bit far, so then we started the daycare and that really was very radical. It was like, you know, parent co-op daycare in which the parents who had the ability gave time, and those who didn't gave a bit more money or worked on the weekends to clean the joint up. And we hired a professional teacher, an Early Childhood Education specialist for a pittance, I have to say, which worried us, but you know... And we had the most horrendous struggles over things like whether the arrowroot biscuits had to be whole wheat, wholemeal, you know, just horrendous. (laughing.) It was amazing how wearing it was. I remember Bonnie and me going off to the Brunswick Tavern for a beer after one of those meetings and the young server carded us and we were so happy because we felt like we were 50, we were just so drug-out.

B: I'm surprised there were food issues back then.

C: There were food issues, yeah, but there was also issues like some of us were perfectly happy with the kids running around with no clothes on and some of us were just totally appalled. Of course, then the Day Nurseries Act insisted that we had to have separate bathrooms for the boys and the girls even though they were in diapers. I remember one time when one of the kids crawled into the cubicle, locked the door and crawled out underneath and we couldn't get to the bathroom. We had to bribe him to go back in and unlock it.²

B: I just saw a report on a major study on whether childhood onset asthma is partially the result of the sterilization of childrearing. It's very interesting. They're not just making it up. They're looking at very, very specific organisms and they identify a critical period as early as three months.

C: Earlier - vaginal birth.

B: There's another one. They didn't talk about that but I've read that as well.

C: Vaginas, like any other orifice, not being utterly clean. But I remember being taught, as a nursing mom, as a new nursing mom, that I had to sterilize my breasts. Before the baby went on. And getting over it after a while.

B: Fortunately, when my children were born, Rosemary was a Public Health Nurse, a profession she took on after being a practicing nurse in northern Nigeria. So all of her sensibilities were radical even before she got to university. How did the tough-guy left look at these activities? Did they see the soft politics? I can remember even in the '70s, women I knew were active in the movement were still fighting the battle about whether the women's transformation can only come after socialism and it was kind of a hierarchy and all of that. Did you experience that?

C: Yep.

B: This stuff as marginal?

C: Oh yeah.

²Jamie comments: I remember doing that.

B: You didn't experience being marginalized by the left?

C: Well, it was very interesting. What happened to us was that Brewster's brother had been killed in a car crash, car accident. When we were about to announce our engagement, I went down to see Brewster and he met the train and I knew something awful had happened and that's what it was, but his father, being a good capitalist, had taken out life insurance on all the children and so this life insurance paid out, I don't know how Brewster became a beneficiary. We were paid out I think it was five thousand dollars. Maybe eight thousand, it wasn't a huge sum, with which -- I mean we looked at this and said, what the hell do we do with this? This is blood money. What do we do with it?

At that point we were renting an apartment. We couldn't stay in the apartment because there wasn't physical room. It was a very, very small apartment. In fact, we had to leave when I got more pregnant because I couldn't turn around in the kitchen. If I was aiming one way, I had to go out that way and go all the way around to come back in the other way. And so we bought a house. We used it as a down payment on a house and that was when the fur flied, flew? Yeah, the fur flew, because we were owners. We said "But why would we pour the money down a rat hole of rent if we can put it into a house, which Brewster then worked on and remodeled and sold for more than we'd bought it for and having lived in it, I mean that's how the system works, if you're willing to assume that your time is worth very little, you can do a great deal. And he learned skills on the job, which was very interesting. I don't know how he ever got all those skills, but that's another story.

B: That's in his book.

C: So yeah, we were just really, really shunned and ostracized for that.

B: And the revolutionary stuff that you were doing around maternity and

C: That wasn't seen as revolutionary.

B: It was just seen as bourgeois?

C: I'm not sure how --

B: Or just women's issues?

C: I'm not sure it was seen.

B: Ah. That's a good point.

C: It was irrelevant. It was, you know, okay, well, of course you're breastfeeding. I mean, you know, that's not a question, even, as I remember, in the Peace Movement. I wasn't involved in the socialist left. If there was such a thing in Toronto at the time, that wasn't where we were. We were in the Peace Movement. And the Peace Movement and the Student Christian Movement, those weren't issues and there was a very small cohort of us who actually were married and had children. Well -- were married for a while. Some of those marriages survived. I think, at least one more besides us.

B: And years later, say when your kids are seven, eight, nine, ten, you're in the 70s and these issues now are picking up mainstream steam and feminism becomes increasingly a force. You'd already kind of been there materially. Did you play a role in that phase as well?

C: Oh yeah, well, that was when we moved to Nova Scotia - in '71 - and the first thing I did was find a group of like-minded women and start a consciousness-raising group. That was probably one of the very first things I did. And that then morphed in '75, when the federal government was giving out grants. It was the International Year of Women, the National Women's Year and they were giving out

grants to do a needs assessment for women in the rural areas. And we said to hell with that. We know what the issues are. We took the money and started a women's health clinic with a woman doctor to do pap smears and breast exams, which was very popular because there wasn't a woman doctor in the county and the vast majority of the women had never had such a thing as a breast exam or a pap smear. So that became the foundation of the Women's Centre. Now we, of course, took it a lot further and did not only breast self-exam but cervical self-exam, which was absolutely hilarious. Shocking to some, but as I remember it, we were just falling over ourselves laughing at what we were doing, poking around in each other's innards.

B: And did it take?

C: Yeah. The Women's Centre is still functioning.

B: Wow. And how did the men relate to this right from the beginning when you were having your children at first but also then when you're creating centres like this and consciousness raising?

C: Well, as I said, the activists, it wasn't on their radar. That wasn't what they were doing and insofar as we were still involved with all of that as well, being young and very energetic, it wasn't really an issue. This was just something else that we did. When I got to Nova Scotia, that was a period when most of the marriages fell apart because the men just couldn't cope -- this was not what they'd signed on for. This woman had radically changed.

B: And what was it? What part wasn't what they had signed on for? Parenthood?

C: No -- women having minds of their own and an agenda of their own. It's an agenda of our own. That was the thing. And that was the point where we started taking it very seriously as a movement, as you know, and we had -- what was her name? The woman who wrote *The Feminine Mystique*?

B: Betty Friedan?

C: Betty Friedan. And Gloria Steinem and the others -- now there was beginning to be a literature. But the main thing was -- the consciousness raising group was really important because it was an opportunity for us to realize that the minutiae of patriarchy in our own lives was driving us nuts and to share that and -- I mean I remember one woman commenting, I think we all agreed that most of us had not actually ever been raped except for, of course, the normal date rape.

And stopping and saying, wait a minute? What do you mean "of course" "the normal"? And that was / but I was the only, and this is very interesting for me personally, I have no idea if it's useful anywhere else, but I was the only one who could report that when going to dinner and dancing with my grandfather, I was uncomfortable with the way that he held me when we were dancing and I went and told my parents and my parents said, "Yeah, he's a bit of a problem. What would you like us to do about it? Do you want us to forbid you to go?" I said, "Oh, no, I can handle it, thank you." And nobody else had ever, nobody in the group had ever had an experience of their parents saying yeah, it's a problem.

B: Actually acknowledging it.

C: Yeah. And I'd be interested to know if I ever put that out in public, how rare that probably was. I suspect it was, certainly in our little group.

B: The uncomfortable contact with the grandfather would be very common.

C: Yeah.

B: And the support you got from your parents would be virtually unheard of.

C: Yeah. That's my best guess.

B: Although in your case, probably not surprising because you raised it with your parents and most young women wouldn't have.

C: The fact that I raised it with my parents . . .

B: Indicated the trust and confidence you had in them and your relationship, I assume.

C: Yeah. Which may have been a bit naive of me, but then I was only about 14 at the time, so you're allowed to be naive when you're 14 or 15.

B: I also think it's interesting that you talk about this group of women who are sharing and looking at the minutiae and I think what you're saying, this isn't what the men had signed on for, which begs the question what had we signed on for?

C: Well there's a jump there. The consciousness raising group was able to help us get a common understanding of how patriarchy worked in its detail. That gave us the strength to do more structural analysis of how patriarchy worked in the society and it was taking on that role of leadership, the famous word, that was what the men couldn't deal with because they had expected, when they married in a patriarchal context, that they would still be the boss and suddenly no longer were. I did talk a bit about what I was doing in those days, but yeah, I think that was what happened. I remember particularly Les Bortner, who was a lovely guy and when Anne Owen got tougher and started expressing her mind, there were issues in the relationship. In that context, I certainly was taking leadership and was conscious about that.

B: And you did that with confidence and it sounds, pleasure. Was that a question of maturity? Your groundedness in the issues, your relationships with people? Why do you think that happened?

C: All of the above and not to underestimate the support I had at home -- that it was okay for me to roll in at two o'clock in the morning after a Women's Centre meeting and be pretty damn groggy in the morning while doing chores.

B: And had that support always been there or did Brewster also go through a change of consciousness, perhaps earlier than other men?

C: No, I think it had always been there. He had grown up with strong women. His cousins were all women. He was used to being the only boy in the group.

B: And he saw this as political and took pleasure in the fact that you were doing it?

C: Yeah. Well, there was a certain amount of conflict. He certainly would have said he never wanted me to iron his undershorts, but he would have been a bit distressed if I hadn't pulled my weight on the farm -- as would I. And I keep remembering back, now that I'm old and tired, the immense energy we had. I could do it all.

B: Last time you talked about how you have a picture of Bonnie Klein's daughter.

C: Yeah, Naomi.

B: Being there when she was about 13 or so, helping you make hay.

C: Right.

B: And of course in my mind, having hayed myself, I could see you and this 13 year old girl and probably your husband and your son getting in the hay and going to meetings and then going to meetings and on and on...

C: Yeah, all of us. And Rebecca driving the tractor because she was the littlest one. As soon as she was heavy enough, well actually before she was even heavy enough to stop it, Brewster would put the tractor in low low, so he could run after it and jump onto it if anything went awry and she'd be there steering but there was no way she could stop it except to throw it out of gear or whatever.

B: And was this a happy time?

C: Yeah. Yeah, it was a golden time. We worked our butts off and we loved it. I mean there was conflict. There was lots of conflict. Four very strong minded people trying to live together.

B: But your life was in your hands, like when Ivan Illich wrote about the tools of conviviality.

When the link between you and the land and your life is immediate.

C: Brewster was saying just yesterday how much he misses the easy camaraderie of the other farmers that we were working with. We call it "working with," but what we did --well, actually, God, we got there in '71 and I think it was the next year that I organized the first Sheep Fair. So every year I organized this immense event for all the sheep farmers in the province.

B: And what was it? What was the sheep fair?

C: It started because there was an importation of breeding stock from Britain which was just coming off quarantine and so the annual breeding stock sale was going to be a big deal because you had these new breeds who were coming in and we wanted to make a splash. And Brewster said we should have a sheep circus and do other things around it and I said, look, let's call it a sheep fair. And that was a time when everything natural was starting to become popular and Nova Scotia, I suspect, has always had very, very inspired fabric artists, fibre artists, but there was lots of spinners and weavers so we said okay, well we'll start -- and don't ask me how the hell I got hold of them. I no longer can remember, but I got hold of some of the more prominent spinners and weavers. I must have just called the guild I guess, and so we had a display and competition of wool craft, which included some of the more prominent of the sheep farmers themselves. There was one woman, a marvellous woman who did hooking with raw wool and different colours of the natural colours, quite wonderful. So we had the sale on and I had to make up the catalogue but we also had a ram burger barbecue and we had a dance and we had competitions for the children which were things like hoof trimming and carcass judging. So they weren't just, you know, they weren't just fripperies. We had craft competitions. One year it was the best thing you can make out of used baler twine. Another year it was what you can do with horn and bone. We had photography competitions. Oh, whatever we could think of that would get people involved.

B: And what was the location? Where did you do this?

C: In Truro at the fairgrounds. And then we had speakers and the one I remember was -- do you remember Madame Benoit, the cook? She had her own TV show.

B: Yes.

C: She and her husband, [Bernard], had a farm called "Noir mouton" which was on the road north of Montreal going up to Tremblant. And so he came and talked about how that worked, doing a farm that was selling directly to the consumer wool craft and sheep products, meats and other things, which is all very interesting. We had others -- that's the one I remember because it was sort of the big profile one -- but we had other speakers. So we'd have a speaker, we'd have a dance, we'd have a barbecue,

we did all of that and I organized the whole thing.

B: Okay. That's huge. So you also organized, you put together the committees and the workers and...

C: Yeah, I mean I didn't do everything. I just organized it.

B: But it seems to me that that's key. As I hear about the things you've done over time, it seems to me that that capacity to concert energies, to crystalize ideas very quickly, you seem to make up your mind to do things very fast. Once it's there, you say, there's something to be done, you get into it.

C: It doesn't feel like that to me. It feels like to me like it emerges out of the stew and then I find myself on a track and say oh, of course, and carry on without looking back too much to say 'how did I get here?'

B: Yeah, that's the inductive mode. But in this case, you're in a place that's very old and this hasn't been done before and you come up with the idea and I will bet that even in the very first one when it happened, people said "*We* did it."

C: Oh yeah. And it was fun. But the thing was, you see, at that time, sheep had a very bad reputation. Two reasons. One was, and they may have a connection, one was that people had kept sheep on the side so they were the sort of filthy things at the bottom of the barn. I mean really, shepherding was at a very low ebb, though it was traditional and pretty well any mixed farm had a few sheep, there were very few that actually took it seriously. And those were mostly immigrants. Not all, but mostly immigrants. Mostly from the British Isles, though some were from other places. And the other thing was that during the war, the troops had been fed aged Australian mutton. So you can imagine being 18 and in a war and you're given this thing which has a very distinctive smell and taste and you just can't go near it ever again. So the market for lamb had to be built from scratch, basically, from a whole new generation that was interested in trying it. And the reputation of sheep from farmers, the level of shepherding skills and of self-esteem as a shepherd, and that's old. I mean on the prairies, between the farmers, the shepherds and the ranchers is an old, old struggle, which is crazy because they actually go well together. Co-grazing cattle and sheep.

B: Even the classic Western movies including the ones that were political and metaphors for class struggle, often it was the sheep farmer who was the underdog and that's where Gary Cooper was. and the cattle farmers and the kind of range that was needed. It even went introduced the nature of the commons because what was needed to feed the sheep was different than the cattle.

C: Or so they thought.

B: I do know as a kid it was mutton. I never heard of lamb. It was mutton.

C: Yeah. Which is wonderful with enough garlic and red wine. But then so is anything. There was another wrinkle in that we were in Pictou County, which was populated initially, or the farming population initially came from Scotland, the Highland Clearances, where the Lairds cleared the farmers out of the common lands in order to raise sheep. So they didn't think too much of sheep either, though of course they had a few. Everybody had a few. So this was where the sheep fair was deliberately dreamed up - and Brewster and I did this together. It wasn't just me. I did the organizing but the ideas were common - in order to increase the self-esteem of sheep farmers and the capacity of the sheep farmers to act together.

B: Did they have their own marketing board?

C: No. Not for sheep. We had a wool marketing board of which I was briefly the Chair but it didn't have supply management. I want to make it very clear that organizing the sheep fair was deliberate as a way of rebuilding the sheep farmers and then we started on marketing and then Brewster took the

lead on that and developed the marketing co-op which now operates, which now sells pretty well all of the market lamb in the province.

B: To this day?

C: To this day, yeah.

B: That's a remarkable accomplishment.

C: It is a remarkable accomplishment, yeah.

B: And how pivotal do you think it was, given the other activities that you did from when you arrived -- the community groups, the women's groups, and then ultimately the fair?

C: Well, the fair came before the Women's Centre because that started in '72 or '73.

B: So you started it right off the top.

C: Yeah. We asked ourselves, We're here, what are we going to do? How do we organize? We had gone with a political agenda. We wanted to figure out how extractive capitalism was working and to get to the end where it's being extracted from.

B: So you knew you had to build community before you could organize a community around marketing, around...?

C: Well we didn't know what the agenda was going to be. We just knew we had to be there and that was what came up.

C: We didn't intend to farm. We figured we'd put ourselves in this place; we figured that if we could earn a living by our wits in Toronto, we could do it in Nova Scotia and it didn't take long before we realized that if we were going to live in Pictou County and work and the only place where there was going to be work would be in Halifax, we weren't going to get any organizing done. And the place that we'd bought in the spring was a farm that had cattle on it, so that summer we got the hay in and discovered the barn roof leaked. We had to reroof the barn. We had two women coming to live with us for that first winter and there was only two bedrooms in the house when it was us and the two kids, so Brewster had to build an extension onto the house to house these people, by which time it was winter. And so we said well, we've got the feed in the barn, we'll keep the cows until the spring. They were bred and by spring it became abundantly clear that if you're going to organize in that kind of context, you have to be under the same kind of economic imperative as the people you're working with. You can't come in like you have some other source of income, whatever it is, even if it's just talking with your mouth. So slowly, slowly, slowly we learned how to farm and build -- the community accepted us because we were working like stink and that's the ultimate accolade -- 'He's a hard worker.'

B: Last time you said that it's important to understand that working doesn't make you working class, and in this case, in a way you kind of leaped over that fact, because your material circumstances were the same, you're doing the same thing.

C: The other thing was that this was an area where the young people had traditionally left and here we were coming back and we were taking it seriously. We weren't just sort of playing at being farmers. We were taking it seriously. And that's what gained us the respect.

B: They'd probably seen a lot of back-to-the-landers who just...

C: Not a lot yet. We were within the wave.

B: But most didn't actually become successful farmers.

C: In fact, the couple that have stayed were this area's farmers. Yeah. Even though he earned his living as a school teacher. For most of that period, they had a dairy herd.

B: Although that's not unheard of in the farming community.

C: No, exactly. No, that's just perfectly normal.

B: Although usually it's the woman who does the school teaching.

C: Yeah.

B: The way you describe it, it sounds fantastic, interesting. How did it feel to leave?

C: Awful. Absolutely awful. We were farming glacial moraine. Don't plough it, for Christ's sake don't plough it. I used to joke that stones are fine if they're under the ground, but if you let them come to the air, they multiply. They breed.

B: I spent a summer picking stones.

C: Yeah. Everybody remembers picking stones. I understand why people write books about those experiences because there's just story after story.

B: You're leaving?

C: We knew that there was no sound business plan for that farm without the indentured labour of our children. This is what happened; Jamie and Rebecca went off to university in the same year. Rebecca skipped a grade because Mount St. Vincent in Halifax accepted her a year early (without Grade 12), which they would do in those days. So they left in the same year and suddenly we had no labour. We said we lost our indentured labour and we realized that we couldn't do it on our own unless we either gave up our political work, which would have been tantamount to suicide, or radically revamped things, put a lot of money into better equipment because the equipment was also aging and expanded the flock and hired somebody to work with us. But in order to get a full-time actual salary, we'd have had to make a very big investment and when we looked at it, that just didn't really make sense. Aside from the fact we had no idea where we were going to get the money, it just didn't really make sense. And also, Brewster was starting to feel that he wasn't going to be able to keep up working at this pace forever.

B: What year are we now?

C: We're in '86. And he was born in '33. So he was 53 years old. And I think it was the year we had his 49th birthday party that he started to realize that you know, you can't do this forever. It's a little young for people to retire from farming, but under the circumstances it made sense.

B: You were a little old when you got into it.

C: Well, not...

B: Not as though you were raised with it.

C: No. No, no, no. Of course, for sure. No, it was 15 years – 15 really, really important and formative years. But for at least a year or two after we left, I would find myself, when I'd let my mind float free, thinking if I'd only been a better manager, we could have stayed. And that was a time when farmers in the Prairies were committing suicide because they were losing farms that had been in the family for

generations. This wasn't a farm that had been in the family for generations. This wasn't even, you know, many people would say, not even a viable farm. It was hard scrabble. And we went in clear-eyed. We didn't go in to farm and still I felt that. How must they be feeling? And that was really big. I've never lived on the Prairies though Brewster would have liked to. I just couldn't face the weather.

B: And was there a pull to do something else that mediated this sense of failure and disappointment? And nostalgia almost?

C: Well, we started doing the Ram's Horn in 1980, in the fall of 1980, and that was because there'd been a coup in the Sheep Producers Association because Brewster had exposed the marketing practices of the drovers and how that was exploiting the farmers and he did it openly in a meeting. And the next meeting, the drovers - farmers who were also drovers - had clubbed together. There was a whole lot of new members and they threw Brewster out as Secretary. Which is of course the powerful position -- you don't want to be President. You want to be Secretary, right? And so he had been writing the minutes of the meetings in such a way that they told the story of what was actually happening. It wasn't just motions moved, and that comes from long back, Brewster was very good at this stuff and so we did the first Ram's Horn basically to explain to people what had happened, how they were being screwed and who was doing it and naming names and telling the story. So we'd started and gradually that had gone from being a newsletter for sheep farmers. People kept asking how come New Zealand can land lamb here cheaper than we can raise it and what the hell do we do about it? So that lead to the analysis in the Ram's Horn of the larger, global economic structure.

B: When I came across it, that's what it was doing. It was explaining the political economy of the food system.

C: Exactly. But at the same time, Brewster was organizing a marketing co-op. So all that happened at the same time, but people kept saying 'you should write, you should do a Ram's Horn reader because this is really interesting stuff'. And we started looking at it and thinking uh-huh, it's too topical. It's too contextual, but there is something that needs to be written and so the germ of *From Land to Mouth* was already forming. And then an academic friend told Brewster about SSHRC having scholarships for what was called "Independent Scholars". It doesn't exist anymore. So we applied for a scholarship for -- oh, the other thing that had happened was bovine growth hormone was just coming in. And Brewster was observing the farmers not talking about it. It was a technology, it's something coming down the road, you've got to adopt, adapt, or get out of the way. I mean it's just all 'sharpen your pencils, boys'. I mean I can just hear it. And he said "I want to think about technological determinism" so that's what he wrote the grant for and out of that we had, I've forgotten how much money it was, not a lot, but we managed to live on it for two and a half years while he wrote *From Land to Mouth* and started on the Cargill work. It was an amazing thing. It was a scholar grant where you explain to them what you've got in your mind, you get the money, but you don't have to produce anything in particular. Well, he produced three books.

B: And you're still on the farm or you've left the farm?

C: We're driving to Toronto to look for a place to live and I'm writing this grant application out longhand as we go. Then get back to the farm and transcribe it on our computer which was a luggable [35 pounds] Olivetti with a four inch screen green on green. Light green on dark green.

B: But I do have to say that some of the story I know partially just from talking to the two of you socially but also from reading Brewster's book, the repentant and unrepentant Brewster. In a couple of drafts. You tell the story differently.

C: Yep. Yep.

B: In a way, it is a different story. And I think one of the things we're exploring is one, how

interesting is that story? Well of course our story's interesting, essentially for each one of us. But also, what's the significance? And maybe we can explore that a little the next time.

C: Absolutely, and as I was talking, I was thinking about all the stories and thinking you know, just stringing the stories together the way we're doing, questions come out that are very interesting to explore, more theoretical questions like what was that about? What was underneath? You're helping me see that and the potential that there might be. There's several different ways that this could go, but I'm feeling much more positive about the notion of something concrete coming out of this.

B: And it's interesting that particular narrative because it wasn't an anecdote. That actually you describe the whole process came from me asking you how you felt about leaving the things that you had already described to me. And of course, it was a very logical question to ask you how you felt because I know from what you said, how you felt about what you were doing, there was that feeling to the politics. There's a feeling to what you're doing. You know?

C: Yeah. And every move we've taken, I've gone because Brewster's gone. Every time. And he's dragged me kicking and screaming each time because I get somewhere and the first thing I do is put all these little rootlets down. It hurts when you take them out.

B: Yeah. It's roots, it's relationships, and caring; but also there's an imagination of the duration of it, and that imagination goes from the past through now and into an open future. It's not a mutilation but I bet you it feels like it at the beginning.

C: Yeah. Well there was a funny thing that somebody put on Facebook of two fetuses in the womb talking about whether there was life after birth.

B: (Laughing) That's very good.

October 12th, 2015 – Brian Murphy's third conversation with Cathleen Kneen.

B: As I piece together the story and Jean was asking how it was going, I said it's fascinating because it's a spiral and the spiral fills in more detail and more detail but not from a logic but from a narrative and inquisitive standpoint. So with that in mind, it occurs to me that there are two themes that came up from the last time. One was non-violence and pacifism and the other was faith-based movements. I want to start with the faith-based because it seems to me that you were part of a crowd that was very faith-based and most of them Christian faith-based. Your husband, for example, but other people too, as I recall. People like Lee Cormie. But your background was Jewish and my sense is that actually your activism, your citizenship, your personhood wasn't faith-based. It was driven by other things. So I wonder whether that instinct is correct, and also what it was like being in a movement that was, seemed to be faith-based -- and was it actually faith-based, or did people just start there and it was many bases?

C: Different answers for different periods. As I mentioned, my mother was so appalled that I'd actually married a theologian and Brewster was -- definitely when I met him and in the early years of our relationship -- definitely driven by his faith, though it's very interesting reading his book [Journey of and Unrepentant Socialist] how quickly that became nuanced.

B: Yeah in his book he says that he was faith-based but he doesn't demonstrate it because so many other things come in; as you say, nuanced.

C: Yeah, well it wasn't -- he never took Jesus as his personal Saviour. It was never like that and that's how faith got defined and articulated in the Christian context, so that was alien, and for me, the whole thing was alien. But what was interesting was -- it's the same as my mother; my grandparents in Vienna sent the child to a Lutheran Sunday school because she should have some religious training and they weren't Jewish religious, so it didn't make any sense. So that's what she got and became a humanist, I think. She was very interested in comparative religion but sort of as a theoretical construct. And as I said, my father's faith was Marxist by the time I got to know him.

B: And therefore atheist?

C: And therefore atheist, exactly. To my mother's great distress but she got over it. So when Brewster and I had children, we were going to bring the children up in the church, because that made sense. I sort of felt like I don't have any religion, so I don't really care one way or the other and he did and he did care, so you know, fine, no skin off my nose. So we started going to the Church of the Holy Trinity, the infamous wonderful Church of the Holy Trinity in Toronto, when the kids were rug rats, before we left Toronto the first time around. And that was the point where the church -- that particular church -- was just beginning to undergo some radical changes. The church itself is, as you may know, situated in the middle of the Eaton Centre, which hadn't been built yet. It was built on land that the church owned. So there ensued a massive struggle for control over the wealth that that potential sale of the land to Eaton's was going to generate. Initially Eaton's wanted just to tear the church down. They finally realized that that simply wasn't going to happen and did a land swap and the church got some land on which affordable housing was built.: This was in the late '60s.

B: And it was an Anglican church?

C: Yes. And there was a struggle with the diocese, which the church finally won, which was great because it meant that it had enough of an endowment and that being a 'gathered' church -- it was in the middle of downtown -- its members were scattered around the city. If it had been a parish church, it would have been utterly impoverished but because people came in on their bicycles and buses and cars to the church and were able to provide some support. Not enough for the kind of ministry that church undertook, but which it could after the settlement with Eatons and the Diocese of Toronto.

That included somebody dedicated to a street ministry, someone dedicated to housing, one woman who was working on women's issues. And it also started to break out in terms of liturgy. So one of the first things that they did was remove a bunch of the pews at the back so that there was room for people to have coffee hour after church and people came in from the street to join the coffee hour.

That was the beginning and then the church got - well, the church got unscrewed too - but the pews all got unscrewed so that we could sit in a semicircle and then the altar came down from the whatever you call that piece in the front - it's got a name but I can't remember it right now - and became a table on the floor around which everyone gathered, passing bread and wine from hand to hand. I'm not sure what order all these things happened in. I know that the pews were moved before we left and when we came back, everything had moved substantially. The issue of gay marriage had become major. When we had left, it was the Vietnam War and the church was housing draft resisters and deserters and when we came back, it was more the social issues: housing, poverty, and within the church, rights for gay people.

So we had a couple who were deacons, both of them, and they couldn't marry in those days but they got pregnant at which point both of them were banned from the deaconate. Now in the Anglican church, when you serve the communion or when you read the Gospel, the other readings are okay, but the Gospel has to be read by a deacon, so there are certain things that certain people are anointed to do, so that wasn't so much a problem because by this time, the whole liturgy was being run by the congregation and sometimes we'd invite the pastor to preach and sometimes we wouldn't. We'd invite somebody else who was a better preacher, of whom we had a number, and we also had a number of officiants because there were at least half a dozen priests in the congregation, not to mention at least one Catholic who had married and therefore wasn't a priest anymore. So there was a fair bit of theological knowledge and many of these people were also writers, teachers, poets, so we had a wealth of teaching.

B: And they were probably driven by the theology of liberation by that time.

C: Yeah. Though not necessarily in that particular package, but that certainly that was the spirit, for sure. It was once described scathingly as the NDP at prayer, that church. Certainly Dan and Alice Heap were important people in the church but looking at the NDP now, I'd say we were to the left of the NDP. But whenever it was Allison or Joyce's turn to serve at the table, we'd leave an empty spot deliberately so there'd be only three people at the table instead of four. Three corners, covered the other corner empty. Like the seat that you leave empty for Elijah at the Passover.

B: This was a way of marking that they'd been sanctioned.

C: Yep. They went on to have another child. Joyce had one and Allison had one and those children were brought up in the church, and so it went on. But for me what was exciting about Holy Trinity was the liturgy and the music because among all these people were a couple of guys who were poets - three of them - who wrote hymns or rewrote hymns and so our music fitted our theology. And they were good. We won't publish this, but there's an awful lot of very weeny music in the United Church hymn book. It's all terribly pretty and sweet and light, but the nice thing about Holy Trinity, and particularly Ian Sowton, is that the dark stuff is there. The language of the hymns really expresses the struggle of the soul with evil in the world and our part in it. I got involved in the Worship Committee and actually was Chair of the Worship Committee for some years.

I actually got baptized (to my parents' appalled horror) and then very quickly realized that it was a mistake because in fact, I didn't believe the framework. I didn't believe the paradigm. I loved that church. I loved that group of people. I loved the way in which things were done and the way in which the faith was expressed, and the struggles were my struggles, but the paradigm wasn't my paradigm. I did not believe in the Virgin birth. You know, I can't say the creed. I just don't believe it. But the community was so strong and so clear that I stuck with it until about maybe the second time around

when we left Toronto for B.C. About a year and a half or two years before that I found myself a Jewish teacher and started studying Judaism more seriously. Which also didn't survive the move to B.C. but it was helpful for a while.

B: And you were doing that for private spiritual reasons?

C: Yes. I clearly was a member of the community of Holy Trinity, not of the Church of the Holy Trinity, but I learned a lot of liturgy, which has stood me in very good stead in organizing events.

B: Most people don't understand that the liturgy is fundamentally an organizing tool, an animating tool.

C: Yeah, exactly. And I learned that, which was very helpful learning. So the kids were both brought up as Christian knowing that they were also Jewish and having Passover every year. Actually that was the first thing that happened when we moved to Nova Scotia because we were still looking for a place and someone said "Why don't you go and see David Stein because he's moved here recently and he'll probably have some idea of what's available." So we went over to see David. Turned out it was two things. One, his wife, Randy was in the hospital having just had their first child. Second, it was the first night of Passover that night and he was beside himself over what to do. And I said, well, can I help? We had just arrived, and there I was sort of co-hosting and leading a seder at David and Randy Stein's house, in Randy's place, because Randy was in the hospital having Milcah. And there were a few other Jews around, but all of these people were very secular. David was the only one who did a seder.

B: And in the movement.

C: Yeah, you were asking about the movement. In SUPA, the leadership was secular.

B: But they also worked very closely with the Student Christian Movement.

C: Right.

B: Was there tension there or just that people were operating from their own faith?

C: I wouldn't say we worked closely with them. That meeting that I was telling you about was an attempt to try and come to terms with some of the differences, but you know, Art Pape was a heartbeat away from going into the seminary to become a Rabbi and he was one of the key leaders in the Student Union for Peace Action. And many of the others were secular Jews but with a certain amount of - It's the ethics with Jews. It's just as much -- it's more almost in the Jews that I know, about how you live. It's not about your religious practice.

B: Yeah. One of the things that I was thinking about this and wanting to explore it with you, I thought to myself, some people are driven by morality and others are driven by ethics and there's a difference between morality and ethics. One being rooted in religion and natural law and following the moral code, where people who are ethical in a way invent a moral code but not from a code but from another base, a secular base. Does that make any sense?

C: Ah, well, it's interesting because I was just reading something that Brewster wrote about biotechnology and saying that he's not sure about the difference between morals and ethics. But clearly, one or the other of them is involved in this mix, in terms of looking at the manipulation of the genetic code. It's hard to know, because it comes through teaching either way. Maybe there's people who figure out an ethical code all by themselves without ever having been taught that something is right or wrong when they were children, but I can't imagine it. I think you are taught what's right and wrong. Maybe not self-consciously if people aren't religious, but you still don't behave that way. Don't do that. You need to be nice to, you know, share your toys.

B: I wonder if the ethical is more aspirational and the moral is more faith-based, based in an understanding of the universe so they see moral code as natural law, a law of the universe, where we choose our ethics through teachings or instinct because of how we aspire the world to be, not necessarily the way the world is.

C: In the earlier meaning of the term, that's a nice distinction.

B: (laughing) Yes.

C: Because I think it's messy, which is why we have trouble. They believe that people who think the way Brewster does have trouble coming to terms with a distinction.

B: And of course one of the things we've learned is as soon as you have a dichotomy, you know you're going in the wrong direction. A dichotomy is meant to be transcended. Within those who are faith-based and those who are not, were there fault lines, strategic fault lines or fault lines of priorities, fault lines of what kind of behaviours were seen to be important or the attention to community, various things? Was there any difference or did people just...

C: I'm not sure I can make all that much of a distinction. There certainly were people who were faith-based and saw their participation in the churches strategically. So we had all the church coalitions and the inter-church coalitions for this, that, and the other thing – starting, I guess, with Chile.

B: Even before, but certainly. LAWG was before the coup in Chile.

C: We started LAWG before we left for the farm, in the late '60s.

B: Chile happened in '73.

C: Oh, I see what you mean.

B: But certainly the coalitions, PLURA, were there for years, well over a decade, probably 15 years, and so absolutely critical to any action that was happening in what we now call civil society.

C: Right. And we had a group that met which included a couple of Catholics and a couple of Protestants and it was just sort of a mixed group that met for beers on Thursdays at the Jack Russell Pub in Toronto to talk about what the hell was going on with the inter-church coalitions because we were really not very happy with the direction they were going in. This would have been in the mid-'80s.

B: Yeah, that's when the wheels started to fall off.

C: The wheels were starting to fall off, yeah.

B: And it was so critical because up until that moment, the coalitions were the engine.

C: So when you ask about faith-based, I think of the people who were involved in that discourse and those activities. We had a house church before we left for Nova Scotia and we'd meet for Bible reading and prayer. We did Bible reading with the children right through their growing up. Neither of them has any religion now,³ though Jamie did ask for, the first year when he went to university, asked for Christmas for a Jerusalem Bible. We had already got him a sewing machine. Most successful gift we ever gave him.

³Rebecca comments: Not religion, but faith (for me at least), but it doesn't look much like what they are talking about...

B: And how would you describe your faith now?

C: I wouldn't describe that I have a faith. But there's a poet, I think it was George Johnson who said something like 'a glimpse of the unspoiled brings me to my knees.' There are moments. I was in Mud Lake the day before yesterday and at one point the sun came down through the trees just where there was a huge scattering of red and orange and yellow leaves. I just, ahh. I just stood there.

...

C: I've forgotten what it was you said that characterizes a leader.

B: That you have insights, instincts, knowledges which is different than analysis.

C: Yeah. So the first thing I was going to say is personality, which is formed by goodness knows what. But I've never been afraid to be an actor, to be on the stage. To speak out. And we learned that very young, Jeannie and I, because we had the London Theatre Company in St. John's and, in fact, we had Charles and Ruth Mardel living in our downstairs apartment, probably for peanuts, and I think the trade-off, in lieu of rent because they were poor as church mice, they were actors, was to give Jeannie and me elocution lessons. And then Jeannie and I would put on little plays for my parents and the neighbours. That was probably the beginning, watching the actors, and my father -- both my father and my mother would read to us and both of them were very, very good and my father in particular. He was a singer. He was a performer.

B: So he projected.

C: Yeah. Taught me about voice projection. And God gave me a voice which is beautiful on radio. I mean I remember one time I was giving a talk at a conference and as I was there one of the young men who worked for the hotel was cleaning up and he came to me and he said, "Can I say something to you about your speech?" I said, "Of course." "I could listen to you forever, you know, just talk." I got a job with CBC in the summer of 1970 because I desperately needed to get away from the children and needed to do something and I heard somewhere that CBC was hiring summer relief announcers. And I went in and auditioned and it just so happened it was at the point where they realized they needed women's voices on the air. But I was safe because I didn't have a little high voice. I didn't talk like this (demonstrating). Like the ones they do now which drive me absolutely bananas and I could say, "This is the CBC Radio Network" and I didn't sound quite like Lamont Tilden but not too bad, and by the way, Lamont Tilden was just lovely. He and a couple of the other older guys just sort of took me under their wing.

B: He had an amazing voice and the most unique accent I've heard.

C: Yeah, they were just lovely. Well, the accent, that was the other thing. I didn't have, quote unquote, an accent. There's a little tiny hint of Newfoundland. I can hear it when I listen to the playback and I certainly heard it when I did a voiceover for at that point it was a slideshow - we didn't have video yet - on violence against women. In the playback, I heard my voice say, "What kind of a man would beat on his wife?" Okay kid, you're a Newfie. But basically, I had a mid-Atlantic accent at that point and so I couldn't be pinpointed anywhere and that was really helpful as well, but it was the voice. And so I learned that. I actually was the announcer for Peter Gzowski on "Radio Free Friday" before it was taken over by As It Happens. There was this Monday and Friday slot, and then Gzowski got this program "This Country in the Morning" and "As it Happens" took the evening slot. It was all very good training.

So as I say, performing comes easy to me. I'm more likely to speak out much too quickly than I am not to speak up when I ought. The other part of leadership, and I was discussing this with Soha last night and she said a leader is someone who takes initiative and who takes care of their people.. So that's the other part because I would initiate something because it just seemed like the obvious thing

to do. But it was in the process of the bringing people along and bringing people into that move, and their insights and understandings of what needed to be done or what the situation was that made the thing actually happen. And that's why I've always said it's not me. We did it together. It took all of us because it really does because I would be skating on really - and I do very often - skate on really thin ice but it's that discourse, it's that constant toing and froing of 'how do we go from here' that makes it actually happen. I mean I remember when I was preaching at Holy Trinity -- and giving the prayers of the people was something else. I'm up there in front of everybody and I've thought through what I probably should say but when I get started, it's like over to you and I'm just, I'm almost channeling, I have no idea and I always know when it happens because I have no idea afterwards what it was I said. I now call those elder moments when I'm not speaking out of my own personality, I'm speaking out of received wisdom from somewhere, wherever it's coming from. And obviously there's a cooking process going on there, you know, obviously.

B: Because it is your wisdom.

C: Well, I'm holding it for now. That's been part of my hesitation about this whole project, you see, because I don't feel like I own it. I'm presenting it and I have particular gifts which I clearly acknowledge. The voice is one of them and there's others which enable me to hold and to present this, but it would be unbearable cheek and arrogance for me to say it's mine. This is just my story.

B: Let's track that because you say we started with faith and you're not a faith-driven person, but you also now talk about received wisdom. But obviously you don't believe you're receiving it from God.

C: No. I said my voice was a God given gift.

B: Yeah. But you also said that when you spoke, although you had given thought to what you wanted to say, once you got on a roll, it just came.

C: Yep. Not always. You can't count on it. You've got to do the work because most of the time, this doesn't necessarily happen, and I think any elder will tell you the same thing that when you speak as an elder, it's sometimes surprising to you. I wasn't expecting to speak as an elder. But maybe that's just because I'm new at the game.

B: But I guess my instinct would be when you get into that zone, one of the things is you are forming a bond with the people you are speaking to, a field, an energy field. But that you are speaking your heart and your heart has a direct line to what you know. So you're actually speaking what you know. "Oft thought but ne'er so well-expressed."

C: Let me give you an example of something as one that I actually remember. I was at a gathering of the B.C. Food Systems Network in a healing lodge. And various people had been speaking and it was really nice to be in an Aboriginal context because we had been working toward that for a long time and I found myself saying, which I hadn't planned to say, that of course decolonization is our common responsibility, our common job. And people were thrilled and I thought oh, that is *true*. So it was a moment when I was speaking a truth, so yes, what you're saying is right, though it always comes out of the interaction with whoever you're talking to, to some extent I'm sure. That's part of being an actor. You're not an actor without an audience and the audience, you know, is a feedback. It's circular, together it makes the whatever the event is happen.

B: Do you think that in those moments which are common in your life. . .

C: Had to happen? I wouldn't say common, but yeah.

B: But you're channeling the wisdom of everyone's experience?

C: Maybe that's what it is. Now we're back to grandiose.

B: Yeah, we are, okay.

C: I wouldn't claim that I was channeling the wisdom of all the people in the room. I would say that there's an energy in the room that I'm picking up. Probably.

B: And that has always been so? Are there parts of your life where you didn't give play to that as much?

C: What I remember is a moment at a meeting of the Women's Centre when I started to speak and everyone fell silent. And I thought holy fuck, now what? And that was the moment when I realized I was a leader because a leader is basically somebody who other people listen to. And so it's very ephemeral.

B: And had you been silent up to that point?

C: No, no. No, no, I'd been part of the cacophony.

B: That's right, but this time you noticed

C: And this time suddenly everyone fell silent. And then I thought, oh dear, I better be sure of what I'm saying and of course, I wasn't, because you never are. So that's the other piece of leadership and the part that's a little startling when you haven't thought of yourself necessarily that way, or the extent to which you're a leader, and I think in a sense, it wasn't until I got cancer and the messages of support started pouring in and the way in which they were expressed and I suddenly thought, oh my God, all these people love me. I'm weeping because it's just so incredibly... I knew I loved *them*, and I hadn't realized, I just hadn't realized that it was of course it's a two-way street. I knew I had taken leadership, and I certainly knew I was appreciated. I also knew that the things I've struggled for are not won. My whole desire to create a movement based in food sovereignty rather than food security and in a positive rather than a negative, in a power place rather than a place of seeking accommodation and help is still going on and the current situation at Food Secure Canada, sometimes I think oh my God. (sigh). I mean I know I'm not alone in that particular struggle but it's not over just because of... I'm seen and appreciated as a person who really worked to make that happen, but it's not a done deal.

B: And are you now faced with the limitations of your role?

C: Exactly.

B: No matter what you do, you may not be able to save it, alone or together.

C: Yeah, one starts reciting Rudyard Kipling's "if" to oneself.

B: Right. I think there's two things. I noticed that the notes you sent out of your going through your healing process had leadership in them. That you very gently helped people see how you wanted to be seen. How you were seeing this journey, but in a way how people can help you by seeing it this way versus making you an invalid, making you a victim.

...

C: I have been wanting to write a blog about [Food Secure Canada's] Eat, Think, Vote campaign, which is a campaign across Canada for people to meet with the candidates for federal election and raise the issues of a food policy, which is everything from a guaranteed minimum income to dealing creatively with genetic engineering, to school meals, the whole thing. And the problem is, and you know I helped organize an event here and I'm involved with the campaign in the sense that I'm talking about this all the time and putting signs out on my front lawn and generally posting things on

Facebook and whatever and talking to people I meet in the street about the election and the need to get rid of this dreadful regime we have. But changing federal policy is not the purpose of the food movement and at first I was really angry about it and I wasn't going to write from anger, so I didn't write anything. And then it was really hard to figure out how to say it and now I'm trying to see how do we use that raising of consciousness, raising of awareness and beginning to come together in a way that will build the movement at the bottom?

B: But also it's very difficult to raise that serious, profound policy issue in the context of an election, and they're not even talking about health, let alone food. But I agree that there's going to be a role for various movements. The way they have to be thinking about it is not advocating policies but actually trying to reorient the entire discourse. And that is an affirming healthy thing because it means talking amongst ourselves.

C: Exactly.

B: And not necessarily *at* them.

C: Exactly. And that's the thing that we have to understand. I really appreciate you bringing in the word "affirmation". That's exactly what it is. It's not about being Pollyanna but it's not particularly helpful to walk on the dark side of the street. You may as well walk on the sunny side of the street.

The vitamin D helps.

B: In fact, not only is it (the dark side) not helpful, it's destructive.

C: Well exactly. And the thing is that the actions that we take out of our anger may be effective - and this is an argument I've had with my son-in-law Brian, who is an Irish patriot - and we struggled for years, I think it was about six or seven years when we were living in the same place together, over the issue of armed resistance. And we finally agreed to disagree, but the thing is now, thinking back on that issue, the problem is that if you're killing people, (...) you're a killer. C: And becoming life-affirming is really / there's a very interesting project that we've been involved with the research project that I'm involved with at Carleton, which is looking at the relationships between community-based organizations and academically-based researchers and we finally agreed that decolonizing those relationships is what it's about. How do you develop respectful relationships? One of the projects that we got involved with is called "Long-term Inmates Now in the Community." It's in Mission, B.C. and it takes lifers who are either out finally on parole or are still incarcerated and they're running a market garden and eating food together in the kitchen. And it's (...) it's incredibly life-affirming. These are murderers. And in one case, the mother of the man who'd been murdered came to one of their gatherings to meet the guy who'd killed her son. And she said "Nothing is going to bring my son back, but at least I can be on the side of life." And I thought holy smokes.

B: That's pretty profound.

C: That's just incredible but that's the reconciliation piece that we have to struggle with as a society. We have murdered so many people. We collectively. And that's the other piece I want to say about faiths. Zooming back again, we were very good friends with an elderly couple. He was an Anglican priest and social justice activist who served in Japan for years and we went to their summer cottage for the weekend and on Sunday morning Cyril was to officiate at a table Eucharist with just the four of us. And I was still inside my church phase, so I participated but I felt really uncomfortable about it and I said to Cyril afterwards, "You know what I think is wrong? We're not enough people." And he laughed and he said, "You mean we need ten?" And I said, "Yep. You need a minyan,"⁴ and I realized

⁴In Judaism, a minyan (Hebrew: מִנְיָן \ מִנְיָנִים minyán [min'jan], lit. (noun) count, number; pl. מִנְיָנִים \ מִנְיָנִים minyaním [minja'nim]) is the quorum of ten Jewish adults required for certain religious obligations such as public prayer.

that that's part of what this is all about. That's my understanding of worship or I guess that's the nearest word I can come to, is that it's a collective. It's a collective thing. So that whole personal saviour thing just leaves me completely cold because that's not how I experience it. I experience the commonality. I experience the common spirit. Sometimes momentarily, I'm not terribly good at this, with nature. I'm looking at the orange tree as I speak, but most often with groups of people. So yeah, in that sense, I would say I am faith-based. But it's a different model, in which case I'm not sure I'm that different from anybody else. I'm thinking about the base communities and what the hell is that all about if it's not a collective prayer?

B: So you have faith in "The Way". You have faith in collectivity. You have faith in what is good even in the face of the knowledge that not all is good. My instinct is that I'm an anti-Manichean. I don't believe there's a fight between good and evil. I think evil is the absence of good and therefore our ethics should be to put in as much good as we can.

C: Hmm. So the notion of a hole. A dark hole that you can fall into. And I guess that is the lack of good. So again, my image from when I was sickest, when I felt I was falling into that black hole. It was what the nurses called a pain crash but that's what it felt like. And I literally, at the time, now it's just a memory, literally at the time I felt a cushion underneath me which was the love of all these people who I knew were holding... I knew they were praying for me or thinking of me or sending good intentions in my direction or whatever it was but, you know, that just held me up. That hole's down there and I'm not falling into it. And very soon after that, I came back into myself and I reintroduced myself to my doctors. They came in that morning and it was about 2 o'clock in the morning, I woke up and said, "Oh, I'm back."

B: And you affirmed the good.

C: And then in the morning when they came, I said I'd like to introduce myself because I haven't been myself so this is me, hi. They got a great kick out of me.

B: Last time, in fact I think both times we've talked, you have asserted that the axis of your politics was the Peace Movement. You made a distinction between pacifism and non-violence and you think that your axis really is non-violence. It's a commitment to non-violence that has driven you.

C: I've always had trouble with the language, you know? Anti-war, non-violence.

B: Is it true that this has been the impulse of your politics?

C: But the language is problematic and I think this conversation has been helpful in clarifying that, because it's not about being against something. It's about being for something.

B: For life.

C: Yeah. I've thought a lot about Stephen Harper and what I would say to him if I actually met him and you know, I keep thinking would I spit in his face? No, I don't do things like that. I would probably say I really think you need to go and pray about what you're doing because I don't think, I hope you don't realize, how incredibly destructive everything you've done to this country is. I should be a Quaker. If I come at it as non-violence, then I'm letting violence define the action. If anti-war, then war defines the action.

B: Yes.

C: And it's not, but peace - and this is the struggle that the Peace Movement has always had, it seems - and it's probably because of our tendency to gloss over the pain - peace seems sweet. It's all Tinkerbell and boring. Very boring. And it isn't, of course. So I'm very happy with the language of reconciliation because it starts with a recognition that evil has been done but it's focusing on - and

that's why I told you the story about Link and the inmates. It's focusing on okay, as Brewster says, how do we live together? How do we live together? Now we're here and I can't help the colour of my skin. I can't help the language I speak. I can't help the what do you call it? The legacy that my parents gave me, which means that I can actually live reasonably comfortably without worrying about it. I can't help any of that stuff. I can do something about it, but the something needs to be change making, any more than my friend who's Sepwecwemc whose parents and grandparents were in the residential schools, whose siblings have committed suicide, you know, she can't help who she is either. But we need to reconcile, one way or the other.

B: And is part of reconciliation transcendence? Or is that just what we hope might come out of it?

C: I think it's what we hope might come out of it. But it doesn't matter, in a sense and here's the ethics coming in. It's the right thing to do. It's what there is. It's the only game in town. Why are we doing this? Well what else would I do? I mean I might focus on a different particular piece. It could be housing or health instead of food. Food is nice because it's such an easy paradigm to organize around because you can feed each other while you're doing it.

B: I was wondering why was the leap, from an ethical axis of non-violence to food security. The way you're now talking, it wasn't really anti-violence or even non-violence. It was more the affirmation of life, the affirmation of being.

C: I think I came to that later. I wouldn't have said that when I was in my teens and twenties. I was much angrier. I was very angry.

B: Did you come at that from working the land and working with food and working with producers or did doing that come from a change of perspective? Or is it part and parcel?

C: Yeah, that's a spiral thing. I was going to say well, it was the People's Food Commission. But no, that's a very good question and the anger still surfaces sometimes.

B: What was that anger? For the 19 year old who crossed the border for that big meeting? You say you were an angry person. Was it an abstract anger or was it actually a felt anger?

C: Both. Both. It was abstract in terms of politics and I don't know what it was personally. I don't know why. I don't know where it came from and it's one of the things I've struggled with all my life and I haven't figured it out yet. But there is that core of anger and I think it is about injustice, but everywhere injustice. There's a poem by Kenneth Patchen who's a poet that Brewster introduced me to when we were courting where he talks about the fox and how she's dying, leaving her little ones in the nest and so on. And then he says, "And because" - I don't have the words quite right. I don't know what to say about the soldier dying because there are no comparisons in death. Words to that effect, so it's that kind of, you know, ah...

B: Are you going to find the poem?

C: (reading poem)

The Orange bears with soft friendly eyes
Who played with me when I was ten,
Christ, before I'd left home they'd had
Their paws smashed in the rolls, their backs
Seared by hot slag, their soft trusting
Bellies kicked in, their tongues ripped
Out, and I went down through the woods
To the smelly crick with Whitman

In the Haldeman-Julius edition,
And I just sat there worrying my thumbnail
Into the cover—What did he know about
Orange bears with their coats all stunk up with soft coal
And the National Guard coming over
From Wheeling to stand in front of the millgates
With drawn bayonets jeering at the strikers?

I remember you would put daisies
On the windowsill at night and in
The morning they'd be so covered with soot
You couldn't tell what they were anymore.

A hell of a fat chance my orange bears had!⁵

B: Wow.

C: So that's one way of expressing the anger.

B: And I can see it in your face.

C: Oh yeah. He's a powerful writer.

B: Yes. You're a powerful reader.

C: That's a gift.

⁵From *The Collected Poems of Kenneth Patchen*. p. 384. New Directions Publishing. 1957.

October 22, 2015 – Brian Murphy's fourth conversation with Cathleen Kneen.

B: The last conversation I was asking you about the link between the movement for non-violence and food. We found that the link was around promotion of life because you were saying, "I don't want to be anti-violence. I want to be pro-something."

C: There's another answer which I've thought of in the meantime.

B: You were being very optimistic and very *pro-life*⁶ and such, and then I asked you: "The young woman, the 19-year-old who crossed the border and went to all the peace people and met Brewster and whatever, did she already have those insights or was there something else?" And you said, "Oh no, there was a great deal of anger," right? And I said, "Where did that come from?" And you said, "Well, maybe that's where we should start the next time." I would like to kind of shift gears completely because we were also talking about beauty and your faith. You said some very interesting things about beauty and faith and you quoted this poet, George Johnson. "A glimpse of beauty brings me to my knees." All the way through our conversations, it has occurred to me that you are a person of place. You note place. Place is important to you, and I thought we could talk about it. But descriptively, not analytically. So, for instance, the St. John's of your youth, and the time you spent in Scotland when you were a student. You've talked about the community in Nova Scotia, but I haven't heard about the landscape, the place. I wondered if we could just spend some time about place and start in the St. John's of your youth. But if you would prefer actually to close up the stuff about anger?

C: I'd like to close up about anger. I don't want to go back into anger at this point. I realize that I need to do a fair bit of processing, partly because there is, at this point, an overlay of anger about my physical condition and I haven't dealt with that. I have deliberately and consistently and with serious intent refused to let it surface, knowing that only by being hopeful and positive and trusting the universe and trusting my community and trusting the people who love me and support me will I heal. Anger doesn't heal – at all. So I've put it aside. I know it's there and I will deal with it. I've promised that I will deal with it, but I will deal with it not from here. This is not the place to deal with it from.

B: Faith was the other one.

C: Oh, no, it was the link – how do you get from anti/non-violence to food, and I remembered an article I wrote when I left the farm on the violence of industrial agriculture, breaking the virgin prairie, the whole paradigm of the patriarchal approach to agriculture, which is about control. And that's how it came together for me, through feminism. And then as I got into the work, it was obvious that it's the one thing that everybody can do something about on a daily basis, and you can connect with the sources of your food. One way or another, everybody can do that. And to feel the generosity of both the natural elements and the human beings who bring you your food, and feel grateful for that, and everybody can do that. It's a really positive basis on which to organize. And it weaves into my approach to cancer.

B: I think that would be very helpful for people because it seems so Pollyannish.

C: I know.

B: to those of us who insist that you can't fight violence with violence, who want to be positive, we're being a Pollyanna, but what you're talking about, that's not being a Pollyanna. I mean that's real, practical, material.

C: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

⁶Note this is a rather unfortunate phrase.

B: And it's clear that even without it being articulated in the philosophical way you did, the food movement is resonating with people.

C: Well, we have a political system which has systematically disempowered people, distanced them from their own reality. I mean there's no other way to explain the Stephen Harper years other than that people were totally alienated from their own reality. So people would see one little tiny piece and support... I mean, the person who is a little corporation and so she voted Conservative because of the corporate tax rate. But what about everything else? She said 'It doesn't matter.' You think it doesn't matter. You don't understand what is actually going on in your own life, what's important. As the mother of a special needs child.

B: Well, thank you for reflecting on that.

C: I think it's the thing I bring to the food movement. One of the important moments in my life was Janine Gibson teaching me a sung grace, which goes (singing): "thank you for this food, this food, this glorious, glorious food, And the animals, and the vegetables, and the minerals, that make it possible", which obviously is a round and wonderful to be sung in a large group and I took it to one of the assemblies of Food Secure Canada and got this auditorium of 300 people singing together.

B: In the round as well?

C: Yeah. And then I did another one -- at a different conference; "Bring Back my Planet to Me," and got the whole group singing. And this is back to what I was saying before about liturgy. There's a thing that happens to people when they sing. When you sing in a group, it doesn't matter if you can carry a tune or not. One of the things I love about the Raging Grannies is that none of us have terribly good voices. It doesn't matter. That's not the point. The point is to get the words out there and get people actually singing. What effect did "Harperman" have on the outcome of the election? I don't know, but it certainly was powerful because everybody could sing it.

B: Cathleen Kneen as a person of place. Describe the St. John's of your youth. How did it feel? What did it smell like? How did you experience the place?

C: We lived downtown, about six blocks up from the harbour, at the bottom of Long's Hill, and my school was halfway up Long's Hill, and in between, where I lived, was on the harbour side, which would have been the south side of Gower Street, and it was divided at that point, so Queen's Road went up and Gower Street went down. And in between, there was a little parkette which consisted of three trees and a bit of dirt where we played alley mot.

B: Alley mot?

C: The mot is the hole into which, if you dig it with your heel, into which you put something.

B: Oh yes, okay. I never heard it called that. We had them but I can't remember what we called them.

C: I don't know either. It was a long time before I ever read the word marble. I suppose because they must have been originally marble.

B: Probably. We called them alleys.

C: We called them alleys.

B: But it's the mot part that I'd never heard, and I remember doing it with a heel.

C: Yep. So dirt, the street, playing on the street. Our backyard, which was also tiny and faced on to

Bully Street and I used to joke that I didn't know if "Bully", the street name, derived from the bullies who lived there, or the other way around. Interestingly enough, and it was something I only realized later, that we lived within a block of the synagogue. I remember we were absolutely not religious and then when we moved from downtown out into more like the suburbs, we were also a couple of blocks from a synagogue. All within walking distance, which of course if you happen to be religious is really important because on the Sabbath, you're not supposed to work, which means that you can't make your horse or your donkey work, which translates into your engine of your car so you have to walk to synagogue and I always could, but it didn't matter because I didn't. So it was very funny. I remember when the coal stopped, and we cleaned out the coal hole and there were two little doors or passages, whatever you want to call them, into the house. One for where the milk went and one for the coal. And the coal one got closed up because we weren't getting coal anymore. We switched to oil, cleaned out the coal hole and my father really cleaned it out, whitewashed it and I could use it for a clubhouse for my little friends where we could go and meet and play. So I remember all of that.

B: Do you remember the sound of the coal going down the chute?

C: I remember the smell. It's all the smells. St. John's smelled like coal for a long time, and I'm quite sure that's why my father died of lung cancer because he grew up in Leeds and then St. John's, and it was all coal. It had nothing to do with the smoking which he quit when he was in his late 30s, I think.

B: It's interesting. I would have expected you to say that the air, it smelled like salt and fish.

C: Well it did that too. It did that too. And when I went to Nova Scotia to summer camp on the Bay of Fundy, and of course the Bay of Fundy famously drains right out and there's a smell of the mudflats, which is partly the smell of rotten fish and I was the only one who loved it. I just loved the smell. The smell of rotten fish is the smell of home. Even living in the Shuswap after the salmon run when the salmon are rotting on the beaches, it was nostalgic for me. The feel of the ocean. The ocean was present even though I didn't actually go and see it that often, particularly in the winter time, but it was always there.

B: So you lived in St. John's how long?

C: From the time I was two to the time I was 18. 16 years.

B: And what was it like to be a child growing up in St. John's in the '40s and '50s?

C: I think I had a wonderful childhood. It was an interesting place and there was all sorts of stuff going on that I didn't quite understand.

B: Well Confederation happened when you were a child.

C: I was six. I was six and all what I remember was that there were fights in the streets. I also remember, and the thing that I think probably was most important, was that when I left Newfoundland, I discovered there was a way to end a party other than getting around the piano for a sing. Because that had always been part of everything. Always singing. The bards were still peddling their songs on the street corners when I was very little. They called them bards.

B: How did they peddle a song?

C: Sheet music. I don't remember how much it cost. Probably a nickel or less.

B: Original music?

C: Yeah, yeah. Mostly. The music may not have been original. The words were. Very often they were set to old English folk tunes. There's a song book that Gerald S. Doyle put together of the

Newfoundland songs and we used to use that one and we used to -- we actually even sang the ads (singing): Milk of magnesia is more than a laxative, et cetera. Yeah, that's what I remember. I remember when I was in my early teens, taking my bike around the harbour down along Blackhead Road, the south side hills to the other side of the harbour and standing on the rocks and watching the Atlantic smash into the rocks. And it was just incredibly -- grounding -- I guess that's the right word. I don't know. For a teenager feeling all this huge angst about who am I, where am I, what am I, and whatever, there's the ocean and it's just so immensely powerful. And it just put me back in a place where I -- yeah, I'm insignificant, phew, thank goodness.

B: But in a kind of significant way because I am by this.

C: Yeah, exactly. And I belonged to it and that's something they say in Newfoundland. You know, you belong to a place. Where do you belong?

B: Now you belonged to St. John's. Did you get out of St. John's much? Was Newfoundland a continent that was yours?

C: Not a whole lot. I mean, we would explore the Avalon Peninsula for sure. When I was about ten, I took the Newfie Bullet across the island to Corner Brook to visit my cousin. Slept on the train in a little bunk. We [the family] started out in Burgeo, and I have a few memories of Burgeo, which is on the south shore. I've gone back because my sister actually practiced medicine there when she first [graduated], you know the Newfoundland government will pay for your medical education if you will serve wherever they send you for two years and so she went back to St. Mary's Bay, to St. Joseph's and I went and visited her there and I did visit, yeah, mostly around the outports. Certainly have a vivid, vivid understanding of the landscape. St. John's itself, the peeling paint on the houses, as my sister says, they've tarted it up since then for the tourists so the colours are somewhat more vivid. And I guess that's because of the coal. That's because the colours were all dirtied and faded. I remember my mother washing the kitchen and realizing that the walls were actually blue, not grey.

B: Is there any Newfoundland literature that captures your experiences as a Newfoundlander? Any books that you've read that really struck you as true?

C: Well, Bernice Morgan's stuff is true and Annie Pearl's stuff is not.

B: Yeah. I get that. I don't know Bernice.

C: Bernice Morgan, oh dear, I can't -- I have to look up the names. She wrote several books and they're about the early settlement of the outports.

B: Is this fiction?

C: It's fiction but it's real. It's true. A storyteller friend of mine once said, "All my stories are true. Not all of them actually happened." So Bernice Morgan tells it true. And what's his name? Wayne Johnson. He's got it right.

B: Do you know Michael Crummey?

C: No.

B: He wrote *The River Thieves*, Galore. I quite like him. It's *The River Thieves* which is a fictional account of the extermination of the Indigenous people on the island told from a couple of perspectives. It's hauntingly beautiful. *The River Thieves* is the book that came to my attention first, it's just stunning.

C: Well, we were taught in school - I checked this back with my sister and she says yes it's true - we

were... but Janet Conway, who is a decade or two younger than me and went to the Catholic system was not taught this, so I don't know if it was a difference. But she went to the Catholic schools and I don't know if it's because the Catholic schools followed a different curriculum or if it's just a generational thing. But we were taught that the settlers had murdered the Beothuk and we were taught to be profoundly ashamed of it. We were told the story of Mary March and taught it from a perspective that this was a horrible thing.

B: You should read *The River Thieves*.

C: Yeah. So that was all. I mean, there was no real ethnic diversity to speak of in the St. John's I grew up in. But people were -- my mother quoted a friend of hers who said to her at one point, "My dear, when trouble strikes, make sure you're in Newfoundland."

B: And why was that?

C: Because they take care of each other. People take care of people. Whether you like them or not is irrelevant. Newfoundland is the most generous people on Earth, I think.

B: And when you go back there now, is it home?

C: It smells right, yeah.

B: And you have family there still?

C: No. No family. No family at all. I have a couple of old friends, the girl who lived on Queen's Road across the street from me. We were the same age and we went to school together all the way through.

B: And she's still there.

C: She's still in St. John's and when I went back for my high school reunion, I stayed with her. That's about the only one I think, though the reunion and my subsequent illness got me back in touch with a few people.

B: And you lived there without interruption until the end of high school?

C: Yeah. I graduated high school and went to Memorial for two years. We graduate high school in grade 11 and I was 16, so I went to Memorial for two years and then went to Edinburgh for a year. That was me going on my own. That was when I joined the CND and my parents said, "Well, about time, too." It was my first fledging.

B: So what was that? Describe the place you discovered in Edinburgh going from Newfoundland.

C: Ah, ancient, grey, stone, wonderful. Just a wonderful, wonderful *city*. I'd never been in a city. Well I'd been in a city. I'd been to New York, but this had ancient bones and I was so, so young. I remember proudly announcing that I was not a Canadian. I was from Newfoundland, which was Britain's first overseas colony and I was proud of being a colonist. Gaah.

B: Oh my gosh.

C: (laughing) Yeah, like I said I was very young. I was 18. I was incredibly naive. I stayed in Mason Hall for Young Gentlewomen. I nearly got thrown out because the boys' residence next door, men's residence, they'd somehow or other gotten hold of somebody's panties ...there was a girl in our building called Wendy Scroggy which is a marvellous name to chant out a window. It wasn't her fault, poor girl. Anyway, they strung these panties up on the roof so I climbed up on the roof and got them down. Now this was a slate roof. I did it barefoot because I figured that was safest, and the matron of

the hall had an absolute total conniption fit, as you can well imagine.

B: Did you find Edinburgh exotic?

C: No. I found it wonderful, different, but not exotic. It was... though the Newfoundlanders are more Irish than Scots. I had two boyfriends named John McGillivray.

B: Yes.

C: One of which was a Newfoundlander who went across to Oxford in the same boat I went to Edinburgh.

B: Oh okay. You went by boat?

C: Yeah. Well yeah. It was 1961.

B: Yes, but people reading to this may not even consider that you took a boat until you tell them.

C: Oh yeah. It was one continuous party. It was great. We had a wonderful time, about half a dozen of us all going off to university.

B: How long did it take?

C: I think my memory says about a week. And when Brewster and I married, we went by boat to Rotterdam.

B: You realise there's several generations who've never been on a boat.

C: And it's not a bad thing [to take a boat]. Brewster said in his book, you know, that his friend in India, when asked why do we have to walk instead of taking the bicycles, responded: "You'll get there too soon." And jetlag, my Irish son-in-law, Brian, says, "I'm here but my soul's not come back yet." Because the spirit takes longer to move - you can't just transform from one side of the continent to the other or across an ocean. It takes time.

B: And when you returned to St. John's from Edinburgh, did St. John's look different to you?

C: Well I didn't stay very long. It was basically pack up and move to Ottawa because my parents -- that's why I only went for one year. I was going to stay and finish my degree there, but my parents moved to Ottawa and I don't know why -- I'm sure there were some financial considerations, but basically they wanted me back. So I came back and finished my degree at Carleton. It was early '60s and I spent very little time in Ottawa. I lived at Carleton. My parents lived in Alta Vista and I went back and forth. I got downtown as far as L'Hibou, on Sussex but that was about it and I remember one of my friends lived in an apartment out on Hogs Back and I thought that was just the edge of the world. So I really didn't live in Ottawa much.

B: But back then, Alta Vista was almost suburbs.

C: Yeah. And I lived one year at home and one year in residence. And then I got married and left.

B: So it never felt like a place for you the way that St. John's did or even Edinburgh, sounds like.

C: Well a place is always the people. I mean I'm describing the smells. I live in Britannia Village which is about as close to not urban as you can get in the middle of the city. I mean the river's right over there and I look out my window and I see boats. And I go for a walk and I see geese and turtles and the occasional deer but that's less unusual in the city these days. Yeah, I don't have the same

feeling of place in cities, which is probably why I don't like them. I've lived in Toronto twice, for nine years the last time and five the first time, I think.

B: Those are both extended periods. Two different Torontos as well.

C: They were. That's very true, they were very different Torontos and, well, the first Toronto -- I mean I know Toronto quite well but I have no real affection for it.

B: But your first Toronto certainly was the Annex. It was downtown. It was a political Toronto.

C: It was a political Toronto and it was a neighbourhood Toronto as well because the neighbourhood we lived in was, in some senses, a little bit like this one. When we moved away, what I missed was the Caribbean influence in Toronto. I missed black people. I missed their music. I missed all that. I missed the Asian people on the streetcar. Rebecca on her first day of school in Nova Scotia came home and said, "Mommy. Nobody's any interesting colours in my class." That was what she was accustomed to and that part of Toronto I love. I love the ethnic mix.

B: And back then it was unique. Montreal and Vancouver didn't have anything like the cosmopolitan feel of Toronto. Toronto was the first city in Canada that became like that.

B: So Toronto the first time, '65 to '71...

C: We were on Rathnelly just north of Dupont. Just at the bottom of the Avenue Road hill and there's the High Level pumping station which is a park and a little enclave of about six blocks. It was convivial. We walked. We were among the pioneers to ride bicycles. We actually got television coverage one time for that. And there was all kinds of opportunity. Like I, in the summer of 1970, walked in off the street and got a job at CBC as a summer relief announcer and I biked to work.

B: And were you attached enough to that place that when you left to go to Nova Scotia it was a wrench?

C: That probably was the least wrenching of my leavings because it felt like an opportunity. I hated leaving my friends, of course, and the nursery school and all that stuff. But I had a very romantic vision of what it would be like. We'd have a house in the country and some chickens and the kids could collect the eggs. We did have chickens and the kids collected the eggs. And we thought we'd have a few sheep. Well, there's no such thing as a few sheep and we wound up farming.

B: But that's the time in a young person's life and a young couple's life that either they buckle down and accept whatever choices they've made and they live them out for the next 35 years or they pick up roots and stride into the future, and you picked up roots and strode into the future. So of course it would be exciting. You were going to something.

C: Well, everything was still fairly new and it felt logical. And the way Toronto was developing wasn't really -- well, Brewster's talked about that, you know, the growth of the buildings on Bloor Street and...

B: Even the terrible battle around Spadina Expressway.

C: Well we won it.

B: But it had to be fought.

C: Oh yeah.

B: You could tell where the metropolis was going.

C: But then we discovered, when we lived in Mission B.C. for example, the same fight. Same fight. There's just no -- the notion of conviviality as being central to the human capacity to live well in an urban context just doesn't seem to parse. It's really weird.

B: I think that's why Ivan Illich appealed to many of us back at that time because he was really naming it and particularly in *Tools for Conviviality*.

B: When you got to Nova Scotia, did it feel like you were returning as a Maritimer, as a person of the Atlantic?

C: Yeah. Yeah, that was the other thing about it. The place we picked, we picked because we both felt comfortable with the landscape because it was just like the rolling hills just south of Edinburgh. It was a familiar and comfortable landscape for both of us. Brewster did theology there, not at the same time, but the city is still there. One of these years, we're going to go to the Edinburgh Festival and really enjoy it. Edinburgh and Prague are very similar in the way in which, as old cities - old, European cities - they invite you into courtyards and around corners and down alleyways.

B: Yeah, Prague is one of the landscapes of your soul.

C: Yeah.

B: I've heard every time you've mentioned Prague, you don't swoon but it's clear.

C: As far as a city is concerned, that's my vision. Edinburgh and Prague, they're cities. Toronto not so much. Toronto was the neighbourhoods I lived in, in South Riverdale and earlier in Rathnally and then after that Little India. So the landscape of Nova Scotia and the place we lived was called Brookland. It was called Brookland for a reason. It was just beautiful. When we sold it, we felt like the farmer who sells off his eldest daughter because of her beauty. It felt like it was the beauty that sold it.

C: It was in northern Nova Scotia in Pictou County, about 20 minutes from Pictou and the ferry [to PEI]. If you're leaving Truro heading east, you go over Mount Thom and we were just on the other side of Mount Thom, so we were in the snowshed. The place was just lovely and there was space but what I remember most about the farm was the collective work.

B: Your children were how old at that time?

C: Three and five.

B: Okay. So in their youth, that's when they're coming into consciousness, that's the landscape of their youth.

C: That's right. They're both Nova Scotians.

C: Though Jamie is still close friends with children he went to nursery school with in Toronto. But that's partly because the family we were closest to split up and so we had the kids for one whole summer and then they came down every year, so we had the four kids.

B: So describe the landscape that they grew up on in Nova Scotia. So it's craggy, it's rocky.

C: No, no. No, no. It's rolling hills. It's stony, not rocky.

B: Okay. That's a good distinction.

C: Well Newfoundland's rocky. And Peggy's Cove, everybody knows what Peggy's Cove looks like. That's a piece of Newfoundland. It just got misplaced. Yeah, rolling hills, sparkling brooks, ice cold, clear water, beautiful tasting water.

B: Clean air? Still?

C: Oh yeah, yeah. It's still there. They've managed to cut down most of the forests that the children would have played in, which is a travesty.

B: Wind?

C: Wind. Not the Prairies. This is not the Prairies. I mean there was a wind. There were winters. I remember a couple of winters when we actually tunnelled to the barn because the barn was an "L" shape and just located in such a way that the snow piled up in the barnyard and I remember the Jack Russell terrier going ahead of us, tunnelling. Their childhood, I would say, was a combination of collective work and a lot of freedom to move and roam and experiment. I did not know that Jamie was experimenting with gunpowder down there in the gravel pit until years later.⁷ As long as they were home for meals and did their chores, they basically had the run of the place. It was about a hundred and twenty acres there. They didn't go that far. They stayed within about half an hour of the house. But Rebecca when she was little would go and play with the fairies who lived in the field across the road.

B: So your experience of that landscape was mediated by the experience of your children. Like your memory of that space would be quite different if you didn't have these recollections of your children growing up there.

C: And in the same way that when I was 12 and went over to the south side hills to watch the ocean when I felt rotten about things. When I felt bad about things on the farm, I'd go up the hill to the bridge over the brook at Geoffy's and sit there and be all by myself and watch water. It was always water, water is the common thread and you'll see that throughout my life. I think that was one of the reasons, though I never articulated it, why I resisted so moving to the Prairies. Brewster really wanted to move to Saskatchewan, mostly because it's full of the best people in the world. And I don't quarrel with that, though, you know, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, some similarities perhaps.

B: This was an alternative to Nova Scotia?

C: No, it was an alternative to Toronto. Where do we go if we're leaving the farm?

B: After Nova Scotia?

C: Yeah. When we left Toronto, our best friends, the parents of these kids I was telling you about, moved to Thunder Bay. So they went north and we went east. But it was the same imperative to get out of the city and get some understanding of the rest of the country.: So we went back to Toronto. It was kind of the default. We looked at a bunch of places. And it worked for us for a while.

B: But you found a different city?

C: Oh my God yes. Yeah, very much different and I was again lucky. I mean all of these changes in my life and thank you for the "pick up and go" comment because I think that's true. I think that some people put down -- well I put down roots. I mean that's the problem. Every time we move, it's just so hard because... Just pulling, pulling up the roots and it got harder and harder each time, but leaving Toronto wasn't nearly as hard as leaving the farm in Nova Scotia and leaving the farm in B.C. Those were really hard.

⁷Jamie comments: She must have noticed me setting off small explosions in the driveway, though.

B: Did you always know the second Toronto would be a waystation?

C: I didn't even think about it. No, I never thought about it.

B: It sounds like you didn't experience the place in the same convivial way you did in the '60s.

C: No. We were a lot older. Didn't have small children, which brings people together at another level.

B: That's true.

C: No, that was the whole period of Holy Trinity that I talked about before, so, yeah, we definitely experienced this conviviality differently.

B: If you were going to paint a series of paintings -- watercolours, oils, even just pencil -- of the key landscapes of your life, Newfoundland, Edinburgh, Toronto, Nova Scotia, the interior of B.C., Mud Lake, describe what you might choose to be the still lives of the subjects of those paintings in each place.

C: Oh my goodness.

B: Or even if they were impressionistic and not landscapes. I'm trying to get to the non-verbal here. You talked the last time so much about beauty and your love of beauty and how beauty is in a way your faith.

C: It's a question of space and I'm not sure how to render space. I mean Edinburgh in a sense is easy because the space is enclosed and it's black and white. It's grey. Shades of grey. And St. John's I've got photographs but there's a painting that isn't actually mine. My parents left it to my niece but she's in New Zealand and she's just now finally building a house and I have to send it to her.⁸ Done with palette knife of the rocks and the water. It's actually in Nova Scotia but he's got it right. You don't use a brush. It's craggy. So that's Newfoundland, whether it's the blocks of colour in the city or the blocks of rocks and water. That's Newfoundland for me.

The farm. It's interesting. While I was there, what I was doing that reflected the farm was decorating pottery. There's a lot of time waiting when you're making hay if you're the crew. So I'd get the kids and we'd be sitting down by the brook, waiting for the hay to be baled so we could go and move bales or you know, or for it to be raked so we could go around and clean up the corners and I would embroider the wildflowers, like the vetch in particular, which they call mouse pea down there because it has little teeny tiny pods with tiny, tiny, tiny seeds in it. So focusing on tiny things, which is odd because the space was sort of inherent and how do you draw that freedom of movement? How do you render it? I don't know.

In Mission, that's where watercolours makes sense because Mount Baker in the sunset out the living room window, you know, I actually did paint it with watercolours because that's what it cried out for. But when we moved to B.C., the thing that got me, I was absolutely terrified spiritually. Immobilized by the trees and the mountains and I kept saying to people look, you know where I come from, trees are no taller than me. And then we went to Cathedral Grove on Vancouver Island and I suddenly understood totem poles. And then I began to appreciate Emily Carr, who I'd never appreciated as a painter before. The "oh, of course, that makes sense." And we'd climbed a few mountains and once I'd gotten up on top of a couple of them and began to understand something of how they existed in their own space, began to be a little less intimidated, though the spiritual power of the mountains and the ancient trees is really humbling and that was very much, I think, part of my spiritual journey and

⁸She has it now.

why I think the experience with Indigenous people in B.C. found fertile ground in us. It was because of the power of the landscape itself.

B: So you were experiencing that personally. And therefore having empathy with people who had experienced it primordially. It wasn't just being related to you and you were accepting, you actually experienced it.

C: Oh yeah. Well you can't not. I don't know how you could live there and be blind to it. I asked one of my friends who has lived there for decades. I said, "Do you ever get used to it?" She said, "Oh no. You never get used to it."

B: So the leaving of that place to come here, it must have been something else.

C: Oh it tore my heart out.

B: More than any other leaving?

C: No. It was about the same as leaving Nova Scotia, and that's because I don't really belong in a city, and because having discovered the wisdom of the rural through daily practice of work on a farm, I feared and I still fear losing that sensitivity and that perspective and becoming urban. I'm frightened of becoming urban because I think urbanism is wrongheaded. I think it's a problem.

B: Which is why you try to create a village wherever you go.

C: Probably, though cities are made up of villages. There's an urbanism which is a different thing. And it's interesting because now it's quite political with the whole development of con-urban spaces and the politics of urban as most people now live in urban places, which I think for humanity is probably something close to a disaster. And as I said at the beginning of the conversation, --we do cycle, don't we? -- The problem with it is that it's so hard to stay in touch with your own reality as an animal.

B: And your co-reality.

C: Yeah, we're social animals and you do have your circles of friends but again, one of the problems with cities and why I love villages in cities is that in a city, it's very, very easy to never talk to anybody that doesn't think the way you do and you can't grow that way. I love having someone in my neighbourhood voting Conservative. The village would be really poor without her. I'm kind of just picking on her.

B: She's not your enemy.

C: No.

B: We're going to wind up, but before you wind up, I want you to read something. You ended the last time reading a Patchen poem, The Orange Bear. We'd been talking about the grandiose, what is this thing that I have an aversion to? This is the Tao Te Ching, my Bible, stanza 17. Read it out loud.

C: Seventeen. The very highest is barely known by men. Then comes that which they know and love. Then that which is feared. Then that which is despised. He who does not trust enough will not be trusted. When actions are performed without unnecessary speech, people say "We did it!"
Unnecessary speech.

B: I thought of that stanza when you were trying to explain that.

C: That's three different thoughts.

B: Yup. That's the nature of the Tao.

C: Hmm. I discovered when I was doing Radio Noon when we were on the farm and I had six minutes that in six minutes I could say three things. I just picked which three things I would say.

B: Often when I'm trying to understand the Tao, I remember that it can be read in reverse because we're so linear. The very highest is barely known by men, right? So the first thing men know -- and when I do workshops on the Tao, I change the gender into a universal.

C: Thank you. It choked me, yeah.

B: And it's very easy to do. This translation is my favourite by a woman named Jane English. So the thing that is known most by people is that which is despised. Then that which is feared. Then that which they know and love and only then the highest. So that's just a little mantra, but it was this part here that seemed to me to reflect your leadership ethos -- Someone who doesn't trust enough will not be trusted.

C: Yeah.

B: But also you ended one of your descriptions last time by saying it was really important that people say "*We* did it."

C: That's right. Thank you.

November 9th, 2015 – Brian Murphy's fifth conversation with Cathleen Kneen.

C: Well, one of the thoughts that crossed my mind was whatever else, this will be a record for my children when I'm gone, which could be sooner than later.

B: I was wondering what pushed you and what pulled you to B.C.?

C: Yes, and what I wanted to do was to get on the record the whole organizing of the BC Food Systems Network and the relationship that got developed with the Indigenous people there, because it is turning out to be something quite important.

B: Because you didn't go out to start that?

C: No, no, no, no. It happened. Like everything else in my life. I was thinking back to our earlier conversation about leadership and I realized that my view of a leader is somebody who knows where they want to go. They have an endpoint in mind and they have a methodology in mind and they're going in that direction and pulling people along behind them. And I've always had a vision but I've never had a specific endpoint in mind like I want to organize a national network, I want to / you know? Up until the point where, and this is where I think I will accept the name of leader, Eric Chaurette and Colleen Ross and I came back from the International Forum for Food Sovereignty in Nyéléni, in Mali [in 2007] and agreed that we would find a way to move the food security movement toward food sovereignty. I picked that up and that was my work for the next number of years. When we came back we created The People's Food Policy Project. It was a project which we then got adopted with a little arm twisting by Food Secure Canada at the 2008 assembly which was here in Ottawa.

B: And Food Secure Canada had already been created?

C: Oh yeah, we started organizing Food Secure Canada in 1999; that was when Canada had to report back to the World Food Summit Plus Five on its action plan on food security. And of course it hadn't done anything. But it was required that there'd be a civil society component to that report back. Mustafa Koç was one of the core people organizing this, so we got some funding from IDRC and Foreign Affairs, I think, to have a meeting. The foreign affairs minister at the time, Bill Graham, he came.

And what came out of that was a very strong feeling that we needed to pull together some sort of a national organization or at least a national dialogue because what came out in the reports and the conversations was, as I said, that Canada hadn't done anything on food security and in fact had been acting in a negative manner. And so okay, well we better pull up our socks then.

B: And food security domestically as well as internationally or the focus was international at the time?

C: No, it was always seen as one piece. Among the groups that were organizing at the beginning were Inter Pares and the Foodgrains Bank and ETC Group and USC and Food Banks Canada, Dieticians of Canada, National Farmers Union, et cetera. I guess it was the meeting we had in Winnipeg and Debbie Field was one of the key people in this and Debbie and I played a good cop-bad cop kind of role all the way along. Debbie was the creator of Fooshare in Toronto and has used that not only as a way to develop really important and robust policies and practices to make sure that people get adequately fed in Toronto, but also as a training ground for young leaders and a substantial proportion of the crop of young leaders in Canada have come through Debbie's hands, one way or the other. She's quite amazing. Very, very tough-minded woman.

But she's never been involved in Food Secure Canada as such. She's always sat on the sidelines critiquing. That's been her role and we've talked about it and she said, "No, I'm more useful this way." Okay. Anyway, between us we came up with this notion of three pillars for Food Secure

Canada: zero hunger, a sustainable food system, and healthy and safe food. So zero hunger's pretty straight forward. Not amelioration but removal. A sustainable food system has two pieces to it. One is that people can earn a living in the food system at every level and the other of course is it psychologically viable and sustainable, and the third, healthy and safe food codes for no GMOs as well as support for local, whole foods, et cetera. So it gets the dieticians on board but it also gets the radicals who want to get corporate pharmaceutical, biological, and chemical companies out of the food system. But you don't have to explain all that at first blush. So the three pillars, as they're presented, are more acceptable than when you delve down into it, what we're actually all about. So I kept delving and delving and delving. So I didn't consider myself to be a leader back in the early days, it was because I was just doing what came next. Always with a vision, but never with a road map.

So I got to BC, because Rebecca, who -- I'll have to backtrack. When we decided to leave Nova Scotia, we had to go and talk to Rebecca. Jamie was at McGill, so it was not that much of an issue with him, but Rebecca was at Mount St. Vincent and she had gone there out of grade 11, into an early admission program because the high school was driving her crazy. That's what Brewster said and I said, Brewster, you're exaggerating. It's not driving her crazy. But she went down there and she was getting very morose and I sort of thought well, she's a teenager. What do you expect? But she came back at Thanksgiving and it was the Rebecca we'd always known. She was just bubbling over with excitement because people wanted to talk about ideas and they wanted to know what she really thought and people were stopping in the corridor and discussing things. And they wanted to know what I thought! It was just . . . I said to Brewster, okay, you're right. If her personality is disintegrating, that would be driving her crazy. Yep, you were right.

B: Now most institutions wouldn't provide that. What's unique about Mount St. Vincent?

C: That's part of what's unique about Mount St. Vincent. In fact, they also have a program for older people, so when Rebecca and I showed up, they asked which of us was the student. We didn't know if she wanted to stay there or what she'd want to do and in any event, we couldn't leave without talking with her because we already knew we were likely to go back to Toronto, which is a long way away from Halifax, whereas we were within an hour and a half drive to Halifax at that point. So anyway, in typical Rebecca fashion, she said, "Well, I think I need more parental guidance. Can I come with you?"

B: She's how old at this time?

C: 17. She knows how to manage her parents very well. So she came with us and decided she'd go to Ryerson and study journalism, which is what one studies at Ryerson, or at that point it was. A couple of weeks later she came home saying, "Oh, I can't stand this." "What's the matter?" "Well they were teaching us -- they spent the whole day teaching us how to write a press release. I mean, who doesn't know how to write a press release?" Okay, maybe you're in the wrong program. So she went off to Montreal and did a degree in English at Concordia⁹ and then decided that she needed to get out of the ambiance of the Kneen family. So she headed west on her own, stopping to stay with former friends of ours on route and basically earning her way going from farm to farm and finally wound up on the West Coast where she had some interesting experiences working with street people, working on a book fair, book festival and wound up working with an organization called Farm Folk City Folk whose mission is pretty well what it sounds like. It was essentially a collective of people who were living on a farm about an hour outside of Vancouver and people working in the city and the idea was that they would trade over. Of course that never happened because the urban people got too urban and wouldn't have the faintest idea how to run the farm and farm people didn't want to go into the city. Rebecca started out on the farm.

⁹Rebecca comments: I went to Carleton for a year first...

Herb Barbolet was the director of FF/CF and he wound up in the city working on food security issues and developing some interesting relationships with the Dieticians of Canada, Community Nutrition's Council, Dieticians of BC, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and getting involved also with some of the charitable organisations - Vancouver Foundation and Van City, finding funding to keep the organization going with him as Executive Director and Rebecca didn't last there all that long because she wasn't interested in taking orders and having everything checked with the boss before she could say anything. Not her *modus operandi*.¹⁰ But meanwhile, I had arrived and Herb was always excited to get new people who can do stuff.

B: You had arrived, you had moved out there?

C: Yeah. Yeah, we wound up in Mission because it had a commuter train into Vancouver that you could take your bicycle on, so it was a really nice way to get in and out.

B: And you had moved there because she was there?

C: Yeah. She got to Vancouver and she was doing all this interesting work and she'd just started working for Farm Folk City Folk and she kept saying, "You've got to come out. You've got to come out." So we went out several times and every time we went to Vancouver, the sun was shining.

B: Is it possible that you two brought out the sun?

C: I don't know. Meanwhile, in Toronto I'd been working at the Assaulted Women's Helpline and I don't know if I mentioned this before, but getting to the point where it was really starting to get to me, where I would walk down the street and see a man with a small child and cringe. And I thought no, this isn't working. I should be able, I should, should be able to not take the work home but I couldn't.

B: This was paid work?

C: Oh yeah. I was Executive Director. Executive Coordinator. It was also a time of women of colour demanding their rightful place, and at that point, the only politically correct thing I could do would be to quit my job and give it to a woman of colour. Well, I could quit my job, but I couldn't give it to anybody. That wasn't within my power. But I couldn't be politically correct as a white woman in an executive position and that started to get to me because I just felt I'm in a box, I can't do anything and I understand you're in a box too. But putting me in a box doesn't help. We need to get together and figure out how we are going to change things. And the other part of it was I was hiring counsellors but they had to be able to do the work and it's not easy work. It's very, very difficult work. So anyway, it was time for me to leave and Brewster was going to go whether I went or not. He was fed up with the way I was becoming. So Rebecca said "Come, come, come, come." So we did.

B: So you had been in Toronto for how many years?

C: Nine years at that point. We left the farm in '86 and left Toronto and went to BC in '95.

B: That was a long stretch.

C: Yeah. Well, I wasn't working with the Helpline all that time. I worked with LAWG. I took on the job of Administrator. I worked with NC Press and at one point, the publisher, Carolyn Walker, went to China to do research for a book on the Three Gorges and I basically took over as publisher for six months while she was away. So I got my teeth into publishing. I designed a couple of books. I published several. It was fun. And I worked in the area of violence against women with the local

¹⁰Rebecca comments: I worked there for over 4 years. The issue that drove me out was actually that Herb kept committing the staff to work we had no time or funding to do, with no support from him, so we wound up working for free for over a year, and I fought with him over it.

community health centre, or whatever you call it, developing protocols for how to deal with battered women. So I did a range of interesting things and that was when I got involved with Holy Trinity, which I've talked about. So we're in BC...

B: But in parentheses, we were talking about push and pull, and as I recall, the mid-90s in Ontario was a grim time anyway because Mike Harris took over, so I can understand wanting to get out of town.

C: Well, I then discovered that you can't get out of town. I already knew that from watching the back-to-the-landers in Nova Scotia thinking you could just go into the countryside and live a pure, clean life and – forget it. Forget it. It doesn't happen that way. The countryside is intricately connected with the rest of society, whether you like it or not. And if nothing else, I mean the shock for those people came when they hit the schooling system. Whoops.

B: So it was '95 when you were in Mission, BC?

C: So it's '95 and we're in Mission, BC and the first thing we do is say, "So where do you get your local food here?" Local food? Not so much. So we put up a sign, a poster on the telephone poles calling for a meeting to create a farmers' market and then 35 people showed up. So then we were organizing a farmers' market which was immense fun.

B: How big was Mission at that time?

C: You know, I have absolutely no idea. It was a sizable small town. Its major industry was the shake mill and the prison, so there were a lot of social workers in town. Before the bridge over the Fraser River to Abbotsford was built, it had been a retreat where hippies came out from the city and bought cheap land, so it has the best, one of the best folk festivals in the country. It still is quite brilliant because there are lots and lots of musicians and artists and I think there was something like six working potters in town. You know, it's that kind of place. Radically different from Abbotsford across the river, which is the buckle of the Bible belt. So we're happy in Mission. I mean not terribly happy in the house we were living in, but that was what we could get, and I'm going into Vancouver and getting project funding to do work on developing food security. So the first and logical place to go was the Pregnancy Outreach Programs which were originally created to raise the birth weight of babies born to at-risk mothers, meaning young, Aboriginal, welfare, whatever their at-risk part of it was because they could prove that increasing the birth weight increased the other outcomes in terms of health, capacity for education...

B: And this was a provincial program?

C: It was a provincial program, but it was part of a federal program as well, which was the PPMP, Nutrition Program -- Pregnancy Something Nutrition Program. Then there was also an Early Childhood Intervention program, so between them, there was a variety of different programs that were going in most of the communities around the province and that seemed like a pretty good place to start. So I started there with a series of grants, all run through Farm Folk/City Folk. After a while, there was a move, yet another move by yet another provincial government, to call into question the Agricultural Land Reserve. The Agriculture Land Reserve had been imposed over the kicking and screaming of landholders - and I can understand why - who felt they weren't adequately compensated and they probably weren't in some cases. But basically to put a freeze on the development of agricultural land and the question is, what was the definition of "agricultural land"? And a lot of marginal land got swept into it and some good agricultural land was omitted, so it needed some jiggery and pokery, and there was a commission set up to do that with various branches in different parts of the province. So developers would make a submission to the Land Commission and it would either be accepted or turned down. But there was more. There was an attempt at that point to change the rules a bit. So I was talking this over with some of the people I was working with and said this is

an issue for all of us because without that Agricultural Land Reserve, the whole province is just going to get covered with houses, not to mention mines and other things. So we said well let's get together and see what we can do, so I pulled together a meeting of some 40 of the activists in the Pregnancy Outreach Programs and some of the policy people who I'd met through Farm Folk/City Folk, which was also working on this, and we had a meeting at the Anglican retreat centre, or whatever you call it, camp, in Sorrento, a 15 minute walk from our home in Sorrento where we were then living, so that was nice. The meeting decided that we were going to organize so that everywhere the commission went, it would hear the same message from local people. So we organized and that's what happened all over the province. They were getting this message that we'd worked out and I guess it was at that meeting we decided to call ourselves a BC Food Systems Network. We didn't want to use the term "food security". I didn't want to use the term "food security" because it basically implied, at that time at least and still does, two things. One, the safety of the food supply which, absent genetic engineering concerns, is really not where I want to hang my hat. And the other is feeding the hungry directly rather than working upstream. What we wanted to do was focus on the system *qua* system, and insist that the parts are related. Interestingly, because this was '99, if you look at the principles that the network founded itself on, those principles would be easily rewritten as the six, seven pillars from Nyéléni, because we were talking about Food Sovereignty.

B: By this time, '99, is there a national network working on these issues or does that come out of the BC one?

C: It's starting and the BC network was both a model and a leader. I mean there was certainly work going on in Ontario, has been since forever.

C: That was before Nick Saul got the idea of the community food centres but Foodshare was active and Nick was active and there was a Toronto Food Policy Council, which we developed earlier when we first went back to Toronto. We were a part of that movement. It was my turn to get paid work so I was working full-time more or less or cobbling things together, so Brewster spent more time on it than I did, but we were certainly instrumental in getting the Food Policy Council started and that would have been what? '87?

B: Okay.

C: So certainly things were happening here, there and everywhere. Mustafa Koç was working in an academic program looking at food security at Ryerson and there were others, other academics as well. Rod MacRae was the first General Manager of the Food Policy Council but later he went to York University and Wayne Roberts took over that job. So anyway, this is '99 and later that year, in the fall of that year, there was a big gathering in Seattle to protest against the World Trade Organization.

But at the same time, there had been an organization that was created, and I was still on the farm when that happened, called Diverse Women for Diversity which was a project of Vandana Shiva's, along with Beth Burrows of the Edmunds Institute in Washington State, Jean [Grossholtz] from the East Coast, and a few other notable women such as Christine von Weizsacker, who was involved with the International Biodiversity Convention, and a few other people who were the leaders and they arranged a meeting in Seattle partly because it was convenient for Vandana Shiva because she wanted to get us there to be able to make a statement if that was going to be possible.

C: So here we are at the Diverse Women for Diversity gathering in an auditorium and we're all sitting there waiting for the elder to come and give the opening prayer, which is *de rigeur* on the West Coast. It's become *de rigeur* here but it wasn't back then. So we're all sitting there very politely with our hands folded in our laps waiting, and this little old lady comes bouncing up onto the dias and she says, "Well, you can tell you're over the hill when they ask you to do the opening prayer instead of the keynote address." Which she proceeded to deliver, and reamed us up one side and down the other. Turns out she was an AIM, American Indian Movement, activist and she just gave it to us, both

barrels. So I thought wow. I'm not going to make that mistake. So the next year when I came back to BC and we were going to organize the next meeting of the BC Food Systems Network - I may have elided two years in here, I'm not sure - but anyway, one of the pregnancy outreach programs that I was working with was in Merritt, BC and as with many of them, it was a very strongly Aboriginal community and the young nutritionist who was organizing this had a group of older, Native women that she used as an advisory group. And so I came and met with them and I met a woman named Trudy Jack, who would not call herself an elder but a traditional woman, whose life work she says is to teach young girls how to become women within the context of her tradition. So I said, "Trudy, could you come and give the keynote address." This is on food and medicine and I figured I knew what she'd say because I mean, it's no secret that among Aboriginal people, there's a very blurry line between food and medicine. Food is medicine and medicine is food and I thought that's what she'd talk about. No. Trudy got up there and spoke very clearly, very gently and with great humility about how she lives her life and how in the spring of the year, she has to go out and collect the bitter root because you have to have something bitter in the spring and then how the summer is dedicated to gathering this and that and processing it and packing it all away and how this year, she's going to have to get another deer because her daughter's just brought a man home and he's going to be another mouth to feed. And some of the things that she gathers and collects are medicines and some of them are food but she never talked about food and medicine as such. And I could see the policy wonks in the room thinking: huh? And I could see the young women in the pregnancy outreach programs going: yes! Yes! And I thought, okay, learning number two, it is not what you think it is. And as Dorothee Soelle, who's probably my very, very favourite theologian would say, "The truth is concrete." So that really underscored the whole, well you know, you and I when we were young had this discourse on praxis but that was the praxis kind of hitting me in the face.

B: Did it hit the other people in the room in the face?

C: Oh I think so.

B: They got it intuitively if not abstractly.

C: Yeah. Well we made from there a rule that - and it was introduced at the beginning of every meeting - that if you do not understand what somebody is talking about, if they use an acronym with which you're unfamiliar or a name with which you're unfamiliar, it is your responsibility to stop them, stick your hand up and stop them whether it's, you know, a professor from the university or a welfare mom from Merritt, it's your duty to stop them and get that explained because the point of this is to communicate.

C: And we had always some kind of a sharing which was accessible to everybody. Probably one of the most successful ones was when we asked everybody to bring a food or a story of a food which was important to them culturally, and the two that I remember - well there was three. One was a woman from Victoria who was one of the policy people and very, very Anglo-phile? I think her parents were English and what she brought was a dish of curry because her male ancestors had served in India, don't you know, and that was her family dish.

B: Wow, interesting.

C: There was a young woman who brought a potato because she said she wouldn't have gotten through school, meaning university, without potatoes. She said, "I think I lived on them. There was a point at which I thought I *was* a potato because that's what I could eat. That's what I could afford." And then there was a delightful man who he talked about growing up with a food vocabulary of some 15 hundred items. And then he said "I got married and we moved to the seventh floor of something or another and my wife was responsible for the food and my food vocabulary shrank to about 300 items."

B: Interesting.

C: Well, it was painful. He was such a lovely person. Anyway, these stories made for immense solidarity around the room and we realized after a while that that was going to take the first day. Introductions took the first day.

B: And by this time, is it now in people's consciousness that activism is cultural action in the terms like for instance Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire wrote in more theoretical terms? Was that the lesson that was taken from this?

C: I would never call it activism. It was always grassroots, very grounded work for coherence. I'm thinking fancy words like cultural liberation yada yada, but no, it was just to help people make their lives coherent and to explore the policy realities as you go. And some of us had skills in one place and some of us had skills in another. We continued to, every now and then when something came up, take political positions and organize around those, but that was reactive not proactive, in those days at least. But the other thing that happened which was really important, was I wanted to make sure - and it happened anyway because a lot of these young women were Aboriginal - but I wanted to make sure that there were Indigenous voices in the room. Partly to make them comfortable because I wanted everybody to feel comfortable and we were meeting 20 kilometres from the Neskonlith reserve at Chase, in Secwepemc territory. And I remember I mentioned that in Mission we organized a farmers' market, so when we got to Sorrento, I helped organize another farmers' market because we didn't have one, and I wasn't the manager this time. There was another woman who was the manager but I got a phone call. I guess my name was known or something. I got a phone call from a woman on the reserve saying they'd had their first major garden this year and they had a plethora of squash and would it be possible - they didn't have a whole variety of things to sell - but could they come to the farmers' market and sell their extra squash? And I said sure and gave her the name of the manager to call. I went down to the farmers' market the next weekend and met her. Her name was Dawn. Beautiful, beautiful young woman. Charming and smart and we struck up an acquaintanceship and so I invited her I think to the next Sorrento gathering and a couple of other people from the reserve and made sure that we had a teacher, at least one, who was teaching traditional food ways. So we always had that from the very beginning, partly because it was for the sake of the women who were themselves Aboriginal but they were urban Aboriginals and didn't necessarily have that contact. So that helped, you know, again, build confidence, build culture and community, which was our goal. And of course also for the others, it became a learning as well. So what happened was, because people came with their families / oh, that was the other thing. There were always childcare laid on. It had to be. And then the children and the childcare people went away at suppertime and then the evenings the kids were around. So one evening we always had a dance with a local band and it was a dance with, you know, from two to 80, that kind of a dance, singing songs like Waltzing with Bears with a great big stuffed teddy bear that got passed around the room and there are some children now who are activists in Vancouver in mostly environmental issues who grew up in the gatherings. When we moved away from Sorrento and we didn't have that same band anymore, one of them came to me and said, "Where's the music? Where's the / what's / we're not dancing with bears." I said, "We'll have to figure out something else." Anyway, so we had one guy who was a - I have to say recovering because I'm sure he wasn't recovered - alcoholic who insisted that we hear in the circle, and the circle takes as long as it takes, that we hear the story of the residential school. Three years running. And at the end of the third year, one of the elders from Neskonlith came up to me and said, "We'd like to make a feast for you next year." So it had been observed that we were listening and paying attention and it still brings tears to my eyes. It was such an affirmation of what I'd tried to do. We were - I was - struggling to make it possible for people to hear and succeeded.

B: It sounds like these groupings were very well integrated -- the groups you formed and the meetings -- culturally. It seems like it was very natural.

C: Well it certainly felt natural.

B: That Native people and non-Native people were there together around common issues and a common cause.

C: Let me not underestimate the racism, please.

B: Okay. Even within the community you were building?

C: It was the water in which we swam.

B: Of course, yes.

C: We didn't have to drink it.

B: That's very good.

C: But you know, as I said, Dean had to tell the story of the residential schools over and over and over until he felt that we'd gotten it.

C: And at the same time, Ernie Phillip was teaching us the traditions of the Secwepemc People, the housing that they had and why and how, how they survived in this area, and Minnie was teaching the food ways and how various foods were processed and so these were from the local band, local Nation, but there was also some people from South Similkameen who came and taught their ways. So we had, you know, an interesting variety. So yeah, I did exercise leadership there and I'm proud of it. The next thing that happened was this young woman I mentioned from Neskonlith, Dawn, decided that what was needed was a working group on Indigenous food sovereignty or at least some kind of a gathering on Indigenous food sovereignty and she got together with one of the best known knowledge keepers in the country, probably, Jeannette Armstrong, who is a poet and writer and teacher and had created a cultural centre in Penticton called the Enowkin Centre. And she is a knowledge keeper. She and her brother are both knowledge keepers. With clear lines about what knowledge they will share and what they will not share. Their parents have written a book about their people's Indigenous knowledge and basically what's shareable is what's in the book. And the reason it's not shareable, and this took me a long time to understand, is that it's so embedded in the reality of that geography, so it's kind of like it wasn't until I got to BC that I had any inkling of understanding of the meaning of the totem poles that I'd seen at the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa. I mean they're awesome but I didn't understand them and then when I got to B.C. and I got to Cathedral Grove and I saw all these trees that three people could hold hands around, four people, and I realized their spiritual power which was then being honoured. I was going to say replicated, drawn into, no, honoured. Honoured in the carving and erecting of a pole. So the spirits that the people could feel animating the trees animated the carvers to pull those spirits out and make them some kind of a bodily form. So in the same way, the medicinal knowledge, the healing knowledge is embedded in the place and so I can make a cottonwood bud salve and it will soothe burns, but I don't live as Jeannette does among cottonwoods as the dominant feature of the landscape of your people since time immemorial. So there's some things that I'm not going to be told about. Actually the woman I mention from the Similkameen, one of her elders died and hadn't finished teaching her and she was in a panic because she had a child with - I've forgotten what kind of difficult disease, it may have been diabetes, I don't remember, but she was in the midst of treatment and my friend knew some and not the rest and didn't know if she could go ahead with it or not. She said "I don't know all the prayers."

And it's interesting. That tradition is there in my own tradition. There's a story about the Rabbis having to go to a certain place and read the scripture and perform the dance and sing the song, and over the generations, they would forget little bits of it until finally all they knew was that something was supposed to happen on this day. And that was accorded to them, according to the scripture, that was accorded to them as enough. Now it may be, I don't know, but it was very interesting for me to

see. It's a little echo of the same thing in my own culture.

B: What do you think there was about your experience and perhaps personality or character that made you . . . You didn't go out to BC to have such a profound interaction with the Aboriginal reality.

C: No.

B: But when you went out there and as you say, racism was the water you swam in, what made you open to embrace this and to do what you needed to do, to learn, to gain the trust, to be authentic? How did that come about? Because many of the people who you met when you went out there weren't doing that until you arrived.

C: Well they were in the sense that the pregnancy outreach programs were integrated. There were women from all over the place. There were Sikh women, because there's a big Punjabi community. All kinds of people. So there was that. I wanted to go back. One thing that I carried with me to BC was a comment from my son, Jamie, when he moved to Montreal because he had asked for a Jerusalem Bible, which pleased his father no end, as a gift when he went off to university, but then clearly he wasn't following that and I raised it with him at one point and he said, "Well, I think when you move to a new place, you need to inquire of the people who are native to that place what is the spirituality of that place." So I had that teaching from my son, when he was about 18.

B: I was not that sophisticated at 18. I wasn't thinking in those terms.

C: Yeah well, he's got an interesting mind. Don't get me started on singing Jamie's praises because we'll take up the whole day. So there was that sense in my mind that there was something else going on and as I said, the power of the landscape, the mountains and the trees, clearly. There was a woman out in the Kootenays who claimed that she could hear the trees singing and they were singing to her and begging her to stop their murder. The thousand year old trees. Now we know that apparently inanimate or certainly immobile lifeforms do have ways of communicating with one another. We've discovered that trees can actually talk to each other. If a person claims to hear it, then they're crazy. So I talked to her or I listened to her talk. But there was no question that there was spiritual power in the trees and the mountains. They scared the livin' daylights out of me.

B: And the rocks too?

C: Well, the mountains. This isn't just rocks. I know from rocks. I'm from Newfoundland, but trees don't grow any taller than *that* on the [Newfoundland] coast, and I'm looking up and up and up and up, oh my God. And from our living room in Mission, we could see Mount Baker in all her different colours as the lights changed.

B: Mount Baker's over the border, isn't it?

C: Yeah. We climbed it. So we climbed a few of the mountains and once we'd done that, I could make my peace with them but it didn't reduce my immense respect for their power. So there was that. And then there was the stories I've been telling you about. That woman in Seattle and Trudy and Dawn and realizing that again, following Jamie, if you're going to live here, you need to understand something. Why are these people's -- I mean I'm a berry picker, I've been a berry picker since I was a kid. So if somebody proposes to destroy a berry patch, I would be upset, but I wouldn't be *that* upset. They were just beside themselves, so what is it? What is it about the berries? Or the berry picking patch? So that was part of it too, but part of it also was these were the people. These were the people I was working with and so you just work with who's there. So anyway, we -- Dawn and Jeannette and Richard and a few other people decided to have this gathering down in Penticton at the Enowkin Centre, and Brewster and I went. Well, not went, I helped organized it. Worked my butt off actually. But we went and there were some sessions which were closed to us, which was fine and one of the

questions that came up there and has come up with incessant regularity ever since is what is the appropriate relationship between people who bear the history of the land in their bones and bloodstreams and those who are in love with the land but new to it? Now described as “settler-Indigenous relationships” -- I remember getting into some big arguments about the assumption of the Indigenous people when I started this work that all the white people who had come here had come as colonizers. And I said my family did not come as colonizers. We came as refugees. Sorry. I’m not carrying that. I will carry that the assumed privilege of people who look like me, which gives me privilege which has been massively misused, probably by me too. But I will not take the historical - I mean the historical record’s got to be clear. This is a country which has brought in people who might have been wiped out as peoples just as we nearly wiped out the Aboriginal Peoples.

B: My people were exterminated in Ireland.

C: Yeah, you’re a Murphy. Yeah, exactly. And my people, they made a good shot at it in Germany and didn’t quite succeed.

B: I suspect that the Indigenous people with whom you said these things, that they actually admired the authenticity and the frankness, the directness of your getting into it.

C: Oh yeah. These were people with whom I was friends. For example, Dawn and I have had long conversations about whether or not the children on the reserve need to be taught English and English literature -- if only so they can defend themselves and their people, but do they, in so doing, warp their minds to the point where they don’t know what they’re defending anymore? When I was in Nova Scotia, it was the time of the NATO overflights over the Innu territories, And I went into Halifax to a meeting with a couple of elders. It could well have been Elizabeth Penashue. I don’t remember. Very likely was because she was a big activist. I met her later, got to know her. But the elders spoke as elders do and they talked about how this one had a miscarriage and how the animals are acting weird and they’re not the same - they’re not as plentiful - anecdotal evidence. And I could just see how that, in the context of the hearing we were in, wasn’t going to cut any ice at all. And then a young man got up and he was wearing a three piece suit. He looked like a lawyer. He was a lawyer, but he was Innu and he gave them chapter and verse. He gave them the statistics, he gave them the history, just laid it out. And at one point he commented that he had left Labrador to come down and be educated as a lawyer in order to be able to defend his people and then he said, “But of course I can’t go back now.” And it was the ‘of course’ that got me.

B: And another of course is, both kinds, both types, of testimony actually are necessary.

C: You’re right, and that really is important because we keep getting lost as if those were two different and contradictory approaches.

C: This whole settler-Aboriginal or Indigenous dialogue - I’m saying what we’re struggling for is not to be allies in some vaguely determined battle. What we’re struggling for is to be friends so we can hear each other and forgive each other and figure out what’s going to make us happiest.

B: Then there’s also the process of how truth is established. All the years that I worked around Peru out of Inter Pares, during and after the war with Sendero Luminoso, and Diana Ávila, my Peruvian colleague, and Jean and I, we were the first people to go up into Huancavalica and Ayacucho even during the war and it was part of the principle that when you go into the community, you listen to the *testigos*, the testimonies, which were like the testimonies you were hearing.

B: And sometimes it was interminable and very long but also to the details.

C: To white ears.

B: After that of course, with the community leaders, many of whom had also been doing the

testimony, there were very, very excellent political conversations about what was necessary.

C: But not until afterwards.

B: But not until afterwards. But we knew what was at stake.

C: It's why you have to have truth before you have reconciliation. And it's interesting because in the last year, there's been a number of opportunities for me to hear and read more James Daschuk's work, and Joseph Boyden, *The Orenda*. Books I couldn't finish and I thought, okay, I don't need to do this. Not because I don't need to hear it but because I'm spiritually too weak right now because I'm dealing with cancer. It was just like there was a lot of stuff around getting rid of Harper that I couldn't do because I just couldn't stand it. I couldn't stand thinking about it.

B: No, it raises all sorts of questions -- we talk about truth and reconciliation, but actually what's happening is the transition of knowledge and ways of knowing. Why did that fellow three years running tell you the same story? And eventually come to the conclusion, okay now they have this knowledge.

C: Well I'm not sure he ever did. He killed himself eventually. And I'm not sure - well I'm not sure he did it deliberately, but I think it was he went back into the addictions. I'm not sure about that, but I know he's not around. But it was that the community, the Elders, saw that we'd been listening. But you know, it takes repetition because I mean, Jesus, that's what they went through.

B: And it's also in a way like this conversation that we're having. It's a spiral . . .

C: But it's over and over and over again. It's not just one night you're raped. It's every night . . .

B: And you learn it again and again, you learn it deeper and . . .

C: And it's random. It's random evil, it seems like. And it informs this racism, which is founded in the fact that people who are suffering, really suffering that kind of psychic devastation, aren't very pretty.

B: Also their truth isn't very pretty. One of the elements of racism is a reaction formation. In fact, to reject the truth, to not accept it and own it needs more than just not listening.

C: That's why I can't get away with just saying, well my family were refugees. No, that's fine. Okay. Heard, noted, now let's get on with the real issue which is the structures of society and how we participate in them.

B: You have relationships with these people still, even when you're here. You talk about Dawn as though she's...

C: Oh, we have an ongoing relationship. She's continued to do the work. Out of that first meeting, she created the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty. She's had a hell of a time getting other Indigenous people to step up to do the work. Really, really hard. And as a result, she has shouldered a great deal of it, which I don't think has been particularly good for her. I mean it's just, it's a lot of work. It's a lot of responsibility and we could go on talking about that.

B: It sounds like the Indigenous activism that you came across there is quite different than what you saw in Nova Scotia.

C: We didn't see much. A little. It's getting similar now but . . .

B: Is it the critical mass in BC?

C: Oh yeah. So much of BC hasn't been ceded and there's so many different nations that they've all got really [deep roots] - it's the geography.

B: You keep going back to the geography.

C: It's important, and in BC it totally is. You know, whether it's the fact that for farming, as one woman said to me, "Our land comes in juicy little bite size pieces", in between the mountains or whether it's that the trees are *there*. I mean if you live among the cedars, of course you become a cedar person. If you live among the salmon... Brewster and I've taken our canoe out into the middle of the Adams River salmon run and been swamped by salmon in the same way that the early settlers or explorers in Newfoundland were swamped by the cod. You put down a basket and pull it up full, they said.

B: Is it possible, I've never thought about this, that part of the dynamism of First Nation activism in BC, and I agree with you the fact that the treaties, there was no ceding is really important, but also when you talk about geography, it sounds like so much of the primordial is still there.

C: Yeah.

B: Where on the Atlantic Coast -- Nova Scotia and New Brunswick -- it's been devastated.

C: It's been worn down. Yeah. I mean the sea is still the sea. The North Atlantic is still the North Atlantic and still has an important effect on the people, I think.

B: And there was more extermination on the East Coast.

C: In terms of Aboriginal people. Oh absolutely, absolutely. Certainly in Newfoundland, it got down to one person. Mary March they called her. And to my shame, I can't remember her real name.

B: Did you find the book I mentioned to you, *The River Thieves*?

C: No. I've requested it from the library.

B: Incidentally, when you talk about your strength and how much emotion you can withstand, the book is an emotional book, but a restrained intensity.

C: It's not a question of how much emotion. It's a question of how much pain, other pain I can stand.

B: That you can stand, yeah.

C: Yeah. It's just too painful. I mean if I were stronger, I could read it and shield myself from it but I'm not strong enough to, so it just comes, and goes wham! Whaa (crying sounds).

C: I watched Jim Daschuk speaking at the Canadian Association for Food Studies and I watched two of my friends sitting there just collapse in tears listening to it. Because he just tells it like it is. His book's called *Clearing the Plains*. And he describes, in detail but not with numbers, just with stories, of the clear, deliberate starving of the Indigenous people to destroy their capacity to reproduce themselves.

B: You mentioned buying the farm. I want to hear about how you ended up buying a farm in BC and what that entailed.

C: The short form is that Rebecca knows how to manage her parents. Brian wanted to have a brewery and Rebecca wanted to farm and the only way they were going to farm would be if somebody bought the place who had deeper pockets. They had about 10,000 dollars saved up, which doesn't translate

into a farm.

B: And you hadn't had enough of farming? Was there actually a yearning?

C: Who, me? I think I said that last time.

B: But there's a pretty big gap between when you left Nova Scotia . . .

C: I know, but as I said, I'm not a fan of urbanism.

B: But you're older now.

C: Oh yeah. I wasn't going to actually take on the work.

B: I thought you'd lived communally.

C: We tried to. Oh dear, should have known better. We tried to live in the big house together – the four of us - but that wasn't working at all and after a few months they moved into the little house and we stayed in the big house.

B: And the brewery was started later?

C: No, at the same time... They couldn't have done what they did if we hadn't been able to invest in it. And we were able to invest in it because Brewster's father died and so we had some funds, which we didn't have when we were first looking for a place in BC.

B: You guys reinvented your lives far more often than most people do. It's incredible.

B: Courage but also incredible good fortune.

C: Incredible good fortune. It's not courage if you're not frightened.

C: And maybe we were just foolhardy.

B: That's a good one. I always said that the people with the most courage are the people who actually experience fear.

C: Yeah. If you can overcome your terror, wow. I mean that's why the courage to face cancers, that's big. And so I'm working on how not to be afraid because that's the only way I know how to do that.

B: And I have to say Cathleen, you share that in your notes.

C: Yes, I know.

B: So beautifully.

C: I know.

B: Because of course, people who love you are also afraid. They're afraid for you but they're also afraid for themselves.

C: Well, to be honest Brian, the reason I wanted to have this conversation today is next week I see the oncologist. I'm not feeling any better. I go up and down. Yesterday was a good day. Today is not going to be a good day.

B: You haven't started the radiation yet?

C: I haven't seen the radiation oncologist yet.

B: Okay. So you're just waiting.

C: I'm just waiting, waiting, waiting for an intervention. And I keep remembering...

B: That's when fear can grip.

C: Exactly. How big is this damn thing growing? Because it's hurting me and the one thing I don't know, and I'm going to call the patient-designated nurse and ask her this question: if I'm going to die from this, what will that look like? Like will I just suddenly tomorrow wake up and be orders of magnitude weaker? Is that what happens?

December 14, 2015 – Brian Murphy's sixth conversation with Cathleen Kneen.

C: I've been having some thoughts that are really incoherent and I thought maybe if we talked it out, you would have some insight into how it fits. This is the whole thing about cancer being an enemy and the whole violence paradigm. As you know, I've spent a substantial chunk of my life working on issues of violence against women and knowing that the violence frequently adheres to the most intimate of relationships, and it occurred to me to wonder if there's any useful parallel there with what cancer is doing to me inside myself.

If this is the – what's the right word? Murderous, evil, whatever the right word is – lover? The deadly lover? I wanted to get it out. I don't know if that's going to go anywhere, but I just wanted to get it on the record.

B: Okay. Like a demon? Or like part of yourself?

C: Yeah, like part of myself. Like part of myself which is turning on myself. I mean one never knows in the whole saga of violent intimate relationship what difference -- who said what to whom -- when and what difference any of that made. Like who bears any responsibility for the -- I mean, no question a person who perpetrates a violent act is responsible for the violent act, but what is the spiral? How does that thing work? I just wanted to get it down in case this may be the last conversation we have, I wanted it on the record that there may be some useful insights into thinking about the cancer relationship with the body in that context.

B: And is that an intellectual question or do you actually have feelings about this that gives you an instinct something like that's going on?

C: Well it popped into my head out of the blue, which says it's a feeling thing. I was writing about something else and it just sort of "oh" (surprise), okay. I mentioned it to Rebecca. It didn't make any sense to her but that's because I wasn't explaining it properly.

B: And is part of the instinct kind of a divided self?

C: Yeah. And trying to - well trying to understand the cancer as part of me and not as some alien invader and that's where I got to the intimate killer. That's how I got there because it's my own cells. It's me. It's the things that make me eat and defecate and all that stuff.

B: Although your feminist self will recall many times where you warned against blaming the victim.

C: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, and I'm not suggesting that. I'm not suggesting that. I have no power over this thing and that's part of the insight which was really important in the process of having acupuncture and thinking about a different paradigm that we were talking about the other night, that Western medicine seeks to control and to have a predictable outcome. In fact, Western life, Western culture seeks to control and have a predictable outcome. And Eastern philosophy doesn't do it that way. It doesn't seek control. It seeks harmony, which is an utterly different thing. And so having started to think about that, I'm not going to be blaming the victim. I'm just trying to understand where the harmony can be found.

B: And why in a body, your body, your body seems to be in a way at war with itself?

C: It does seem that way, yeah. It does seem that way. And (...) hm (...). Now leave it at that.

B: Have you read Susan Sontag's "Disease as Metaphor"?

C: No, but that's what I'm talking about. I mean I live, think and breathe metaphors.

B: Yeah. It's an old book. She updated it later on, and there's AIDS as Metaphor, which is actually how I discovered it and then we went back and read Disease as Metaphor which she wrote to deal with some of these questions when she got breast cancer in the '70s. The interesting thing is that one of the more current examinations of what cancer is focuses on apoptosis, which is natural cell death. And part of that paradigm is saying what's going on with cancer is the natural cell death, that is, the natural process by which your body kills cells that have gone awry.

C: Yep. That's been hijacked.

B: And so then ironically, it's because killing isn't happening, rather than the other way around. And therefore things are growing like crazy because the natural process of the body looking after itself through programmed death ...

C: I mean that the parallel I keep coming up with is capital of course. Obviously it's the principle of unrestricted growth and the appropriation of everything and anything to serve the purposes of capital. Which of course, as we now are learning, a little bit late in the day but maybe we can still make use of this learning, much to its own detriment, because we're destroying our own habitat.

B: The other night when we came by, you'd just been to your first acupuncture and it seemed to me to have been a positive experience, and also a relief that you are now in a healing process that was integrative rather than the war one.

B: Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

C: It's a bit shocking to realize that I am turning my whole world philosophy upside down, though I'm not really and this is part of what we've been talking about and maybe we can go back into that.

B: To me it seems consistent with many of the things you've told me about.

C: Yeah, the principles. The principles I've tried to develop get rephrased every decade or so, but they're the same principles. You know, La Via Campesina comes up with food sovereignty. Well food sovereignty was what we were talking about in the People's Food Commission that Jean Christie spearheaded. Insofar as these are useful in moving the discourse forward and deeper, then we pick them up and we use them and then we drop them and something else comes along. We've given up logic models, and now it's Theory of Change. We come up with a new one, then it's another one after that and there's another one after that and it's all the latest game in town and that's how you have to write your grants. You have to have a theory of change now.

B: That's what we need. More theories of change. It also sounded, the way you described it, that the person who's doing the acupuncture is also dealing with what he is doing and what you are doing in a different way than medical people in the hospital. It seemed to be very calm and reciprocal.

C: Very quiet. And interestingly, generally speaking I would find that irritating. Let's get on with it, shall we? I mean really. Why are you sitting here with your hand on your forehead and stroking my forehead. I have had a resistance to that kind of methodology my entire life.

B: And this time you just went with it.

C: It was time. It was time, and it was that moment when he asked me, "Well, is there anything else you haven't told me?" And I said, "I don't think so." And he said, "Well what about anger?" And I said, "Yeah, but I'm familiar with it and I know what I'm angry about. I know where it is and ways of dealing with it, not necessarily the most effective but just the same." He said, "What about irritability?" And I started to cry. And at that point, I thought okay, you're the person I need. Because my response indicated, my visceral response to the question indicated that yeah, I'm so brittle and

taking it out on Brewster, which is utterly unreasonable.

And Brewster and I sit here talking about things -- he says "Well you know, I haven't really done that much." I say "What? You're the thought leader of the movement, for heaven's sake. You're the one who's been out ahead bringing us along with new conceptualizations and you know, new ways of researching, writing these incredibly powerful books that people are using in courses." And every now and then somebody comes up to him and says, "Oh, I read your book" - doesn't matter which one it was, all of them - "It's completely changed my life." That's not nothing. But what amazes me is that I have been going through my little journey thinking I'm basically Brewster's support system, sidekick, editor, whatever. And not acknowledging adequately my own gift and my own work.

B: That's absolutely true. In fact, that's where this little project you and I are doing, because we were having that conversation at our house over dinner, and not that you said that you were going along merrily, seeing yourself as the helpmate of genius, the handmaiden of genius, but Jean and I were talking about your role and we weren't making a point of it as opposed to Brewster. We were just talking about you. And you were a bit taken aback by the way that we saw you, which wasn't the way you saw yourself. And then we started to talk about - well maybe we should - it would be fun to just explore that a little bit, which is how we got here.

C: And it's been very, very helpful because it's enabled us in the last weeks to have some helpful thinking about the nature of leadership, something about feminism, something about - I like your use of the word 'genius', creative genius, about the theory of change, if you like, like what actually does make social justice come about?

B: And there are many things. There are many elements. There are many talents that are required and my experience is that no one of them is sufficient.

C: No, quite.

B: Although some of them are recognized more than others.

C: Yeah. And I was thinking - thoughts are evanescent. They just sort of slip by me and what was that one? It was about... maybe it'll come back - no it's gone. I apologize because it is a fuzzy day.

B: You don't have to apologize.

C: Yeah, but I do apologize because I wanted to not wait. Partly I wanted to keep the momentum going and partly because with my best will in the world, I can't avoid doomsday scenarios in my head. I can't avoid the thought that this could be a completely unfinished project and I'd like to get as much of it out there as possible.

B: And it's inevitable that the, as you say, the worst case scenario is going to be going through your mind. I'm delighted you can say it because that in itself, just like when you were with the acupuncture guy, is a release and it allows the energies to flow.

C: Yeah. Yeah, I - whoops, oh don't tell me it's gone again. It came back for a second -- I know what it is. We were talking about leadership and I was talking about bopping around following Brewster. I've always assumed that leadership required something of a deliberate focus and roadmap and when I met and married Brewster, I married a man who had a clear understanding of what was going on with the world and where he thought he could make a difference. And he's pursued that, with turns and twists, but I think he's actually chronicled that very well, but he's pursued essentially the same agenda for his entire adult life.

B: Would you call it a vocation?

C: I have done. Yeah. Though vocation is a conversation between the one who's called and the one who's calling and the one who's calling is a little inchoate. I've never had that kind of deliberateness until bringing food sovereignty back to Canada when Eric and Colleen and I said right, we've got to do this and we did. The fact of the matter is the first time I ever realized I was a leader was in the Women's Centre in Pictou County where we were having one of our late night debates about something or another. The debates went on very late into the night – a bit of a problem when we're lambing and I've got to check the barn at 6 a.m. (laughing) With my eyes half shut, sometimes... I started to speak and everybody stopped talking and were listening to me and I thought holy shit, I hope I'm saying something important, then. They seemed to think so. And so that was the first 'aha' moment in that process that I had.

B: And what you've told me about your activism in BC, it seems to me by then there was a great deal of intentionality in your leadership. Not that you set an outcome you wanted, but around process, around convoking people, the gathering of people, the honouring of people. You were doing that, it sounded to me like with no hesitation.

C: Well, and there was an outcome in the sense that the metaphor I've used is a lifeboat. And it becomes more and more appropriate with climate warming, that the institutions are falling apart. Everything we know, the whole Western paradigm is proving itself utterly bankrupt, destructive and on its way to destruction. Hopefully we can get there fast enough that we don't take the whole planet down with us, though you know, the elders are fairly clear about that. Art Solomon used to say to my friend Joan, "Don't worry, Joan. The Creator will not allow His creation to be destroyed at the hands of fools."

B: That's my absolute conviction. Around this whole climate action thing. I don't believe the planet's at stake. We're at stake. Nature will win. The only question is whether we're going to be around to see it. So you got to the farm in B.C. Did they buy the farm or did you buy the farm together?

C: We bought the farm together with rather substantially unequal shares. It's in the Shuswap in Sorrento. What happened was when Brewster's father died, there was a chunk of money that enabled us to actually buy - because before that we were looking for something but there was nothing that we could afford. And because of the Agricultural Land Reserve, it was almost impossible to find a property with two liveable dwellings on it and on the ALR you can't build. The Agricultural Land Reserve was put in place to preserve agricultural land and one of the rules is you can't build housing on it.

B: And did you look together?

C: Yeah, we were looking together. It emerged fairly quickly that she - our baby daughter who we'd brought up on the farm, wanted to farm. And she's thriving on it. And Brian wanted to make beer. He wanted a brewery. He was making beer in the backyard in Vancouver and as he said, trading it with friends. Sometimes for little pieces of paper with the Queen's picture on it and sometimes not, but he really wanted to get into it in a bigger way. So the family clubbed together, paid for him to take a Boots-On Brewing course in California and we commenced to look for a property.

Well what happened was they – and I – were very involved with the Certified Organic Associations of BC. I was the consumer rep on the board for nine years and started and edited, through most of that time, the quarterly journal. And somebody's just asked me to talk about that, which I've been starting to think about and how important it was to me at that point in the history of the organic movement to have some way of being self-reflective about what we were doing. And to keep reinforcing the basic principles and the philosophy on which the movement was founded – because it's always and always going to be a challenge, because you can sell things that are grown organically for more money than you can sell things that were not grown organically and so, you know, farmers never have enough cash in their jeans. They're always looking for another wrinkle, something they can do.

The big argument we were having at the time was, does praxis change belief? Like if people farm organically, will that make them think differently about the animals and the plants and the soil that they're working with? Or will they just impose an industrial mindset and do whatever they can get away with? ... We never did resolve the question and now we're in the same issue with the question of export, because the whole of Canadian agriculture is framed for export and so we now have a national organic standard which enables us to export organic materials to countries with which we have reciprocal agreements. And there are many of us who say this is a very wrong turn. This is pushing us in the direction of industrialization – and some of the things that have happened in the organic standard make me crazy. Like we still haven't got rid of beak trimming, which stops chickens from pecking each other. Well, I mean it's just such a downstream solution to the problem. They peck each other because they're too close together. It's straightforward. And because they're not fed right. They don't get the right kind of food, which is back to another whole set of issues that this holistic treatment which starts with what are you eating? Which is exactly what the vet always asks when you bring a sick animal in: what's it been eating? But we don't do it with ourselves.

B: Are you still the editor?

C: No, no, no, I quit when I left BC. - It was great because Rebecca was doing the layout. She's brilliant at it and so the layout of course is not just laying something out. You also have to say look, I need 25 words trimmed out of this. Now which 25 are they going to be? And thereby ensues another hour of conversation between Rebecca and me, which was wonderful. I just loved it, love working with her. She's very skilled.

B: When you bought the farm, did you realize that that was also going to happen, this closer working relationship? Because you'd been quite distant from each other geographically until you moved onto the farm.

C: That's right. I guess I was involved with the association before we moved to the farm. We moved up to the Shuswap before we actually got the farm. We'd been looking around the lower mainland, on the bench behind Mission, but there was no land to be had and then through the COABC, we got a call from Anne Warren, who was farming with Sue Moore in Sorrento, saying that the piece of land next to them was going to come up for sale, upstream from them, and they were mortal terrified that it would be bought by someone who'd be farming it conventionally.

So of course we went up and looked at it. It wasn't actually for sale at that point, but there was a little house on it and Rebecca and Brian went to work for Sue and Anne for a year and lived in a cabin, a bothy Brian called it, on the property at Sue and Anne's place and Brewster and I lived in the little house on the other property and talked about how we could make a brewery there and looking at possibilities of what could be done. There was an old church falling down next to the railway crossing and we thought we could maybe turn that into a brewery. It had the, you know, it had the bones, though we'd have to move pretty quickly because it was going to fall down.

Anyway, it all didn't work out and one day, Rebecca and I were down in the village looking idly through the advertisements in the realtor's window and there was a property we hadn't seen before. It was part of a marriage breakup and they just dropped the price so it came within our radar. We went and looked at it, and this was a ten acre property with two houses on it, a very big one built like a boat, I mean literally built like a boat sitting on a concrete slab and a little one which was the original farmhouse but still in decent shape. And there was also a garage/workshop with 14 foot high ceilings, sealed concrete floor and Brian said "Brewery!"

So we bought it with our inheritance and what Brian and Rebecca had scraped together. Then we moved. And we tried living together in the big house for a few months. This was my idea. I thought we could do that. I should have known better. It was worth trying and we didn't blow up over it. We

didn't destroy our relationship over it. It took a very long time for Brian to be comfortable in the countryside. He was a very urban man. Brian also had two sets of trainings. One at Emily Carr School of Art and the other at the School of Social Work and he was working as a social worker in the downtown east side when I met him.

B: And to what extent did you and Brewster get involved in production on the farm?

C: Not at all in the brewery. We were very clear about that from the outset. We'll put the money up but we want nothing to do with it. It's not fair. Absolutely not fair. Number one, we don't know anything about it but number two, we have enough issues to deal with as parent and children. And of course part of the reason why it's worth mentioning Brian's relationship with his father is that it made it very difficult for him to develop a positive relationship with Brewster. That took some years, as Brewster is nothing if not a father figure, to a whole lot of people. But, you know, we have worked it out. So they started the brewery and we did work on the farm. Brewster took over management of the strawberries and mowed the lawn.

B: The strawberries were produced commercially? You were selling the strawberries?

C: No the strawberries were house garden. I worked on the house garden. I worked when needed in the big garden. I was also working flat out on the BC Food Systems Network. So I didn't have all that much time to offer, but I helped.

B: And you and Brewster were what age? You're in your mid-fifties and he's pushing the end of 60.

C: That's right. That's right. And writing. Writing - he wrote -- what did he write from there? He wrote *Farmageddon* from there.

B: That's right. So he's writing, you're editing. You spent your whole life editing, giving voice to other people.

C: (laughing) I'd like to think that. The process of doing Brewster's last book, *Journey of an Unrepentant Socialist*, was very interesting because I had a very much heavier hand in the content than I have in any of the other books. The other books have been based on his research, which is his work. This was based on his life. Which I share. Or share a lot of it. Not by any manner or means all of it, but even so, you know, I'm saying, Brewster that's not the way you tell the story. What about this part? Oh yeah, you're right. And I also insisted on more personal stories. He really wanted it to be much more arm's length, about the philosophy and the theology and politics and how those transformed, and I said 'but you can't do that without talking about yourself and how you transformed.'

B: Yeah. I had that conversation with him after I read an earlier draft and I said it's tantalizing. You mention events, you mention people - I want to know more. I want the story. And I could tell it made him uncomfortable. He told me yeah, you were talking with Cathleen. I said no, I wasn't talking to Cathleen. It's just the way I am.

C: Yeah. Joan was pushing the same thing.

B: It's a better book for it.

C: Oh, I'm absolutely convinced it is. And I think if I hadn't been so deeply personal in both the introduction and the ending, it also would have been not as good a book because one of the things that I learned back in Nova Scotia is that people would come to be with us because they saw us and our relationship as some kind of a model of what they wanted to do in their own lives. And I never quite understood how that worked because it seemed to me it was pretty individual. I mean very, what's the word? Unique. It was unique and not necessarily replicable in any way, and some of it I wouldn't

want to replicate.

B: It can't be. But I can understand how it would feed people's aspirations.

C: Which is great. I mean I believe in marriage. I think marriage is a good institution. It needs a little window dressing here and there, a little changing in the power structures, but the notion that you say okay - I mean any kind of commitment, really - I am going to take this on through thick and thin and I know it's not going to be perfect and some of it's going to be godawful, but I'm not going to go away. I won't give up on you. And I think that's really important.

B: Within, I assume, some margins of hazard. You must have supported people in escaping their relationships.

C: Of course. I don't know this for sure, but I have a feeling that most of the women who flee for risk of their lives haven't deep in their heart of hearts given up on the guy -- it's just not safe to be with you, for both of us.

And I know women long divorced and remarried with very happy families who think of their first husbands as that was my husband, not my ex. He was my husband. He's the father of my children. My children whom I adore and who look just like him. You can't reject that.

B: How was your activism affected, or was it, by being back on a farm?

C: I was so happy. Did I tell you the story about our crazy friend, our crazy paranoid friend and going for a drive around Ithaca, New York?

B: No.

C: Oh then let me put this in parentheses because it's an old story. But it puts together some of the threads we've been pulling out here.

We went to visit Brewster's cousin who was crazy. She was living like a bag lady in a not very fixed up summer cottage right on the edge of Lake Cayuga, north of Cornell where her sister was involved. So Julie sort of kept an eye on Sally but Sally was just -- she was an artist. She'd married a man who was dying of cancer and saw him through his death with great courage, compassion and grace and then got involved with a very nasty piece of work, an American political scientist who wound up teaching at York University in political science until the students rebelled and had him kicked out because he was teaching the wrong philosophy of political science. He was very much an American imperialist.

And I think she left him, I would say she fled, with her little guy and wound up up the road from her sister's place and was getting more and more paranoid. She thought that the guy who was courting her sister was a warlock who was casting spells on her, that's why her car broke down. Clocks would stop unexpectedly. I mean anything that happened, this was something that he was doing and he was doing it to get at her. So finally, you know, she said there's evil, there's evil abroad around here. So we left and drove up the shore of the lake, north, and then we thought / according to the map, we'd passed the end of the lake and we should be able to get across to the other side and go back down again and so we took a right-hand turn and drove up until we hit a chain-link fence and said oh, okay.

So we went back, went north again and back again and this time there was an army jeep on the other side of the chain-link fence and a soldier saying "what are you doing here?" We said, "We're tourists from Canada driving a little white Toyota with Canadian plates. What's the matter?" "You can't come in here." "Well we don't want to come in here. We're trying to get across to the other side." "You can't do it here." "Okay, whatever, whatever. Keep your knickers on." So we went back to the

highway and then we came to a road that lead to an entrance into this military complex, which Brewster then remembered from his days of working in that area, was a military base where nuclear warheads were transshipped to Europe.

And so Brewster got out of the car and went over to harass the guy in the pillbox and I just sat there watching. And as I sat there watching, an old fashioned station wagon, the kind with wood on the sides, came driving by, came into the place and it was a woman with a bunch of kids and they went past the pillbox and went in and I sat there and I thought about raising children in a place that transships nuclear warheads to Europe and I observed that I had stopped breathing. And I yelled at Brewster. I said "Get back here." So he came back and I said, "Let's get out of here, now." So we drove on. We found where we could go across and we went around to the other side and there was a you-pick strawberry place. I said, "Brewster, stop the car." He stopped – he was very good about it.

He stopped the car. I jumped up, ran into the field, got on my hands and knees, got my hands in the dirt (sigh) and then I could breathe again. Meanwhile Brewster's negotiating with the strawberry farm owner to pick some strawberries, which we then did. And got back to Sally's place and said you know what? She may be paranoid but she's right. There's definitely evil abroad here. And I learned something about myself that in the face of evil, get my hands in the dirt. So going back to the farm now...

B: What an incredible loop.

C: Yeah. It's a very important story because it's one that pulls together all kinds of pieces of my journey, including the fact that we later tried to go to a women's peace camp but they wouldn't let Brewster in, and that was one of my first encounters with real radical, very radical feminism. And I understood, but *he's* okay.

B: So going back, getting on the farm again was getting you back, rooted, grounded.

C: Getting on the farm again was not a contradiction to doing political work at all, and actually was much better because I was able to do some local organizing. In Mission, we started the farmers' market and I managed it and that was fun. Hadn't done a farmers' market before. In Sorrento I was also involved with a group, but I didn't manage it, the Sorrento Village Farmers' Market. I also started and got involved with the North Okanagan Food Justice something or other with a nutritionist. I'm still working with all these nutritionists and they're working on soup kitchens but they're also working more on community kitchens, community kitchens where women come together, usually women, not always. Not always. I remember one reserve where they had a men's kitchen. They met every Thursday night. All they cooked was meat, but you could always tell when it was a man's night to cook because you could hear the guffaws of laughter all the way across the field. They're having a terrific time. But most of them were women. Most of them were women in the demographic that I was basically working with, which is single moms usually on assistance of some sort, with small children. And a whole bunch of challenges. Whether they were Aboriginal or not, certainly challenges of lack of education, lack of resources, lack of any acknowledgement of the skills that they had, including by themselves, and so on.

So we started a little group, Shuswap Food Action group. I managed to find and hire a young woman who is now the Executive Director of the Certified Organic Associations of BC. Good for me, finding her. She's great. We collected a group of people together, started a Good Food Box, using Debbie Field and Foodshare's manual, but changing it because we had no paid staff. It was all volunteer. So the trick was finding a volunteer who knew something about produce because it was really important, particularly when we were getting established, to be able to say to the person who's donated or given us a wholesale price on some food, this isn't good enough. We need top quality, sorry, take it back. We're not an alternative to the dumpster.

So that was really important and I think partly for that reason, and the fact that somebody would say, well what do I have to do to qualify to get a Good Food Box? And I said you have to have ten bucks, preferably a week beforehand. What we tried to do is to get people to pay for the box when they picked it up on the Tuesday before Welfare Wednesday, I think that they picked it up because that's when the pantry shelves were thinnest. But once the Welfare check came in, to try and persuade them to hive off the ten bucks for the next month at that point. It's a once a month thing. And that's all you needed and so we had all kinds of people and all classes of people who saw it as a good deal. And it was a good deal. You got about 18, 19 dollars' worth of produce for ten.

It was a community thing. We had this whole team of people who packed the boxes and people would bring their own boxes and repack. So you'd get a chance to examine what you were getting and very often people would swap. You know, I don't like beets, can I swap for some of your carrots, kind of thing. One of the things that troubled me about that was that practically all of the produce we got was conventional and if there was some leftover, I'd give it away but I wouldn't take it home because I was eating organic. And that class distinction just galled me and I've heard it from other people who run Good Food Boxes. Most of us come out of a foodie kind of approach and an analysis of what the food system does to food at the very micro level as well as at the macro level, so yeah that's hard. Very hard. On the other hand, it was a way of getting people together. The team that packed the boxes had a wonderful time and it got to the point where somebody would bring a treat for the team every time. They'd sit around and have coffee.

B: It occurs to me that a theme that's gone all the way through these conversations is the leadership but if we had started with organizer rather than leader and followed that one through or started with entrepreneur instead of organizer and followed that one through, started with manager and followed that through - I mean it's amazing.

C: I'll accept the word organizer - I'll accept organizer. I have a lot to learn about management. I've been on several boards and messed up royally a couple of times. If you asked me what have I done badly in my life? Management would have been one of those. I think I've learned a lot. I think I'm probably a pretty good manager by now, a little late in the day but you know, better late than never.

B: You've probably come across more bad managers than good ones too.

C: Oh yeah. It's easy to be a bad manager. You just have to not listen and that's easy or it seems to be very easy. But I don't see myself as an entrepreneur.

B: I was just going to ask you, do you see it as a word with bad connotations?

C: No. No, but I - it's a certain kind of - well in a sense, all organizing is. I mean it depends on how you define it. If you define "entrepreneur" in a collective sense of the ability to see an opportunity in a situation and say 'we could do this differently, we could do this this way and it would work', then yeah, that is what I do. But I just see that as part of organizing.

B: If you look at the root of entrepreneur, an entrepreneur is someone who foments transactions among people. Most people would say between people but I much prefer the word "amongst" than between. Even with *Inter Pares*, which a lot of people translate as between equals. I've always insisted it's amongst equals, and of course transactions are entirely different. They have a reciprocal relationship.

C: Well, and polyvalent

B: So how long were you on the farm? From 1999 until 2006? Seven years?

C: Yeah, it was a good run.

B: And then you left.

C: Kicking and screaming.

B: I've got the feeling that you left that experience with more resistance than you left Nova Scotia. Is that true?

C: Yes. I left Nova Scotia with a deep sadness, knowing full well that the farm was not a commercially viable enterprise with some adjuncts, whether it was my pottery or Brewster's fencing supplies or whatever. We needed to have other kinds of income knowing we were dependent on the labour of the children and a lot of friends from the city who'd come out and help in the summer time. Knowing all of that, I still would wake up at night in Toronto thinking to myself, if I'd just been a better manager. Which was the line the government was pushing at us. You've got to manage better. Sharpen your pencils. And so that was completely different.

Leaving Sorrento was leaving a community that I'd built, that I was a beloved part of, leaving my daughter who I adore, and I'm not saying that for effect. It's just - it was just so hard to leave her. Moving to the city, which is not where I wanted to be, moving to Ottawa with the money that my mother left me, knowing that the one and only thing that she really wanted in her dying days was for me to be living in Ottawa with her or near her. And when she was dead, I could do it. And the irony of that was just almost insupportable in the first year. So there was a bunch of reasons on all sides of that decision to move, but Brewster needed to go. And this was one point where I think his age did play a factor because I realized that I can organize on the phone. He couldn't. He did in Nova Scotia when he was organizing the sheep farmers. He can organize it but his hearing's gone in the meantime and he doesn't see the telephone as a tool that he's comfortable with and there's not much I can do about that. Most days I have a meaningful conversation with at least one person on the phone. So that's what I'll do. If I get up and I have to lie down after breakfast, I'll call somebody and have a conversation, about whatever.

B: That's amazing. That's rare now. People have lost the skill.

C: Yeah but that's how I've organized. That's what I've always done. The other day I called a woman who'd called me just to say how are you doing and I'm worried about you and concerned and - but three weeks later I phoned her up and we talked about the way in which she's been working as a leader in her own context, the kind of work that she's been trying to put forward, what she's going to do on her sabbatical that starts in January, what's going on in general in her area, who are the allies. It was a political, philosophical, friendly conversation. Lasted about half an hour.

B: Wow. That's great.

C: And that's not every day. She's a wonderful person. So are they all, all wonderful people, thank you, but - but when I'm lucky, that's what happens.

B: And how did you choose Ottawa?

C: We weren't going to go back to Toronto again. I mean we'd been inoculated. It was partly expense, but mostly it was Jamie was here. Jamie was here and Joan was here. So I had two anchors immediately and we knew a lot of people, the Inter Pares crowd. You know, you sort of walk into a circle of, I would say, of friends. A lot of the people we didn't know very well but we knew them well enough to start getting engaged.

B: Yeah, I remember when you moved, it was like it just seemed natural, almost like you were returning here, although no one had ever known you being here.

C: No, we'd never been - except that I had been at Carleton ...

B: And of course you were involved with the Food Movement and this is kind of a centre.

C: This has been a political issue for me: that, well of course now that you're Chair of Food Secure Canada, of course you're going to be in Ottawa. That's where the government is. But that's not what Food Secure Canada is about, and I've been fighting that fight ever since I left. It's not about influencing the government of the day. It's an important piece of work. Diana Bronson, bless her, is really good at that stuff. My dear friend Kathleen Gibson is brilliant at it, at the provincial level. I'm not saying Diana isn't brilliant, that isn't a comparison. But for me, the purpose of building a movement is, again, to create a change in the direction of social justice on the ground. This is the lifeboats. We're building lifeboats. We're building organizations, institutions, aggregations of people, interrelationships, ways of communicating, cross-cultural dialogues in which we can be more fully human and from which we can, if and when necessary, advocate policy changes at the governmental and institutional level. But the purpose is for it to be - and I've heard it said in the current Food Secure Canada leadership - that the purpose of the movement is to advocate for institutional change, for legal change, for government change. And I don't believe that. I think that's got it upside down.

B: The purpose of the movement is movement.

C: The purpose of the movement is itself, which is deeply Aboriginal when you get down to it. The purpose of everything is to be itself, to be as fully itself as it can be. That's what everything wants to do and then it scatters its seeds to the winds and dies. I made the group in BC promise that when I came back and said I'm from Ottawa and I'm here to help you, they wouldn't laugh at me. But they did. They did.

B: It's interesting. It sounds to me a little bit like / I know people who have moved to Nova Scotia, to PEI, to Newfoundland and they're always from away. And when you moved there, you were probably always from away, but when you went to BC, you were never from away.

C: Well, everybody in BC is from away, except the Aboriginal people.

C: I'm realizing the stories that I haven't told. I'm thinking oh my God, there are hundreds of them. Oof.

B: And they come up in conversation, and they come to life again. By bringing them up, they're coming out of your cells. And that's health-making.

C: Yeah, exactly. This whole thing is reinforcing my sense of self which is extremely important if I'm going to keep up the strength that I need at this stage.

January 5, 2016 – Brian Murphy’s seventh conversation with Cathleen Kneen.

C: A story that needs to be told is how I got involved with the Indigenous people in BC through the BC Food Systems Network.

C: So I had a conversation with my friend, Abra, who was with me throughout most of this stuff, and two issues came up. One of them was what was the back story, how did I know who to ask to come and speak at the gathering, and was that all it took? And obviously the answer to that is no. So the back story of how I found out who to talk to was that there was already a lot of work being done at the time, and all of these things are important because they address again the question about leadership -- because nothing comes from nowhere, as Brewster’s fond of saying. So what I was able to do I was able to do because of the context in which I found myself, and the work that other people had already been doing. Had those connections not been made, it would have been a great deal harder for me to have tried to make them at that time. And things are radically different now and the awareness of Indigenous cultures, Indigenous issues, Indigenous authority, Indigenous spirituality, Indigenous interrelationships with the land that they’re related to, responsible for, whatever, not to use the term rights, but also the legal relationships. The level of awareness now is orders of magnitude different than it was 15, 18 years ago.

B: On both sides actually.

C: Yeah, on both sides. With the extremes continuing to be highlighted, whether it’s endemic racism in the Mounties or whether it’s the really hard ass resistance from some people who I know, who I’m friends with and which I find deeply troubling. Mind you, in the same way that I found deeply troubling my son-in-law’s insistence on the responsibility of a patriot to bear arms in defence of his people, being an Irish Republican. And we wrestled over that for five or six years after he and Rebecca got together before he and I could come to some kind of agreement to disagree and mutual respect for one another’s positions.

B: Was he born in Ireland?

C: No.

B: He’s taken it in by osmosis?

C: Well more than osmosis. Hard work. Like he studied Gaelic. He has the language.

B: And he doesn’t come by way of the United States?

C: No, no, he grew up in Burnaby, BC. It was his grandfather who came over. He was a gunsmith, ironically enough. And Brian learned to love guns from his grandfather, I think the artistry of them. But I think where we come together is the passion for justice for the downtrodden.

C: We were talking about my reaction to the acupuncturist and the acupuncture process. I’ve talked before about this acupuncture being a conversation, joking and conversing with my children [cancer cells] and I’m saying here’s the deal: you don’t kill me and I won’t try to kill you. So the conversation is in the course of what therapies I choose to follow. And I’m not going to try and burn you or poison you or anything else. What I’m going to do is provide you with elements in my diet and in my daily practice which support your integrating into the rest of my body instead of being out there having to be big and strong, bigger and stronger than everybody else.

B: And in fact reintegrating with your body.

C: Yeah. Yeah, because these cells started in my body in the first place.

B: That's interesting work because it's mental work but it's also intellectual work. It is a way of defying the constructions that we're given and coming up with our own instinct about what's going on in our bodies.

C: It is spiritual work as well in the sense that, without invoking a deity of any sort, I'm having to understand better who I am in the world and this whole process has been very helpful in delving into the history of it. How and why did I insist on looking at the context and what other people were doing at the same time? So the pregnancy outreach programs, started by Health Canada originally, the Prenatal Child Nutrition Program I think it was called, and the feminist activists in Health Canada, amassed the evidence that if women were better nourished during pregnancy, the birth weights of their babies would go up.

The lower birth weight leads to poorer health in the adult and if you can get the birth weight up to a certain point after that, it doesn't matter much. But if you can get it up to a certain point, then you're going to have less weakness, less tendency toward autoimmune diseases, whatever. They're going to be healthier kids, so a very, very inexpensive intervention in pregnancy can get you lots and lots of health. What my sister used to call health prevention. Of course, who were the poor single moms who were at risk of the low birth weights because of personal history, because of poverty and because of addictions? Of course, the Aboriginal young women. So immediately, we're in the Aboriginal communities and the rural and small town communities and that's where I'm doing the work.

C: And these are the women that I was working with. So I'd gone down to Merritt, which is in the Nicola valley, and got to know a couple of the older women who lived a traditional life and that's how I found Trudy. But then the next thing was that we created a tradition of a circle, an opening circle of introductions. We got up to 200 people. It started to become the major thing we did because by the time we'd get around the circle, we've spent a day.

We always tried to find a way to frame it so that people would have a story to tell but there was this one guy who three years running told his story of the residential school experience and we all listened.¹¹ Three years running. And it was about 70 percent the same people every year and about 30 percent new people. At the end of the third year, some of the local Elders, women, the Aunties, came to me and said 'we'd like to do a feast for you next year'. So it was that posture of listening as well as actively seeking out teachers -- so we had teachers who were teaching things like basket making and herbalism and traditional food processing, always, always as part of the mix, that I think they began to realize we were taking it seriously. Now the most recent development there which excites me beyond belief is the work that's being done to recapture the authority over the land and it's called Grease Trails. As we know, the eulachon, which are also called candlefish because you can actually light a match to them, they're that greasy. They're like a capelin. They're little herring type fish. They come in great schools and you net them and you render them down and that was the oil that was used at least for light and probably for eating, I would imagine. You wonder why people were so healthy. Well, they ate fish oil.

C: Anyway, they also traded inland. They traded down the coast in catamarans, way, way south but they also traded inland and traded for all the things that come inland. So those grease trails, which are actually still there and they've got riders, horseback riders, following the grease trails and finding trails in the muskeg which have been beaten down by hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years of moccasined feet, so it's a trail that you can follow. Pretty awesome.

B: Did you walk some of these trails?

C: No. No, I just heard the story. But it's really exciting that that's what people are doing because they

¹¹Repeated from earlier, longer discussions

say 'No, this is our land. These are our ancestors and this is how we related to this land in a way that didn't "exploit" it. We didn't hunt necessarily or fish there except in passing through, but we passed through and that was part of an important web which we weaved.' So that and the fact that the whole discourse around settlers, allies, how do white people who are the descendants sometimes into the fourth, fifth, sixth generation of people who came here from somewhere else and who don't look like the Indigenous people, how can we creatively live together with people whose history of the land is so deep and so different? So that discourse is alive and active and it's very exciting for me to be in the situation where yeah, we've got a few thousand dollars. We can hire a research assistant to help create a discussion that we can record and start asking these really difficult questions. They're really, really difficult questions.

B: And I assume part of the process that they're going through is bringing young people who actually haven't had that experience back into the community, back into the land.

C: Absolutely. Absolutely and certainly the more sophisticated and intentional of the activists, I would say, are very involved with schooling. Take the kids out of school. Teach them the language.

B: And also rehabilitation. I know a fellow in Cache Creek who is the Chief of his band. Young guy. I met him through Concordia. And he'd had his own history of trouble as a youth and they were using it as a rehabilitation program for young folks who had gone off the rails.

C: Yeah. I'm reading *The River Thieves*, by the way. Thank you.

B: How are you finding it?

C: Oh it's great. It's not an easy read. It's taking me way too long, but I've been distracted.

B: Yes, I guess. One of the questions that I had from our / it's lovely doing this and watching the birds at your feeder. They are very, very comfortable in your hands.

C: Yeah. Well they're chickadees. They eat out of your hand.

B: When we were talking about you leaving the farm the second time, the BC farm, and I asked you innocently: "And how did you feel about that?" And you explained how brutal a process it was to be leaving there and your ties to land and in that same conversation, the last one, you also told the remarkable story that went way, way, way back to when you and Brewster were young where you came across this woman who was somewhat deranged. Paranoid.

C: She was a cousin.

B: And the story ended with you in the dirt.

In a way digging peace out of the earth and saying 'she's not crazy,' because you found this military encampment. And I got thinking about that. Thinking about your influences and the fact that you were in fact a city girl from Newfoundland and your parents were professionals. I was also thinking clearly your father was a great influence on you in terms of your ethics and your will. So I was thinking, what is the connection between your dad's influence and this thing about the earth and farming? Because there wasn't really farming in your background or even very much digging.

C: Well he insisted on gardening. I remember one year he built a little lean-to greenhouse so that he could grow something. I think it was cucumbers he was after. But he always gardened. Not when we lived down on Gower Street because there was no land, but I was only about 12 when we moved out to Carpatian Road and then immediately there was a garden. There was a rock garden in the front but in the back there was a vegetable garden and that was always there. And in the country at our cottage, a cottage called Walden, of course.

C: There's a certain personality and well you know what rural Newfoundland's like. It's rocks. But he managed to get a little patch of potatoes. So yeah, I was a city girl or a townie but the smell of the salt air was there. The coast was important. So it's not just land. It's land and water.

B: Well you had land and water in Nova Scotia. You didn't have land and water in BC.¹²

C: Oh yes, we did. We were a ten minute walk from Lake Shuswap.

B: Okay. When you say 'water', I assume ocean.

C: No. No, even in Toronto, I had to make do with Lake Ontario. I had a very interesting experience of describing where I lived in Toronto to a Torontonians and I described it in terms of the Don River. And she said, "You mean the Don Valley Parkway?" (laughing) I said no, that's not what I meant, but I take your point, and I take your secondary point, and your tertiary point as well. So here, you know, I can see the river. Right over there. You can see it. It's like seeing deer tracks in the woods. Now I know that people see deer as pests because they come and they eat your garden and they destroy things, but there's something about seeing the tracks of wild animals or feeling the presence of wild animals that -- the only word I can think of is 'comforting'.

B: Were you aware of this before you went to Nova Scotia or did you discover this part of yourself in Nova Scotia and had the land?

C: Yeah. It's something I discovered. Well I mean again, we were out in the country. We had this cabin that my father bought and fixed up and we had a lot of freedom. I'm just thinking back now. Our kids did too, but they were country kids, with the same level of freedom -- get on your bikes and I'll see you at lunch time.

C: Free-range kids.

C: And boys and girls together. And there was the occasional mishap there - which happens anyway, no matter what you do, so why impose tyranny when you're, you know, you're not avoiding anything through that. But that's another discussion.

B: And the attachment that you found to the land the first time in Nova Scotia, was it the same as Brewster experienced or was your tie to the land different at the same time? Because he also is not a country boy.

C: Definitely, definitely the second. He grew up on the golf course behind their house, as he is fond of telling. And the experience of walking to school every day across the golf course, which was the old fashioned, wild kind of golf course, and stopping and rearranging the little brooks on route. You know, playing with water, and skiing on a small hill with a rope ski lift that they built themselves with an old car engine and a winch. I'm just sort of imagining him. He had a lot of freedom also and freedom to explore. I think that's the important piece because if you don't have the freedom to explore, I don't know how you get the chance to develop the level of attention that's required to relate to beings that don't speak. I mean, I'd go for a walk in the woods with my Aboriginal friend, Dawn Morrison, and all the animals come out and show themselves to her. And the walk takes three times as long as it usually does to cover the same territory but everybody comes and says good morning.

B: Isn't that interesting.

C: The beaver and the muskrat and the birds and the, you know, everything. Rabbits.

¹²Jamie comments: Actually, in Nova Scotia we rarely saw the ocean, even though it was barely 25 miles away.

B: The creatures who normally would scuttle away don't scuttle.

C: No, you just don't see them. Oh, a poem. Another poem from my dear, dear, dear friend George Johnson about his beekeeping friend: "When he walks among his bees he is not often stung. His pace is too benign and slow for their sweet scented minds to know."

C: So that's what it is. The pace is so slow that she doesn't bother them. And I'm sure it's...

B: Benign and slow.

C: Yeah. Benign and slow.

B: Yeah. That's very good. You affirm that your dad was a great influence in your life. Name a few other people. Tell me a few other people who at very significant crossroads in your life were influences.

C: I'll have to give that some thought.

B: It wouldn't necessarily have to be an influence like leader or teacher. It could be just as a co-conspirator or as a friend or someone who you both found yourself looking together in the same direction.

C: Well the problem is that there's so many.

B: I bet.

C: I'm going to wind up giving my rolodex. You know? Because I've been very, very gifted in finding people whose way of working complements mine, and it was really interesting when I had to withdraw from the CFICE Project, the 'Community First Impacts of Community Engagement'. It's the first of the SSHRC big partnership projects. A seven year project. Basic idea to bring some clarity and focus into the process of research relationships between communities understood very, very broadly. Everything from Native bands to I don't know, Just Food. The whole, health regions, or whatever. It's a seven year project, and by halfway through, as in halfway through year three, the initial principal investigator decided it was time for him to retire, which is fair. It was. I mean chronologically at least. And handed it over to the guy who was the co-lead of the section. We were divided into hubs and mine was the food security hub and Peter was the co-lead of the food security hub. The academic co-lead. I was the community co-lead and Peter and I worked very, very closely together. He's very methodical or I should say coherent, yeah, and I really enjoyed working with him. We would talk on the phone at least once a week if I didn't just see him somewhere. He was teaching at Carleton. And then he – I was going to say he got pregnant. Chris got pregnant and he needed to take paternity leave, so he came in as the PI [principal investigator] but wasn't actually there. We had a temporary PI and we had to find a new academic co-lead.

We chose Charles Levkoe, which is interesting because Charles operates very much like me. He has an academic training and mind but like me, he's somebody who gets the energy from striking off somebody else. So we had very different kinds of phone calls than Peter and I did, and they're all over the lot. They range from where we're getting our candles for Hanukkah to how do we frame the current call for a research assistant to help develop the project that we've decided to take on as the policy end of this project. The idea in the end was to change policy, policy at the government, institutional, whatever level. And our lens needs to be decolonizing.

I'm not off topic, by the way, I'm not. But the thing Charles and I were talking about was so if we want to get a student, a grad student which is what we've got money for, one of the things about SSHRC projects is they want grad students to get really good jobs and experience, how do we frame it

in such a way that the person who's attracted to it is going to be somebody who understands decolonization and is really interested in looking at all the work that's been done in brokering research relationships between academics and communities, how we make sure that what's top of the agenda, in front of the mind, is this question of decolonizing power relationships.

B: Because academic research can colonize.

C: Yes, it's been actively used that way, and in some of the worst manifestations of it. But even without that extreme negative, where you're talking about Indigenous knowledge being stolen and misused, even so, there is a question of what is knowledge? What is the power that pertains to knowledge? How is knowledge shared, used, what parameters need to go around that? And something I think you said earlier about young people. How do you intergenerationalize? What processes do you use? So this was the conversation. We talked for an hour yesterday on the phone. That's standard.

B: And is part of this project to actually write up this methodology?

C: Part of the project is to get the methodology adopted broadly, and that's why we're doing two kind of tables - not to say pilot projects because they're not really in a pilot situation - one of which is looking at methods to broker research relationships nationally in any sector. So whatever the sector, it doesn't matter but how are those research relationships developed? And the other is very locally here in Ottawa, to focus on food sovereignty. And of course there are underlying questions about the scope. What are the benefits of working nationally? What are the benefits of working at a local level? How can they be melded or blended? Can they? And if not, where is it most fruitful to put one's energies if decolonizing is the scope? And there's no answer to those questions right now. We don't have any presumed answers. We're not even sure this is the best way to go about doing what we want to do. So there's ongoing discussions and I can't go to the meeting on Thursday because I've got to take Brewster to the doctor. So hence the long conversation.

B: It's a fascinating project. Is part of your design how you disseminate the learnings?

C: Oh of course. Yeah, yeah. There's a whole group of people. Bessa Whitmore, who's leading the knowledge mobilization, I think it's called. The knowledge mobilization hub is a whole hub. Of the five, that's one of them. And its theme is cross-cutting. The other ones are violence against women, anti-poverty, housing, and community development.

B: It's quite affirming that such a project could be sold to SSHRC.

C: Yeah.

B: Now there's pretty sophisticated marketers, intellectual marketers here who've been around the system a long time, but still.

C: Yeah, still. And this was Ted Jackson's last, you know, okay before I retire, I'm going to get this one happening. He was the original principal investigator. Ted Jackson and Jerry Briggs was working with him.

B: I know Ted well. Ted was on the Board of Inter Pares at one point, although I knew him before that when he was at Trent.

C: Oh that's the Trent connection. Okay, I wonder why Trent of all small Ontario universities is one of the keys in this project. Peter Andre, who is now the principal investigator was at Trent.

B: Oh okay. I can't remember whether Mark Stiles was also at Trent. Mark wasn't an academic. He was an activist within Frontier College. The early Inter Pares nexus was a nexus of the CUSO crowd of course but also Frontier College and the Company of Young Canadians.

It was an interesting nexus of people who were growing into adulthood from all of these experiences. I remember meeting when Ted was on the Board. He didn't stand on the Board very long because as he learned how we were operating, he said, "You know? You people don't need a Board. You should become a workers co-op." And we looked at it briefly but our analysis was that if we became a workers co-op, that would be interesting but very narcissistic and we wanted to institutionalize in a different way.

C: Yeah, but before that there was LAWG. Which, as a model, I've never seen replicated anywhere else where you had a board collective and a staff collective and each of the staff had at least one board member who was their mentor, monitor, feedback mechanism. And I think that worked very well. The board met on its own. It had board things it had to do. The staff of course met together all the time.

B: Because Inter Pares was incorporated as a charity, we were operating under...

C: And we weren't. We weren't a charity, though it was basically the women's religious orders that supported us. That would be interesting to go back, if somebody's doing some background on LAWG.

B: Yes, they are. John Foster's working on that. Sheila Katz was working on that, and Louise Casselman.

C: But they were at the other end of things, later on. Well, we started LAWG. Brewster and I were part of the group that started LAWG before we went to Nova Scotia.

C: Just to be really clear, for me, the opportunity to become involved with Aboriginal people is an ongoing challenge and as I get weaker, it becomes more and more of a challenge because I find it much more deeply a spiritual challenge. This is tough. Those people are not like me. It's tough to have to question things. I mean you were asking me who were the influences on my life and I'm trying to honour the question as I'm chatting. It's tough to question things that you hadn't realized were open for questioning. What's the relationship with land? Why water? I mean there's the simple obvious answers. I grew up in the water. In the meaningful way, I think I got a much better sense of the power of the divine while standing and looking at the Atlantic Ocean than I ever did in a church.

B: And then the struggle now, as you come to grips with these things and grapple with them, is to follow what you're learning?

C: The struggle is that it is beginning to appear that I have to take those perspectives, and I say plural importantly because it's not just -- mean the discipline I'm following at the moment is an ancient Chinese one, it's not Aboriginal. Aboriginal in China but that's different.

B: It's traditional.

C: It's traditional and it does use the same methodologies, I guess, of non-invasive, kind of hands-on stuff, which is how I describe acupuncture. A different understanding - and this is what's so challenging - a different understanding of the way in which bodies work. And the whole thing about energy and energy flow, and I guess the problem is that so much of this has been picked up by people who really want a quick answer and there are magazines and blogs and organizations and you know? All this airy fairy, weeny tweeny vegan stuff.

B: New age stuff.

C: Yeah. It's just so intellectually lazy. And yet that's as stupid as refusing to have anything to do with Islam because of jihadists, or Christianity because of the pope. They may like to think they define it. That doesn't mean they do, but it does make it harder to come to it with a straight face.

B: Is one of the challenges that you experience in making this increasingly real in your life, especially living in this stage of your life, that in a way it's post-verbal, it's post-logical.

C: Yup. Yup, bingo.

B: So then what do you do with that and how do you share it?

C: Or to use an absolutely God awful expression that Jamie interred somewhere or disinterred somewhere, which is "How do you language it?" (laughing) Language is not a verb. Please! I love word pictures. Metaphor is how I operate and I don't want to lose that because I just love it. It's where my cartoons all come from. They're all wordplay one way or another.

B: But you must be discovering that the language is not the way to get there, but once you're there, perhaps language, especially figurative language, imaginative language, poetic language can help people understand where you're going.

C: Very simple. I was trying to explain to the young doctor who's replacing my acupuncturist while he was away over Christmas, how sticking the needle in made my leg feel. And I finally said, okay, if it were in my throat, I'd call it nausea or queasiness, but it's in my leg or my stomach. And she was a little taken aback, and thought about it. Xhao, the Chinese doctor, said "Mm-hmm." So for me, being able to describe it in a way that you know what I'm talking about now? You know that sort of funny feeling where something is - I call it roiling. The other simile I've used is that when I was pregnant and the baby decided he was going to take a somersault, so something independently. No particular stimulus that you know of. Just goes "rohnhh".

B: It's an anxiety experience in the muscles rather than the head.

C: It's not even / yeah, maybe it's anxiety. It doesn't hurt.

B: It's a disorientation.

C: It's a disorientation, exactly. And Xhao's comment is what we're dealing with here is energy flows and what I'm trying to do is to help redirect some of those energies. So of course you're feeling it. Good, thank you for reinforcing that we're doing, what we're supposed to be doing here.

B: And this is only one manifestation of the spiritual exploration you're doing, is it?

C: Well the whole thing is an exercise in intellectual humility. I mean cancer is an exercise in humility

B: Is part of it standing on the edge of the clearing but you don't know what's in the clearing and wanting to be able to let go because you know you can't be in the clearing unless you let go of the shore.

C: It's easier if you think of it as a pool. You've got to get into the water, but you have no idea how cold it is.

B: Sitting Bull's supposed to have said - and probably there are many great leaders, traditional leaders, who said that in a flood, the worst place to stand is on the shore. You have to let go of the shore and go into the middle of the stream because the shore will be swamped by the flood but the stream will carry you beyond it.

C: The stream's where the energy is, yeah. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Scary. Scary as hell.

B: But in a way it's letting go of the mind. It's going past the watcher. Is it a lonely journey?

C: Not so long as you're around.

B: Thank you.

C: Well no, I mean I have, you know, people are walking along with me. And there's so many and various. One of the things that I'm doing, I think I mentioned this before, with my limited energies is I have long conversations with people. I was just looking up a number and I came across the number for my friend, Verna Scales. Verna Robbins she was, who lived across the street from me in St. John's on Gower Street and we used to walk to school together when we were four.

B: That's great. 70 years ago.

C: My whole life. And she had a stroke a couple of years ago now and there's increasing signs of dementia and she's just trying to live with that, having been an intellectual. She was a scientist and originally in marine science and then she switched over into biology and was working on the theoretical side of medicine at the university, and now she's seeing the distinct possibility that there's no intervention that anyone's been able to come up with that will stave that off. She just has these occasional bleeds in her brain. The hope is that one of them will kill her before she loses her mind altogether.

B: And she's absolutely conscious of this? She knows it's happening?

C: That's what we were talking about. That's how I know that's what she was thinking. That's what she was telling me. It was quite shocking.

B: She must be very grateful to have had that conversation. There's probably not very many people she could have had that conversation with.

C: Possibly. I have no idea. Verna's a remarkable person. She's lived in the same town all her life, though she's travelled, globally, but what I mean is that Joan LeDrew was picking her up to go shopping and Joan was at school with us. She's in touch with our old schoolmates, which I'm totally not. I've got two notes on my desk from old schoolmates. Cecily Bradbury I remember, the other one I can't even remember, who are now living in Quebec. I guess in this end of Quebec and wanted to get in touch and I haven't done it yet. And I'm surprised. That's one of the things that constantly surprises me. I constantly think that people who I knew only through the accident that we went to school together couldn't be terribly interesting, and my chosen life and my chosen set of friends who are people who challenge me intellectually and politically. They push me to go further on issues like armed resistance, and you know, as my friend Kathleen says, "When do we decide to put ourselves in front of the bulldozers?" "Not yet" is the only answer we've come up with yet, but we talk about it every couple of months. "Is it time yet?"

B: Yeah, when you really get into that thought, often the question is why am I not doing this rather than why should I?

C: Exactly. Exactly. And particularly if you happen to be a member of the Raging Grannies in Ottawa who are constantly pushing the edge, but extraordinarily generous and gracious on an individual level, it's, well, of course you can't do more than you can do. Just take care of yourself and you'll be back. But at the same time, we've got to get out there and do this, this, this, this, this, this, and this. Tomorrow. So who's coming? So it's those people, I somehow assume I wouldn't find them among my old schoolmates, but that's ridiculous.

C: I was standing in the middle of the street shortly after we'd moved here and was sort of waving goodbye to my neighbour, Jane, and she sort of said, "Where are you going?" And I said, "Oh, I'm off to a meeting of the Raging Grannies." And she said, "What's that? Sounds interesting." So I explained to her what the Raging Grannies were. [phone rings, interview ends]

February 4, 2016 – Brian Murphy's eighth conversation with Cathleen Kneen.

C: I have to explain quickly that I'm losing my breath. I've got an encapsulated lung, only one, other one's okay. This is not going to be the sound quality of the previous ones and I apologize to whoever's transcribing this. But it had to go sometime. My voice has been one of my great gifts and my ability to charm people with my voice.

B: It's still charming.

C: I wanted to say, 'why are we doing this?' It was Brian's idea, but Brian and Jean said "You should write your own book, not just Brewster's book because it's different. They're parallel lives, but they have very different foci? Focuses. So I said God, I don't even know where to start. And you said "Why don't I come over with my computer and we'll just record a conversation because you don't have any problem talking. It's that blank screen that gets you." And I said "Great, okay, we'll do that."

And with incredible generosity, this is now number eight of eight hour long conversations, and so why am I doing it? Well I believe that I have something to offer. I believe that what I've done has been worthwhile, with all due humility, et cetera. The messages I get back from my friends with whom I've been communicating about this cancer process, which I still don't have good words for, are very much in the soft and squishy. We don't have good language to talk about this stuff and I would like to find good language to talk about it. Were you the person who sent me Viktor Frankl's book? The Search for Meaning?

B: No, but if I'd thought of it, I would have. It's a wonderful, wonderful book.

C: It arrived and I've been reading it and I thought, why am I reading? In this state of mine, why am I reading a book about the Holocaust? But it's not about the Holocaust. It's really very interesting. I've read through the first part.

B: You don't know who sent it to you?

C: No. It arrived from Amazon anonymously. So the universe has sent me a book.

B: Wow.

C: It must have been somebody I was talking to, probably from away, who just sent it. May not have realized that their sender name didn't appear anywhere. May not know that it's anonymous. Anyway, he writes at one point that the Statue of Liberty is on the East Coast and on the West Coast, by the time you get to the West Coast, it's responsibility. And I thought holy smokes, ain't that just it? Freedom without responsibility is a travesty.

B: Yes.

C: But it's also been my own journey. Going to the West Coast, learning responsibility.

B: The West Coast experience really was a watershed for you, wasn't it?

C: Oh absolutely.

B: So it's not merely figurative.

C: No, no, exactly. That was why it hit me so hard. But the whole thing about how it's not just freedom to express oneself and to be oneself and to be in the world, but it's also how that has resonance in the creation of a just society. How that all hangs together. So we've talked a bit about

leadership and I wanted to talk a bit more about partnership and I wanted to know, so this is a memoir. If I write it as a book, it's going to have recipes in it and doggerel, you know, rags and snatches and not be very long and maybe multimedia. And Brewster and I were thinking -- he was saying 'what do you want for a funeral?' I said I don't know. That's not my concern really. That's for you guys, but he said where would you have it? I said whew, that's an interesting question.

B: Good for Brewster.

C: In St. John's? In Pictou County? In Ottawa? In Toronto somewhere -- Saskatoon? Winnipeg?

B: Sorrento?

C: Oh yeah, and then in BC in several different places and I started thinking, oh, so we're talking about a caravan. We're talking about some sort of little event. Because what happened when we did Brewster's book launch in Toronto was that people, pretty well all of whom were of our age cohort, which stretches now from 80 down to 60, I guess, came together because of their connection with Brewster and either discovered or rediscovered their connection with one another from all the different aspects of our lives in that particular city, which was everything from stopping the Spadina Expressway and developing the Rochdale playschool to I don't know, working in publishing, working at Violence Against Women, working at Public Health, all the different things that we did there, that he did there. If we're building a movement, that's a really important thing to do, so to use this as a tool which could be the occasion for a series of events where people come together, and making connections is the point of coming together, that might be a good memorial. So that's kind of what I'm thinking. There's always the sense that I want to have the last word on my own life.

And it's not a bad thing. Anyway, so that's why we're doing it. I just wanted to bear that in mind as we carry on the conversation. And it gives you also an idea of where my thinking has changed in the month since we started talking, I think.

B: Yeah, you started this roller coaster in about the second week of January, so it's almost a month.

C: Yeah, first week of January. I noticed the shortness of breath at the beginning of January, and we're now into the fourth of February.

B: So it's interesting you're talking this way because you were very, very tentative and we had an agreement that we were going to do this project without a goal. So it appears just talking has clarified...

C: Well talking and being hit upside the head with a rather severe deterioration in my condition.

B: Yeah.

C: Where I'm not clearly -- we've been struggling through with this in terms of recording times of taking medication for whom, why are we doing this? Well if I get into palliative care -- it's useful to have a record. Palliative care, A, okay, so I'm just sort of - and I have really good days or really good times in days and then I have times when I'm just toast and you'll see it as we're going along. You'll watch my face deteriorate and if you're Brewster, you'll say, "Cathleen, time to go." And then sometimes I can lie down for ten minutes and that takes care of it, depending on the importance of what I was doing. I'm now on steroids. Which will make anybody who knows me laugh.

B: Yeah, it's one of the ones we fought against but they apparently are miracle drugs and you need them.

C: Well and not only that, the whole notion of being on steroids and Rebecca says, "Well Cathleen, right now you on steroids will get you back to something of what you were like without steroids" and

that's the whole point is to get myself some energy and use -- and be able to -- and this is the struggle, of course, ain't it always? It just intensifies -- to use the energy I have for the purposes I want to use it for and not just sort of fritter it away.

B: Yeah, it's there and that's not coming from the steroids. The steroids just do something that allows the energy to circulate plumb again.

C: That's right, yeah. I've actually gained a pound again. I lost some weight.

B: Excellent.

C: And it's coming back. So -- and I'm taking half the dose because on a full dose, I couldn't sleep.

B: The physical roller coaster must have been an emotional roller coaster as well.

C: Yes. Absolutely.

B: Hope and hopelessness, hope and hopelessness.

C: Yep, yep. And coming back finally to writing that letter. That's the other thing that goes with the book is letters.

B: Yes.

C: Where I finally said "It's okay."

B: I assume you worked with Joan on them.

C: I wrote them and Joan sent them.

B: They didn't seem like Joan. Is that roller coaster, the emotional roller coaster, a lonely journey? Or are you feeling accompanied in it or is it both?

C: Both. At some point, it's always lonely but no, it's not lonely. It's mine.

B: Very good. Like the story. It's mine.

C: Yeah. It is mine and I have to own it and I have amazing support. In fact to the point where it had occurred to me, I don't know if I actually got that into the letter or where it is, but we'll put it down here, that I had wondered in passing why am I being so public about this? Most people, Sheila, Bob, most of our friends who suffered with this stuff don't want to broadcast it to the world. They don't want everybody to know what the hell is going on with them. I do. And is that exhibitionism?

B: No. It's care. In some of the other cases and there are cases right now, I know I'm being contacted - that's what I know because people want to know. They need to know. So I see your letters as a gift, not narcissism.

C: You're doing it for them but you know, you don't ever do anything only for other people, I don't think. So why am I doing it for me? What's in it for me? And what's in it for me is I'm getting this incredible level of affirmation about who I've been, what I've done et cetera. Is it deliberate? It may be. I need the strokes, so I'll send out a message to the group and because there's no question that that affirmation has been what's kept me going. No question at all, from the very darkest days right after surgery when I was down in the deep black pit and I literally felt something like a mattress ad where you're lying on clouds?

B: Yes. Yes.

C: Holding me up and I knew what it was. Right through to, you know, the notes I'm getting from people who want to come and see me and it's just so lovely. And I get some lovely, lovely notes, the most moving of which are when you have time and thought, I'm struggling with something here and I'd love to talk with you. And that is just so affirming.

B: Yeah.

C: I haven't had the time and thought yet. There's three phone calls I need to make. Two anyway. And I've got a lot of visitors and I wonder why that visitor and not a different visitor because I can't think of why one person is more dear and precious to me than another. I mean I know these conversations have been just a joy and the evening we spent with you and Jean, you know, is one of those shining little lights.

B: Thank you

C: Well, thank you. That's the whole point, right?

B: I think another element of the notes is not exactly a declaration but a statement "I am here".

C: Yep.

B: "I am. I be."

C: Yeah. Yeah because that's what happens. I lose myself.

C: That's exactly what happens and I can feel it and I can feel it when I come back and the series are helping me come back, so whatever else, you know, this particular half dose of (dexamethasone?) is doing it for me.

B: My sister who I've told you has cancer and lives in Kingston, my older sister, her headline on her updates is "To my cheerleaders and marching band."

C: (laughing)

B: And she's always affirming the people to whom she's sending it and she says "Quite clearly the feedback that I get when I send these is what keeps me going."

B: She sent one last night. She decided to go off the chemo that she's on which is about the third or fourth different one, so she's really -- she's grasping at straws and this one is going to kill her. So she went off after 12 days and I suspect that now she probably would have preferred she hadn't done it, but she wanted to try. And it has that quality of honesty about what's happening. She talks about fear a lot but also gratitude.

C: So I don't really want to talk about the cancer much today because there's so much else to talk about and I spend a lot of time talking and thinking about it and it's the context but it's not the content of what we're doing here. So I wanted to ask if you had other questions.

B: I did have a question because I was thinking over, for myself, about whether there are lacunae, things that we've talked about where I thought, I don't really know that episode. One that occurred to me several times in our conversations, you mentioned a congregation in Toronto of a very particular church. It was clearly an activist church. And you allude to it as though I know the story and in some ways now I kind of do know the story but for people who don't know the story at all, I think it might be useful to give a little history of that church and what was the engagement that you and Brewster had, and a little bit more coherent story about that congregation.

C: Yeah. When we moved to Toronto after our marriage, so I'm this nice Jewish girl who's married a Christian theologian. I had no particular deep connection with Judaism and I was fine to go along with Brewster. And there was this church variously known as the Church of the Holy Trinity, 'Our Lady of Old Eaton's' because it's right in the middle of the Eaton Centre, 'the NDP at Prayer'. I mean it's been called a variety of things.

B: And what street was it on at that time?

C: I don't remember the name of the little street that comes off of Yonge Street between Yonge and Bay. Just south of - is it College or Gerard? I'm not even sure. Anyway, where the Eaton Centre is, so the next one up from Queen. And it's a beautiful old church owned by the congregation. There's a lot of debate with the Diocese about this.

B: It's an Anglican church?

C: Anglican church. Yeah, it's a funny mixture because it's high Anglican in intent and for years and years, there was a congregation that worshipped at 9:30 in the morning and had a regular high Anglican mass and then this other rag-tag bobtail downtown crowd that came in for the 11 o'clock service which included in its ranks half a dozen priests, Anglican and lapsed Catholic, at least two working poets, various musicians and so on.

B: Who were the poets, do you remember?

C: Ian Sowton, in particular, who was lovely, and Bill Witla and Ian between them did a lot of remediation of some of the militaristic imagery in the language of some of the better of the hymns.

B: Oh. You told that story.

C: It does the Christmas Story every year in the old language which unfortunately - he's dead now.¹³ Oh my God, name's gone. Wonderful man with a magnificent voice who read the Christmas Story and we all acted it out in a mime. Always with a real baby. When we first went there, it was still fairly conservative and we were part of a movement that removed the pews from the back of the church so that there was an area where we could gather after church and have coffee, and coffee hour became very important and there was food and so the street people wandered in and picked up food and that was all good and well. Then the rug-rats started crawling around.

B: By the rug-rats you mean the kids?

C: Rug-rats being the toddlers. It became very family-oriented. Every month there was a particular family service which would have things like, you know, those big airplane fabric parachute kind of big tent things?

B: Yes.

C: That you could bop them up and down? And finally they take off by themselves and that would be the central liturgy at one point for one of the family services. Or at Easter time, we paraded a huge, really, really big wooden cross all around the church, around outside and back in again and it hung up over Easter weekend. Easter Sunday, we got up early. Somebody had been to the funeral homes and picked up flowers and we, with rubber bands and getting slivers in our fingers, we covered the cross with flowers and raised it up. It was that kind of liturgical expression. Jim Houston was one of the more brilliant people in this. And the Witla family with the music in particular and Bill is an inspired leader of worship. In fact the official priest rarely got a lick in at preaching because there were so

¹³This was probably Elliot Rose.

many wonderful, thoughtful, theologically-trained-or-not people who had things to say and would say them. Or even – well, he was a very good counsellor, one-on-one counselling, so that's basically what the official priest wound up doing. He was a Jew originally, Jack Adam.

B: That's mid '60s?

C: And then when we came back from Nova Scotia having tried very hard to be part of various churches and not finding anything that really worked- and having had the experience of being politically shunned - we went back to Toronto and went to the Church of the Holy Trinity and in the prayers of the people, somebody got up in the circle - by now they had taken the altar down and had a big table in the front of it where the Deacons and the Priests stood, four Deacons stood at the four corners and the Priest in the middle - and I mean there was a bunch of important things that we did. That church housed draft dodgers in the '60s. It had gay dances in the '70s and '80s. It did a street outreach in the '80s and '90s. It was very much part of the downtown fabric and what was needed was what happened at Holy Trinity.

So the important thing there, just structurally speaking and it's a sidelong, is that because of the property, and we struggled with the Diocese over it and we won, that the property actually belonged to the church, not to the Diocese and the Diocese couldn't just take it and sell it, which it was going to do in response to a really good offer. We wound up trading a piece of land for another piece of land on which we built affordable housing, but the funds that we got from the property basically endowed the church so we could have a social ministry without having a congregation that has a great deal of money to offer. I mean I think some of us were fairly well-off but it's like most of the churches, you've got a handful of people and a lot of people that have no financial capacity whatsoever.

B: Did the church continue to physically exist in that spot?

C: It continues to physically exist and to this day does the same kind of stuff, hasn't changed.

B: That was part of the accommodation? We can build the Eaton Centre but the church stays.

C: The church stays. And so I think the Eaton Centre began to regard us as something like a lawn ornament, you know, an interesting feature because it's a beautiful old building. It burned a couple of times, and was rehabilitated, some very interesting stories. Anyway, as we came in, prayers of the people, somebody stood up and said, "The Kneens are back. Welcome the Kneens back." You know, round of applause.

B: And this is '86?

C: This is '86.

C: Next week we go back. Same thing happens. Somebody wasn't there last week and wanted to put this in prayers of the people. It happened three times. So we said, okay, I guess having left Nova Scotia with that momentum, that itchy feeling of the knife between your shoulder blades, we came into a welcome of people who knew damn well who we were. They knew what our politics were and they thought it was great. Until the point where I actually got baptized. My parents were appalled and I'm not quite sure even why I did it.

B: I didn't know that. That hasn't come up.

C: Well, it's worn off. I've repudiated it again. I realize I'm not a Christian. I don't believe in that stuff at all, in fact. None of the miraculous things. It's smoke and mirrors, but I believe in the Church of the Holy Trinity and I'm a member this group and that's their catechism so okay, I'll buy in.

B: Were you under pressure to do that - or was it something you wanted to do?

C: No. Not really. There was a little pressure from Jack, who being a Jew himself thought this was appropriate. He'd gone whole hog and done it. And then of course I was also having a love affair with a woman priest who was part of that congregation.

B: I was going to ask you over the time the change of the role of women in that church.

C: The role of women never changed. It was always the same, I think. We were just way ahead of our time, that's all. And particularly in terms of the gay business, we had a couple, Joyce and Allison, who got pregnant. They were Deacons and of course the Bishop banned them from the Diaconate, so the only thing left at Holy Trinity that they did as Deacons, everybody else did too, was read the Gospel. So on the days when the Gospel was read by somebody else because they were the Deacon serving, the corner of the table was empty and we made do with three. And that was always the symbolic gesture. And they had two children in the end who were brought up in the church. There's a lot of stuff in the way in which the church worked that I just loved. The important part for me was that I learned the liturgy. I became the Chair of the worship committee. I mean it's amazing. I'm actually fairly well educated when you get down to all the stuff I studied with Brewster and all our conversations and all these different churches I've attended and I have read the Bible, most of it more than once. A lot of it more than once.

B: And did your membership in that church respond to a spiritual need or a social need, a community need, or both, both in the 60s and then when you came back 15 years later?

C: In the 60s, it wasn't terribly important for me. I had a whack of other stuff going on. When I came back and said, where am I going to be? It became a home. And I think the church does that function very importantly for a lot of people in a lot of places a lot of times.

B: So it was the home thing.

C: Yeah. You feel you have an instant community.

B: Was your relationship with the deaconess public?

C: The Priest, no. No. Not at all. A couple of people knew, they intuited. Then she left and went to BC and I met her again when we got out there, but she went to BC, in the knowledge that nothing was going to happen with our relationship, that there was no way she was going to get between me and Brewster. She just wasn't going to do that. It was a very, very difficult time because it was a very serious relationship, but it wouldn't have worked, even if I had tried to leave Brewster at that point and - I'll put it on the record - the thought did cross my mind. It would never have worked because our politics were clearly not the same. And that was an interesting realization. In this crazy world of multiple and different sexual relationships and where the sexual side of the relationship, where the libidinous side of the relationship if you like, intersects with the rest of what the relationship is, a realization that 60s, 70s and some of the 80s notwithstanding, that's not the critical piece. Which is why I wanted to talk about partnership because that for me is what's critical.

B: Say more on that.

C: If you're going to actually live with somebody all your life, for me, for Brewster and me, it's that partnership. Anyway, so this partnership, I cringe sometimes when people are having a love affair and they refer to the person as "my partner" because you haven't taken on that. That's much bigger. There's nothing wrong with the word spouse, nothing wrong with the word lover. We should be accurate about what we're doing. If you're partners as Brewster and I have been, it is partners in life, partners in work, partners in the struggle, you know? With different roles in a relationship which is committed and long-term and lifelong.

B: Were you partners like that from the first walk at the Conference in the States that you've told me about?

C: I think so, I think so.

B: Or did this evolve? Was there a moment when it was reforged?

C: It was assumed from the beginning and incarnated as we went along. You have to remember how incredibly dewy eyed and idealistic we were.

B: So people talk about love at first sight, but you're saying this was partnership at first sight.

C: Yeah, I guess so. I guess so. It certainly worked out that way. We've been incredibly fortunate because we were able to work together.

B: I wouldn't have thought at that age you would have known what partnership was other than maybe seeing it in your parents. I don't know about Brewster's parents.

C: No, no, not as a model of marriage. I just keep saying how idealistic we were. I was just a little peacenik. I don't know where it came from. But it did grow. I mean going on to the farm. When we first got married, we were finding our feet and in Toronto, getting involved in a million different things which I've reflected on in the earlier bit of this conversation in terms of the different areas of political activity -- but then going to the farm and realizing that on the one hand, we had this feminist upwelling which said that everybody had to do the same thing to be equal. It doesn't really work very well when you're trying to run a farm and you've got livestock and machinery and land and children, all of which need to be juggled. At some point you realize that somebody's got to stay on the tractor and finish the fieldwork and somebody's got to go back to the home place and milk the cow, feed the chickens, and make dinner. And it kind of makes sense that the person who's better with machinery is the one who stays with the machine. And particularly when the person who isn't good with machinery doesn't really *like* machinery very much. Brewster doesn't really *like* it either, but he does well with it. He's a good manager of it. And it's different with our kids. So we realized what we had to do was to recognize that the different roles were of equal importance. It was just a question of functionality, not a question of priority or power or authority because again, and this was something where we were so blessed to raise the kids on a farm where it was possible to say okay, whoever is going to have to deal with the outcome of this decision is the one who gets the final say on the decision. We'd discuss it all around the table but if you're dealing with those sheep, you're the one who gets to decide what the final whatever-the-issue-was gets dealt with.

B: Also, I suspect a son and a daughter in this case were raised pretty equal in terms of what they were expected to do.

C: Well, it was serendipitous because when Rebecca was born, I wanted to call her Dana Joy -- the Joy was just because; the Dana was after the woman in that couple we met in Prague. Well, when she came out, this squalling little black-haired, she was all mouth, screeching and I said oh, well, you're not a Dana Joy. I think you're one of the mothers of the people. I think you're a Rebecca. She is a Rebecca. She is a mother of the people. Her second name, Jane, I don't know if I ever told you this --

B: I didn't know her name was Jane.

C: Brewster had a dear friend when he was at Union Seminary. She was a white woman from the south, became the first white staff person in the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. She was also a lesbian and a poet. Her name was Jane Stenbridge and I was staying with Brewster at one point when a phone call came in from Jane. She was in Alaska and needed money to get back to mainland U.S. immediately and so our tryst was interrupted by having to go and wire money to Jane because that was obviously the top priority. And it was important that we named Rebecca that way. At

ten when she came to me almost in tears because she said "I'm growing up. I have to leave Fairyland" and I thought about that for a while and I finally said words to the effect of "No you don't, actually, but this is how grownups do it." And I gave her Jane's poetry book.

B: Oh Cathleen.

C: Wasn't(?) it fun.

B: What a lucky girl to have you as a mom.

C: Well she was - we were both lucky. I was very lucky to have - *am* lucky to have her as a daughter. She's an amazing person. So what I was about to say is that from the get-go, I mean the thing was I recognized her when she was born. And I think Brewster did too. I'm saying me here where I think it's probably mostly both of us, but that's just because it's convenient.

B: Yes.

C: I recognized who she was. I said oh it's you. Why didn't you tell me? I've been carrying you around for nine months and had no idea it was you. Whereas with Jamie, I was too inexperienced I think as a parent, and too inexperienced with babies to recognize him, though I think may well have done it in the same way because he's also not exactly Caspar Milquetoast. He's a Mensch.

B: Yeah.

C: So yeah, and it was very deliberate and we were very deliberate in trying to make sure that the children both had meaningful relationships with other adults who weren't us but shared our basic life values. Because we knew that they were going to have to rebel and we wanted the rebellion to be personal, not political. And in that, I think we succeeded. I always love quoting Wayne Roberts' aphorism that the beer bottle doesn't fall far from the trailer.

B: That's a good one.

C: Yeah. And we've been extraordinarily fortunate and I think it was the context that made it possible. I mean I know - I'm not romanticizing farming people. It was hard work and we were doing it because this is what we wanted to do. We knew what we wanted to do and if you want to try and do that in the city, it's just harder, that's all. Because you can't send the kids out and say I'll see you supertime.

B: Life is much more fragmented.

C: It's just very much harder. I mean we were talking last night about the period of time when Jamie was showing all the signs - he was ten years old - he was showing all the signs of being maladjusted, unhappy, miserable. I mean bedwetting, just ridiculous things for a ten year old. And we talked to the school. The school had no idea. So we took him out of school and put him on the tractor and all the symptoms cleared up in a couple of weeks. It was just - I mean it was classic kid crying for help symptoms, but you couldn't do that in the city. You couldn't suddenly give a child a man's work, expect him to do it.

B: In fact, it would be much more difficult to take a child out of school, which are alienating places. And this theme of partnership, have you felt judged on occasion by others, women, feminists for the way you look at marriage and partnership?

C: No. No, I don't think so. I think - well when you say 'other women', I'm thinking immediately of my own consciousness-raising group as we called them in those days. It turned into the Pictou County Women's Centre, which to my delight continues to do good work, including inviting Peter McKay's

wife to come and speak at a conference, with the result that about a third of the people walked out because she was so appallingly arrogant and full of herself.

B: The reason I ask that question was you alluded to people having a misconception about partnership - in marriage.

C: Oh that's just - I'm just listening to people talking: My partner this and my partner that.

And the shrinking from using language - what's wrong with husband and wife? Okay, well I must admit I have a problem with one of my friends who refers to her wife. I haven't quite gotten my head around that one yet. I understand what she's doing but if you're a two-sex relationship, I don't see wife as necessarily being problematic. If you're in a one-sex relationship, then it feels like a servant role. Hmm. We'll have to think more about that one. Let's let it go.

But the partnership has been interesting because Brewster has always - and this is back to leadership and where I've seen leadership and why I've not seen myself as a leader - because I see, always have seen, I should say, leadership as being more end-oriented and focused and Brewster's always been that way. He's ten years older than me, fairly well educated and trained I would say in a variety of intellectual disciplines and intellectual by instinct, self-educated a lot, though he says he got out of university and said, "Well I better educate myself then." Whereas I got out of university with a degree in English and couldn't read a book. Didn't read a novel for three years.

B: It's interesting what you say about Brewster and yourself because you could see in the way you describe Brewster that he was a visionary. But I think you can be visionary in seeing what can be done and you can be visionary in seeing how things can be done. And both are a form of leadership and understanding in your bones and being able to share process, the best way, as opposed to necessarily the thing down the road.

C: Yeah. Which is back to why we're doing this because I think I've learned a thing or two about process that is very, very hard to articulate because our language is so freaking sentimental and it's just really hard to get at that kernel of love when we don't have good language for it. And I don't know if the problem is English. It strikes me English is a fairly omnivorous language as it swallows up other languages and it uses what bits of it it wants.

B: But it's Germanic in structure and subject-object.

C: This is true. Even if it's an indirect object.

B: Yeah. You often express a frustration about the limits of language to express what's in your head, in your heart, and your soul.

C: Doesn't everybody complain about their tools?

B: But you're so articulate.

C: Well that's the whole point, isn't it?

B: Yeah. What other things are difficult to express now that you are - finding an urge?

C: Well I talked about sex today for the first time.

B: I was going to ask you. We had agreed earlier on that we were just going to skirt that issue.

C: Yep.

B: And it just came up today as natural as all get out.

C: And that's, I think, an interesting clue, isn't it? Things come up when they're ready.

B: And it's all of a piece.

C: Well the other thing is that I think I've come to the point where my body just isn't functioning anymore at a bunch of levels and that would be one of them. Doesn't mean a lack of desire for intimacy but it's a re-jigging of intimacy. It's not the same as it was. And you realize in the moment of its loss that the sexual, the intimate sexual encounter and intercourse or whatever nature it is, is relatively easy, in the sense that the process and the outcome flows. I've been reading something about this. I think it was Viktor Frankl writing about sex and how the ecstasy, the orgasm, whatever you want to call it, that is that moment of subsuming one's own being into the other or the relationship or something.

B: It's a communion.

C: Yeah. Yeah. It takes you both out of and into yourself and has no purpose other than being itself and it's not something you aim at. That's what Frankl was saying. When you aim at it, you kill it. Which is why all the hookups are so ridiculous. I mean it's fun. That whole thing is fun. When you've got that super libidinous energy and God knows I had it, just like, it's a game. It's fun and you play it. It's got very little to do with - and this was something I didn't realize at the time or it would have been easier to articulate at the time - very little to do with a lifelong partnership with somebody that you disagree with half the time, have to struggle with all the time, you know? And have ecstatic communion with.

B: That would be an extremely liberating perception if it were shared more widely.

C: Yeah. Which is why I guess in this moment, it's come up. I have to figure out better ways of saying it than I just have, I think. I feel like I'm not quite on top of my game now. I feel like I'm slipping.

So the partnership then grew up in this very loaded context of - as I said, the emerging feminism and (...) ah, okay, I am definitely losing it. It's just going...

B: Did they run counter to each other or they had to be reconciled? Or you knew that they always were reconciled?

C: Well you asked me about my friend's perception. One of the things that I did get was a perception from outside that Brewster was the ultimate patriarch. And I never felt that was completely true. There was an element of truth to it and I screamed at him about it, but Brewster's complicated and I made sure that was in his book, that he'd grown up in the context of very strong women. He'd grown up with the assumption that women were human beings and a little different from men, but not of a different order. And at the same time, you know, we were under a great deal of pressure to fulfil an extremely demanding physical piece of work, every day and every day and every day, to the point where we exhausted ourselves. So it certainly was a struggle and I think from that struggle came my dalliance with love affairs with other women, which simply convinced me of what was to me abundantly obvious and true anyway, and that is that we all exist on some kind of a bell curve. And we slip along it. As one woman who lectured at a shelter I was visiting said, "You know, who you love depends on who you love with, not the shape of their skin."

B: That's a good one. I have not heard that.

C: I liked it.

February 9, 2016 – Brian Murphy's ninth conversation with Cathleen Kneen.

C: So you've been asking me questions about when and how I got involved in Aboriginal issues and I've been talking about going out to BC. I was quoting Victor Frankl, that the Statue of Liberty on the East Coast should be reflected by a statue of responsibility on the West Coast and we were constructing this whole 'Cathleen East Coast West Coast'. So back in the '60s, a woman named Millie Ryerson, who was a mensch, she was one of the most amazingly creative people I've ever met.

B: The things I've heard about that woman.

C: She had started, I think on the same basically social justice mission, being a Communist and all, had started a little shop called The Artisans on Gerard Street. The little area is no longer - it's been redeveloped, but at that time, it was a pokey little Victorian type of shop and she went north, worked with the people there and collected and purchased their craftwork, which was not of real value -- the scene was not as it is now in terms of high quality control. She bought things, sold them and went back and said you know, this would sell better, I think, if we did it this way. Not to change your traditional work, but to make it more visible to a non-Aboriginal audience and I do the same thing with non-Aboriginal people as well. She decided that if the Student Union for Peace Action was going to be able to be a powerful force for change and good, then it needed to have an independent source of funding. So she gave us her store.

B: Wow.

C: Yeah. And of course we couldn't cope.

C: But that was my first encounter. It also turned me into a potter because I got to see some of the incredible work that was being done and oh my God, this is amazing. So that, along with the fact that a woman who had a potter's wheel moved in down the road and had her kid at our daycare.

B: How long were you able to manage the store?

C: Well I left Toronto in '71.

B: And it was still going?

C: So about five years. I think we probably quit before I left. I was not the only one. I was one of a team, of course. So that was one piece. Then when I came back to Toronto after Nova Scotia, I met a woman named Caroline Walker, who was married to a man named Norman Endicott of the Endicott family.¹⁴ Norman grew up in China and was the only visitor to our farm who ever stopped on route walking across the field, picked up a stone and took it to the edge of the field with him the way a Chinese peasant would. It's a vision of walking the talk. You don't just talk about being engaged with what people are doing. You just do it because you're there. And anyway, Caroline, along with her first husband, Gary Perly, had a business called Perly Maps, so they were in the publishing business. And I think Gary thought it would be kind of neat, and she certainly did, to have an actual publishing arm which was called NC Press, originally for New Canada. So NC Press was the business and Caroline was kind enough to offer me work and basically taught me the publishing business, to the point where when she wrote her book on the Three Gorges and went to China for several months, I kind of took over the publishing along with her sister, Janet, who did the day-to-day stuff and understood how the systems worked and I did all the editing and publishing and layout.

¹⁴The Endicotts were eminent missionaries and socialists. Norman's parents, James and Mary Endicott, were Methodist missionaries in Chengdu, China; James' father had been a missionary in Chengdu from 1894 to 1910 and was later Moderator of the United Church.

So under the tutelage of Caroline Walker, I had the opportunity to pick up this little booklet that Murray Angus had written called *And the Last Shall Be First* and it was in the days Brewster wrote his little booklet, I guess it was for the Anglicans at that point, called *The Right Hand and the Left*. I mean it was that era, when people were writing little monographs that were used as study guides because the church existed at that point in a context where people did get together and study and after church on Sunday, they'd have lunch and then spend the afternoon doing a study on something or other important. And I think D and P and Kairos and the other within-church quote unquote development groups benefited greatly from that practice. In any event, this was called *And the Last Shall Be First*. And I looked at it and I said, "Murray, there's a book there. We could make a really pretty book out of this. And that would get much, much further than where it's getting right now." So I did. And I managed to get the -- oh what's the collection of Aboriginal art north of Toronto, up around King somewhere? -- They were kind enough to allow us to use Norval Morrisseau's painting.

B: So that's the book right there. It's beautiful!

C: Isn't it? That was 1991.

B: So this was when you came back after the farm?

C: After the farm and before BC.

B: Does NC Press still exist?

C: No. Does anything still exist?

B: That's one of the questions I'm going to ask you at some point.

C: I really wanted to make that correction because now I'm back in Anishinaabe territory, it's important to me.

B: I find it interesting when you talk about these experiences which almost can seem like episodes in a long life, but of course when you were doing it, they weren't really episodes. . .

C: It was what was happening.

B: During these conversations we've focused on two big themes about your contribution: leadership and organizing, but it's interesting. Time and time again, we also see you as the manager. What a good manager you were and how many times when things were happening and things had to be managed, you emerged as the manager and people had confidence and you had confidence and you got things done. And then, of course with the book, that's more than just managing. That's actually going from management into the guts of the thing.

C: And there was a man named Art Solomon.

B: That name is very familiar.

C: He's an Elder. He was a man of that stature. His wife Eva was certainly Joan Kuyek's mentor, and it was Joan who led me here. I need to make sure that's really clear. Joan saw this long before I did and she has seen many things long before I did.

B: Led you to?

C: Led me to an understanding of a statement that Jamie made when he first moved up here when he

went to McGill. And Jamie said, and I think it's on the record, that "If you want to live somewhere, then you must enquire of the people who live there what is the spirituality of this place." Right? So Joan saw that right away and she got to the point where she was gifted an eagle feather and practiced meditation in the appropriate manner and so when I got into a relationship with Art because he was interested in...

B: He's an Algonquin?

C: Yeah, he's dead now. He died of Bright's Disease in '97.

C: This was the second book of his we did. And the paintings were done by his son-in-law, Perry McLeod-Shabogesic.

C: Your list of dedications would be Menno Weibe, Ed Newbury and his wife Reena, Rorihokwats, Joan Kuyek, Phyllis Fischer, who actually funded it, and Perry McLeod-Shabogesic's paintings, and of course Mickey Posluns. Mickey was the guy who lived down in Akwesasne and wrote Akwesasne notes and got involved in that whole struggle and was involved with getting the canoe trek down to New York, the ocean canoe trek [the Odeyak]. All this land, territory rights, et cetera, and the quote I was going to give you before was when we stand up at the beginning of a meeting and it's now become standard operating procedure, and before we start, I want to acknowledge that we're standing on unceded Aboriginal land. Where's the *and therefore*? So I got into the 'and therefore' at the end of the 1980s, beginning of the 1990s. And then moved to BC so that I was wide open.

B: Okay, that fills in a gap because I actually asked you in one of our conversations when you spun some wonderful stories about when you were there and how that emerged and one of my questions was how come you were so open to that? And you explained it, but this adds layers. Like we said, this conversation is a spiral that has layers and layers of understanding and meaning and life.

C: The other thing I had to tell you, we haven't talked about it on the tape, I think. I have cancer. I have pancreatic cancer and in my search for understanding of that, which is, I think, where some of the impetus for doing this came from, I was telling you about my experience with the acupuncture therapist who, among other things, told me that my pain and my cancer are in two basic locations. The right and the left. And the right side is where anger lives and that's not as powerful. For me the left side is where the power is, which is where the worry worry organizing thing is. And if I could leave off that, if I could let go, calm down, let go, let be, then I would be much more likely to heal better.

B: Wow. Was your intuition that it was the other way around? That it was the anger?

C: No, neither. I had no idea. This is a whole completely different paradigm than I had any experience with. And as you remember, at the time I was just wild with excitement because instead of having to fight, instead of having to see this whole thing as the battle against cancer, I could see it as a healing process where I was working with the elements of my body but that the elements of my body should be what my mother taught me in my cradle was how to organize. How to have a plan B. Her whole refugee experience. Oh, you know, we've got a plan B. We've got a bank account for plan B. I was discussing it with Brewster today. We were talking how much this is going to cost and I said, "Do we have a plan B here? Do we have a bank account?" He said "Yep, it's okay. It's okay, we can manage it."

B: And you've always been the fixer.

C: Never thought of myself as a fixer. Not in any -- certainly not in the conventional sense of what that term means, the person who makes things happen. I've always called it defaulting to admin and management.

B: But also there's your story about 'we stand on unceded Aboriginal territory' *and then what*?

C: Yeah, exactly.

B: It's that instinct to do something about it, which is apparently this left side. It's untenable that injustice is and nothing is done about it. I think it's one of the key lines in the Torah. To see an injustice and to do nothing is to be part of the injustice.

C: I remember my mother saying - my parents had this fight all their lives - Do you give the sixpence to the beggar or to the party? That's the question, right? And the problem, of course, is as Kathleen (Kay) MacPherson so famously said, "When in doubt, do both."

B: Yes. There's a note in my journal at one point, many, many years ago, decades, because I was doing justice work in the form of charity. Inter Pares is a charity. And in some situation I was in, I just had this insight, it wasn't true, it was just an insight that if you want to change the world, use politics. But if you want to change a person's life, charity. I meant charity in the sense of *agape*, not the way we define charity now. But love. And your friend is right. We have to do both.

C: Yeah. It's unconscionable to do one and not the other. And that's been said much better than I'm going to say it, so I won't.

B: As a result of your interaction with this wonderful man, this acupuncturist, have you experienced a shift, a balance of the left and the right? I can't imagine you ever not wanting to.

C: That would be - it would be way premature and I think arrogant to say so. I think I've gained some kind of a consciousness of it. -- which I'm working on trying to bring to consciousness. And that's what irritates me about sleeping so much because when I doze -- when I don't sleep, when I doze, I lie there and I think and I let these thoughts percolate and I let those ideas come and start working in my head. But I just found the irony -- and it's not even an irony-- I was thinking of it as that which has given me life has killed me or is killing me, but then that's what life is.

B: That's what life is.

C: Yeah. Life is sexually transmitted terminal disease.

B: And it's also brought life.

C: It brings life. Exactly, exactly. And the rotting and ripening is all the same process. That's much easier to say than it is to live. It is bloody hard to live. Make no mistake about it and I make no claim to be able to live it. Just to tell you a little bit about what it's like, what it feels like to be trying to.

B: Although those words are coming out of your practice, so you are trying to.

C: I am trying to....

B: "Bring to consciousness" - this phrase sometimes you use. What does that mean when you say you want to "bring it to consciousness"? Most people would just say yeah, I want to be aware, but you mean something else.

C: I think I've said before, my sense of myself is of this happy little thing bopping around the world, loving people and being loved in return.

B: The flower child still.

C: I never was. I was too old for it, so I don't know where that idea came from except that it was so different from what I understood to be the real serious political leadership. You know, we met a group

of Indian Marxist students in Kerala and I don't know if there is anything quite as vibrantly dynamic as a full-on South Indian Marxist, all flashing black eyes, you know, and they have studied. When I met the Europeans, much, much earlier on in the 60s, when I met the Europeans they had studied their Marx and they had studied their Lenin. They knew all these things and I sort of knew them vaguely. Like I read the Bible, you know, I haven't read *Mein Kampf*. I haven't read *Capital*. I've read some of the essays on economics and so on. I've read some of the Marxists like the easy ones and I say easy as a praise, like Joan Robinson, who write very clear prose and even someone like me can read it. I mean I had Joan Robinson's book, one of them, in the hospital bed with me when I had Jamie. I tried, but I'm not a scholar. And so it's -- it's a sense that I'm not a heavyweight and so to bring something to consciousness is to work on moving beyond being, taking things as instinctively correct because I mean -- damn it all, it's obvious. All this stuff, this wisdom is absolutely obvious. You cannot have justice without peace. You cannot have peace without justice. What's so hard? So what does it mean that this becomes such an enormous insight means it is more than just thinking about it. It's making it a conscious, making it bigger in your life.

B: The word made flesh.

C: Yeah. Hmm. Yeah I guess.

B: Incarnate.

C: I use that term. I use that term quite a bit, to people's surprise, 'Incarnation', and it's not one that's in common parlance so people look at me.

B: But that's good because it's not formulaic and people have to think.

B: Your journey's covered a lot of space and a lot of time, and earlier on in this conversation we had talked about things that have changed and things that haven't changed and I'm curious, as you kind of stand on the mountain and look at the landscape of your life surrounding you, something that you think has been a pretty significant change for the better, or something that's been a pretty significant change and you think it's for the worst, and maybe something significant that actually you don't think has changed much at all.

C: One thing that changed me, it's an interesting question that gets asked of young people when they're going to university is: "What are you going to do with that?" Like I remember Jean mentioning this at one point. What do you do with a degree in English? Well you wind up publishing, I think, several not insignificant books.

B: And not just these. The Ram's Horn as well.

C: Well, but all of Brewster's books. I had completely forgotten about these books, these artefacts of *my* life because I see them as artefacts of *their* lives and I'm the midwife. But I've learned a fair bit of midwifery.

B: Actually you're more than the midwife of a lot of this stuff. More than a muse in fact. The creative partnership, the intellectual partnership, now you even admit to it in Brewster's last [book].

C: Yeah, and that's what that is. That's exactly what that is.

B: That's how you see midwifery.

C: Yeah. I was probably expanding the term beyond its easy cracking point, but nonetheless, that's what I was thinking was, yeah, is that intellectual and I would venture to say in the case of Art, a spiritual wrestling that we had because he insisted on using Christian - and masculinist Christian at that - language and concepts to describe what I see as anti-masculinist, anti-militarist...

B: Was he pleased to see his writing 'between covers'?

C: He was ecstatic. He was really happy with it, yeah. And the family loved it. Well it was something else. It was another way of incarnating and expressing the power and the wisdom that he brought as he struggled to try and bring the native spiritual practices into the prisons. And a friend of mine, Alma Norman, was just about to turn 94 I think, something like that, who did the same thing at a prison for women, though she's Jewish, not Aboriginal. She had a Seder.

B: And he was an activist too? He worked with prisoners.

C: Yeah and I'll never forget the apoplexy when the pipe was disrespected. Just an old clay pipe. It was horrible in those days. And you sort of see the beginning of that spiritual awakening along some of the leadership in the standard system. People are starting to say oh, there is something to this. And now that we're finally rid of Harper, we can see it happening with things like bringing back the prison farms, realizing that if we want people to heal, they've got to be whole. There's a reason why those words are the same.

B: And it's not just form. There's substance to it. An acknowledgement of substance and not just symbolism.

C: Well, the acknowledgement of ceremony and reality. So the farming is important because it actually feeds people at the same time as it gives you non-verbal ways of relating to animals because that's what animals do for you, that's liberating from a society which has used language to oppress and to destroy. Very powerful. And the same thing with the ceremony which is a more pointed, if you like, recapture of the spiritual practice and origin, but much more precise. This is how we, these people, do this this way. This is what is in our wampum. This is what our pipe says. All of which is very, very bizarre if you come from Europe. I know because I come from Europe and it's just, it really is - this is just an old clay pipe. What's the significance of an old clay pipe? How do you imbue these things that are not silver and gold? How do you imbue them with the spiritual?

B: By implication, wouldn't that mean that also the spiritual tradition from which you come has the same depth? Has it opened you to kind of, in retrospect, a different view of the tradition from which your parents came?

C: Well my parents are not terribly helpful because my father gave up Judaism or spirituality of any sort and became a militant atheist as soon as he discovered Marx because he thought there was contradiction. He was a formal Marxist. Never joined a party. That wouldn't be his style, but he definitely was a materialist. And my mother of course was someone who walked into the woods and said, "But you can see God's here."

B: But you were open to Brewster's spirituality.

C: Well he had a commitment that was coherent, so just like my father. We do marry our fathers quite frequently. And just like my father, he understood that justice required a discipline and that the Christian metaphor worked for that.

B: And he's part of the generation who embodied the Kingdom of God is on Earth. Or should be on Earth.

C: Yeah and you know, we had liberation theology. That was that whole period and so he made sense and I didn't have anything to counter it that made the same kind of sense. So I said fine, I'll go along with yours.

B: And it made sense in practice. It was a holistic...

C: Yeah. It made sense because if you're really concerned about peace and justice, which of course is what we were all about and then there's this ready-made community of people who have a story that tells about peace and justice and how you struggle for it and all, fine. And then after a while, as I've told you with the story of Holy Trinity, after a while it just sort of dissolved because it didn't make sense anymore. The myths didn't make sense. The stories, you know, the Virgin birth was meaningless. This notion of the Creator as two men and a bird, as someone once famously described it, just wasn't working.

B: And I would think that the feminist ethos and its life-embracing... is much more coherent in terms particularly of peace and justice.

C: Well Dorothee Soelle, a German peace activist and theologian, wrote a little manuscript called "Is There Life Before Death?" And that became one of my mantras as well.

B: Well I think you've proved there is.

C: Well I think we have. We're getting more and more abstract as we're going along, and I'm not sure that's what we wanted to do, or if we want to go back to dredge out actual stories.

B: My experience is your stories come out to illuminate an abstraction.

C: Here's one. Back in the early days of SUPA, working out of that place on Harbord Street, I wrote a little paper which included the notion that the nuclear family is a contradiction in terms because it's as if one extracted the yolk, or removed the white, I should say, and the shell that holds the thing together and then said to the extracted yolk "Okay, turn into a chick now." Because you can't do it. It's not there -- and we were really keen on trying to move beyond the nuclear family.

C: And that whole story I told about Bonnie and Doug, trying to see if we could live together and discovering that there was no built environment -- I mean it's just so freaking classic, eh? You want to do something that's really liberatory but the built environment stops it.

B: Precisely. It's difficult to imagine or create a change using the same thoughts and structures that you want to change.

C: You know Audre Lorde? She said something like "you can't tear down the master's house with the master's tools."

B: For sure. You often refer to the little things you've written. Do you still have them? Like this essay, do you still have it?

C: I have it somewhere. That's the pile of boxes that I haven't gone through that I want somebody to help me go through sometime.

B: Has part of the back of your head thought about things that have changed in your seventy years?

C: Taking a degree in English and then becoming an editor. I was changed by that. I was changed obviously by feminism. But an awful lot of it, I mean that's what I found doing Brewster's book, I almost said "writing Brewster's book."

B: We'll edit that. (laughing)

C: Well, in a sense I did write it because he wrote it and then I edited. I did actually do some writing. I did actually put some things in, but most of my editing was taking things out. And we did have different visions of the book initially because Brewster's vision was always that this was an

intellectual project that he wanted – and actually I want to write a letter to the editor, somebody wrote a letter to the editor about dusting off the term “socialism.” After Tommy Douglas, nobody’s been using it, and I think I want to put a little plug for ‘Journey of an Unrepentant Socialist’ into the Globe and Mail. It was something I wanted to write.

C: The main change has been struggling with class and privilege. I remember Dimitri Roussopoulos being very scathing when Brewster declared he was going to marry me. ‘She’s just a little Bourgeoise’.

B: I can imagine him saying that.

C: With his little finger cocked. And as usual, Dimitri was both right and wrong. I mean I was and still am. I have my grandmother’s wedding china to prove it. You know, I grew up in privilege and I understand that I have privilege and it informs and empowers my determination to make things a bit better, for sure. So we come to this discourse, you and I, from two very different social places, which is wonderful.

B: But where does that leave Dimitri’s observation, his categorization of you? It’s trumped up. We often accuse others of what we fear about ourselves.

C: Because it is frightening to think, oh my God, I’m nothing but a Bourgeois really.

B: When did you transcend that?

C: I remember being on the farm and thinking, you know, now I’m working with my hands. I’m a worker. And then realizing that no, actually that wasn’t true. And I would have been in my 30s at that point. 30s, 40s, somewhere around there, about the point when I realized I was not my mother. Close but not quite. Well it was Julius Tomin, when we were talking about democratic socialism, socialism with a human face. It was he who said that *true patriotism is an understanding of the unique contribution that your society, your particular culture and society, can make to the future of the world*. So that for me is okay, what is the particular contribution that I can make because of my unique background and culture and gifts? And that’s the question that’s been with me for a long time.

B: But the 19 year old you described as part of the Peace Movement...

C: Wasn’t asking that question in the same way.

B: It does not sound to me like you were acting in reaction to a sense of your bourgeoisness. What amazes me is how early in your life, earlier than I did in my life, you were scanning horizons.

C: That was my parents’ doing partly, because they really wanted me to not be caught in Newfoundland. By which they didn’t mean any disrespect to Newfoundlanders and Newfoundland lifestyles, the value of that way of being in the world, but that they felt there was something not necessarily better, but other that I had and that I should at least explore before I rejected it. So that’s why they wanted me to go to Scotland and study and discover intellectuals and they were right. And the same thing happened to our daughter and she went off to Mount St. Vincent and came back ecstatic because people wanted to hear her opinions about things. It was just so exciting. So they were right in that regard.

B: And the story as you relate it is very much the story of a pioneer. Going into landscapes semi-prepared, and seeking a bonding and a life with that landscape, both a physical and social landscape. The landscape of your own relationships.

B: There’s almost a cliché. I sometimes think my son would kind of like to ask me: “Dad, do you regret anything?” And my sense is if I were to ask you that question, which I’m not going to, your

whole instinct would be you know, that old French song, *Je ne regrette rien*.

C: Well there are some things I've done in my life that were bad.

B: And if you couldn't say that, it would be very strange.

C: No. I can say that when my father was dying of lung cancer and my husband was moving to British Columbia, I went to British Columbia and left him in Ottawa. That was bad. And my sister says, "You followed your husband. That's what women do." And I said, "Yeah, but the fact that they do it doesn't make it good." It was not a good thing to do and I will regret that. That's the big one. I did not honour my father and my mother.

B: Do you feel honoured by your kids?

C: Oh God, yes. Yeah, it's amazing. They're unbelievable. That's why I've spent a fair bit of time in these conversations thinking about how we raised them and what the parameters were, what the opportunities were, how we did things differently from other people. I mean we know why, but how, and did it work? And it does seem to have. They're remarkable people, both of them. And they had a remarkable relationship, which I think I did have something to do with, and that I'm really, really happy about, proud of. I don't regard it as my doing, they did it themselves. But I midwived it.

B: How do you mean they have a remarkable relationship?

C: They love each other. I mean they really understand each other. They have solidarity with each other. They share at a level that I don't know very many people – well I don't know much about big families. I only know these little teeny ones with two people in them. Though I don't know – if I keep reading in the literature about brothers and sisters who have these amazing relationships where they are just one another's mainstay and support.

B: Yeah, large families. We were nine children. Large families, and ours isn't a typical family, so I'm not sure -- but my sense is that large families are many families because there's so many dyads, triads, histories. If there's nine kids in a family, there's really many families because by the time the oldest daughter is in high school, the last child is just being born. So the qualities of the relationships are quite different. And it's interesting to see them when we all get old. In our case, there's seven of us left and all of us are over 60. So we're all getting into this period of time, the last quarter, and seeing more of each other now, just out of circumstances and intention. So I think large families are different than ones where there's only one or two children.

C: I'm starting to fade. But that's really helpful.

B: Let's wind it down. In many ways, the arc of your story has been told.

B: She may be starting to fade but she looks lovely, I'm here to tell you.

C: Well, I'm here to tell you that this is an amazing man who can drag flowers out of the most appalling mess.

B: The soil is rich.