

Interview: Glen Hansman (GH)

Interviewer: Ken Novakowski (KN)

Assisted by: Larry Kuehn and Lesley Harrington

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[00:00:10] KN: Okay. Today is February the 15th, 2023. And we're here today to interview Glen Hansman, who was the President of the BCTF from 2016 to 2019, interviewed by Ken Novakowski, and Larry Kuehn with technical assistance provided by Lesley Harrington. Good morning, Glen.

[00:00:30] KN: Good morning

[00:00:32] KN: and thank you for agreeing to do this interview. We want to start by having you tell us a bit about when and where you were born and also where you grew up? Where did you go to school and so forth?

[00:00:46] GH: I was born in North Bay, Ontario, which is about a four hour drive north of Toronto and west of Ottawa, was born there in 1973 and spent most of my school years there. It's a town of about 60,000 people. Still is a mining community or a lot of moneyed businesses anyway. Our base there, was the Francophone community. Definitely a big presence.

[00:01:17] GH: It's not some place I go back to very often, but every couple of years I go see family there.

[00:01:24] KN: Can you tell us a bit about your school years there, then your elementary years and then your years of high school?

[00:01:31] GH: Well, strangely, every elementary and secondary school I went to there are all now closed. One became a motel. Another one got transformed into condos. And so I was a French immersion student at a time when that was really a boom, at least in Ontario. Lots of families were putting their kids into this sort of new experiment that was happening in Ontario. I can't say that my French is all that functional beyond basic conversational. There's not a lot of opportunity to practice it here in Vancouver, where I've been living for the past 23 years. But I do look back on elementary school at least fondly, and I did though spend my grade 11 year as an exchange student in Denmark, and that was sort of an experience at the time; it was in 1989, 1990, school year. And so in Denmark, the year that the Berlin Wall fell and having the opportunity to go and walk through Checkpoint Charlie a few weeks into the aftermath of that and just the experience of sort of seeing everyone's reaction and all the different political analysis of it sort of pro and con and stuff that would have been critical of the USSR and stuff that wasn't. And actually having the opportunity to go to what was still Leningrad at the time on a school field trip in March of 1990,

[00:03:18] GH: there were several events and just the political context at the time kind of in retrospect was pretty influential in terms of my thinking about some things later on. But then having to return to Ontario High School for grade 12 and 13, that was a tough slog because I went from more or less sort of what we consider to be kind of a college or university type school environment where students had a lot of autonomy and the staff definitely had a lot of sort of high expectations for students to stay organized and practice time management. But along with that, people carried themselves accordingly. It was not particularly enjoyable to go back to a school environment where the adults were in charge and people policing, whether you were in the hall or not, or just

[00:04:23] GH: things like that you are thinking about that too, definitely influences how I kind of view students agency as a teacher now. Like don't be like that. But at the high school it was that there was a lot of anti-indigenous racism that was very much in your face all the time and I became very politically aware of that and the impact on people. While I was in high school, friends of mine who were in some of the Anishnabe language programs which were all in the basement of the school, even just like there structurally in the school, who was where and who was trained in which English courses, for example, which was still all the rage in Ontario at the time. I could draw upon a lot of that sort of experience, not just what was happening in my school, but just how education was done in Ontario at that time. That it was a useful experience in the sense of when we were doing in the curriculum revisions here and then entering into teaching in B.C. and constantly reflecting on my practice as a teacher, I still draw upon some of those experiences, putting them more in the what not to do category.

[00:05:55] GH: I was asked also at a school. I might just add one more thing where a long time music teacher was arrested shortly after I graduated for having sexually assaulted a number of students over a period of decades. And that definitely had ripple effects. The entire sort of student community across generations and in this and a lot of talk, at least amongst students and former students, how could staff members not have known that this was had been playing itself out? Like would this not have been sort of the subject of banter or at least speculation in the staffroom? And why didn't adults intervene around something that had been going on for at least since the early seventies, as it turned out? And so it was yeah, it was a place where a lot of pretty heavy things were unfolding in real time before my eyes as a 17 and 18 year old when I returned from a fairly independent student experience in Denmark. KN

[00:07:13] GH: Were there any teachers throughout your whole schooling experience that had a particularly positive impact on you?

[00:07:21] GH: Oh, for sure, especially my elementary teachers, there's some of them I still bump into if I go back to North Bay. One of them in particular was friends with my dad's parents. She's still alive and I remember her as my grade seven and eight English teacher, very carefully teaching us English grammar, you know, precisely sentence trees and breaking things down. And I still get a kick out of doing that. And I think its valuable learning. And she definitely instilled in me the importance of good, clear writing. She valued words highly, and we would haul out the

thesaurus, but she would give us the thrill of perhaps pulling out a fancier word every once in a while. She wouldn't value that more highly than the parts of clearly communicating what you're trying to say and the audience and not confusing people necessarily just because you happen to know something that has seven syllables, when there's a word that has perhaps two syllables that will serve you just as well. And some of the other teachers from that school were really great. So that elementary school world and the people who were in there, the thing I regret the most, though, is that my ability to utilize the French that I learned is not what it ought to be, given the amount of time that I was in French Immersion and also having lived in Ottawa and Montreal where I was using it

[00:09:19] GH: for work, working in restaurants and bars as a student, it all seems to have evaporated, which I regret highly, but there's other things that have preoccupied me in the years since then.

[00:09:32] KN: Can you tell us when where you went to university and talk a bit about your university years?

[00:09:38] GH: Hmm. I started Nipissing University in North Bay immediately after high school, which was a mistake. I had already kind of decided that my life was not going to be in that northern Ontario town, especially as an out gay person in the early nineties, and it just didn't feel like a place where there was necessarily a future for me. I don't think I felt particularly unsafe there, but it just sort of seemed like a very hopeless sort of situation. This all being pre-internet and the capacity to sort of meet people or find community is not what it would be now. And it's from that angle, it's kind of remarkable, going back to North Bay now and some of those places in northern Ontario where things definitely have changed. I won't necessarily say that they're awesome, they're not. But I'm also glad I went there. But I ended up dropping out after the first year of university for a variety of reasons. Mental health. Most crucially, it was not great, but I so I took a few years off. I worked at a gold mine in northern Ontario. I cut lawns. I worked at one of the local ski hills, shuffling people up the lifts,

[00:11:11] GH: but then eventually kind of got it back together enough. In 1995, I'd saved up enough money to pay for the first year of university on my own, and I had reapplied to Nipissing University, but just on a whim decided to see if I could get into the University of Ottawa or Carleton University, and I was accepted into both. And because I had some friends who live near Carleton, I decided to go there and so I moved to Ottawa in the fall of 95 and did an English degree there and met somebody during that time and ended up moving to McGill, where education seemed to be the next logical step. After the English degree I was doing, I still wasn't hundred percent clear that going into teaching was what I wanted to do, but I ended up going to McGill, got into the education program, and even though moving to Montreal wasn't necessarily what I had intended to do, it all panned out because when I moved to British Columbia, I didn't have to upgrade any courses at all here. And I was able to sort of slide into a continuing contract pretty soon after moving to

[00:12:34] GH: Vancouver. I've also done a graduate degree at UBC.

[00:12:42] KN: Was there anything in particular like an individual or idea that inspired you to become a teacher?

[00:12:52] GH: Well, some of those experiences I had in high school, and there were some other things that happened at school that weren't great for me as a student, and I don't want to go into detail about them, but just high school in particular was not a place that I enjoyed. And so part of me, my thinking was I'd be interested in going into education and to try to have those things not happen to other students in the future if possible. But it still intrigued me as well. And I liked working with kids of all ages. I thought I'd be a secondary teacher. My program at McGill was geared towards secondary teaching and all my practicums were in secondary schools. And when I moved here, I thought when I was interviewing with a member of the school board and city school district, my intention was to teach in a secondary school program. And because I thought I would get humanities or English language arts or something like that, it would kind of match my own interests in terms of literature and social engagements and history and a variety of things, and just a vehicle to help influence making positive change.

[00:14:28] GH: But then I ended up teaching in a elementary classroom for a couple of weeks, and that ended up being extended to more or less the school year and I discovered through that experience also by virtue of the fact that there were amazing people, particularly primary teachers, who did this big brain dump of all their decades of expertise of working with kids, that I realized, oh, maybe elementary schools are where it's at. And there I've stayed.

[00:14:57] KN: That's interesting. So, where did you start? What school were you at?

[00:15:05] GH: I remember my first assignment as a teacher on call. I was actually disappointed. I did get called on the very first day of the school year in September 2000. I did get called in the afternoon, so I said, Well, Let's go. It was at Queen Mary Elementary just to have a day assignment. And the next day I was in a chemistry class at Churchill Secondary School in Vancouver and a mishmash of things that first September. But by the end of that month, I was in a grade two assignment that ended up being long term and then segued into research teaching role at that school, Kingsford-Smith Elementary School. And on the face it, you're in Vancouver, which was lovely. The teachers

[00:15:56] GH: would talk all about their years of teaching and all at that school.

[00:16:01] GH: Well, I loved those years and when I finished up at the Federation, I was pretty clear in my head that I wanted to go back to teaching and be with kids. And to the assignment I had at Kingsford Smith, not just with the teachers that I was working with, but also the principal and the vice principal at that school. Initially, we spent a lot of time ourselves rolling up our sleeves and working directly with kids either in the resource room or partnering in classrooms. I didn't know at that time that that's not something that doesn't occur as much as it ought to necessarily. But a variety of people sort of encouraged me to stick with it, and I was definitely

enjoying that. I ended up moving into one of Vancouver special education programs that was housed at the same school. I was kids with receptive and expressive language disabilities, some of whom I'd already been teaching, including in that first year when I was teaching a grade two class. And then some of the students ended up being on my caseload as a resource teacher. And so there was the grade three, four, five, six, seven class that I had for three and a bit years. There are few students in there that I probably taught five years in a row and I still try to keep track of where a few of them are the ones that are still around

[00:17:41] GH: and so the relationships I was able to establish with them and the families and learning that so much of what happens in the classroom and the success that occurs academically is founded on the depth of the relationship you have with them and trying to get them excited about math and their writing and other things by grafting that to whatever their interests are and their enthusiasm. Some. I was really torn when I was presented with the opportunity to move into to something else because I was really enjoying myself. Um, but I also felt kind of an obligation to my local, which I was also getting more heavily involved with. And so I ended up giving up that teaching position, I'm assuming I'd be back within a year or two. But as it turned out, it was well over a decade that went by and I never actually went back to that school.

[00:18:54] KN: Can you talk about how you got involved in your local affairs.

[00:19:00] GH: Well, my first foray was being scolded actually, because I remember the staff at my school. I can't remember the details at this point, but this is well over 20 years ago there was something to do with the schools in that part of the city. And the Board of Education in Vancouver at the time was doing public hearings on something. It could have been just been funding or staffing for the next year, but my staff had decided that they wanted to do a presentation to the trustees to talk about the needs of the students in our school or something along those lines. And I and another teacher were the ones that went to do that and I didn't realize what the process was at the time or that it's, you know, rightfully our local who is the representative of teachers in the school district. And you have to balance the interests of all the schools in the city. And so after we did that, the President of my local at the time, Mary McDermott, or maybe she was vice president at the time, I remember her coming to the school and being very upset with me about that.

[00:20:10] GH: But she and I ended up talking about a whole variety of things. And she and Pat Gudlagson who were both at the Elementary School Teachers' Association office at the time had encouraged me to put my name forward for a number of things. My staff rep at my school kept getting this fax that they were looking for a representative on a committee the school district had struck to look at developing a policy that would address homophobia and transphobia in Vancouver schools and things that the district could do to address school climate for LGBTQ students. And my staff rep said this would be perfect for you. I've received about ten calls to please put your name in for it. So I start getting this fax all the time. And so I did. And VESTA appointed me. And so my first official role was being a union rep on a district committee and

seen through that policy development and an action plan, which at the time there was a left leaning majority on the school board in Vancouver who not only adopted the policy, which was one of the first sort of comprehensive school policies on that topic across Canada,

[00:21:40] GH: wasn't the first, but was one of the first and also some money to go along with it, including money set aside for training of staff. And the initial wave of that was ensuring that principals and vice principals and school counselors had the opportunity to know what the law was, what their obligations were based on this new policy, and to walk through some CIS scenarios. And what I did not get at the time was that it was a totally anomalous experience for myself as a second or third year teacher to be leading these workshops for principals and vice principals alongside one of the associate superintendents in Vancouver and a couple other people. And these were command performances and the principals, the vice principals, they didn't show up to their session, were summoned to a subsequent one. You must be there and it seemed perfectly right and proper that because I've been working on the committee and representing the union, that I was doing this. In retrospect, I'm like, "that does not happen very often". But yeah, it's work that I'm quite proud of it because it did actually create some systemic change in schools and to a major sort of contribution to the climate, not just for students but for staff in the schools. At the time,

[00:23:11] GH: it wasn't the be all and end all, but it definitely led the way. But because of that work I was doing for the local, I felt strongly that I'm just one person and my life experience isn't necessarily representative of everyone whose part of the LGBTQ community. And so Patricia Gudlagson had suggested that I use the VESTA office and they would put other facts in the message to schools to see if other teachers would be interested in coming in and strike a little ad hoc group to help inform what had been happening at the district. And for me, what I was saying at the table on behalf of VESTA and a few people showed up to that first meeting, including someone who has also gone on to be one of the B.C chief executive and on our provincial bargaining team and has played other roles in our local over the years. And she and I ended up moving into a district role to help facilitate implementation of the policy over the long term. But when our local president at Vesta had a stroke in the December of 2006, at that point I was now in the local office one day a week,

[00:24:49] GH: December of

[00:24:50] GH: 2006. Maybe I should say that again when our local president in December of 2006 had a stroke that was Mary McDermott we had a conversation. We had been having conversations at our local executive already, which at that point I was a member at large. No, sorry, I was a vice president or something. I can't remember what title was, but I did have a release role in the office one day a week to do some of the communications and the newsletter for the local. So I was one day week at the local, three days a week in my classroom and one day a week at the school board office. So I had three hats I was wearing that year, three very different hats. And so when Mary had her stroke, we had a big conversation around who could come in to kind of be acting president for a few weeks or a couple of months. We didn't really

know the depth of or how long it would take her to recover or whether she'd be able to recover at all. But we'd already been having conversations as a local by the fact that successor ship planning perhaps wasn't as it had been

[00:26:13] GH: there. There were a lot of people in that executive who were very close to retirement or had been

[00:26:19] GH: either in the office once or twice already and Barb Parrot, who had been the president before and a member of the B.C.T.F. executive and had done many things. We have a big boardroom and lots of people around that table because it was a large executive. She was across the table, pointed at me and said, "you are going to do it". I was like, "okay, I'll do it, I'll do it Barb". And so the executive appointed me as the Acting President, which ended up being for the remainder of that school year. And when it was clear that Mary was not coming back, I ended up running officially to be at the local President the spring of 2007, and I was in that role for a couple of years.

[00:27:07] KN: So before we get into that year, being president, you were in the classroom in 2000 till then. Do you recall anything about the stripping of our agreement,

[00:27:24] KN: does that register with you?

[00:28:08] GH: Oh, yeah. Well, it did, because I was one of the people directly impacted, but also my first probably official union related activity was going on one of the school busses on the ferry over to Victoria for the big rally that occurred outside of the Legislative Assembly in January 2002. And I remember how powerful that was as people over the whole province were out. I wasn't there for the negotiation of all those provisions that were stripped away. I didn't even know if I had a copy of the collective agreement, but the ramifications of what had happened were definitely felt almost immediately because layoff notices and surplus notifications started flowing soon thereafter and I was laid off. Those ended up being recalled to the same school, a slightly different FTE, but knowing that the impact by the following September in Vancouver was the shrinking of teaching jobs by a significant number, even though the number of students was not shrinking. And so it was do more with less. So yes, no, I definitely remember that.

[00:28:52] GH: I remember it's hard to kind of separate what I remember from the time versus like watching all these videos and like newscasts and the debates in the ledge. But I do remember at the time that there had been the sort of the all-nighter filibuster in the in the Legislature. And I do remember reading or seeing on TV Jenny Kwan and Joy McPhail speaking in defense of collective bargaining and teachers and how egregious this action was. And I was also aware of what was happening in the health sector, too, via the media, not through any sort of personal contacts or knowing any because I was still fairly new in Vancouver. So I didn't know anyone who worked in the health sector. But just knowing through the news, the number of people, in particular women, who were losing their jobs and privatization that was occurring in the hospitals.

[00:29:54] KN: So what about the 2005 strike? Were you still in the classroom then?

[00:30:00] GH: That was the year that I had a foot in many roles. So yeah. So during the strike itself, I carried and drove. So Mary was the president at the time. So I was her chauffeur going to school sites. I was part of the early shift. So myself and our secondary local president of Vancouver, Donna Brack, she and I opened the office in the morning. I think Jody Poloshko was there too, putting together sort of our printing communications that we'd be distributing to the picket lines. We'd show up there before five in the morning because I live just past the Vancouver school board office. It was in between where I live then and where I live now. And the VESTA office. And so we'd first stop and say Hi to the picketers who were outside the School board offices to prevent the call out of Teachers on Call to the schools on that day and then to the VESTA office. And then we'd get the bulletin ready all the latest and greatest updates from us. Motivational things, any updates that were being provided by the Federation or some inspiring quote from Jenny or Irene or something that had been in the news.

[00:31:25] GH: And then we'd have all the zone captains, as we call them, the people who'd go around the city initially. And bring updates and check on the picket lines in front of all the schools. We'd have a meeting with them at six in the morning and giving them a motivational speech. So I remember that those two weeks very, very clearly and the frustrations with that. And I remember that the vote that we had and the huge, what was supposed to be a general meeting, but we had invited people from other locals to come at Hillcrest Park. I don't know if that was a VESTA hosted event or a BCTF city-wide event. I'm not sure at this point, but I remember being there and um,

[00:32:29] GH: and then

[00:32:31] GH: all the school visits that we were doing the following spring when bargaining resumed soon thereafter because it was just a short deal and having those conversations with people in schools about whether we need to do this again. I think we were contemplating a vote to take a vote before the expiry of that collective agreement just to put pressure on the table. So it's all one big kind of tsunami of memories. I think they all kind of blur together, those two rounds of bargaining.

[00:33:03] KN: And you became president shortly after that because you said Mary had her stroke in 2006 and you took over and stayed on for a number of years. Can you talk about your years as president and some of the highlights of that?

[00:33:18] GH: Well there were highlights and lowlights, because in those years there was a regime change at the Vancouver School Board. And so the more right leaning party in Vancouver got a majority during those years. And that was really hard because a lot of the open communication that we've been having with previous trustees suddenly the doors were shut again and the attitude of management towards the union kind of went along with the political flavor of the school board. You know, that said, they were there were occasionally even some of the more hardline trustees who were willing to meet with us, kind of one on one, off the record.

Like we'd meet at some diner at Main Street and 49th Avenue like a pub. And this was actually when Mary was around. I remember this one time where she and I went to meet Ken Denike, who was a trustee with the Vancouver School Board for a super long time. He had just come back, I think, after having been deposed by the previous left sweep of the school board. And I stupidly started taking notes in the meeting and he just like looked at my pad and Mary was like, "Stop It, you idiot".

[00:34:49] GH: I was like, okay, sorry. But then it was a pens down meeting. We achieved some gains at the local bargaining table. There were some processes that we were able to sort of clean up with human resources in a number of areas a lot of member supports. I know that the thing I was prepared for the least was things dealing with the salary indemnity plan and so assisting members over the phone when they were on short term or long term disability, who sometimes just needed somebody to talk to. And so that role of the local officer of having a task switched between political advocacy either provincially or hammering the trustees or management over something unfortunate that they had done. And representing members in investigations. Sometimes that went very well for the member, especially if they really hadn't done anything or some really intense ones were actually the member had done some stuff, in some cases extremely inappropriate and not anything anyone should be doing in their professional life with students.

[00:36:24] GH: And then to be, you know, be emotionally prepared to take that phone call at Friday at 4:15 from somebody who was in complete crisis or self-harming or dealing with some serious addiction issues and just not having anyone else in their life to speak. And even if you've just had a brutal investigation down to the board office and haven't had the opportunity to process it or are completely worn out by that physically and mentally, having to kind of muster the energy and hold space for this person who has turned to their union in the absence of anyone else in their life that they're able to talk to. So that I remember towards the end of my time in the local office; that there were days where that was really hard afterwards just because of privacy issues and because there aren't too many other people who have comparable roles out there that you can't kind of like unload on about that. But fortunately, I was in a local office where we have more than one release person. We have several released people. So at least there's that. That kind of community where you could debrief things or at least kind of try to buoy each other's spirits.

[00:37:51] GH: But I do recall just a lot of the frustration, just mostly because of the political climate provincially. We're still like stuck in the B.C. Liberal era, nurturing relationships with MLAs in Vancouver or people who aspire to be allies in Vancouver and working to support trustees through various trustee election campaigns. I think when I was in the local office, it was the last time that VESTA spent a significant amount of money on a trustee election campaign. I think we were on the front page of the Vancouver Sun alongside developers in terms of the amount spent on everything, and unfortunately it didn't end up being money well spent because it didn't achieve the aims that we had hoped. So there was there were a lot of bittersweet moments during that time, and it was sort of small successes and especially in the department

of supporting members like the meat and potato parts of the local office. I think we did that really well during that time and a lot of the training of staff reps and sort of team building at the school level and trying to change the way we did things to kind of develop more of a team approach at the school level too, with like the staff PD chairperson and other folks.

[00:39:26] GH: So it wasn't just sort of staff were on their own at the school level and those things have carried forward. And then as local president myself and actually Linda Watson, North Vancouver Teachers Association, we started organizing regular meet ups with the Metro president, the released officers just to talk about day to day stuff we were going through. So kind of putting aside any sort of political differences provincially within the Federation. But just to talk about the stuff that we did on a day to day basis, the trends that we were seeing in investigations from management, some of the sort of more social justice related work that we were trying to do for members or for students; could we inspire one another and coordinate some things? And those meetings ended up being expanded to include some of the Fraser Valley locals too. And I thought that was really good learning for me. I think it was healthy for us as a community of locals to kind of rely upon and learn from each other. And we tried to vary where the meetings occurred just so we could kind of do a bit of a field trip like what does a local office look like in different parts

[00:40:47] GH: and what are the things that are there, the same that we're dealing with and what are some things that are completely different? But then what we end up with on our plate next year because management talks to each other all the time, school district to school district. So it's important that we do as well.

[00:41:04] KN: Okay, I want to move now to your involvement on the BCTF Executive. You were elected Member at Large and very soon thereafter, in 2010 became Second Vice-President and a Full Time Table Officer and you were full time for nine years. So that's a fairly significant period of time during which a lot of things happened. I wanted, first of all, to ask you about your first three years as Second Vice-President. Is there anything during that period of time that stands out for you that you remember and want to talk about?

[00:41:47] GH: Well, there was a lot that happened during those first three years with the government. George Abbott was the Minister for the majority of that time, and he was one of the more, I would say, personable people that I dealt with during my entire time as a table officer with the Federation. He was certainly one of the ministers who was actually interested in education, which is not always what you could talk to him about the issues and he was like he was interested in them and wanted to understand what things meant in the classroom. And so while he was there, a lot of the initial conversations around redesigning of the curriculum, not as it had been done in the past, where it'd be just a couple subject areas or a couple of grade levels, do those and then do other ones. But the idea of sort of doing everything all at once at all grade levels and some of the building block pieces, that stands out because that was a huge chunk of work that took many more years to complete after his time. But a lot of those initial

conversations defining what the Federation's role could be in that and making sure that we had a central role.

[00:43:13] GH: But the other big thing, and which also pros and cons was the final dust up around the B.C. College of Teachers and that things morphing into what is a different nomenclature now than even then. But what became the Teacher Regulation Branch and the current structure with the B.C. Teachers Council and so the whole regulatory regime for teachers in this province, which I will still maintain that a lot of what led up to that was a manufactured crisis. And it was a very frustrating process that involved Don Avison, who was a former Deputy Minister who was commissioned to do a deep look into what was really going on behind the scenes. But I remember his reports, it cited stuff that occurred during a period of time when the B.C. College of Teachers had been replaced by appointees of Christy Clark. And so attributing that to the BCTF, you know, that said, our hands as an organization weren't necessarily completely clean in some of the situations that were described in there either or how things have been handled, I guess, weren't done probably as we would do them today. But Mr. Abbott was open to, in the aftermath of that, to collaborating with us directly on coming up with a new structure.

[00:44:57] GH: And so during those three years that the curriculum stuff and the heaps of meetings here in this building around what the new structure could look like, and then the passage of the legislation that mirrored almost exactly, not 100% exactly, but pretty close to what we had sort of laid down on paper and talked through. That was a big that was a substantive body of work. But of course, overlaid with that was another round of bargaining where in the name of the curriculum changes that were going to be occurring, government was attempting concessions at the bargaining table related to teachers professional development choices, related to how people were evaluated. They tried to remove the layoff language that we had so that management could hand-pick who was surplus or laid off from an individual school based on not seniority, but, you know, conceivably based on whatever educational idea that was being circulated at the time. And so the fact that we were able to achieve all this other work while all this nasty stuff was also happening, and it was a lot of the same players in both. It's kind of an interesting tension. We fortunately were able to push back successfully on those concessions. But, you know, they came back again in the following rounds and there's still echoes of those and a deep seated commitment, I'm sure, within the structures of the employers' association and elsewhere, just within the culture, that at some point they would like to be able to go after that stuff anyway

[00:46:54] GH: to achieve very ill defined aims, which are all usually just screens for them to have more management rights and a collective agreement not being in the way of management, being able to do whatever they like to do at any time.

[00:47:20] KN: So you went on to be First Vice-President from 2013 to 2016. What stands out for you during that period of time?

[00:47:34] GH: Well, there was definitely a big I loved the last six years in particular like that, seeing Jim in action during that 2014 round of bargaining and job action. He had such an amazing gift to connect with people which I to this day like. If he and I are like walking together somewhere, we meet up, he just kind of connects with people. They recognize him for a variety of reasons. But people remember him from that strike, from that event fondly, even though it was one of the like longer teacher strikes in Canadian history. So those three years, like being in that trio of Jim, Teri, myself, it felt really great. And the work that was being done to coordinate within, especially across the public sector unions, but within the B.C. Federation of Labour, it's like really putting our energy into mobilizing members to make change in Victoria to have more conversations around how can we mutually support one another around collective bargaining and not undercut things. The implementation of the new curriculum was sort of leading up to that and all the work sort of going on around that.

[00:49:12] GH: But then parallel with all that, it just so much organizational energy going into the commitments we were making around Reconciliation and the aftermath of the national event that was hosted here by the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada, the Federation had put aside \$200,000 to pay for members from around the province to come. And the motions that we were carrying as the Executive, the sorts of discussions happening in RAs and the AGM where we were not just talking about but trying to put into action the Federation's commitment to advancing Reconciliation within the education system and within the union. Those were really important things that were happening during that time. That definitely required political support for that. And the three of us were definitely committed to that and trying to do as much of it as possible. And we did it in a variety of all that we were doing. And we ventured into almost all conversations that we were having with government, whether it was with ministers or with the staff, people at the ministry or with the Premier's office too. And then a lot of those initial conversations spilled over to when I was President. I'm working with Teri and Clint around what can we do structurally, whether it's the structure of our provincial Executive or other things that we do in the Federation to increase access, opportunity and connection for members of the Federation who are BIPOC or who come from other groups that have been historically disadvantaged or haven't seen themselves within the system.

[00:51:12] GH: So a lot of sort of attempts at making cultural change within the Federation in meaningful ways definitely were initiated during those three years when I was First Vice-President and then continued on.

[00:51:30] KN: You mentioned the 2014 strike. It was a long strike. Can you talk about why it was such a long strike; what was it that made it happen and for such a long period?

[00:51:49] GH: Well, there's really one reason, and that is because in 2002 the B.C. Liberal government had legislated away all the provisions and teaching conditions agreements around class size, class composition, staffing ratios for specialist teachers, numerous other provisions that don't get talked about as much but gave rights to members in schools to have a say in how schools were organized. And that whole process was still playing itself out through the courts.

We had lined up, there was a decision at B.C. Court of Appeals, and we had hoped eventually we would get to the Supreme Court of Canada for a final decision one way or another. But the B.C. Liberal government, through BCPSEA, was trying to get at the bargaining table, trying to get us to give up whatever future win that we might have at the court. So even though they had legislated it all the way, even though this was all playing itself out in the courts and we had had a successful decision at the Supreme Court of B.C. from Justice Griffin, the BCPSEA had on the bargaining table a proposal that they would not let go of, that asked us to give it all up, even though we hadn't got it back. And

[00:53:28] GH: so that was the main thing. It was still something that we could do, which isn't to say that we felt like 100% confident that we were going to win at the Supreme Court of Canada. We knew we had a good case, especially after the health services decision in favor of the Hospital Employees Union and the other unions who had challenged the similar legislation that impacted them in 2002. But it was just this nasty, vindictive and petty concession on the table that the government knew that there would be no way in a million years that we would accept it. I couldn't speculate whether they were intending to sort of legislate a deal in that round or not. Who knows? But another way of kind of looking at it is of them cementing yet again what they had done in 2002. So the month long strike that we had was in defense of the language that we were still trying to get back. And it's a good thing we did because eventually government did order BCPSEA to take that proposal off the table. And so all those months that kids were out of school are completely the fault of government.

[00:54:56] GH: And I am so glad that teachers did stick to it, even though it was hard because fast forward two years later, we did win in the court and when we won in the court, we re-entered negotiations to restore the language and that resulted in the restoration of over 4000 teaching jobs around the province.

[00:55:17] KN: So let's get into that a little bit more. In the meantime, you became President and one of the very first exciting things that happened while you were President was the Supreme Court ruling. So talk about that a bit and talk about what the BCTF did during this period of time to implement the changes that were going to be necessary as a result and how that went forward.

[00:55:47] GH: Well, the thing that helped get a deal in 2014 was a letter of understanding that was attached to the agreement that said that when the court I'm paraphrasing here, but, you know, should the Supreme Court make the decision to restore the language that was removed in 2002, that the parties would enter into negotiations to talk about what that would look like, and there was no dispute mechanism clause built into that, unfortunately, and no clear process. And so in the in the months leading up to the actual Supreme Court hearings, we were kind of looking at that again going, okay, well, we've got the Supreme Court of Canada date in November of 2016. Usually the court takes, you know, 6 to 8 months to issue a decision on an appeal. And so as soon as we get through the legal proceedings, then we're going to turn our mind to like what sort of process are we going to propose to BCPSEA to do these negotiations? It

wasn't full-fledged collective bargaining. There would never be the option to strike legally. Certainly we would be able to apply pressure if things weren't going the way that we want them to. But it wasn't because of what we signed in 2014. There wasn't necessarily a clear line between the Court restores the language and the words then appearing in the collective agreement,

[00:57:24] GH: there was something that had to happen in between, something that involved an agreement of both the parties. So that's what I inherited and but as it turned out, the Court didn't take six, eight months to issue a decision. The court made the decision that very day, which rarely happens, surprised everyone in the room, regardless of their side on this, that the timing of it just at a personal level was a bit odd, because just moments before the decision was given verbally, Irene and I were actually outside the Supreme Court of Canada building on a conference call with the B.C. Federation of Labor because of some internal stuff that was happening with some affiliates. And I was in a very important role at the Federation of Labor at the time. And I, by virtue of being BCTF President, I was also an Executive Officer of the Fed. And then we were standing outside in the cold, in the wind behind the Supreme Court of Canada building. And I was kind of like, we've got to get back in there. I think we're going to break for lunch sometime soon. And so we did. And it was just moments before the judges just came back and then issued the decision and everyone was gobsmacked.

[00:58:52] GH: And then they were done and then they walked away and then cameras were in the lobby with the group, including Larry and a number of Past Presidents and Honorary Life Members of the BCTF and staff and other activists who've seen this through over the years. And then we had to speak about what had just happened and what it was all going to mean. And so what I remember the most from that day is not the Supreme Court of Canada process itself, though I do remember that. But it was so brief. It was everything that happened elsewhere. So everybody else went off and celebrated it as it should be. But I spent the next 6 hours or so going from TV studio to TV studio to the main CTV and CBC and Global broadcast centers based in Ottawa and talking to reporters back here and being on the National News and all the media. So does this mean that we're going to have a whole bunch of teachers back in schools next week and after the news was starting to break here, getting a bunch of messages from members all over the province, just joyous, but also wanting to know what does this mean to me and my school next week

[01:00:14] GH: and I not even having a chance really, to kind of like talk with legal counsel here about the next moves and everything like that. But just in a brief huddle that Jim and I had, just because he was the one who'd been here there most recently and who I sort of trusted the most in terms of like how to talk about this. Now, I just decided I was going to talk about the win as if it is exactly as we would want it to be. Yes, government now has to step up to the plate. Yes, those jobs need to be back as soon as possible. And there is going to be a process that's going to play itself out. But parents and students in B.C. should expect many thousands of teachers to be arriving in schools soon. And so that was my line, it was exactly what I said. I can remember

exactly what I said now, but it was that sort of like manifest your own destiny. This is this is what's going to happen. Even though there was this other sort of

[01:01:17] GH: process that on paper was a bit more ambiguous about what the next steps would be.

[01:01:25] GH: So I

[01:01:27] GH: well, Mike Bernier, MLA from Peace River North, was the Minister of Education at the time. He actually was one of the first people to call me after the win became public. He was another Minister who over the years, you know, credit to him, put a lot of energy in at least maintaining open lines of communication, which is not what you always get with a Minister. But that night in Ottawa, after I'd done most of the media and before I went and met the rest of the BCTF folks where they were having dinner, we had an initial conversation around getting together within the next week or so to start talking about like what this might mean in practical terms. He was aware of some of the comments I had made in the media around like this means that the language is back and jobs are going to be restored and he said, well, he didn't disagree with that necessarily, but he indicated a bit of amusement, perhaps at how certain I was about what this meant. But that's okay. We could joke to a certain degree between the two of us. So it really began coming back. We got the wheels in motion,

[01:03:01] GH: requested dates with BCPSEA to sit down. We identified who'd be doing it on our end. Our Executive made the decision that would be the table officers plus staff because it was a full-fledged, collective bargaining process. So there wasn't a decision to reconstitute the most recent bargaining team or put out the call for another one. The political context helps because at some point there would be a provincial call for a provincial election, which in part was some pressure on us, because if the government dissolved itself and went into an election cycle, there was the potential that if a deal was reached, that there would be no government necessarily to approve it on their end or there wouldn't be anyone to kind of negotiate with. And so we were conscious of that and wanted to go right away. I think the employer was certainly conscious of that and no doubt wanted to use that to their advantage; that's speculation on my part. But I think the government was definitely motivated to reach a deal with us swiftly. But they made it clear, at least negotiators made it clear very early on, that while they weren't going to be a roadblock in terms of restoring most of the language to go back in as it was. They didn't give us any sort of song and dance about like, here's a new model or, you know, we refuse to let it go in or we're just going to like roadblock you, which they could have based on the wording of that, I'll show you what we agreed to in 2014.

[01:05:01] GH: They I guess they did the political calculation and saw how supportive the public was of our win. And there seemed to be this sort of expectation out there that this now meant improved services in schools. They weren't as resistant as they could have been. Where the stumbling block was, though, was around what to do when there was no space and where school districts couldn't, for a variety of reasons, fulfill the language either because there

weren't enough teachers in a particular region so we talked. We went down and looked at like individual school sites and simply the school districts in B.C., including Vancouver. Like Elsie Roy Elementary School in Vancouver was one that we looked at many times because that school has no footprint. There's no property for that school that the school board owned beyond what the footprint of the school actually occupies. You know, the kids go and play in a City of Vancouver park that's nearby and that kind of thing. So what would you do with the restored language when there isn't even the space to put an additional portable? So trying to sort out those kind of mechanisms rather than activate all this language and then immediately have potentially thousands of grievances right away, which would take decades, literally

[01:06:26] GH: there aren't enough arbitrators in the province that would be able to kind of hear all those. Even if you grouped a whole bunch of them, it would take a very, very long time. And so for a variety of reasons, the parties agreed to create a new mechanism that would replace some of the existing dispute resolution mechanisms that existed in some local agreements, language that would be something new in lieu of an arbitrator making the decisions down the road. And that was a really hard decision for the Executive to make because many of our members and a lot of our locals and activists wanted each and every word of the language restored. But we didn't have anything to actually insist on that. The court decision wasn't enough because we had this timeliness factor. What if the election was called? We'd have no one to negotiate with or all that sort of stuff. And then if the current government was re-elected, they could just sort of flip and take the approach that we were worried that they might take and just be like, too bad you got your

[01:07:51] GH: way

[01:08:37] GH: on the Supreme Court, but we don't have to agree to anything. See you in the next round of bargaining. So it was sort of like, what do we do in a situation? The votes we had as an Executive were In-Committee. So I won't comment on those or the debates internally, but the collective decision at the end was to go ahead with what we ended up with, the deal we ended up reaching. And once that happened, some school districts were proactive and started hiring right away. Some school districts started like reaching out and recruiting immediately after the Supreme Court decision, which was great because in the spring of 2017, those were the school districts that were best positioned just to have their school staff for September with actual teachers, actual people in the roles where there were unfortunately many other school districts that waited. Well, after an agreement was reached and signed and ratified by the parties before they started, like looking as a province for people. And so by the time we got to the fall, we were immediately confronted with this massive recruitment and retention challenge that the newly elected NDP governments inherited and then unfortunately did not do much about.

[01:09:24] GH: And so my three years as President overlapped with the Court win, but also the end of the B.C. Liberal era and the election of a NDP government supported by the B.C. Greens and it ended up being frustrating and disappointing. And in many ways that was sort of the

prevailing theme. Unfortunately for the remainder of my term there was a lot of banging our head against the wall on things that should have been easy for us. This new government, new progressive government to do in education, especially given the many statements it had made in opposition.

[01:10:19] KN: Would it be fair to say that your expectations were not met when the NDP was elected, that in fact you were quite disappointed?

[01:10:28] GH: Well, I, I totally get that. Given how long the B.C. Liberals were in power, it was like a decade and a half that, you know, when an opposition has its job and it's to criticize government and propose alternatives and because the period of time they were in opposition was so long, a lot of promises, quote unquote, accumulated. But, you know, some of those promises were said directly, like when you have NDP MLAs, including the person who was the opposition critic, who then becomes the Minister of Education, come into the BCTF summer conference or showing up at the RA for a social or being here at the building and talking to adult educators about their jobs. So large events, but smaller things. Things are said that are either directly stated commitments like we are going to do this, we're going to get rid of the FSA, we're going to meet with teachers and replace the FSA with something we could all live with if we form government. That was their commitment that they had made in the 2013 election and still talked about that after. After that, we're going to get rid of the sections of the School Act that could, if a Minister of Education chose to have greater control over teachers' Professional Development choices, we're going to take care of that.

[01:12:00] GH: That was said at a summer conference. And so things like that, people expect they're actually going to deliver on. Now, I understand, and most people do, that a government can't deliver on everything all at once, that things take time, things that are said when in opposition may or may not come to be when a government is in power. But the attitude of the government, unfortunately, at least in my experience, it seemed to be very sort of dismissive of anything that they had said before about education. So we get the caught in a bind. They say we have hired 5000 teachers, even though it was our court win that, well, the numbers they were using kept jumping around, but it was our court win that restored all these jobs. These aren't technically new teaching jobs. It's putting back what was and there were lots of problems with that language before it was taken away. Conceivably, we would made improvements in that language over the years. And so there was no appetite at all to talk about filling in some of the gaps, making improvements to that. In fact, the two rounds of bargaining that we've had with the NDP, BCPSEA has been just as resistant

[01:13:29] GH: to making improvements to that language and continues to speak dismissively about that language, even though it's been renegotiated a few times, funding hasn't really improved at all other than the money associated with improvements in our Court win. The attitude towards recruitment and retention or the attention being paid to that issue isn't what it ought to be. Even though we have so many people without teaching certificates, teaching classrooms for multiple years in many places around the province, including in the Fraser Valley.

So this isn't just like the northern spots of the province. And so it's yeah, there's been many areas where it's just sort of like and in some respects where the communities was actually worse than it was before. And that's too bad. But that's not the first time that's happened. I know that. And so it's important to sort of keep trying and this isn't about any particular person. I also appreciate the fact that it's also unusual for a premier to make somebody a Minister of Education when they had been the Critic, probably for the reason that I've identified that you say a lot of things when you're opposition and people are going to expect that you're actually going to deliver on that stuff when you become government.

[01:14:56] GH: And if it's the same individual who suddenly now has the power to sign off stuff, but then it becomes sort of doubly disappointing where it's like, well, wait a minute, we just had a conversation about the same thing last year and you really cared about it. Now it's just apathetic what's happening again? Oh, we're not going to do that, so let's do that.

[01:15:21] KN: So you were President for three years. Are there other highlights of your three years as President you want to talk about?

[01:15:33] GH: Yeah, well, I mean, the coming back to teaching and sort of seen on the ground like firsthand the impact of the positive change that has come about from the new curriculum and the space that's provided teachers and students to explore things in all sorts of directions. I'm talking about the version that was described by Minister Peter Fassbender, the sort of personalized pathway and education enabled by technology. There is so much gobbledygook that had nothing to do with really with what was happening. And I'm not making any claims that it's the be-end all. And, you know, but that kind of on the whole, I feel strongly that it was a positive change and we were able to help make that happen in partnership with the staff at the Ministry of Education and political people, even when there was a lot of adversarial stuff happening in marketing and elsewhere. And I think that's a big achievement too, in and of itself, that had a lot to do with the people and the relationship building and just be able to kind of keep momentum on some things, but interwoven with that was all the work around Reconciliation and fixing in any way perspectives into the curriculum or trying to

[01:17:07] GH: work through the K-12 education partners table bilaterally with First Nations Education Steering Committee and with the province, on making sure that more training opportunities were available, that we were not shying away from historical truths. And other organizations were doing this work, too. The School Trustees Association has been doing its own internal work. The BCPCPA had been doing its own internal work, but in all the work that we were able to achieve in the Federation and the commitment of financial resources and staffing and bringing members in, it wasn't a small, not a small thing and will have a lasting impact. And the other thing that happened during that time too, that I'm proud of and that was finally getting the province to commit to doing some proactive work around homophobia and transphobia in schools and working together, not just with the partner groups in the public education system and the rights holders, but also the independent school system. They had to put in policy and some practices and some people in positions of expertise to help create some

momentum around that and a network that's proven to be successful too, despite some resistance and naysayers.

[01:18:44] GH: And it's a model that could be replicated around other things too, because there's still a lot of work that has to be done just on that addressing school climate for to us LGBTQ students, staff and families, but also to address racism in schools, in particular anti-black and Anti-Indigenous racism. Addressing the experience of kids with disabilities in the school system and how we talk about disabilities. And I think those conversations have to happen with us internally especially with respect to our class composition language that was restored. And how does that fit with our current understanding of and supporting kids? And are there alternatives that guarantee that there are supports and services in schools for kids that address our members' workload, but perhaps can take a different approach than what we've utilized in the past. So those are still conversations that are ongoing and need to happen. But hopefully in future rounds of bargaining we'll have an employer or government who is actually willing to have an honest and mature conversation about that rather than defaulting to like, No, we just want management rights or no, any language is a burden or this is old and antiquated and therefore it's not needed at all.

[01:20:17] GH: It's like, well a lot of it is older for sure, but there are different approaches that we could take. But just how can we get there? Because in the absence of language in collective agreements, we have recent history that proves 100% that governments are not going to spend money on education unless they're forced to.

[01:20:40] KN: What was your greatest challenge that you met and faced in terms of your presidency?

[01:20:47] GH: A lot of it's sort of like in the rearview mirror. A lot of things have sort of fallen to become a kind of duality. And so Teri, Jim and myself put a lot of emphasis on being out in the field, trying to meet with teachers and community as much as possible. And so just remember, which is important for organizing you, especially on a provincial scale, like people, regardless of where they live in the province, including small, faraway places like Telegraph Creek or Nelson; people are teaching there and living their lives. So the things that we do as a Federation have to reflect that. When we speak of things on the radio, we have to be able to talk about what a school looks like in different communities. When we meet with government, it's important that we bring those stories forward. It also helps connect members to their union, which is important for them for a number of reasons. But when times get tough, we need to be able to kind of glue together and move forward together as a collective provincially. So I believe that's really important to do all that legwork because there are going to be times when we have to paddle in the same canoe quite strongly and be going in the same direction, whether it's a 2014 situation or if another government in the future does something bad.

[01:22:21] GH: On the flipside of that, though, I mean a lot of that comes as a personal cost. It was a lot of time on the road. And so being in here for nine years, definitely towards the end it

was a lot longer than what I had originally planned on being here. I won't put words into anyone's mouth, but let's say a nine year commitment wasn't originally what was in the cards. And so just, you know, just the pressure that puts on home or the pressure that puts on just sort of like

[01:23:00] GH: I'm going to go back to teach at some point. And so that's the back of my head. Like, am I going to completely forget how to do that job? I'm going to go back to or just feeling physically kind of worn out by that, that amount of sustaining that for a long period of time and just the emotional rollercoaster of a neoliberal government constantly throwing things out, organization and dealing with members frustrations around that, the struggles people are going through, holding space for people that psychologically becomes a camp for me anyway. Definitely came sort of psychologically wearing.

[01:23:51] GH: And I

[01:23:52] GH: don't feel bad saying that, that's just kind of the human element of a role like this, that it's there's at some point it's sort of like, okay, I'm not taking care of myself in this role. So, you know, it might sound banal, but that was sort of the biggest challenge, sustaining the focus, but just sort of mentally psychology to give it your all in a way that's kind of needed, especially with continued sustained attacks from a government or lack of action, like the lack of progressive action from a government and still having to like it. The membership rightfully demands that their union is doing X, Y and Z on a wide range of fronts. And then I guess the other element to that, too, is, is navigating the internal political waters of a large union, which is not unique to the B.C. Sitting on the Council of the Canadian Labour Congress with all the other major labor unions in Canada I know full well that other unions have similar internal political machinations and that those are dangerous waters at times to navigate or just really challenging interpersonally. And at some point there's a threshold that one might hit in terms of like, okay, I'm not sure if this is what I want to be having to deal with all the time.

[01:25:48] KN: So are there any other experiences that you had either had from this journey or that you want to mention?

[01:26:00] GH: Well, I have to say, like the generosity of people at going out into communities, like being invited into teachers' homes, into their classrooms, and just local officers, like people who perhaps strongly disagreed with the position that I took or I would like, be me arguing against something that the same group of people have brought forward, but then to go with them, into the schools and the communities drive around down the Alaska Highway and dipping into British Columbia from the north, people were incredibly generous with their time and their expertise, just sort of sharing their lives and everything like that. And I gained so much from that, but just constantly surprised at the amazing things that people do in their classrooms or that local presidents and others do on behalf of teachers in the province. And so I just wish there was a way of like chronicling that stuff. I didn't keep a journal, not that anyone would

necessarily read it anyway. It's like not many people get to go visit some of these places in British Columbia, and yet people make a life for themselves,

[01:27:20] GH: find joy in their assignment, find satisfaction, raise families and do all sorts of things. And it's pretty remarkable the diversity of what teaching looks like. What teaching and learning looks like. I remember asking a lot about it. But if I definitely left the role, regretting that stuff didn't change as much as it could have, even with the restoration of the language, but with the recruitment retention issues not really fully resolved and with many school districts not doing as much as they ought to have been doing to make sure that they were living up to the restored language and not having a provincial government of any stripe that was willing to invest more into education, in particular funding that would allow for more staffing in schools, whether it be school counselors or teachers of special education or whatnot. There's still a lot of teachers out there who are working in some really tough situations and just feeling like you can't meet all your students' needs. Most teachers care greatly about their students, all teachers care greatly about their students, but also it can be really professionally frustrating and people end up taking on way too much to overcompensate for an under-funded system and can burn them out easily.

[01:29:21] GH: And to me, a lot of the fixes for that still seem very obvious. Still a lot of them involve money, but not all involve money. But there doesn't seem to be anyone as yet in Victoria who's really willing to sort of take that on.

[01:29:38] KN: And so let's talk about those kind of problems that outlive your life as a table officer. So how do you kind of reconcile that?

[01:29:55] GH: There's no magic wand to any of those things. So you pass the baton, try to support the incoming people as much as you can, which I try to do when asked and, um, and even when I'm not asked, I'll try to offer constructive advice here and there, or at least be kind of a memory bank for a few things that have been more recent. But I also have skin in the game because I'm back teaching in a school myself and so there's that.

[01:30:29] KN: Yeah, you're one of the few past presidents whose gone back to the classroom. You've actually gone back to teaching and what are you finding it like?

[01:30:35] GH: It's experience, like

[01:30:41] GH: I love it. I look forward to going every day. Most days I leave school going, "Oh, that was good". Sometimes I'll leave scratching my head going, okay, I could have done that differently. Or how are we going to sort this out? So, yeah, all the things I loved about teaching the first time are still all there. I feel very lucky to work with the group of people who remain super excited about what they do. And I find that challenging and rewarding and yeah, glad to be doing exactly what it is that I'm doing and the kids crack me up. So there's always something new happening or some new twist. But there is a lot of yeah, a lot of satisfaction and joy and meaning to it.

[01:31:42] KN: Okay, one final question; what advice, if any, might you offer to someone who is considering going into the teaching profession today?

[01:31:55] GH: I still think it's one of the best jobs a person can possibly have. I work in close contact with a lot of new teachers or people who are thinking of becoming teachers, including people who are in teacher education programs too. It's sort of a relevant question because it sort of it's happening all the time, but teaching is a job with endless variety and opportunity too, to try out different things if you want to. It's also a job that if you find your niche and want to stick with that you could do that too. But the ability to sort of shape the future and have a direct impact on young peoples' lives is really good work. And important work. Though anyone going into teaching, I still would encourage to try to get connected to their union early on, at least to know what's going on and to have your say and not be afraid. Sort of ask for help also, because it's also a job where people can feel alone and isolated in their rooms or feel that they're struggling with something that nobody else has struggled with before when the opposite is usually true. And there's lots of people sort of willing to put their heads together with you and help you out and everything.

[01:33:39] GH: But it's kind of finding that in a system that's still underfunded and where there's a lot of needs that you have to be mentally prepared for, the fact that you're going to have kids that you're not going to be able to solve every problem or meet the depth of their needs. That is far beyond what you're able to provide as an individual. And so you're working a system and there's decisions and you're in the system and you have a voice in that system. But there are still decision makers usually far away from you that don't hear your voice and may not even care what's happening to that individual student in room. And some choices are rolling down to dollars and that could be very dark. That could make some people become very disillusioned and bitter. So it's important not to slide into that because you still have to sort of remain hopeful that either change is going to happen or there's at least some avenue to try to make that change happen over time, even if it doesn't happen until after you've departed what you're currently doing.