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Interviewee: Jennifer Charlesworth
Interviewer: Marshall Watson
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MARSHALL: Assume I don't know you or don't know this sector. So if a government change is an important factor in something that goes on—just those types of details. Assume I'm not me. Assume I'm no one. Yeah. And that's, and that's kind of it. So let's start... Where do you want to start? What was little Jennifer like?

JENNIFER: [Laughter] Well I think I was...

MARSHALL: Were you always on this trajectory? Or where you headed somewhere else earlier?

JENNIFER: I was headed somewhere else. I was headed towards biology. I was going to be a biologist first. And then I thought well I'll be a biology teacher, so I was pursuing... Interested in education, becoming a teacher, and then had a very disappointing meeting with the Faculty of Education. Who at that time—so this was 1977 – said...

MARSHALL: At which uh...

JENNIFER: At the University of Victoria. At which point they said, oh there's far too many teachers you're never gonna get a job. So just be prepared for that. So I thought well.

MARSHALL: That was nice of them.

JENNIFER: That was, yah, that was very nice of them. So I was wandering around the campus looking at the tiny, you know, like maybe a 20-page calendar. It was, of course, everything was printed back in 1977. Nothing was on the computer and I was thumbing through the few—I mean there were what 5000 students or something like that at the university—thumbing through what was available and learned of this thing called the Child Care Program. And I showed up and asked if I could speak to someone, thinking that it might be a week hence. And a new professor had just arrived from Yale—and that was Dr. Penny Parry. And I got in to see her that day and two hours later I came out thinking I know exactly what I'm going to do. And so I applied and got in and there were about 20 of us in the year. So it was second, third, and fourth year. They did it after our first year. You spent three years in the program. There were 6 faculty members.

MARSHALL: Oh wow.

JENNIFER: A total of 60 students maybe in the whole school. We weren't even a school at that point—we were just a program. And then it became the School of Child and Youth Care while I was there. And so it was Penny Parry Who got me into this field.



MARSHALL: That's amazing.

JENNIFER: Yeah it's amazing.

MARSHALL: She thought it was too.

JENNIFER: Yes, well she should be. She should be. So it was Penny Parry and then Thom Garfat was on the faculty. So he's been a leading light across the country in Child and Youth Care and particularly around residential care. Based in Montreal now. There's a lot of collaborations with Grant Charles.

MARSHALL: And your intent was just to learn more about the program? You were curious when you went... [5:00]

JENNIFER: I was curious and when I came out I thought I found the place I need to do my life's work.

MARSHALL: Do you remember what... was there a moment? Was there something she said?

JENNIFER: I think what she was talking about. She was sharing stories. Her area of specialization was on children and youth with learning disabilities, as it was called back then. And she was sharing stories about being with kids on their journey of learning about themselves and why they made sense of the world that they made, and the way that they did. And although we didn't have language for it back then, it was strengths-based, it was very child-centered. And I just had this image of her hanging out with little people, you know, kind of doodling and doing things and what not. And bringing her—she was just so compelling. In the story she talked about how do you be with young people. And I was already a coach in recreation. That's what I was doing. I was spending a lot of time with young people so the idea of being with young people with these additional vulnerabilities and being in relationships in that way just... yeah. So it was as she was talking about how she did her work with kids with learning disabilities and I thought, that is unlike anything that educators are doing or unlike anything that I've seen before and I want more of that.

MARSHALL: Right. As much of how she said it as what she said. Also in terms of her approach.

JENNIFER: Yes.

MARSHALL: Right, so then your experience with little people, young people, up to that point was in a coaching capacity?

JENNIFER: It was in a coaching capacity. Teaching and coaching. I was a sailing coach, sailing teacher. Yah so I ran sailing programs for... Must have been by that time I'd already been doing it for five years as a coach. And teacher and ran sailing programs and whatnot. So I'd been... And I'd also been. I was a high school dropout. So the first job that I got after dropping out of high school was as a teacher's aide. And so I worked



with grades one, two and three as a teacher's aide as well. So I loved being around kids.

MARSHALL: So you dropped out of school to work in a school? [Laughter].

JENNIFER: Yah, I walked out [Inaudible].

MARSHALL: [Laughter].

JENNIFER: Yes, so I have a great deal of... school did nothing... you know, high school was not a good place for—I mean it was good in many ways but it wasn't a place that I felt enriched or challenged or anything like that. So I was like, oh well I'll just finish school by correspondence and I'll go work.

MARSHALL: Right. And you did.

JENNIFER: Yeah, I did. And then I met Penny several years after that. And then thought now that's, um, yeah. So with Penny and then I got into the school, um, volunteered over the summer to kind of build some more capacity with kids that had higher vulnerabilities.

MARSHALL: Right. Before you actually started in the program?

JENNIFER: Before I started in the program. And then, yeah... And because there was a small program there was [Inaudible] maybe 18 or 20 students in our year? And we became very tight. It was an amazing group of people. And many of whom have stayed in the field, which is quite cool. And we had, as you see, 5 professors I think in the faculty at the time. So we became very close to them and they were incredible teachers that had lots of real life experience. And worked on the front lines in residential treatment or in, you know, learning disabilities or in largely residential because that was kind of what was going on back then.

MARSHALL: Right. Yeah.

JENNIFER: So learned a tremendous amount. It was an amazing experience to go through.

MARSHALL: And did you do... Did you spend time in other summers the way you did before that first year?

JENNIFER: Yep.

MARSHALL: What were your summers like? What kind of work was that?

JENNIFER: Yah, so I worked in child day-care for my first summer. I worked in anti-poverty work the second summer. And I worked in... Oh alternative education. I did mental health work. So we were always in practice as well as doing our summer stints as well. So I did mental health, child and youth mental health, alternative ed, child day care, and anti-poverty social justice work.



- MARSHALL: It's a three-year program you said? And it sounds like it was less book based? It was not like a [unclear] course.
- JENNIFER: It was...
- MARSHALL: Professors brought their learned experience into the classroom?
- JENNIFER: They did. There was a lot of theory as well. So I think it was a hybrid course but fundamentally they wanted to train us as strong practitioners. So we had to be out there doing the work and applying the theory. So it was practice.
- MARSHALL: Gotcha. [10:00] All right. And then after those three years you had a...
- JENNIFER: I had a degree.
- MARSHALL: A degree.
- JENNIFER: And then it was...
- MARSHALL: You graduated in...?
- JENNIFER: 1981.
- MARSHALL: 1981, OK. And then what did Jennifer do with that new degree?
- JENNIFER: I went and got a job in government. And I had—I was quite torn because I was really excited about working on the front line and again back then what was going on was primarily residential treatment care for kids. And I got cold feet—I had a job offer up in the interior and then got cold feet about leaving the coast. So.
- MARSHALL: What was the job offer?
- JENNIFER: It was to be a manager in a residential treatment program. The agency doesn't exist any longer but yeah. It was pretty cool. I went up there and worked with the young people and the staff and I really loved the job but I couldn't leave the coast. So I ended up coming back and getting a job in government as an evaluation consultant. So we were evaluating on the Child and Family Services programs in the, you know, however many iterations of the Ministry of Children and Youth were back. So that took us to all sorts of places around the province to do program evaluation.
- MARSHALL: Right. So you weren't working with young people.
- JENNIFER: I wasn't working directly.
- MARSHALL: You were evaluating the programs that worked with young people?
- JENNIFER: Yes. And what's interesting about that is, I mean really I had no business doing that.
- MARSHALL: [Laughter].



- JENNIFER: But I had a degree and there were lots of people, I mean. If you were in the Child and Youth Care field, it was rare to have degreed people. They were primarily the practitioners at that time were people who had a good experience.
- MARSHALL: Experienced.
- JENNIFER: And/or had done a diploma program, primarily in the east, and then had come out west. So that's why I was offered a manager job out of university. Which again, I had no business. If I'd done that work with the residential treatment program that would be.
- MARSHALL: Right, that would be. Yeah yeah.
- JENNIFER: But you know here I was a 23 year old or something like that. But because you had the degree...
- MARSHALL: Because you had the degree.
- JENNIFER: You would get these opportunities that others wouldn't.
- MARSHALL: Right.
- JENNIFER: Despite the fact that I didn't really have the depth and breadth.
- MARSHALL: And if you had no degree, you would have got probably a frontline work with no training or a little experience thrown into a situation. I mean that seems to be the thing that I've heard in these conversations.
- JENNIFER: Yes.
- MARSHALL: People stumbling into their first roles.
- JENNIFER: Stumbling in, exactly.
- MARSHALL: And realizing that no one knows what they're doing but they have to be, you know, counsellors and managers and also, you know, at times, yeah.
- JENNIFER: Contract managers, building maintenance, we do everything.
- MARSHALL: Security, like they're counselling kids one day and restraining kids the next day and...
- JENNIFER: Well that's the other thing because back then there were things like—I mean restraints were used. The other thing that's interesting about that period of time is that the kinds of modalities of treatment and care—so we were still behaviour modification largely. There was quite a bit of structure. Kids were removed from families and placed in treatment.
- MARSHALL: Treatment.



- JENNIFER: It was what we knew and it was the best that we knew at the time. And so there was quite a bit of structure and formality to the work that was being done, that would be prescribed for example by the psychiatrist or the psychologist and then we would be the implementers as the frontline workers. But yeah, it's gonna be interesting looking back on that going wow we, you know... There were lots of inexperienced workers. But having said that, we were also called into this work. The passion and the drive and the commitment and the, you know, crazy hours and you became bonded with your colleagues.
- MARSHALL: We're all in a similar situation. Having said do all these things that were, you know, probably not even in their job description.
- JENNIFER: Yeah.
- MARSHALL: [Inaudible] different stuff that was just needed to be done.
- JENNIFER: Just needed to be done and you adjust to it.
- MARSHALL: What was happening in that situation or with that society or that organization.
- JENNIFER: Yeah yeah. So it was very interesting. So then I was working evaluating programs. And then I did that for a couple years and then that unit got closed down and then, so that would be 1985.
- MARSHALL: '85. And you were travelling across the province, evaluating in those 4 years.
- JENNIFER: All over the province. Yeah. Which was really cool [15:00] to see all the different ways in which young people get cared for and cared about or things that were working, things that weren't working very well. At that time there was also, um, we were entering into an era of fiscal restraint.
- MARSHALL: Right.
- JENNIFER: So the sector went through tremendous turmoil and change at that point in time.
- MARSHALL: While you were doing the evaluating?
- JENNIFER: Seeing a lot.. yeah. While we were doing the evaluating and then our evaluation unit got canned. So that whole capacity of evaluation of services got cancelled and then I became a policy analyst. But I think what's key about that time in history was the restraint resulted in a number of things. A lot of things were... It had been delivered by government.
- MARSHALL: Right.
- JENNIFER: And now we are put into contract service sector. So that was a big transition in the mid 80's. A lot of services got cut and some young really, really good family support worker services—where one in particular where I did an evaluation of that program



actually. The evidence was compelling that it was making a huge difference to support families to stay together. So think this is 1984, right. 1983/4.

MARSHALL: The question I was going to lead to was, like, you're doing 4 years and I assume that you're not the only evaluator. But these things that are, you know, not working and some things that are really working great. And then knowing what happens in the mid 80s, like, that all that work was just led to.

JENNIFER: It didn't matter.

MARSHALL: It didn't matter.

JENNIFER: It didn't matter. I can remember going in and taking our evaluation results for the Family Support Worker Program and presenting it to senior officials in government—it wasn't even in the ministry because the ministry was supporting it. Ministry bureaucracy was supporting it. But the politicians of the day said they didn't really care what the results of the evaluation were, it was that it was just not a priority. Child and Family Services was not a priority. So that program got cancelled as well as other programs and I often think because we've come back numerous times over the years with different kinds of iterations of how do you support families. And so that and it hasn't been sustained or we kind of reinvent the wheel.

MARSHALL: Or you ask the same question again a decade later and then.

JENNIFER: What's happened to families in the meantime?

MARSHALL: Yeah.

JENNIFER: So that was actually a turning point for me because... A couple of things happen. One is really seeing that families or children are in families and really beginning to question the way in which we removed kids. And then the evaluation of family services or family support worker was an important one for me because I thought, wait a second—if families are well supported they do better. And kids do better. So then I shifted my thinking into family work. Family based work. Do family systems training.

MARSHALL: As a result of?

JENNIFER: Really seeing kids are embedded in families so maybe I should learn about how do you support families. I've done it at UVIC. Frances Ricks, Barb Whittington, and Thom Garfat just did a fantastic family systems courses. So I definitely had that orientation but being able to see.

MARSHALL: As an idea but then seeing it.

JENNIFER: Yah, really do the work. So that's when I went back to the front line.

MARSHALL: After the cuts and the evaluation programs nixed?



- JENNIFER: Yup. And about just really thinking that I can't do good policy work without also understanding good practice. And I'm willing to shift my practice again based on the things I was learning.
- MARSHALL: So it was, that was the reason rather than a lack of other options? Or this job is different. You just... that was the trajectory you needed to head in at that time?
- JENNIFER: Yeah I think that. I've always felt that good policy people are good practitioners too and good practitioners really understand policy. So I've always thought it would be great to have more of a, you know, we should do, you know, secondments back and forth. So you've been in the field and then you get two years doing policy and you bring that in. Or if you've been in policy for a while, you go back and do frontline practice. Whereas the move towards being more generic around, you know, you can be a generic policy wonk in social development or environment. It's like, no you can't.
- MARSHALL: Completely segmenting the pedagogy for the practice?
- JENNIFER: Yeah.
- MARSHALL: Yeah, there's that disconnect that you see mirrored in all sorts of different industries. It's like I remember having conversations about this random tangent about even in how post-secondary—regardless of faculty or department—is structured in that way where you're taught either how to teach [20:00] or the content you're going to teach but not both.
- JENNIFER: Yeah. Yeah yeah. Well and right now there is that very, you know, if you're a policy person in environment you can be a policy person in [unclear]. Well, I don't know. Is that true? It's not, you know, it doesn't ring true in my gut in our field at any rate. Right. So yeah.
- MARSHALL: But often those questions aren't asked and those things are taken for granted.
- JENNIFER: Exactly.
- MARSHALL: So you went back to...?
- JENNIFER: Went back to the field. That's when I was in the ministry and did.... I also went back to grad school at UBC.
- MARSHALL: While you were working?
- JENNIFER: While I was working. So I worked Emergency Services as it was called back then. It's After Hours now. But I worked nights and weekends and then went to school during the day.
- MARSHALL: Grad School life.
- JENNIFER: Grad School life. Yes. And so I did Emergency Services, which was fantastic because



you get it all.

MARSHALL: Yeah.

JENNIFER: And back then it was Income Assistance and Children and Families was in the same ministry.

MARSHALL: Oh OK.

JENNIFER: So when you get it all and you get at all.

MARSHALL: That's everything.

JENNIFER: You are doing crisis grants and, you know, when families are gonna be evicted, you're finding places for families that have just got evicted. You are, you know, dealing with removals for children that have been abandoned. I mean you're dealing with it all. So it's like an amazing experience and I had such good district supervisors too and colleagues that taught me so much about real frontline child welfare and income support services.

MARSHALL: Yeah. And what was that like? Like those things that taught you so much. Like what were the lessons that you remember from that time that might have stuck with you?

JENNIFER: Well I think one of the most important lessons was—this is interesting because we've gone to using technology so much more to evaluate. But of course we would evaluate risk on the phone based on the calls. But I think the most important thing was the going and assessing with your own eyes what was going on and trying to gather information. So how do you show up to really learn and do it quite quickly. Like you have to build your spidey sense, if you will. Of OK, I got this call from a neighbour that says these things are going on and now you're showing up on this person's doorstep. And here I am as a social worker. You know, how do I evaluate? Is this family struggling? Is this child at risk? What kinds of actions do I need to take? How do I stabilize the situation? And remember you're Emergency Services. So you aren't going to build a long-term relationship but you have to assess pretty quickly.

MARSHALL: Very quickly.

JENNIFER: And thoughtfully. So I think that is probably...

MARSHALL: And the stakes can be quite high.

JENNIFER: Yeah. So how do you build relationships quickly? How do you not use your power in a punitive or hostile way that will increase the level of potential risk to the child for example? So really trying to figure out how you—I didn't use the term then—but I think you have to figure out how to walk with grace, with your power. Because you have a lot of power.



MARSHALL: That's how you would answer your own question.

JENNIFER: You can remove people's kids, right, you're delegated. I can remove people's children. So that's a lot of power. So you go in and kind of assess the situation. Figure out what you can do to be helpful to calm it down enough or then you actually need to remove kids.

MARSHALL: Right. Cause that's a significant amount of power and a very brief window in which to assess, understand, and make some sort of decision.

JENNIFER: Yes.

MARSHALL: Whether it's doing something, doing nothing, and what that something is you're going to do.

JENNIFER: Exactly. And what's in you, what can you offer on a weekend or in the middle of the night that might be helpful to a family? I know. So then it also makes you really aware of how important having access to services is. I mean, I was in the Lower Mainland so it's not at all like the norm, where you have virtually nothing to offer. Yeah. So I think that was a big one and I think the other thing that's just stuck with me too is there were so many people that I worked with that were unbelievably good at what they did. So when I do my work—even now in this job as the Rep—I get how hard frontline work is. And I think it's harder now than it was back in the 80s because I think there's much more complexity, [25:00] to be honest. Gosh, you know, yeah, of course there's going to be some poor practice or some workers that shouldn't be doing it or God forbid like some of the situations we have to deal. Some workers that actually cause some terrible harms to kids. But given the thousands of people that are doing it.

MARSHALL: Overall enough macro level.

JENNIFER: Overall, yes there's a lot of really dedicated people that are doing the work and it's really hard work. I think that's something that's just stuck with me is appreciating what frontline work is actually all about. And her you are, I mean

MARSHALL: What it takes and what the stakes are and how many people...

JENNIFER: We had some crazy things happen. We were out at 3 in the morning, right. Trying to find a kid or dealing with a violent situation—a domestic violence situation. You're on your own. And get this, the cars that we were given—I don't know if maybe I'm dating myself but.

MARSHALL: The point is to date all of this [Laughter].

JENNIFER: Okay. [Ford] Pintos?

MARSHALL: [Laughter]



- JENNIFER: Pintos. If you got rear ended, the Pintos would explode. But we had no cell phones. You know, we have these terrible cars that we had to use, you know.
- MARSHALL: And not knowing... [Inaudible] ... there's no support.
- JENNIFER: You're calling a cop sometimes to help you if you had some way of knowing that there was a risk of violence but yeah. Some of my colleagues got into some real... I was fortunate I didn't get into too many pickles, but some of my colleagues got into some really challenging situations. You know, if I'd been in there with my lack of experience then I would have probably got shot or something like that but they managed to extricate themselves.
- MARSHALL: Negotiate that.
- JENNIFER: Yeah. So you can't help but respect what frontline work really is about.
- MARSHALL: What it really takes. What it requires and the resolve and resiliency to keep doing it once you know that that's what it takes and what it's going to be like. Yeah. So you stuck with that all through Grad School? How long were you doing that?
- JENNIFER: Yep I did. And then I moved to... So after that I moved because I was auxiliary which meant that they could call me up anytime and give me like 45 minutes notice—I think it was—back then. And if you refused 2 shifts and you'd get canned. So it was like, things are completely different now. So having a regular job was very appealing at the end of that. So I got a job in Resources and Guardianship.
- MARSHALL: OK. And that was how... Grad school was two years?
- JENNIFER: 2 years.
- MARSHALL: 2 years. And so two years of that and then?
- JENNIFER: 2 years... 1.5 years, I guess, of that. Something like that. And then.
- MARSHALL: You got something more stable and permanent.
- JENNIFER: And then I got stable and permanent. Yes.
- MARSHALL: In guardianship?
- JENNIFER: In resources/guardianship. I was doing primarily resources. So supporting foster homes, developing group homes, developing specialized placements, supervised some treatment centres, respite, and lots of foster caregivers. Did a lot of foster care recruitment kind of thing. And then guardianship because you get to know the kids that were in those homes as well.
- MARSHALL: Right. Yeah. And so that's kind of... Yeah a bit of frontline but also a bit of not front-line.



JENNIFER: Yeah exactly.

MARSHALL: In a way.

JENNIFER: Yeah. It was interesting because then you're supporting... Your primary job is to support those who care day in day out. Which is also really... It was an interesting vantage point, right.

MARSHALL: Yah. And not unlike the other principle in terms of supporting the families that support the children, right?

JENNIFER: Yes.

MARSHALL: You're caring for the caregivers in a way.

JENNIFER: Yeah. Trying to.

MARSHALL: In your role. Yeah. Trying to.

JENNIFER: Yeah. And then the other thing was, you know, if we had a child that needed a placement and then trying to find the right fit. So that stuck with me all these years of thinking about what happens when you make a bad fit and/or if you're just kind of looking—we used to have things on a board, right. And you would say, you know, where are beds? And you'd have a child and you think well where are the beds that are available? And then you kind of fit a kid to a bed rather than fit the child into the right placement.

MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: Because sometimes we have no options, right. So that has also been interesting for me in thinking you actually need to have more room in a system in order to make those really good pairings/matchings.

MARSHALL: To understand the nuance of it...

JENNIFER: And understand the kid.

MARSHALL: And it's not just the kid needs a bed.

JENNIFER: A bed. Exactly. [30:00]

MARSHALL: It's more than the bed, it's nuanced and the fit—like what you said—if it doesn't fit what that means, what happens...

JENNIFER: The consequences for that child. So one of the things I loved about that job was actually meeting with the children or really getting [Inaudible] littles, little ones and meeting with the people who knew the children so they can really deeply understand who this person was—this child or this youth—what they needed, and then match-



ing that with what we could offer. Or recruiting. So I can recall one particular really, really tragic case. It was just unbelievable what these kids had been through. And they were really young and were displaying so many really, really difficult behaviours as a result of horrific sexual abuse that they'd experienced and violence and whatnot. And we knew that there was a possibility that one parent would be able to, you know, to reunify but she needed a lot of help and support. But these kids needed so much. So that, you know, trying to go out there and recruit and find that perfect match that could really support these kids—sibling group—and also help Mom towards at least having a significant relationship with her children at the right time. So that was the kind of thing was good. And then the other thing that was going on historically, that's interesting, is back then they called them ICCRs—Intensive Child Care Resources.

MARSHALL: OK

JENNIFER: And they were programs that were highly specialized for children ages 13 and above—13 and 18. That were no longer able to be within regular foster care or even specialized foster care because their needs were so profound. So these would be highly specialized resources. And the language then would be things like, you know, well they burned through everything. So it was often blaming the child. I don't think that was the intention to blame the child but...

MARSHALL: Right. That was...

JENNIFER: The language that we... we actually didn't use our language well sometimes. But these were kids that just could not, you know... They were really struggling so we would build specialized resources around them. And I think what was interesting about that—was a great program. .

MARSHALL: Was that new program around that time or...

JENNIFER: It was a new program around that time. There was a person named Sandy Cook who actually would also be a good person to interview. He'd come from, I think he'd come from Quebec actually. And then he ended up working with Covenant House. He's done really interesting things. Was the board chair for Federation of B.C. Youth and Care now.

MARSHALL: Oh OK.

JENNIFER: He's retired now. But he was... When I first met him he was running some of the ICCR—the clinical side of things. But what, so that was a really interesting program but what was really interesting is I did a file review of all of the kids that I had on the caseload. 17 or 20—between 17 and 20 kids, I think. Every one of those children had been identified by a public health nurse, childcare worker, daycare worker, or at the very latest a kindergarten teacher as having significant needs and they hadn't been met in those early years. So here we were, we weren't doing any of the early interven-



tions then they would kind of go through all of these placements. That was the first awareness of the impact of placement breakdowns on children and how it kind of re-traumatized over and over again. And then we would put all these resources in when they were 13—and going through puberty and big and more violent and all those kinds of things—rather than recognizing we needed to do early intervention. So that was another kind of like, oh early intervention matters for these kids...

MARSHALL: Reacting to things...

JENNIFER: When we are constantly disrupting their home and their attachments and whatnot, it has pretty severe consequences. But there wasn't research back then.

MARSHALL: No no no...

JENNIFER: It was all anecdotal and people like Sandy and... well Nanette Taylor was involved in that—in the ICCRs as well., you know, so all of us kind of going, oh my goodness we have to think differently about what's happened to these kids.

MARSHALL: What's actually happening. You realize you're addressing a symptom of the problem, not the problem itself.

JENNIFER: Absolutely. Exactly.

MARSHALL: And that's a profound realization.

JENNIFER: And if we knew [35:00]... I mean we had no idea about the impact on the brain or what trauma was or anything like that. Now I can make coherent, I can,, you know, it's retrospective coherence, right. You can go, that's what was going on.

MARSHALL: You can look back and explain what was going on.

JENNIFER: That's why early years is so important.

MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: So that kind of ended me, in a way, I ended up landing—after doing front line work and whatnot—came back to Victoria after travelling and doing crazy things. Came back and started working back in Victoria in the policy shop, doing early years work.

MARSHALL: And this would have been?

MARSHALL: This would have been 1987.

MARSHALL: OK. Yah.

JENNIFER: 87'/88'. Something like that? Yah.

MARSHALL: Yah. 87'. That's where we're at.



JENNIFER: Yeah so the early years work. And then I didn't last very long there but mostly not because I didn't really love the early years work but deinstitutionalization was happening at the time. So again, this is... so 1987 was when we were at the height of deinstitutionalization—deinstitutionalizing Woodlands and Glendale. So Glendale was up here and Woodlands was on the Lower Mainland. Tranquille had already been done. That was in Kamloops, led by the amazing Albert Mansky [??] as an advocate back then. And then really pushing the government to deinstitutionalize and create more humane care.

MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: So they were doing Woodlands and Glendale. So I became the Provincial Coordinator for those two which was the first foray into special needs areas. But again really, really strong advocacy. And from the point of view of, again, of the history of our field, really understanding that it was deinstitutionalizing for people with developmental disabilities but it actually was part of a much bigger awakening, I think, in our field of so many of the things that we have done to do large group care. Like, there were kids in 14 beds in a cottage, kind of thing, or an institution back then emotionally disturbed. So again, you know, all that kind of, we have done a lot of institutionalizing ourselves, as well as our kids.

MARSHALL: On a different scale, yah.

JENNIFER: And so to... The deinstitutionalization movement, I think, caused many of us to awaken to how do you actually serve not only within family but now within community as well.

MARSHALL: Right. And so that role, you applied to this?

JENNIFER: I was just seconded in it.

MARSHALL: You were just seconded into this role.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

MARSHALL: And how long were you there?

JENNIFER: I think I only did that for a year because then I was seconded [Laughter] to be the Secretary to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy. So I just, I was very fortunate. I think that it was a time where there were just lots of opportunities and I kept saying yes. But, you know, in some respects I wish I'd stayed longer with the deinstitutionalization.

MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: Because there were, well Randy Nelson was really involved. I don't know—Randy was more in government but ended up being an ADM in the Ministry and then re-



tired, but...It was a pretty amazing time to figure out how do you take hundreds and hundreds of people with pretty profound needs—because they had been made more profound because they were institutionalized—and create community inclusion. And we're still wrestling with that. And there are many things we did wrong in that de-institutionalization. We actually replicated institutional mindsets in the community in some ways. But having said that, another opportunity presented itself to be able to work at the centre with Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, which felt like a really important thing to do. Because even though I still feel like I was very fresh in my field, there was—I'd had enough diverse experiences—early years, frontline, deinstitutionalization, mental health, child care, you know, that kind of thing. So that...

MARSHALL: So that you could...

JENNIFER: Could bring a social policy lens in. And again, if you had a Master's then...

MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: You had Graduate training...

MARSHALL: That was enough to go there and then you had the opportunity to kind of live [40:00] into that ideal version where you practice and then policy and understanding both sides to do both sides well.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

MARSHALL: And did that go as you had hoped or planned?

JENNIFER: Yeah. Working for the Cabinet Committee was fascinating because it helped me understand how decisions get made. And I think that as a practitioner, being able to understand policy was really really helpful. Then as a policy person being able to understand the politics—small-p politics—of how decisions get made. How resources get allocated? What are the priorities for legislation? How do you decide on this policy or without policy or, you know, this program with this area of interest inter-ministerial?

MARSHALL: That's a much more nuanced understanding than. Yeah.

JENNIFER: Yeah. So. And I did social policy so Cabinet Committee and Deputy's Committee I did the Cabinet Committee on the very first Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal relations. So that was interesting—very early days. Like what does that government's relationship with Aboriginal Peoples look like. And then Legislation and Regulation and so those three committees you start to get...

MARSHALL: Those were one after the other? Or where they overlapping?

JENNIFER: No, I did all 3 simultaneous.



MARSHALL: Oh wow.

JENNIFER: When you're advising and supporting. And then you work with all the other Ministries and Deputy ADMs to bring information forward to assist the Deputies and the Cabinet Committees to make the best decision possible.

MARSHALL: Right. Wow and how long were you doing that? That sounds...

JENNIFER: I did that, again I was seconded in that one. I think I did that for a couple years and then I got pulled over into health because the Royal Commission on Healthcare and Costs was under way. That was Bob Evans. So he was a Health Economist and so it was a reimagining of health care.

MARSHALL: And when was this?

JENNIFER: That would have been in 90'?

MARSHALL: 90'?

JENNIFER: Something like 1898/90. Something along those lines. So the Royal Commission was under way and then they needed someone to assist in figuring out what to do with that. And so I went over to the policy shop in Health and I think, again, I mean they were all like 18-month stints.

MARSHALL: Here and here and here.

JENNIFER: Yah, here and here and here.

MARSHALL: And then when was the next time where you stayed in one place for more than two years? Or did you keep moving from secondment to secondment within government like that.

JENNIFER: Then I got brought back because the SoCred government was on its last legs. They—Van der Zalm had left and Rita Johnston was brought in as the interim Premier. They were going into an election in 1991 and they needed someone, I guess, who was a pretty experienced civil servant—a public servant—to help manage that transition. So David Emerson—who is the deputy to the Premier at the time—and Doug Allen asked me to come back to Cabinet Operations as the Director of Cabinet Operations to manage the transition from a bureaucratic point of view. So I did that and then stayed with the New Democrat Government. So helped that transition and stayed as the Secretary of Cabinet Operation until I had my first child in 1992. So really I didn't last anywhere longer than two years. Anywhere.

MARSHALL: Yeah.

JENNIFER: It was all like 1 year to 18 months.

MARSHALL: 1 year to 18 months but moving from public servant positions rather than you're re-



moved from the front line for a while.

JENNIFER: Yeah I was removed from the front line for a while.

MARSHALL: And then....

JENNIFER: Yeah. And then that was interesting because it was a beautiful position. I loved being in that role. But here—again in the history of time there was six months maternity leave. And then the idea of going back to that job, which was like a full-on job....

MARSHALL: Full on job. And a lot of things can change in 6 months when you have a child.

JENNIFER: Seven days a week. A lot of things, yes. So the offer when I came back—as I said I couldn't do that job and be the parent I wanted [45:00] to be—so the offer that was made to me as a position, as a comparable level, was to be head of the Medical Services Commission. To negotiate with the doctors. I thought well that's not going to make it any easier [Laughter].

MARSHALL: [Laughter].

JENNIFER: You know, you are in negotiations with the doctors. So yah, so I declined that...

MARSHALL: That was a no.

JENNIFER: And didn't have.... Well, I guess I have to think of it in the time, right. In 1991 I had a very, I had a very very blessed career. I had an amazing career. Unusual for a woman to be in those kinds of positions.

MARSHALL: But given lots of different opportunities.

JENNIFER: All the deputies with the exception of one were male. There's just one female deputy at the time.

MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: So and as a woman—Oh no, they were two [inaudible name] and Isabelle Kelly [??] were the two. One in Health, One in Child and Families. And so if you said, oh I want to... when your [unaudible] been, when they've been kind of lifting you up.

MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: And the New Democrats were very good back then. Really wanting to give women opportunities. But if you said, 'Ooh well I kind of want to focus on family.' They would be like, 'What are you talking about?' Much more opportunity, I think, to kind of talk about balance. So if you declined a position like the Medical Service Commissioner or the Cabinet Office or something like that, it wasn't that you were blacklisted, it was just that that wasn't a possibility. That wasn't really entertained.



MARSHALL: That wasn't a thing that happened.

JENNIFER: That wasn't a thing that happened so... And I didn't have my voice at that point. You know, I couldn't figure out how to negotiate out.

MARSHALL: Right, right.

JENNIFER: So I just left government. So I left government. And I went into private practice, doing consulting and working and raising my kid. And then my second kid.

MARSHALL: Right. Right.

JENNIFER: So I didn't go back into government until 1996. 96' was the Gove Report.

MARSHALL: Yes.

JENNIFER: So that's important because that was also a huge huge impact on our field. It was a shocking report. Probably still have—yeah I think I've got it here—yep there it is, Matthew's Story. I'm a bit of an archivist. But, yeah that changed everything in many ways. So I got asked to come back into government to assist in the implementation of the Gove recommendations. And then of course what happened was we started to do that but then...

MARSHALL: You said yes, I assume.

JENNIFER: I did say yes. I came back again. And was responsible for regional operations in the Gove piece and then the Ministry got blown up. So the new ministry was formed so... All of the Children and Families piece then got combined with a piece from the Youth Justice came over from Attorney Generals. [Inaudible] General at the time. The Mental Health and Addictions part came in from Health. The Childcare came in from Education. So all these pieces—from five different ministries—came together and then we had to figure out how to create a new ministry.

MARSHALL: And was that as a result of... why... The coming together of those things was circumstantial?

JENNIFER: Yah, well...

MARSHALL: What was your recollection of that?

JENNIFER: Well the Gove really called for a "reduce the silos and collaboration" and it's actually—I should go back to the recommendations—I don't know if you said a single ministry, but he might have set a single ministry. I think he did say a single ministry and we've kind of gone around the edges of that, thinking well maybe we could get... live with the spirit and the intention of it. But at the same time, the children's—the first Children's Commissioner—was appointed, Cindy Morgan. She lives in Ontario and I've tried to reach out to every Children's Commissioner and Child and Youth Advocate of



the province ever to try and understand how they would approach things

MARSHALL: Oh nice.

JENNIFER: So I met with Cindy a little while ago, but she was very critical of the ministry's approach.

MARSHALL: The new ministry? [50:00]

JENNIFER: No, the old ministry which I think led to the Premier making a decision to just blow up the thing and start again and see if we could fix it.

MARSHALL: Right, and your role in fixing that was?

JENNIFER: Well... So my role pretty quickly changed from implementing Gove within the former Ministry of Children and Families—or whatever it was called back then—to, I got brought over to be part of the executive that was building this new ministry. That was interesting because Bob Plecas [??] was returned to do that and I loved working with Bob. Amazing that he was able to. He was always known around the, what's fondly called—or not so fondly called—the Dirt Ministries. And regional economic development. So that was his background but he came in and was recruited. Was probably the first one fired by the New Democrats when they came in. But then he was brought back in to try and figure out this new ministry. So he was great to work with, actually. He was very empathic. He was also very strategic, you know what I mean, an incredible strategic mind. And he had, he brought in some really interesting rhythms and routines for us as an Executive. About how we would convene on Mondays, figure out what the plan for the week was because we have to be really fast to build this brand new ministry in record time. Figure out all the systems. How do you know...

MARSHALL: A whole new structure.

JENNIFER: Everything. How do you know everything, you know. Human resources, your finance, your data management, your...

MARSHALL: You're making something new out of things that had existed in different places.

JENNIFER: And how do you change a culture? Yes. We create a culture because we didn't want a ministry that was just, you know, the Child Welfare/Child Protection, with all these pieces added on. We were trying to fundamentally change it as we were going forward so that it was less about, you know, that we were thinking about family support and we were thinking about the wrap around services.

MARSHALL: The intentional ways these things were connected.

JENNIFER: Yes exactly. You know, and why it was so important to have Mental Health and Addiction services as part of this so that you can help young people who are really struggling as a result of the experiences that they've had. So yah. So that was a pretty



crazy time.

MARSHALL: Yah, I bet. And you stayed there for 18 months and then you were off to something else.

JENNIFER: I was.

MARSHALL: I see a pattern forming. [Laughter]

JENNIFER: I know, I know. [Laughter] I often have to... [Laughter] It's crazy. The Fed is the longest place I've ever stayed.

MARSHALL: Oh really?

JENNIFER: Yeah. The longest place I ever stayed. Six years.

MARSHALL: That's interesting. Oh we'll get to that.

JENNIFER: Yes. So, anyway, I had a crisis of faith. So we were building this organization and what happened was one of the things that I was responsible for was [sort of] regional operations and creating a culture. So I was responsible for transitions and transition planning. And then six months in, the Premier—Glen Clark—decided that we were done with transition. You know, we should be done now. We should have built the new culture. Like don't...don't...

MARSHALL: You're finished now with your work.

JENNIFER: You're finished now so just get on with doing the work. And so Bob said that to us and I looked around the table and I really valued all the colleagues that I had. It was a great group of people. It was a joy to work with them and I loved working with Bob but I thought there is no way that we have built this culture in a good way yet. And this is going to be a train wreck because we haven't tended to bringing people in, you know, supporting this new way of doing the work, really attending to organizational culture. And even though that wasn't something I had trained in at that point, it was something I felt in my bones.

MARSHALL: You could see it, having been involved

JENNIFER: That you could see it. You could see it, you could see... [sighs] So anyway I decided I had to leave because I didn't, again, I didn't know how to articulate what was going on in order to be helpful. So that's when I went back to my mentor Frances Ricks and said, 'That's it, I'm out of this field, I can't do this anymore, we're not being helpful, this is not going to be good for kids.' And that's [55:00] when I went back to do... She invited me to consider coming back to do my PhD. To take a look at how do you create a high performing child welfare organization. Like how do you do that?



MARSHALL: Right. She was still she was still at UVIC?

JENNIFER: So I went back into private practice and then I...

MARSHALL: Took her up on that offer?

JENNIFER: Took her up on that and talked and...

MARSHALL: After you left, was it a trainwreck?

JENNIFER: I think it has had a lot of problems. Yeah I think that it...I think it could have been more successful earlier on in the journey if we'd actually been able to do what I think we all knew needed to be done but we weren't allowed to.

MARSHALL: You weren't allowed to. That was a very diplomatic phrasing of that. Well done.

JENNIFER: Yes. Yah. [Laughter].

MARSHALL: But there's an important lesson there.

JENNIFER: It was a really yah...

MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: Organizational culture and it's so interesting because even I think Leadership 2020—that work that I did for my MBA—was very much around trying to understand organizational culture. Because the culture affects our practice and when we have a culture where people are unhappy or don't understand or we've siloed or, you know, we're competing for favour. You know, like the focus on mental health and addictions. I think they probably still... Well Addictions went back to Health.

MARSHALL: Right it moved again but...

JENNIFER: But mental health, I think, they've always felt like the undervalued family member...

MARSHALL: What you do is inherently tied up in how you do it, right.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

MARSHALL: It goes back to the same, like what you say and how you say it are different but inter-related. You can't do this work in any way... Like it has to be...Yeah.

JENNIFER: Yeah. And we didn't do the work we needed to with the contract service agencies, the community service agencies. There were just so many things we missed that needed to be done in a good way that we didn't till the soil and plant the right seeds. So I think it took a lot longer to get to the place where we could have gone, I think, if we'd really tended to the organizational culture and...

MARSHALL: Built what needed to be built...



JENNIFER: Yeah. And figured out. Yah...

MARSHALL: ...rather than jumping in and getting to, yah. Which is rarely possible within a big bureaucracy.

JENNIFER: It is, I know.

MARSHALL: Take as much time as you need to build the right.... No, that's not going to happen.

JENNIFER: Yeah. And sometimes I think we needed a you know... And sometimes when you're doing big changes, you also need to parallel fund. You need to kind of maintain the system...

MARSHALL: While you build a thing.

JENNIFER: While you build a new thing that will then overtake the other system, you know. And we didn't have the luxury of doing that. And I appreciate that that's a luxury.

MARSHALL: It is a luxury.

JENNIFER: So we were trying to kind of build the 747 while we were...

MARSHALL: Getting to take off.

JENNIFER: You know, getting ready to take off and... Yeah and it had it's problems. But it wasn't because people weren't trying really hard or it wasn't really good intentions or good leadership or...

MARSHALL: No no no.

JENNIFER: ...anything like that. It's just... It's such a reminder to me. And again—it's something I bring into this job—it's like, we might think that change happens quickly/should happen quickly because we're impatient, but rightly or wrongly, bureaucracies have great value but they also have great constraints. So...

MARSHALL: And knowing how to work within the system you're in, right? And not assuming that it can just do things that it has never done before. Right it's like...

JENNIFER: Exactly.

MARSHALL: ...imagining some outside of the system where things can work perfectly, right.

JENNIFER: Yah! Just think of information sharing.

MARSHALL: Right!

JENNIFER: You know, like you've got Justice, Youth Forensics, and Mental Health, and Child Welfare. So they've each got their rules and their regulations around, and their codes of conduct, and their professional accountabilities about how you share information.



So when you say we're going to actually do integrated case management—which was another thing that was important at the time—and you've got people saying well I can't share information because that's against my professional code of conduct or, you know, my legislation says this. It's like, well we're just wanting to have a conversation around a child, you know, and yet there were all sorts of things that you had to unpack before you could create new practices.

MARSHALL: Do the, yah.

JENNIFER: You know, it's like oh this is way harder than you think it should be. And sometimes it's incredibly frustrating and it doesn't make any sense and...

MARSHALL: That's a big big system to push up again.

JENNIFER: That's right. And then you know then you've got the intersection with your community service providers, as well. Because since the mid 80s, they've become increasingly more important. They were the ones doing the frontline service for us, other than the child welfare side of things and... and child and youth mental health...

MARSHALL: Right. But yah, [01:00:00] the community sector growing...absolutely.

JENNIFER: The community sector growing and yeah...

MARSHALL: But you [Inaudible]?

JENNIFER: Yes I did.

MARSHALL: 4 years? Longer..?

JENNIFER: 7 and a half years.

MARSHALL: 7 and a half years while you're doing private practice?

JENNIFER: Yes. And teaching.

MARSHALL: Which takes us to...? And teaching...

JENNIFER: 2000 to 2005.

MARSHALL: 2000 to 2005. And you were teaching?

JENNIFER: No. So I guess I left in 98' or something like that. 2005 is when I finished.

MARSHALL: This would put us around 99' to 2005-ish.

JENNIFER: Yes.

MARSHALL: Around there?

JENNIFER: Yep. And then graduated 2005. And then applied for this job when it was being so



[Inaudible].

MARSHALL: Right. Yes.

JENNIFER: 2006. His report, they created this office, I applied for this job, didn't get it. Mary Ellen got it. So then I applied to The Federation.

MARSHALL: And did you get that job?

JENNIFER: I did get that job. They actually hired me.

MARSHALL: And that's...

JENNIFER: I volunteered with The Fed quite a bit...

MARSHALL: Before?

JENNIFER: ...writing articles, actually doing some of the things. Yeah, writing bulletins and articles and stuff like that. Yeah, just on a voluntary basis. Doing some strategic planning...

MARSHALL: While you were doing your PhD?

JENNIFER: Yeah. It was just an organization and I always thought... It was The Federation.

MARSHALL: of Child and Youth...

JENNIFER: Child...Federation of...What were we?

MARSHALL: Child and...

JENNIFER: Federation of...

MARSHALL: Our researcher can look that up. The version of child and youth.

JENNIFER: I don't think there was child and youth...

MARSHALL: No, Child and Family...Services.

JENNIFER: Child and Family Services. The Federation of Child and Family Services when I started there.

MARSHALL: And that, I mean, that and this position—unless we glossed over some stuff—would have been the first time you applied for a job? Rather than being seconded in or offered? In a long long time?

JENNIFER: I think the idea was... I did apply for one job. I think when... I think the Gove job I did apply for that one. And then everything else was pretty much secondments.

MARSHALL: Right, and then you're...So this takes us to 2005...



JENNIFER: 2006.

MARSHALL: At The Fed.

JENNIFER: At the Fed.

MARSHALL: And The Federation, what was that like? You were not doing frontline.

JENNIFER: There was myself and Susan... no, not doing frontline.

MARSHALL: Not in government.

JENNIFER: Not in government, not doing frontline.

MARSHALL: Something kind of new?

JENNIFER: Something new and... I think that was... Like I wanted...I really value The Fed. And it also was an opportunity for me because I've never worked in—other than during my internships at some short-term jobs in the late 70s, early 80s—never worked in non-profits. So it was an opportunity for me to understand non-profit, run a non-profit, understand the non-profit and then know the broader community social services sector, and be kind of an advocate from that angle.

MARSHALL: From that side of things....

JENNIFER: From that side of things. Service provider/provision side of things....

MARSHALL: ..The Federation be an umbrella non-profit for the community sector.

JENNIFER: Yeah. Nonprofits in the community and for-profits.

MARSHALL: Those that will be watching or reading everything later. Yeah.

JENNIFER: Yeah, that's right. So that was interesting for sure. So I hadn't ever done anything like that but at that point The Federation had myself and a part-time admin.

MARSHALL: Susan?

JENNIFER: Susan Shue—who is amazing. She did everything. And a very active Board. Noreen Boudreau was the Chair of the Board at the time.

MARSHALL: It was a working Board at that point.

JENNIFER: It was very much a working Board, yeah.

MARSHALL: Also made up of ED's from within the sector.

JENNIFER: Yep.

MARSHALL: Member organizations?



- JENNIFER: All EDs, yeah. And my predecessor —Craig Meredith—had done an amazing job because The Federation used to have core funding in the government and then as part of the 2002... So yeah, and I should maybe back up to the... From a historical point of view, when I was doing all the consulting and community based work, I was working almost exclusively with community-based agencies. So when the cuts came down in 2002/2003...
- MARSHALL: Right, 2002/2003.
- JENNIFER: Devastating. Absolutely devastated. The first iteration, the cuts were going to be around 30-35% which was unbelievable. So what a group—a small tiny group of us—because I didn't have any government contracts. The contract service providers were terrified about saying anything. And Queen Alexander Foundation actually covered some of my time so that I could work kind of behind the scenes—well [01:05:00] I can be the front if you need—but worked with folks that were behind the scenes to gather data.
- MARSHALL: Community organizations that had the contracts to get that number down.
- JENNIFER: Exactly. We got the data, we met, we had a very political strategy on the Island, presented to all of the MLAs about the impact of the cuts. Like what is going to happen in your community and what's not going to be available so that the MLAs and the back-benchers—because there were only two members of the New Democrats at that point so it was entirely Liberals that we had to work with and really wanted them to understand what the impact would be on their communities.
- MARSHALL: Right, their constituents.
- JENNIFER: So I think the backbenchers did what they needed to do which—so got the cuts down. It was still devastating but it was below 20%.
- MARSHALL: But not 30%, yeah like teens, mid-teens.
- JENNIFER: It was about 18%, I think, depending on where you were...
- MARSHALL: Where you were.
- JENNIFER: ...in what area. Youth services were cut a lot harder. And I firmly believe that those cuts in youth services really had long-term impacts and there's a group of young people that we did not serve nearly in the way that they needed, that have had long-term negative impacts.
- MARSHALL: As a result of that.
- JENNIFER: As a result of that. Yeah, yeah.
- MARSHALL: But that approach... The elected officials rather than working within the public service



to mitigate cuts?

JENNIFER: Yes. Yeah.

MARSHALL: Was the approach?

JENNIFER: Yeah. Because the public service—to be honest the public service also helped us with sharing some data, as well, because I think they were quite horrified at what the impact was going to be...

MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: ...to be honest. I won't name any names. But it was also a really good way of thinking—OK, data matters. Emotion is not, had no impact on decision-making. Data had the impact. So coming into The Fed, that was such a good lesson about we actually have to have evidence as well as the stories. You know, you have to bring both. Same here, you know. Same here, you know, that's one of the things that's so important. So when we do our reports—like the Time To Listen Report—where it's aggregate data so the data is good. It's really solid and we have young people's stories and young people's voices. So, you know, back with that 2002/2003 data was so important.

MARSHALL: Right. That paints a very vivid picture for the elected officials in terms of their constituents and their community.

JENNIFER: This is who's not going to get [Inaudible], this the number of agencies, this is the number of jobs that would get lost.

MARSHALL: Yeah, right. Like a story is motivating, right? Those numbers hit home. They make it tangible. They make it real, right?

JENNIFER: Yes. You will lose 57, modestly paid, contributing members of your community in Parksville. How's that going over? You know those kinds of things were really important to talk about.

MARSHALL: Oh totally.

JENNIFER: So say that means that there's going to be 1800 families that look like this. They're not going to get the services and supports that they need.

MARSHALL: Here's then one anecdotal story of what that looks like for a family, multiplied by this many hundred families. So then you get... The impact is fully felt on both levels. Yeah, absolutely.

JENNIFER: Yeah, so it was a very interesting time to see...

MARSHALL: I mean, a small win in a bad situation.

JC: Bad situation, yah. It was a very very... I would say the sector was really beaten. It was



very very hard on the sector to go through that time and it took years and years...

MARSHALL: Hearing the different stories of how it was impacted on personal levels and program levels in different ways, right? Now for most people it's, you know, a number or a budget line item—understanding when cuts happen or why cuts happen—but what that impacts on the ground in terms of programs and jobs and services...

JENNIFER: Yes.

MARSHALL: ...has been...Yeah.

JENNIFER: And you know a lot of people in the sector kept trying to deliver the services because they didn't want young people or families to get harmed. So that meant they were working longer hours so that... When I said earlier that for many of us in the early days we were called into this work. Like it was... it's heart work as well as head work. And so those folks were still, you know, were there.

MARSHALL: They're still there.

JENNIFER: They're still there trying to figure it out and do as much as they possibly can.
[01:10:00] And so it affected people in so many different levels.

MARSHALL: [Alarm rings] Sorry.

JENNIFER: Oh, it's all right.

MARSHALL: My apologies. I don't know what that was.

JENNIFER: No worries!

MARSHALL: It's on Airplane mode. I don't even know how that happens.

JENNIFER: [Laughter].

MARSHALL: I don't understand technology.

MARSHALL: So... At The Fed—2006.

JENNIFER: Yes.

MARSHALL: You and part-time Susan.

JENNIFER: Part-time Susan? And a very busy Board.

MARSHALL: And by the time Marshall showed up in 2011, there was more than just you and part-time Susan. What were those years like?

JENNIFER: Yes. Those years were, I mean it was a very active board, us diversifying—so we grew our membership up quite a bit. We also got contract dollars—so project dollars—



that allowed us to hire some folks. So being able to take on things like recruitment and retention and [Inaudible] partnership stuff. Yeah, and getting... So we basically diversified our funding base and were able to bring people in like Rebecca and Amy and Doug and Donna and...

MARSHALL: And diversify the membership.

JENNIFER: Diversify the membership as well. So we also went through... In 2009 is when we went from The Federation of Child and Family Services to The Federation of Community Social Services. The intention there was. Over the years services -contract services or [Inaudible] services—used to be quite, um, they would have more niches so you would be/have a small agency delivering a specific kind of services. Largely because of the decisions that were made by government in the contracting side of things, you were getting more and more multi-service larger organizations. And especially in some regions, there was a lot of re tendering of contracts that was happening as well. Just trying to figure out how to cope with the cuts, really. So a lot of re-tendering. A lot of organizations got pushed out. And then were becoming... They themselves were diversifying. So they were starting to do developmental disability services, employment based services, housing. Just all sorts of things in order to create a more robust agency. So we needed to change too because there weren't these pure child and family organizations any longer. So by changing our name and our brand and our approach, it wasn't that we denied our roots in child and family services, but we recognized that changing landscape...

MARSHALL: The changing landscape and the changing nature of..

JENNIFER: Yeah. So that enabled us to bring a more diverse array of members in. Never really got as many from the disability side as we had hoped. That was the CEO network we were trying to keep the [Inaudible] in the hopes that then we would come together and have one organization. That didn't happen but nonetheless we managed to grow.

MARSHALL: Right. And so it was.... yeah. At the same time growing membership but also existing members were growing and diversifying....

JENNIFER: That's right.

MARSHALL: ...at that time.

JENNIFER: Absolutely yeah.

MARSHALL: All right. And the organization grew and then Marshall showed up.

JENNIFER: That's right.

MARSHALL: And then you left in 2012?

JENNIFER: Yeah.



MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: 2012.

MARSHALL: And that decision was?

JENNIFER: Well...

MARSHALL: Because you've been in one place for a long time.

JENNIFER: Yeah. Yeah. And I think I found the job incredibly hard, like draining.

MARSHALL: Yeah. I mean it was hard and draining.

JENNIFER: Yeah. And I'd taken quite a significant income cut to come as well. So it was making it—it was more and more difficult for me. Kind of like [makes funny sound] I've got kids going into University.

MARSHALL: I have kids growing up.

JENNIFER: Blah blah blah so yah. So partly economic, to be honest.

MARSHALL: Yah, the nature of the non-profit sector.

JENNIFER: Nature of the non-profit sector. I know. So no pension, non-profit sector, low wage or lower wages.

MARSHALL: Lower wages.

JENNIFER: No. And I never, I mean I never.... I mean I knew that I was paid better than most people, including many EDs so it wasn't like... I'm not being critical of [01:15:00] The Federation or anything like that. They were doing the very best they could but our whole sector...

MARSHALL: The sector, yah.

JENNIFER: ...is underpaid. And.

MARSHALL: The structural imbalances that are just inherent in the way things are...

JENNIFER: Exactly. And I wasn't sure that I had it in me, like, I've given everything I had for a very long days.

MARSHALL: Right. There were a lot of days. You were doing. You were doing a lot. You were working a lot. There were some big pieces of important work...

JENNIFER: Yeah!

MARSHALL: ...that happened.



JENNIFER: I know! I mean I'm really proud of the things that we did. There was...

MARSHALL: Oh absolutely.

JENNIFER: ... some pretty significant work. You know, that I think the seeds were sown for some good things to happen subsequently, as well.

MARSHALL: Absolutely.

JENNIFER: But I also had to take a look and the thing I love doing more than anything else was Leadership 2020.

MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: So if I can do more of that and...

MARSHALL: Back to...

JENNIFER: ... go back to really...

MARSHALL: ... teaching, caring for other caregivers.

JENNIFER: [Laughter].

MARSHALL: Right? Helping people who are good at what they do, do what they do.

JENNIFER: Yes, that's right.

MARSHALL: Full circle. In a very new and different way, which you continued doing after you stepped down.

JENNIFER: Yes. Yes exactly.

MARSHALL: Until very recently.

JENNIFER: Until November. Sad.

MARSHALL: It is sad.

JENNIFER: It's the hardest part.

MARSHALL: Letting go of something that...

JENNIFER: Something you birthed.

MARSHALL: Yeah you created that thing.

JENNIFER: Well, I mean Amy. Amy was at the front end of that. Yeah and that great Board that said, OK well let's give it a try. That's pretty amazing. But yeah, I was part of the recruitment and retention. The work that we were trying to do to re-establish a good working relationship between government and nonprofits.



MARSHALL: Yeah. There was some big pieces of work around ICM, the Residential Review.

JENNIFER: The Residential Review was definitely another highlight. I think that the only sadness is that it didn't get picked up in the way that it should have. And we're still in this office.

MARSHALL: Yes.

JENNIFER: Still, we're on it because it still has...

MARSHALL: Still have feelings about that.

JENNIFER: Yeah and it's still just as relevant as it was in 2011.

MARSHALL: So yeah... the... you know... Marshall will edit this out. The things that need to be done are there. We've got all these things. What's to know! [excited but inaudible]

JENNIFER: God! I mean what is... we've managed to get the foster care rates up this year. That was the...

MARSHALL: Yah!

JENNIFER: From 2000—we actually finished that report in 2010. It got released in 2011. So here we are 20 years later.

MARSHALL: 20 years later. I mean we had—I mean between you and me and the walls—talks last year about that, noted like ten years after. And like what's going to happen. And for a brief time there was like some way of holding, you know, the ministry's feet to the fire about these things that are there, that are being treated like boxes that were checked in speeches and reports without actual fundamental change. And when there was...I mean I think everyone kind of just accepted that after a decade, it's not going to be taken seriously. Which was a bummer.

JENNIFER: You know what? I mean, I actually think that...

MARSHALL: Because it was co-authored with the ministry?

JENNIFER: The ministry with Alan Markwart, right. Who is my deputy. So yeah. So I. We're not letting it go.

MARSHALL: Right.

JENNIFER: Because it's still just as relevant. We still don't have a system of care...

MARSHALL: And the thing that needs to be done, still hasn't been done.

JENNIFER: We don't have a strong, robust kind of middle area in terms of treatment time and treatment and access to services. Yah. So there's virtually nothing that's in that report that has been addressed, so far. So I remain hopeful.



MARSHALL: Yes, me too.

JENNIFER: Because it's. And we don't need to re-consult. I mean that is another thing that I just think drives me crazy [Inaudible] rehash things. Consult over and over again. It's like, OK. Why don't we do some things and then we can see—we can ask people—whether it's made a difference. We could do that.

MARSHALL: We can do that. Yeah, but is that part of what you're doing now? We're now in 2019. You've been in this role for six months.

JENNIFER: Six months, yes.

MARSHALL: And I mean we've talked about this a bit before, but how have those six months been? Because this is also very new. This is very unique. And—as far as I understand—an other position that you were asked to do?

JENNIFER: No. Well no. [01:20:00] I applied for this one too.

MARSHALL: Oh really?

JENNIFER: Oh yeah. Oh gosh. Well I applied for it when Mary Ellen left, as well. Just to catch you up on this. So I applied for it and went through a very long process of back and forth because there's a committee appointed by the Legislature to select the next Representative. So you applying and you go through a very involved process and you have to get unanimity. So all members of that selection committee—6/7 members—have to agree. So all three parties—ah well, at that point there weren't 3 parties there were 2 parties. But everybody has to agree. So they couldn't agree. So I didn't get it. Bernard got it, which I'm very grateful. I think he was just the person that they needed at that point. But then he left after 16 [Inaudible]. So I...

MARSHALL: Right, went back east.

JENNIFER: I applied... Yah I went back home. I applied again and this time it just felt right. I was ready. I think in many many ways and the three parties agreed. And then... so they have to agree and then they put my name forward to the whole Legislature and the Legislature votes. So that's the independent officer piece. But that reminds me there is a piece I think is important in terms of our history.

MARSHALL: Yes please.

JENNIFER: Which is the Indigenous child welfare experience and where... In the early part of my career—in the first 20 years or so—no one talked about the unique experience of Indigenous children, youth, and families. Never talked about, you know, what had happened. Nobody talked about colonization. Nobody even knew or were trained in residential schools or anything like that. And really I think that that's really interesting from our history because, unwittingly, it caused a lot of harm.



MARSHALL: Yeah.

JENNIFER: We weren't trying to be bad people. We didn't know any better.

MARSHALL: That really really really big harmful blind spot.

JENNIFER: Exactly. It's huge. Nothing in my training—including in my PhD—in terms of the formal training. Fortunately Francis was doing some amazing work in Northern Manitoba and was... So she brought a lot of that in and that was like, whoa that's interesting.

MARSHALL: Based on lived experience in these communities?

JENNIFER: Yes. But nothing that was formal in our education or anything like that. So that's the early 90s, right? So really we're in a critical developmental stage and when I say I was ready for this job, it's because I'd had the privilege of working with Wedlidi Speck, on Indigenous 2020, in The Fed as we were trying to build relationships with our sister organizations.

MARSHALL: Yeah. The MOU...

JENNIFER: The MOU with the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres. Yes. And working with the First Nations delegated agencies and their directors...

MARSHALL: And that piece of work that was...

JENNIFER: Yeah.

MARSHALL: ... kind of, you know...I mean, I'm not sure but felt like it started-ish. Because that was in 2012?

JENNIFER: When would that have been? Must have been before that.

MARSHALL: 2011?

JENNIFER: Maybe, Yeah. 2011.

MARSHALL: It must have been 2011.

JENNIFER: Yeah. I think so. And then we'd also did it to all sorts of in-service, you know, professional development training with Paul and with Lenny and Chris and that kind of thing. So when you think of our evolution.

MARSHALL: That long trajectory.

JENNIFER: That's a huge piece and I think we're still—for many of us—we're still trying to figure out how do our agencies now have to look? What do our recruitment practices need to look like? How do we work with our sister organizations and our brother organizations? How do we understand whose land we're on? How do we kind of address our complicity in the mean-ness of the colonizing practices? So that's, I think, from the



point of view of the evolution of our field...

MARSHALL: The sector.

JENNIFER: This.... Yeah the sector was slow in getting to the table on this one. Its... yeah. Sometimes I still get questions about why? Why should we be having this conversation? And then it's like, Oh we definitely need to have this conversation.

MARSHALL: And in a few ways, that's kind of unique to the British Columbia context. But yeah... varying...yeah. [Inaudible] 8/9 years ago, but still quite new. Actually talking [01:25:00] with this project, one of the only two questions that I bring and ask at the end—which, uh, so spoiler, this is coming up. Is something along the lines of like... I don't like to think of even in my own career in terms of like failures or missed opportunities. But, you know, the idea of when things were toughest? Or something that you wish you had done differently? Posing that... Tim Beachy did a spin on that question. And Ian Mass's story was being asked to be a witness at the ceremony between The Fed and the B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and his role as a witness. And how he understood what that meant and how we've gotten into that position. And standing there and kind of this wave of realization, just like, you know, being in the system, being in the sector, doing all this work. And given how things were in the 70s and 80s. And you kind of stumble into these things and you just find yourself working in a group home and that ends and it leads you to doing advocacy and you kind of just keep going because things need to be done and you're helping and doing and trying to get contracts and keep going. And the wider perspective of things are going on. There's so much that's just taken for granted and you don't get a lot of those moments. And he is like that was one of those moments where I was just like.

JENNIFER: Oh that's so cool.

MARSHALL: And yah, that was his answer. And that was... His story was beautiful and it's a wonderful opportunity.

JENNIFER: Yah, that's really beautiful.

MARSHALL: It was great. I just went through that transcript yesterday.

JENNIFER: Nice. Yeah. Yeah! I mean, I think that these are some really important times for us to be showing up very differently. And we've had that ,right? Like we were.. We started out doing behaviour modification, institutionalizing kids. That's what I was trained to do. And here we are now, with federal enabling legislation that's in second reading that might be returned. If it gets passed, then nations may bring Indigenous—reclaim their indigenous laws and practices to create their own child welfare system. So when you think of... Our sector has gone through all sorts of different changes. And lots of pain and heartache and all that kind of stuff as we've been going through.

MARSHALL: But as we kind of mentioned earlier, a lot of parts of the inherent work of the sector is



kind of doing work that needs to be done in a reactionary way, which is often helping the symptoms of bigger problems without realizing the bigger problems underneath. And when you have those moments of realization, it's a gift to be able to approach things differently. And it's hard to get to that when you're so busy trying to be just...

JENNIFER: When you're so busy.

MARSHALL: ...help and care and get through, you know, a 12 hour day.

JENNIFER: And keep your staff.

MARSHALL: And stay safe and keep the lights on.

JENNIFER: Exactly. And I think that's really hard for a lot of our organizations and even the ministry but I would say particularly for the Community Centres. Now I'm speaking more with my community sector [Inaudible] this because I've got lots of work to do here to help us stay within our [Inaudible].

MARSHALL: [Laughter]

JENNIFER: Not very—culturally—a team yet but...

MARSHALL: Like everything. It's a work in progress.

JENNIFER: It's a work in progress.

MARSHALL: What would Jennifer's answer to a hastily weirdly worded question of, you know, a thing that might have been done differently? Something that you would view differently with hindsight. Maybe something when things were toughest. I don't like framing these in terms of failures because a lot of times you're making a decision based on half of a picture with a bit of information and there's lots of things going on. But, you know, something that stands out as something you learned an important lesson from.

JENNIFER: I think probably the best lesson was when I had my crisis of faith when I was working at the ministry. And what I wished I'd known then was how to raise concerns about the path that we were on. Let me back up for a minute. I think for... I had so many great experiences but I was also—mostly because I was a really hard worker and I was a good foot soldier. Even if I was in positions of leadership and whatnot, [01:30:00] I would get the job done. I'd kind of hunker down and I'd get the job done. But I didn't bring the same sort of critical lens that I think I can now. And what I wished I'd been able to do back then was bring a better critical lens in and to be more helpful as a member of executive with my colleagues to say, here's what I'm seeing. Here's what I think is going on. This isn't going to end well, I don't think. Can we have a conversation about that? You know? Instead, I quit. And so I have found my voice—interestingly my PhD research ended up being on voice. You know finding your voice



to be, you know, so advocacy of course comes. But I didn't have the critical analysis or the confidence in my own sense of what was going on to have those really important conversations and I wished I had. Because leaving wasn't the answer. It was the answer for me. It worked out fine for me. But it wasn't the answer to the service we were responsible to provide to kids and families. And I think that I wished—and, you know, it's funny because I've connected with other members from that time. Since then, many of us ended up leaving. And we all have doubts. We all have doubts but we didn't... None of us were kind of... We were just doing the work rather than saying, wait a second here. Are we doing the right thing or not? So I wished I had that ability. That would be, you know, it was just, I wasn't skilful enough.

MARSHALL: Yeah. And, you know, [unclear] phrasing that in terms of there is also the capacity or the permission or the, you know, whatever. Those types of things, that's a hard thing to do no matter where you are.

JENNIFER: And the interesting thing is I think that we could have. I think that the deputy, Bob, would have been very receptive to that. And I kind of tried but I wasn't, you know, I didn't have, again, that kind of really critical lens, which also leads me to think how important it is that we cultivate and that we support people to not only be great practitioners but to understand the context and to also be good advocates. No matter where we are, we should be advocates. And to also bring a critical lens and critical analysis to the work that we're doing.

MARSHALL: Understanding how to work for complexity.

JENNIFER: And be willing to...yah! Exactly.

MARSHALL: [Inaudible] 20/20 right there.

JENNIFER: 20/20 right there.

MARSHALL: Yeah! Put that in the ad. So then let's shine the spotlight on something significant in your perspective. In this moment right now, if you had a spotlight to shine on your best or most significant work.

JENNIFER: Geez.

MARSHALL: Is there one that stands out? That felt right? Or really really important at that time? Or maybe with hindsight? I know you have a soft spot for 20/20.

JENNIFER: 20/20 yah. But you know what came first to mind? I was walking out of—in 1977—walking out of a meeting with Penny.

MARSHALL: Yeah?

JENNIFER: And it's like, I'm so glad that I had that opportunity. I get emotional even thinking about it. It's been a good run.



MARSHALL: Yeah?

JENNIFER: Yeah.

MARSHALL: That's one very pivotal moment that put you on a trajectory...

JENNIFER: It was absolutely a pivotal moment.

MARSHALL: That sent you down this very long path. That you can trace back to that one talk with one person.

JENNIFER: Yeah, that one two-hour talk. It was amazing and you know—just as an aside—this is a sweet story. So Noreen Boudreau was the person who hired me at The Federation. She was a friend that I knew before. So she was just honoured by VACFSS last week—Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society—as one of the community partners. So they honour a community partner every year as part of their honouring time with staff. And she told this great story of Penny called the Double Dutch story. So Penny apparently was, you know, there was a child that had significant needs and lots of stuff going on so they had this cast of thousands. And I can just see it because this is the Penny way. You know, brought all these cast of thousands and everybody, you know, the psychiatrist said what they said and then the psychologist and then, you know, this' and the thats. And the child was there and the family was there and Penny turned to the child at one point and said, so what are some things [01:35:00] that you think would be helpful to you? What is it that you think is important? And the child said, well what I really want to know is how to do double dutch skipping. Because if I could learn how to double dutch, then I'd be able to play with kids in the playground and then I'd be able to make friends. And then if I had some friends, then maybe I wouldn't beat people up and, you know, like all this kind of stuff. And I thought that's such a Penny because Penny would be the one that would turn to the child. And that's exactly what converted me in 1977 was the idea of being with the child.

MARSHALL: With the child.

JENNIFER: Yeah. So I think that's, like, that's number one that came to mind. And I think Leadership 2020. Yah it's definitely one of those big ones for me. Of being able to say our field needs—not only do they need people that are willing to step into leadership roles—but they need folks who are willing to be able to lead in a different way. And the Indigenous 2020 is probably my greatest... The thing I'm most proud of. The reason for that is that not only is it such an important thing to help people, you know, be prepared for this complex work. But one of the things that so many of the folks that showed up to the 2020 Indigenous were people who have been leaders in this field for years. And who had..., you know, When you think of the matriarchs in the Friendship Centre Movement, 40 years carrying a huge burden. Doing it when there was no support. When people were, you know, the depth of racism was so profound—it still



lives—but it was really profound.

MARSHALL: That's why those organizations exist.

JENNIFER: Exactly. So to be able to welcome them in, to host them well, to nurture and support. And they were sponges for the learning and they laughed a little lighter at the end. So I think that's...

MARSHALL: That's beautiful.

JENNIFER: I think that's a good one.

MARSHALL: That's great. This has been wonderful.

JENNIFER: Thank you.

MARSHALL: Thank you.

JENNIFER: Thank you! What a treat. [Laughter] Get a little emotional.

MARSHALL: I mean that's also a theme of these. It happens.

JENNIFER: Is that right?

MARSHALL: Yeah yeah.

JENNIFER: So cool.

MARSHALL: Everyone gets a little choked up. This is important work. You know the people who do this work are, you know, special people, who care because it's not easy.

JENNIFER: No. No.

MARSHALL: It's not easy at all.

JENNIFER: Yeah. I mean, I just look at... I think that's the thing that just teaches me so much or has taught me so much about being able to do this job too is that, you know, there are just so many people that believe so...

MARSHALL: Good people who do good work and being able to help those.

[end recording]