NO JOBS ON A DEAD PLANET:
LABOUR’S PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIP BUILDING BETWEEN BRITISH COLUMBIA’S LABOUR AND ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

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Abstract

This thesis explores, from a labour perspective, the relationships between labour and environmental activists: relationships that were created following decades of conflict and resolution of environmental issues. Flowing from the question ‘What can be learned from labour leaders’ experiences of building relationships with environmental activists?’ I utilized the stories of those who were actively involved during and after the ‘war in the woods’ period. This case study used an institutional ethnographic approach to determine how and why the conflict occurred. I argue that while the personal qualities of leadership are essential, they are not sufficient for relationship building. Labour leaders also need to prepare the ground inside individual unions to facilitate authentic external relationships that can turn into lasting political change. The final discussion turns to exploring unions as systems, leadership in unions, and reflecting on how labour leaders ready their unions to work effectively with coalition partners.
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Prologue

“Karen, I would like to speak with you about your thesis,” announces Rick on the first day of class. My heart jumped a little. What could he want to talk to me about, I wondered; hadn’t we already discussed what I was going to do? I had decided almost a year ago that I was going to create an environmental program for union members, in particular, workers in Alberta’s tar sands region.

After a couple of days we were able to finally meet for a quiet conversation. He didn’t waste any time with small talk, he said “some of us have been talking and we think that what you should write about is the relationship between labour and environmentalists during the ‘war in the woods’ time.” And of course right away, because I’m this type of person, my back got up a little bit and I said to myself, “I’m 50 years old you can’t tell me what to do!”

“But it doesn’t make any sense for me to do that,” I protested out loud. “I am already working to build relationships between labour and environmentalists and it is many of my friends who are also doing that work. It is what I am doing all the time, working with labour and environmentalists.”

“And that is exactly why you should do it,” he replied. “You have lived this and are still living this experience. This makes you the right person to do this research. So you know, we think you should do it.”

He continued to try to convince me, but I had retreated into my head and was trying to process this new idea. I could feel myself smiling and nodding my head, but the ideas and my fears were swirling and keeping me off balance. I realized that I should probably give Rick some sort of answer, at least to buy myself some more time to think.

“Sure, that sounds very interesting, I’ll think about it” I said. And we ended our meeting. Over the next few hours I thought of little else, which wasn’t that helpful as I was trying to focus
on what was going on in class. By the end of the day I realized that building relationships really had been my passion for over two decades and this would be a thesis topic that I already cared deeply about. I was ready to make the change and leap into what I thought would be a familiar and comfortable pool.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The War in the Woods

In British Columbia (BC), Canada, the decades of the 1980s and 1990s are known as the 'war in the woods' (Ecotrust, n.d., Salazar & Alper, 2000a). It was a period of protest, violence, and headlines. Salazar and Alper (2000b) argue that it was unlike a regular war, as it was more of a war over land-use as opposed to merely land. On one side was the forest industry and on the other were those who felt that dramatic changes as to how the provincial government managed BCs forests were needed. In the midst of it all, First Nations were beginning to assert their rights. Trade unionists and environmentalists found themselves on opposite sides of the conflict. I hope to demonstrate that it was not just a clash of ideas and interests but also a conflict rooted in how unions make decisions, how people interpret the value of forests, and most of all, a conflict about the how relationships and systems are understood.

As with many events, it is difficult to say exactly when the 'war in the woods' started. There were lead-ups to the conflict that helped to set the trajectory towards conflict. In the 1970s there was a dramatic drop in levels of employment due to increased mechanization (Marchak, Aycock, & Herbert, 1999). Public protests over forest practices and the lack of reforestation in the 1980s is a key identifier of the earliest signs of the 'war in the woods', but when conflict moved off the land and into the realm of provincial politics and even the international arena during the 1990s, it became evident that a solution to the 'war in the woods' required a comprehensive approach that included corporations, governments, and First Nations representatives as well as labour and environmental organizations (Salazar & Alper, 2000).

On the ground, environmentalists who were committed to saving old growth forests, blocked roads and prevented forest workers from entering their worksites. In rare occurrences, more controversial tactics were used by environmentalists. I remember hearing about tree spikers...
who would nail large spikes into trees so that fallers would not use their chainsaws to cut the tree down due to the danger of accidentally cutting into the spike and seriously injuring themselves as a result. On one hand, there were people who were basically putting their bodies on the line to save old-growth forests, and on the other were people who were feeling threatened and responded by demanding their right to go to work to support their families. It was a cavernous divide.

The industry works in a system that works basically like this: trees are felled, transported to sawmills, lumber is cut, residue is sent to pulp mills, pulp is sent to paper mills, government oversight ensures that trees are cut appropriately and reforestation occurs. This structural division created real divisions between workers in the same industry. It was also significant that in British Columbia, unionized forest workers in the 1990s were represented by four unions. The Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada (IWA-Canada) represented workers who were mainly involved in logging, sawmilling and log hauling operations. The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP), formerly the Canadian Paperworkers Union represented workers in pulp and paper manufacturing, as did the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada (PPWC), although both of these unions also had a small number of sawmill workers. The British Columbia Government and Service Employees Union (BCGEU) represented government workers involved with forest and environmental management.

In spite of these divisions, labour activists worked for solidarity between workers themselves, and between workers and environmentalists. For example, Mae Burrows, a BC activist and writer, argued vociferously against a division between workers and environmentalists (1998). She insisted that workers and environmentalists must work together, given the tremendous pressure on jobs and environmental protection due to globalization and free trade agreements. “These conflicts are occurring at a time when the need for environmentalists and labour unionists to cooperate has never been greater” (Burrows, 1998, p. 19). Instead of working
together, they were threatening each other with violence and blockading worksites (Hume, 1997a, Hume, 1997b). In 1998, as Chair of the Vancouver and District Labour Council’s Environment Committee, Burrows was motivated to begin to find solutions to the division and, along with several others, helped to create the first structured coalition between unions and environmental organizations in British Columbia: the Labour Environmental Alliance Society (LEAS), now known as Toxic Free Canada.

There were other labour leaders who were also determined to bring the parties together, to build relationships and to find a path forward. They helped to create new relationships and new organizations that would foster conversations, education, and advocating joint positions. For some leaders, it was also about educating themselves, their executive boards, and their members about forestry and environmental issues in general (Bennett, 2007). Some of these individuals have been interviewed for this study and it is through these interviews that we find people from the BC labour movement who, for a variety of reasons, took leadership roles within their organizations and helped to shape the respectful relationship between labour and environmental organizations that exists in BC today. Given the role of unions in our collective journey toward a more fair, equitable and sustainable society, it becomes imperative that we understand more about how to identify and develop strong and effective union leadership.

This research explores the experiences of leaders within the labour movement who, when faced with the perceived conflict of ‘jobs or the environment’, chose to respond both inside of and outside of their normal work activities. Using the ‘war in the woods’ as a case study, the information collected in this research is intended to help understand ways to overcome barriers to building relationships between labour activists and environmentalists.
The Political Landscape

During the 1980s and the 1990s, British Columbia was governed by two political parties: the Social Credit party and the New Democratic Party (NDP). The province has largely experienced a two party system with the Social Credit party, which was formed in 1952, perceived as the party of ‘free enterprise’ and the NDP, perceived as the party of labour. The Social Credit party was formed to promote policies of monetary reform, but ended up as a vehicle for fiscal and social conservatives. Carroll & Ratner (2005) argue that prior to 1991 they had implemented “Canada’s first comprehensive neo-liberal initiative” (p. 168). Although seen as a party of labour, the NDP promised an “increased role for environmentalists in forestry policy discussions” (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 263).

Unions and Environmental Organizations

In Canada, labour unions are legally constituted entities. In British Columbia, a labour union’s legal responsibility is to represent its members and negotiate collective agreements on their behalf (British Columbia Labour Relations Code, 1996). If unions are federally regulated, that is involved in federal crown corporations, transportation, telecommunications, and banking, they fall under the Canada Industrial Relations Act. Unions negotiate collective agreements, “obtain redress and justice through grievance procedures” and provide training and education for their members (Black & Silver, 2008, p. 11). Unions also may lobby governments for increases to minimum wages, improved health and safety legislation, improvements to social programs, and improved human rights.

Although labour unions and environmental organizations can be considered non-profits, there are some significant differences that may affect how relationships between the two types of organizations are able to be created. The Labour Code outlines the rights and responsibilities of unions, beyond just managing the union’s funds. Labour unions have dues ‘check-off’: they are
funded by dues from their members that are deducted by the employer and forwarded to the union (Black & Silver, 2008, p. 25). Labour unions are political organizations in that leaders are elected. The leaders of the unions are accountable to the membership on a regular basis and each union has the ability to un-elect and replace leaders that do things that the members do not like, or who do not do what the members want. It has certainly been my experience that there is always a tender balance between how much leading the leaders can do before the members object.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including environmental organizations, in British Columbia fall under the Societies Act. If they have charitable status, which allows for tax-deductible donations, there are requirements by the federal government, such as tight restrictions on political activities. These organizations have a board of directors and may or may not have members. There are various ways of raising funds, but they do not have the mandatory ‘dues check-off’ that unions do, and so most often rely on donations and grants. The NGO’s board can set the direction of the organization and donors decide whether or not they want to donate, however donors do not have the ability to remove staff or change board members. This is quite different from a labour union and allows the NGO much more freedom to pursue its mission.

**Leadership and Social Movements**

Knowles (2007) reminds us that because unions are struggling with the reduction of union density as well as a changing culture that emphasizes the individual, rather than the collective, union leadership assumes a greater significance. His examination of trade union leadership in Australia provides some insight into how leadership and the organization’s environment inter-connect to shape the way unions develop over time. Knowles demonstrates the tension that union leaders experience in the attempt to balance administrative responsibilities with the need to serve and preserve the union, which is an inherently political organization. As with other types of
leaders, they must also be responsive to government and the general community in addition to preserving the integrity of the union. Further, workers pay dues to the union, expect participate in the organization and have the opportunity to vote a leader in or out of office at pre-determined intervals. Union leaders are directly accountable to their members in a way that is not experienced by private or public sector leaders. Unions are organizations that were created from the struggle of workers to find fairness in the workplace and operate under a deeply embedded set of principles and values that are expressed in each union's constitution. Conserving these values as well as its history and culture are crucial tasks for union leaders. Knowles’ contribution lies in his recognition that leaders within the labour movement must manage a range of tensions and contradictions.

I believe that leaders within social movements need to accept both individual responsibility as well as collective responsibility for the work. Ganz (2010) argues that the perception of leadership within social movements generally differs somewhat than the perception of leadership in other arenas. For example, there is a stereotypical view of a political leader as someone who is charismatic and charming - in other words, electable. However these are not requirements for leaders within social movements. He argues further that social movements require leaders to "create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty" (p. 509). The role of a leader includes identifying, recruiting, and developing leadership at all levels. Successful leadership development creates a community, which then can be mobilized to achieve its stated goals. Union leadership shares these characteristics of social movement leadership, but as it also involves elections and political leadership, it therefore requires a more specific examination (Ganz, 2010).

The task of building relationships out of the kind of conflict which may arise between labour and environmental organizations demands a new exercise in social movement building.
The new organization, or coalition, may have a similar structure to other social movements, and less in common with labour unions, which have formal structures with elected leadership rather than voluntary leadership. Ganz (2010) tells us that the leaders of these new entities take on responsibilities for a new beginning where there are opportunities for a shared future as well as an opportunity to move beyond the aftermath of a shared past.

**A Systems Approach**

Leadership within the labour movement is not an individual pursuit. Leaders are enmeshed in complexity. Swenson & Rigoni (1999) argue that a systems approach, rather than the traditional linear approach to ethical problem solving is more successful because a linear approach does not consider the complexity of the problem. They also assert that a systems approach can provide for outcomes that are good for the short and long term. This is important because, for example, when considering relationships between and among unions and environmental organizations, the outcomes of certain solutions create a framework for the relationship that may outlast the participants. They conclude that this approach does not create perfect solutions, rather, that by participating fully- by including all the relevant variables, examining the relationships, and monitoring the progress- we stand the best chance of creating sustaining solutions. This approach provides a solution that considers the future impacts of the decision as well as the immediate consequences. I believe that labour leaders who perceive these relationships and their changes over time will be more successful in relationship-building.

Oshry (2007) also advocates for a system approach to organizational leadership. He refers to blindness to the other parts of the system, *spatial blindness*, as a source of considerable misunderstanding and conflict and *temporal blindness* refers to the fact that all current events in system life have a history. As he writes so eloquently:

When we don't see systems,
We fall out of the possibility of partnership with each other;

We misunderstand one another;

We make up stories about each other;

We have our myths and prejudices about one another;

We hurt and destroy one another;

We become antagonists when we could be collaborators;

We separate when we could remain together happily;

We become strangers when we could live in peace.

All of this happens without awareness or choice. (Oshry, 2007, p. xvi)

Oshry (2007) argues that if we were to truly see the other parts of the system and know the history of the system we would have the ability to see into others' worlds. If we could see into their worlds, we would then have more empathy and may be less quick to judge or to see them in a negative light. We would be able to think and respond more strategically. However, system blindness is everywhere and the worst thing is that we do not even know that we are blind. We think we see and we think it is the truth and we act on that 'truth', but we are blind to the system. For Oshry, seeing the whole of our story deepens our understanding, enriches our lived experiences, and allows us to work to change the systems in which we live and work in a thoughtful, inclusive, and successful way. The implication for unions is that leaders must be able to perceive the perspectives of the other if they are to play a meaningful role in conflict-resolution. Oshry’s insights may help shed light on the ‘war in the woods’ conflict which, I believe, was an excellent example of myopic conflict resolution.

**Leaders Facing Conflict**

Although the specific conflict we are concerned with here did not include any formal mediation, the heart of the relationship-building required leadership and conflict resolution skills.
Bowling & Hoffman (2000) argue that the personal qualities of the mediator play an important role in the success of the conflict resolution. Mediators who bring their authentic selves to the process are able to bring a sense of peace into the room that holds enormous power and influence. Their ability to remain peaceful, even when experiencing conflict both within the room and managing their own personal triggers about conflict in their personal lives, is a key factor in setting and maintaining an atmosphere that creates conditions for constructive dialogue. If we see this through a systems approach, we see the behaviours of the participants in the mediation "grow, evolve and change symbiotically" (Bowling & Hoffman, 2000, p. 16). Therefore the type of presence that the leader brings into the room has enormous influence. Similarly, Ganz (2010) refers to the importance of authenticity in building relationships within and between social movements. He says that social movement leaders can communicate their identity authentically as a lived experience. They are able to describe the choices that they have made and the values that shaped these choices. By sharing their journey, including the joys and disappointments, they are able to be seen as authentic and more as a participant in the work, rather than as the 'boss'.

Fullan (2001) suggests that there are five components beyond authenticity, to be being a successful leader: pursuing a moral purpose, understanding change, developing relationships, fostering knowledge building, and striving for coherence with energy, enthusiasm, and hopefulness. He says that these components should not be at the expense of one over the other, but leadership requires a balance among all these traits.

Finally, Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee (2004) refer to the creation of resonance as a critical component in creating a positive atmosphere so that solutions can be found. The concept of emotional intelligence, while still under debate, is nevertheless useful to this overall discussion. They argue that connections are made through emotions and that a leader who
exhibits energy and enthusiasm will be much more successful than one who spreads negativity and dissonance.

In conclusion, from this brief review, we can identify characteristics of good leaders within labour and other social movements. Leaders within the labour movement must manage the tensions flowing from competing administrative and political responsibilities. As well, they must take individual and collective responsibilities in order to create a sense of shared purpose. They also take responsibilities for the emergence of new entities or coalitions that might be created in the process of relationship-building and overcoming conflict. To do this, they must be aware of the complexity of relationships and the systems in which they are enmeshed. Leaders must be able to perceive the perspective of the other. They must bring their authentic selves to their work and their ability to succeed will depend upon their ability to be self-aware. In fact, good leaders exhibit a number of traits that support a coherent way of being in the world. Finally, they are able to create a certain amount of resonance with others.

**Research Questions and Design**

The overarching subject of this project is to ask what we can learn from labour leaders’ experiences of building relationships with environmental activists during the two decades between 1990 and 2010. This is a complex question and many further lines of enquiry emerge:

1. How and why did individual leaders from the labour movement become involved in building relationships with environmentalists during and coming out of this period of conflict in BC?
2. How does the union’s identification as a business union or a social union affect the labour leader’s ability to play a role in relationship building with environmentalists?
3. How did labour leaders respond to the influences of outside actors in the conflict?
This study is delimited to British Columbia labour leaders who played an active role in the building of relationships between labour activists and environmental activists during the period of 1990 to 2010. This is the period of the greatest achievement in the creation and development of personal and organizational relationships. Due to the very specific nature of this study, there are very few individuals who meet the above criteria. The interviews were conducted in March and April, 2012.

The findings from this study are intended to help understand how a union’s identity, texts and social relations affect its ability to work with other social justice organizations. These findings may also contribute to the knowledge and understanding of relationship-building both within the labour movement and with potential coalition partners. I hope that the results will provide a contribution to the continuing efforts of labour and environmental activists to find common ground from which to find solutions to our growing environmental problems.

**Significance of Research**

I fear that a second ‘jobs versus the environment’ conflict in the forests is pending. For example, many of the pine forests in the interior of BC have been decimated by the rampant proliferation of the pine beetle. Parfitt (2007) argues that the response from government has been to clear the land of the diseased wood by elevating annual logging rates by more than 15 million cubic metres per year and that such a rapid rate of logging can only lead to future hardship for workers and communities if this approach continues. An alternative approach is contained within government’s own documents advising the province to consider harvesting smaller trees and logging areas currently managed for their biodiversity, wildlife and scenic values as part of a mitigation strategy (Government of British Columbia, 2009).

Moreover, the tension between jobs and the environment in British Columbia now includes not just the forest industry but also the energy industry. During the period of time I spent
conducting my research, the federal government began to hold hearings on the Northern Gateway pipeline which, if approved, would bring bitumen from northern Alberta to Kitimat, BC where it would be put on tankers and shipped to Asia. The rhetoric from government and industry is hauntingly familiar. On January 9, 2012, federal Environment Minister Joe Oliver wrote in an open letter:

Unfortunately, there are environmental and other radical groups that would seek to block this opportunity to diversify our trade. Their goal is to stop any major project no matter what the cost to Canadian families in lost jobs and economic growth. No forestry. No mining. No oil. No gas. No more hydro-electric dams. (Oliver, 2012, para. 3)

With the ever-growing urgency of climate change, we are faced with more and more “wicked problems” (Ritchey, 2011). We will require a new generation of activists who have the ability to build relationships between people in order to bring about social, political, economic or environmental change for a more just, sustainable and peaceful world (Hodgson and Brooks, 2007; Whitmore, Wilson, & Calhoun, 2011). This period of conflict between workers and environmentalists provides a case study that can be useful as new conflicts emerge. In the post-‘war in the woods’ era there has been progress on many fronts. New organizations have been created based on a growing commitment to relationship building. The Labour Environmental Alliance Society (now Toxic Free Canada) was created in 1998 through partnerships of former adversaries and works to find solutions to complex environmental concerns. The Boreal Forest Agreement (The Boreal Forest Agreement, 2010) and the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement (The Great Bear Rainforest Agreement, 2009) are two examples of successfully-negotiated agreements between First Nations, federal and provincial governments, environmental organizations, business and labour representatives. The British Columbia Federation of Labour is
currently embarked upon a strategy of coalition-building with environmentalists and social justice activists with respect to the creation of green jobs for a sustainable economy.

My Perspective

I’m not sure if both or one of my parents said this to me, or whether it was somehow inferred, but I remember them communicating that because we lived in such a precious country and were so lucky to live here that we were obligated to give back to the community. My Dad was active in the union and the community and my Mom was active in the church. I became active in the labour movement and the environmental movement after I was hired at the Tahsis Company pulp mill in Gold River, BC, into the technical department. I saw exactly what kind of toxic waste was going into the environment from our work, because my job was to test it and report the findings to the company and the government. I just thought to myself “Holy smokes this is what is really going on and this is just one mill in one town”. And events snowballed from there.

It is a necessary element of qualitative research to state my assumptions, beliefs and expose any biases at the outset of the study (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). My need to address this issue stems from a life’s work of relationship building within the labour movement, and between the labour and environmental movements. I have been a labour activist since 1977 when I was first elected as a shop steward. Over 17 years I worked my way up to being elected president of my local – the first woman in Canada elected local president in the pulp and paper industry. I currently work for the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada as a National Representative.

In 1997, I participated with a group of labour activists, First Nations representatives, and environmental activists meeting on Bowen Island to propose a new organization that would develop and promote the issue of community forest acquisition and management. From that
meeting *Forest Futures* was created. I was a founding Board Member of *Forest Futures*, which has subsequently changed its name to *Dogwood Initiative*. I served as President from 2003 to 2005. In 2000, I was elected to the *British Columbia New Democratic Party* Standing Committee on the Environment for an Ecologically and Economically Sustainable Future (SCOEE) and held the position of Chair from 2003 to 2006. I joined the Resource Advisory Committee of the *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA)* in 2001 to provide advice, guidance, and history of workers in BC involved in the forest, pulp and paper, and energy sectors. In 2006 I joined the Board of Directors of *Toxic Free Canada (TFC)*, formerly the *Labour Environment Alliance Society*. TFC was formed just over 12 years ago to help bring together labour and environmental organizations. In 2008 I was invited to join the Steering Committee of the *Climate Justice Project*, an initiative of the CCPA. In the spring of 2009, Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson invited me to sit on an advisory committee to help the City design a plan to make Vancouver the ‘greenest city in the world’ by the year 2020 (City of Vancouver, 2010).

**Final Thoughts**

I was deeply troubled by what I had witnessed during the ‘war in the woods’ period and felt a very strong urge to play a more active role in finding solutions that would stand the test of time. Now almost 20 years has passed and I have chosen to study the development of relationships between labour activists and environmental activists. I feel that this must have been a personal journey for the people involved, as it has been for me. As expected, I have discovered that these activists have created a personal practice of relationship development that is mature, respectful, and altruistic.

This case study is comprised of a series of interviews with labour leaders to uncover their experiences in building relationships during that volatile period of time in British Columbia, and from an analysis of the texts specific to their labour unions. Chapter One provides an overview of
background information that includes a chronology and explains the purpose of this study and rationale for its significance. Chapter Two references relevant literature and explores the foundational elements that provide the basis of this study. Chapter Three discusses the overall research paradigm and methods used for data collection, participant selection, and organization and analysis of the data. Chapter Four presents the study findings and analysis in rich descriptive detail and Chapter Five summarizes the study and provides an interpretation of the data.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Historical Context

There are five unions that are the subject of this case study: the British Columbia Government and Service Employees Union (BCGEU), the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP), the International Woodworkers of America - Canada (IWA-Canada), and the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada (PPWC). Four of the unions are Canadian national unions and one, the BCGEU, is a provincial union that is affiliated with a national body, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE). Four of the unions are affiliated to the British Columbia Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress, with the PPWC being affiliated to the Confederation of Canadian Unions.

The British Columbia Government Employees Association was founded in 1919. In 1942 it changed from being an association to a union, the BCGEU, however it took until 1974 for the union to be granted full bargaining rights under the BC Labour Code. The union’s constitution states that "We will pursue social, economic and political justice as those are the goals upon which the labour movement was founded” (British Columbia Government and Service Employees Union, 2011, p. 1) Among the many issues addressed by the union, the environment was included. In 1995, Dr. David Suzuki applauded the union for its very progressive environmental policies (Bech & Rowles, 2011). In April 1996 the BCGEU hosted a conference on "Economics and the Environment" which built on the policy paper that was adopted at the 1995 convention. These two events propelled the union to "develop a presence in environmental debates and campaigns" (Bech & Rowles, 2011, p. 154).

The CAW was founded in 1985 after breaking away from its international parent, the United Auto Workers, and had a reputation of being a progressive, activist union (Black & Silver,
2008; Camfield, 2011). The CAW constitution outlines their commitment to improving the working conditions of its members but also to “work for laws that make life better for the community” (Canadian Auto Workers, 2012a, p. 5). Over the mid-1990s the CAW adopted 3 important policy statements on transportation and the environment (Canadian Auto Workers, 2012b).

CEP was founded in November 1992 in Montreal, Quebec as a merger between 3 unions: the Canadian Paperworkers Union, the Communication Workers of Canada and the Energy and Chemical Workers Union of Canada. All three founding unions were Canadian unions who had broken away from international unions and were formed by mergers with other Canadian and international unions (Swift, 2003). Its constitution's refers to collective bargaining and other responsibilities related to the workplace, however, it also includes a statement claiming that the union will "secure legislation safeguarding and promoting economic security and the social welfare of all workers, and to remain vigilant in the interest of preserving and extending civil rights and liberties within a free and democratic society" (Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, 2012a, p. 1). CEP has a number of policies related to environmental issues, from the first policy on the environment (Policy 909) adopted in 1995 to the National Forest Policy for a Sustainable Economy (Policy 916), adopted in 2000 and a series of policies on energy (Policies 915, 917 and 917 amended) adopted in 2000, 2002 and 2008) (Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, 2012b).

The Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers (IWA) had a history that spanned over 60 years. Founded in 1937 it represented loggers and millworkers in Canada and the United States. In 1987, the Canadian branch of the IWA separated from union, retaining the IWA initials but with the new name: Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada (IWA- Canada). In September 2004 IWA-Canada merged with the United Steelworkers, however it retains a sector
council (Wood Council) to coordinate the activities related to the forest sector locals. In the later 1980s the union expanded its forest policy work to include more of an environmental lens and in 1990 published *The Forest Is the Future*, a document calling for long-term sustainability in the forest sector - "a balance between our environmental, social and economic concerns" (IWA-Canada, 1997, p. 3).

The Pulp and Paper Workers of Canada was founded in 1963 with the first local union of pulp and paper workers in Crofton, BC. By the 1990s the PPWC represented about 5000 workers in the forest industry in BC and changed its name to the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada. It is one of the very few unions in Canada that has no hired staff other than clerical staff; the union operates with elected officers only. Each local union is autonomous and its business is conducted by volunteer elected officers. The first policy on the environment was adopted in 1969 and was amended 13 times during the 1990s. The first forest policy statement was adopted in 1970 and was also amended 13 times during this same time period (Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada, 2012). I recall virtual unanimity from the convention floor delegates for many of those debates; the membership of the PPWC was known to be very progressive with respect to taking on employers and governments on issues such as pulp mill pollution and raw log exports. The constitution of the PPWC does not specifically mention working with other organizations, but states that it will “...use every honourable method to elevate its membership in the economic, moral and social scale of life, to help safeguard the principles of democracy, to work for the establishment of political and social equality” (Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada, 2012, p. 1).

**Constraints and Challenges**

Although there are many legal rights and responsibilities attached to a local union, it is also collection of people with different experiences and realities who are attempting to have an
impact both in their workplaces and on a world that is constantly changing. Unions appear to be struggling between a rigid construct of themselves and a more fluid self-understanding of their place within “social unionism” (Russell, 1992). This internal conversation is being held against the backdrop of public discussions that raise the question of whether unions are even relevant anymore (Camfield, 2011).

The world is fluid and ever changing but our constructs are abstractions that are static. There is a dislocation between our constructs and the living world that is flowing by on the outside. We cling to our static construct and not the world that is flowing by. That generates a huge amount of pain. (Dr. Bob Kull, personal communication, January 5, 2011)

Kull’s reflection leads me to wonder why it is that we cling to our beliefs and our patterns of behaviour. Why is it just so difficult for labour activists to think differently, to ‘think outside the box’ and to evolve with the changing times? Meadows (2008) refers to the concept of bounded rationality. She explains that people tend to make decisions based on the information that they have and not necessarily with all, or at least enough of, the information that they need to have. Therefore the decisions made within any organization are imperfect.

For decades now, labour activists and leaders have been complaining about an apathetic membership and how members treat the union as an insurance policy. Many leaders complain that their jobs are like firefighters where one deals with immediate problems and not much more. Meadows (2008) says: “We live in an exaggerated present – we pay too much attention to recent experience and too little attention to the past, focusing on current events rather than long-term behaviour” (p. 107). This is precisely what we do; we react instead of responding, which means we end up staying exactly in the same place. I have often heard a quote, attributed to Einstein, who apparently said that the definition of insanity is to do the same thing and expect different
results. The world is changing around us, workplaces are radically different than even a decade ago and yet most unions keep doing the same things that they have done for 100 years. I worry that unions don’t see themselves as part of a system in need of change; hence we rarely change any of our behaviours. Are we insane or is it just that we are not systems thinkers?

**Business Unionism/Social Unionism**

In Canada, ‘business’ and ‘social’ unionism are but two styles of unionism practiced, however they are the most prevalent. Camfield (2011) writes that *Business unionism* focuses on collective bargaining and for the most part, takes a cooperative approach in dealing with employers. The union believes that it main purpose is negotiating improvements to wages and benefits and does not worry about capitalism or the role of corporations. *Business unions* do not concern themselves with the community or broader social issues or concerns, such as the environment. On the other hand, *social unionism* describes unions who are actively engaged in social and political issues. *Social unions* also provide the necessary services to their members, negotiating and defending collective agreements, but they are somewhat more likely to challenge corporate power or the actions of government. *Social unions*, however, cannot be described as ones that would easily take militant action through mobilizing their members. These are general terms and each union expresses itself slightly differently regardless of which category they fall under. I think it is important to understand the distinction between these two styles as it is the social unions that engage in social justice, albeit in a range of lower levels of militancy and activism than *social movement unions* who committed to militancy and solidarity within and outside of the labour movement (Camfield, 2011). The CAW sees itself as a union committed to strengthening social unionism and after 1983 the BCGEU saw itself as a social union as they were rejecting the more traditional role of business unionism (Kumar & Schenk, 2006).
Canadian unions are required to have a constitution and many unions who define themselves as social unions include a purpose statement such as the one found in the CEP Constitution: “To assist in advancing the social, economic and general welfare of working people through political, educational, civic and other activities” (Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, 2012a, p. 2). In addition, many unions develop policies on issues that are not traditionally seen as ‘bread and butter’ labour issues, such as Medicare, public education, and the environment. These policy documents are used as educational tools for members and the public, and also for lobbying government on issues of importance to the union and its membership. The direction set by the union in its constitution and policy documents give power to labour leaders who engage in political action and social justice outreach. However it is not as simple as ‘just doing it’. Labour unions are large, unwieldy organizations that have multiple levels of decision-making.

It is true that most high-level full-time officers and staff do not have much ability to change their unions in dramatic ways, even if they wanted to do so. Nevertheless, top leaders and key staff do make choices about how to respond to developments and what path to chart that have some effect on what kind of organizations unions are. (Camfield, 2011, p. 85)

An example of the move to social unionism is that in 1996, the senior officers of the BCGEU made decisions to lead the union in a different direction, one that would include deeper involvement in community and political affairs. The next year they reported to the Strategic Planning Session of senior staff and Provincial Executive on their discussions of the need for change. By September 1998, after more than a year of discussions and planning, the Provincial Executive formally approved a series of pilot projects. The pilot projects met with mixed results, with the most important lesson being that this type of initiative must be membership-driven rather
than implemented from the officers of the union (Steeves, 2006). “Building alliances with social movements is never easy. There is an ongoing tension between unions and social movements. It is a tension which can either threaten unity or lead to a renewed dynamism” (Robertson & Murninghan, 2006, p. 171).

**Unions as Systems**

The component of systems that fascinates me most is interconnection - what Capra (1996) defines as relationships. He says: “a system has come to mean an integrated whole whose essential properties arise from the relationships between its parts,” (p. 27). Relationships are what link the elements to the purpose and to each other. To use the bicycle as an example: without the elements being in a relationship with each other, it is just a pile of parts, its only purpose is as a pile of spare parts. Therefore it is the bicycle parts combined in a relationship that allows it to function systemically as a transportation device.

The parts of a union can be divided into two: the people and the institutional structure. The people in a union are the members, but the membership contains sub-groups: activists, officers and staff, although any of the union’s members may be characterized as activists. Whitmore, Wilson, & Calhoun (2011) define activists as those who act to “bring about social, political, economic or environmental change for a more just, sustainable and peaceful world” (p. 8). They report that although officers of a union are elected, more unions are reporting that it is increasingly difficult to recruit and retain members to fill elected positions. Camfield (2011) writes that union staff may conduct a range of duties from clerical duties to collective bargaining, to labour arbitration and that the structures of a union can vary, but most unions have a hierarchy of responsibilities. The union steward, sometimes called a ‘shop steward’ is the member whose main responsibility is communicating between the members and the elected officers. The elected officers run the affairs of the union, such as looking after finances, negotiating the collective
agreement, resolving grievances or complaints and leading the members in the unions political or social justice activities. The structure of a union is determined by its constitution and by-laws and the activities of the union are influenced by its policies.

To fundamentally change the way labour and environmental organizations work together we must change not only behaviours, but the system itself. I am fascinated by Meadows (2008) assertion that interconnections are essential components to a system and that “[C]hanging relationships usually changes system behavior” (p. 17). Meadows (1997) identified a 12 point list of Leverage Points – the places within a system to affect change. The top four are: self-organization, change the goal, change the paradigm and number 1, transcend the paradigm. She further notes that changing a leader at the top does not automatically change the direction of an organization, that there are limits based on the other elements of the system. This dynamic applies to unions and environmental organizations, as well as to governments and political parties.

It is critical to understand the role of positive feedback loops, alternately referred by Meadows as reinforcing feedback loops, on the path of understanding and the identification of solutions. “Reinforcing feedback loops are self-enhancing, leading to exponential growth or to runaway collapses over time. They are found whenever a stock has the capacity to reinforce or reproduce itself” (Meadows, 2008, p. 32). Activists who understand this simple, yet complex component of systems will be able to create a foundation for solution-making that can be a growing, reinforcing and sustaining process.

Activism – Why?

*Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.*  
*Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*
Capitalism is pillaging and poisoning the world and workers increasingly tend to accept the view that our descendants and the other beings with which we share the planet will be poorer and less healthy than we are (Scull, 2001). Neoliberalism is rolling back the gains from 1950s to the 1970s and workers are less well off every year (Stanford, 2008). With this discouraging news, why would anyone engage in labour or environmental activism? Ganz (2010) reminds us that if grievances are experienced as an injustice, as opposed to an inconvenience, then people are more likely to demand or act for change, particularly if combined with the presence of solidarity and hope. This deep desire for change must be coupled with a structure that creates an environment for capacity-building, support and action.

Foster (2004) writes that there is a common perception in the Canadian labour movement that members do not want to get politically active and that members just want their unions to negotiate good collective agreements and leave the other matters alone. He argues first, that this is not true and second, that unions can play a critical role in fostering political activism by reflecting “the class-based lived experience of workers” (Foster, 2004, p. 13). I think that a worker’s perception about the potential for affecting political change, how daunting the challenge is, and their perception of class and being a worker, all combine into a tangle of possibilities for action or non-action. Foster (2004) asserts that by bring a discussion of class into the union, as long as it is based in real experiences and not just rhetoric, space can be created to encourage political activism. He also argues that speeches no longer spur members into action; it is real conversations between members, with honest and personal relationships, that inspire and support actions. Ganz (2010) agrees and says that it is the interpersonal relationships within unions that are “critical to forging the shared understandings, commitments and collaborative action that constitute a movement” (p. 514).
Workers as Environmentalists

In the conflict over forestry in BC, it seemed to me that many people assumed that forest workers were only concerned with their jobs and not the environment, thus creating an easy division between workers and environmentalists that could be exploited. However, this oversimplified perspective may not be true at all. Dunk (1994) argues that the relationship between forest workers and the environment is far more complex and includes many concerns about the state of the forests. At that time forest workers did not identify with the environmental movement as they understood it and they did not see themselves as environmentalists due to how they perceive differences between them. Environmentalists became the ‘other’, as forest workers constructed their identity based on issues of class, education, location and media influence. The notion of the ‘other’ has been used in social science to understand the processes by which societies and groups exclude ‘others’ whom they want to subordinate or who do not fit into their society. Alford (2004) explains the negative connotation by stating that “one that knows that it is the other human who comes first, defining me as the other’s hostage” (p. 154).

The rhetoric of the jobs-versus-environment argument created a persistent narrative that was reflected and reinforced by the media, but I feel it was a gross oversimplification. Dunk (1994) found that forest workers in his study in northwestern Ontario linked environmentalism with southern-based, middle-class interests. To them, environmentalists were people from outside the region who did not understand local environmental or economic issues and whose view of nature was determined by an urban experience. Forest workers saw the clash of rural/urban perspectives through the eyes of their own working class experience in resource exploitation jobs where benefits would flow to those living in urban centres. He also found that forest workers live and work in nature, and form an important bond with their work life and their home life. They not only work in the forests, but also spend much of their non-work hours engaged in activities such
as hunting, fishing, trapping, camping, ski-dooing, taking drives along forest roads, picnicking, berry picking, collecting firewood as well as just being in the forests for the pleasure of being there.

**Emotional Influences**

Ganz (2010) argues that successful social movement leaders “mobilize the emotions that make agency possible” (p. 517). One then wonders was it emotions that caused the intense on-the-ground conflict between forest workers and individual environmentalists and if so, what emotions were they? One possible answer comes from the work of Albrecht et al. (2007) and Albrecht (2010). In the early 2000s, Albrecht was contacted by concerned citizens regarding an increase in coal mining in their area. After working with the citizens for a period of time he wanted to understand the psychological components of what made people so attached to their community. He created two new words to describe what he found. *Solastalgia* is defined as “the pain or distress caused by the loss of, or inability to derive, solace connected to the negatively perceived state of one’s home environment” (Albrecht, et.al, 2007, p. 96). *Soliphilia* is defined as “the love of and responsibility for a place, bioregion, planet and the unity of interrelated interest within it” (Smith, 2010, para. 35). He also explains that soliphilia comes from the realization that people must overcome feelings of alienation and disempowerment from political decision-making and work interdependently to find solutions (Albrecht, 2010). Solastalgia and soliphilia are deeply connected to loss of ecological diversity or environmental damage. They are psychoterratic (psyche = mind, terratic = earth-related) symptoms of the relationship between human health, ecosystem health, and the impact of lack of control (Albrecht, et. al., 2007). Both forest workers and environmentalists, including those from urban centres, may experience *solastalgia and soliphilia*. 
As we can see from the above literature, the five unions in this study were complex units of relationships involving people, systems and emotions. There was pressure from both inside and outside the organizations to transition from business unionism to social unionism; however, we will uncover in the following sections just how complex the transition became due to enormous pressures that are mostly out of the control of the individual union.

**Forest Companies and the Forest Industry in BC**

For decades, the forest industry in BC boasted that it was the most important sector in the province’s economy and even in 1997, employed an estimated 102,000 workers in tree falling operations, sawmill and planning mills and pulp and paper mills (Marchak, Aycock, & Herbert, 1999). The decline in employment actually started in the 1980s, when there had been a decline in employment in all three sectors.

There was a fairly steady decline in employment relative to production of timber, of lumber, and of pulp and paper from the early 1960s to 1980. Per unit of roundwood produced, employment declined in all three major sectors of the industry during that period even though new mills were being constructed and the industry was booming.

(Marchak, Aycock, & Herbert, 1999, p. 111)

In their book *Falldown: Forest Policy in British Columbia* Marchak et. al. (1999) report that there have been dozens of forest companies of many sizes operating in BC, but the large operators have, for the most part, held an enormous portion of the sector. By 1998, ten forest companies in BC controlled over two million cubic metres of the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC), which represented close to 68% of the committed total. The top 17 forest companies controlled close to 83%. At the time, many of the top companies also owned, either wholly or partially, smaller forest companies which extended their reach even further. Forest giant MacMillan Bloedel held the major share of private forest land on Vancouver Island – logging on private land
is not calculated in the AAC. The large forest companies in BC were quite profitable and in 1997 posted revenues of over $1 billion; seven companies reported assets of over $1 billion. It was these high levels of profits and concentration that allowed for the lack of diversification in the industry. But change in the industry was on its way and by the end of the decade, rapidly declining market and supply conditions forced BC's forest companies to restructure their assets and the downsizing of the industry began in earnest. By 2012 the face of BC's forest industry had changed dramatically. Out of the top 17 forest companies in 1998, only 3 remain in the top 10: West Fraser Timber, Canfor Corporation, and International Forest Products. Direct employment has been cut in half to 53,300 workers (BC’s Top 100, 2011; Council of Forest Industries, 2012).

The forest companies of BC in the 1990s did not operate in a vacuum. Carroll (2010) explains that Canadian companies conduct their business within a national and global system where much of the power is concentrated at the top, thereby wielding enormous power which has been to the “detriment of social justice and ecological wellbeing” (p. v). He explains that corporate power is one that expresses itself as power over the means of production as well as the beneficiaries of production. This gives corporations the power to shape social consciousness and policy to its own collective benefit. He argues that despite public demands for a new green and sustainable economic system, most corporations remain in the ‘business as usual’ pattern. He adds that the power of corporations has changed little over the past century. It is rooted in a system of commodity production whereby the profits flow to the top classes of society, leaving workers and communities at the bottom in a relative state of dependence (Carroll, 2010).

Moving Towards Globalization

Camfield (2006) writes that from the late 1940s to the mid-1970s there was a steady period of economic growth that was so significant most people began to believe that the previous ups and downs of capitalism was all but over. This was the period of time where two things
happened simultaneously; the middle class came into existence and there was a reduction of
corporate power and profits. He argued that it wouldn’t take long before there would be an effort
to swing the pendulum back and that in the 1970s a restructuring agenda began to take hold with
governments and business organizations in Canada that would see the beginning of the rollback
of anything which might be seen as a barrier to corporate profit-making. At that time, as a
response to both the Trudeau (Liberal) government in Ottawa and the Barrett (NDP) government
in BC, business leaders in the province came together to create a “think-tank” that would “re-
establish the dominance of free enterprise ideas, the values of the market and property rights”
(Gutstein, 2009, p. 120). In 1974, with the support of people like Macmillian Bloedel vice-
president Patrick Boyle, the Fraser Institute was born. Two years later the Business Council on
National Issues was founded, comprising the chief executives of 150 of the country’s largest
companies (Gutstein, 2009). In 2001 they renamed the organization the Canadian Council of
Chief Executives and in June 2009 the founding CEO, Thomas d’Aquino, stepped down and was
replaced by former Liberal Finance Minister John Manley. This is just one suggestion of the
close relationship between corporations and Canada’s federal government.

Even if the ‘ruling class does not rule’, business leadership does reach into civil society
and into the institutions of the state, recruiting support for a world-view within which the
interest of capital in profitable accumulation becomes universalized as the general interest
of society, or even humanity. (Carroll, 2010, p. 201)

Towards the end of the last century, there was an expansion of the development of large,
multidivisional corporations that then moved decision-making power from the local operations to
head offices. This further concentrated power and allowed corporations to pit one regional or
national workforce against another (Carroll, 2010). The rapid expansion of the transnational
corporation through the 1990s in Canada contributed to both the concentration of economic

Carroll (2010) writes that the world political economy is becoming increasingly globalized, that is to say one that is less and less organized via nation-states and more often organized by private individuals and corporations. Economic relations then become actions between individuals and corporations operating in a global marketplace without the interference of any industrial policy initiative from a national or sub-national government. Salazar & Alper (1996) explain that this results in national and provincial governments being less able to manage their own economies as power has been shifted from regional governments to international capital. In terms of industrial policy, governments have -become less relevant. With power shifting to the international marketplace, environmentalists altered their strategies from local actions to international boycotts. Stanford (2008) writes that this more globalized form of capitalism gained ground significantly in the late 1970s with a dramatic downward shift in the tolerance level of business and government for taxes, social programs, regulations and unions. Shrinking profits, high inflation and militant workers frightened financial investors particularly due to the success of left-wing revolutions in several countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In Canada, the improvements that came during the post World War II period were attacked by corporations via their business organizations and over the next two decades were partially reversed by compliant governments.

Some argued that capitalism could no longer afford those Golden Age programs; in my view, this is invalid, although there is no doubt that the Golden Age recipe began to encounter significant economic problems. Others argued that with the decline of communism and the weakening of left-wing parties, capitalism no longer needed to
mollify its critics with compassionate policies (since it no longer faced a serious challenge to its continued existence). (Stanford, 2008, p. 47)

There have been several different terms describing this recent period of globalizing capitalism over the past few decades. In the 1990s, the labour movement most commonly used the term ‘the corporate agenda’, but today the most common term now used is neoliberalism. Stanford (2008) explains that many people are confused by this term as in Canada ‘liberal’ refers to a more centre-left political ideology where there is much more space for post-WWII social policies. He explains that in economics ‘liberal’ has a much different definition in that it refers to an absence of government interference. Neoliberalism, therefore, refers to going back to a time prior to WWII where government played a much smaller role in regulating the economy and protecting social interests. And further, neoliberalism changes “how and in whose interests power is exercised” (Stanford, 2008, pp. 47-48). Camfield (2011) asserts that today, neoliberalism has pounded workers and workers organizations to the point where many unions are working far more closely in the interests of employers and that the consequence has been the denigration of unions and direct action by anti-poverty and other groups based outside the workplace, such as environmental organizations.

Table 1

**Key Goals and Tools of Neoliberalism**

**Key Goals**

1. Reduce and control inflation; protect the value of financial wealth

2. Restore insecurity and “discipline” to labour markets

3. Eliminate “entitlements”; force families to fend for themselves

4. Roll back and refocus government activities to meet business needs; cut taxes
5. Generally restore the economic and social dominance of private business and wealth

6. Claw back expectations; foster a sense of resignation to insecurity and hardship

Key Tools

1. Use interest rates aggressively to regulate inflation and control labour markets

2. Privatize and deregulate more industries

3. Scale back social security programs (especially for working-age adults)

4. Deregulate labour markets (including attacks on unions)

5. Use free-trade agreements to expand markets and constrain government

*Note.* Adapted from Stanford (2008), p. 48

**Trade Agreements**

From the mid-1980s and through the 1990s, unions were preoccupied with challenging neoliberalism via a clear opposition to trade agreements (McNally, 1991). The Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) came into effect on January 1, 1989 after a spirited but losing battle by labour and other social justice activists who argued that increasing multilateral trade would diminish capacity of the federal government to control the domestic economy. Black (1992) explains that part of labour’s objection was the complete absence of the recognition of workers and their organizations, but the most important objection was the belief that the FTA would lead to economic integration with the US and that Canada would lose control of its economic and related policies by an unrelenting pressure to harmonise policies on tax, social welfare, labour relations, and others. By the early part of the 1990s, much of what labour had predicted to happen had begun. The Tory government, under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, began an agenda of accelerated privatization, deregulation and tax reform. In addition, there were revisions to social programs such as unemployment insurance. He adds that labour unions quickly noted that this
was a major assault on the rights, working conditions, and material conditions of ordinary Canadians. Stanford (2008) writes that trade agreements are what limits government control of all trade issues from government because they remove tariffs and other trade barriers as well as granting special legal provisions for foreign investors.

The Environmental Movement: Who Were the Participants?

Trying to clearly identify the participants and the components of the environmental movement is like trying to nail Jello to the wall. Stewart & Vincent (2002) write that the environmental movement began and remains ideologically eclectic containing anarchists on one side and traditional right-wing conservatives on the other. It contains mixtures of feminists, socialists, social democrats, liberals, technocrats, spiritualists, and others. The movement attempts to address an enormous range of issues, including climate change, toxics, air and water pollution, wilderness preservation and animal rights, and employs a wide range of tactics, such as education, research, civil disobedience, grass-roots organizing and buying land. They remind us that environmentalism in Canada has a long history and can be traced back to the early part of the 20th century when urban reform, wilderness preservation and workers health and safety were at the forefront. Modern environmentalism is generally associated with the era of progressive change beginning in the 1960s. In the 1970s, organizations such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth were created. The second wave of environmentalism flowed from the 1987 Brundtland Commission report entitled “Our Common Future” that focused on the concept of *sustainable development* (The World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, para. 4-7). In British Columbia, it was utilized to demand 12% of the land base be designated as protected from economic activities such as logging (Burrows, 1996).
Free market environmentalists.

According to Stewart & Vincent (2002) sustainable development was a popular concept and a useful one for corporate leaders who were able to push back against environmentalists by advocating for a *balanced* approach between the economy and the environment. However, by advocating for balance, space was created for the traditional concerns of the Left such as justice and equity. They argue that questions were raised about who would be the agents of change, what would and could be changed and how would these changes express themselves. I think it is interesting that discussions on sustainable development were also happening at the same time as globalization and neoliberalism. Clearly, the corporations had to find a way of protecting their interests.

In Canada, free-market environmentalism is advanced by members of the Friday Club, an informal grouping including the Business Council on National Issues, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the associations of the vehicle manufacturing, mining, chemical, pulp-and-paper and petroleum industries. (Stewart & Vincent, 2002, para. 12)

Stewart & Vincent (2002) report that the Friday Club met regularly, providing an opportunity for business leaders, politicians and high-ranking bureaucrats to discuss environmental issues. Business was pushing for voluntary, rather than mandatory regulations, arguing that the state should let the private sector lead the way to find solutions to environmental problems. Business started to take the approach that corporations could be environmental saviours employing efficiency and technology to save the environment, rather than reducing consumption, for example. Stewart & Vincent (2002) refer to this approach as free-market environmentalism.
Green environmentalists.

Concerned about the risk of logging in the Nitinat Triangle on the west coast of Vancouver Island, a small group of activists came together in 1969 not only to campaign to protect this ecosystem, but also to build the West Coast Trail. Some of the group were already members of Sierra Club US, so they brazenly organized themselves under the name of Sierra Club Western Canada, later to be known as the Sierra Club of BC (Sierra Club BC, 2012). For more than 40 years, it has worked on environmental issues throughout British Columbia. In 2000, due to the hard work of environmental, community and First Nations activists, Clayoquot Sound became BC’s first UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve and it continues to be a model for conservation as well as experimentation in sustainable economic activities (Goetze, 2005). They currently partner with the Clayoquot Sound Conservation Alliance to work collaboratively with the Nuu-chah-nulth toward the protection of the remaining intact rainforests (Sierra Club BC, 2012).

Greenpeace was incorporated in 1972 just after their first campaign to stop nuclear testing on the North West Pacific island of Amchitka (Weyler, 2004). Harter (2004) writes that by the 1990s they were playing a significant role in the struggle to preserve forest land in British Columbia, and in 1993 were participating in the blockades at Clayoquot Sound. He explains that they provided support to the Friends of Clayoquot Sound that included money, campaigners and an experienced public relations machine. In July 1997, two Greenpeace ships, the Arctic Sunrise and the Moby Dick, were blockaded into port in Vancouver by angry members of IWA-Canada (Evans, 1997). This fed into the jobs versus the environment rhetoric that had been voiced for most of the decade. Harter (2004) writes that in the late 1990s some Greenpeace supporters left the struggle believing that making the workers the target, rather than taking on the corporations, was exacerbating the split between workers and environmentalists and was, ultimately,
unhelpful. He argues that Greenpeace was never able to fully address how a campaign that was meant to put pressure on forest companies ended up in direct conflict with workers. This played directly into the hands of the companies, who were then able to tell workers that it was the environmentalists who were putting their jobs at risk.

In addition to the conflict with the forest sector unions, Greenpeace also had labour difficulties of its own. Livesey (1994) writes that in June 1993 the unionized employees at the Toronto head office employees filed a complaint with the Ontario labour relations board accusing Greenpeace of bargaining in bad faith, using layoffs and other threats to intimidate union members, and of systemic discrimination against women and racial minorities. He explains that this attempt by Greenpeace to “break the union” did not endear themselves to the labour movement, especially when, at the 1994 Convention of the Canadian Labour Congress, labour activist and former Greenpeace researcher Andrea Ritchie informed the delegates about Greenpeace's attempts to bust the staff union in Toronto by using an infamous management-side law firm to conduct first contract negotiations, and firing or laying off supporters.

The Western Canada Wilderness Committee, founded in 1980 under the leadership of Paul George, also played an important environmental role in British Columbia during the 1990s. Its mission was to research, publish and distribute information about threatened Canadian wilderness and wildlife in order to build broad public support for their preservation. From 1990 to 2000, they participated in the struggle to achieve 33 separate parks and/or protected areas. In 1990 they received the Government of British Columbia Environmental Achievement Award (most effective B.C. environmental group) and in 1991 a similar award from Environment Canada. In late 1991 they signed as partners to the South Island Forest Accord (Canadian Dimension, 1992). They tell us on their website that they work through creating strategic alliances with community leaders, First Nations and other environmental organizations
The Wilderness Committee is also a partner to the Clayoquot Sound Conservation Alliance.

In 1983, a group of women outraged at logging taking place in their own backyard founded the Friends of Clayoquot Sound. By the next year the first logging protests in Clayoquot Sound occurred when the newly fledged environmental organization and local First Nations set up blockades on the logging roads leading to Meares Island (May, 1998). In 1992, the Friends of the Clayoquot Sound set up another blockade, but the most significant protests occurred in the summer of 1993 when the introduction of the Clayoquot Sound Land Use Plan sparked outrage among environmentalists and the Nuu-Chah-Nulth\(^1\) people alike. During that summer, nearly 11,000 people came to Clayoquot Sound to take part in the protests, with more than 800 people arrested. Activists eventually gained the support of major organizations such as Greenpeace and the Sierra Club (Harter, 2004).

**Background to the War in the Woods**

**Operation Solidarity.**

In the early 1980s, while the general public was demonstrating concern with forest issues, workers were experiencing a different sort of conflict. In July 1983 the provincial government under Social Credit Premier Bill Bennett decided to make some significant changes to a wide range of public services and union rights. In fact, in one day the government introduced 26 highly contentious pieces of legislation. These included the elimination of the “human-rights commission and rent-review office, tightened government control over school boards and colleges, watered down Medicare, dropped government enforcement of employment standards, 

\(^1\) The Nuu-Chah-Nulth First Nations live along a 300 kilometre section of Vancouver Island, from Brooks Peninsula in the north to Point-n-Point in the south, including inland regions.
and extended wage controls indefinitely” (Mickleburgh, 2008, para. 19). For the unions, there was Bill 2 and 3 that would strip many provisions in collective agreements in the public sector, giving employers the power to terminate workers without cause or regard to seniority. Mickleburgh (2008) recalls that in an attempt to force the government to cease and repeal their actions, the labour movement and many social justice organizations joined together to form Operation Solidarity. This coalition provided the organizing base for escalating actions by public sector unions and social justice advocates, including a rally and march of more than 60,000 on the streets of Vancouver in mid-October 1983. While public sector unions were on strike, a general strike was narrowly avoided when an agreement was reached on the weekend of November 11-13, between Premier Bennett and the powerful leader of the woodworkers’ union, Jack Munro. Most of the egregious attacks on unions were taken out of the proposed legislation as a result, but there was little for anyone else. It didn’t take long for Munro to become the target of bitter denunciation both inside and outside the labour and social justice movements (Mickleburgh, 2008). This set the stage for ongoing division between BC’s activist community due to the sense of betrayal felt by those outside of labour who did not see any of their issues addressed because of the perceived self-interest of the labour community.

**Social Conflict over Land Tenure**

In British Columbia, the Crown (the government) owns approximately 95 percent of the forest land base and licenses to privately owned companies the right to harvest trees through a 'tenure' system (May, 1998). These licenses specify the rights and responsibilities of the licensee and the rights and obligations of the Crown. Forest management by the Crown has been legislated since the 1940s (Marchak, et al., 1999). In the 1980s two things happened; the forest industry entered what it thought was just a cyclical downturn that ended up being the beginning of a global economic downturn, and the public became concerned with three things: a
reforestation backlog, efforts by First Nations to settle land claims, and valley-by-valley confrontations over clear-cut logging of old growth forests between environmentalists. Sometimes, First Nations were on one side and forest workers on the other. May (1998) recalls that the first of the conflicts began in 1984 on Meares Island in Clayoquot Sound, but that is was soon followed by protests on Lyell Island in Haida Gwaii (formerly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands) and in the Stein Valley.

Dwyer (1993) tells us that in the 1980s the provincial government attempted to increase the resource extraction limits of Strathcona Park (the oldest provincial park in BC) that had been set in 1973 and due to wide-spread opposition an alliance of First Nations, labour and environmental organizations was formed. In February 1989, the first conference of this alliance was held at Tin Wis, a Nuu-Chah-Nulth facility located south of Tofino, BC. It was a very successful conference resulting in the parties signing the Tin Wis Accord and the formation of an organization called the Tin Wis Coalition. Cox (1992) tells us that the BC Fed formally joined the coalition in March 1989 and that the second Tin Wis Conference was held in October 1990 in Port Alberni, BC, resulting in the coalition developing a new mandate and plan of work. He reports that the coalition proposed radical changes: to develop and implement the mechanisms for First Nations, trade unionists, environmentalists, women, youth and others to work together on a regional basis to resolve resource development and environmental issues and conflicts, and to further the process of developing a ‘peoples’ alternative to the policies of the Bennett government.

Harter (2004) argues that The Tin Wis Coalition marked a significant departure from the entrenched mutual distrust between labour and environmentalists. Unfortunately the coalition ceased activity shortly after its October 1990 conference, with First Nations peoples turning to the courts in an effort to resolve land claims issues. I agree with his assertion that the coalition’s
legacy was one of proving that traditional adversaries could work together effectively, and that their interests were not as disparate as they once imagined.

In 1991 a new provincial government was formed under the New Democratic Party, and new Premier Mike Harcourt, and there were real and significant expectations from both labour and environmentalists after decades of Social Credit government. According to Salazar & Alper (2000) one of the first things that the new government did was to recognize “Aboriginal title and the inherent right to self-government, thus committing the province to negotiate land claims” (p. 12). Burrows (2000b) explains that in February 1992, the NDP embarked on a lengthy and ambitious plan for the forest industry. It established Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE), “with a mandate to develop a provincial land-use strategy” (Burrows, 2000b, p. 210). Salazar & Alper (2000) characterize this as the beginning of the groundwork for the development of a new set of regulations for the forest industry under the Forest Practices Code. These new regulations would change how the industry managed the public forest lands that they had licenses for. They add that just a year later, the government started to work on an industrial strategy for the forest industry.

There were 4 regional CORE tables: Vancouver Island, Cariboo-Chilcotin, West Kootenay-Boundary, and East Kootenay. “Concurrent with the efforts of CORE was the initiation of the Land and Resource Management Planning (LRMP) process to develop strategic land use plans for the rural areas of the province not covered by CORE” (Day, Gunton & Frame, 2003, p. 23). CORE was set up as a multi-stakeholder dispute resolution process to address land-use conflicts, however, Burrows (2000b) laments that the real decision-makers weren’t at the table. Based on a round table format where there would be no hierarchical structure and all participants would sit as equals, CORE was intended to be a process that was community-centered, with meaningful public participation and localized decision-making. Sadly, the process did not unfold
as anticipated. Salazar & Alper (2000) argue that the decision of the provincial government to “discontinue CORE in 1996 signalled diminished interest in shared decision-making approached to resource issues” (p. 13).

There were many factors at play with respect to the eventual failure of the CORE process. In her analysis of the Vancouver Island CORE process, Burrows (1996) argues that the process itself was flawed and doomed to fail. She writes that “(T)he overall conclusion of the participants was that the anticipated substantive debate about land-use and discussion to resolve the associated conflicts were contained and subverted by the CORE process” (p. 37.) Salazar & Alper (1996) noted that CORE did not address the very important issues of forest tenure, which is a broad term for who can use what resources, for how long and under what conditions. As already noted, in BC, most forest tenure was held by large forest companies. “CORE, because of the omission of tenure from its agenda and the participation of multi-national forest products companies, would be seen as a sham” (Salazar & Alper, 1996, para. 29). In addition, the CORE process was weakened by what was perceived by the other parties as a disorganized environmental movement. Environmental organizations are organized differently from business and labour. Salazar & Alper (1996) report that “…leaders in government and industry acknowledged to us their difficulty in dealing with environmentalists. Since the movement is not bureaucratically organized, ‘leaders’ cannot speak for ‘followers’” (Salazar & Alper, 1996, para. 79).

Burrows (1998) explains that in the early part of the 1990s, and after the change from a Social Credit to an NDP-led government, labour unions, environmentalists, and First Nations worked together on the issues surrounding pulp mill pollution to convince the provincial government to implement zero-dioxin discharge regulations. At the end of the decade, a similar group was able to work together to force the elimination of the use of chlorine compounds in the
production of pulp, which was at the time a major necessary ingredient for paper and paper products. She notes that during this period, many of the same parties were pitted against each other in a ferocious war over both the fish and forest industries. At that time, coalitions could not bring environmental organizations together with workers and their unions to confront the logging of old growth forests or to protect stocks of salmon.

**The Start of Relationship Building**

With respect to forest and land-use issues, the valley by valley struggle to save old growth forests produced an amazing list of protected areas: Moresby and Lyell Islands, Carmanah, Stein, Kitlope, Khutzeymateen and Walbran Valleys (May, 1998). Byers (2012) refers to British Columbia as the birthplace of Greenpeace and the home of the David Suzuki Foundation, and asserts that these victories to save important wilderness areas and other victories established an organized, deep rooted, widespread, and determined community of environmental activists. He asserts that it was this passion for the environment has lead to the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement and the Boreal Forest Agreement, two significant land-use agreements negotiated between governments, First Nations, forests companies and environmental organizations, as well as the existence of a *de facto* moratorium on oil tanker traffic along BC’s central and northern coast. With an active and successful environmental movement, labour representatives faced a choice; either begin the process of building relationships with environmentalists, or sit on the sidelines and let others influence the decisions of government and corporations that directly affect their members.

**Final Thoughts**

This literature review demonstrates the complexity of the conflict between forest workers and environmentalists in the 1990s. Unions in the later part of the 20th century had been struggling with the transition from business unionism to social unionism. The internal challenges
were complicated by legal constraints, multiple layers of decision-making as well as the leadership challenge of encouraging members to embrace a new internal culture all taking place within a public conversation on whether unions are even relevant anymore. Many labour leaders were frustrated and out of new ideas. In an attempt to facilitate change, many unions experimented with new policy documents, changes to their constitutions and creating new alliances both inside and outside the labour movement. There were also enormous influences on unions during the 1990s from the outside. Forest companies were undergoing their own dramatic changes due to a neoliberal approach to an ever increasingly global marketplace. Locally based forest companies were being swallowed up by transnational corporations and the relationship between workers and their employers changed dramatically. During this same time period, the environmental movement was also growing and changing. Environmentalists covered the range from lone local activists, to community based, to national and internationally based environmental organizations. Indeed the growing popularity of the environmental movement forced the leaders of the largest corporations in Canada to meet regularly to discuss this growing phenomenon. Soon international reports and agreements began to influence the public discourse on forest issues in BC. The ‘war in the woods’ was influenced by previous attempts at coalition building in BC – some successful, like the Tin-Wis Accord, and others not, like Operation Solidarity. At the height of the conflict, the new provincial government attempted a new process for land-use decision-making that tried to be inclusive and transparent, however, in many instances these attempts failed to reach consensus. It wasn’t until the beginning of the next decade that relationship building between labour and environmental activists began to gain some solid ground. As with many other conflicts, the ‘war in the woods’ is far more complex than was reported in the media and perceived by participants and observers alike.
Chapter 3: Research Methods / Project Design

Research Design and Rationale

Critical Strategies

In the domain of social science field research there is a well-established catalogue of methodological approaches for interviewing, sampling, analysis, etc. Carroll (2004) argues that all of these approaches follow a positivist tradition that emphasize techniques that may reinforce ‘status quo arrangements’ due to their practice of having the researcher be ‘detached’ from the research. He tells us that ‘...in a socially unjust world, knowledge of the social that does not challenge injustice is likely to play a role in reproducing it’ (p. 3). If this is so, then surely we have a responsibility to find a way to challenge the status quo in order to find solutions to injustices. Therefore Carroll advocates for the use of ‘critical’ strategies, which he defines as strategies that allow the researcher to be personally involved in the research and provide access to a deeper understanding of the social.

Carroll (2004) explains that there are three approaches to ‘critical’ research: oppositional, radical and subversion. ‘Oppositional’ means taking the side of the oppressed or the side of critical social movements and ‘opposing’ or challenging the “dominant ideological accounts of social issues that legitimate entrenched power” (p. 3). A ‘radical’ approach would be to seek to find the interconnections between the problems. These problems at first may seem unrelated, but upon deeper study, may reveal themselves as being connected in unanticipated ways. The “subversion” approach: “…disturbs the ordinary, taken-for-granted assumptions and understandings that position us in certain ways, narrowing a potentially wide range of human being to a limited set of identities and practices” (p. 3).

Carroll (2004) argues that the objective of social inquiry is to produce knowledge that benefits those in the struggle to revitalize democratic society. He continues that effective activism
both requires and produces social knowledge. Critical strategies are developed from activism, but also inform activism: they change that which they are about. Entrenched power and domination expresses itself in many forms, ones that we are sometimes quite unaware of (Gaventa, 2006).

However, it appears to me that as the power of corporations increases there is a parallel decrease in the space for democratic discussion. In the struggle for good jobs and a healthy environment, the leading narrative—jobs or the environment—is one which attempts to hide ecological degradation over the race for increased corporate profits and control.

**Institutional Ethnography**

Carroll (2004) promotes a number of critical strategies, but for the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen an institutional ethnographic methodology with a blend of oppositional and radical approaches to the research. Institutional ethnography is a reflexive approach to understanding the social world, while contributing to its transformation. He explains that institutional ethnography (IE) “arose out of the political ferment of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s—a wave of intense social activism and political cultural transformation” (p. 6). Canadian researcher Dorothy E. Smith, one of the leading practitioners of institutional ethnography, was inspired by Karl Marx’s critique of capital and used this to develop her understanding of extra-ruling relations. Smith defines extra-ruling relations as the “internally coordinated complex of administrative, managerial, professional, and discursive organization that regulates, organizes, governs, and otherwise controls our societies” (Smith, 1999, p. 49). She adds that the opportunity to explore ruling relations is to “explore the forms of power that are diffused through complexes of text-mediated social relations constituting subjectivity and agency (Smith, 1999, p. 82). Ruling relations are defined by Carroll (2004) as a complex field of coordination and control, in other words, we use IE to understand connections between local settings of everyday life, organizations, institutions and the “relations of ruling”. Smith used her approach to understand
the critique of colonization that informed the wave of 1960s activism that included the movement to “Canadianize” cultural production. Carroll (2004) tells us that the analytical starting point of institutional ethnography is the “actualities of everyday life as experienced by its practitioners” (p. 9). Smith (1987) defines institutional ethnography as a specific social research approach that responds to the task of taking up the “problematic” of the everyday world. She proposes starting with life as it is actually lived and proceeding from there to developing an understanding of the actualities of that world. Not only is life problematic (difficult, wearisome, confounding, etc.), but we can see the world of everyday life as sociology’s problematic. That is to say that life is a complexity of concerns, issues and problems that compel a broad range of investigations (Grahame, 2004).

In conventional ethnography, the researcher is held to a practice of observation and interviewing. Smith uses ethnography to move beyond observation to the exploration of the experiences of a particular person or persons to analyze the social organization that shape local settings. Merely understanding the localized social world is not enough; the research becomes a determination of how things actually work with the key to discovery flowing from the concrete experience of the individual. The understanding of the local organization of the everyday world can lead to the understanding of its connections with ruling relations, in other words, the institution (Smith, 1987). Therefore, “an institutional ethnography describes the social organization of everyday world from a standpoint outside of institutionalized discourses” (Grahame, 2004, p. 184). Institutions, in this context, are defined as functional systems such as health care and education. They are complex entities in which several forms of organizations are intertwined. The labour movement in Canada is a deeply-layered institution that is interwoven with government, corporations and other social justice organizations and, I would argue, can be best understood by beginning with the experiences of individuals who have lived and worked in
it. From their experiences flow an understanding of the way power flows within the institution more generally.

According to Smith (1987) there are three tasks that differentiate institutional ethnography as a research strategy from conventional ethnography. The first task is to identify ideological practices that make an institution’s processes accountable. Studying work, and not just paid employment, is the second task and it centres on examining the activities of individuals involved in producing the world they experience in daily life. The third task looks at social relations in order to discover how the localized work organization is connected to the broader social world. The findings of these tasks are then collected and written into an investigative narrative that identifies the key ingredients of the problematic. Despite the fact that the research process is a cyclical one, my narrative will be presented in a more linear fashion.

Conventional ethnographies have been conducted with a separation and detachment by the researcher and written in a manner so that the reader remains separate from the world that the ethnographer has described. Grahame (2004) explains that those being studied are “the other,” those whose life and ways needs definition by the ethnographer. As someone who shares the institutional location of the individuals I am interviewing, I appreciate IE’s commitment to a more integrated approach. Institutional ethnography conceives subjects from the standpoint of those who have been excluded from institutional discourses, from power, and the investigation begins with the experience of everyday life. This approach is intended to bring awareness about various forms of oppression and provide a process in which people are able to gain understanding about the institutions that shape their everyday world.

De Vault & McCoy (2004) argue that the impetus for IE is the search to discover not just what is happening, but how it happens. This is based on the premise that “happenings” are the activities of people and that these “happenings” take place in a world of extended social relations
or chains of actions “...the IE approach to empirical investigation has fit less comfortably within academic sociology because its focus is not on theory building but on ‘what actually happens’” (De Vault & McCoy, 2004, p. 201). Campbell (2004) reminds us that the task of IE is not to “test a hypothesis” but to explore the institution to expose how the ruling relations affect people’s everyday lives. This cannot be done without showing or telling their stories. This effort is particularly well suited to exploring the actual way that the ‘war in the woods’ was experienced by leaders within the labour movement.

**Interviewing**

Interviewing in IE employs a different strategy than conventional social research interviews. Smith (1996) advocates using informants’ accounts not merely as an interpretation of their experience, but as a vehicle to expose the “relations of ruling” that shape experiences. Interviews using this approach identify and follow the points of connection between and among individuals within the institution, even if they are in separate settings within the institution. The task of the interviewer is to create the conversation that leads to the identification of the relations of ruling. The purpose of the inquiry is not to merely compare local settings, but to identify the features of ruling that move across the institution, in other words, to create understanding of how things actually work for union leaders in their workplace (DeVault & McCoy, 2004). The complex ruling apparatus in this case is not contained within one union, but exists in the relationships between the labour movement, employers, the government, First Nations and the environmental movement.

One of the challenges with IE investigations is that they are very difficult to plan out fully in advance. A tangled ball of string is a useful analogy. The researcher pulls on one thread at a time without knowing exactly how much will emerge. Smith (1987) recommends beginning by identifying an experience that is similar to the experience whose determinants are to be explored
and proceeds from the *standpoint* of the people whose experience provided the basis of the investigation. The researcher then follows a simple, three part sequence: 1) identify the appropriate experience, 2) identify some of the institutional processes that are shaping that experience, and 3) investigate those processes in order to describe analytically how they operate as the grounds of the experience. DeVault & McCoy (2004) point out that as with other practices of social research the researcher may use text and discourse analysis to examine the practices of knowledge in the institution, but interviews play a key role. This is where the researcher is able to fill in the gaps from previous research.

DeVault & McCoy (2004) explains that these approaches include planned and unplanned interviews, one-on-one and group discussions or focus groups. This approach works in IE because although the interviews are not standardized, the institutional processes are. All of the informants will have encountered these processes, in some way, in their work. We can understand IE interviewing to be more like open-ended inquiry with researchers being oriented to discovering sequences of interconnected activities. However, just as in any qualitative interview, the researcher must achieve a balance between directing the interview towards her own goals and encouraging informants to tell their own story. The researcher must hold dear the task of uncovering “what you don’t know that you don’t know.” The researcher’s developing knowledge of the institution and its processes will facilitate the examination needed to find the institutional connections.

**Experience as Data**

Smith (1987, 1990a, 1990b) asserts that in the theoretical approach known as social organization of knowledge (where institutional ethnography is located as a research strategy), experience is the ground zero of the analysis and the results are the explanation of how the experience came to happen as it did. Campbell (2004) claims that this form of analysis is not just
“sociology for women”, as Smith has stated, but that it provides a process of understanding for all those whose lives are subject to ruling relations. Campbell (2004) also asserts that IE differs from other ethnographic approaches when it treats data (interviewing, observation and documents) not as a topic of interest, but as a point of entry to the social relations of the setting. It assumes that people are experts in their own everyday lives and work. IE is also political in its nature. By exploring how people’s lives are affected by ruling relations that occur outside of their knowing, IE provides the opportunity to demonstrate to individuals how their personal actions and experiences are impacted by the institutions. This is one way in which IE is an engaged critical strategy. The research participants play a role in the construction of knowledge that they may find useful to employ in their ongoing work and struggle.

When gathering observational and interview data, the researcher must operate under the knowledge that there will be different versions of what is happening, as people will speak from different places of knowing the work and the institution. This assumption is based on the tangled nature of everyday life in organizations (Smith, 1990b). The researcher will appreciate that people experience the everyday world from their unique locations in it. “Indeed, where one stands determines what one experiences, shaping to an important extent what can be known” (Campbell, 2004, p. 208). IE data collection requires writing fieldnotes as well as collecting experiential data through interviews. The informants account and the researchers account should support each other when a clear relationship to the located social processes is demonstrated. For the researcher to understand the actual social organization of an informant’s experience, she must tease out the data from the informant who speaks from the perspective of her own life. Each informant will have their own unique views of each and every experience and it is the researcher’s task to understand and describe the connections between these sites of experiences
and social organization. In IE, experience as data makes the analysis accountable to the everyday world as people live it (Campbell, 2004).

**Final thoughts on IE**

Carroll (2004) states that taking a critical approach provides an opportunity to change the world, not just interpret it. IE provides a specific methodology for critical research via a combination of fieldwork, interviewing, and textual analysis that stems from an initial problematization of the everyday. It gives us a flexible research strategy that provides an opportunity to understand not simply what is going on (what are the problems), but how ruling relations affect local settings. It is one thing to identify the relations of ruling, but they are not easily dismissed or changed simply by knowing. Campbell (2004) asserts that perhaps by knowing the rules we may be able to diminish any feelings of frustration about the system that we work under. I would argue further that by identifying the relations of ruling, or systems, we have a much better chance to divert from the current trajectory of environmental degradation, growing inequality and limitless economic growth.

**Data Collection and Participants**

I collected data from a purposive sample of eight labour leaders in British Columbia, including myself, using open-ended, individual depth interviews. I use the term ‘leaders’ to categorize people in the union who were not necessarily elected leaders of the union, but who demonstrated leadership qualities and held positions in which they were able to exercise leadership. I recruited labour leaders via telephone and personal contact and then confirmed interview dates and time using E-mail correspondence. Follow-up conversations were also conducted by telephone and E-mail correspondence with some of the participants. All of the participants are people who are well known to me. Recruitment focused on individuals who played key roles of leadership in the 1990s and 2000s with respect to environmental issues. I
conducted the individual interviews in person, expect for one as we were unable to coordinate a timely meeting. The interviews were recorded using digital audio and fully transcribed shortly after each interview with field notes written prior to, during and following the interviews. Individual interviews were open-ended and I used informed consent to ensure an ethical approach to the research (Groenewald, 2004). Due to my own personal experience with the subject I kept a personal journal throughout the process (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003).

For almost 22 years I was a member of the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada (PPWC) which represented pulp and paper workers in BC only. For this study, I interviewed representatives of four other unions: the International Woodworkers of America – Canada (IWA-Canada), representing loggers and lumber mill workers; the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP), representing pulp and paper workers; the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), representing fishers; and the British Columbia Government and Service Employees Union (BCGEU), representing workers in government oversight. Each of the seven labour leaders that I interviewed discussed their experiences during the 1990s as well as their thoughts on the movement now and what their efforts may contribute to the continued effort of relationship building between social justice allies. During the ‘war in the woods’ period, their participation ranged from being volunteer activists to working as hired union staff whose responsibilities may have included health and safety, environmental/land use policies, political action issues, research and in some cases, becoming an elected officer of their union.

Mae Burrows was eased into forest issues via a circuitous route of teaching English as a second language (ESL) to farm workers, to pesticide and water issues, and then fisheries issues, before being hired by the UFAWU. George Heyman began his union career as a local activist from the BCGEU in the 1980s. He served as vice-president from 1987-1999 and then as president from 1999-2008. He is currently the executive director of Sierra Club BC. Phillip Legg was a
researcher with IWA-Canada at the time, and is now employed by a public sector union in BC. Brian Payne was a National Representative for the Canadian Paperworkers Union, and after the 1992 merger into the CEP, was responsible for servicing pulp and paper locals on BC's west coast. He is now retired. Kim Pollock was a researcher with IWA-Canada and remains on staff with the United Steelworkers. Cathy Walker was the Health and Safety Director for the CAW during the 1990s. Cathy is also retired. Darryl Walker (no relation) was a BCGEU local activist who was elected as a vice-president in 1999. All of the individuals that I interviewed were people that I have a personal relationship with, many for 10 years or more, and were willing to be identified.

It is important to learn both what we claim to know and how we claim to know it (Gough, 2002). I believe that by understanding what happened during these events, we may comprehend how new relationships were forged and what can be done by others to continue the trend. In following the advice of Wagner (1993), I attempted to formulate questions that addressed my “blank spots,” areas where I knew enough to ask the questions, as well as my “blind spots,” areas where I did not know enough to even be able to ask the appropriate questions. Due to my own lived experience of this event I worked diligently to be aware of and acknowledge my own perspectives and existing hypotheses while allowing each interviewee to tell his or her own story.

Golafshani (2003) recommends the creation of a framework of validity, “conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality” (p. 604) by using the four procedures suggested by Creswell and Miller (2000). The first procedure is to bring a summary of the findings to the interviewees to ask if this is an accurate reflection of their experiences. One must not assume that the researcher and participant mean the same thing even when they use the same words. They recommend that interviews are audio tape-recorded and transcribed exactly, including other vocal and/or emotional responses. I asked probing questions to encourage elaboration “to achieve clarity and
to stay close to the lived experience” (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1375). The second procedure is to have the summaries reviewed by an individual external to the study. The third procedure is peer debriefing which is a review of the data and procedures. This task was performed by my thesis supervisor. The fourth procedure is triangulation, whereby I will seek convergence of the themes within the study (Cho & Trent, 2006).

Reliability is much more difficult to assure in qualitative research. Given the constraints of this research project, there was not an opportunity for another independent researcher to review the transcripts to determine if we would share the same codes and themes. Therefore the second procedure from Cresswell and Miller (2000) was not met; however, by employing the procedures recommended by Chiovitti and Piran (2003), I was able to enhance the credibility of the study. They argue for eight procedures, all of which I have included throughout this proposal. I was responsible for all decisions about coding, classification, de-contextualization and re-contextualization of the data. I have attempted to accurately analyze the data, while fully acknowledging and appreciating my own perspective, experiences and beliefs. Given my role as a participant in the movement to bring labour and environmental activists together, I engaged in a self-reflective process called “bracketing”. In reporting the findings I acknowledge my own existing knowledge of this event and I have tried by best to keep an open mind to the experiences of others (Sanders, 1982; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Finally I believe that I have ensured that the literature reviewed relates directly to the theories that emerged (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003).

To ensure validity, accuracy and credibility I specifically utilized the following procedures. First, I sent a transcript of the interview to the participants and highlighted the potential sections of the interview that may be included in the final paper. In addition, I indicated the direct quotes that would be used in the paper. I then send them a copy of chapter four (findings) to ensure that I had captured the context of what they had told me in the interview.
Then I followed up with email and telephone conversations with most of the participants. Throughout the study, I held regular telephone conversations with my supervisor to debrief the data. I also utilized triangulation to identify and verify themes within the study by analyzing the data (coding, classification, de-contextualization and re-contextualization), reflection through journaling, and discussions with my supervisor. In addition, when analyzing the data I ensured that each of the themes reported were consistent across more than two of the interviewees. Finally, I kept a journal throughout the entire thesis study, commenting and reflecting on what I encountered in the literature review, the interviews and the conversations with my supervisor, the interviewees, and my colleagues.

This study is delimited to British Columbia labour staff/leaders who played an active role in the building of relationships between labour activists and environmental activists during the period of 1990 to 2010. This is the period of the greatest achievement in the creation and development of personal and organizational relationships. The interviews were conducted in March and April, 2012.
Chapter 4: Interview Findings and Analysis

Introduction

As set out in my research design, this study began by conducting a series of interviews with labour leaders who were active during the ‘war in the woods’ period. What I uncovered from the interviews was that there was consensus among my informants that there was little conflict resolution in the 1990s. It took the following decade and a different group of people to build relationships between labour and environmental activists. I agree with Pollock when he observed that the ‘war in the woods’ can best be described as an event that traveled through three distinct phases. First there were valley by valley blockades where there was virtually no conflict resolution. The ‘on the ground fighting’ was set aside, temporarily, when the conflict moved to a second phase where government tried to create public processes to make land-use decisions. Although these processes informed government with respect to policy, they did not resolve the conflict between the parties involved and so the ‘war in the woods’ moved to a third phase where environmentalists began an international ‘markets’ campaign to influence forest companies in BC to change their practices.

In the 1990s the environmentalists did not get all that they wanted, nor did the workers, as jobs continued to be lost in the industry for a variety of reasons. Forest regulations changed and independent forest certification processes were invented but the conflict between these two groups of people wasn’t resolved. It wasn’t until the end of the decade that labour leaders involved with the Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC) decided to take action and the Labour Environmental Alliance Society (LEAS) was formed. On Friday, August, 8th, 1997 a group of representatives from the labour and environmental movements met to begin a dialogue on the fishing and forest areas of the BC economy. Pollock recalls that IWA-Canada was not invited to this meeting. The meeting was chaired by Burnaby-Douglas NDP MP Svend Robinson.
Although support for a joint statement supporting the enforcement of a US-Canada Salmon Treaty was not accomplished at that first meeting, a commitment to continue the dialogue was reached (Crowther, 1997). The meetings were hosted by the Vancouver and District Labour Council Environment Committee and were co-chaired by Mae Burrows from the T. Buck Suzuki Foundation and Ann-Marie Sleeman from the BC Environmental Network. After almost a year of joint meetings and fruitful discussions a new coalition emerged. The Labour Environmental Alliance Society (LEAS) was founded in 1998 as a true partnership between labour and environmental organizations. Rather than perpetuating conflict the mandate of LEAS would be to facilitate joint understanding and develop joint solutions and actions (Burrows, 2000a).

I find it interesting that many of the people who participated in that process were not the ones who had been on the front lines of the fight, particularly the environmentalists who were directly involved with the protests and the markets campaigns. However, both CEP and BCGEU did participate in the CORE tables and the birth of LEAS. Given all that had happened previously, it is remarkable that leaders within the labour and environmental movements began conversations with each other to heal the wounds, to find common ground and to bring the movements together. My experience is that today the leaders of organizations within the movements are on a first name basis with each other and regularly work together and share resources on issues ranging from forests to energy to climate change.

While I began the thesis seeking to understand the personal qualities of leadership that could bridge serious systemic conflict, I found so much more. I discovered that it was much more complex than just identifying specific traits shared by labour activists; it was also about the multifaceted nature of the conflict itself. These individuals were both encouraged and constrained in different ways by their unions, and their actions were influenced by governments, corporations and previous relationships with other social justice organizations. And finally I uncovered that
many of them held a particularly special place in their heart for the environment, quite often due to positive experiences in their early lives.

**Remembering the Conflict**

The ‘war in the woods’ was a conflict with multiple participants, locations, and actions that spread out over a decade. It is likely that only from the perspective that comes from our present distance in time that we are able to see the conflict more rationally. From my interview with Kim Pollock came this insightful recollection:

I think that there were three phases to the struggle that weren’t separated historically - that were overlapped but you could discern these three patterns to how the conflict played out. First there was a valley by valley conflict taking place in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Then in the mid-1990s there was an attempt to resolve the land use questions and these manifested into two parts – one was the big landscape agreements, like Clayoquot Sound and the other part were the CORE and LRMP processes. Finally, in the late 1990s were the markets campaigns.

As Pollock said, the second phase of the conflict manifested in two parts – the first of the large land-use agreements for BC and the succession of land-use planning processes. In 1993 the Clayoquot Sound Land Use Decision led to the creation of the Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices in Clayoquot Sound which led to the area being designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2000. In 1992 the newly elected NDP government facilitated a number of land-use planning round tables to create land and resource management plans (LRMPs) beginning with the Vancouver Island Land Use Agreement, of which IWA-Canada, CEP and the PPWC all participated although for IWA-Canada it was an intensely debated decision whether or not to remain at the various tables. This was due, in part, to the government removing Clayoquot
Sound from the Vancouver Island CORE discussions. This area was handled separately culminating in the Clayoquot Sound Land Use Plan and the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust.

One of the challenges for the IWA-Canada was its relationship with the New Democratic Party, which was in power at the time. Pollock recalls that many in IWA-Canada were concerned that the land use planning processes were simply a mechanism to “simmer down the whole fight and contain it”. All of the interviewees were very clear on their belief that the CORE process was mostly a failure. Certainly there was no final consensus outcome, but there were consequences other than just failing to reach an agreement.

Pollock recalls that at the end of the Vancouver Island CORE process the environmental sector proposed that 25% of Vancouver Island be protected. The people at this CORE table were working under the understanding that 12% was an appropriate level for protection. When asked how this would be paid for, the response was that maybe the unions had some ideas; perhaps stumpage fees could be raised. Pollock recalls being completely frustrated at this point and wondered if there was any consideration of the human and economic costs to this proposal. He acknowledged that this was the point in time where he personally started to become hostile.

The interviewees all had their own opinions as to what might have been the actual timing of the final breakdown of whatever relationship had been constructed during the years of round table discussions, but regardless, they all agreed that they were left with little opportunity to have further constructive dialogue. Cathy Walker noted that the funding of the environmental groups became a flashpoint and so workers in the forest industry felt compelled to participate in a company-driven ‘yellow-ribbon’ campaign in an attempt to counterbalance the power of environmentalists. The ‘Yellow Ribbon Campaign’ culminated in 20,000 people on the Legislature lawn in Victoria, BC on March 21st, 1994. Legg reflected that the union didn't want to be in the "embrace of the boss", but that the union never saw that there was any other options
than to side with the employers on this issue. He acknowledged that siding with the employer was a conscious choice because they believed it was best for the members at the time, due to their belief that there was no space for them to work with the environmentalists and that the union was facing an all or nothing proposal.

I remember that it didn’t take very long after the breakdown of the CORE tables that the environmentalists returned to direct action and market campaigns, which can be characterized as the transition to the third phase of the conflict: environmental organizations began to take the fight to a national and international level, targeting purchasers of BC wood products. And at that point the workers began to understand that the environmental movement was substantial, sophisticated, well-resourced, and they weren’t about to go away anytime soon. Pollock remembers the transition this way:

They discovered, quite sensibly, that if they [the environmentalists] came here and tried to operate on the ground that they would lose. But the beauty of the market campaign was that they didn't have to come anywhere near British Columbia - just go to the purchasers of the product and the threat to put protesters on the front lawn. You know there is nobody more squeamish in the world than retailers - promise them a picket line and they will give you anything. The market campaign killed us. We couldn't deal with it.

Pressures and Tensions

Getting Things Done.

I asked Heyman about how he got things done in the BCGEU as he was transitioning from being a steward, on the local executive, to being elected to the provincial executive:

You had to figure out how to make it go through the system. You had to convince people who could make it difficult for you if they thought it was the wrong idea or a distraction, and that it wasn't, it was a good idea. In which case they would become your allies and
help you move it through. And you also had to build support amongst the people in your
elected bodies who might not have thought of it, might not have even initially thought it
was important. If you brought it forward and talked to them about it, they would often say
‘yeah, that's right we should do that’. And then they would just vote with you. And they
would also listen to you and learn a bit. Its workers talking to workers, it's building
awareness and support for ideas.

Each union has its own politics as well as processes. Cathy Walker recalled how they
overcame a National President who was “spooked” on environmental issues:

You had to get the union leaders on side, you had to get all the sector councils on side,
and then you had to take it to the national executive board and passed, and then passed
again. You had to get it thought about at all levels of the union. To the credit of many
people in our union who did good work, these things were adopted but Buzz [Hargrove]
remained spooked on the environment to the end. However, it really helped when we
finally got David Suzuki to speak to the CAW Council. He gave the most spellbinding
speech; you know David at his best is phenomenal. The CAW Council is normally this
noisy mess of people running around the room with nobody paying attention. Well, you
could have heard a pin drop the whole time David was speaking. So that was a real game
changer in terms of general support within the union, you couldn't dismiss the
environment anymore.

I have learned that unions have very specific internal processes that have been developed
over long periods of time and that union members take great pride in creating democratic
practices that hold leaders accountable and place the final decision-making power in the hands of
the membership. Heyman and Cathy Walker demonstrate that these processes require great
attention by those who want to lead change within the organization. This was certainly true for
me both as a young activist in the 1980s trying to get my local union to take positions on pulp pollution issues, in the 1990s to create interest in forest issues, and in the 2000s on issues related to climate change. A leader must understand the hierarchy of decision-making and appreciate the internal politics at each level of the union.

**Identifying the Differences.**

All of the interviewees expressed frustration when doing coalition work with environmental organizations. Cathy Walker said: “Sometimes it's been very successful but many times it has been just so frustrating because you are sometimes left wondering who has the power to make a decision”. It was their experience that the organizations they were dealing with did not have formal structures like unions, that the organizations themselves were much more amorphous and as Pollock said “one was never certain who would be attending the meeting on any given day”. Also some organizations would vanish and others would be created. Cathy Walker recalls that the staff of many of these organizations were paid very little; many worked out of the goodness of their heart and a belief in the issues. Unions on the other hand have very formal structures and lines of reporting and accountability. Labour leaders always have to answer to the members and once a decision is made, an individual has little opportunity to change it. Given the structural differences between unions and environmental organizations, it is not surprising that tensions arose. Experience in the art of negotiations, or lack of, was also raised. Legg recalls being briefed on the results of LRMP table discussions and being told repeatedly from IWA-Canada participants that they “don’t feel as though we’re negotiating with somebody who’s done several of these [types of negotiations] and therefore is practiced in that.”

**Membership Pressure.**

Pollock, Legg and Payne spoke at length about the fear of their members that the actions of environmentalists were putting jobs in the forest industry at risk. There were also other
significant events that were creating job loss in the industry and these will be discussed later in the chapter. The ‘war in the woods’ was a manifestation of the frustration of workers who were worried about their future ability to put food on the table environmentalists were going to be the target of that fear (Burrows, 1998). The workers that were most agitated were those represented by IWA-Canada, who knew that they were the ones on the front lines. Pollock, Legg and Payne all reported that members would attend union meetings and demand action against the environmentalists. As Payne said that instead of trying to figure out how to find solutions to the dilemma, the ‘war in the woods’ expressed itself by the workers as an attempt to “stop this cancer before it spreads” and they would use whatever it took to stop the environmentalists. Payne remembers that “…it was a real stand-off. It was coming. You could see it coming, you could feel it coming. You just didn’t know exactly where it was going to sort of burst out”.

For the other three unions, being one step back from the front lines posed different challenges as their jobs were not at risk in the immediate sense; but as fewer forests were logged, there would be a drop in manufacturing and reduced demand for government oversight. The forest industry is an integrated one where each sector depends on another. On average, about half of each log milled in BC creates residuals such as wood chips, sawdust and hog fuel (an industry term for wood waste). These are used by the pulp and paper industry: chips and sawdust as the raw material for pulp and hog fuel for power generation. In addition, the sale of these products to the pulp mills is an income generator for sawmills; therefore sawmills and pulp mills are dependent on each other for their very survival. Declining production in the forests meant declines all along the production chain and the workers knew this meant that economic hardship for them was not far behind (Marchak, Aycock, & Herbert, 1999).

The other unions faced a very big decision: would they fight the environmental movement to preserve the current forest practices alongside IWA-Canada or would they join the struggle for
a more sustainable approach to the forest industry in BC? The decision to choose the path of sustainability then presented the challenge of engaging their members in a political fight that did not directly affect them at that moment in time. Payne explains:

I remember going to meetings where we would have local union activists who were keenly trying to figure out how to help their own local become more interested in environmental issues and almost getting drummed out of the hall by others who wanted to talk about the pipefitter’s grievance, or contracting out or something that was much more exciting to talk about. It makes it a challenge sometimes to get everybody onside.

There are some members who don’t automatically agree with what a union might be espousing, even if it ultimately is in their best interest. It can be hard work to educate members on what is happening in their industry and what its future will mean to workers. These unions were also being criticized by some of their own members for not engaging in the same way that IWA-Canada members were. There may have been some cases of sheer bravado, but some members clearly understood the longer term implications of cutting down fewer trees. Payne concludes that it is very tough to get the members to support advocating for environmentally friendly positions but that “you’ve got to convince your people that it’s genuinely in their long-term best interest to be going down this road and taking these positions”.

The pressure from members was forcing the union leadership to make a choice - either side with the environmentalists or side with the employer. Elected leaders want to be re-elected and therefore each initiative was weighed carefully in that context. In an effort to educate our members I recall that at the 1990 PPWC Convention the delegates voted to change the name of the Pollution Control Officer to the Environment Officer and the following year, the position of National Resource Officer was created. This moved the union from focusing on pulp and paper issues, towards seeing a broader perspective on environmental issues that affect the members.
Pressure from Forest Companies,

The ‘war in the woods’ is often remembered as a conflict just between workers and environmentalists, but there were many forces at work that influenced the conflict throughout its expression. Heyman remembers it this way:

It was framed as jobs versus the environment, and I think the ‘war in the woods’ was a handy media term. I would lay the blame as I most normally would, at the feet of the companies. Notwithstanding the fact that in recent years the companies actually recognize that their markets were going to be cut off unless they find a new way, which is why the market based campaign led to the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement. In fairness, to some extent, they have seen the light, some of them anyway. But I think at the time it was like let's pit loggers against the environmentalists and we can just stay out of the way and let them go at it.

There was pressure from the forest companies as they too were experiencing problems of their own, particularly with respect to ownership. Legg describes the transitional changes to ownership and its implications this way:

It went from BC based, to Canada based, to internationally based. Decision making went further and further away. There was less of a connection, and they were just doing what the shareholders wanted and demonstrating to the workers that they really didn’t have their backs.

In 1997 Weyerhaeuser purchased MacMillan Bloedel and IWA-Canada soon discovered that things were about to change for them. Long-standing practices of working collaboratively with the employer came to a stunning end. Pollock recalls that Weyerhaeuser appeared to be on a track to “take out the union” as an approach to resolving the downturn in the lumber industry. He recalls that things changed dramatically at the bargaining table where the relationship changed
dramatically, turning much more adversarial. Legg laments that the union didn’t catch the change as quickly as they would have wished to.

These new owners, like Weyerhaeuser, were also much more sophisticated with respect to public relations. They had succeeded in contracting out much of the front line work and the result was that it was the smaller contractors who were in the news rather than the large forest companies who held the forest licenses and were actually responsible for the logging practices. Payne remembers it this way:

And often because big companies had small contractors doing the front line work for them and some of them quickly figured it out that the more they contracted stuff out the less their name was in the news, because it was sub-contractor’s name whose was in the news. They kind of were one step back, even though it was their timber.

Employers also used their access to forest workers to instill fear in their employees by talking to them in the workplace and scaring them about what the environmentalists would do to their jobs. Legg commented that “it doesn’t take 100% of the companies doing it 100% of the time, just 10% of the companies doing it and all of the sudden there is a demonstration in front of the legislature”.

It seems to me that events like the “Yellow Ribbon Campaign” helped to prevent meaningful public dialogue from a systems approach as it was viewed as something that needed a conflict resolution approach as opposed to a systems analysis. As Burrows (1996) reported in her analysis of the Vancouver Island CORE process, the resolution wasn’t achieved using a consensus model of conflict resolution and as Salazar & Alper (1996) report, there were too many factors not included in the discussion. During this period, the forest companies themselves were changing, mostly due to an increasingly neoliberal approach to resource extraction. Ownership was changing, decision-making was further and further away, and an increasingly
anti-union bias was emerging. Unions were struggling to identify and then respond appropriately to these changes. Often reality set in when it was too late to react, and responding became ever more difficult. On the other hand, if a systems approach had been attempted, there may have been a different outcome. Perhaps if both parties had been able to see themselves as being a part of or in the middle of a complex system, as Oshry (2007) recommends, that there may have been a different approach from the ‘we win/you lose’ scenario that the conflict seemed to be.

Relationship Building

The interviewees all report that the real work of relationship building between labour and environmentalists did not begin in earnest until the late 1990’s. Darryl Walker recalls that when he was first elected, the BCGEU was moving very quickly to build relationships with environmentalists. Payne recalls the struggle throughout the 1990s with respect to internal solidarity in CEP and its capacity to engage its members on environmental issues.

It’s hard for the union to take those kinds of positions when you are getting criticized by your own members who want you to take a stand against the environmentalists. They say, “How come we’re not taking that stand? I mean, what kind of bullshit is this? We can’t have this mill close, we can’t have our wood supply cut off.

Payne talked about the internal education of members and the transition to be able to develop relationships with environmentalists as an evolution. He recalled that the members were fearful of losing their jobs and their homes and that the whole thing felt extremely unfair. It took years of conversations and a deliberate strategy of engagement for the union to be able to start building relationships with the environmental movement. He added that when CEP members felt that their bread and butter issues were taken care of, such as bargaining good collective agreements, that members were much more comfortable with the union engaging on social justice and environmental issues. Heyman talked about taking the union to the members and what he
meant by that was finding ways to empower local committees to engage support projects in their area. This way the members would see that there is actually a way to work on the issue that they are already working on through their union and then they become more involved in the union. Then more members would see that the union is not just for collective bargaining and grievance handling and it opens the door for more engagement with other types of campaigns and activists. I characterize this as unions getting their own houses in order to be able to engage with the environmental movement. The BC Fed and several unions began the process of educating their members by bringing in well-known environmentalists to speak at conferences in addition to writing union policy documents on the environment. The PPWC began a tradition of annual forestry and environmental conferences. Heyman, who was part of a working committee at the BC Fed said that “Part of what they (the BC Fed and some unions) were doing was to give an environmental ethic a place and some credibility in the labour movement”. Concerned with the divisions between unions on environmental issues in addition to the potential impact on workers that may occur due to treaty negotiations with the provinces First Nations, the BC Fed struck a working committee to look at environmental, economic and treaty negotiations issues. Heyman, a member of the committee recalls that from 1990 – 1991 the committee included, among others, Norm McLellan (CPU), Gerry Stoney (IWA-Canada), Ray Mercer (CUPE), and environmentalist Coleen McCrory from the Valhalla Wilderness Committee. This was highly unusual to have someone outside the labour movement on a BC Fed committee.

**Looking Outside of the Union**

In the 1990s, labour was trying to balance many demands: negotiating and defending collective agreements, participating in the CORE and LRMP processes, and trying to find its place in the growing movement for environmental sustainability. Clearly new relationships were going to have to be forged. On the one side was the short-lived success of the Tin-Wis Coalition
and on the other was the bad memory of Operation Solidarity. The challenge was to get the appropriate parties to the table, to begin a dialogue and see if there was some common ground, and to identify things that they both could say “yes” to. Darryl Walker said “If you work together and you have some sort of common cause, you don’t even have to like each other, but it helps. So if you’ve got a relationship, I think that there’s a better chance of success”. The 1990s was the decade where unions began to work with environmental organizations in a much more earnest fashion. Walker remembers back to the 1980s when the BCGEU started to respond to other social justice organizations:

And so, we started to respond to the external influences, meaning beyond our collective agreements, beyond our relationship with the government and beyond our grievances. We started taking on the needs of other people and they started taking on our needs. And so when we went to a convention, rather than talking exclusively about our own problems, we started talking about the rights of seniors, of Medicare, of students, of tuition, of legal aid, of those that were less able to take care of themselves, of single mothers, of abortion issues, of an array of other things, and now we started to expand our horizons and became an organization that went beyond ourselves. I think at the same time the whole labour movement did as well.

Burrows said that the approach that was taken was to work with groups and individuals that wanted to work together and not worry about those who didn’t want to be there. People and organizations could then join when it felt right for them. Burrows talked about the early days of the VDLC Environment committee:

So we worked with [First Nations activist] Saul Terry, the Council of Canadians and others on issues where we had common ground, but it was also partly as a way of doing what Sam Gindin had recommended in his principles for dealing with conflict, and that is
find something to work together on. And so what we did is we didn’t work with people who were just interested in keeping the conflict going. So we found people in the CEP and PPWC and the BCGEU, and we found other people in the labour movement and we found environmentalists that wanted to work together.

**Building Coalitions**

The first issue that the VDLC Environment committee was able to reach consensus on was opposition to the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and they were encouraged to continue. Growing the number of people at the table took years of regular meetings and forums as well as the effort and goodwill of the participants. Many times, labour and environmental activists were saying the same things, but they framed them differently. “Eventually we made the group so big that there wasn’t hardly any room left on the outside,” said Burrows. Lifelong friendships were developed, even though there wasn’t always full agreement on all issues. Having the right people at the table was the key: they have to want to be there, and be able to speak with some authority on behalf of their organization. The conduct of those at the table was also very important. Payne adds:

> Always key to me from day one was to make sure that you were honest with people. I mean, if we couldn’t deliver on a commitment that we had agreed to as a union because it just wasn’t possible, then we were always up front about it. And so it was always important to me that you continue to have that relationship and that ability to be honest.

**Advice from the Trenches**

The experience of the people I interviewed demonstrated that it is much easier to bring people together for a targeted campaign as opposed to a permanent coalition. I asked Cathy Walker if she had any advice around relationship building and she gave me this lovely example:
I think it would be very helpful to become a member of that organization because there is no downside other than having to attend more meetings perhaps, but it's a really great way to get to know people. I remember going to the meetings on the issue of uranium mining in BC, they were among the most fascinating I ever went to. You had these very elderly Voice of Women people, women who had been fighting for peace for so long combining with young environmentalists. And I still remember thinking this is an absolutely wonderful model of people coming together with completely different backgrounds for a common cause. You had this wonderful collection of people who had fought on these issues and mobilized in the anti-nuke movement from the ban the bomb era, to the young hippies who were off in the bush trying to live the good life all figuring out how to fight uranium mining effectively. We were all running in the same direction and we developed a very good strategy. We knew the price of uranium was coming down, and we thought if we could just stall this, there would be much less financial incentive to open up mining. We demanded a Royal Commission and we got one. The price of uranium kept dropping and at one point the industry told us that uranium mine is not going ahead, the price is down, and basically you guys have won. It was a wonderful moment.

I think that is really great advice. Further, I think building relationships is also about respecting the passion for the issue that everyone brings to the table. If you could do that, then the things that you don't agree on might not cause roadblocks to the primary conversation. You can set those things aside and work on the issue at hand. You agree on what you can agree on and then you agree to set aside, for now, what you cannot. Cathy Walker elaborated on this:

My advice is to pick an issue or an organisation and get to know the people, remembering that all of them are committed activists who are just doing this for their love of the environment or whatever the issue is. And be patient enough to explain some things of the
things that you know, particularly for young kids many of whom have never known what a regular steady job is. Bring them along about what things are like for working people, it's an investment in the long run.

One of the important roles that unions can play in building relationships is the ability to pay for things, as unions are often much better financed than other social justice organizations. Large unions have considerably larger budgets than environmental organizations, therefore they are able to pay for things like meeting space, advertising and research. This takes the pressure of finding resources out of the equation and allows for the work to be accomplished and relationships to be made. Heyman gave an example:

I remember going to the first discussion meeting (for Take the Lead) and looking across the table at this very intense and energetic environmentalist getting out her Mac[intosh computer] and taking notes - she had arrived at the meeting late and was breathless - saying we'd need a paper on this and I think we could do it at Pembina but it will cost about $10,000, we don’t have any money. And I said, okay we will find the money. The paper became the focus of the conference. And it was really well done and probably wouldn't have gotten off the ground if we hadn’t kick-started it. It sounds a bit self-serving and I don't mean it to be, because Karen Campbell wrote and worked on and facilitated a really great paper. The other important piece of this is that a long-standing collegial relationship for Karen and me developed as a result of this support and collaboration.

Love of the Environment

The primary question to this study is to determine what we can learn from the experiences of labour leaders in the act of building relationships with environmentalists. This led me to wonder about the personal motivation of the labour participants. Did they take on this challenge
because of an overall sense of duty to the union and its members? Or is there something else here at play. Throughout the interviews, I attempted to determine if a key factor to uncovering the motivation of these leaders was to demonstrate that it was also a personal connection to the environment itself that caused these members to initiate conversations with environmentalists.

Burrows talked about her connection to the environment:

So you put that together with a working class background, and I myself, when I was a young person, was a farm worker. I picked fruit for several years in the summers, all summer long, and then worked in a cannery. I had a real connection. I grew up in Haney which was a town that on the one hand was really pristine. It had pristine, beautiful rivers that we really felt an incredible connection to. Like, when I was really little, I would get on my bike and put my inner tube over my shoulder and peddle down to the river all day, you know? And my Dad would get off work and he’d say, ‘Yeah, we’re going to go down to the river, and go swimming because it’s the only thing in life that’s free,’ and we just really felt like it was ours.

Heyman told me that he was born and raised in an urban setting, and that his experiences as a teenager over a few summers camping on the beach on the West Coast of Vancouver Island had a profound effect on him. In 1969, the year the Sierra Club was founded to protect the Nitinat Triangle, he and a young man he met on the beach walked the West Coast Trail up and down, before the park had been established, before the trail had been maintained in any way. Midway along the trail, when they reached the lighthouse, the keeper told them that he didn’t think that anyone had made it all the way and he had been there for 15 years. He recalls:

We would go days without seeing anyone, walking for hours with the ocean on one side and dense forest on the other. I took a lot of pride in the fact that I had done that, and that it was wild, it was wild country. I did a lot of hiking in the mountains - I developed an
appreciation for the back country. I also spent a couple of years in my early 20s living off-line, living off-power, in the Sechelt inlet, and that gives you a slower perspective on things and just a sense that nature is important and that we are out of balance with it. The irony is going to Sierra Club 40 years later. I knew it was the right thing to do to apply for the job when I saw the date and it reflected that pivotal time in my life.

Darryl Walker recalls growing up in Port Coquitlam, BC and as a child went fishing in the rivers and creeks of the area. He said that he never much thought about the salmon or the trees in the area at the time. In fact, he recalls not thinking much at all about the environment until 1995 when his daughter was born. He remembers taking her to Burns Bog on Earth Day and having somewhat of an epiphany.

We were going by all the stands. I mean, I didn’t know anybody. Nobody knew who I was. I just started to ask questions of the various groups that were there. I started to create an inventory in my head of who was working on these issues and how do we tell our members about them. How do we spread this news, how do we get involved.

Other interviewees talked about their time on the land, camping with their children, hunting and fishing, and experiencing the beauty in nature. In my conversation with Pollock, I asked him about the passion that IWA-Canada members pushed back against environmentalists with, and if it was in any way connected to the land. He responded to the question this way:

The absolute heart of the union's fight on this came from the loggers. In communities where you had union loggers and union manufacturers there has always been a way closer link than in urban manufacturing such as new Westminster or Vancouver between the loggers and the manufacturing workers and the land. These are people who live on the land everyday and so that connection to the land is absolutely visceral for those loggers.
It’s a huge for them. Their fear -- and it’s quite justifiable -- is that they would take the land right out from under them.

Pollock's comment reminded me about the decades living in Gold River, BC and my many friends who are employed in the logging sector of the industry. I've never really believed for a minute that they were not environmentalists. They are always talking about the land, about being on the land, how the land changes from season to season and the wildlife that they see. This passionate connection to the land may explain why they choose the work they do and live in rural communities.

**Why Did They Get Involved?**

There was a vast range of stories told when the interviewees were asked about why it was that they got involved with their unions and how they found themselves immersed in the middle of the ‘war in the woods’. Each person had their own unique journey to the destination: urban dweller or farm raised, privileged background or working class, close connection to nature as a child or little connection to nature until adulthood, willing participant or reluctant recruit. There was no common explanation as to why each of these people became fellow travelers.

Two interviewees reported having moments of profound clarity and meaning. Heyman recalled that in about 1967 while driving down the mountain from Simon Fraser University he saw a billboard that said ‘Ecology, look it up – it concerns you’. He said, “for me it was just one of those aha moments”. Darryl Walker recalled that after listening to a particular presentation from a local environmentalist in the latter part of the 1990s, he was finally able to put all the pieces together in a way that made complete sense to him as the father of a young child, as well as a labour leader. He was then able to understand how environmental issues affect all his members. The other interviewees described more of a journey of increasing responsibility on the environmental file for their union and with those actions; their dedication and commitment to
their work was nurtured. Pollock found himself on the front lines of the conflict virtually on his first day at work. “…the Clayoquot land use decision came out in April ‘93 so we were into it full-scale right from the day I walked in the door”. Burrows was eased into forest issues through the union’s work on fish habitat and their opposition to the Kemano dam project.

Two began as health and safety advocates, Cathy Walker as a union employee and Darryl Walker as a union officer responsible for health and safety. In CAW and BCGEU, environmental issues were combined with health and safety in a single department, which is not the case in the other unions studied. Cathy Walker said “It quickly became apparent to me that there was a link between health and safety inside the workplace and the environment outside. It just seemed a natural link that I would take on the environment as part of the duties”. However, in the other two unions environmental issues were not singled out in a specific department, but were handled within other existing departments.

Having worked in the forest industry and understanding my own attachment to the industry, the unions and its members, it was not surprising to hear the personal connection to the work that was described by Payne:

My family grew up in the forest industry, were always IWA members and would never cross a picket line. Although my dad wouldn’t be classified as an activist, there were certainly lots of those kinds of basic fundamentals that were what you grew up with.

Heyman told me that he:

... got involved in my union initially because my local needed a shop steward, but I was heavily involved in the co-op movement and I didn’t think I had time. But the reason I stayed and I even stayed in my job even though I had been planning to leave was because I always believed in the union movement and saw my job was a vehicle to hold a position in the union. This was important to me because I wanted my union to be involved in
Central American solidarity work. So that is 30 years ago. That's a very interesting decision because it led me to have this very fulfilling career in the labour movement but that wasn’t what I was planning. I just wanted to get the union to donate more money and support various initiatives to support revolutionary movements in Nicaragua and Guatemala and El Salvador.

It seems that all of them were in the right place at the right time, although Legg joked that he had “taken a wrong turn and kept on going”. The ‘war in the woods’ conflict was presented to their union and they were in positions to take the lead in finding resolutions. But being in a position to take the lead and actually entering the debate had its challenges. As was stated by Heyman when describing the meetings in the early 1990s, “I was very nervous about anything that would just wipe out jobs wholesale because I had been a worker in that industry”. For all the interviewees there was an overall commitment to making things better for working people and at the same time, finding new solutions for a growing environmental crisis in the forests.

**Qualities of Leadership**

I have identified my interviewees as labour leaders, not because they were senior elected officers of their unions, although 3 eventually were, but because they actively participated in the effort to build relationships between labour and environmental activists during this specific period of time. I hope to demonstrate the importance between talking about doing something and actually doing it. What I am most interested in is the doing rather than the talking. In this section, what I found was that were demonstrated by several of the interviewees that I believe are important indicators of union leadership.

Much of what has been discussed so far is the *how* of building relationships, but what is equally important to question is *why*? Why did we bother, why did we put so much personal and institutional effort into this project? Certainly for labour leaders, there was already plenty of work
to do with negotiating and defending collective agreements as well as fighting for improved health and safety in the workplace. Heyman talked about how he wanted to build bridges between two sectors of the social justice movement: workers justice and environmental justice. Many interviewees spoke of solving the conflict between workers and environmentalists because it was the ‘right’ thing to do and that there would be many more conflicts in the future so we needed to create a process to deal with them. Darryl Walker talked about how the economy just wasn’t working for workers or the environment, and that that these two groups should come together to help design a current and future economy that isn’t destructive. Burrows said that what she really wanted to do was to start a working class environmental movement. I believe that what all the interviewees were saying and demonstrating was they worked at building relationships because they could see the bigger picture and wanted to act on finding solutions for workers, whether it was wages and working conditions, equity and fairness issues, health and safety, or the environment in which we live and work.

**Forward Thinking.**

All of the interviewees referred to taking actions and creating solutions that would have impact then and into the future. I will refer to this as being forward thinking. In my conversation with Cathy Walker, we talked about the power of collective bargaining and the many missed opportunities we have witnessed with respect to only focusing on the ‘bread and butter’ issues of our members. She lamented about a lost opportunity for Ontario’s auto industry:

I wish that we could have won issues like having the absolute demand on the bargaining table of producing green cars in Canada. While we talked about it in policy documents, it was never there at the bargaining table, and we’d never been able to make a huge deal about it. If we had really been able to push on that issue we might have been making the equivalent of the Toyota Prius’s in Canada today and maybe that could have set a
different environmental agenda within the automotive industry in North America. Those are demands, in terms of product, that both benefit the environment and absolutely confront the power of capital to make all the decisions on how we run our world. I would have loved to have been successful in all of that but we just couldn't do it.

One small but positive example that I was involved with was in 2008 in BC’s pulp and paper industry, when the CEP negotiated into the collective agreement a provision for a joint union/management committee that would discuss new economic opportunities for the mill due to climate change and other environmental issues. This allowed a forum for the workers to bring a workers perspective to the creation of new jobs in the workplace. Legg talked about using a closed factory as the basis for a new industry to be created on the site as there would be “infrastructure and skilled people there who need the work”. He talked at length about this and how we need to take the negative of a plant closure into a positive by creating new good green jobs. This is a wonderful example of progressive forward thinking.

**Personal Qualities.**

All of the interviewees presented a humbleness that was obvious to me. Whether they were elected officers or staff, there was a lack of ego, much self-deprecating humour and a willingness to create space for others. Not one of the interviewees talked about themselves unless they were specifically asked about their personal experiences. Everyone used the term ‘we’: such as we did a good job, we brought people together, we had a very good strategy, etc. They talked about making sure that others shared in the credit for any of the successes. Almost all of them referred to other labour activists who had inspired and/or supported them. I believe that they all saw themselves as a part of an overall movement or effort and saw their role more as a facilitator or a catalyst for solution-making. Although by the end of the 1990s she was the executive director of LEAS, Burrows talked about being a catalyst in this way:
One of the things about our work is that we would bring the BCGEU and the Wilderness Committee together, and then they’d go off and do something on their own. For example, we brought the CCPA project together and then they went off. Much of our work was catalytic. To be successful you can’t be the prima donna in it. So you don’t always see the work that’s being done, but that is coalition work—it is introducing people to others and then they would work together and do something.

Doing work that was more than just things that were in their own self-interest was important to the interviewees. Legg called it “intoxicating” to be part of an important effort of a social movement. As Payne explained it, “… we fundamentally believed that the best interests of our membership could be served by finding solutions to these emerging problems”. They talked passionately about influencing employers and governments in the best interests of their members, communities, and the environment. Legg spoke beautifully about the importance of wisdom coming from the “school of hard knocks” and the maturing process that happens as you experience successes and failures in life as well as in relationship building. Embracing that they were a part of a collective action is one of the qualities of leadership that I believe was demonstrated by all of the interviewees in both the interviews and in their work.

Legg reflected on the generational differences between activists. “In your 20s, 30s and 40s you are hot as a pistol, but those skills don’t work so well when you are in your 50s, 60s and 70s. But you are older and wiser”. They all seemed to have learned from their experiences and were pleased to share their personal stories with me, and with other younger labour activists. Heyman talked about how honoured he was when at his retirement party several young BCGEU activists personally thanked him for his support during his presidency.

All of the interviewees were people with a strong work ethic and a commitment to being honest. Heyman said “be bold, be honest, listen, listen, listen, and pick your moments”. Payne
said that he was proud of the fact that he had never been accused of misleading or lying to people. “It’s very important because at the end of the day if you’re going to take your group someplace, they have to trust you and trust what you’re telling them is true”. All the interviewees had more than two decades as leaders trying to build relationships and many referred to patience required to build slowly, carefully and respectfully. Darryl Walker opined that the Great Bear Rainforest agreement would likely not have happened if it weren’t for those conflicts in the 1990s. I am reminded that perceived failures can lead into positive changes over time. No one articulated the exhaustion associated with the work better than Pollock, who said “I am the only person alive who lived through the three CORE processes and five land use planning processes and has lived to tell about it, although it took 10 years off my life”. For all the interviewees, there was an overall commitment to making things better for working people and at the same time, finding new solutions for a growing environmental crisis.

The leadership qualities exhibited by the labour leaders in this case study are broad, and are unlikely to differ from most of the lists created by experts in the leadership field; however, I think it is important to identify the traits that were exhibited by these remarkable individuals (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2004; Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011).

- Their leadership was expressed due to **personal choice** rather than imposed upon them as a result of being elected to a position in the union.

- Each of the people I interviewed thought about how their actions at the time would impact the work lives of the members in the future.

- They talked about **consequences of decisions** made by the union as well as decisions made outside of the union, but that had impact on workers.
• They talked about finding different kinds of solutions, rather than relying on mimicking previous ones.

• What I found most fascinating was the almost complete absence of the term "I". They all spoke from the position of being part of a collective, in other words, "we".

I think this speaks volumes as to why they are labour activists in the first place - to me it is a clear indication of a fundamental belief in wanting to work with others. Finally, there was an indication of a tremendous work ethic, demonstrated partly by taking on an extra duty of building relationships with environmentalists.

Final Thoughts

Although there were many attempts to resolve the conflict over land-use, it wasn’t until the end of the decade that labour leaders were in a position to build relationships with environmentalists over the issue of forestry and land-use. These interviews uncover the many factors as to why this was so. Each union has their own internal culture and structure therefore leaders had to identify a process of getting new ideas heard and supported in their union. Through a process of communication and education with members, staff and officers, new ideas about environmental issues were able to become imagined. This task was certainly easier said than done. It happened in a period of change with respect to the unions’ relationship with forest employers as well as a period of public scrutiny; the ‘war in the woods’ story was interpreted in the media for years. The building of relationships with the environmental movement occurred through the hard, personal endeavours of individual labour leaders. These leaders shared many important attributes: commitment to social justice, forward thinking, facilitator, catalyst, strong work ethic, honest. However, I believe that the most important one is the practice of authenticity.
and inclusion. These leaders knew who they were, practiced what they believed and understood that it was about the collective (we), not the individual (I).
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

Reviewing the Interviews

One of my primary questions was to try to learn about the leadership qualities of those who were active in building relationships in the post-‘war in the woods’ period. The leaders that I interviewed shared very similar personal qualities to leaders in any other discipline, such as honesty, humility, authenticity, ability to listen, and to be forward thinking. In addition to these personal qualities, these leaders demonstrated a sincere commitment to social justice, to the notion of building a better world for others, as opposed to being on a track toward personal advancement. It wasn’t about power per se; it was about using their power to be a catalyst for the greater good. Additionally, when I asked them about their connection to the environment, it became apparent that their own personal experiences created a connection to the land known as soliphilia. These leaders held personal characteristics that one would expect of any leader, but combined with a commitment to social justice and a love of the environment, made these individuals powerful catalysts for change within BC’s labour movement.

Individual leadership, however, isn’t enough. The unions needed to lay the groundwork for the later attempts at relationship building with environmentalists. Environmental policy development played an important role in laying the foundation. Each of the unions created environmental policies of many types, some general, and some specific, such as focusing on forests. The process of getting a start on policy development, developing the policy and getting the policy accepted was an enormous communication and educational challenge within each union. Sometimes there was resistance from the members and sometimes there was resistance from the leadership, but either way, the resistance needed to be overcome for the union to be able to move forward. Some of the unions also began to involve themselves in less contentious social justice issues and this also helped create a culture of working with organizations outside of the
labour movement. This was most helpful in learning how to work with organizations that have differing structures.

As reflected in the previous chapter, there were three phases to the ‘war in the woods’ conflict: the valley-by-valley conflict phase, the land-use planning phase, and the markets campaign phase. As the markets campaign phase came to an end, unions increased environmental activism and began coalition-building in a much more constructed fashion. Unions started to create internal environment committees. The first formal joint meetings between labour and environmentalists were organized by the Vancouver and District Labour Council and the British Columbia Environmental Network, which subsequently founded the Labour Environmental Alliance Society. In the first phase of the conflict, there was little effort to resolve the conflict between the combatants. Both sides were taking a winner take all approach and the flames of the conflict were fanned by the forest companies.

In the second phase, the provincial NDP government attempted conflict resolution via a series of consultation processes on land-use. These processes ended mostly in failure, with respect to relationship building, likely due to the uneven structures of the labour and environmental organizations that participated as well as the fact that significant issues of forest management were left out of the discussions, such as forest tenure. Given the lack of resolution, it should have been expected that the conflict would re-emerge. What was unexpected was that the conflict moved from on the ground in British Columbia to national and international marketplaces. At this point, the environmentalists were able to make their case, logging practices in BC were changed and many old-growth forests were saved. The ‘war in the woods’ came to an end, but there was still no resolution to the conflict between the two groups of activists. Conflict resolution only began with the actions of the VDLC and the BC Environmental Network. What was most fascinating to learn was that the people who attended those first meetings were not the
ones who were on the front lines of the conflict; in fact, it was those who Payne characterized as “one step back from the meat grinder. I think that the enormous challenge of conflict resolution in this case was that there were so many factors to the conflict. It was so much more than just a struggle between workers and environmentalists. Unless all of the issues were identified and included in the resolution processes, failure was inevitable.

Forest unions were under enormous pressure during the 1990s and the leadership knew it. The unions had to fight against a number of fronts – environmental and economic – but still operated under the same internal systems that had been in place for decades. These systems included processes whereby the members made the decisions based on motions, resolutions or recommendations by the leadership of the union. Activists had to find ways to advance their issues. Many times it was both the membership and the leadership who were nervous of taking on new issues, so an information process had to be created to gain support for the issue. All of this occurred in a system where the leadership of the union had to face re-election on a regular basis, therefore elected leaders were sometimes the least interested in taking on controversial issues.

Unions were and are far more comfortable with the practice of collective bargaining than coalition building as they have had decades of experience. In collective bargaining, the parties try to reach an acceptable compromise. Neither party expects to achieve all of their goals and expects improvement over a period of time. The ‘war in the woods’ was a completely different experience, as there seemed to be little space for compromise. The workers wanted all of their jobs retained and environmentalists wanted to save intact forests. This is why there was so much pressure on IWA-Canada and less pressure on the other forest unions: the desires of environmentalists would eliminate IWA jobs. However, while the other forest unions saw it as having to make a choice between siding with their brothers and sisters in IWA-Canada or siding with the environmentalists, in fact there was a third option that ultimately unfolded; to build
relationships between labour and environmentalists so that they could work together to achieve a more sustainable approach to forest practices and forest employment in BC.

The forest companies played a far more important role in the conflict than many people imagined. They played a significant role in the “Yellow Ribbon Campaign” as well as helping to ratchet up the rhetoric in the workplace. However, they too were under pressures from changing ownership to globalization. An anti-union approach by many of the new employers changed the workplace relationship significantly and the larger forest companies began a campaign of contracting out work to small contractors. This not only saved them money, but kept their names out of newspapers during the height of the conflict. For almost the whole decade of the 1990s they were able to avoid responsibility to workers for their employment and to the public for their logging practices. However, one of the successes of the markets campaign by the environmentalists was to shine a light back onto the large forest companies who were forced to change some of the logging practices due to regulatory changes.

Institutional Ethnography – An Examination of Labour Unions

While I conducted each of the interviews, there came a point in the conversation where I would end up talking about the type of social research I was conducting. Each time I mentioned that I had chosen to include institutional ethnography I was met with a polite but questioning look. “The first thing to know about institutional ethnography is that it isn’t about the institution – it is about wondering how and why things happen the way they do”, I would say. One of the things that I tried to understand was how and why some labour people chose to get involved in the ‘war in the woods’ conflict. I wanted to know how they got involved, and why they chose the different ways and opportunities they did. What were the ‘rules of the game’ in each of the unions and how did they work with or work around those rules? What has been extraordinarily challenging as well as wonderfully helpful has been my own participation in the work of bringing
environmentalists and labour activists together. Simply, it is not possible to separate myself from this project and view the events and their aftermath from a dispassionate perspective. I chose an ethnographic approach to allow for the inclusion of my own story in this study of an important historical event. I have attempted to identify my own ideas from the ideas and experiences of my interviewees, however, since there are some shared experiences, there are similar ideas. (Sanders, 1982; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). The limitations with this approach for the purpose of this study included the challenge of acquiring relevant documents from each union and being able to achieve multiple interactions with all the interviewees. It may be that this methodology is better suited to analyzing a single union, rather than multiple unions as well as use in a current rather than historical issue.

**Local Practices.**

What I learned about each of the five unions is that on paper, there really were not great differences in their structures. All had collective agreements with employers in the forest industry, although the BCGEU had a collective agreement with the provincial government for its members who provided oversight for BC’s forests. All unions stated in their constitutions a desire to improve wages, benefits and working conditions of their members, as well as improve things for the broader public. All unions had policies on forestry, and since the 1990s, all now have policies on the environment. The CEP also has an energy policy and the CAW has a comprehensive transportation policy.

What is different within each of the five unions is the culture, and the process for getting things accomplished. All of the unions categorize themselves as a rank and file union, which means that the members have a significant amount of control over the business of the union. However, the day to day business of the union is conducted by staff and senior officers of the union and initiatives are most often driven from the top down, with the exception being the
PPWC, where there are no staff at the national union level. For a labour leader who is not the president of the union, there can be significant challenges in trying to resolve an issue that the president does not see as a priority for the union. Indeed, many presidents remain more concerned about their ability to negotiate improvements to the collective agreement and their working relationship with the employer, than over concerns about the environment. Presidents want to be re-elected and each initiative is weighed carefully in that context.

**Examining the Work.**

According to Camfield (2011), it is more important to look at what unions do rather than what they say they are going to do, such as what is found in constitutions and policy documents. The work of union staff and activists include collective bargaining, defence of the collective agreement, fighting for improved health and safety and member education. It also includes taking on new issues within the union, such as work that is considered outside the traditional realm of union work, including political action and working with other social justice organizations, including environmentalists. In problematizing the work, I wondered just how this “other work” is accomplished. Both Heyman and Cathy Walker talked about getting things done in their unions. They said that it was a matter of understanding their own internal culture, identifying the people with influence, how the decision-making structure worked and how to build support for your idea – even if it meant having someone else take the credit. All of the interviewees said virtually the same things, even if their organizational structures were slightly different.

The unions spent time creating policy documents on the environment, some were specific policies on forestry, energy, transportation and others. Some of the unions created environment committees, outside of health and safety committees, at the national and local levels. Some of the unions also increased their outreach to other social justice organizations, including environmental
organizations, providing resources on issues of shared values. And finally, many unions began to include environmental issues into their education programs and regional conferences.

**Social Relations.**

Smith (1987) argues that an organization such as a union or the labour movement itself, is engendered by social relations that originate outside of the local settings and can only be partially seen within it. Therefore this study examined the social relations of the environmental organizations the forest companies, the provincial government, and social justice organizations, whose actions affect unions, to assist in understanding of why things happened the way they did in this time period. As we have seen, it makes a difference who owns these companies, where the decisions are made, the business models they utilize and the global system of capital in which they must conduct their business. Other than negotiating collective agreements, the workers have next to no input on any of these factors; however the relationship between labour and forest companies is largely influenced by them. Until workers own the means of production, their work life is much dependant on dynamics outside of their control.

Regardless of who is in power, the provincial government is responsible for setting the laws that regulate labour relations as well as sets the economic policies for the province, including the management of crown lands under its jurisdiction. In BC labour unions have a long history of supporting the NDP, whether overtly or not. Some unions, like IWA-Canada, CAW, and the CEP were affiliated to the party at that time, whereas the BCGEU and the PPWC were not. For unions like IWA-Canada, who has always publicly supported the NDP, it was a balancing act between its demands for workers and for forest policy and providing popular support for the NDP when they were first elected in 1992. Labour activists believed that they would be better off under a labour-friendly government, but they were also concerned about criticizing their own government if it didn’t go far enough.
The five unions in this study were interacting with the social justice movement in British Columbia prior to the ‘war in the woods’. Operation Solidarity, in 1983, was a dramatic event in BC’s history and it the outcome provided the labour movement with a reputation of putting itself before the interests of others that had a negative influence for the decade to come. There were, however, at least two opportunities where labour, environmentalists and First Nations did work together on issues: the Tin-Wis Coalition as well as the broad-based campaign to reduce pulp mill pollution. Unfortunately, when the valley-by-valley protests to protect old growth forests occurred, forest workers and environmentalists found themselves on opposite sides of the conflict, with no mechanism for constructive dialogue until much later in the decade.

In 1989 the Vancouver and District Labour Council’s committee on the environment began facilitating conversations between labour and environmental activists, which quickly became a venue to find common ground and to resolve differences. Birthed as the Labour Environmental Alliance Society, it was the premier organization at the time in BC to work to build relationships between labour and environmental activists in an open and supported process.

It is interesting to note that the first issue that LEAS was able to reach consensus on was the opposition to the MAI, a trade agreement flowing from a shift to neoliberalism.

If I were talking with Dorothy Smith right now, she would ask me what the key ingredients of the problematic were. I believe that creating a common perspective on jobs and the environment that is shared between organized labour and environmentalists is the most important direct challenge we faced in the 1990s and that we are still facing today. The social relations with forest companies, government and social justice organizations helped to manifest the ‘war in the woods’. The conflict involved forest workers and environmentalists, but was part of a much larger transformation for workers and for the environment. Without addressing the
larger struggle of how to protect the environment in the context social relations and of continued resource exploitation from expanding corporate interests we will never create a durable solution.

**Are Unions Systems?**

I remember reading Meadow’s *Thinking in Systems* (2008) in December 2010 and becoming eager to apply this to the labour movement with respect to all the changes we needed to make to be relevant into the future. Unions have elements: members, staff, income, buildings. They have interconnections: members, bargaining units, locals, national reps, officers, and staff. Finally, they have a purpose, which is both its legislated responsibility and its stated mission or purpose statement. Unions are also interconnected to the world around them – to other systems that are also interconnected. I started to think about how to apply Meadows Leverage Points to labour unions in Canada – a task easier said than done. Unions have been incredibly resistant to change. Tradition, custom, and history run through our everyday lives. Meadows (2008) explains that all systems have the ability to self-organize, and in biological systems, that ability is called evolution. In my opinion, unions have not evolved all that much. When you review union constitutions and by-laws from 100 years ago, they are not much different from today. The roles played by members, stewards, officers and staff have changed little. There have been business and social unions since the turn of the last century, but I was not able to identify a union that has a fundamentally different internal structure or a completely different mandate or goal as all of the others in Canada.

Meadows (2008) places *goals* as the third best place to create real change in a system. Unions could set new goals, and express them clearly in texts: the constitutions and policy statements, to evolve into organizations that are seen to be working for all society and not just themselves. Simplistically, union activists will state that they are social unionists, not business unionists because they advocate for public health care or against public private partnership.
However, in the minds of the public, unions remain as a special interest group only concerned with themselves (Canadian Auto Workers, 2012; McFarland, 2012). If unions want to be seen to be less self-interested, then they must go beyond talking about social issues to fully participating in the struggle to accomplish social goals; in other words, they must cease acting as solely self-interested. The social relations of the labour movement need to be understood which may the create space necessary for real community and social activism. If unions want to nurture relationships with environmental organizations they will need to affirm commitment through changes to goals as well as include an environmental lens to all of the work that they do.

Second from the top on the list of places to intervene in a system is the paradigm of the system itself. A paradigm is the shared idea in the minds of society. If unions are perceived to be only self-interested then labour has two challenges; one, to change its goals to ensure a new way of conducting union and social justice business and two, a change to society’s perception of unions. If people hear the word “union” and think negatively, then a paradigm shift in perception would be that people hear the word “union” and think positively. Many people are still thinking in the frame of “jobs or the environment”. How can these paradigms be shifted? Perhaps unions could lead the shift away from neoliberalism to a new economic system that is more equitable and less dependent on the exploitation of the environment. CEP and CAW are talking to each other in an attempt to create a new model of unionism and hence a new union combining the members of both unions (CAW, 2012a). However, time will tell if this is the type of paradigm shift that Meadows advocates. Transcending paradigms is the most effective leverage point to change systems; however I suspect that transcending the paradigm of our current economic model is going to take a bit more work than just shifting the paradigm of labour unions. Fully addressing this point must be left for another project; however I will quote Dr. David Suzuki to help make this final argument:
It's almost a cliché to refer to a "paradigm shift", but that is what we need to meet the challenge of the environmental crises our species has created. That means adopting a "biocentric" view that recognizes we are part of and dependent on the web of life that keeps the planet habitable for a demanding animal like us. (Suzuki, 2012, para. 10)

After many months of thinking and talking to people, I more firmly believe that a holistic approach to facilitating change within the labour movement is essential. Unions are part of a system of relationships between other humans, and humans exist within the ecosystem itself. We are related to everything; therefore using a systems approach to building relationships with environmentalists will help us see each other as allies and partners on this planet, as opposed to seeing them as “the other”. The labour movement has a long history of referring to each other as brothers and sisters, so perhaps as a first step, we could begin to treat all progressive activists with the same respect and inclusion. Just like in a family, we don’t always agree, but we find ways to support each other so that each has their needs met. If there was a common belief that we are all family on this planet, we may have more patience with each other’s perspectives as we are working towards solutions.

**Leadership for Labour Leaders**

I believe that the labour movement requires more systems thinkers as well as a change in our definition of leadership. When we think about leadership we often think about power. Our society has many examples of hierarchical power – government, business and the military. We also experience this type of hierarchical power in labour unions, combined with the belief that our senior officers have power that they are able to exert over the union as well as over employers. Oshry (2007) encourages us to move beyond our current perceptions of power to look at the systems that affect our work lives. He asserts that one begins to see power differently once a person is able to see systems as wholes. Real power is the ability to influence system process –
however you must be able to see them to be able to influence them. Smart leadership understands that everyone brings different roles, perspectives, experiences, resources and skills to the table and respecting those differences, as well as seeing the collective power that it creates. It is important to appreciate the love of the environment that many labour leaders hold within, and to find spaces for this passion to be expressed. With this approach, there should be little chance that the labour movement and the environmental movement can ever again be so badly divided.

For successful labour leaders, the importance of building coalitions must not be understated. Capra (1996) suggests that within human systems we must move from hierarchies to networks. All of the interviewees talked about the importance of working in coalitions and their challenges and successes of their own efforts. The opportunity to work on specific issues of common interest creates a greater likelihood for resolve of the issue as well as the creation of networks for future problem-solving. Both Burrows and Heyman spoke about the chance to be a catalyst for change without worrying about who gets the credit. I suggest that this leadership skill and leadership orientation is far more powerful than being a traditional leader with the attached perceived power.

I feel very strongly that labour leaders must take all environmental issues much more seriously. Certainly, land use decisions are the challenging and have the potential to be divisive, but pollution and climate change affect us all whether or not we belong to unions, and therefore unions have a tremendous opportunity to play a constructive role. If the labour movement wants to gain public respect, becoming leaders with respect to environmental issues is an opportunity that should be grasped firmly with both hands. As Payne said, environmental issues are “just not going away and therefore the sooner unions wrap their heads around it, the better”. Both Heyman and Darryl Walker advocate including an environmental component to all of the work of the union. My recommendations are that unions write progressive policies on environmental issues,
change the goals of the union to include participation in the environmental movement, advocate for just transition strategies, reaching out to community organizations should become second nature to unions if we want to avoid future conflicts.

**Final Thoughts**

My thesis question asked what can we learn from this conflict, and I believe I have uncovered several important points. I now see more clearly the difference between resolving the problem and creating relationships because I think that in the early and mid-90s, we worked on solving the problem, which was the jobs versus the environment problem, but we didn’t pay any attention to building relationships. In retrospect, we didn’t do a very good job at solving the initial problem as jobs continued to be lost, but we did eventually change the discourse to jobs and the environment. The hard work of building relationships didn’t begin until we had hit rock bottom and then it was left to people who were not directly involved with the on-the-ground conflicts. The people who were engaged by the VDLC were people from both the labour and environmental movements who wanted to be there, who wanted to create a relationship and not those who were burned out and bitter from the earlier part of the decade.

What I think is extremely important about this observation is that it leads me to ask why did we ignore relationships? Why did it take almost a decade of turmoil before we could turn things around? Yes, there were important influences on labour like globalization and neoliberalism, but things have never been easy in the labour movement. Labour has always struggled against employers and governments, so why was this conflict so challenging? I think the answer lies in the fact that unions were also in a transition from business unionism to social unionism in British Columbia at this time. Unions needed to do the difficult internal work of opening up the culture from one of focusing on issues of collective bargaining and worker health and safety to a culture that includes thinking about the union’s place in broader society. In
reflecting on the comments from Heyman, Payne and Cathy Walker, there were tremendous internal struggles to encourage members and elected officers to think about the bigger picture, to support the idea that the union must think about the environment in a different way, and to participate in the struggle for sustainability. It was after this internal struggle and the experiences of changing the culture of the union that these labour leaders were better able to play a role in building relationships with environmentalists.

This learning journey, my thesis experience, has left me exhausted and exhilarated, frustrated and relieved, humbled and triumphant. It has been an extraordinary gift to have had the opportunity to examine an important historical event through the lens of relationships between the two social movements that I have devoted my life’s work to: labour and environment. My greatest challenge was to allow my own voice and experiences enter the project instead of denying my place in the work. I hope that the decision to employ institutional ethnography will bring an added richness to the findings. This is a study about relationships, about people, and so it seems to me to be ludicrous to have even considered any other approach. I started the MAEEC program because I wanted to create educational programs for union members, but it led me to think much more broadly and systemically about the kinds of solutions that the labour movement can play a role in. Yes, education and communication are key components to an ecologically sustainable future, but I have a much greater appreciation for the fundamental nature of relationships and the role they play.

As a result of completing this study I have a greater understanding and appreciation of what I have already been doing. Due to this opportunity to reflect, I've come to understand that what I have tried to do for most of my working life is to build relationships and to bring people together. The more I study about systems, ecosystems, and systems theory it becomes absolutely
clear for me that it's all about relationship between people who want to make social and environmental change. In conclusion, I'm enormously grateful for this experience.
Epilogue

“Mom, I have something to tell you and please don’t be mad,” said my youngest daughter, Ashley.

My brain instantly went into overdrive – what could be happening? Did she get another tattoo, I wondered?

“I’m pregnant.”

I was stunned. This was completely unexpected – although at 25 years old and in a stable relationship you’d have to wonder why I’d be that surprised. Yet, she was the daughter with enormous environmental health issues: severe allergies and asthma. We have almost lost her a couple of times and have always been concerned about her future. How would she manage the pregnancy? How healthy could this baby be?

“I’m so happy for you, sweetie,” I exclaimed. “How could you think that I would be mad?” After a lengthy and joyful telephone conversation, we both said “I love you” and ended the call.

The fear monster then took over. And what kind of future would this child, my first grandchild, have? The world is going to hell in a handbag I told myself. The list of things to worry about is endless: toxins in our water and food supply, deforestation, air pollution, climate change, water depletion, nuclear waste and more. I recalled having a conversation about a year ago with the brilliant William Rees, co-creator of the Ecological Footprint model, telling him how terrified I was of being a grandparent knowing that I would one day have to face the questioning of a child who knew that my generation was largely responsible for all of it. He smiled, hugged me, and said that I would surely have to face the consequences of a decision that was not of my making and that, never fear, many people share my concerns and continue to work
for change – even if it sometimes feels like we are against enormous odds. I was comforted, slightly, but hoped that I wouldn’t have to face my own fears too soon.

It is true that many people are working to find solutions to the enormous demands that the human race has placed upon our beautiful planet. The eight people I interviewed, myself included, have contributed enormously not only on the issue of building relationships, but on many aspects of environmental and social justice. I sincerely hope this case study is a beneficial contribution to a growing body of work on the importance of personal relationships in solving complex issues.
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