

Kim Jaedicke

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KJ: I'm Kim Jaedicke, I'm with CUPE Local 38 which is City of Calgary inside workers. I'm currently the chief shop steward; I have been for the last year. Previous to that I was recording secretary for six years and previous to that just a general member-at-large. I'm employed with the City of Calgary; I'm in my 20th year with the City. I am a staff development technician or a trainer, so I train all the customer service staff that work in development and building, and I'm a shop steward for my floor. So I represent about 140 members on our floor.

Q: Tell us about your background.

KJ: I was raised by a family that ran their own company and still currently do in Calgary. My father, mother, and brother ran a roofing company in the City of Calgary. From the time I can remember, my brother and father have worked together. Because of a marriage breakdown, my mother is no longer involved in the business. Union wasn't part of our lives, not growing up, absolutely not. I had my first job when I was 17-- well no, I had a few part-time jobs all through high school. But my first major job I graduated high school at 17 and started working, and I worked for a division of Safeway. But I was not a union employee there. I was an office person, so working with union people but working in an office. I really had nothing to do with union there. I can honestly tell you I was scared of the union because I didn't understand it. Then I started with the City and really wasn't involved in the union whatsoever. At the time I signed a card we were doing a ratification vote for a contract, and the shop steward I was working with at the time came in and said, here sign a card so you can go vote. That was my introduction to the union, which now I think is horrendous. So I signed a card and went and voted, still didn't understand it, but knew that it meant that I was getting more money. So I was all over that. Then I was watching the news one day when we were up for our next vote or our next ratification, and I saw the president of our local on the news. He was saying some stuff about the employer, and to this point I'd never had an issue at my job. I had

enjoyed my job. I felt I was treated fairly, I felt I was paid fairly. I just thought, you know what, this guy does not represent me. I don't know who this guy is, but he really annoys me. So a couple of weeks later I was talking with a girlfriend and she said, you know, we should go to a union meeting. I went, absolutely; I'm all over that. So her and I picked up and went to the union meeting. The first meeting was kind of overwhelming because a lot of times you get into the old boys' club, and that's very much what it was. There was one woman at the table. She was the recording secretary, but everybody else at the front table was a man. It was very routine – they were used to what was going on, just took everything by pace. It was kind of intimidating; so I kept going back to learn and understand. I had a coworker that I'd worked with previously that attended and she was on the executive. That kept getting me to come back out and come back out. Then she said, oh you've gotta come and try an educational with me. So we actually did a weekend school that I found quite interesting, and that was my first time at a picket line. We were supporting our Catholic caretakers that were out on strike. So we went and walked the picket line. I was scared to do it but once we did it, it was exhilarating because I got what they were saying. Because they were quite a bit lower paid than where we were at I felt terrible for them. They were mainly men from other countries, English second language; it was the job they basically had to take because they didn't have education. I looked at their wages and thought, this is outrageous that their employer is treating them that way. So it sort of hooked me in. Then as I got to know our executive I really understood what was going on; I got the bug and just went on from there. I'd probably been involved for 10 or 12 years but it's incredible what I've been involved in. As far as the old boys' club, I take back all my thoughts of that. Our president, I don't know for a fact, I'd like to find this out, I believe is one of the longest-serving local presidents; I believe he's up to 22 years with CUPE, with our local. He supports every member that's involved. Whatever your little niche is, he's there to support you and explain processes. We have lots of new members. Currently we have 4,000 members in our local. So we'll have people come in to meetings and want to learn and want to get educated, and he's very supportive; he's very caring as far as explaining things and letting you understand what goes on. I've had a complete turnaround on how I felt about him also from that original TV ad where he was saying

things that I didn't really appreciate about the employer. Now I understand that too, because a lot of it is he manipulates the press as well as the management manipulates press. So it's been entertaining watching him do that. Now that I'm so involved I've witnessed some very interesting stuff he has said to the press that he knows just the right things to tell them that they'll misconstrue in the news, but it works out for us.

Q: What was it like being on your first picket line?

KJ: I was very nervous. If you've never been involved in a union, and really I couldn't go to my family to ask about it because really no one in my family was involved in union. I was scared, because all I'd ever heard about, the only time you hear about picket lines it's not a good thing usually. So I was actually scared, but as I was scared and holding up that picket sign I realized the camaraderie and the family that the union was. The local that we were picketing with was a fairly small local but as we stood there more and more people showed up from all different locals. UFCW. It was a CUPE local that was on strike but all these other locals showed up and I was quite amazed. It made you stronger; it made you feel better knowing that you were walking with all these people. I would say that's the one biggest thing I've learned about unionism is you're never alone. There's always somebody there with you.

Q: What other people influenced you?

KJ: I would say the previous executive of CUPE Alberta, which was D'Arcy Lanavaz and Rena Oak. She was recording secretary and he was president of CUPE Alberta for four years. What they did for CUPE Alberta in that four years was incredible. I've been around CUPE for a while and a lot of times unfortunately we were lacking in leadership with going forward and really putting a good foot forward of what CUPE should look like. I believe that D'Arcy and Rena did a great job of getting that out there, Darcy more in the forefront being in the press and building the alliances with AFL and groups like that. I admire the work that they did and I'm proud of the work. I was part of a lot of it; a lot of

locals were part of it. But they were the driving force in getting us to walk forward and do better as CUPE Alberta.

Q: You talked about Safeway being one of your first jobs. How does the non-union experience compare to the union experience?

KJ: I have to be honest with you that as far as the union to non-union, I was employed there for eight years and it never made sense to me what union was to non-union. They were a sub-local at the time of UFCW, I can't remember their number, and their union wasn't very strong or I didn't see it even though I worked for the first four years in the front office. So I didn't really see anybody. But for the following four years I was involved in, I worked out in the warehouse with the guys that were unionized. The only time it ever was brought to my attention that they were unionized is when I would go out and help if we were working a late shift, and I'd go out and help pick orders. Then the union guys would say, you know, you realize that's union work. Well I didn't understand because I wasn't union and it really didn't mean anything to me. I will tell you being office staff and not being management there, when I first started there there was one manager there who was a great guy but him and eight other managers basically walked out the door one day and all new management was brought. The new manager had a real problem with me for some reasons. It makes me laugh when I think back to it because he was a shorter man and had a bit of a problem with taller women. I wasn't the only one that had the same problem with him; he definitely had a problem with taller women, and he really treated me very badly. After I'd been there for four years he told me he was moving me to a new position. But it was a lateral move, he kept telling me. I was like, oh okay. So I had worked at the front desk as the receptionist, I had worked as an accounting clerk, I had worked as a buyer's assistant. Well, all of a sudden, I was becoming a shipping clerk. That's fine, I enjoy learning new things; however, I was now going onto three different shifts. I was working days, I was working afternoons or I was working midnights; so I was not happy. That was basically the downfall. I believe if I would've been unionized at that point I would've been able to fight it. The good news is my husband works for this employer and still works in the same warehouse where we

met. I don't know how many years ago it was. Maybe about 15 years ago I was contacted by UFCW and they asked if they could interview me because they wanted to know exactly what the job was that I did back there because they wanted to unionize. I'm happy to say now their office staff are unionized as members of UFCW.

Q: What accomplishments have you been involved in with your local?

KJ: Me personally, I have brought in some things and I've sort of challenged what I used to call the old boys' club on some ways they used to do things. I always said it's hard to get people to come out to a meeting, especially we're downtown. So if people go home after work then to come back to a meeting it's always hard to get them to come back in. So, on our last couple of ratification meetings, I've advised that what we should do is have people able to come to us. Not only do we have traveling ratification votes, we also have our office open all day long. The first time we did this our office was only about two blocks away from City Hall. We had 800 people go to our office that day to sign for the ratification vote, which they had never had numbers like that. So normally what they had is they'd have one general meeting somewhere in the city where you could fit 4,000 people but you would be lucky to get a few hundred. Well, this way we're getting a lot more people because we've got people going out to our satellite offices, we've got our office open all day, and we've also rented space from City Hall, from the City to have ratification votes in City Hall. That way the people in City Hall, which is where a big bulk of our members are, can come down and vote on their breaks. It's sort of reaching out to your members, which has been a very good thing. I pushed for that big time. In 2002, well probably in 2000, I was asked by the table officers, and I was an officer at the time, but I was asked if I would sit on a job evaluation project. Not fully understanding, I thought, well I'll go and see what's involved in this. So in 2002 the meetings started where we had a job evaluation project team, and there were eight of us on this team – four union and four management. What we were doing is redoing the whole job evaluation process of how the City pays Local 38 members. So in 2002 we started by writing a new job evaluation questionnaire and profile, and then sent that out to the members. It took us two years to write and get that out to the members and then

in 2004 the project team basically broke up and then we started the job evaluation committee, which was six and six members. So we had six union, six management. I'm the only member from Local 38 that sat on both the project team and the job evaluation committee. So for nine months we were seconded into these job evaluations and we rated 1,228 jobs or positions within the City of Calgary, which equated to 2,800 members or 2,800 people. We were very successful. It was an incredible opportunity. At any point you could've walked into a committee room and you wouldn't have been able to tell who was union and who was management. It was very cohesive that way, very respectful. It was a long nine months but I'm still friends with the people I sat on those committees with, whether they were management or not. You have to, after spending all that time together. The good news is it was great news for 94 percent of our members who got raises. It cost the City \$5 million when that became live, which was the following September. But that was a huge, huge project and I'm very proud of the work our local did and I'm very proud of the work I did on that. As I said, I was the only member from the union that sat on both the project team and on the committee.

Q: Have you been involved in negotiations?

KJ: I've been involved in three different rounds of negotiations with the City of Calgary. The first one, being new, I didn't quite understand, and some stuff went on that I really didn't like. It was quite a while ago and because I was so new I was very positive. I've always been very positive about my employer because I've always enjoyed my job and I believe in a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. So it was quite comical because when we would meet as the union there was very negative connotations coming out. I kept saying to the other members of our team, they're really trying, I believe they're really trying. We had 17 meetings and on the 18th meeting we were in a hotel in northeast Calgary and they gave us this package back and finally the lights went on for me. I realized that they were just being jerks. I took the package when we went back to our room and I sent it flying across the room and I said, this is crap, they're just being jerks. I just remember our president and our business agent were just dying laughing because they were wondering when I was going to realize what was going on, because they

were just manipulating. But of course they had been there before to see it. The second round the City needed a contract; they needed it badly. They needed us to sign because they were changing their human resource processes. So they needed us to sign before the end of the year which was also the end of our contract. So it was a totally different framing and I'm proud to say that was the first time in 31 years we had signed ahead of our contract actually expiring. They were elated with that. We just finished, geez I don't even know when we signed our last contract, it wasn't that long ago. Unfortunately, the same gentleman that was with us the first time I sat was not the chief negotiator, and my understanding is he's not the chief negotiator with us anymore. So it doesn't go well when he's in the room. But there's an opportunity of the experience even being in negotiations is something people just, until you sit there, you don't understand. The one thing I would say to people if I can't say anything else is it's important to educate people. You don't have to give them all the details, but they need to understand. In my position as a trainer I get all the new staff that come into our work area and a lot of young workers, a lot of kids that are just out of college. They take for granted all the benefits that the union has got there for them, that the contract has got there for them. That document we have is years in the making. It didn't just start today. My biggest thing is I think unions fall down educating people. I'm very fortunate that in my position I get the staff when they're new and I have lots of opportunity to educate them on where we've come from and where we're going, because I think that's very crucially important.

Q: Is there anything negative?

KJ: I would say with my local, I mean every union has issues that have happened. I would say the most negative thing that has ever, it hasn't happened to me, but it happened to our local and it happened to CUPE Alberta. A few years ago we were at a national convention in Winnipeg. The one thing about unionism is there are some unwritten rules, things that we've always done, unwritten practices, it's just what we do, that sort of thing. The problem that happened was national always has a regional representative from each region, so each province will have someone sitting on our

national executive board. It's not written anywhere that it should be the president of the region; it's understood. It's an unwritten rule; it's what we do. When we were in Winnipeg at that time CUPE National was going through quite a debate about having women in leadership positions. The previous national leadership was a woman president and a woman secretary-treasurer, and when the new president and secretary-treasurer came in, they were both men. So the women's committee was at arms saying, this is wrong; we are two-thirds women and we need to have more women representation. Was there many women at the front at the national executive level? No, there wasn't. I'm a firm believer you put the best person in the position; I don't care whether it's a man, woman, where they're from, any of that. It's the best person; it's the person that's going to do what you need them to do. However, the women's committee had approached many locals and had them put through a resolution to have five women seats, basically five appointed women, and Alberta took great offence to that. CUPE Alberta was like, ya that's not gonna work for us; we want the best person there. So that as a constitutional resolution was shot down. However, when it came to electing who our representative on the national executive board is, as I said, it's an unwritten rule, one of the sisters from Alberta stood up and put her name forward. So, against our president, who again the unwritten rule is the president of CUPE Alberta will be our representative on the national executive board. The problem with this unwritten rule, when you do something like that, is the whole country votes on who is representing you. So because of the previous resolution being shot down, the country decided we were gonna be represented by this sister instead of by the brother, who was our choice. But the rest of the country decided, because of course Alberta is quite small in unionism compared to the rest of the provinces with CUPE. It was quite overwhelming. It was overwhelming on so many levels I can't explain it all. The reason it was so hard on me is I work very closely with D'Arcy and it was D'Arcy that wasn't elected. I've always worked closely with D'Arcy; I think he's a phenomenal person and he's the best person to be in that position. On a personal level, I don't think anyone should ever be treated like that – it was like the rug being pulled out from under him. As far as Alberta, it just made us look silly. So what we did after this had happened, it happened in the morning and we actually called an Alberta caucus that afternoon. We did not go to the

convention floor that afternoon and Alberta had a caucus meeting and discussed what happened, because it just wasn't going to be acceptable. We came up to a solution where when we came back to Alberta we went back to verify the information that had happened at our convention. When the person is elected as the president, we also make a motion that they will represent us on the national executive board. We were able to convince the sister to resign her position and D'Arcy was placed back in. But it left a very bad taste in a lot of people's mouths. For us as a local it was a very big struggle cuz that was our brother that got treated that way.

Q: What about the future?

KJ: Our local, I have to say we're a strong local. We do well; we work well together. Like I said, every local has their little idiosyncrasies but we're pretty good, we're pretty open, we're able to say, you know I don't agree, but at the end of the day we walk together. Whether we agree or not, I quote Peter Marsden here, it's a hill you wanna die on. So whatever the argument is, if you really wanna argue about it, is it that important that you argue about it? We will be going into our opening for negotiations again at the end of this year. So it's going to be a challenge on the bigger picture. It's going to be a challenge with the elections coming up; we have civic elections coming up that we're getting geared for. We know out of Calgary we've got one of the aldermen that's running, and he's Mr. Privatization. So we're actually a little nervous about what's going on with that. And again with the provincial government, with the cutbacks they're doing, it affects us all. We're all in the movement together and whether it's UNA or whoever, it's going to affect all of us. So a little nervous but as long as we stick together we'll be great.

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