Interview with: Norleen Lillico

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Interviewer: Niamh Moore

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Summary: Norleen talks about her involvement with activism at the Walbran, leading up to Clayoquot, and discusses differences between the two actions as well as experience with other blockades and with getting arrested and being in jail, and then on house arrest with electronic monitoring (Clayoquot Arm). Norleen stresses the importance of patience in activism, the role of the media, and the lasting impact of direct actions. She talks about the planning of the peace camp at Clayoquot and the decision to close the camp, camp life, the importance of consensus and accessibility, as well as self-care and activist burn-out.

[BEGINNING OF RECORDING]

NIAMH: [Inaudible].

NORLEEN: Right.

NIAMH: So it's--, so it's on now. So maybe you can tell me, yeah, how you heard about the campaign and how you got involved? If you can remember.

NORLEEN: Yes [laughs], actually, yeah, I was involved--, I was living in Saanich, which is just north of Victoria, and I was involved with the campaign to Save the Walbran Valley there which is another ancient rainforest pocket that's left. While I was there I learnt how to climb trees a different way, instead of just climbing as a kid we had a technique to climbing it, taken mostly from mountaineering techniques. And there is a weekend workshop in Clayoquot Sound that one of the climbers was invited to come and do a demonstration at and he asked me to come because he wanted women to feel inspired to be involved too. And it's hard if you're a women, 'cause I found that was my experience in the Walbran as well that being a woman it was hard to jump into this all male show especially a macho kind of thing as tree climbing. Like there it was the real macho thing. And there's a bit of my stubbornness that kind of I got my toe in and just kept trying. So--, and he was really quite supportive and he said, you know, that, "Perhaps there would be more chance that women would try it if you're there because it's just easier I find to learn from a woman. It's going to be less intimidating." So I agreed to come along not really knowing. I'd been to Tofino once and loved it but never beyond the beaches. So we went to this amazing island and had this weekend workshop and all of the people that I met there I assumed lived here--,

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: Which, as it turned out, wasn't true.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: But I just met this incredible group of people that was called the wilderness gathering--,

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: In 1991 and it was so phenomenally inspiring and the circles that happened there were so respectful and people were allowed to finish what they were saying before someone else spoke. And in the Walbran it was no direction really. So it was kind of--, it would just get to who had the loudest most aggressive voice which was male always. It actually progressively got worse in the summer as the police were more effective in picking off the key people that were keeping the camp together and some of them were men and some of them were women, but in the Walbran I just saw how if you have the strongest voice and you're dominant enough then you win out in the circle. And then I came to this gathering and people are respecting each other and are doing by consensus and I was--, it was so lovely and I just assumed everyone lived here. But I went back and let my place go and moved up.

NIAMH: [Inaudible].

NORLEEN: And then started learning about the campaign here. And, as I learned, I remembered in 1988 where I was and seeing on the news about a guy sitting in a tree in Clayoquot Sound but it wasn't until I came here that I re-remembered that--,

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: That being in the safe of your environment of your home sitting in the chair, you know, watching TV and going, "Oh my gosh! This person is putting their life on the line here." I grew up in Alberta and there are no forests like this in Alberta. The climate just doesn't work for it and the logging has taken over what was there mostly except a bit in the north. So I think it was falling in love with the set up that was here because the Friends had been active since 1974 and this was 1991 so there were--, there were elders that supported what was going on and to me it was just so rich compared to at the Walbran it was whoever showed up that week, you know, you

didn't know them and they didn't--, there was no talk of consensus or anything. It was just refreshing to come to some kind of process where it welcomed all views and it felt safe, which was nice. Right after that was the Bulson blockade and that's where I met Valerie Langer she was at the blockade camp. And even the camp there there were about--, for most of the time there were half the people as at the Walbran but it was just so differently run. There was just so much depth of experience here and much more compassion with each other and just--, and I guess with the ease of knowing what's going on and what's going to happen and the security of having things set up properly, like radio contact and things. And from there I just jumped right in. I had been involved beforehand and this was just so much better and so much more my suit that [inaudible] and did some more tree climbing first which was really nice, that's where I met most of the people that ended up on the blockade. And then we went to the blockade and didn't use tree climbing skills, this was before there were formalised trainings here about nonviolence and what it was, but certainly the discussion was there and the ideal was there. And they had a nonviolence around [inaudible] that it was not okay to do when you're sitting there with a group of people that you don't really know and tomorrow the police [inaudible] morning. Just so much safety that these people had the foresight to say, "Okay, what is going to happen through [inaudible], let's talk it through," [inaudible] were going to come in. It was scary [inaudible] working to it and consequently got arrested or hauled out of there. But I wasn't--, I still wanted to see what was going on and I'm not usually one to jump right in. Certainly support what I believe in but I still have to know all the ins and outs, and I'm glad I didn't 'cause I really wasn't ready to make a full commitment. You know, it would have been--,

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: Which is [inaudible] but--,

NIAMH: Too far.

NORLEEN: I wasn't ready to. Yeah, I went to the court cases with the people, six months of, erm--, I forget what it's called but it's when if you don't break the law within those six months [both talking at once].

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: So then I became involved in the Friends as far as the weekly [inaudible] to see what was going on to really understand.

NIAMH: [Inaudible] stuff or weekly stuff here, like, because that's different to the blockades and…

NORLEEN: It is and then it was much different to now. [Inaudible] basement apartment, basement suite apartment kind of phone calls and [inaudible]. Then we really got involved in some long term planning and that was all new to me as well. My activism had been on Take Back the Night walks [inaudible]. We started just even looking at them then and trying to see where the company was and trying to get a dialogue going with the company as to what they were doing, what was allowed to be done and even then they wouldn't talk to us [laughs], but also as a part of that wilderness gathering what came up was the formation of something called VTRAC which was the Temperate rainforest [inaudible]. They were trying to say that the Walbran was earth first terrorists and trying to get the Friends to say, "We're not like that at all," you know, like trying to cause conflict between the groups. And in a way they were getting [inaudible]. So the whole job of learning how to--, acknowledging that the media [inaudible] how they manipulate and twist around what gets done. And so [inaudible] powerful in that we had an alliance and we agreed that we would phone each other first and we exchanged phone numbers and there were active people in Courtenay and around [inaudible] of those groups. So we had nonviolence. We would, you know, [inaudible] is going on and what can we do to get it looked at as in Clayoquot Sound is important. [Inaudible]. And working with some activists that have been [inaudible] really interesting and learning from them and [do] mostly nonviolence training courses. So through there we linked up every so often. Like three or four times I think. And had [inaudible] and strategy session which [inaudible] support [inaudible] they do to stop it. So trying to realise that the daily [inaudible].

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: And making the goal being to stop the trucks that day you have to go way out on a limb, [inaudible] they get you out and--,

NIAMH: [Both speaking at once].

NORLEEN: You know, half an hour later they're going to work and you're standing there and you're a failure [inaudible] inside. So [inaudible]. And it helped to know that people had been working since 1974 even worse 'cause they come back out full [inaudible], but the realisation is that we're creating [inaudible] things happening. So learning patience along the way. And I mean I think in this movement it's hard because it's like it had to happen ten years ago and to live with that knowledge and to accept that it probably won't happen this year, you know, it's you're already compromised so much and yet to be called such an extreme radicalist because you won't

compromise. So trying to accept that steps are slow sometimes and yet not get complacent either. So that's where--, actually two really powerful years of working with that. Erm, one year because it was the following summer we had a much bigger blockade and this was in Clayoquot Arm which is in the Kennedy Lake area. Erm, and it was--, it's interesting how many blockades really come out of legal issues. The Sulphur Passage blockade was because a road was being built illegally. Like the company was illegal in building the road and so the blockade came because people were just like, "How outrageous!" you know. And all that eventually happened was the road was stopped, which was beautiful, but the--, the first step was the minister of forest in Port Alberni just backdated the road permit. So it's like they got a solution the road's legal it's all right, go home, but of course no one went home. So the road did get stopped. That one was a success, but the one in Clayoquot Arm there had been what the company called an insect infestation and a bit of a blow down, but the way that they planned it was to build this road through all this old growth, all this ancient forest to get to this blow down which was going to become an insect infestation. And it was just so ludicrous. It was so obvious first of all that the blow down occurred because of poor logging in a valley that was too steep and then that they designed this road so that they'd go through all this--, when they road build they get the logs without the stumpage fees, it's a bit of tax switch around on them.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: So--, 'cause road building is they're making public recreational roads they get tax breaks. So of course they go through the best groves and it was just yet again when their people are saying, "Look, you know, we are trying to be part of the process but you can't walk over us every single time." So this blockade occurred and it was interesting because the Vancouver Sun had a complete news blackout on it.

NIAMH: Wow!

NORLEEN: And there were 65 people arrested and they never reported it.

NIAMH: Wow!

NORLEEN: So in a way it was very frustrating but in another way it was like we must be successful here because for a major newspaper to be that blatantly blocking us out--, and even the news, like the BC news didn't carry it as much as CBC news did although most nights when CBC would take it, you know, then the local news would put it in at 11 o'clock [laughs].

NIAMH: Right, yeah.

NORLEEN: But--, so that was a blockade that I was arrested at.

NIAMH: Right, so that was the first time--, was that the first time you were arrested or…

NORLEEN: Uh-huh.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And for that one there was jail sentences. And I was in the first group so I was actually the only woman that went to jail and when the crown council put out his idea--, it was really too bad. We went for a plea bargain and I wish that we would have had a bit more experience at the courts because we didn't really have any advice and none of us were all that experienced, you know, in trying to figure it out. It would have been nice to have more legal support there. The lawyers certainly tried but it didn't seem like they worked as a team. They were individuals 'cause no one pointed out to me that I was going to be the only woman going to jail and that I think should have been pointed out right away--,

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: Because there were some people that had been arrested this was their second or third time and the crown council said, "Well dismiss their charges because they'll get jail if these many people plead criminal--, plead guilty for criminal contempt and all the rest of you plead guilty for civil contempt and I won't ask for jail," which in his plea he actually didn't, in his plea for sentencing, but all through the trial he'd been throwing out all these jail experiences, like, from Sulphur Pass and from Strathcona Park. So he'd certainly been talking to the judge about jail but during his plea for sentencing he did stay true to his promise he didn't ask for jail, but he'd already created such a case for it that it was really quite a shock though. Still, I mean, even though I'd taken training that says, you know, you're breaking the law you take the consequences of your action I was quite proud to take the consequences of my act until, like, sitting in this jail cell going, "Wait a minute--,

NIAMH: Yeah, nobody told me about this.

NORLEEN: "That wasn't fair." Yeah [laughs]. Well the whole plea bargaining thing was really unfair in that I think that we didn't have enough experience or enough counsel to

realise that they were just trying to split us. And what we were thinking was it doesn't matter what they call us we know what we are and what we've done, but in hindsight they did cleave us in a group and make some of us look like we were organisers. I'd been there every day and because I'd been involved for over a year I knew a lot of the facts and I'd been to the forest and I'd seen what was going on and I wasn't going to be shut up. I wasn't rude but I certainly was in the face of the news camera saying what I thought was going on 'cause that was the purpose of being there.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: So--, but I think because I was there and because I was vocal it was like, "She's an organiser we'll pluck [them out]." And that's one of the tactics that's been used quite a few times is the sort of divide and conquer and just highlight some people to be picked on. So it was interesting though, my--, I went--, I guess the court must have been December 5th because I was in jail over the weekend of--, I don't know if you've heard of this but there was a massacre in Montreal.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: Yeah. Well--, and there's a candlelight vigil and Tofino has one and every place I know of in Canada practically has a commemorative night and on this night there was a gathering at the parliament buildings in downtown Victoria and they did a candlelight vigil there and then walked to the jailhouse and sang at the jailhouse--,

NIAMH: Wow!

NORLEEN: Which was, like, so amazing for me to learn about just--, and people that were at the vigil would come up to me later and say, "It was so moving to go to the jail." And it was just so amazing for me to realise that even though I was--, they thought I was being stuck and their thumb was well in my head and I was sweating it out it was all these women getting power and bonding together just by coming and singing. So that was really lovely to hear. It was an interesting experience though in that they're not to be joked with or played with at all. And, like, it just surprised me because I sort of have it on a moral ground that I'm a good person, you know, criminals go to jail 'cause they're bad people or they've done bad things, you know, I'm not doing this for my own personal gain, not monetarily anyway, but according to the courts we're, like, the scariest people around because we use our own heads and our own value system. So that was a real naivety shaker. Just coming to grips that, no, justice doesn't mean justice it means just them and it doesn't matter that you're a good person because they don't have that law, they don't go by those rules.

NIAMH: How long were you in jail for?

NORLEEN: Well it was a 21 day sentence. I did only five days in jail and then came to my home on electronic monitoring, which was a really twisted thing because just people dismiss you, "Oh, you're at home, no problem," but it really makes your home be your jail. And I mean this is the wintertime and where I was living there we had wood heat and the wood pile was too far away for me to get to.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: So I'd have to phone the [inaudible] correctional centre, there's a long distance call, to ask permission to go get wood from my store and they'd say, you know, "Well the person is not in right now they'll get back to you tomorrow," or something. It's like…

NIAMH: Freezing.

NORLEEN: Yeah [laughs], so the fire is going to go out I've just got to get some wood. And if you do set off your alarm, like, if they want to they can call that breaking from jail and that's a huge crime. And it's so ludicrous because it was just, like, all I'm doing is going down to get wood, you know, I'll--, it will re-register as soon as I come in the house. But just the stubborn lack of flexibility in their rules. I mean I did like it better than being in jail but in another way it's disempowering because as far as the outside world is concerned, "Oh, you've got it cushy 'cause you're at home." So the power of the statement of being in jail is lost yet you're still a prisoner. I mean I hated my room when I started my jail term I didn't want to go in my room, it's like being a little kid and being sent to your room, you know, "No I won't [laughs]." Yeah. So…

NIAMH: I just pulled something out.

NORLEEN: Well Margaret is just coming through asking for me. Shall we stop for one [inaudible]? [Inaudible].

NIAMH: You were talking about the jail--, jail and electronic monitoring. Yeah, I was just wondering did you talk to other women in jail 'cause you were--, because you said the thing was you were in jail on your own and you're not with any other women who'd been arrested at the same time? So did you have more contact then with other women who were in your jail?

NORLEEN: Well I did and I didn't. I was kept in Victoria city cells for four of the days.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And there it's just mostly what comes in is--, they don't even feed--, this is so sad, but it's mostly drunks and they don't provide meals. Like I was given takeaway food from some fast food chain, some burger french fries place and there was, like, two things on the menu burger and fries or burger and fries [laughs]. But one woman I got to talk to quite a bit--, the thing that really shocked me was it was all first nations women and they were all treated very differently than I was treated. One woman who came in she was crying saying that her son was gone and I called to the warden, I think she's called--, the other women that--, the key keeper, saying that, you know, "This woman two cells down from me is saying that her son has gone." And she was saying how she'd been in the park and her son was gone and I was really getting concerned about this. So the woman came, the key keeper came and talked to this woman and I couldn't see her I didn't know who she was so--, but I could see the reaction of this warden's face and it was so frustrating when it finally dawned on me I was like, oh, this woman is native. I bet she's native. And there was nothing in her voice that I could discern it from it was the way that this guard reacted. And it was my first face up experience with, like, raw racism right there. And because the guard was saying things like, "Well why did you get drunk?" and to me that had nothing to do with her being concerned about her child being gone. So I talked to this woman the next morning, she--, we tried to talk that night but it was really difficult the guard moved her into the padded cell and we had to yell to get heard to each other and she was having a really tough time so all I said was, "Well I'm here, know that somebody else is here," and, you know, it really bothered me intensely. So in the morning she was awake early and so I went out and was talking to her and her--, the child's father had taken the child to get pictures taken and never brought him back and she'd gone to the police station and the police station dismissed her and said, you know, "Come back in 24 hours," just, you know, the brush off. And so she'd gone to some other legal aid type of place and they'd brushed her off. So eventually she ended up in the park drinking. Well I thought gee…

NIAMH: Yeah, might have been me.

NORLEEN: [Laughs] Exactly! It was just so--, and the reason why--, the only reason why anyone in a professional or whatever position was interested in her was not that her child was missing it was that she was being a public deviant because you're not allowed to, you know, have some emotional outbursts in public. And so by the morning there was a new warden--,

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And this woman was really nice. She actually gave the woman my leftover hamburger from the night before 'cause I--, all my hamburgers went back [laughs]. And so she had some food and she also gave her the phone number of a few friendship centres and whatnot that could probably help her, but it was just such a shocking experience just to realise, like, that goes on every day I'm sure of it--, and then from there I was transferred to the [Nanaimo] correctional centre which is a man's jail, but I stayed there a day and a night in the infirmary. They put me in the infirmary because I was, like, the only woman, right, and I just like couldn't…

NIAMH: That's unbelievable, you're in the infirmary.

NORLEEN: I know, I know, it just--, it actually made me chuckle 'cause I was beyond being angry by that point.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: It was like oh, I must be sick then. I'm the only female here and I'm sick, right [laughs].

NIAMH: It's [inaudible] and they didn't know [inaudible].

NORLEEN: They didn't know what to do with me, they just didn't, so they put me in the infirmary. It's like I was so glad no one else got sick that night [laughs]. But--,

NIAMH: Wow!

NORLEEN: And there I did--, maybe we were there--, I was there for a day, a night and most of the next day and by the middle of the next day the guys that I'd been arrested with showed up.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: So I felt way better, we even went for lunch together, that was lovely 'cause the first time I went in for a meal was lunch and it was so intimidating I just walked in without even realising of course this is a full room of male inmates and of course the whole place stopped--,

NIAMH : Stopped.

NORLEEN: When I walked in. But the funny thing was I had on a t shirt--, no one had given me any other clothes to wear so I had this t shirt on that a woman who was arrested in 1988 at Sulphur pass someone had made it for her and on the front it said 'forest protector' and on the back it said 'illegal prisoner'--, no, 'political prisoner' and then had a number on it and this wolf drawing. So I'm up getting my food just so self-conscious about everything forgetting completely about my t shirt and the head guy of the jail was in having his lunch at the same time and I guess he just hit the roof but he didn't do it while I was there. And I thought huh, there you go, how do you like that? And the guard that was escorting me took me out of the cafeteria once I had my food and--, but he didn't tell me ahead of time that all I had to do was get my food and then I'd go back to my room. There's that--, one thing about jail was they do all these really weird head stuff to you. Like, all they do is show up at your--, all this guy did was show up at the room and say, "Follow me." I'm like, okay, I'm in jail I'll follow you, you're the one with the gun. So we walked down and then he opens up the door and I'm walking into this cafeteria full of guys it's like holy shit, well I guess I'm hungry [laughs]. But he didn't let me know, "Don't worry, you don't have to sit and eat here, you know, you're going back to your room." And it was just like a lot of tricks like that and I'm sure it was a thing that they knew I was the only woman, they knew I was bound to feel a little bit vulnerable about, you know, being in this place. And there again it was--, there was more of a mix of population as far as being first nations and non-natives but it was shocking. It's not--, it's a low security jail and it's lots of--, actually a lot of people that I think were there for drug related stuff or corporate crimes, so of course [inaudible credit cards]. Yeah, jail was a really scary--, I mean I knew that it would be scary but just the raw reality of it and just the blantantness of the bias and the power trips and stuff. You just don't bother to ask for a pencil to write or a pen to write because of the whole power trips that you have to go through just to get something to write with, you know, it's like forget it, I'm only here for another day I'll just wait till I'm home. But it puts my heart out for women like Betty who spent months there and they had their own house and there were more women, but still you're still under their thumb. It's a big choice to make, like giving--, it's not--, like I never felt like I gave over my power but it shocked me how much those in uniforms, like, just seemed to grow with their power, like that was their whole--, their whole armour is their power, what they see is their power over somebody else and I didn't like experiencing that whole side of it.

NIAMH: Had you known in advance would you still have made the same decision?

NORLEEN: I would have made a different decision at court but I would have still--, even if I would have ended up in jail I probably--, what I think in hindsight was I wouldn't have sung and danced on a logging road, I would have been up a tree where it would have taken a little bit more effort to get me out of there.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: But I still believe that it was a wise and learning thing for me to do to just have the courage to say, “No, I won’t stand aside, my conscience will not allow you to go to work, I need to--, I need to make a voice out of it.” So certainly I would do some of the things differently but, I mean, the act would still be there.

NIAMH: So how did you feel afterwards, I mean after the electronic monitoring I suppose?

NORLEEN: Erm, I was disappointed that more wasn’t made out of my case. Like my ego did have a little nobody noticed me, you know, and I thought it was a bit of a waste of time. And I was on the phone every day to the attorney general trying to--, and I think I got to talk to him once and then it was just, like, a really quick brush off and it was like that whole--, I sort of came out of it thinking, well, what good did that do? But then by the time the peace camp came round, like the next summer came round, and I realised how much I’d grown and the depth of my feelings for what was going on and my commitment had become so much more powerful--, that’s what really surprises me if they think that by putting you in jail you’re going to [inaudible] your commitment, if anything I was way stronger. I didn’t want to go to jail again but I was way more committed. I--, that’s what helped me decide to make the commitment for the full four months of the peace camp I mean and to really actively say, "Okay, I can help doing this and this and this and I’ll commit to doing that and that,” and seeing that hard work had to be done and accepting that that would be my role. I was still on probation so it would have been a much stiffer sentence if I would have been arrested and I just chose that I could do much more help in staying at the peace camp and doing what I did to support. So that was interesting and of all the people--, most of the Friends that were arrested they were the same, they came back more powerful, which was nice to see. I mean it’s scary being in jail but the only thing that’s scary is you might have to look at something inside you ‘cause that’s where it’s all coming from. So I got stronger. They let me take my cedar in. I wasn’t allowed sage in jail, sage was a bit too weird looking, but cedar it was [a bough] and it was recognisable as off a tree.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: So I felt pretty privileged with that and there were a few really scary times and when I’d just break the cedar open and smell it and remember that it’s okay, the forest isn’t that far away and it’s only for a certain amount of time. ‘Cause they pepper sprayed one time in the jail.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And that was a pretty scary experience. It was--, and I was the only one on the women's side that night but they had pepper sprayed the males, the men's side.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: The floor.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And it just goes through--, and all the air is circulated through the same places so it was…

NIAMH: Right. Did you know it was happening or…

NORLEEN: No. No, and then all of a sudden the guard showed up with the mask on and that scared me quite a bit too 'cause I was like, "What's going on? Tell me what's going on?"

NIAMH: Why do you have a mask on [inaudible]?

NORLEEN: She was--, yeah [laughs]. She was quite nice. She actually brought me a wet washcloth and said, you know, "If you lay down in your cot or stay low it's better and, sorry, they're spraying downstairs, there's nothing I can do," but she did scare me with her mask on.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: Yeah. Now, that was weird, but it was nice to have the cedar there. Even that in itself felt like a bit of a thing that I had over them, like all I had to do is smell the cedar and I could be back in the forest and remember that there's strength there and this is just a moment and they don't really have power over me. I've put myself in their hands and it helped me with--, I hadn't really done lots of strong visualisations before but I did in jail a lot just to get back to the forest and to get out of that place. So that was good. I think it can become a really powerful experience. It's what you make of it, right. It certainly strengthened my conviction to not--, not [let the power over--, authorities] think that their power is going to win 'cause it's not how it works. So I guess I gained more strength in my power from within which sometimes is tough work but it's worth it.

NIAMH: Yeah, I've got it.

NORLEEN: Yeah, yeah.

NIAMH: Yeah, and I bet it paid off in the summer of '93.

NORLEEN: Yes. There are certainly times I would have loved to walk away from there [laughs].

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: But it's funny how now I'm looking back, you know, how once enough time has gone by you can just see the rosiness and remember the tired nights but not really. And it's so wonderful how many ripples are just, like, floating all around the planet because of that summer and that's what I think the--, those authorities or those power over folks should be worried about.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: Not that all those people stood in a logging road. I mean that in itself was amazing, but that those ripples are going out and they're being applied to who knows what aspects of everybody's life, that's where the power is as I see it. And that's something that they can't stop, you know, it just grows. Especially when you use it it's like exercise and you start getting better and better at it.

NIAMH: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. That's right.

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: So are you going to tell me something about the summer of '93 and what that was like--,

NORLEEN: Gosh!

NIAMH: Or the planning for '93 or…

NORLEEN: Well [pause], it was a really wonderful process to be part of the planning for it as far as saying, “Gee, this could happen this summer, you know, we could do this and this.” And I can remember being at a friend’s house and just kind of daydreaming and saying, “Well if we do have a camp, like, just think if 1,000 people showed up,” and he was like, ha, ha, ha, ha.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: This was, like, February--,

NIAMH: [Inaudible].

NORLEEN: And it’s pouring rain and, you know--, and we had thousands on just one day, you know, it--, as far as I know it blossomed huger than anyone’s expectations.

NIAMH: Yeah, that’s…

NORLEEN: We all had pretty big expectations of it too.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: Just that the whole dream of being able to live together in a camp and teach nonviolence, teach consensus as we know it and live it as we know, practice it and start opening up people’s awareness to different aspects of feminism that, you know, before they had a chance to react to the F word they might just realise that, you know, gee, this is an okay principle of life [inaudible]. And then to try and educate, you know, this comes from feminism and it’s okay, even if you’re a guy it’s okay. So that dream in itself was wonderful to see it happen and unfold and all come together and all almost fall apart and almost come together again. And, you know, I mean there’s that liquid balance in there that--, it was challenging in that there were some--, it really was a microcosm of what’s going on in the world. And when I think most often when we kind of hit a wall that’s what--, those of us that spent most of the summer there would get together and just remind ourselves, you know, this isn’t utopia, it’s a microcosm and we have to acknowledge that, you know, there were times when men would still dominate the circle the whole night and argue about drumming, wanting to drum all night. And, you know, just having people that are really concerned about a campaign to try and protect the forest spending their whole night arguing about drumming or sitting patiently respecting people who want to talk about drumming and all this. And still we’d have to come away and go, “Well this has got to be part of the steps because all voices do need to be heard.” And

trying to be patient and also learning when to draw the line and say, “Excuse me, but you’ve spoken a lot, you know, and I think that we’ve heard what you’re trying to say,” you know, trying to say it back to them so that they feel heard but also acknowledging that someone is abusing the system here and we can’t just sit back and be polite to them ‘cause that’s not what it’s about. It’s about respect for all people so--, including the listeners. And finding courage and compassionate ways to bring that out because some people just weren't aware of it and I’m sure some of the guys were just doing it because that’s just their patterns, what they’ve learned. So a lot got evolved aside from a save one single forest campaign, which was beautiful. Also that was a linking together of a lot of different women’s minds who I don’t think had ever worked all together before and that was really wonderful too. It was interesting to see when we would all sit down those people that were there for the long haul or just doing a lot of extra volunteering and taking on teaching nonviolence and that, we sort of became a group. And we would sit down and try and figure out, you know, what--, what was working, what wasn’t working and they were a majority of women and it was amazing what got done. And certainly not all women, there were some really supportive guys there too that helped do the balance because we do need a balance. So just the process of supporting each other and trying to not own it ‘cause we didn’t really own the camp, it wasn’t our place to come and play and we got to choose who got to come and play with us and yet feeling committed to knowing the direction and the overall goal and also knowing that, you know, we wanted it to happen and it was part of a forest campaign. So it was like trying to find that balance of letting the camp make the decisions and also knowing what direction we’re going in so we didn’t have all night drumming every night [both laugh]. That was a big issue.

NIAMH: Yeah, [inaudible] mentioned it.

NORLEEN: Especially when you’re getting up at four o’clock in the morning. And there were people there--, there were senior citizens there, I mean all the time there were all ranges, young kids, you know, it’s not a party [laughs]. And it was a challenge to learn how to motivate people who had sort of come--, it was actually at first very disappointing to realise how many people, especially young people, had just, like, come and got themselves there and then expected that it was all going to be handed to them, you know, like their whole groovy experience. And it was like, “We’re not camp councillors here,” you know, “This isn’t Hollyhock” which is like a place where you can go and have courses on how to become enlightened. And it was like, you know, “We’re trying to do work and we’re trying to educate and we’re trying to share what we know and learn what other people know,” but it’s not a rainbow gathering either. And so trying to be compassionate and welcome all because everybody is at their own stage of learning but also keep focused on a campaign. It was a fun balance [laughs].

NIAMH: Very strange.

NORLEEN: Especially when you're all living together. It was my first really big, big communal living experience.

NIAMH: Probably most people's [both laugh].

NORLEEN: So big, big.

NIAMH: Big, big yeah.

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: One--, one of my favourite memories of that time was I had a crash--, we all kind of crashed every once in a while and it was very silly, but it was--, it was a dumb man thing again. Just in that I had gone to a group of peacekeepers and people that had been around the camp for quite a while and I knew and trusted them and they were all guys standing talking by someone's van and I needed some support at the kitchen 'cause one of the drummer guys was just getting out of control and he wouldn't listen to me. And he'd just drum louder and I just wasn't feeling heard. So I thought okay, I'll get some peacekeepers and get support. And I'd went and told them what was going on and said, you know, "I'd really like your help," and just out of the blue one of them commented on the other one, like, just something about, I don't know, it was so weird, the size of his feet or the size of his toes or, like, they just made--, it was just silly and it was--, it was this personal conversation but I just didn't get it. And I was so frustrated 'cause I was already overtired and overstressed and all I wanted was really some guys to come because I knew this other guy in the kitchen wouldn't listen to me or any other woman I could find and they're too busy doing their whatever it was. And I--, it was some minor thing but it just put me right over the edge and I said, "Well I'm leaving, you guys deal with it," and I just walked away. And at the camp we had a women's space where there was a tent and only women went and you could go there when you were bleeding or any time you wanted to. So of course I'm going to the women's space and Tzeporah, bless her sweet soul, was in the van getting something and heard what went on but was doing something and knew without even seeing me what had happened and she comes running down the path after me. So I'm at the women's space sobbing of course saying how I'm just over it, you know, I don't want to do this anymore it's not fun, I don't like it, I want to go home now please and who comes skipping, literally skipping, along the path but Síle Simpson. And have you met her?

NIAMH: Yeah, yeah.

NORLEEN: Yeah, yeah, with her little radio monitor on 'cause she's been arrested and she's on radio collar, "La, la, la, la, la," and I burst into tears again [laughs] thinking that woman is freer than I am. And she scooped me away from camp took me to her house and showed me her Greenham Common video.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And I was like, "Oh, yeah!" and fed me chocolate and tea all afternoon [laughs] and so I--, I just had this beautiful vision of a women's camp and it's still a bit of a vision for this place. It's what--, I mean if ever moved on to other big group camps it would be a women's camp here--,

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And I almost did it two years ago and it never all came together and it was good that it didn't all come together 'cause all of us that were in to doing it were all on the verge of burnout anyway so--,

NIAMH : Right, that's really interesting.

NORLEEN: But…

NIAMH: 'Cause I've been asked--, well because of this connection with Greenham Common, you know, that people said that was very much in their minds when--,

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: In setting up the peace camp and obviously the big difference is Greenham Common was women only. And so I have asked a few people like, you know, what difference they thought that it made that it was a mixed camp but kind of with feminist or eco feminist kind of overtones and would it have worked if it was a women only camp and what would that have meant?

NORLEEN: It would have been different with a women's camp because a lot of men changed so phenomenally and I gained a lot of respect for men who will proudly say, "Yes, I

believe in eco feminist, I will live by these principles." And they're men, they're not--, you know, that made me feel good because a huge part of me knows that until we get the guys to figure it out we're still us women working together and not being heard, you know. I see tonnes of power, I would love to see a women's camp though above and--, maybe not beyond--, well separate and different from what the peace camp was because I think the peace camp really--, our goals were to reach out and make it be accessible to all people. And it was in that I mean businessmen came, physicians came, you know, the whole [inaudible] came. And people just stopped on the highway and felt welcomed. Families would come and set up tents in camp and in that way that was a…

[TAPE CHANGE 0:40:45]

NORLEEN: It would be different from the peace camp experience. I would love to see it now that I've been involved with the peace camp because a lot of the issues that were hard to deal with were male dominance power over issues, but certainly from seeing the Greenham Common video I mean it wasn't all sugar and spice either. You know, there's still strong beliefs and there always will be and a part of what I think we all need to learn is how to honour the strong and honour those that doesn't speak up as loudly and make all feel welcome and how to get through conflict because conflict arises. It just does. It would have been nice at the beginning if we would have known how huge it was going to be and how important sticking to the feminist principles and being unified on those principles. If we had known that at the beginning and as a group really reinforced it and made sure that we had male allies, because a big part of the camp in dealing with the males that were there were having male allies at the camp to help us out because still the biggest thing was being heard and being respected. You know, like when you tell someone that their behaviour is upsetting to someone else and they laugh at you or don't even acknowledge you well then your voice is not being respected either. And unfortunately we did need to go to the guys and sometimes it was nice to be able to say, "Look, this is an issue that I don't feel I have to deal with. I've named it and I've seen it but it's not my responsibility to fix it." And it felt so powerful to come to a place where it's, like, just because you see something and can name and can call it and have the courage to publicly call it doesn't mean you're responsible to fix it. And yet if you do you're usually held responsible to fix it. You know, and it was nice to be able to say, "Wait a minute, this--, I don't have to do this, you know, I don't feel heard by you and this guy right here agrees with me and these principles, you talk to him [laughs]." And sometimes it felt awful having to go get a guy just 'cause he was a guy to be heard but other times it was like, "Well, if you're not going to listen to me, you know, here are men that are living it and they're proud of it." But I would have--, I am still loving to think of the idea of being in a camp where it's all women and we can start with a basis of understanding that, yes, we do all agree with these principles whereas some of our discussions at the circle would be people wanting to change our nonviolence code and it was like, "I'm sorry, but when you walk into the

camp you agreed to the nonviolence code. It's not up for consensus." Then there'd be the big argument, "Oh, your power over--, you know this is a consensus camp. We don't like this rule." It's, like, "It's not a rule it's an agreement, it's an understanding, if you want to live here you agree to it." And it was things like I felt that they were quite basic and straightforward about respect and about nonviolence. And it was like, "Well I want to drum all night," and it's, like, "Well, people find that not acceptable." So I think that for me would be the next step.

NIAMH: Are there people still thinking about that?

NORLEEN: Yeah, it still gets talked around [laughs].

NIAMH: So who else is interested in that idea or…

NORLEEN: Gosh! I'm sure Betty is [both laugh].

NIAMH: Yeah, I'm just wondering, she hasn't mentioned--, I would have thought she was, like, a prime candidate. She's [inaudible] and I'm thinking she never told me this exciting plan. I want to know exactly.

NORLEEN: Right. There's a woman named Amy Simpson who lives in Vancouver who I could get to meet and interview.

NIAMH: Yeah, people keep mentioning her name and I don't have a telephone number for her. Do you have one or…

NORLEEN: I don't--,

NIAMH: Somebody…

NORLEEN: But Jan Bate does.

NIAMH: I'm seeing Jan soon.

NORLEEN: Good, yeah. Make a note to ask Jan because--,

NIAMH: Yeah, I'm just going to.

NORLEEN: Amy would--, Amy was--, we daydreamed with her a lot.

NIAMH: Right. Yeah, I'm just going to write it down 'cause--, about Amy 'cause, yeah, I really want to talk to her but I didn't have a number.

NORLEEN: And there's a woman in Victoria now that I'm thinking of it named Sushil.

NIAMH: Yeah, I'm going to see her.

NORLEEN: Good. She's interested in…

NIAMH: Hopefully. I've got her number anyway.

NORLEEN: Good. Okay, you've got her name and number. She was also really--,

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: Had fun daydreams with her about the camp.

NIAMH: Right. Yeah, sorry [inaudible].

NORLEEN: No, that's fine. I'd love you to meet with Amy. You see Amy was another of the women that was there the whole time and so we formed a really nice close bond because it was, like [laughs], get together and shake our heads and be blown away and other times just be so amazed by what's happened too. There are beautiful, beautiful times as well. So I think part of the best--, I learned peacekeeper training and then learned to share what I knew as far as peacekeeper training. So I would help co-conduct courses or workshops on peacekeeper training and that was sort of nonviolence was the first overall and then peacekeeper was utilising those principles. And I used to love the circle where people would, you know, share some of their experiences and what they'd done or what they wished they would have done or just--, it was such an amazing camp to meet people who had done so many different things and all--, as far as I could see it's all on the same movement. You know, it's all the social awareness, social change, respect of all beings. So that was lovely about the camp and so many people came through that had so much more experience than

we did and they just--, really I think they didn't realise it [both laugh]. It all worked pretty much. If I can think of any more wonderful--, actually one of the things that I really liked about the camp was at one point in the summer there were quite a few youth, like even, you know, like, six and seven and eight year olds who got a bit of a group together. A bit of a group together, that's not a good way to put it. It actually came out at one circle that this one boy [finally got a guy 0:06:08]--, got to talk and he said, you know, "As kids we're feeling like, you know, we're concerned too and we're learning what's going on and we're not being heard by you people," and we're all like [intake of breath]. We're so shocked.

NIAMH: Yeah, I know, like...

NORLEEN: You know, we're trying to be these socially perfect people, you know, politically correct and everything and we're not listening to the kids.

NIAMH: Kids arrive and you just [inaudible].

NORLEEN: And--, yeah. And so they offered to facilitate the next night's circle and it was so amazing.

NIAMH: Wow! Nobody has told me this.

NORLEEN: It was so incredible. And they, you know, got the circle together and they got the talking happening and they passed the--, they each had a turn first to talk and [in that hole] for quite a few weeks there was just a nice mix of them that there were enough that they felt they could help each other out. And from then on in the summer it felt like that's a part of where the youth day came from as well. There were some youth in Tofino who--, I mean their parents had been active for years and they wanted to do something and they weren't sure what. So it formed into a youth day where it was youth explaining or youth taking a stand and—

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And it was really interesting that the police just couldn't handle it. I think the youth day put them over the edge more than anything else. They got so mean. They were threatening to arrest all the kids and call social services and send them to Vancouver or Nanaimo or somewhere and, you know, they'd be in cells and they'd be put in homes and it was so bad. And once they'd all been arrested no one really--, you know, you think it's a cop they're going to tell you the truth so you don't really know if they're really saying that or what's going on. And yet those kids were so strong. I

didn't go to the blockades because, as I said, I was on probation so I'd be the vulture the next--, like when everybody got back I'd be the talking circle leader and say, "Can you tell me what happened? How did you feel [laughs]?" But with the youth it was, like, no one came back to camp because they all went to the jail to support the kids.

NIAMH: Wow!

NORLEEN: Yeah. And it did eventually all work out and it was yet again the cops being the evil power over men, but they did--, it was shocking to realise that they actually had that power, that they could call the parents to be unfit parents and put the kids through the whole social services loop even if it was only for, you know, a day or two, still I'd be freaked if you're a kid. And probably very scary for a parent. It's kind of one of those times where it's scary but you really know you're being effective because they wouldn't come down that hard unless they were really getting razzled by it. But the power of the youth at the camp and they put on a play and they did all kinds of fun stuff too.

NIAMH: Yeah. I've had difficulty actually trying to catch some of the younger people who were involved in the camp. Do you know any people around Tofino?

NORLEEN: Well she's not in Tofino I wonder how you would find her.

NIAMH: Or…

NORLEEN: Amy [surname] was one of the youth from…

NIAMH: Right, I think somebody has mentioned that name but…

NORLEEN: Yeah, she was from Tofino and I only know that she's going to school in Vancouver so I really don't know.

NIAMH: Right, maybe I'll write the name down again--,

NORLEEN: Well…

NIAMH: 'Cause [inaudible].

NORLEEN: Yeah, write down Amy [surname] and then write down Joanie [surname]. Joanie [surname] is a mum and her daughter's name is Angela.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And Angela was very, very active in the--, probably in Clayoquot kids I think for a while. And Joanie lives on Chesterman's beach and she has herself been active in the Clayoquot campaign for years.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And her daughter is this budding activist so they know where Amy is for sure.

NIAMH: Right, okay.

NORLEEN: So yeah, they'd be interesting to talk to if you have time.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: And Joanie has put in a lot of her time in trying to sit at tables and do the government negotiation thing so she has a whole different perspective than I do because I don't trust myself in there.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: I don't have respect for them--,

NIAMH: You have to be strong.

NORLEEN: And I know I don't. Yeah [laughs]. So I just keep myself out of those kind of meetings.

NIAMH: Well that's good.

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: That's good to know that.

NORLEEN: The only way I've been to them is we did a few red tape actions where we wore red tape over our mouth. And actually the first one I went to was a horrible experience for me because just the whole symbolism of having something on my mouth bothered me so much I actually got to one point where I took it off 'cause I thought that I couldn't breathe and I could breathe fine. It was just so strangling to know that I'm standing here in your face with--, holding this poster of a clear-cut and you're still talking about clear-cutting, you know, and I know I'm silenced but the symbolism of having the tape on was really harsh. And I think it was a really powerful image for them though just to be surrounded by all these people who are silent, you know. And they tried to pretend we weren't there but I think it got on some of the--, just the realisation that there's a strong voice out there that doesn't agree and we may not be able to talk in this room but we can make our presence be felt. But I don't--, I'd rather not even do those actions anymore, let somebody who's a bit fresher and more ready for it [laughs].

NIAMH: Yeah, well that's important to know that. That's one of the most important things to know--,

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: When you're not up to doing something.

NORLEEN: That's it and that you don't have to do everything. I think in this line of work--, like I was telling you about the urgency it's the same with the need to get something done. You know, the phone will ring here and it's hard not to pick it up and deal with it right away and yet the way I see things working is that we need to take care of ourselves first and if every single person honestly took care of themselves I don't think they would--, we wouldn't be in this state. You know, if they really looked inside and took care of it I think we'd all be much gentler and there wouldn't be an environmental movement because everybody would be concerned about, you know, the way things are. So it's been a hard process from 1991 where I just jumped right in and '93 I was still, like, right into it, to realising, no, I want to be a whole being and to be true to myself I need to take time. And now I'm sitting here into my ninth month pregnant and it's been good that I've learned those lessons because I need to do that now. And I'm glad that I didn't just need to have a child in my womb before I could say, "Whoa, I need to take it slowly." You know, over the past few years--, well at the end of the peace camp I realised that it was time to start balancing a bit more with me and less with my compulsion to do it all because it is an urgent and absolutely necessary thing but if you're compromising your lifestyle and your own personal health then you're not really saving the planet. You may feel like in the

moment you are but I don't think you are. It's harder to be that patient though because it is scary. You know, there is a hole in the ozone, there is--, there's not enough trees left to keep--, you know, and there's all these things that are happening--,

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: That--, that's because this office deals with the crises. You know, we have a list of good news that I go to every once in a while--,

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: 'Cause it's like things are coming ahead, things are getting achieved and try to remind myself of those ripples coming out of the peace camp still. Another woman that really her presence at the peace camp was instrumental to my being there and my experience was Jean McLaren. Have you…

NIAMH: I've spoken to her.

NORLEEN: Yeah, yeah. She's a raging grannie all right.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: I told my mum I wanted to be like--, I wanted to be a raging grannie if I grow up [both laugh].

NIAMH: And what does your mum think?

NORLEEN: She laughed actually. She wants to find out more about these raging grannies herself. Maybe she'll be one someday too.

NIAMH: Wow! Yeah. She could have the t shirt [both laugh].

NORLEEN: A wannabe raging grannie. Just wait till my grey hair comes in. Yeah, she's a woman who inspired me as far as her length of years of commitment to social change and how maybe the issues have changed from nuclear to, you know--,

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: Women's movement and that, but it's still all connected to one movement. And it is the feminist principles that link them all together as far as I can see and some people kind of bristle that it's called feminist principles and it's, like, but it came out of the feminist movement and that's its basis so why not honour the basis? Because in the camp one of the discussions was well let's just change the name, if the name is what's upsetting people let's call it something else and it's like, but I want to honour the feminist movement because that's where it came from. You know, it's not that we just slapped it on because we like it, it comes from a history and it was developed and work was put into those principles. So that's--, that was--, Jean's life was amazing. Actually her life story would be pretty interesting to--,

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: [Inaudible].

NIAMH: Yeah, she's written a book. She's written her life story, did you know this? It's about to be published soon.

NORLEEN: That's right. She told me a little bit about it on the phone. She's kind of one of the grandmas of this baby.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: So I talk to her on the phone some.

NIAMH: Right, right.

NORLEEN: She's my west coast grandma because everybody else lives far away.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: So we've been talking and she was saying that her book had been accepted. That's wonderful.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: Gosh!

NIAMH: She's probably fairly excited about that I should think.

NORLEEN: Well she's got a lot of good to share that's for sure. And it was nice to go to her at times when I'd be, like, over it with whatever it was because she had this--, I think she had a big--, a bit of a more distant view of what was happening and she wouldn't get so caught up in the moment and I appreciated that. And certainly she had her moments too because her and I it turned out--, like at camp I think just walking through the gate or just I don't know whether the atmosphere did it or how but many, many, many people had personal transformations there and they would suddenly come to these realisations and want to talk to someone and it was often either Jean or I who would get, you know, "I've got to talk to you." And sometimes it was, like, really horrible stuff that they'd been through in their lives and they needed to talk to someone. And I have a little bit of training in--, some counselling skills but one of the first things I learned is to put up safe boundaries around me so I wasn't such a sponge. But it was really interesting that the amount of people that just like would--, with all honesty look at their lives and look at where they'd been oppressed or acknowledge that they'd been--, you know, things had happened that they didn't feel comfortable with and find the courage to deal with it there and so--, but Jean and I were often the ones who had the time and were around and plus, I guess, maybe also a familiar enough face there too.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: That--, and so her and I would sometimes get together in the evening and, you know, "How are you doing?" "I'm pretty shattered, how are you doing?" "Okay, let's walk up the clear-cut." "Yeah." It's interesting to find beauty in a clear-cut too especially a burnt out charred one such as that. There's some really surreal landscapes where, like, some nights I'd see, like, desperation in every single tree trunk, you know, and just prying arms and just really pathetic things but other times, you know, I'd look and notice that there's moss and a little tiny bit of growth in the middle of this burnt out tree. And I think that's--, that place needed the energy there. You know, it's easy to be in a forest it's very hard to be in a place that's been so brutally desiccated and yet those places need good energy too. So I found that it gave back and took sometimes. I've stopped by a few times, like, since then--,

NIAMH: Really?

NORLEEN: To check it out, yeah.

NIAMH: Wow!

NORLEEN: Yeah. It's been interesting.

NIAMH: What was that like to go back then?

NORLEEN: The first time I went back it was really strange 'cause it's almost like going, I don't know, like to a school when it's empty or something. Like it echoes sort of almost. And trying to find things--, this was a year later, trying to find where the old fire circle used to be. And I was with another woman who'd been there too and had spent most of the summer there and so we're, like, you know, walking around kind of looking at the ruins but they weren't really ruins, you know, but it was like--, then we went to the women's space and, you know, stood on the platform and went, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." It was really nice. Also the elders are growing. It's bigger and lusher and fuller than it was when we were there.

NIAMH: Wow!

NORLEEN: Which is wonderful and that's--, you know, many people say the earth is dying, we are killing the earth and I don't really think that's true. I think we're killing humanity and there's a chance that humanity won't make it but I don't--, I think we're being egotistical if we think that we are all powerful. I think we can do a lot of damage and we are and it's sad what we're doing to the other creatures and it needs to stop definitely. However, I don't think ultimately that we do have the power to completely destroy the planet and when I get in my doom, gloom, deepest despair I remind myself of that. It's, like, watch your ego, they're human beings, you know. We certainly are capable of doing outrageous damage and it's shocking what we can do but the planet is pretty--, pretty amazing in the power that's here to regenerate and to come back. It's not the same. I mean second growth is not the same but at least it's alive. So it does help give me some solstice when I think of, you know, we aren't killing the planet off we're killing each other off for sure and that's a concern but I don't need to worry about the planet like I used to. Worry about the life support system for humans and for other creatures but I think that the earth does have just such an amazing power that if we could stop now we'd be far better off. Oh well! I think also good news doesn't often get passed around as much as the bad news especially if you watch the news on TV. If that's your news that's all it is is bad news. You don't hear the good things. Also I don't get out of this little community much so it's--, and it's easier to kind of get myself into a place where it's like, it's okay, I can live my lifestyle as I see as gentle and I can help as I can and just don't go past the junction very often [both laugh]. It's such a culture shock.

NIAMH: That's probably good. That's really good.

NORLEEN: And I don't really think it's the ostrich thing because that's--, that won't work. We can't just do that. We have to actively work, but I think actively working in your own life first and then having strength and courage to work from outside as well. Now I'm just working within again [laughs].

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: The cycle has come around.

NIAMH: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Are you doing much at the moment in terms of the Friends or have you since--, what have you done since the camp I suppose?

NORLEEN: Since the camp I stayed active with the Friends and I think I was a director again the next year but maybe not. I'm a director now although right now with the pregnancy it's I'm phasing out again, but what I did find was we had a campaign, we still have a campaign, called Forest Watch and I got very involved in that. I found after the peace camp I was burnt out as far as the front office kind of info request, talk to people that phone up and are--, are really angry. They support us but they're really angry at what's going on in the forest and they want to rant. And I just--, I couldn't listen to that anymore 'cause, you know, I agreed with everything that they said and I just--, I didn't want to hear it again.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: So I realised I was burnt out on front office and even info requests or--, and I just didn't have that energy, but as far as learning the forest act and hiking logging roads and I was very much into that and taking pictures of the clear-cuts and documenting and writing letters and then--, so I was active in that since we started it which was quite a few years ago. This--, this winter though--, well, being the first few months pregnant and being very overly emotional I found I couldn't write letters anymore because I--, it's a good thing that I passed them by Maryjka because I was starting to get really sarcastic 'cause there wasn't--, I was frustrated because we've had paper chases--, like a part of this is paper chases and we use recycled paper of course but I think all the government, all the fisheries, the forestry guys, all the company guys we just get stacks of letters back that are on white bleached carcasses of what we're trying to save. You know, and those were the letters that we got back we actually had sent letters for I think two years, a year and a half anyway, to the central region board outlining our concerns about what was going on, never got any--, any

acknowledgement back until we did a blockade and then they're calling us to ask for meetings. So--, but as I was starting to say about with Forest Watch I was too emotional. Well it was just my body was changing and I wasn't ready to do that anymore. So I burnt out on the Forest Watch aspect of it and found that front office was lovely. I can just smile at people coming in, "Hello." "Hi, yes it's terrible, isn't it? You're right, want to sign a petition? Okay, goodbye." And it was so casual and it was so--, people were--, generally if they walk in the front door they support what's going on and I think I just needed that again. So I came around back again to helping out in the front office and saying, "I don't want to do forest watch, I don't want to walk another logging road, I refuse to go through another new clear-cut and take pictures of another destroyed salmon stream and write another letter that's going to be ignored and going over it." But I'm certainly glad the campaign is still going on because it has a lot of power to it just in that it's truth and it's their laws that they're breaking; instead of us being out there breaking their laws they're breaking their own laws. So hopefully see our legal defence will be able to come through with a bit of a court case or something. But now I--, actually right now I barely even make it to directors' meetings and that's a choice I've made just because I want to stay healthy and got a little eco kid coming along [laughs].

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: So…

NIAMH: That's important.

NORLEEN: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And it's interesting 'cause it still feels like--, like I come in sometimes but I still feel like I'm involved in the movement and it's, like, for me once I know I can't not know anymore and once I've made decisions--, it's like I've been here since '91 so I've been involved with the organic food store here since '91 and I was so shocked when I went past the junction, I went and did a family thing in April and my sister said something about, "Well can you eat this?" because it wasn't organic. And I thought can, like that makes it sound like, you know, I have this list of rules or someone above me is saying what I can or can't eat and then it's like, it's my choice, I choose not to because I don't want to support chemical growers and also I don't want to put it in my body and once I know about chemicalised food I can't not know it anymore. And I can't just eat whatever and not know that it's going to affect my body differently than if it were all organic. And it's the same with the forest issue. Now that I know I can't not know, so a part of me is still somehow involved. Maybe not as much outwardly active but I mean certainly still if nothing else trying to influence others to--, even just to realise the choices that are made. I got my mum on to recycled toilet paper and that was a big one.

NIAMH: Right, yeah.

NORLEEN: So, yeah [laughs].

NIAMH: Those little big battles.

NORLEEN: Yeah, that's it, those little big battles. Just staying true to an ideology and living it and knowing that it's okay because it's what I want to do. It's not something that's imposed on me it's been my choice. I still dream about that women's camp though.

NIAMH: Yeah, I know. When you just said it I just thought…

NORLEEN: I know, I shouldn't have [both laugh]. It was funny 'cause the one summer that it was feeling like it might just come together we started getting all these letters from all these women that were interested and we're like--,

NIAMH: Really?

NORLEEN: "I hope this happens." But it was good that it didn't happen that summer because…

NIAMH: Was that '94 or…

NORLEEN: Yeah, it was.

NIAMH: Yeah. So it's a bit too soon.

NORLEEN: And it was--, yeah, because a few of us hadn't really had breaks. I took two weeks off and went to the Interior but that was like a road trip, right, came back and jumped right back in again. And two weeks after four months of that intense work and then jumping right back in and one of the things I did realise from that camp experience was you need to be fully prepared. I mean I guess one is never really fully prepared for everything that could come up but to do it well and to think of things ahead of time not just doing--, the people burnout when you have to just wing it, you take on too much and it gets way too stressful. So I'm sure it's in the workings and, to be honest, Clayoquot Sound is not safe yet. It's not. And even if it ever all got protected well there's the neighbouring valleys, there's Nootka, there's--, and there's still the power over going on. There's still a movement to be changed. So yes, I

would think of a camp here though because of the wilderness and of the wild places 'cause--, for I think everyone that came, or most of them, a part of the connection was just going into a forest and you make up your own mind, you don't need someone to tell you how important it is you know, or why it's important you just know it's important. I think especially for people that didn't grow up here, you know, it's like this whole new place.

NIAMH: Yeah, and grew up in Ireland there's no forests [left], you know.

NORLEEN: Yeah. Yeah, and just the magic. So--, yeah, it will be a while before I have tonnes of energy to reach out to a huge camp like that but, who knows [laughs]?

NIAMH: Yeah. Yeah.

NORLEEN: There's a lot of amazing women around that…

NIAMH: Yeah, that's what shocks me [laughs] there's so many. I mean I can't--, I can't understand [laughs] how come there's so many amazing women here?

NORLEEN: Yeah, it's true. It is true. I think that's what has kept me here for so long because it's a hard place to live in a lot of ways, probably finding that just with the housing right now [laughs].

NIAMH: Yeah, yeah.

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: It's not easy. Yeah, I'm impressed by people who manage to stay here.

NORLEEN: Yeah, yeah. You have to really be creative.

NIAMH: Yeah [both laugh], very.

NORLEEN: But, who knows what will happen? Even this summer it's still unclear what will happen this summer with all the meetings and everything going on. For me I'm pretty clear what's going on this summer though. As far as the movement and the spread of the word goes it's hard to say. Now my mind is whirling with this women's

camp. I knew this would happen. I actually knew it before I even came in for an interview.

NIAMH: Really?

NORLEEN: It's like Norleen you're going to bring up the women's camp I know you are [laughs].

NIAMH: Well I was like, nobody has mentioned it so far.

NORLEEN: Really? We had so many dreams.

NIAMH: It's funny 'cause like--, yeah, because I was asking not everybody but I asked a few people, if people mentioned Greenham or anything and I asked about the difference between a women only and a--, and also 'cause before I left Britain I interviewed a woman that I met at the camp who had been at Greenham who's like British. And she was in the--, at the peace camp for, like, three or four days, but she's become a good friend of mine now, and so I interviewed her 'cause I'm, like, trying to interview a whole diversity of women, so, like, you know, somebody who was at the camp just for two or three days to see--,

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: What did she think. And I was asking her about differences between Greenham and [inaudible].

NORLEEN: And what happened there.

NIAMH: Yeah. And--, and just thinking about that and what difference it would have made.

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: And nobody has floated--, a few people have kind of said they didn't think it would work--, would have worked if it was a women only camp and stuff and that it made sense that it was mixed and stuff. So this is why I'm really excited to--,

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: [Inaudible] plan for a women's camp and…

NORLEEN: Yeah, there are lots of dreams about it.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: I liked that there was a mixed one first for the steps that needed to get done first, but I could see the next step would be a women's only camp.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And even--, and I mean it doesn't mean that men can't support a women's only thing.

NIAMH: Yeah, absolutely not [inaudible].

NORLEEN: You know, there's so many other jobs to do and that's where you start realising is this my ego that's getting me involved or is that I really want to help and be supportive?

NIAMH: Yeah, yeah.

NORLEEN: You know, and if someone really wants to help and be supportive and they happen to be a guy it's like--,

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: Well, here's all the areas that we need support in that, you know, have nothing to do with living at the camp yet they're crucial. So I don't see a women's only camp as being exclusive or--, well it is exclusive for women but it doesn't mean that men can't…

NIAMH: Men can't be involved and men can't support. There's going to be a lot for them to do.

NORLEEN: Exactly. Yes, even like there's a Take Back the Night walk in September and there's…

NIAMH: In Victoria.

NORLEEN: Uh-huh.

NIAMH: I went--, when I was here three years ago I went to the one in Victoria then but I think I'm leaving on the 21st of September which is the march is on the 20th.

NORLEEN: The next day, yeah.

NIAMH: So I must actually check the time of my flight [laughs].

NORLEEN: That's right. It's a quick bus.

NIAMH: [Laughs]

NORLEEN: It's a quick bus from Victoria to the ferry to the airport.

NIAMH: 'Cause I was like [inaudible] I was thinking well this would just be really good 'cause I remember--, and it must have been--, well I guess actually when I was at the peace camp the last time it was in September and the march must have been earlier in September three years ago.

NORLEEN: Yeah, yeah.

NIAMH: 'Cause I remember going and I remember there were some women from the peace camp who were--, who were at the march or women who had been to the peace camp were at the march--,

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: And they sang the song we're taking [your car] back, that one. And that was the first time I'd heard it and they said it came originally from Greenham and I just thought this is amazing, this song came from Greenham. Well that's what they said.

NORLEEN: Went through the camp.

NIAMH: Went through the peace camp and it was, like, then sang again at this take back the night march.

NORLEEN: That gives me…

NIAMH: So I thought--, I saw the notice up in the Common Loaf and I thought wow! It would just be a nice way to finish my trip off but--,

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: I'll have to check the time of my flight actually.

NORLEEN: Yeah, wishing it would work into my schedule.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: I'll have to see but especially with the carpool going down from here I mean that's really exciting.

NIAMH: [Inaudible] here.

NORLEEN: Uh-huh and even on the poster it's like, men can be supportive, you know.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: Sure, we need lots of help just don't try and walk with us 'cause it's not what it's about. And I think the camp could work that way. You know, it doesn't--, I think when it incites anger it's--, it's, like, non intentional and it's something like, you know--,

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: [So you own] the…

NIAMH: Yeah, exactly. That's the point.

NORLEEN: Yeah, go talk to that guy over there and try and resolve it ‘cause I don’t need to right now.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: And that’s one of the huge supports that guys could do is try--,

NIAMH: Yeah, that’s [inaudible].

NORLEEN: And be the mediators to explain to some hotheads what’s going on.

NIAMH: Wow! Yeah, you’ve got to keep on dreaming [both laugh].

NORLEEN: That is the biggest thing, keep dreaming. Dream big.

NIAMH: Yeah, yeah. I mean I was amazed when I got here and people kind of said that the peace camp wasn’t--, you know, wasn’t very planned, it was kind of planned but, you know, you were saying like, “What if there are 1,000 people?”

NORLEEN: Yeah, I know.

NIAMH: And then there were, like, how many thousands passed through the whole summer?

NORLEEN: Yes.

NIAMH: Nearly 1,000 arrested here, like...

NORLEEN: Yeah. And doing the Midnight Oil concert I think there were 5,000 people in one day, you know, it was just like--, and it’s true because there were really only five people who had said, “Okay, you know, I’ll be there and I’ll teach nonviolence,” or, “I’ll be there and I’ll help out in this aspect.”

NIAMH: Who were the five [inaudible]?

NORLEEN: There was myself, Amy, Jean McLaren, Paul and Kevin.

NIAMH: Right.

NORLEEN: And actually Tzeporah--, Tzeporah would have made six to be honest because--, yeah, Tzeporah was six, so there were six of us. And then as it turned out well Tzeporah was arrested and so she was in jail for quite a long and she wasn't at camp. And then in doing what she did she was feeling torn because she'd be living at camp but being in here at the office and having a tough time just finding enough sleep between midnight and four o'clock driving back to camp and coming back in and so she spent some of the last bit living in town. But--, I mean none of us were really that experienced. As far as there were people that had said that they would commit to being in the office certain days and, you know, full time and that was necessary. What never--, what none of us ever realised then in the planning or in the dreaming stages was what it would really all entail living there.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: You know, because it's not really like a nine to five thing. It never was there. Whereas at the office that's, you know--, well that's not true either.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: The office can be pretty overwhelming too.

NIAMH: Yeah, I'm sure it was at the time [both laugh].

NORLEEN: Yeah. So to consider from there I mean if anyone would have been a really logical strategist they might have said, "This is not going to work, you cannot five people--, six people cannot pull this off," but it did. And it certainly wasn't just six people, right from the beginning there were people there that were, like, helpful and some people, you know, they just cruised in they didn't even really know what it was and they'd stay a month or two helping out. It was amazing.

NIAMH: Was that a problem the relations between the office and the camp? I mean that sounds a bit difficult trying to…

NORLEEN: It got to be a problem as far as us all getting together for meetings because at camp we were just like--, it would be so hard to get away for a meeting so we'd finally get away for a meeting and at the time there was no car and most people that [laughs] volunteer don't have a car they may have a bicycle but--,

NIAMH: Yeah, that's it.

NORLEEN: It's a bit too far. So people would be in town trying to get it together and the phone would ring and, you know, they'd be putting in a press release and they wouldn't leave on time and we would have had--, you know, been sitting there waiting knowing that we only had so much time and where are the people from the office? And then the office people would say, "Well we don't even have a car, why can't you come in to town for meetings every once in a while?" and we'd be like, "You don't know how hard it is here." You know, they of course be saying, "You don't know how hard it is here." So we did end up some of us flip-flopped a little bit just because a change was nice too, but also it helped to understand, yeah, I know the office can get so chaotic and you think you're going to leave at five o'clock but the phone rings or some new crisis happens. The Salt Spring Island people and maybe some others but I know a group on Salt Spring did a fundraiser and bought us a car.

NIAMH: Wow!

NORLEEN: Which was like, a lot of us were totally against it, right [both laugh].

NIAMH: Yeah. Yeah, this is not the way.

NORLEEN: Dinosaur, fuel guzzler! And yet that car has taken so many people--, like this--, the camp thing it was amazing how much it helped us because staff people could jump in the car and get out there and we needed people out there that were fresh faces. So--, but also that car has gone on so many slide shows and done so many other work orientated things and when you live in Tofino it is--, it's either very expensive and lengthy to take the bus--,

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: It takes all day or, you know, you just can't get there so you miss and sometimes without the person to person contact just over the phone doesn't really do it.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: So the car I'm one of the ones that grudgingly say the car was such a wonderful gift. You know, I was the one going, "Oh no [laughs]!"

NIAMH: Can't possibly.

NORLEEN: But it's another aspect of realising that some tools we still need to use and we can acknowledge that it pollutes and try not to use it unless it's needed but it's a tool. It's like these computers sitting here.

NIAMH: Yeah, yeah.

NORLEEN: What are they [both laugh]…

NIAMH: [Inaudible] [both laugh].

NORLEEN: Yeah, yeah. How many young girls sat in a factory putting together that thing, you know? It's like ee! But you do need to--, we live and breathe and work in this society and some of the tools do help.

NIAMH: Yeah, can be used anyway in particular ways. What about the very end of the camp actually 'cause that's the bit where I remember you from the camp actually is right at the end when--, when the decision came from the office to close the camp I was there then and I remember—

NORLEEN: Right.

NIAMH: Remember you vaguely and, like, thinking that poor person [both laugh], she doesn't have an easy job.

NORLEEN: I know that--, actually that was one of the conflicts about the camp and the office was that often I was the only director at the camp so most of the directors of the Friends were in the office and they would get together and have an emergency meeting 'cause it was always an emergency.

NIAMH: Yeah, and you weren't there.

NORLEEN: And they would make a decision and then the decision would be sent to camp and usually in a really inappropriate way just 'cause everybody was getting so burnt out and so we would be told instead of, you know, it takes extra time to come up with the nice way to say, "Look, you've got to do this on this day."

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: This was what was decided. And it was really difficult. It was interesting though how--, I mean in one way it was a huge relief because it had already gone on an extra month. We'd really at the beginning only thought of three months and it had gone on an extra one. Also a few weeks before that we'd had a huge storm which was…

NIAMH: Yeah, that was before I got there.

NORLEEN: Was it?

NIAMH: I heard about it.

NORLEEN: Gosh! And it was nothing like the winter storms here, nothing. It was just a nice little fall warning and just seeing how it so desiccated the camp. Like, because it was in a clear-cut the winds don't get buffeted and the whole kitchen lifted up. It was like one of these Dorothy from Oz things 'cause it was a tree planters kitchen so it was just like a tent--, a huge circus kind of tent almost and it lifted up and flew through the air and landed in the clear-cut and it was just like oh my gosh! Because the wind funnelled straight down nothing to stop it, it hit a rock wall and took the tent straight up in the air and away it went. And there were people holding on to it. We had logs tied on to it. I mean we already knew that it could be a problem and we were in the midst of tying it to logs and rocks and everything when it took off and people just--, most of them let go. But that wasn't a huge storm so we knew that that was right around the corner, but it was difficult because it was like I knew that and I actually had a home to go to, people that had come there and spent, you know, even just a month of their time it's not really how long it was, you know, what they were doing and they hadn't had a chance to be part of the decision. In a way it was like, well, you don't really know what it's like here in the winter and you think you can camp here all winter but we know you can't. Well that's pretty condescending to say to somebody, you know. It's like--, and yet it didn't feel like we had the power to have a circle to decide and it didn't feel like the right decision had been made according to what I thought was true. So it got into this weird place where it was like people are bringing their anger to me 'cause I'm the director and me feeling really angry at the office but not being able to tell it 'cause trying to show some solidarity with them [laughs] with what was going on and also a little bit of relief that I could actually go home soon. And yet the other hand of it was like, wait a minute, we're doing really good work here and we do need to have a say in what we do and maybe it can go a few more weeks, you know, maybe even just one more week or let's--, you know, there's got to be some way where we're heard too. So that was a hard one to juggle.

NIAMH: Yeah. It seemed difficult.

NORLEEN: [Laughs] Especially when you're faced with the news in front of everyone and they're all looking at me like I should have the answers. It's like wait a minute, I'm not the boss here [laughs]. I may have one title 'cause I'm a director but that's…

NIAMH: Yeah, yeah.

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: Yeah, yeah, I just remember that happening, you know, it was right at the end [both laugh].

NORLEEN: Guess what everybody, party's over.

NIAMH: But I also thought it was quite funny 'cause I remember--, funny strange, I remember when the announcement was made, I can't remember who made it, some guy I can remember at the circle, anyway--,

NORLEEN: Yeah.

NIAMH: I didn't know who it was but I remember--, because this friend of mine from Greenham that I interviewed and she was there with her partner and I remember--, you know, I kind of spent a few days with them and I remember that nobody talked about it for, like, several days after the decision came and I remember they kind of really started talking about it. And we started talking about the fact that nobody else seemed to be talking about it and wondering 'cause like, you know, they were just there for a few days and I was there a bit longer than them I think, but--, you know, so we were just like new and didn't really know what was going on, we kind of thought maybe this is like--, you know, everybody knew this and this was just kind of like the--,

NORLEEN: The formal announcement.

NIAMH: The formal announcement or the whatever, you know. And we're kind of talking about the fact that nobody else kind of seemed to be talking about it and then people started talking about it and it was weird, it took, like, about two days for people to say anything.

NORLEEN: Yes.

NIAMH: And that was kind of--, that was really weird.

NORLEEN: I actually found it a bit of a scary time, yeah, because it was like wait a minute, we've spent a whole summer talking about honesty and about being heard and having your own voice and talking decisions out and if you're not comfortable with something finding a way to verbalise it rather than internalise it and let it blow out. And yet I felt like I was walking on eggshells 'cause no one was talking about it all of a sudden. It was like uh-oh, there's an elephant sitting right here and we're all dancing round it. We've spent a summer learning how to name elephants and here we are dancing around it.

NIAMH: Yeah, I know.

NORLEEN: And it felt so odd.

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: And a part of me was afraid that it was going to be huge and I mean it was pretty huge when it came out but I was expecting that in a way, but I was also wondering what was going on behind the scenes or--, you know, because I thought people must be talking about this. I mean this is--, the whole way the decision came down was so wrong--,

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: According to all we talked about and--,

NIAMH: Yeah.

NORLEEN: Learned and lived the whole summer it was like…

NIAMH: I can remember sitting in the circle thinking [laughs]...

NORLEEN: You're like, what? That does not work here [both laugh].

NIAMH: This hasn't happened before while I've been here.

NORLEEN: This is weird someone standing up and I think you're right, I think it was a guy too.

NIAMH: It was--, I can't remember who 'cause I didn't know, but somebody from the office anyway.

NORLEEN: Yeah.

[END OF RECORDING]