

Interviewee Name: Brenda Cohen

Interviewer Name: Padraic Cohen

Date of Interview: 03/14/2021

Location: Cochrane, Alberta Canada.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>

Partially transcribed by Padraic Cohen

Abstract:

In this oral history, I interview my mom, Brenda Lee Cohen on her pandemic experience with a particular focus on her work with the Calgary police service as a crime and intelligence analyst supervisor. In this interview, Brenda talks about her initial experience with the COVID-19 pandemic, she recalls the first day of the pandemic as she and her husband were stuck in America. This particular interview touched upon what her work environment was like during the pandemic and topics such as systemic racism, the police ‘culture’ and the revocation of a popular program for city employees known as the ‘golden handshake’ in the midst of the pandemic. Brenda also spoke briefly about her experience with misogyny within the workplace and how these ideas are so prevent within a space which mixes the civilian and police worlds. Finally, Brenda also spoke about what she is most thankful for in this pandemic, and ultimately reflects on her own inability to express her thoughts and emotions – and how one day when she is out of the police environment, things will be different.

PC 0:01

Hi, my name is Padraic Cohen, and I'm a graduate student intern with the COVID-19 archive at ASU. The date is March 14 2021. And the time is 1:34pm. I'm speaking with my mom, Brenda, Cohen. I want to ask you a question about your pandemic experience. But before I do, I would like to ask you for your consent to record this response for the COVID-19 archive. The COVID-19 archive is a digital archive at ASU that is collecting pandemic experiences. Do I have your consent to record your response and add the archive with your name?

BC 0:29

Yes.

PC 0:31

So first, I just want to ask you some background questions. So number one, how are you doing today?

BC 0:37

Doing very well. Thank you.

PC 0:41

And do you have any family?

BC 0:43

Yes.

PC 0:44

Okay. And can you tell me about them? Well,

BC 0:47

I come from a large family. And I am married and I have a son, you Patrick one. And I have three brothers, three sisters, and my mom is still alive.

PC 1:02

Right? How old are you?

BC 1:05

Today? I am.

PC 1:07

Yea today is your birthday Sorry.

BC 1:08

Today is my birthday. And I am 57 years old.

PC 1:11

Happy Birthday first.

BC 1:12

Thank you.

PC 1:13

What's your birthday?

BC 1:14

March 14 1964.

PC 1:17

Okay. And what do you do for a living?

BC 1:21

I am. I'm a certified crime and intelligence analysts with the Calgary police service. And my current position is a supervisor. In the real time operation center. I supervise inflammation coordinators, who work in a 24 seven work environment. And I have 16 permanent inflammation coordinators that I supervise who work on four separate teams, as I said in a 24 seven work environment plus I supervise one analytical technician. In three crime intelligence analysts that work in the major one works in major events and emergency management. And the other two work in our traffic safety unit.

PC 2:10

I think I understand that it just can you describe what the job is, in particular, like, can you I guess not dumb it down. But

BC 2:18

so the at the Calgary Police Service, we have a quadrant or a group of civilian employees who are trained to work with investigators in frontline officers, and our incident commanders to analyze data, to analyze information, and to analyze intelligence. And we put all of that information together together in different forms of products that help police officers make decisions. So in the real time information center, we have a duty inspector who oversees all of the calls for service that occur in the City of Calgary calls for service for police for law enforcement. And that duty inspector has the ultimate say over a lot of the calls that occur. And normally most calls are handled at the officer and the patrol unit level. But we oversee those calls that escalate or become what we call isolated events or exigent events where that ultimately would result in the duty inspector making the ultimate decision to shoot to kill. And that is the responsibility of the duty inspector if that incident ever occurs. A lot of the elevated incidents that we become what we call extracted are extortion type calls, kidnapping, violent offenses with guns, firearms, crimes against people that happened in real time, anything else that happens like a homicide or whatever, then the homicide unit is engaged, they come out they take over the investigation. And then we go on with our regular activities of continuing to monitor the calls for service so so I supervise those information coordinators who are continually monitoring the calls. They have access to over 30 databases to obtain information that help the command staff make as I said before informed decisions. So that could be you know Vital Statistics Equifax financial backgrounds, mental health information information that is normally private we have access to and it helps us to determine information on a given individual or crime group. As best as we can the information that is available to us, does that make sense? It's kind of I'm sworn to an Ellis I can't speak about investigations specifically. But it is information that normally is not open to the public in the media releases, they only get a section of the information that we can release to them because an ongoing investigation is private, until that investigation is closed, and then it's subject to disclosure, which then becomes public information.

PC 5:34

And how long have you been working here?

BC 5:37

I've worked for the Calgary police service since 1996. I started out as a research assistant, then I went into the crime prevention unit, then I went out into the districts as a crime analyst. And I was a district crime analyst in three separate districts, and then move to the real time Operations Center in December of 2010. And moved into the supervisory position in 2015.

PC 6:03

All right, and can you tell me what attracted you to this job?

BC 6:11

It just it wasn't, it wasn't a job that I pursued. It's sort of I got a job as a research assistant and also got offered a job with Canada Border Services, at land crossing. And because I was newly married and wanted to start a family, I didn't want to work and have to commute from a land crossing. So I took the job at the police service, as a research assistant. And then from there, I basically pursued the career in crime analysis, not really knowing what it was. So I kind of lucked into it. And it's a hard position to get into now it's very sought after. So I pretty fortunate that that happened to me. And then I took it upon myself to do my Masters will finish, I was in a master's program. And so I did another master's program. While I was employed Plus, I also pursued being certified. There's only about five of us in the police department, a Calgary police that are certified crime analysts,

PC 7:19

And how do you become certified? Like, is there a prerequisite like a class or

BC 7:23

There yeah, there are specific classes that you have to take, and you have to work in the area for a certain amount of time. Plus, you have to continue your education while you're pursuing the certification, and you have to write an exam. Okay? Um,

PC 7:41

Do you enjoy your job pretty clearly, or not somewhat, or,

BC 7:45

Um, I'm, my background in my heart lies in crime analysis. And I don't do a lot of that I get an opportunity to mentor and facilitate, and to teach the people that I supervise, which I love to do, but I ultimately love focusing on a specific investigation, and working with investigators on a particular crime or crime series. So I miss it. I miss that. And I miss working out in the district. That was fun. You built up different teams, where I'm working right now, where you have four different teams. And we go through working in a police environment, you you build up friendships, and you and you work on relationship building, and, you know, things like that team building, but you're, the relationships that you build with police officers, is temporary, because they're constantly being moved, and they go for promotion, and eight, so you retain that friendship, always. But the working relationship is always changing. So you never kind of work with any one particular person for any great length of time, except a few. They're civilian, and unfortunate with the civilian members that I work with. They're a fantastic group of individuals. Okay.

PC 9:04

Thank you. So now we're gonna move on to the background to the pandemic, if that's okay, there's maybe a little bit of a jump from talking about your job to COVID. But it'll work out. So number one, do you remember where you were when you first heard about COVID-19? And what did you think about it?

BC 9:22

Yeah, I was on vacation with your dad and United States and we were coming home and our flight got delayed in. We were stuck in an airport for four hours and then we were on an airplane and the airplane had a mechanical problem. And so we were stuck on a plane with about 100 people for almost an hour and then we had to get off and wait for another four hours and then we got back on the plane and so like, flew into Great Falls, Montana, and it was late at night and your dad So we're just going to drive home and I said, No, let's just stay overnight. And then, because I didn't have to be at work until the day after. So I went back to work. It was I think it was Thursday, and I had explained what it was March 13. And I had explained that, um, that I've been on a flight with a group of people and, and I thought, like, I probably should isolate at home. And my immediate supervisor said, yes, isolated home. But then the very next day, I got phoned by the health nurse, and she said, No, come to work. So I've been at work ever since we had the opportunity to telework. I telework for a short amount of time, but because my work environment works 24 seven, and the majority of my employees were working, they did not telework, they don't have the ability to telework. They're not considered an essential service, but they can't do their job from home because of the databases and the connections. So I just felt that I needed to be in the office with them as opposed to teleworking in the other analysts and analytical technicians that I worked with the telework. So do they answer your question? Yeah, no, I heard about it. And it didn't really impact me, I felt that the majority of the civilian analysts and we're working in at are continually teleworking. But I've been in the office ever since. And it's only impacted me by I had, when I came back to work, I had three or four employees that were on holidays as well. And they all had to isolate for two weeks prior to them coming back to work. So it impacted me in terms of scheduling and finding coverage for my, the people that I supervise. So and then through work. And because I supervise the major events and management, we they activated an incident management team for COVID, because we were anticipating police officers coming down with COVID, in that we would be in a risk situation in trying to have enough police personnel to take calls for service and to work on the street. But that never really transpired. So the first couple of months of COVID. So from March through to May, in June, there was a lot of anticipation about how it was going to impact the Calgary Police Service, but it never really transpired we right away, we had the officers wear their PPE, which is their protective police equipment. And we updated the standard operating procedures and the policies and that they weren't allowed to go to calls without wearing their PPE. And I think that has what saved them, a lot of them from not coming down with COVID of the COVID cases that our police officers have tested positive majority of them have been through their personal interactions and not while at work, which is very interesting.

PC 13:14

I'm.. Oh those are really, you answered alot of my question there.

BC 13:19

Oh sorry

PC 13:19

No, no, don't apologize for that. Please. No. Um, so you were saying you you your first interaction with COVID was essentially you? How do you feel about that? Sorry, just how do you feel about the onset of the pandemic in the first place your feelings about it?

BC 13:36

Um, I think because somebody could have questions, and, from the news reports and all that. We were seeing how it had impacted a lot of the countries on the Pacific Rim, China. And it was interesting to watch some videos, I remember I watched one on how China was dealing with it in in how they were at that particular time in forcing a very rigid tracing program, where you couldn't leave without the government knowing exactly where you were, what you were doing. And I think that, in turn, was very interesting and probably spoke to the success of them dealing with the COVID pandemic in that particular country. And knowing full well that that would never be allowed to occur here. Because governing and we just don't, we just wouldn't be able to enforce those types of rigid requirements. So it was interesting to see how our, my country was going to enforce the lockdowns, it was interesting, going to work in a sign in the morning, traffic was decreased. It was sometimes it just seemed like our calls for service went down and they have retained are sorry, they've been static, they've never increased. So because I look at calls for service overnight in a 24 hour period, and they're consistently decreased when we compare it to the previous year. So, in that sense, you know, we were anticipating COVID calls going out, we're tracking them for from a law enforcement perspective. But it really never transpired. To the extreme that I think we were, everybody thought it was. So for me, there was a lot of fear mongering, which was essentially just, we just weren't being educated or informed, I think.

PC 15:44

And who was doing that fear mongering the news or

BC 15:48

just in general, just communication, right, you know, how people communicate and social media and whatnot, Twitter, and Instagram, and, and then, of course, the, the media is, I've never been a person who follows the media or believes in the media, I just, I've always, media, you have to read between the lines. And I don't like someone else telling me what is news when in fact, it's not news. Very kind of jaded that way. Just because of my background and knowing that the news, really, they don't really often know the full story or the truth of a story. So, okay.

PC 16:35

So how did COVID affect the the layout of your workspace? Like you said, there's pp. But you still want to work? And there was also this thing called telework. Can you describe a little bit more on that?

BC 16:46

Yeah, so total work is for those employees who could continue to do their work, but do it from home in a safe environment, because from what I can tell, the risk was more. And we didn't want to impact our medical facilities, right? So you reduce the risk of having COVID. By confining yourself into an area where, you know, you wouldn't be putting yourself in, in a situation where you might contract the virus. So work environments were looked at, well, how many people can we shut down their district offices, the crime analysts, a lot of the crime analyst started working from home they had CPS issued laptops where they had their whole desktop was there. In as I said, my crime analysts were able to work from home successfully and be able to do their job, the only thing that was missing was personal interaction. But we got through that with the online Microsoft Teams meetings, and meeting online and we stopped having meetings in a room and have them online instead. And actually, there's a lot of positives that came of it. Because the meetings to me, in my mind's eye were right to the point there was teleworking has been productive in the sense that you don't have people coming into your office and interrupting you, and or, you know, having that coffee chat and all that. And you can work and then take a break and go and do something else. And then come back ensuring that you know, you're putting in your, your 10 hours, but your 10 hours are from like, say 730 to 530, or whatever with an hour's lunch, you're working for hours, and then maybe six hours later in the evening or whatever. But as long as you're putting in your 10 hours, there's a lot more flexibility, and agility and I think people were a lot more productive with teleworking. In my office, my office is removed from the teams throughout on the floor, what we call the floor, so they're good 15 feet away from me, if they need to come to see me, they can come in my office wearing a mask. Or if I get out of my out of my desk and I go to walk out onto the floor, I wear a mask. If I go out in the rest of the building, I wear a mask too. And that's kind of and then also my work area. The real time operation center is in lockdown. So we lock the doors. So if anybody needs to come in to get a warrant signed or whenever they phone first and we let them in and they're wearing a mask, and they swear to the search warrant, we give them what is called an ID which is the number and then they can go and execute the warrant but it has to be seen by the duty inspector and signed off by the duty inspector so we're in a what I would say would be a secure work environment.

PC 19:49

Okay, so just to confirm like cuz I feel like I I'm li'l confused. So it was like this before the pandemic too as well.

BC 20:01

We, before the pandemic, our, our doors were open, anybody could come in

PC 20:06

Okay

BC 20:06

To our work environment now that the doors are closed they can't. So we've reduced the exposure of our personnel to people just coming in.

PC 20:17

Okay. Thank you. I was just confused. That's my fault. So I have two questions. The first one is, do you prefer working from home? Well, you said that there's some, some strengths to that with the space of the time? Or do you prefer working in the office? If you had a choice? Like, which one would you choose?

BC 20:38

It's 50/50, it really is I found working at home, I think I was I could do it. I just felt so isolated from my work environment. And because of, especially, I have my door open, I can hear what's going on. So I know that I'm like, I'm not there. 24 seven, I'm there during the day. And I'm there to support my information coordinators, but they don't particularly need me, I'm not a micromanager. I don't, you know, look over their shoulders, I read their notes, I try to help them when I can, but they can do their work. Without me, they come to me if they need assistance, or if they need direction on something that they're not quite sure of. But I'm not there breathing down their necks and telling them what to do. But I like being there to help them and support them. Because often times they're dealing with events that are not very pleasant. And on New Year's Day at New Year's Day, but it was New Year's Eve at 10:30. At night, I got a phone call. And one of our officers was killed in the line of duty. In my one of my information coordinators was the last one to speak with that officer on the phone. And so you're dealing with that you're

you're trying to find another team who can come in and cover for them. And at the same time, you're worried about that. Those those team members and how well they're doing, they had to debrief. And but she was the one information coordinator had to be off work for almost two months. And we made sure that she had counseling, and but it took her time and they deal with those types of situations. And that's what I'm there for is to support them and to make sure that they're taken care of, in my line of work with the civilians same as police officers, they might not be involved directly in a situation, but it doesn't pack them in they do suffer to some extent some post-traumatic stress disorder. So we have to be cognizant of that. And we never know how it's going to impact them. Right. So you're there as a support system in like I, on that particular evening, New Year's Eve, I was on the phone from like 1030 till two o'clock in the morning because we also activated our Tactical Operations Center, which required me to call out an analyst and another. Just making sure that there were people there to do the job to assist in making sure that call because it was an isolated event, we had to put other people onto that call to ensure that it was handled properly and investigated. And then it then fell over to Alberta. A circle we call it a cert which is Alberta services and investigated services as the care services team. And there are provincial based investigators who are who come in and investigate a situation that is separate from Calgary police service because we don't want to come across that were involved or biased right or in fact that investigation we want it to be investigated by another.

I'm not speaking very well, because well I, I have to apologize because my mind's kind of all over the place, but we want to another what they call another impartial law enforcement agency to investigate that situation. Okay, that sounds great.

PC 24:21

Yeah, that's fine. Okay, perfect. Um, this is another another thing we were talking about earlier, you brought up the fact that officers would come in wearing the masks, but I remember sometimes you tell me they came in they weren't wearing masks. This happened a lot or is this just a onetime thing?

BC 24:38

Oh, in our office like we officers that are coming in, like from the frontline if they come into our building. My building is separate from the headquarters. It's in the same area but it's what we call our covert building because it's where we have all of our covert surveillance investigators and specialized investigations and whatnot. And so the whole building is kind of a very secure building. So if there people are in there, it's usually people that are, if they come in to have a search warrant, they've been working in the in that office and then normally wear their masks. But sometimes, if they're not wearing a mask, they're, they're probably low for exposure risk and all that, because they've been working in the same office for quite a length of time. So really, they're not that much of a risk. But there again, you don't know what they did in their personal time, right. And I think for us, the biggest fear has always been those people who are

asymptomatic. Because that seems to be where a lot of people contract, or test positive is because of that. But a lot of people just forget that they have their ass there, but they just come in, and it's really quick, and then they leave, right. So for my employees, if they're sitting at their desk for 12 hours, I don't expect them to wear their mask for 12 hours. But as soon as they get up from their desk, they're supposed to put their mask on. And they for the most part do pretty good that way. Okay.

PC 26:17

When there aren't masks, though, when that when that does happen. I remember really telling you that there was some anxiety with three supervisors and their little worried every now and then was

BC 26:27

Yeah, but it's just education, right? And it's just being mindful of that and in in in reminding people that you need to be wearing your mask if you're going to be around these people because they work 24 seven, they're not. They don't need to wear a mask when they're in their work environment. But if you come into their work environment, be respectful and wear your mask, because it does causing worry and anxiety to some extent.

PC 26:55

Okay, thank you. And we're next we're going to go on to the events of the summer, which were the massive protests and the ongoing protests, which have been happening throughout the province recently. So this summer, there were numerous protests against police brutality and systemic racism directed towards the Calgary police department. Can you tell me what the atmosphere was like in your workplace when this is occurring?

BC 27:20

In my workplace, my actual workplace in the real time operation center, I mean, we, we have the news up continually, we have six massive screens that go across and we have what we call our hawks downlink, which is a camera that is attached to our hawks, so we can watch events occurring in real time from the air, we have our corporate security cameras, so we see we can view a huge amount of cameras that are in and around the city. And, and so when we have the media on, we're listening to what people are saying. We watched the Black Lives Matter through CNN, and then **CBC** and other news stations, local news. And seeing these things happen, as you well know, on news, have they report it over and over and over and over, they repeat the highlights or the most popular news segments. And so it impacts people. And because they are supporting those police officers to do their job. And I know Calgary has had some incidents of where our police officers have been involved in situations of assault or excessive use of force.

And so we're always kind of sensitive to to any type of media and that type. And then, so it affects the swarm person's morale, but it also affects the civilians because they're, they're trying to provide support to them, right.

PC 29:15

That's kind of like a bit of a limbo area where you're not really sure where your allegiance lies, is that I think that's really too dramatic what I said, but you know, what I mean is that

BC 29:25

it's very, very hard because you, you have your own opinions, like I have my own opinions, but I have to be always cognizant of what I say because it can impact other people and people can misconstrue what you're saying because I'm, you know, certain work environment. There are things that I might agree with and things that I might not agree with, but I keep my personal opinions to myself, okay. And oftentimes But I'm here at home. Yeah. But I don't often talk about him in the work environment. Okay. Okay. Like even though I'm being recorded, and I know that

PC 30:08

Yeah,

BC 30:08

I'm kind of there's certain things that I even probably wouldn't tell you that I would tell you not.

PC 30:16

Yeah.

BC 30:17

If I wasn't being recorded. But if in this situation I would probably not.

PC 30:22

Yeah, that's fair. So, on top of that, then my next question might be a little iffy. So if you don't want to respond, you don't have to. So have you personally witnessed any discriminatory conduct while working for the City of Calgary or the police service?

BC 30:38

Yeah, I would have to say yes. Different types of discrimination, rape. Certainly massage, massage any like, I've worked, I've experienced some logistics. That's why members through the years I've experienced that personally. And it's not pleasant. That is probably one of the first discriminations I've seen discrimination. In terms of ethnic and racial. I've worked with a lot of officers from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, and I haven't seen it per se. For sworn for civilians. Yeah, definitely. There are work environments that have what I would deem as work ghettos, mostly through the City of Calgary in general. But there are work, what I would refer to as ghettos, in terms of they seem to be predominantly females. And being a supervisor, I think I've seen that more and more work. The people that I interview are predominantly females from a particular unit within CPS, and it's sort of a career path thing. But at the same time, I'd like to, I like to have diversity, I like to have some different genders and people from different ethnic groups to be in the work environment, because I just think it, it, it helps us work better together to know that other people have might have a different opinion about a certain situation.

BC 32:17

So I have experienced it, and I do see it, and I am aware of it. I'm not going to talk about specifics if that's okay. Yes. But yes, it's there. Our chief has talked about systemic racism, I think my personal opinion is that there's a systemic culture. I think police officers from the time that they are recruited, that they are told that they are better than other people are, they're held to a higher standard. And so from that, they believe that they're maybe a little bit better or separate from the normal person on the street. And I think that that, that tends to be interpreted differently as they progress through their, their career, and sometimes I think they lose, or there that their work is, is influenced by who they think they are, what they think they are. I think they lose sight of the fact that because they're in law enforcement that they have a right to, to know, better than someone else. And I think that is part of what the chief is referring to that we don't often make the right decisions, and sometimes it causes problems.

Yeah.

PC 33:39

Can you just clarify the term word ghetto, you said,

BC 33:43

To me a word ghetto. And this goes back to my early days of working with the city where it's it's a it's a work unit, or department where it you have a number of people doing the same thing. And they can't get out of there, they can't apply for another job, because they don't have, they don't have the university degree or they don't have the college diploma. And the only way that they can get out of that into this, maybe a supervisory position is by having years of experience. And so they, they get they lose that drive to become maybe better or to move on to there's no motivation. So they just go in and they're just doing the same thing day in day out. And they know that they're going to do this job for the rest of, you know, until they can go to pension. So to me, that's a word ghetto, because they're not going anywhere. And they're doing the same thing over and over and over. And then they start to pick on each other. And it gets it can be a negative work environment, and I guess it's kind of a term that I heard back in the day. Late 80s and early 90s, and maybe not so much anymore, but I think they still exist where you get those people who can't move on because, you know, they're, they can't go back to school. They're, they're kind of stuck in their work environment. And I don't know how else to describe that. Okay.

PC 35:18

I mean, there was like, a gender despot, sorry gendered aspect of this is what you're saying is they're probably women. Yeah. Okay. All right. Um, let me see where we were. So you're talking about the chief of police. Right? That's Mark Neufeld. Okay, so Mark Neufeld, respond to calls that there were systemic racism in the city by saying that he "wasn't sure." What do you think about that?

BC 35:43

I think he's, he's, he's done a good job. I mean, he's brand new to the Calgary area. And he's brand new to the Calgary police force. And, and I think he acknowledges that you're just like any other police agency, there are problems of racism. And we've looked at the way that our police officers have completed what we would call street checks or in their terminology that they use, the way that they speak to people, all of those are indicative of biases. And sometimes as some, as a police officer, if you're working in a particular area of the city, you tend to see the same type of people over and over and over like, vulnerable, vulnerable homeless people, sometimes you'll see something that is a common term used on the street, but it probably is a term that we shouldn't use, because it encourages that word, or, I don't know if I'm explaining this properly. But it's all in our language, in in, in how we treat people. And just because you're down and out doesn't mean that, you know, you're a loser, or you're this or you're that. And we have to be mindful that. You know, everybody, everybody's an individual. It doesn't matter where you live, or what your job is, or the fact that you, you know, might not have a job, or, you know, you're bottle picking to get ahead or whatever, that doesn't make you less of a human being. And unfortunately, it's not just police officers in society in general, we, we tend to measure ourselves

by our material. property, and it's all image, right? It's not just the police department, but no, it is there. Yeah. And I think Mark, the chief was acknowledging that and he's trying to change it. And it's hard, because he's dealing with the public who are seeing things from the media. And he's also dealing with trying to at the same time trying to change an agency, law enforcement group, but they're looking to him for support, and, and guidance. And when he says, Yeah, there's systemic racism, then they're saying, he doesn't believe in us. He doesn't support us. And that's hard, because he's coming into a police office, or a police agency that had low morale. And he's trying to steer a boat that just won't, you know, you need everybody on board to kind of turn that boat around. And it's hard.

PC 38:30

Yeah. So just just speaking on that I recall, I think was during the summer, or just after the summer that they released the documentary called above the law, documenting the police service and their numerous cases of, I guess, ethnic attacks or the way they would handle indigenous people. And just the way they would just brutalize them.

I forget where I was gonna go with this,

BC 38:55

In general right? Like you're talking about law enforcement.

PC 38:58

It was this was particularly the Calgary Police Service.

BC 39:00

That particular film was from an incident in 2013. If I'm thinking of the same one that you're thinking of, and there was media of an individual being assaulted, I think, yeah.

PC 39:21

I forgot where I was gonna go with that, actually, sorry about that. It left my head, but my actual question. I could keep going. But do you think there needs to be changed to the police service?

BC 39:32

Yeah.

PC 39:33

And what would that be?

BC 39:36

I think it just starts from right from the beginning in the terms of the people that we're recruiting. I think we, and I think Calgary police service does recruit minorities in the form of diversity. I think we can do a better job of that. And then we need to look at our policies for how we handle situations. I know that as a police agency, we handle a lot of calls that we really shouldn't be involved in that other, our stakeholders or other agencies outside of the police service, they would be best suited to handle those calls. We deal with a lot of people with chronic illness, mental health issues, chronic runaways, drug addictions, alcohol, addictions, all these things that really aren't crime oriented. And so we get caught up in situations and calls, expanding a lot of resources, and money in dealing with such situations and incidents that really would be best placed with another agency. But how do we do that? Because we've created this situation that there's no call to small, we will go to everything in anything. In a lot of times, I think our officers are put at risk, or they're expected to find results, or deal with a situation that they're not trained to deal with. They're not they're not social workers. They don't have a psychology background. You're not. You're not I mean, like, they, they're, they have to have all of these skills. And yet, there's their skill to, to respond to health, or sorry, public safety, right? Yeah, public safety and crime. That's our priority. But too often, we're dealing with calls that really shouldn't be law enforcement calls.

PC: Okay, sorry, I did remember the question I was going to ask about that documentary, it's really simple, how did that affect the CPS and your work, like, the release of that film.

BC: Well, my, well like my work area we-we deal with things on a just continual base, it's like, one call, one right after the other so we just, ya know we deal with it and we just go along with it and ya know there's always another situation that will take our, our attention or that we've gotta focus on something else. We deal with it we see it and we acknowledge it and we'll move on. In a real time operations center, we've if it becomes a protracted event like I've said, we'll activate the tactical operations center and they'll deal with that event. And we'll support them as best as we can, so we don't we don't kind of get stuck on this situation. Now the analyst and major event and emergency management she deals with those events, she deals with planned and unplanned events and her work has increased by almost 300% because COVID has cancelled all the planned events. The major planned events that she would do risk assessment, and risk triage on and we'll come out with an ops plan of how we're gonna handle that, that planned event. But now, for the most part, unplanned events, she's been doing a lot of open source searching and a lot of the groups she's dealing with is the anti-mask and the anti-government and she has to find out intelligence and information. To help us deal with the unplanned event that's

gonna take place tomorrow in front of city hall, so she's gotta assess the risk to the public, the risk to our officers, how are we gonna respond to that rally, or that protest, or that march, right? And because of what we've seen of what has happened in the United States, we, there's this potential that it can happen here in Calgary, right?

PC: You're referring to the Washington monument- or not the monument, the Washingto-

BC: Well a lot of the situations that have happened in the United States, like you talk about Ferguson, and [Dog howls] so many of the areas where they have had protests and marches that have resulted in violence and Calgary for the most part, we have a relatively [Dog howls] peaceful history of protests and rallies in comparison to Toronto and Montreal and Vancouver. Calgary for some reason have remained, [Dog starts howling very loudly] peaceful –

PC: Oh sorry, I have to get the dog, because he is crying

[Dog howls]

Interruption as **PC** puts the dog outside

BC: [Laughs]

PC: That was, my dog, sorry, alright so where were we?

BC: I was just saying, Calgary has, like don't get me wrong like, we've had a lot of our protests have been peaceful but there have been a lot of situations where two groups are aggressive with each other. And some, you know, some have been physically aggressive, there's been a little bit of physical violence and threats like that. But I think our, our law enforcement agency, the Calgary police, I think they deal with it very well. Sometimes we have to draw on other resources from other districts to help us handle a situation cus we don't have enough officers there, if it's starting to escalate, I think we're able to respond pretty good. But, back to that analyst position, it puts a lot of stress on her to try to fi- to try and come up with a risk triage and a risk assessment in a very short period of time. And it's put a lot of stress on that particular position. So if we tend to go back, to the way it was with planned events, and if the anti-government and anti-mask groups continue, her work is really going to be seriously impacted. She can't sustain it and, I'm either gonna have to find someone who can assist her, or we're going to have to reevaluate what she does focus on.

PC: Yeah, so speaking of the anti-maskers, they've been pretty constant, almost every weekend they're out and from what I've been hearing, they've been getting bigger with each coming rally and they're in public spaces now, like malls, did your- like, firstly, how do you feel about these groups?

BC: A lot of them are groups that have been around, for a while that we've, and we know some of the major players right and they've gone from just supporters of Black Lives Matter, let's say to other protests like at, like protests against pipelines and what not, so you've got like the walk for freedom, and freedom walk Calgary and we've seen these groups kind of come together and then they have parted ways. For me, when I assist Sharmene (?) or do background for her or help her out, she knows these groups very well. She knows some of the major players, she's been able to pick up on certain things that might motivate these individuals and it's interesting, I think that

some of them are people who are out of work and they're wondering why their business had to shut down. Because of the, policies of the government and I-I wonder the same thing. How come one business area is shut down, over another, I, I don't understand the algorithms or the-the rules of the government has applied to certain business and I think its, its unfair. And so for there's a part of me that, I understand what they're saying and I kind of agree with it, but I'm not at that point where you know, I'll go out and protest. I don't really believe that protests really amount to anything, I honestly don't.

PC: So, what do you mean by, the- the two businesses, like there's two different treatments that there's.. One.

BC: So just before Christmas the governor of Alberta, Premier Kenny, he closed down barbershops, salons, small grocery stores whatever. There was ah, casinos and things like that and, and yet he lets other businesses stay open

PC: Such as?

BC: Such as Wal-Mart, right? Grocery stores because they're considered essential, I'm sorry... I don't understand the formula there, or the thinking that, because the barbershops and the beauty salons had already proven that none of the COVID cases had, had come back to beauty salons or barbershops, why would you close that? A lot of those, those are people that, they are small businesses they're not chains for the most part, there's some chains – don't get me wrong. But this is their lively hood, and I can only speak from the perspective of my hairstylist. And she was closed down, she had to move out of her place of business she had to go and sign another lease with another location and she said, if I get closed down again, I'm not gonna be able to survive and I'm not gonna be able to – and she lost staff, she lost customers and-and she was doing everything that was ask of her. And I just, for me, I just feel that why is there certain contingent or population that far as I'm concerned were isolated and for a lack of a better, description, I would say discriminated against.

PC: Okay, moving on, we're just gonna finish the last question here, about this summer. Okay, hold up, sorry. So, I've recently seen that the anti-racism committee has been recently formed and has just begun working as of the 1st. So do you think they'll be successful in implementing successful change, to the police force. Sorry I, we jumped around a lot, that's my fault.

BC: No it's okay, so you're talking about a anti-racism unit within the Calgary police service, that has just recently been formed and I really can't speak to it, I honestly can't I have opinions and I, I – I'll say this. I think its, its good they created it whether or not they're gonna make change only time will tell. And I hope that they are successful in making some changes but knowing what I know from my career within the CPS.. I'm not going to hold my breath.

PC: Mmkay, so now, let's move onto the next group of questions and this would be about the 'Golden Handshake'

BC: Mmhmm

PC: Yea, [Laughs] so, you've been working for quite a while with the city and I'm aware that the City of Calgary slashed the Golden Handshake, can you tell me exactly what that is?

BC: The Golden Handshake is a term that really, since 1964 the city of Calgary has given their employees they will match their holiday so when an employee reaches retirement they get a pay of of their holidays so, lets say if you were an employee who worked thirty years so a thirty year employee with the city of Calgary, depending on what union or agreement you have with the city. After thirty years of service you might have form anywhere from 6 to seven to 8 weeks of annual vacation and some employees over the years have been able to build up and save those holidays and so what the city does is if you get eight weeks of holidays at the end of your thirty years. They will pay out those eight weeks of holidays on your anniversary day or on the date that you get those holidays. The city matches them, so you not only, not only would you get your eight weeks of pay for the holidays but the city gives you an addition eight weeks of pay to say thank you for your service. So sixteen weeks of pay, right, for some people, that's a lot of money. That's been going on since 1964, and councilor Jeremy Farkas – found out about it and said, no more, we're not going to do this anymore and a city of Calgary employee is not allowed to accept anything. We're not allowed to accept a thank you card, like we get thank you cards, granted, but we're not allowed to accept anything of monetary value. Chocolate bar, pop, bouquet of flowers, a gift card – nothing. We can't accept anything from the public. We don't get any bonuses other than our holidays, training, going on trips. That is considered a privilege and everything is documented in we get reimbursed for our, anything that is goes towards that trip and nothing more. So, this year councilor Farkas said “no more,” he's putting an end to the golden handshake so anybody who retires after December of 2021, no longer gets that golden handshake. So any employee that was hired prior to probably our, any employee that's hired after what I think it's 1995 will no longer get that golden handshake. To me that's discriminatory, to me, and then when I look I just think how unfair it's a slap in the face to those employees that are what, what, two, five six years away from that – that, that you gave it to what. Employees from the last fifty some-odd years and now all of a sudden we're not gonna do that, so this year alone, the city of Calgary is gonna see a massive exodus of employees because they're gonna take that golden handshake so, the city is gonna pay a huge amount of money to retired employees that they normally would never have paid that amount because not. And they're never gonna recuperate from that, because they're never gonna recoup the loss of employees that they're losing. Because of that golden handshake, so he might think that he's done the city a great service by saving money. But in the long run the city is gonna pay out a huge amount a money that they weren't – probably don't have in their coffers. It's probably gonna cost the city a lot more money in the long run but yeah, good on him, what a wonderful person he is, because there is nothing to motivate a city employee but that golden handshake. And now that it's gone, that motivation goes and so no-no one in their right mind would want to stay for the city for twenty five or thirty years and say “no we're out of here – why should I stay, there's no loyalty? I don't get anything” I certainly don't, he's totally destroyed my motivation for being a city employee and that's the thanks you get for being loyal. And doing a pretty good job, and you look and the oil and gas industry in Calgary. Calgary has been built by the oil and gas industry and because we're going through an economic downturn so what, you, you penalize the people that have given you some loyalty? The oil and gas industry have always always provided bonuses to their employees for their service. And, this is Jeremy, or sorry, this is how councilman Farkas treats city of Calgary employees, he's a wonderful individual and I say that with as much sarcasim – sarcasm as I possibly can, uhm, yeah... he's great.

PC: Yeah.. So now we'll move onto the final question sheet here, one of the final ones, and this is about the pandemic today! Sorry, so, do you think eventually work will return to how it was in 2019.

BC: No

PC: No? not at all?

BC: No

PC: Okay, why would that be?

BC: Well I think the work has pretty much stayed the same I think what is gonna change is the work environment, we've proven that people can work successfully from home. Sometimes they're more proactive from home, so I think in that sense, we're gonna see a lot more people opting for the ability to telework maybe not fording the week, but two days at the office and two days at home, I think that's where the work environment is gonna change, I think we're gonna see. Before, the COVID, you, the commuting traffic was horrendous, I think that we could argue that if I work from home I'm not contributing to the pollution by driving my car every day. I don't need to take the LRT (Light Rail Transit), right? There's a lot of things that, to me, I think they're positive that have come from this and from working from home, I think there's negatives as well. But I think that we can work around some of those negatives, yeah.

PC: Okay, yeah, no that answers the-

BC: I mean, I don't have the specifics but I think it ultimately has changed and it's going to, to continue to change.

PC: Thank you, next with the gradual rollout of the federal vaccine distribution plan, has the atmosphere in the office changed at all?

BC: Not really, for me, I think that our officers, I think that they were saying that our officers that the front line, or our first responders should be getting the vaccine by the beginning of April. And I think that will help a lot of them deal with, you know, the PPE because the PPE, that they wear every day is, it's not that comfortable and they have to do it in ya know, from, a car which is extremely hard for them. And it's uncomfortable when you think about all of the other equipment that they have to wear, they've adapted very well. I think for them it will help them tremendously in terms of the office and my personnel, I think some of them will feel less anxious if they have the vaccine so. I- you know, I mean, they've really done a good job and they've, I haven't had a lot of, we haven't had any positive COVID cases knock on wood [knocks on wood] but I, I anticipate that it will probably reduce some of the stress.

PC: mmkay, thank you, when are you going to be receiving the vaccine, or do you intend on receiving it.

BC: Yeah, I don't know, I guess when my time comes, if they offer it to us I'll take it at work, if they don't I'll take it when I'm eligible, based upon my age.

PC: Mmkay

BC: mmhmm

PC: And you were just talking about how hard it is to wear a mask, but do you see yourself carrying out any pandemic precautions or practices after it's over?

BC: Yeah I think, time will tell, I think I will continue to wear a mask when I'm out in public wherever I am, until I feel comfortable, do you know, there's so many they talk about the variants and what not, I think we'll see personally myself I will probably continue to have a mask with me and wear a mask when I'm going into a public place.

BC: Yeah, for quite a while

PC: Alright, and when, when do you think the pandemic will end in your just best guess

BC: Officially, I think we're, like, I think we're in it till the end of 2021, I don't know why but, I think we're gonna see some changes as we move into the fall and the winter. But, 20- I would say by the spring of 2022 I would think that maybe a year from now.

PC: Mmkay

BC: Alright? Hopefully

PC: and why do you think it'll take that long

BC: Just in terms of, what we've seen so far right? The numbers, the you just think that, it's getting better and then the numbers start to creep up again or you see another variant and then there's other risks that they are identified. I think just like anything you wanna be cautious.

PC: Now we're just going to move on with the conclusion, so what have you learned over this past year or rather what is the most positive thing to come out of this pandemic for you

BC: My son

PC: Oh thank you [laughs]

BC: [Laughs] Um, I think cus you've been home and you are very very cautious and very much aware of what's going on. I tend to, be, less cautious because of I'm still out and I'm working and I'm out and about and getting things and grocery shopping and I'm wearing my mask and I think that's sufficient and I've always been, I'm totally opposite from you in that you're very cautious. And I'm just the opposite, and I've always been kind of a risk taker to some extent and if it happens it happens and we don't wish of anybody to be sick and I certainly don't want to be the person who is one of those asymptomatic carriers and I worry about that but, I think in light of what you have done in terms of – I know you're not happy being home, I know that you want to be out and about and I want you to I think that you're missing out on, certain aspect of your development and your young life and I want you to be able to experience that and you haven't been able to and yet you remain positive and focused and that says a lot to me. And that's extremely positive for me, to see that in you. Because, it's so easy to be negative and get depressed and get down and so on. Say I can't do this, can't do that and yet – you have remained diligent and focused and disciplined. More so disciplined than maybe I am, and you amaze me, so I'm very proud of you and I think you're the positive spot of my life if I can say that.

PC: thank you, that's very sweet

BC: Without like, being too ya know, sappy

PC: [Laughs] thanks mom, thank you. Final question, is there anything else you'd like to say or other topics you'd like to touch upon.

BC: You know there's so much that I'd like to say, but because I'm being recorded I'm just always apprehensive and because of my work I have always always been, super sensitive about what I talk about and what I can talk about. I- I am very, opinionated and very verbose and I am often, I'm wrong. And I think it's important to be able to acknowledge that and I'm still learning, I'm 57 and I'm a lifelong learner and I'm still learning and I'm not afraid to admit that I'm often wrong. That my perceptions are flawed, and that I am biased and I have a tendency to focus on something negatively and I think again, that's where I'm appreciative of you to sometimes say, ya know, there's a different way of looking at that or I think you're wrong or please don't say that because it means this and at this and this and you don't like it when I say that. Or I say it and I make a certain comment and you will immediately identify to me that that's not, correct, and it's not appropriate and I- you're not admonishing me, you're just educating me. So I appreciate that because, I think I went through that with my mom and so I think that's part of your responsibility is to continue to educate me

PC: Thank you [laugh]

BC: [Laughs] Sorry to put that burden on you, but I think it's important but I am not right, and part of it is my culture, part of it is my work culture I think I have a tendency in this interview I said some things and I- ya know there's part of me that I don't necessarily agree with what I said but I can't say anything different because. Just – just of the situation I think if you asked me 10 years from now, my questions will be different, but I have been I'm in a situation where I feel to some extent – I'm very very fortunate with the people that I have had the opportunity to have worked with. I've seen people that have been marginalized and devalued and they're fantastic people – they didn't deserve it, because they are from a certain ethnic group because they don't speak English or they don't announce their words properly, they have been passed over for promotion. And I've seen that, myself – these past five years I've I've experienced it myself, the fact that I've gotten old and that I've put on weight. I've, I am looked at differently at work and I'm treated differently at work and I think that – that is something that people just refuse to acknowledge but it happens every day. And if we can change things I think racism is – you said, to me, when you educated me Black lives matter first and then all lives matter and it seems so simple, to explain that and it's the same when we talk about systemic racism and systemic cultures in these work environments. That until we acknowledge that we treat people differently, we're- nothing's going to change. So you can create as many units as you want with this many different names as you want, but until you acknowledge that there are problems – you're not going to fix that problem. And if you put the wrong people in those units, you're not gonna fix it – you're just gonna, its smoke and mirrors and you say all the right words, but you don't actually fix anything. And I've seen that happen over and over and over, and after a while – you get tired of, people saying hey I'm doing a good job, yea you're doing a great job

PC: [Laughs]

BC: We're not, and I think there's a lot of evidence to show that we're not.

PC: Well, thank you for your time, I really enjoyed interviewing you, and I hope you did too [laughs] But yeah, thank you so much – that will conclude the interview

BC: Thank you

PC: No worries and I'm just gonna stop recording right now, thank you

BC: Thank you.