Transcription Shaen Johnston

**Interview Status: X open to public (1A)** [X] open to public (1B) 🞏 anonymous

**Name of interviewee:** Shaen Johnston

**Name of interviewer:** Aeron Renstad (With Tyson Fraleigh and Liselotte Riehl)

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**Editorial Note:**

This interview was fairly difficult to transcribe, as the interviewee speaks very quickly and has a tendency to stutter and repeat halves of sentences. We also had audio failures throughout the interview, and have to use multiple devices, so it has been split into sections with numbers and runtimes.

**INTRODUCTION** *We just met Shaen at Charlevoix metro, we put on the mic and started walking. Runtime 1:37*

- [Interviewers]We’re good to go.

- [Shaen] OK, so this, we’re at 2510 rue santre. Mission de grande berge. And this is a fabulous place, I…

- [Interviewers]keep going its fine.

- [Shaen] I’m no good at, um I’m no good at names at this stage of my life I never was so its getting worse. (Laughs)

- [Interviewers] all good.

- [Shaen] But, um… but this place is a second-hand store, so on the main floor you have furniture, and some clothes, and a kitchen. Upstairs you have, clothes and accessories and kitchen stuff and so on and so forth. But, what’s interesting is that these, all of the proceeds going to this goes to the kitchen, and that kitchen produces meals and distributes them to street people, everyday, well five days a week, I think, I don’t know about Saturday and Sunday but five days a week. And it’s been around a long time and it’s, it’s fabulous, you know? Like really really good. They have volunteers coming in, helping with this, helping with that. They also have paid volunteers too, but it’s its such a great thing, you know? It doesn’t stand out much in the community, you know? You walk by it and its just a little bit above your eye level

- [Interviewers]uh-huh.

- [Shaen] yeah, here we have two, we have two Indian restaurants here, one of them is the first one that moved in, and that’s the uncle, and I think his nephew moved in, just like four doors down, its like “oooh, ouch” (laughs)

- [Interviewers]Perfect.

**Part 1** *After this, we dash into a Dollarama to get some water and gum for Shaen, then continue the interview outside the Dollarama. Runtime 16:40*

- [Shaen] There we go. I moved here in 2009, I had been living out in the country for close to 20 years down at the border, Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle, most people know Hemmingford better because it was Hemmingford Zoo. So, I moved in here and inherited my daughter's apartment, which we'll be seeing in a moment. Not the inside, but I'll talk about that later. So, I was there until three years ago in The Point.

- [Interviewer] Okay.

- [Shaen] This is such an amazing community. The fact that it historically, it's boxed in by the canal, by the river, by the bridges, Victoria and Champlain, and by the trains, makes it isolated. And as a result of that, there are a lot of people here that don't get much out of the community. I mean there are buses that'll of course take you out, it's fairly well serviced by buses, it's just much more community, what can I say? It's quite surprising. Okay. We're looking for the name of the street.

- 01:25[Interviewer] Totally.

- [Shaen] I think it's the next one, but I'm not quite sure. No, it's this one. Okay.

- [Shaen] Alright. I'm taking you to the location, where one of our citizens, person in his thirties I'm guessing, decided that we needed music in The Point on a regular basis in the summer. I can't speak for him, all the evolution he went through to come to this. But anyway, once a week having outdoor concerts, small scale, it could be an opera singer, could be country, could be jazz, could be a trio, you know, all sorts of things. It's really fun. His house is located officially in the lane, and they haven't forced people to tear those down, but they were allowed at the time, whereas now you're not allowed building a house that the main entrance is in the lane way, you know?

- [Interviewer] Sure.

- [Shaen] The house in front of him was demolished for whatever reason, I don't know that, and so this space on the street became available. I have to double check, because things have changed. They were looking for grants to get help with amenagement, What's amenagement?

- [Interviewer] Moving?

- [Shaen] The setting up, the setting up. No, it is further. Sorry, I just wasn't quite sure. Sorry about that! Don't usually come here in winter. It's charming. Oh yes, that's true I also wanted to, just so I remember, take you to Northern Electric.

- [Interviewer] You were telling us about that earlier.

- [Shaen] 'Cause that's really important and its impact on the community.

- [Interviewer] Would you mind retelling the story for our interview?

- [Shaen] Absolutely. I'll tell it when we get there. I'm sort of thinking out loud so I remember because I hadn't written that one down. I spoke about it to you but not to, yeah.

- [Interviewer] So you were just talking about bringing music to The Point?

- [Shaen] I'm just wondering if something happened. Since I haven't been living in The Point for three years, I come here regularly but not in the same way, when you walk the streets every day, you see the little changes that are happening.

- [Interviewer] Yeah, totally.

- [Shaen] Yep.

- [Interviewer] So when you moved here, did you find you got involved in the community involvement stuff very quickly?

- 04:40 [Shaen] Now I'm worried, where the heck is it? This is just weird. I was 99.9 per cent sure, [inaudible] Where did it go, don't tell me they closed it down. Could be. Alright, I'll inquire a little more. When I came I inquired around what was going on, took me a little while to get my bearings, but then with, which is that umbrella group consultation. They're the ones that umbrella all the community services here, and they're an amazing entity and they've done fabulous things in the community. All the community groups get together once a month and discuss what's going on, they don't just discuss what's their problem or their needs or their successes, they're taking care of what everyone else is doing. I do not see it, which is really, really bad. See, it would have seen, been an opening like this, with a house but with nothing, and then a house behind. It was sort of tucked behind, it wasn't officially behind the opening of the free lot. Okay, I'll go the other direction. Don't think I'm crazy, but you never know! I can inquire, you know? I will inquire.

-06:40 [Interviewer] [Inaudible]

- [Shaen] Oops! You okay? No snow? Sorry about that. I thought I was walking a pace.

- [Interviewer] [Inaudible] It’s all my fault I thought I’d been keeping up. I didn’t realize this was once a month, has that been a pretty longstanding tradition here?

- [Shaen] To my knowledge. They are the center of the shakers and the movers in the community. [Community Directors Name] has been director of that for quite a number of years. She's quite amazing, we usually have a very interesting team. They're worth dropping into also, that's true. I don't know. How many places can we hit?

- 07:40 [Interviewer] We got all day.

- [Shaen] Okay well, we'll go here. Just in case. Made a wrong turn I think. Usually my sense of direction is good, but in this case, no. I think we're safe. Okay, we're coming up on it. That's good. He gets together groups of musicians that when we're having, for example, open house once a year, [inaudible] the groups get together and they do fundraising for a specific cause. So it's not like we're all gonna do something, and we'll each come back with a little bit because we did the effort together and so on and so forth.

- 08:28 [Interviewer] Like a block party?

- [Shaen] It's bigger than that, in that all of the bigger institutions are involved. Okay, here it is. Alright, we're good. This is it. As unassuming as it looks. The atmosphere here, people bring their own chairs, in the middle of winter there's nothing really to look at, but there's lots of plants and greenery and flowers. Let's just walk back in a little bit. I'm pretty sure it's still here. As I say it looks very unassuming at this state. But this is his house back here, in this person's backyard. It's pretty interesting. He doesn't have access because this is the back. That's a lane way back there, it's not a street. All sorts of amazing things happen here, people bring their children, people bring food, I can see if I can't get pictures in another season because obviously, there's not too much atmosphere right now, it's really effective, music I got a Facebook posting which was talking about all of the advantages of music and I knew quite a lot of them, but not all of them that they were naming, like medically how important music can be in your life, to your good health, your blood pressure, and neurons firing in your brain, and you know, just so many things. It's such a good intermediary between people.

- [Interviewer] Oh wow, sounds like a really nice community event.

- 10:14 [Shaen] Yeah, the get-together, its usually, we've done it in the arena, which is in the community center, over here, we'll go by it. Sometimes it's been done in our own building, each building in other words had sort of an open house, in which they're inviting the community and new members and visitors to come in and familiarize themselves with what goes on between their four walls, and raise funds. At the Carrefour, that's where I learned right here, we'll cross the street. This is a gorilla garden, that this person also initiated, which is cool. When I moved, all of the plants and veggies I had on my second floor balcony, which is a fairly large balcony, I thought, okay, I can't take these with me, just so happens where I'm going, so I brought them here, you know. This is once again, initiatives taken by the people. I think that's what's so unusual, a lot of it starts by one individual saying what do you think, and asking around with friends and so forth, and sometimes they'll go to a group, and get some official ideas or funds or not. And just go ahead and say, you know what, I think it's a good idea I'm gonna try it anyway.

-11:47 [Interviewer] Wow totally.

-[Shaen]There's practically a church on every street corner down on Wellington. This is Center Street, so these are big. They're verging on becoming cathedrals, I don't know when you pass the line from a church to cathedral, I'm not certain. But interesting story here, they're both Catholic, one's French, one's English, talk about the divide. Look at the resources. If I understand correctly, the French one burned and the English one accommodated them for a while, but then they got tired of it. So, with customary Christian brotherhood, they asked them to leave, to go build their own one. Oh my goodness, can you believe it? It's just totally incomprehensible for me, whereas today, we're looking at more and more of the churches. I just met up, have to remember his second name, with Brian at the Church of the Anglican. And he shares his church with a Korean community, he shares his church with a Native community, so you're talking about three different services in different languages. Isn't that the way to go?

- [Interviewer] Totally.

- 13:24 [Shaen] He's really getting into green gardens, local growing, community gardens, and so on and so forth. The communities are moving more and more that way. But there's not enough hours in the day to do everything you wanna do, you know? Maybe we should stop by the Carrefour because we're going right by it.

- [Interviewer] Okay.

- [Shaen] We'll just do a little zig-zag back and then we'll continue down. I haven't walked my dog on a leash in a really long time. This is much more delicate, at least your ears don't get pulled off.

- [Interviewer] That's the dream.

- 14:13 [Shaen] Should've crossed because it's on the other side. This was a school, and a lot of the schools have been converted to community services, or it's been converted to condos. I forget what this is but its been converted to condos. And now there's a population boom.

- [Interviewer] Sorry to stop you, just wanted to make sure that the bus is a bit loud in the background. Would you mind repeating it just once?

- [Shaen] This building here looked like a community building, I honestly don't know what its use was before. It was a community building and now they've converted to condos and this also was a school to my knowledge. I think they do some housing upstairs but it's more businesses on the main floors. The objective in the community development is to try to have main for commercial, at least on the main streets, and then upper floors for residences, so we're promoting local commerce. The problem is with all these schools that got converted, we now are in the process of having a baby boom. I don't know if you've noticed, sometimes there's an actual traffic jam with baby carriages on the buses. It's like, so we have to build schools now again. This just doesn't make sense. It would've been wise to have kept some of the buildings in community service at least, like that, it could've been transferred back to a school. Okay, we'll go in here. We've been threatened for three years now, four years, with closure, because this is part of a whole network of public education, which as I explained earlier, the courses that are given here, there are literacy courses.

**Part 2** *At this point we turn off the Microphone only to cross the street. 2:48*

- [Interviewer] Okay, there we go. If you want to hold that.

- [Shaen] Yep. This is Carrefour d'éducation populaire, and so it's part of a whole group, a network of adult education institutions. Here, they teach literacy, there's computers, there's stained glass, there's sewing. I took pottery here for quite a number of years, the courses were free, all you paid for was the material and not even the ceramic paint, but just the clay, yeah. So this place has been fighting like crazy, and they were trying to cut these back and we've been hanging by a string and the government's been changing so fast. A government would come in, and then they wouldn't make it, even through a full year, and they'd get voted out, you know, they'd be taken out. So it's been really hard to try to keep it going, and they keep making promises. And then the next person, new person comes in, so it's like, how do you, you should move just a little bit to give people passage, how do you manage this? Three-hour course, the middle you stop for half an hour and you discuss popular education. And that's what's really cool, you might be talking about women's rights, you might be talking about a specific development, building development, that's going on in the area, and do we want it? And what are the pros? And what are the cons? And what are the problems? And do you wanna get involved, you know? So there's people of all ages and walks, and they cater also to a fairly large group of people with handicaps, mentally, emotionally, physically. So it's pretty cool to meet people that, despite their intellectual capacity, they have an idea of what's going on and what should be done, and this is important. You know, good ideas. I've been a teacher for close to 30 years, and I could just, once again dawned on me, everybody has something important to say if you can find the way to get through to them and for them to get it to you, you know. We often cater too much to the intellectuals, too much to the experts and here people on the ground of all walks are being educated for years, so you can imagine the impact that has on the community. Very, very interesting. Really, really cool.

- [Interviewer] Yeah, wow, sounds like a really important--

- [Shaen] Yeah, it really is.

**Part 3** *At this point, the microphone died and we switched to Tyson’s phone. Runtime 5:24*

- Here you are!

- [Shaen] Even when I moved here, people were saying, "You're going to Pointe-Saint-Charles. "Oh that's a risky area, you know that's very shady area." It did used to be, it used to be a really really rough area. But... Generally speaking, it's not that bad anymore. You know I'm not, I would come home at two o'clock in the morning from some sort of meeting, or event or whatever, and feel safe. I would not make a point of walking through the park alone, with big dark trees and so on but, you don't do that anyway if you're smart. But it's really... I think this was a school too, there were tons of schools. I mean, if you consider that this was where the Industrial Revolution happened, in Canada, in Montreal, no, right, right here, along the canal, that's another story up along the canal of, all the industries were there when they put the canal in. And so they were getting, and their supplies arriving, and they were getting their energy from the canal. Because there was a certain current. So we had a huge amount of industries here, It was really really important. Now of course we've shipped them all off overseas. So up here were coming to a park, that used to be part of what was called Goose Village. So what I can gather, I mean this is on the flight path of the Canada Geese and the Snow Geese. So yeah, a lot of them pass, it's right on their flight path. They the use the waterways, and the big waterways, like the Saint Lawrence to fly over. Gives them good lift and so on.

- Yeah!

- 2:12 [Shaen] Yeah! I'm assuming that's why it was called Goose Village, because the native people were very active near the, near the river. That being their highway of course. So this part goes right through to Charlevoix. Sort of long and narrow! So we've got to Charlevoix right at the end, like Saint Columba House is just right here. Here you have the library which is a former of fire station. We should stop in there and see if they have the stuff that you might need.

- [Shaen] Yes! I mean, why not, we're here. This is the arena, and the swimming pool, and so on. So it's pretty important a community too. And then the train is just behind these condos here. And they shunt in the middle of the night, and you can always know your in Pointe-Saint-Charles because there's never a place you can be where you won't hear trains, literally they're always present. I'm not saying you won't hear trains at other points in the city, but here you can't get away from them. They're always there in the background. And they... They've been really important, our... But cargo come through here that should not come through, here very dangerous cargo. Right through, and why, because this is not considered, Mean, it's becoming yuppy, but it's still considered to be favorized area. Getting them to, since the big accident out in,

- [Interviewer] Lac-Megantic!

- [Shaen] Lac-Megantic. We looking at, okay what's the speed when these things go through with fuel and so on and so forth. And there was actually a derailment here. And there's a school just over here behind this building.

- 4:10 [Interviewer] How long ago?

- [Shaen] Not that long ago, within the last five six years. And the railway didn't even notify the the Mirror, or the security, or the police, or anything. Now, what went off the rail was, for what I can make out, plastic pellets, so it wasn't a threat. But that could have been anything that had gone off to rail. No so, that these products are coming through downtown is coming through a residential section, and maybe downtown is really outrageous. Railways have quite a lot of power still. Still I shouldn't say yeah, absolutely. So we'll go in here, is this a gorgeous building? I love it,

-4:58 [Interviewer] Yeah, It’s beautiful.

- [Shaen] It is, it's beautiful! absolutely love it. So go upstairs and I can pull out, what I brought along, I brought along some documents myself. And then, we'll just go to through the kids place just to see it because it's fun.

- [Interviewer] I think we're gonna have to cut the audio now so it doesn't... [inaudible]

**Part 4** *We turned off the recording briefly to enter the library building beside the train tracks. After grabbing some books about the Point. She showed us a book about the mural and its creators. Runtime 12:15*

- [Shaen] Hang on after that, no, no.

- [Interviewer] So.

- - [Shaen] Actually. You decide, no, so this group of citizens from Point Saint Charles were artists of different sorts, like she's a stained glass, glass-on-glass expert. She is a glass producer also, but three-dimensional objects usually. Huge variety here in the group, and we worked, she's an art teacher, so on, so forth. We worked from the autumn right through until, I think, the beginning of May just getting the project together, working on different sections. And we decided because there had been a mural project prior to that that had, it just didn't work out because if you look at the way it is these are grooved so people were doing panels, and it was very so-and-so was going to do this one, so-and-so was going to do that one, and we were looking for something that was really community, that it was a group project. So we worked together on ideas, on these long strips, and we also did exercises and looked at other people's works around, you know, around North America and Europe, and the types of murals that are out there, and there's so many different ways and things to do. And so much, and we didn't want to just reproduce another historic mural, you know, we've had that. We want something more with the history of this particular section, and picking and choosing things was really difficult. So this is, this here is representing the new wave of immigrants from North Africa, and this is just a rough sketch, okay? And here, we, this is a little bit harking back to Le Petit Prince, the Little Prince, Saint-Exupery, and so is the little fox up here you'll see. So the way we did it is we drew it small scale, sketched it and then we project it because none of us had experience with large scale. So it was really it was a lot of fun. And you see like we were trying different things. What I really enjoyed was the fact that there was such sharing. In my case because I had an idea, and people had tons of ideas. They would come with a whole bunch of ideas, and we'd try things, we try to fit them in and work together. I had a praying mantis what was it, street lights, and everybody loved it but they didn't know where to put it. So then somebody else transformed it, and it became a hanging plant in which the heads of the praying mantis were coming out of it. And then our artist that works glass-on-glass did it in glass-on-glass, you know, so it's just, so it's like a three-step thing where each person added the grain of salt, changed it, and you don't get stuck in the this is mine.

*A librarian comes and brings us some more books.*

- 03:16 [Shaen] Oh, merci, merci. Like, it's mine, nobody touch it, you know, and this sort of sense of exclusiveness can become overwhelming and competitive, which is like, nah that's not what you want. So we had to seal off the wall, it's a very long wall, and we had a series of young group of I believe kindergarten students that came to help us. So we would block off a section, so okay you're going to be doing this, here's yours, you need to do. In this case I think it was, we had a band the flag of the LGT

- [Interviewer] LGBT.

- 03:58 [Shaen] LGBT, I can never say it properly, sorry. And because they've had it on a couple of other things too, so like the perfect, which at the end of, so we had the rainbow flag, and the kids put their hand prints on it. And I said to them, imagine, you can come back with your kids, and say I participated in this, and there's my hand print, you know, this is art. You know the sense of involvement of the community was absolutely fabulous. This is another group, this is I'm not quite certain which group this was, but we had huge variety of kids and adults coming in, and day camps so they would get the overall effect. So deciding what we were going to be doing and how, including some history, including some presence, some things that are going on actually now and so on, like I'll do on the spot because in the beginning we have on the wall, you begin, you have the native people, then and now the family of the tribe of the turtle, and in the old traditional dress and then in their new clothing, you know, with denim but with the signia of their different tribes. So I think this might be useful. What's particularly interesting is we had grants from something called l’Engrenages Noirs. What's engrenages in English? Engrenage, engrenage, mmm. When you have cogs, you know, the way when you've got motors and you've got wheels. Yeah, gears, I guess if you say the Black Gears. And they promote community projects, and when we got a grant, we had a similar group that was getting a grant, and it was going in and doing art in prisons. We had another group doing art with puppets, with immigrants that had lived extreme war conditions, and so on and having all of that, and they couldn't talk about it directly but through the use of puppets, they were able to. So just to say these people promote projects that really involve the community, and yes we worked, we conceived this, but we did also when we were finished our conception, we consulted the public, said, you know, do you think we're missing something? Because I mean we had to pick and choose, you know, what do you think, what about this, what about that? Someone said there are no animals in there. I thought, oh thank you, you're right. We have no animals, and there are plenty of animals here in this room, cats and dogs at least and squirrels and what and pigeons. And so there was feedback and as explained within the year there was vandalism. And the large portrait of a North African woman was totally desecrated, painted in carefully all in white, which was really just awful, so awful, but it was so interesting because the whole community rose to it, and wrote against and wrote to the local, the small, local newspaper, and it pulled the community together even more, and people like, how dare they. People when we were painting it, people came by daily to see the progress and chat and exchange and share stories, and in that way it was a very, very enriching experience to be in contact with the community because yes, in my case, I was involved in different groups in the community, we did all sorts of things. But it's not the same thing as being in the street, interacting with people as they go by, really, really cool. So that's, that would be good. These just, these are a little bit of close up. Like for example, here the North African woman.

- 08:03 [Interviewer] The one who got painted over?

- [Shaen] That's the one that got painted over. And it was redone but not by the same person, which is too bad, I'm not saying, I'm not making a comment one way or the other, but it's just, you know, the person makes the effort. But here this person is holding the symbol of the clinic, which is like a young sprout, but then in the background we have the community gardens, which are really important, which we'll go around and see community garden, which I belong to since I arrived here, and I found it wonderful. It really, great place for meeting people, discussing absolutely everything in the world, and learning a lot because the which we'll go to in a moment, they have horticulturalists and specialists in permaculture, in this that and the other, so you're constantly learning and sharing, and getting food that'll last you, like my freezer is pretty much full of veg, or has enough veg to last me until the next season comes in. Which I'm not saying that's all eat. I need to supplement it with certain things, but pretty cool, yeah. And so in this one which we'll be seeing in a moment, you see our, there's a co-op here, so we have the most co-ops, I think, I know in Quebec, in this area. So the government has stated, well, you're not due for getting more co-ops, you have enough. It's like, excuse me? If there's a need, we need co-ops, simple as that, you know. It's not, this you have enough. Everybody should have as much as we have. That's the way to look at it. But here I noticed, somebody seems to have touched this up over there, and they've, I guess, I mean it is graffitti because we have the shamrock of the Irish, who are founding members here, and the Fleur de Lis of the French on purpose dancing together, and I notice something's happened over here where we'll check that out when we go over there. It seems to me that some of the identifying things have disappeared, which is no good. Supposingly an Irish harp, but I've never seen an Irish harp that big. For me an Irish harp you can put it on your lap. So that was interesting, and then Goose Village, we have the Canada geese. You'll see them because of the area, it's right close by so that was included also. And you see the industrialization of the smoke stacks, and how black everything, it's also covered very well in the little one. I can loan you. I mean it was really important, the industrialization here, and when they described the pollution and the fact that the workers were working right there, and literally their windowsills everyday would just be covered with soot. Well you could imagine what this means to your health when every day there's a thick, and if they put out their laundry, it would be darkened when they brought it back in,

-10:47 [Interviewer] Right.

- [Shaen] so they, mmm, wow. Here we have a large fanfare, which comes out and across bridge and up out of the Industrial Revolution, and this is typical. We have a lot of demonstrations here, like people rally very quickly around things, causes and so on. But the person that did also included all our members. So here's the person that does the stained glass. This is the person that's quite known for the portraits. This is my daughter, this is me. [inaudible] You know, give or take because they didn't claim to be portraitists. And this one is a group of youth, sort of looking into the future if you want, so you've got multiethnic young people, working together, just hanging out, and so on. So, the values of community, which are really, really strong here, working together, pulling together. When industries pulled out, from what I can make out, a number of women that got together and said, we have to do something about this, we can't just, we're going into poverty. We must get together, we must make a difference, make a change, and so on and so forth. That gives a little bit of an idea. And I'll show you more on there. We can, I thought maybe what we would just do is photograph these.

- [Interviewer] Sure.

- [Shaen] And you can see, like that. We can come back and take them out, out of the car, so.

**Part 5** *After leaving the library, we walk under the train tracks to get to the mural. Runtime 13:26*

-[Shaen] Great, OK, so, here we have--

- [Interviewer] Oh, sorry, just my--

-[Shaen] Yeah.

- [Interviewer] Taking it back just a little bit. And good right there, perfect.

- 00:05[Shaen] OK, yeah, so, here we have the mural, Point-Saint-Charles, All Dress Made by the group Au pied du mur, at the foot of the wall. And so we have some historical things, some social events. We have a huge variety of things here. So, we have the Canada Geese here, first representing Goose Village, which was here. The native people, I would expect, would have been doing major hunting during the migration.

-[Interviewer] [inaudible]

- 00:45 [Shaen] Yeah, because it's on the flight path of the geese as they fly to the arctic. And then, we have coming out of the water, we have the turtle representing the Turtle Clan, one of the clans. And we have native people dressed traditionally, and then, the Five Nations modern jacket showing that symbol. And then, we see all the canal, which is really important for the industrialization of Point St. Charles, where all the industries installed themselves along the canal for power and for the shipping and receiving of produce and finished products and raw materials. And you see the black smoke stacks. And I remember, even my father, who was a professional painter, as in paintings-- That, at the time of my childhood, showing smoking smokestacks was a sign of things getting done, progress being made. You know, absolutely no thought for air getting polluted, destruction of the atmosphere. You know, I mean, no, no-- Even the impact on individuals and their health was not really being considered; it wasn't thought about. So, we have this large demonstration here, which is, you could call it, it's half between a party and sort of, walking band demonstration because you have cheerleaders back there, and so on and so forth. But, Point-Saint-Charles is well known for his mobilization around important issues. And getting people-- We get people down to where the members of parliament are. We get people to where the, you know, our Premier offices are in downtown Montreal, and so on. What's also fun, is that we have different symbols like the fist with the thermometer in it. That goes back to an earlier group of people claiming social and economic justice, and so on and so forth in the Point. So, yeah, here goes-- That would be nice to get a shot of that on the move. You know, the Canadian Wheat Board Commission. So, this isn't toxic, at least if it spills You realize, houses all along here, they stay long. They put together the trains and take them apart.

- 03:24 [Inteviewer] I love how they've included the sign posted to the mural.

- [Shaen] Huh?

- [Interviewer] I love how they've included the sign post--

- [Shaen] Yes, yes.

- [interviewer] In the mural.

- [Shaen] It's a chimney to a fireplace in there, yeah, yeah. And the people in the front of the crowd, quite a number of them, are members of the artist that participated in the conception and the painting of the mural. So here we come to our typical two-story brick buildings. Which, at the time, like, a friend of mine has a place just a block and a half away. Those houses would be containing two families. And you're talking about, on one floor there would be a bedroom for the boys, bedroom for the girls. And when you're talking about a bedroom, and you're in there with bunk-beds, and you can barely walk, you know? There's not a lot of space. And you did most of your living in the street. There wasn't enough space, you know? You had your kitchen, and it didn't look like a kitchen that was big enough to sit all the family down in. You know, it's amazing how packed they were. And you have a co-op here. Which is really important. Point-Saint-Charles has a generous amount of co-ops, but still need a lot more. The rest of the Country has to catch up with them. They're the example to follow We need more. And our dancers here, you'll notice, when I showed you the picture of the original one, the man dancing with green pants had shamrocks on his pants representing the Irish population. Somebody's come in and done something about that. And the woman with the blue top who's dancing, looks like they're doing maybe the tango, I'm not sure. She had fleur-de-lis. And where have they gone? This is very upsetting to me. If you look at the children playing, we've one in the foreground rather in semi-modern day, but looking pretty sooty. And we took advantage of whatever was in the wall. These cracks and things, they stayed there, you know? We didn't have the funds to fix the wall. But the child in the background is dressed rather in an overall type of thing with puffy sleeves and sooty clothing. She looks more from 1800's you know? With lipstick, and then the staircase is so important for the external access to the buildings, which is typical. Down here we have a child feeding the ants some leaves, or getting leaves from ants, not quite certain. And this is what I was talking to you where we have the suspended pot of critters, which are sort of the heads of praying mantises. Done by one of the artists, which was transformed like a three-step process. Somebody produced one part of it, and then they decided, OK, that doesn't fit in anywhere so we're gonna change it from lamp post to something in the hanging plant. So that's done with glass, which I just love. Think it's so effective.

-06:20 [Shaen]This here, where you see La Point, at night you can see red rose sign, like that. Downtown, right at the harbor, from here you can see it. Which is really, really important. Sorry, pivoting. We legally couldn't put red rose flowers there, so we put La Point, but everybody knows that that's representing these flower mills down here that were really close at hand. And sorta the idea here, we have something rather resembling I don't know, a Viking boat, which no, I don't think Vikings stopped here to my knowledge. But it was more of the idea that we're all in this rowing together, an expression en francais [inaudible]You know, where, we're all headed in the same direction. But it's being held up by a montgolfiere. A hot air-- I guess we call 'em zeppelins in English. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then, here we have the first wave of immigrants who would be typically ... In industrial times, Irish. And British Isles, a lot were brought over as engineers. And then, workers for the bridge. There's a whole graveyard at the foot of the bridge they discovered. Where the immigrants-- The working conditions were vile, and dangerous. And they also came in with typhoid and a whole bunch of things. They had the big warehouses that were changed into-- Sorry about that. Places to put these people up while they maybe survived. And not, you know, many, many died. Which is one of the reasons-- And the children that were left without families were taken in to the French-Canadian families, they were Catholic, so, that was a possibility, you know? So, this woman, this is an actual reproduction in her hair-- In her headscarf, I should say, of the industrial area. So, it's a replication of a map. Yeah, and she's blowing-- There are a lot of poplars around here, a lot, a lot. And in spring it's so deep that it's almost like snow. You know, it's mm, 10, 20, 30 centimeters, sometimes. So, she's blowing those. So, over here, the birds that are flying over are obviously not all-- We have a redwing blackbird, OK, that's native, but the rest of them are pretty tropical looking But we have a child making shadow puppets, and then, them becoming real birds; just fun. A group of youth of mixed heritage from all over the place, hanging out together, representing, you know, hope in the future, and peace amongst all the groups. Forget what language, forget what color skin, you know? Forget, forget that. Not forget it forever, but with respect to your relationship to other people. That it should not be blocking you. And here, all these little hands were made by a group of kindergartens, students. And we have this person, sort of dreaming about the world and where are we exactly on the globe. And it's a-- I try to remember that. Yes, it is, actually, the writing that's on his pajamas and so on is from La Petite Prance. Yeah, and we have the ... Gay flag. And we have the new generation, head of a woman from North Africa. So a new wave of immigrants coming in. And so important in our community, too, you know? It's like, the only thing certain in life is change. And then we have, this is to represent-- We have the gardens. [inaudible] The Community gardens, and then, I forgot to say, the North African woman is holding the symbol of the clinic, which is very, very important in Point-Saint-Charles and throughout Quebec because it's the prototype for all the CLSCs.

- 10:43 [Interviewer] Right.

- [Shaen] And that was begun, to my knowledge by McGill students.

- [Interviewer] Mm hmm.

- [Shaen] So, very, very interesting. So we have community kitchens, a little bit being represented. They're cooking up some corn there. But then, they're selling vegetables and so one, because also the Ecole Populaire has-- It's sort of a service desert here; there are not a lot of stores for people to buy. There are a lot of convenience stores, depanneur. But not a place to really go and get stuff, you know, all the supplies that you need. So they have come up with a store that is run principally by volunteers. And they sell fruits and vegetables and so on, pretty much at cost price. So it's run by mostly by volunteers, and it's to provide a service that's really badly needed here. That one was done, mostly by a Mexican artist, yeah. So, the different contributors were really amazing. And people leaning out the window and chatting to each other, et cetera, et cetera. We've got, I mean, the dog sitting there, looks more mm, Mexican, I'm not, you know-- Which his fun, because people bring what they know with them. And then, we had this les murs parlent, the walls talk. The idea was that people could paste things up there. And you know, whatever event was coming on they would do it. But people started posting things up which they were invited to do, and then others came and tore them off. No, no, this is our mural, it's a painted mural, you don't touch it, so I was like, hmm. We're having trouble getting this idea across. So here is the perspective image that from right here, no, it may not seem like, you're actually gonna go off into the country where there's a mountain in the distance, and so on. Mount Royal, prior, maybe, prior colonization and citifying. But, two blocks down where you start seeing it from the bike path, you really do feel that you can drive right through it. And these are fern birds, fantastical things. Critters that-- And then, at the request of having another animal, we have, I guess, a white wolf Which is fun. So, it doesn't have to hang together as a logical thing sequential. It's a mishmash of all the different aspects of our community. And when I say all, it's like-- This needs to be flat. I'm having trouble Change hands.

- OK, yeah, over.

- [Shaen] Alright.

**Part 6** *After the mural we decided to start walking down to a coffee shop. Runtime 3:21*

-[Shaen] After that you can pick and choose. So, talking about the architecture, which Natasha Exandrov was saying, is very particular to the point. It was built early on in the Industrial Revolution. Yes, Industrial Revolution. This particular house belongs to a friend of mine. She owns the whole house, and as I said, it's contained two families. When you go in, it's not that big. And you think, "Where on Earth did they put two families?" In those days, families were big. They usually had five kids, at least, you know. So, as I said, a lot of time you would be living in the streets, in the taverns, in the schools, in the community kitchens. I don't know how often everybody was under the roof. At night they would lock the girls in the girls room, and the boys in the boys room. And I thought, "And what would happen if there was a fire?" 'Cause there were fires, that's sort of terrifying. Another thing that's typical, although I don't see it on this street, is what they call la porte cochere, which was a drive-through for the horse and carriage. Which would go into the inner courtyard. But, it also became a part of the architecture in that, a lot of people could access their apartments by going through and coming in the back. So they managed to have more people housed in that way. I guess, I'm not quite certain. I guess the type of buildings, the stone, the brick... they're not a lot of... ritzy richy buildings here honestly. That's quite decent, but you get into other sections and it's quite fancy. It must have been pretty industrial looking. They've done quite a lot of work with respect to planting trees, and getting flower pots out, you know the city, to make it greener. Because this had very little greenery. If you could just put la serre, there still isn't much greenery. Where's at least here, they have quite a number of parks. And they're working on getting more pocket parks, and so on. I was looking at, oh I know where it was, yes. Hold on! In Verdun, there's a restaurant that I discovered has a whole bunch of pictures. And quite a number of there are Pointe-Saint-Charles. And they showed tramways coming through here, and a whole bunch of things that don't exist anymore at all. So it's sort of fun, it might be, it's right near the Metro. It might be worthwhile to drop by just to toot. I think he said it was his dad's collection. So we'll cross, because it's just over there to the right. Yeah, left I mean.

- 3:12 [interviewer] I'll just drop everything else.

-[Interviewer] That was why I do it. Hey Tyson, you wanna stop that? We're gonna have to chop that recording 'cause it's just me going "Oh!"

Shaen 3.0 *We briefly stop the recording to enter a small coffeeshop, where we grab some coffee and sit at a table. We ask Shaen to specifically focus on herself in the Point. Runtime 9:47*

- [Shaen] [inaudible], I'm sure I can find it on the Internet.

-[Interviewer] [inaudible]okay.

- [Shaen] So, good?

- [Interviewer] I think we're good to go.

- 0:08[Shaen] Okay, all right, I ended up in Pointe-Saint-Charles quite by accident to the extent that I didn't choose the area. My daughter was in Paris on an exchange student program, and her room in a large apartment was available. I had moved outta my home and left my ex and needed a place to go, and it saved me making any decisions like I just, it was a good fit. I inherited, it was quite fascinating, I inherited two of her roommates. It was very usual, that's a whole other story in itself, some really interesting things. If I had known, I would have chosen to be here just because, I guess, my background. I come from artistic background. I taught, I was formed for ecology and language arts, high school, but I taught most, I taught some there, and then I taught more primary just because out in the country that's what I closer to, and I was a generalist because of my background. With a very strong sense of social justice, environmental justice, economic justice, and this is the place to be if you want to fight for justice and look for change and be in a community that really, I'm not saying every person you meet on the street is aflame with this sense of make change, make your contribution to the community, do something meaningful, not necessarily to make yourself famous but to really bring about change, which is so necessary. When I came here, I thought, wow, this is so amazing. As I mentioned earlier, the fact that Pointe-Saint-Charles Clinic is the prototype for all therefore all of Quebec. To my knowledge, it started, as I said, by McGill students, and then if you talk about community gardens, they're really important in that movement. If you talk about legal aid, the legal aid clinics, free legal aid clinics were begun here in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Not sure once again if that has something to do with McGill, I think it does, which is interesting that they should choose to come here because this has been a very down and out area since industries left. People were struggling to make a living because employment was gone, so it was very difficult, and then if you talk about women's groups, [inaudible] what's going on Quebec? How should you go about things? Go check out and see what Pointe-Saint-Charles is doing. There's so much going on here, and yet how many Montrealers have any idea of any of that? Not much, not much, the fact that they have, which is to say, I'm not certain how we say that, but anyways it's an umbrella group for all the community groups that keeps them connected, keeps them organized, keeps them going in the same direction, chooses goals that the whole community want. For example, they wanted to bring in the casino to Pointe-Saint-Charles, and they said with the amount of welfare that's here, with the amount of unemployment we have here, this would really be a bad thing. We've got enough problems with certain abuses, alcohol, I'm not saying that they were record or anything, I'm just saying that leads to, when you're discouraged and so on, so no, we don't want that. We're fighting that and they won. They win a lot of battles and where we're dropping over near, [inaudible] and so the railway is changing spots. They're putting rail yards in a different area and so on. What was once the center of all the rail for all of Canada is now being pulled back, back, back, back, and they sold off this huge piece of land, which was the shunting yards and the upkeep yards for the trains and so on. They sold it off for $1 to, oh dear, and I can't quote which company because that would probably give them a tax break, and the land is contaminated by how many years of industrialization and heavy metals and all the metal that just comes from ... They didn't take care of the oil or whatever, all the products used for the trains either to make them function or to keep them in working order. All of that garbage, where did it go? Well, right there, didn't go anywhere, it stayed right there, so ... When the community got wind of what was going on, they said hey, hey, this is a center of, historically, of our community, we want a part of this and we need ... I mean, there are buildings on the property that could be renovated if they're what's the word I want, detoxified? What's the word, that's not the right word ...

-5:35 [Interviewer] purified?

- [Inteviewer] Cleansed?

- [Shaen] They'll all do put together, and so there was a long fight, and now they've won a certain area where they're gonna set up a microbrewery. They're gonna set up workshops for the local artists that they can have at reasonable rates because there are quite a lot of artists of all sorts in the community, but they don't have the funds to have a working space, so they work where they can, which is not ideal. They're gonna have community spaces, they're gonna have agriculture, not that we don't have agriculture already here, but we need a lot more. If you're looking at the climate change that's coming at us, we need to self-sufficient, so we need to use as much, have as much agriculture production in the city as possible. If you look at Lufa, which is the first rooftop commercial set of greenhouses, organic, they were saying if they could have the roofs of 10 shopping centers, I think they said, don't quote me on thisbut anyway, not a massive amount, they could feed all of Montreal. I'm just saying the possibilities are wonderful, and we should be looking at self-sufficiency and knowing that transportation is one of the largest pollutants contributing to climate change, then growing locally is really a worthwhile enterprise. It has so many good side effects, I mean, they talk about how it helps build community, how it links generations, how actually the microbes in the soil are good for your immune system. There are so many spinoffs, so many, so many, so this is gonna be a wonderful project, and this section of Pointe-Saint-Charles is the least well served. At the far end of the, this isn't officially a borough. Pointe-Saint-Charles doesn't exist officially anymore, it's part of the southwest, but it exists, it very much exists. Pointe-Saint-Charles, you have to go right to the extreme south limits to get to IGA and Maxi, big stores. After that, you don't really, you have little stores, and they're trying desperately to get this main street of Wellington, which used to be important as a shopping area for whatever you needed locally. They're trying to get that back up, but then you have the challenge of, which we're gonna go see if we can see it, of Northern Electric, which is being transformed into condos, as I said, for for teeny, tiny people or maybe maximum a couple, and it's gonna raise the population of Pointe-Saint-Charles by 25%. Those people are gonna have how much say, 25% of the say in what's going on here, and they're come from aways. People that are going to be in ritzy, expensive apartments that are disconnected from the community, don't know anything about the community, and the main floor, which is good in some ways, but not so good in others, is going to be used for commercial reasons, but it means that some of them will never maybe have to even leave their block to get whatever they need. Part of the fight was to say okay have certain services available in there but not everything. They need to get out and promote the local economy, make the wheels go round.

- 9:42[Interviewer] Here, let me try to check this.

**Part 7** *We briefly stop the Phone recording to make sure the file doesn’t get too big, then Continue. Run time 15:56*

- [Shaen] So talk about the billing of Northern Electric. I think that was an aha moment for me. Getting involved in public confrontations, participating... It was a huge supplier of electricity, a huge employer in the Pointe and I guess they got bought out, who knows when. A while back because the bank has been here for quite a while. And so, the decision was being made what to do with this building, and who's gonna take over and what were they going to do with it? And so, I was involved with--I'm trying to remember if I went through--Anyway, I got involved in the whole public consultation called this [inaudible]That's consultations on a whole bunch of things. And projects happening, roads, developments, transformations a huge variety waterworks--A huge variety consultations and this is I think one of my first ones and that really gave me the taste, like we were fighting the fact that they were making tiny apartments when we need a variety of apartments. We need something for singles. We need something for couples. For young families, for retired people, something that represents our whole community. When its a huge building, you're talking many many units. Why are making it for a specific section of the population? We just didn't find that reasonable. And also the idea of trying to preserve some of the appearance when they were transforming it. The way they can do it is change it totally and then you don't recognize it anymore, it's like okay, you saved some of the structure but I mean, where's the history? And then also the idea of pushing for commerce, but also have it outward looking; that this is not an independent block. So that whole process was an initiation for me, and that was an aha moment and since then I've participated in a lot of public consultations. I now have my--what's the word be? My I'm not so sure? That's not the correct thing, it will come to me the word, in a moment. If I get holes in my memory for words they haven't disappeared permanently but temporarily. Annoying, I live with it. Other people trying to figure out what I'm saying. But what I found is that at these consultations, you learn so much from other people. You learn in the process of preparing for it, getting your act together, getting your ideas together, collecting information. But, you hear from all sorts of specialists of all sorts of professions and so on. Think oh I never thought of that prob--oh this is really important, I should include that. It becomes part of your knowledge. So in that way, for me, I think it was really an aha moment, but then again, with further involvement, I've come to realize that these people they have their decision makers they collected depending on what the specialization is, they will have specialists deal with that, and put it into words, put it into a booklet and make recommendations and buy order of priority based on the input from the population, so on and so forth. Then, they hand it over to the city and then the city does damn well what it pleases. So it's like What the [makes an oomph noise in place of an expletive] is going on? Because this costs a fortune, this process'. So if they're not adhered to and you've had top specialists that maybe the city doesn't even have, and you've had an upswell of public opinion about something and it's like meh, nah. We'll just go what we wanted to do originally. It's like no, I gotta kill somebody. Not really, but you know. So that here's where we're working to change the laws and regulate what can be done, what part of recommendations and piece of percentages that must be adhered to, where it has some teeth. As I said, I have my predecessors I guess. Back in Osette for me is like a real showcase; that's another aha moment of when you look at what they manage to stop big projects or get involved in and the power of persistence and getting the community involved and that's it. You don't stop. That's been a lesson to me also, because when you look at these Goliaths' you think, there's no possibility that we can win against these huge corporations that have an in with the governments and different levels, how are we ever gonna--but where there's a will, there's a way. I don't mean to make it fairy-tale like, that we always come out winners, but things are changing and they change because people want them to change. As I said, it's a fight. You have to fight. And people have said to me, with respect to my environmental involvements, "You're up against the Goliath, but who won?" I know that sounds corny, but its really true, if you think David went against Goliath, wow, what were the odds? So, I think that's a very important--I'm a fighter. Things don't come easy in life. The good things don't come easy in life. You have to fight for them. And looking at that as a way of life, but when to pace yourself because I have a great jaw problem. That's also to be learned. Don't put your life on hold for a cause. Or say I'm only gonna put it on hold for this month or these two weeks, and if it spills over you say, okay change of plans. I go back to living and I will continue fighting. You can wear yourself down and wear yourself out, for whatever cause it is, so it's just important to try to maintain a balanced life. I know that sounds like pounding for the pulpit but I just gotta learn from my own lessons. Gotta learn. The carrefour was another aha moment. Like I spoke to you earlier, the fact that people with not as many functioning neurons as yourself, uh that's not really relevant. Many people at many different levels at many different capacities can be surprising in what they can share with you. So, we're so much in silence and academia is way up there and the rest of these -lower-class- And it's like nu-uh. They have a lot to teach you. They have a lot to learn and that's not. We obviously, each of us is not gonna be able to make that connection with everybody. That's just not realistic. There has to be something intangible that allows you to make that connection. But recognizing that that's really, it's out there and the constant exposure of the people to public education and raising their awareness of economic, social and political issues and so on. Nonstop for years and years and years. You're making a really informed public. Oh yeah, cause that's what we need. We're apparently ignorant to so many things that affect our lives so, I think that's really really cool.

-[Shaen] 8:40 The power of one, once again. Le jardin, [inaudible] We can go over and visit at the site of the demolition of several engineer’s houses. Engineers that were brought in from Scotland a lot of the time for the railway, and I'm not quite certain what happened. I think the demolition went on, and they were gonna do such and such a project and it didn't materialize and you just had this sort-of messy lot sitting there. And Silvie decided that she was going to change it into a garden, and she's worked on it for years. Sometimes people join her, and sometimes they don't, but once again the power of one, and then the influence in the ripple effect is very empowering, so once again, that's a really good lesson. The clinic having the guts to not become part of what they were the prototype for.

- 9:41 That's a constant fight because the government is always trying to absorb you, they don't want this. It's like a little thorn in their side. Why would you content with the population? I know what they actually want on ground level. So that's--sticking to your guns despite pressure, despite everything because sometimes means they will not be getting as much funding as. And right now the government is going mega. It's pulling things together, making them their less and less intermediaries between the top and the bottom, which makes it sound like it's more efficient but you're removing a lot of the level that is in common with the population that does know what's leaving the area and so on. You're just removing them, we're back to top down which is not good so... And then there's Maison Saint-Gabriel, which is historic site of the fille de rois. The kings daughters were sent over to be the wives of the [inaudible]. The fur traders who went inland right to the community where they could get the first ones on. And it's wonderful that its here, and then you have-- this will probably have to go off the record. But you, it's okay, leave it on and you can-- you may be able to cut pieces out without to much editing and still-- so it's really interesting friend to have but the person that gets it, is once again not a community member, a person that's there for their own, I am one of whom and look at what I done. They have incredible power, they have contacts with historical society. And they have contacts with the rural levels. You're thinking, okay, so for the 350th anniversary of Montreal, not the one we just had which was like why are we doing this? Spending a whole lot of money when it's like okay, we're gonna do one every year, what are we doing? We're going to put a pathway in that has the names of all the people that came on the first boats.

- 12:16 That's sorta cool. Many of the major families descended from those few women, which is quite amazing. Don't let me forget I have to show you the mural over here, done by professionals, which was to celebrate that and the women are all headless. We were painting our mural up the street from them, at the same time and they submitted it, but, on the board to chose who got the contract with somebody that was in their group. She was like "hmmmm. Is that quite right?" and we saw it painted and I said "Why don't they have heads?" Well we didn't really know what they look like, they weren't people that had portraits done. They were too poor at that time. That didn't stop Michelangelo from painting God, or the Heavens of the Sistine Chapel, what is this? And so we're thinking, okay, well basically these women all we needed was strong arms and their uterus', that's just it. They didn't need heads. We were really, really tempted to go out and put large pumpkins, inflatable pumpkins or something on top to give them heads, and paint faces on them just because, it's like this is wrong. You know it's not right. For me it's like, if this had been a jury of women would that have been decided like that? It goes so much against the grain of Women's rights. Just knowing that your DNA they get 50/50.

-14:09 [interviewer] But that one 50 is always lesser.

- [Shaen] What is this, so looking at the power play of important people in the community, gives you pause for reflection, How it can be fabulous, and how it can be less fabulous, it's good that it's being run but I mean--

- [Interviewer]Yeah, there are some.

- 14:38[Shaen] Individuals fighting their fights but having the support the fact that we have accent gardienne, it's so important. Ecole Cartierre, which is 'house' in YMC, which is the bottom here I can show you. They're very involved in greening up the laneways. Pushing for agriculture, because once again, we have had a huge consultation on urban agriculture. I brought in the second list of signatures in all of Montreal, and the recommendations were amazing, like I described the other, I was like, okay, what's going on, if you don't pass the action it really doesn't serve anything so anyway, yeah, I think I did want to show you my place going by just because as we say, it was such a wonderful place to come to. I think that covers it. [inaudible] like, that’s great.

**[End of Session]**

**[Shaen Johnston]**