

## Canadian LEED Fellow and Green Building Expert Josee Lupien | Transcript

Charlie ([00:02](#)):

Welcome to Green Building matters. The podcast that matters for green building professionals learn insight in green buildings. As we interview today's experts in LEED and WELL. We'll learn from their career paths, war stories and all things green because green building matters and now our host and yes, he has every LEED and WELL credential. Here's Charlie Cichetti. Be sure to check out the green building matters community where you can have unlimited exam prep for any of the professional credential exams you're tackling next as well as putting your continued education on autopilot, saving time with GPS reporting your hours on your behalf. Check it out. [Gbes.Com/Join](#). Now enjoy this episode of the green building matters podcast. Welcome to the next episode of the green building matters podcast. I'm your host Charlie Cichetti. Today I've got a LEED Fellow from Quebec, Canada. I've got Josee Lupien, Josee, how are you doing today?

Josee ([01:15](#)):

I'm very well. Thank you. Thank you so much for the invitation.

Charlie ([01:20](#)):

I know you're a materials expert. I know you're a LEED and WELL expert. You're a LEED fellow. I just can't wait to learn more about you and some green buildings in your region, but I always like to ask , take us back. Where'd you grow up and what'd you notice?

Josee ([01:36](#)):

Yeah, well, I honestly my career was a little bit different depending on how far I went step by step. I first studied health and science, which makes sense on what I'm doing right now, but initially I wanted to be a nurse so long, a far away from what I am actually doing. Finally I went into interior design as a next step because I started my study in nursing and finally it wasn't exactly what I was expecting. From there I got my company for interior design for about 12 years. I've been able to work with architects as an architectural spec rep early in 2000. Finally I found that the green building at that step

was sounding very interesting and the wellbeing of the people. So it was all aligned with health and science, as I like to take care of people that my first idea was mainly to take care of people. So for me, it was quite clear that the green building focus was my future carrier. We founded our company, my husband and I in 2008. So almost 12 years ago.

Charlie ([02:56](#)):

Congratulations. And I can tell just that background, you're quite the nurture. I've got to imagine, I know you're a WELL AP right now, the early nursing background and then buildings and spaces, all that must be coming back to you naturally. Huh?

Josee ([03:13](#)):

Exactly. So it's kind of a way that we're not at all expecting at the right beginning of our career, but as we move forward in life and with the experience and opportunities, so it just makes sense to go in the direction we should go.

Charlie ([03:28](#)):

Fantastic. Well, was there maybe though an aha moment or just when did you really really know though? Okay. Green buildings, that's what I'm going to do. Did something happen or you just kind of gravitate towards it.

Josee ([03:42](#)):

I can almost tell you the date and time. So it's clear, it's clear enough for me, as I said, I was for an international company and architectural spec rep and in 2002, we were at the first LEED projects in our region. And so finally for me, I was so curious about what is LEED. At that time we even had a hard time doing waste management under construction. So imagine we were far away from what we are now. I became a volunteer for CBBC Canada Green Building Council. I was a founding member of the Quebec chapter and I was also sitting on the board as a member and even a president for 10 years. And over time it was clear, clear, clear that finally it's my goal in my life to do something for the environment, for the people. I decided to leave my employers, which I was working for 22 years and no more pay, no more pension and no more vacations. So we went from there and on top of that, my husband also decided to leave at the same time. Four months away from

when I left. We became quite fast as a company the early adopters. Should I say in 2008 on green buildings?

Charlie ([05:20](#)):

Congratulations. Well, one thing we've got to clear up for our listeners because there's some listening all over the world doing LEED in Canada. How was it different? Do you have to use a slightly different version through the Canadian GBC or no, it's really the same program, but maybe these credits are a little harder to do. How is LEED a little different in your region?

Josee ([05:44](#)):

Well, first thing we should just recap a little bit that initially LEED as we all know, came from the USGBC and then the CGC Canada green building was found in 2004. And from there we first had to adapt the rating system and the reference guide for example standards adapted for our region, for example energy. At that time, it was a challenge for the CGBC to go through all the approvals steps with the USGBC. But the thing is finally, we even got our documentation in French. Imagine. So, yeah, it's a very, very wonderful job that the CGBC did with the US green building council and over time I think the relationship is really there. We now have to refer to the international rating system with LEED to before. But before that all versions of LEED 1.0, 2009 were adapted to Canada to our region. So, and there's not that much difference, honestly, mainly on regional materials, their rear radius was a bit different, a bit different. I'm sorry. And the visibility on some critics maybe were different, but what I felt is the USGBC for sure, was always a bit in advance. Our challenge for me was, well, it's still that we have as a, should I say a second step? We have new things available because it has to go through the first USBC. So that might be my comments overall.

Charlie ([07:34](#)):

That's very helpful. Thank you. Because I knew it was a little different there, but just for all the listeners, Canada really is number two for the amount of LEED professionals, leading projects. It's definitely a great green building rating system to use, obviously that's a French accent you've got. So you've been in Quebec for most of the career, right?

Josee ([07:57](#)):

Yes, absolutely. I would love to live in California, but I'm born in Quebec.

Charlie ([08:04](#)):

Did you have any mentors along the way or somebody you looked up to in this sustainability movement?

Josee ([08:12](#)):

I have to be honest. It was mainly the overall network that overtime we built in green building because let's say as a Quebec chapter and CBBC, I've been on the steering committee with the CGBC and for me, it's really about the collaboration. It's not only one person that made the difference for me because every person may have an expertise or an idea or a vision on specialty or something different. That for me, it makes sense that it's not only based on one person, but for sure when we founded the Quebec chapter in 2004, we were about less than 10 people around the table at that time. We were sharing ideas and vision all together. So I would say it's mainly probably the Quebec chapter in the CGBC and the network around and all of that community, I should say.

Charlie ([09:18](#)):

Wow, what a small group at first, I'm sure it's large now, but probably a passionate group of peers to do that work together. Thank you for sharing. Tell us more about your firm and what's keeping you busy today. What kind of work do you do?

Josee ([09:34](#)):

Yeah, I have three different divisions, virtema. We first are for sure, managing LEED projects, WELL, zero carbon projects. So that's a big part of our business. Our revenue year to hand, we have a different team members specialty on life cycle assessments. So what we do is the environmental product, declaration health product declaration. Actually, we are the only Canadian company that is approved as a prepared verifier from HPD collaborative. I'm also involved with HPD collaborative. I'm on their board of directors. So it takes me time, but as far as I'm part of the community for me, it's always important. And the last division that we have is something we really work and especially with the COVID, we were working online on an integrated design process. So it makes sense to be aware, to think about collaboration online, but honestly it works very well. We're managing a lot of the big projects such as hospitals, WELL, healthcare and schools. There's

about 15 school projects around in our region, overall Quebec. It takes a lot of time, but we liked everything we're doing.

Charlie ([11:04](#)):

I'm a follow up question there. A lot of professionals, you and I included, we admitted before we started the podcast today, we're working from home here, reporting this in the middle of the pandemic. And some feel it is hard to collaborate virtually, we might do a lot of zoom meetings and go to meetings and we feel like we're productive. We only have essential meetings. We're checking off to do lists for being good project managers, but any quick tips on how to be collaborative is something you found that really works?

Josee ([11:38](#)):

Yeah, actually for me, all meetings have to be very prepared in advance to give them the time also to get, to be prepared to by providing them documentation or anything that will support the time and activities that we will manage during the meeting. I could say it's part of the, for me to succeed because when we are online, maybe sometimes it's difficult to explain in detail. So we gain time and we're more efficient on the result, as far as they have information before the meeting to be well prepared.

Charlie ([12:16](#)):

It's so important to prepare your mind, right. How does the team I'm about to be with want me to show up? So thank you for sharing that. Tell us about some cool projects you and your team have worked

Josee ([12:29](#)):

Actually, I could be at my first LEED project, or it could be my last one that I just signed, which is a five year project on healthcare over a hundred million dollar. It's kind of a very exciting project. Actually, for me, every project is exciting in terms of the challenge that is different from one project to the other. The project team is different actually. It's always the end resolve that makes it very exclusive because we all want to do our best and make the client satisfied. And on top of that, I have good environmental results such as the wellbeing of the people we do work with and the promoters that I really like to work with because they are aligned with everything that is going on. Let's say it's going to be maybe the WELL health and safety, or

even a WELL certification or LEED project for new construction for operation and maintenance LEED certification. So they are looking for overall, green building is not just one time in life. It's going to be something that evolves over time. And the objective might be different over time. So I love to work with an organization on the overall big picture of the direction. So for me, that's probably the most important which each client and that's part of the success of what what's going to be, the result

Charlie ([14:07](#)):

I can tell you really love what you do. Let's look back on that. Highlight reel a little more. It's a humbling question, but what else are you really proud of? For example, I've got to ask about your LEED fellow. Congratulations. What did that mean to you to get that?

Josee ([14:25](#)):

Yeah, that's a good question. That's a good one because honestly, I was initially shy to promote myself as a, I would say a high person in the, in the level of the knowledge of my contribution to the green building industry. That's not something where the first step to say, Hey, look why I'm the best. So it's not my style at all. So finally people around me and my network told me one day, she'll say you should apply to be a LEED fellow. I said, no, come on. How could I apply to something that I will just be the one that's saying I'm good, I'm fine. So finally I decided to follow their advice and people supported the process to the board, my candidature. And so from there, I've received my LEED fellow and I was so surprised because when you're doing things, because you think it's the right thing to do is good, but you never have in mind that it's going to be, to be recognized. For me, how was the time of my life that I really have been recognized for something I did for me that was natural to do so.

Josee ([15:45](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. That was very proud. And the other thing is I was proud also to pass my WELL exam, which is not very, it's not so easy to pass the exam. I use the tool of your organization by the way, Charlie, to support me on that. And that's mainly the exam prep that made the difference. So yeah, absolutely. I passed the first time and I was so pleased because honestly it was a hard one.

Charlie ([16:17](#)):

Absolutely. It is. It is. And you know, we've been doing the practice tests and prep for a long time, and I really, really appreciate that actually over 12 years now, it's hard to believe. Let's talk about the future of our green building and sustainability movement. What should we be reading up on now? Why are you tracking? What do you think is around the corner?

Josee ([16:41](#)):

So the carbon footprint is really the focus and the wellbeing of the people. For me, it's really the direction that we may feel in the market that is rarely present in the focus that people are looking for. For sure the green building certification are still, and they will be part, but on top of that, the thinking beyond doing something or having a direction for a company or a promoter, or even an owner for what I see actually that is really the direction is on about the carbon footprint of the event, the organization, not just for the building. For sure the wellbeing of the people in their environment is really important because we all know that we were short staffed. We need to have qualified people. We want people to stay in our organization. So we have to offer a little bit more than over so I should think on or refer to even my parents at that time they were looking for an employee for life, but not now and not at all. We need to take care of the people around us and build something that we have the same values and it reflects on our mission, whoever we are as employers and employees. So that's the way we connect and then we can move forward and all work together.

Charlie ([18:19](#)):

Let's talk about both of those because I agree. Some others on the podcast have said, what you've said, which means, Hey, if you're listening, you need to pay attention to carbon and to just the overall wellness movement, not just in your buildings, but in your company. Let's talk about Carbon first do you see in Canada, some laws that are winding up more with not just the efficiency, but with carbon mandates. I know we see that in New York city now, first city, United States to really come out strong with carbon limits for our buildings on the efficiency side, but what's happening in Canada when it comes to how do we push

Josee ([18:56](#)):

Yeah, the objective by 2030 on reducing carbon is really aligned with different cities. Let's say just as an example in Montreal by 2030 we are

looking to reduce GHG emissions for 20%. And I think so they just change it for 30%. So it's a big challenge and we're not that far less than 10 years ago in 10 years in the future. We can absolutely feel that the cities are even the province are targeting some objective related to reducing their carbon footprint. It's not, as you said, it's not just for how we are consuming energy or how we perform on energy consumption, but it's also on transportation also related to simple our economy and Barden, carbon social. We do have the challenge you might have heard about that C40 challenge, which is worthwhile. And I was part of a team last year that we were finalists. We didn't win the competition, but, we were just part of the three finalists, but actually at least we presented a huge concept of, what a life could look like on thinking overall the strategy, not just the building, but the activities, the secret, our economy, everything in one project. So that opens our mind. Absolutely. No,

Charlie ([20:48](#)):

That's so spot on. I mean, we need it to be a public private partnership. Hey, let's have some government mandates, but let's also companies aligning with fill in the blank, Paris Climate Accord, or UN SDGs so we're seeing it happen a lot of work to do right now? You've got some WELL, and I assume probably some FITWell projects happening, but, but just in general, we had heard when, well, first came out for four and a half plus years ago, there was a lot of companies across Canada, like TD bank and bank of America, Wells Fargo that were doing WELL, kind of test it on some builds now. So tell us about some of the WELL progress up your way.

Josee ([21:31](#)):

I was involved also on the adaptation of WELL, or at least the evaluation of how WELL would be applicable in our country. And I was with a group of TD bank Cadillac, Fairview were discussing about their WELL projects. And it was the about three years ago if my memory is good. But from there, WELL, especially with the COVID the wellbeing of the people and the safe side, what is becoming very popular is going to be the WELL health and safety. It's not the certification, but it's a verification that it's quite new from a well, so actually that's something absolutely that is getting popular more and more with promoter, even with owner actually. But the biggest challenge so far we go with WELL is mainly the cost, honestly. And at some point the implication of the owner might not be exactly aligned with the criteria that we have to follow, depending if it's a tenant. So it's now possible to



have, let's say for interior, Wells are efficient now, which is good, but it's quite new. And initially that was part of the challenge we had. So

Charlie ([22:56](#)):

Early projects, always a little tricky, WELL version one, you'd probably agree. WELL, version 2's a little more accommodating already, et cetera, et cetera. Let's talk a little more about you. What do you think is your specialty or gifts? What are you really good at earlier? You mentioned bringing people together and collaborating and preparing. Maybe you're a great planner, but what are you really good at?

Josee ([23:19](#)):

Honestly, for me, it's I like first people. So collaboration for me would be probably my specialty gift because I'm always paying attention when we work in person or virtually to people on their reaction on make sure they can interact or even speak because that's the challenge we may also have sometimes even in both in person and online, so I'm always taking care of people. So that would be probably my specialty gift that I feel that I may have in all projects. So, yeah, and I, on top of that, my goal is always to make my clients and customers satisfied at the end of every project. So that's my personal goal.

Charlie ([24:10](#)):

That's fantastic. You seem like you'd be really fun to work with. So let's talk about productivity tips. You gave us a great one earlier about really being prepared for even virtual collaboration. But do you have any routines or rituals habits that you could share?

Josee ([24:26](#)):

I do, but it kind of evolves over time just as the big change we had to face with a COVID, we had to reinvent how we were working. Let's say just as an example for the integrated design process, that was quite a big change to not do these sessions in person. My day to day may be really a sample management tool project. One note that I can share with my team really connect with my team as much as possible. I have to work a little bit on my time management. So I'm not the best person to talk about a tip on that side, but again, I'm always willing to help, u,ople. So at the end of the day, it might be only my things that I didn't cover on my tasks. So it's not, it's not the best

scenario I should tell you, but I think so the focus should be a one tip I can share on having something to do and keeping the focus on and go one thing at a time. That's probably my best advice.

Charlie ([25:49](#)):

That's some good wisdom and you have to ask why don't we listen to that, but you're to focus on one thing until it's blatant and don't hold it in itself, but that's a great tip. So as we get to know each other more, I'm a fan of the bucket list. Are there one or two things you could share that maybe you're on your bucket list?

Josee ([26:11](#)):

My bucket list is again, I like to be involved with every market, even on international side. So for me, I like to share knowledge. I like to work with the organization even if both share my expertise, but, on the other hand also getting more expectancy with, more people that we can share. So that's one of my goal that I have on my list to try to have more time to be involved in different organizations, committees that I could be a volunteer or on the board or committee. So that's part of one of my objective, but also it's always a challenge to be an update on green building certification there. So there's always something new to learn. I may look for another, a accredited professional LEED for existing building. As far as I have Eed PC BD policy might be a good for existing building because this is something I look for over the time.

Josee ([27:23](#)):

I'm pretty sure it's gonna be more and more popular. And I do already have the, WELL I don't think so. I will go for Fitwell on the professional side, but if my clients will look for it, I will be able to do it for sure. And, but we have someone in our company that is an envision certified. So it's always about continuing education that we have to, we're excited about doing a professional and getting those accredited, professional certification as a person. But over the time we need to keep the assay continuing education. And that's probably the biggest challenge we have because it's always 30 hours each, a title that we have on, on the list.

Charlie ([28:10](#)):

It's a lot of hours. And if you've got more than one you're right, it adds up 30, 36.

Josee ([28:16](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. Even if you're a LEED fellow, you're not, you don't have any,

Charlie ([28:24](#)):

Well, it asked on the bucket list though, when it's safe to travel again, is there a certain place you'd love to go to or go back to?

Josee ([28:31](#)):

Oh, that's good. I went to Los Angeles for my LEED fellow. So for me that would be a good souvenir to go back there, but actually Europe would be great too, but actually, it's quite hard to think about traveling in this situation. I'm so pleased to be at home because I traveled a lot over the last six months, I feel very well at home, which is maybe curious, but for me it's a, just a kind of a good moment that I'm spending every time that I am at home compared to the times I had to travel a lot.

Charlie ([29:15](#)):

Yeah. I think everyone's really appreciated more just to embrace it. So just a couple more questions. Let's talk about books. Is there a book you'd recommend?

Josee ([29:28](#)):

I used to ask my husband to read a book and just share the story with me because as I'm working a lot, I don't have that much time to read. And when I'm trying to read the book, then I fall asleep. I have to go to sleep when I'm reading a book, but what I read is a really short story on, on standard, on, more on the technical side that I'm always pleased to learn. It's just shorter than reading a book, but for me, my favorite books are more on biography, something interesting on history. So that's mainly what I would love to do, but honestly, I don't have that much time. That's why I share it with my husband too, is we have a deal. So he read the book. And so from there, he just tells me the story.

Charlie ([30:26](#)):

So good. It's good to have someone that can summarize it. Yeah. My wife likes fiction and I like more nonfiction and business entrepreneurship, and that's funny. Two more questions here. One is, is there anything you wish you had known earlier in your career?

Josee ([30:43](#)):

Yes. On the human resources side. When I started my company it's important to see how to manage our team and also have tools to support the overall organization. But the thing is when in 2008 here in Canada, the green building industry was not that popular. We were early adopters as I mentioned, but it takes time to get a return on our investment related to the green building industry. So, my wishlist would be to have a better understanding of the added value of green building, but mainly for our client, because we were mainly one by one, each client, we were trying to explain what are the benefits and everything. So it was quite art to over the time gain on the end result was good, but we were, they were not good as it could be if the industry and the, the binding of the people were there at the right beginning. So we had to go step by step, honestly.

Charlie ([32:11](#)):

Yeah. Well, let's say there's someone listening to this podcast right now. Maybe they're just changing careers, either getting out of college and passing their LEED, green associate exam. What words of encouragement do you have for someone that's jumping into the green building movement?

Josee ([32:29](#)):

If you believe that's the way you should go, go for it, no matter what you're going to do, it's going to be helpful in different ways, but absolutely everyone could support the green, the WELL, whatever you look for and you feel that you have aptitudes and you believe that it's going to change the world, go for it because there is, it's never too late. My husband and I were 40 and 50 at the time in 2008. So now, you know my age. So yeah, actually it's never too late. If you believe in what you're doing and how you can change the world, go for it. And I encourage you to jump in the green building movement. Absolutely

Charlie ([33:16](#)):

Jump in. You heard it here. This has been Josee Lupien and coming to us from Quebec, Canada LEED fellow, and just an amazing passionate green building professional. So Josee, thank you so much.

Josee ([33:29](#)):

Well, my pleasure and thank you everyone for listening and hope we will find work with each other at some point somewhere in the green building project, or no matter which one, but always pleased to share with people.

Charlie ([33:46](#)):

I just want to say thank you to our loyal listeners. We actually are celebrating over one year here on the green building matters podcast. Me and the entire team are stoked. And just so glad to continue to listen every Wednesday morning to a new interview with a green building professional here in this industry, or just some pro tips that we want to make sure that you are getting straight from us straight to you.

Charlie ([34:12](#)):

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