

Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Jim Cardinal

Interviewer: Don Bouzek

Dates: October 2005

Location: Fort McMurray

My name is Jim Cardinal. I was born in Lac La Biche, back in 1951, and grew up in Owl River. A type of farm, but not really – almost in a homesteader type style of living. My dad did a lot of trapping and fishing, and that's how we survived. With sometimes work here and there for farmers and stuff, that's the only type of work we had around Lac La Biche. There was 12 of us. The older ones, when I came of age they'd already moved on. By the time I grew up, there was 8 left at home. That's the 8 that I grew up with.

Very isolated. My parents went into town once a month to shop. Other than that, we ate wild meat and what we grew in the garden.

No, not at all. I didn't know how to speak a word of English when I went to school. I had to learn the yes and the no, and how to ask when I wanted to go to the washroom.

Nowadays we say washroom; back then it was just the word pee. So may I go to pee. I did speak Cree. My grandfather spoke French fluently, and learned a few French words – I wouldn't want to repeat them here.

Our first school was a one-room schoolhouse where we had 20 kids from grade 1 to 9. That was the highest grade at the time I remember. We had a wood stove for our heating. It was great. Our teacher, Mr. MacCormick, was a good teacher. He was aged at that time already, well seasoned. I learned a lot from him. We walked about 5 km through winters of 40 below. We never did miss school, no matter how cold it was. There was probably

50% of us spoke Cree, and the other 50% were the farmers' kids within the area. People that we never associated with until we started school.

We were very cool. They got to be our best friends after awhile. When we first started, it was like anything, breaking new ground. You have to fight your way through. You know what the pecking order is, and that's how it was. After that you either got respected or picked on.

The next step was we got bused to another school, which was about 10 to 15 miles from home. That was a 4-room schoolhouse up to grade 9. Anything after that, we went to Lac La Biche. I remember in grade 6 I took grade 6 twice, because my best friend was in grade 5 and I waited for him. I'd do things differently now. But that's the thing about parents not being educated. They didn't understand how your kid would stay behind or not do enough homework. Today I recognize that. If my kid was slowing up, I'd be there to help him; I'd be there to push him on. We didn't have that then. That's the sad part, that a kid at that age would've been able to make that decision, and just for friendship. I still have a lot of friends, by the way, for that reason.

More like a homestead. The land that we had, my dad worked that place himself. I don't remember how it worked, whether it was a lease through the government. We had cattle, we had horses, we had chickens, like any other farmer. But we never did; we had a part where we cut the hay, and there's other parts where we went out 5 or 6 miles and cut hay by the river bends. That's where we hayed. We'd take that home through the wintertime with the sleigh, because it was a lot easier on the horses. That's how we travelled for maintaining our farm stuff. We didn't have enough land to do our own farming for our animals. We had a big garden that would feed 50 people. We had a root cellar where we kept everything in the wintertime. For refrigerator, we'd take ice in the wintertime and put it in a little cabin, and fill it with sawdust so it wouldn't melt. That was our fridge, because we had no power. It's a good experience. A lot of these things, kids would never understand it today. My kids wouldn't believe the way we lived. But it was a good life, and I'd never change it. It's a life that I'll appreciate the rest of my life. And then come to this, the life where you have electricity, everything, running water. I hauled water until I was 27 years old, 5 gallon pails. That's why I'm not as tall as I'm supposed to be.

Oh ya, as a matter of fact on our land, that was my trap line. We had muskrat, beavers, and all that. It was my job, from the age of 12 and up, to maintain that area after school. It was like a job for me. But the money didn't come to me, it went to the family. It went for food and all that stuff. Many times dad would be gone 2 or 3 months at a time. He would leave in the fall and not come back till Christmas. That was part of life. He'd be gone, and I was the oldest boy. I did all the work and the trapping and looked after the animals. Not bragging or anything, but that's the way it was. That's what I had to do. Mom was a very hardworking woman. She had to do all the washing, and they had to haul all the water for that. Any hot water, you'd have a wood stove to boil it. We were busy.

Dad would work for local farmers. After I was about 15, then dad and I would both go. That's where I discovered peas. I never had peas in my life until I worked for one farmer. Pea soup is one of my favorite soups, by the way. But anyway, we'd go there and work for \$5 a day. That's sunup to sundown. Eventually, when I got a little older, we worked for \$1 an hour. Things changed, even with the farmers. They had to pay a little more to get hands to help them. But I remember the \$5 a day, and that was a long day. That's what dad and I worked for, \$5 a day. That would be in the early '60s.

I had a brother, my oldest brother worked here in 1967, construction and building what Suncor is today. He invited me up in the summer vacation for a couple of weeks. He did everything to talk to dad to let me go. Dad finally agreed. He wanted to show dad that there's a future here for us, in McMurray. There's something happening, for me to come and see it. I came up here for 2 weeks. My brother enjoyed his time at that time, partying and having a good time, making very good money then. I remember his paycheque was \$282 clear. A gentleman approached him and wanted to sell him 5 acres of land right where the Syncrude Apartments are today. He looked at the gentleman and said, \$40 for my rent, \$42 to eat with for the next couple of weeks; what am I going to drink? So he didn't buy the land. A few years after I understood; I wished I'd have convinced him to buy the land. But he had a good 2 weeks.

I came back here in 1969 and stayed. Since 1969 I've worked with Bird Construction, local people here that had their own contracts, and Suncor site off and on since 1969. In

1973 I got hired with Suncor, and I've been there since. This is where I learned about unions. The first few years, I was very inexperienced about how the unions work and how you transfer within the area. I would've started with Suncor back in 1972. I didn't know you could transfer within. They wanted to hire me as a belt walker and I refused because I wanted to be a trade person. I wanted to be into a trade. So I had to wait for over a year before I'd get back. They waited over a year to hire me, because I turned down the first job they offered. But it was a good learning experience. I learned we have a way to transfer from one area to another. But within those years I went and became a member of MIOU. I never worried about anything within the union. I was young, inexperienced, and I seen my leaders as doing everything for me and getting everything for me. I believe that's still embedded in a lot of people today in our union site, where the executive is the union, they'll go get what we need. Actually that's the wrong perception of it. Today I'm going to try and spread that around and make it better, and hopefully change some young people's minds in how they look at unions. But not until I became the vice-president and president before I recognized that that's how people look at it.

I'm a welder by trade. I've been a journeyman welder since 1976. I've repaired the bucket wheels right down to the smallest pipe. I've worked in mine maintenance for 20 years; then I went into maintaining equipment the last 13 years. A bucket wheel is what they originally used to do the tar sand mining. This was a monster of what you'd see today. It had its own belts and how it transferred from one area to another, and where the wheel dug in the middle... into another belt wagon. And that does the same thing. It could stretch probably a good 100 yards when it's fully extended. Then they transfer into a belt and that would take that to extraction. And that's what I repaired was the conveyors and the bucket wheels. But my job stopped at the door of extraction. Everything outside of that is what I repaired. Never did repair the equipment like the cats and dozers; that was another department. I mostly worked on the bucket wheels. We did that for 20 years. But it got to be extensive mining. You'd go from one end right to the other. Today they have where you can mine the highest and the richest soil. At that time you can't; so it got to be a little expensive for the mining that you did. That's why they did away with the bucket wheels. But I also remember years ago we had shovels and trucks. That's back in late '70s.

We had what they have today where you'd dump your load, same manner as you do today. It amazes me how it comes back around again and we're doing that type of mining.

Not much. I used to live in Waterways. Down the street was one street, Franklin Avenue, which is still here today, but very few buildings. When I first came up here, what they call Centennial Drive, there was nothing but trailer courts there. There was a couple of bars, only 2 bars then – Peter Pond and Oil Sands. They're both here today, but Oil Sands is the lively one. I used to walk from Waterways a good 5-mile hike all the way to oil can, because they had one song that I liked and I'd come there just to play it when I had a dime. It was a George Jones song, "Shoulder to Shoulder." I liked it. It talks about people being together shoulder to shoulder. It's a relationship song, and I believe that's the way it is with unions and marriages; it's a relationship. It's what I've always believed in.

MIOW is a union that was formed in 1973. In '67 when Suncor first started, we were an association. In 1973 we formed MIOW, McMurray Independent Oil Workers. We were MIOW until 1986, when we had the 6-month strike and ECWU stepped in and helped us to survive the 6-month strike. That's when we joined the energy sector of what is CEP today, Communication Energy Paperworkers. That was formed in 1992. From ECWU in 1986 to CEP in 1992, that's when it became nationally what today is our union.

I always believe when you're needed, it'll show. In 1978 we had a 6-week strike. They locked the gates and then the next morning when the buses came they couldn't get through. Then they wanted to cut the locks off. A bunch of us who were there wouldn't let them do that. The buses are waiting, and they're getting rocked and they're ready to be tipped over. Just to talk about a bit of '78. I was carrying a bat and walking back and forth, throwing my ball up in the air and hitting it and fetching it myself. During the strike I got a letter from Suncor that they were going to sue me for \$2 million for carrying a bat on a picket line. Some things sometimes you destroy. I ripped it up and said, here's what I think of your \$2 million. I wish I'd have kept it. It would've been beautiful history to be able to show that. In 1986 I was quiet.

Not really. I don't remember the issues in it. But I remember writing a few songs on it, but what I did with them I don't know. To try and remember distinctively, I think some of it had to do with wages at that time. We were making less money than construction workers, and I remember that. After that we started making more money.

Right, it was the first time. And I got involved with a few things that happened after that. I remember driving by one time. I was terminated for 10 days. I was driving by and the millwrights were having a sit down, because Suncor management had asked mine operations during our shutdown to do some belt splicing, and that wasn't their work. Operations operated the bucket wheel, and that's what they do. We didn't mind them doing the labour work with us, but to do our job was wrong. The millwrights had a sit down. I was driving by, myself and Matthew Lépine. We pulled over and joined them. We all got terminated for 10 days. Then I remember coming back to work and my boss/foreman/unit leader, who didn't join us, saying to me, look what your paycheque would've been if you'd stayed. Of course that hit the heart, but I said, that's ok. About 6 months later we won our arbitration case, and we got paid because they shouldn't have terminated us. We got paid the overtime plus the days that we missed. I said, look what you would've got if you'd have had 10 days vacation with me. Sometimes you just be patient and you get your turn.

By '86 my family had grown a little so I became more of a family man. I had to stay back learning that Suncor could sue me for \$2 million in '78. So in 1986 I said, just watch from the side and see what's going on. Not saying that I wasn't involved. I did go to jail. There's a picture in River of Grit, a picture where I was in jail. No. 2059 was my number. We violated the part of more than 20 people. We were something like a couple hundred strong at the time, and they only wanted 20 people. We violated that, so they had 160 cops and riot police come and remove us. The court injunction had given them that right. So they'd remove us 20 at a time. We ended up being in jail, and that's where I wrote that song, we get locked out and get locked in. It's funny how things happen. You're fight for your rights at one end, and you get locked out. Then cops come along and lock you in jail for something you believed in. It was kind of hard for the community, because they didn't

really understand what was happening. Everybody said we were fighting for wages. But it wasn't wages. It's the same as today, how people get treated. That's why we had something like 370 grievances at that time, because they weren't treating people very good. That was the hardest part of it, trying to work with the community and they didn't understand what you were fighting for. The newspaper, the radio station always talked about the MIOW is just looking for more wages. We were making good wages at the time. But we did lose a lot of things during that lockout. We lost a lot of wages and something we'll never gain back--hopefully this round of bargaining. Our vacation was based on all the monies you make. Today it's only based on your basic salary. That's just one big item that we've lost. Our supernumerals, when they done you wrong in the overtime, you were automatically paid out. It didn't happen much because they had to pay. When they made the mistakes, we lost that part of it. Now you gotta work the 12 hours at a different time without it counting. Just a couple things we lost that we had before. Everybody loses in a strike lockout situation. I think back, Suncor itself is only as good as you want to make it. A lot of people had problems surviving at Suncor. I used to go there to work and make a happy day every day, whether I was writing songs about it, whether it was making jokes with my peers. Every day was a good day, and that's how I survived my 33 years. I've been there 33 years, I had one letter. In that sense, when you think about the union and the things it's done for you, I believe they've never really done anything for me because I've done a lot for myself, surviving and doing the right thing. Never kissing anybody's on the company side, but always on the line of being a true unionist, doing the right things, trying to lead by example. If you do things when you're asked to go do your job, you won't get in trouble. Just go do your job. I never was the best worker, never was the laziest. I just did my job.

I believe that sometimes you can do an interview for 10 days to explain something. You can do it in 2 minutes in a song. People sometimes will listen to you in a song, and understand what you're saying. If you talk about something for however long, the interest is lost. That's why I believe in writing songs and trying to get the message across. Also if it's a beat that anybody can sing along, it gets people involved. That's why I do it. The little things that are catchy. "Locked in, Locked out." They ask you the question, why did

you write that song? You tell them why, what happened. I wrote a song on labour laws. It's about the way Alberta labour laws are. They do nothing for unions. One day I'm going to have to play it for Ralph Klein.

Working with people like Walter Manning, Roland LeFort, you learn a lot about labour laws, this that are being changed, the things that are happening. Keith Barrington, another guy I learned a lot, Brian Campbell. I can go on with a bunch of names for history. They're always talking about labour laws. I don't read that much, it puts me to sleep. So I try to listen and gather a lot of this stuff, as people talk and I learn. They've never been friendly for labour. I took the labour course in Banff and went to Carleton University for a month. We learn a lot of stuff that we had and lost over the years. That's how I've come to understand labour laws a little bit better, and how we've come to a place where it's not doing the unions any favours, especially in Alberta. Alberta is one of the worst labour laws. Every time they try and change something, it's against union movement. It's time we have a government that would understand labour movement in Alberta, and do some stuff. I don't believe unions are here to wreck any companies. That's the last thing on union's mind. It's just the fair and just way to do things. Give everybody fair treatment. Many times unions are talked about how we protect the people who are maybe lazy, and keep them around for 20 or 30 years. I believe that's wrong also. It's a perception people have that don't understand unions. I believe people will survive, whether they're lazy or not, anywhere. If they just have to show up and work, do your job, what I said earlier. People sometimes think unions are there to get the wages as high as they can, protect the people who are lazy, and I don't believe that at all. I believe that's a wrong perception for people to have. We're here to make sure equality for everyone. I don't mean just workers, I mean people of color, Aboriginals – equality for everyone. I think that's a great thing to have in our workplace, and I think all places should be unionized. But that's just my belief.

I believe that unions, what they've done for me is, being Aboriginal, I believe there was prejudice in our workplace. Not so much with the people you work with, but with the people who manage the workers, and their favouritism. The union keeps that equal, and

makes sure it's fair and just. I remember I'd come into work, and I always did the dirtiest job. I'm not saying it's because I'm Aboriginal. I'm just saying it happened, over and over again. I talked to Brian Campbell about it. I said to Brian, watch. I didn't want him to do anything, just watch what I get again tomorrow. And that's what we did. Brian did that, watched. Finally he said enough is enough. But he had to have the proof, because if you said anything, they'd say, oh no that doesn't happen, he just happened to be on that job today. But it happened over and over again. That's the management part. So union has fixed that over at Suncor, that's changed now. Maybe it happens, but not as much. I haven't seen it, as the president here, right out blankly as it happened then. But the right thing is to do it the way I did it, to make sure somebody else with different eyes was seeing it. Brian was our president then, and Brian fixed it. That's some of the stuff it did for me. The wages that I got, and the apprenticeship, the union was there for me on that part. All the benefits that it's worked on. I can go on about what it's done for me. I've always believe in it. My brother works at Syncrude, and he's been there almost 20 years now. The different things in the union side of my life and the non-union side of his life. There's certainly favouritism in his workplace, today it's happening. He's not treated equally, he's not treated fair. He's made some complaints about it, where nobody's there to represent them. It's his word against the supervisor. Where today we have not just you, there's a lot of people involved. That's some of the different things. They're not sure how much they make an hour, because their rate is on a flat rate. They do make good money, don't get me wrong. Sometimes the SIS share in success. They're told they're going to get it, and 2 weeks before it happens it's cancelled, because something just popped up. These are the things that Syncrude people do. You get terminated for whatever reason. There's no recourse, which we have in the union. Places like Syncrude, you may win your case but you only win the money. They pay you out and off you go. After you pay your lawyers, nothing left anyway. So that's the difference. When you've got an arbitration case, somebody pays for you. It's the money that you put aside, the insurance that you bought in the union part; that's how I see things.

Mostly the growth. I remember when I first came to Fort McMurray in the early '70s, I'd go across and hunt on the other side of the river. That's where I'd call my moose, and

that's where I'd shoot my moose. Today I've got to drive 100 miles out to make sure there's no one in the way to shoot when you're shooting your moose. But that's just some of the things. Thick Wood was nothing but bush, Abasands, all these places have changed. Today we have a lot more stores. We do have a building that's more than 7 storeys. Log houses down Franklin Avenue. We have a decent size airport. The road is twinned towards the worksite, but not anything to the south of us towards Edmonton. That's what really bugs me, when I know there's \$45 million coming out of this place a day, and we don't have twin highway. That's the part that really bugs me. But when I go on my vacation in the summertime, anything south of Edmonton, everything is twinned. And if it's not, it's going to get twinned next year. This is where the money's coming from. I believe we should've been looked after first. Not that I'm selfish, I just believe in saving lives.

I think it's changed a lot. In our union, we have an Aboriginal Committee. We have elected Mark Voyageur as the leader. We're involved with the Alberta Federation of Labour. We've got Mark, myself, Angela Adams as representative of Local 707. And people of colour, Hill Burda Stevenson. That part has changed a lot; we've come a long ways. I don't ever remember having anything like that in this local. That's something we're going to continue to build on. We have an understanding with Suncor Management that all people will be treated equally. We have where we need a 12% Aboriginal at Suncor site. They're not there yet, but it's getting closer. They have to have certain percent of women, and certain percent of people of colour, and disability. That's some things we never saw years ago, and that's the changes that I've seen in this local. People before me have done a lot of work to get there. It's not what I bring in today, it's how we got here today. It's the people before me that made them changes. There's a lot of things I'd like to think the past presidents about, the Don Marchands how hard they fought for what we have today. I remember the days where you can put your fist through a table in order for someone to hear you. Today it doesn't work like that. Today is mostly a friendly approach. Is there something wrong with that? Sometimes. Sometimes you do have to drop a book or kick something over accidentally, but you actually purposely did it. That's the kind of things that happen. Then you get their attention. Then they say, Jim, relax. Or

you give them a phone call and use words that you don't find in dictionaries; that's happened. You write emails in bold letters and they email back and say, don't holler at me. That's a way of sending messages.

When I first got involved in 1994, when I became a steward, people were getting letters and being in trouble all the time. There wasn't enough stewards involved to fight for these people. My coworkers were saying, hey Jim, you're not afraid to speak up, you should take this job and try to prevent all this stuff that's happening. And I did. I said, okay, sure, why not? And I took it. From that time, we had moved to MEM, Mine Equipment Maintenance area. I had a big transfer there, and I took the job. During that time to the time I became vice-president in 1999, there was never a union grievance. Everything was settled through walking into the superintendent's office and saying, I will not put up with this. That's how we settled things. We got to be working together. That's where I realized hitting the table is not going to work. Just work with them. I would do almost anything to prevent anyone from getting fired, if it means I have to work a deal to keep them there. People sometimes see that like sucking up to the supervisor. But that's not what it's for. You do that to prevent that person from getting fired. I wouldn't do that for me, but I'd do it for any of my members. That's how I learned to negotiate a lot of stuff that was happening, whether we make things better for the lube people, the steam people that weren't equally treated pay-wise. That's how we got things better, by talking. And the union management thing started happening. We sat down with management and talked about how we can improve things in the area. We made sure we talked about things before they got out of hand. That's some of the things that got me here. Then in 1999 Alvin Norman, a good friend of mine, said he was stepping down as VP. I said, do you know if anyone's running? He said, no not really. I said, I'm going to run, because we got to show the company that union people out there are interested in it. And I did, and I won that year. And I've been in this office since. The presidency was another thing. It was sort of I wanted a change, to make things a bit better. Not that the person before me wasn't doing the job. But any time I believe there's some things you want to change and things you want to do, you've got to go for it. If I believe there's jobs I'm not doing right, I hope somebody over there steps up to the plate and says, Jim, I'm here, because these are the

things you aren't doing, and I'm here to change them for you. These are the things that the membership are looking to change. I've always said and I'll say it to this day, I'll step aside for that person if I believe I'm not doing the job I'm supposed to be doing. That's how strongly I believe in the membership and what's best for them. Not what's best for Jim Cardinal. Jim Cardinal can go on sometime after, but not during the time of the president.

The president is elected. It's paid through Suncor. The secretary-treasurer and almost all the position are elected in the democratic process. But we do have some resourcing hours from Suncor for certain things, like a safety chair, which is important. One of Suncor's, they say, number one important thing today before production. Okay, we'll leave that at that. But sometimes I think they even believe it themselves. The resourcing hours, we kind of use them for our grievance chair, who happens to be the secretary treasurer. We like to keep the vice president to help out here but we don't have enough resourcing hours. It's something we'll probably talk about in bargaining. But I always believe that if you need help, spend the money within the union to get the help so you can do a proper job. The way Suncor sees it, is why would we give you more money, or why would we give you a stick to beat us over the head with it? That's how they see it. But how I see it is, why don't you give us more manpower so we can do things better? When we had the same executive within this office, we only had 800 to 900 members. We now have over 1800 members with the same amount of stewards. It's a hard job. We're so busy that we don't have time for anything else. Mr. Keegan is here till sometimes 8 o'clock at night. Myself, being a single father, I have to leave after 6 o'clock, I just can't stay any longer. There are kids that have to eat. So I try and not stay much longer than that, unless I've arranged something. It happened last year; it's a 12-hour day in this place where we're only paid till 4 o'clock, but no extra help. If we can get the extra help, we certainly could make things better.

We have a national representative. We're just one unit – there are 7 or 8 units she has to look after. She's busy on her own. Every time there's some bargaining going on, that's

where she's at. Sue Pierce is our new rep in the area, and she's done a wonderful job since she's been here.

I have 3 kids at home. Yes, it's difficult. I could say that by experiences. Back in 2001 my home was paid for and everything, but I went through a divorce. I now have my kids. I had to rent a 3-bedroom place, and I'm paying \$1700. It's expensive. For me to be able to afford a new home, the home that I had back in 2000 would cost me over \$400,000. My life is too short at the other end for me to invest in that. So I believe renting is not all that bad, and maybe to change things in the future when my kids are older, of maybe commuting, and somehow move to a place where I can afford a new house, where I can retire. That's the things I'm looking at. But to invest in Fort McMurray after 33 years, I think no, I'll just work here. The prime example is my girlfriend bought a house 4 years ago. Within the 4 years she made enough money to sell that house and buy a farm by Lamont, and pay for it cash. That's how ridiculous this place has been. It's always the same thing: the rich get richer. Somehow or another these people that are controlling the land in this area have always been the same people that controlled it years back. They determine, we have ? million acres of land, yet to buy a lot you have to pay \$150,000 for just a lot. Wrong. Why do we make the rich richer? That's where it's at. I think the rich is not only the people here, it's also government, the friends of the government. I'm not afraid to say that anywhere. That's how it is, and that's probably the way it always will be in Fort McMurray. The \$45 million they talked about, they've been dipping in that to build the south, and they're dipping in their own pockets here for the land and buildings.

Somewhere along the line, I don't know how many years it'll take us to convince a government that would be labour supportive. It seems to be the only people that talk about labour are the NDP. The Liberals and the PCs within that I've seen have done nothing but damage Fort McMurray. We need to change that. We need to change how labour movement has been destroyed. Like I said before, it's not a part where we were trying to destroy the world. We're trying to better the world. What this government has done is try to destroy the people who are trying to make it better. That's how I see today's government. Just to touch a bit on the stuff the PCs have done. I'll tell you Ralph Klein, if

you had that kind of money, you'd be in surplus too. Everybody thinks Ralph Klein has done wonders for Alberta. But if I had that kind of money, I probably could do the same thing he's doing. I do believe that honestly. And everybody thinks he's a miracle worker. But he's not. I think he's selfish for the rich, meaning the companies, and how can you better the private sector people, people who want to get rich off of you. He might not say that, but there's things he's done that point in that direction.

That's the difficult part. People are very naïve in what they believe in. You grow up; if you don't change at a certain age of your lifetime, you'll never change. Meaning if your family have always voted PC and Liberal, that's what you learn. That's the best government ever. Until you start to take a good look at what the labour movement's about. If you don't understand labour movement, you'll never understand governments. When you start to understand that, that's where people will change. But as long as they say, yes, that executive is going to feed me for the next 20 years that I'm here, if they stay there, our government is not going to change. We don't have enough help within the local. Not putting our local members down, but they just don't understand, they're naïve about it. To try and promote what's good for the labour movement is a hard job. Selling your own collective agreement is a hard job. Selling the labour movement is harder.

I certainly believe that. We as executive here have been looking at what's the easiest way to make our members understand where we're at, that they are the union. The executive is not the union. You go out in the field, you hear people say, you guys at the union. That means they're naïve about it. They are the union. The sooner you can convince them of that, that's where the changes will come. With this bargaining that's popped up, my plans were to start spending more time at the plant site one on one with people. Five minutes here, 5 minutes there with everyone within the next year, and maybe convince them what we are all about. I think that has to happen. Suncor will do anything and everything to keep the union from convincing these people what we're all about. They only give us an hour with the new hires. But now what I've done is get the steward within the area involved when the new hires get there, and get maybe half a day with them, and try and teach them the right things.

I had the Mohawk haircut and we had a meeting here. The HR committee came in here and they said, what's with the haircut, Jim? I said, well I can't wear a headdress. So I figure the closest thing is a Mohawk haircut just to tell you you're pissing me off. I said, but relax, I'm not wearing makeup yet. Then we started our bargaining and one of the managers came in. He says, I see you had a Mohawk haircut. I said no, actually just my hair in the middle where it grows a lot faster than the side. I said, do you say anything to somebody whose hair grows slower in the middle than the sides? I said, so what's your problem?

I'll only talk about my experience in labour history and what it's done for me, and what I believe it will do for my kids in the future. I try to explain to my young kids, who finally are stepping into the union side of things and coming to vote a lot more now, and ask me what's happening within the union hall. I think it's very important for people to know what the union has done for us, and what it will do for us in the future as we go on. The important thing I see is that how we survived within the union. I believe today if we didn't have CEP or any union in the plant site, I think we'd make half the wages we're making today, and Suncor would still be making \$70 a barrel. That's the important part to understand, that if we didn't have that, ... And the housing would probably still be \$400,000. That's my opinion, and I think it's important to know that. If we didn't have that for me to think back about it, I think that would be devastating in this community, where we'd be today if we didn't have one union. Syncrude and CNRL will do anything to keep us out. When you see the CNRLs, the Suncors, even within our plant site, have people like Ledcor and CLAC doing the work at half the wages; you know where their thoughts are. When you see CNRL, who will bring temporary foreign workers to do their work, and use them as slaves, which I believe they would. Because these people that come from foreign countries, not putting them down, but they're naïve about the way they're treated. You get treated like shit where you come from, and you come here just a little bit better and a little bit less shit. It hasn't bettered anything for you. That's where they were going with that, and I think that's wrong. Canada is a free country, and I think we should make sure people are treated fairly. Today with CLAC, we're telling Suncor

and we're going to keep telling Suncor, we don't want CLAC doing our work or any work within the building trades. We'll do anything to make that better for our brothers and sisters in the building trades. Hopefully we succeed together. I think CLAC is a disease, it's a cancer. It's going to damage Canada if we don't stop it now.

CLAC, some say is a union. Christian Labour Association of Canada. What really bothers me about that, is any time Christian, that's the word for me. When you think about that and you go and take advantage of people, you're not going to get to heaven, when you use people. They could've used any other name. But for whatever reason... That's what they say about people who are here for themselves. When you start using words like Christian, and you use the word of God and Jesus to support you in this venture that you're setting out to do--that's the people who'll always take advantage. Whenever you see people who go there and negotiate a contract for you that you have no say in it, and you're controlled by the companies and your supposed union, is wrong. Democracy should always be there for all workers. Any time some other person can negotiate for you and you have no say in what you're getting, it's wrong.

From what I've learned about CLAC in the past, I guess CLAC has been around for quite some time. It's like a cancer. It slowly creeps up, and by the time you discover it sometimes it's too late. Hopefully it's not too late for us with CLAC. It's spreading all over Canada. But right now it's spreading here in Fort McMurray, and to call it a rent-a-union, I wouldn't even go there. I think they're worse than that. They're slowly taking over a lot of work within our site. Like Ledcor and Flint and Firebag, who built Firebag, they're there to make contractors. Now Ledcor has come into the upgrading area and is expanding into other areas. What we've done with Suncor is when we started our bargaining talks, is no CLAC, get rid of them. We're going to make that stand. We're not in a strike position this time around, because we're not opening the contract. But we're certainly going to make a strong point in saying that you get rid of CLAC or you don't have a five year agreement. That's where we're going to make our stand. We want preferred contractors. Preferred contractors could mean the building trades. We don't have too much say on who builds Voyageur, but I hope Suncor understands that if they

use CLAC, there's going to be a problem. The work, from what I gather within our site, is not half as good as what the building trades put out for them. Yet Suncor will go and use the cheapest labour. It's time they start thinking of what happened to the Frack. This is something that was built within 5 years ago. Look at the ones that was built by the building trades in the base plant – still running. That's some of the things they should think about.

Whenever you have your own people, your kids, the Aboriginal people within the area and people through Canada, who are looking for jobs from east to west, and they'd like to come to work in Fort McMurray but won't have that opportunity when you have temporary foreign workers to come in and do the work that our people should do. I'm not saying anything bad about these temporary foreign workers, because I don't know them, How good of trades people they are I don't know that, but I do know the standards that the trades people have in Canada. Understanding that, I believe that's where our work should go. We should concentrate on how we build our young people. Our young people today have a tough time finding good jobs, because of lack of experience. And yet we're going to bring foreign workers to do work that our kids could be doing. The foreign workers thing is an insult to an Aboriginal when you know you're here, you're at home, and yet you're overlooked to bring other people to do your work. That's what I've heard within the locals of the chiefs in the area, and that's what I believe also. How these companies will do anything to get the cheapest work to make the money, and that's all it's about, is how much more money can we make using cheaper labor.

I certainly am not against immigration. We have a lot of land, people are welcome. It's always been part of Canada's way. But what I'm talking about is people who come here temporary, make our money, take our money, and off they go. Our money should stay in Canada. It's bad enough that almost all these companies are US-owned. A lot of our money goes to the US. I think it's a better thing if we had the Canadians within, the locals within, get their jobs first. I can understand the temporary foreign workers once we've exhausted all our needs within Canadian people.

A union worksite, in my opinion, is the respect people would have with one another, knowing that they voted for the contract that they've got. The CLAC worksite, they don't know what contract they got, they just know this is the size of their paycheque. I've heard there's been only 2 arbitration cases in the CLAC union all these years. Union people have a lot more arbitration cases – real unions. Because CLAC leaders control their workers like the companies do. That's the difference.

I learned from Don Marchand. Being very vocal and fighting to the last man is how Don believed, and I learned that from Don. At that time, that worked. Then we go into the Brian Campbells. Brian Campbell is the type of guy who would negotiate you one of the best contracts going. I also learned from Keith Barrington, who was a bit different again. Keith can be vocal or laid back, and Keith listened well. That's what his strong points were. Then we come with Walter Manning. Walter Manning would only blow at the right time. Walter was very good at writing stuff down and making sure nothing is forgotten. Walter was good that way, and that's what I learned from Walter. Then Roland came along. What I learned from Roland, he's really good in politics. That's what I learned from Roland. Each one of them, in what you learn, and you put it together; then you got a Jim Cardinal. I hope someday somebody says that they learned something from me.

I do want to talk about something, just about how in the last year the unions have come to be one. Five years ago you wouldn't see what we've got today. I believe at one time all unions wanted to see themselves being strong and fighting on their own. But I always believed, ever since I can remember, why can't we be one? Why can't we be, not one union, but all unions in one, believing the same thing, having the same fight. Making sure the government we want and fight for that government together, not individually here and there. When you have that kind of a fight, you don't win. But when you bring everybody together having the same fight, I believe we'll win. That's where we are with CLAC today. All the unions have come together, and we're going to fight this disease. I think we will win by that. But that's something we should've done years ago on the government end, the labour laws. But times have changed. People have a different vision now. I remember one time, and I'll say this about Don Marchand. MIOW was the best union

going as far as Don was concerned. And at the time he probably was right. Like any other leader in the union movement, they're with the best union. I'm not saying it was wrong. I'm saying I wish we had looked at things carefully. I remember thinking this back when I was 25 years old – why do we have so many different unions? Why can't we become one and work together? Can you imagine how strong we would be? Today I'm a firm believer in that. I've seen a lot of things changing, and I think it's going to be for the better for all our unions, learning about each other. Sometimes our problem is the leaders we have within the unions, of whether they have people skills or they don't. Sometimes you have to go beyond that. You've got to look at what that union's done, and how you can work together with it.

You'll see a lot more of that now. Only in the last year have I seen different unions' pictures in this office, which we should've had years ago. It's important that we continue and get stronger. If I can convince 300 of my members about voting the right government right here, they convince 300, the next year we convince 500, within the next election we might have a different government representing Fort McMurray. I believe when you can't change things within, like your mayor, become the mayor and change things within the labour movement.

What happened there is the Fort McMurray Labour Council, that's where it started, and within the building trades. Building trades were one of the strongest unions fighting against CLAC. We had a couple of meetings and all the unions were invited. That's how it all started. We had a couple meetings; we had a better understanding of CLAC. I believe we didn't have a good understanding of CLAC. That's why Ledcor snuck in and got as far as they did by the time we recognized what CLAC was. It's the lack of education within our union, my part anyway. I can't say that about Roland, the rest of the people that were here before, but in my part it was the lack of understanding what CLAC was back then. We talked about Ledcor, we talked about Flint having this union that could damage us, but we never did anything about it. Then when we found out the building trades were fighting and IBEW was coming in, you talk and discuss it. I've got

some beautiful pictures about what happened in our rallies. I never got a chance to write a song about CLAC yet.

I have 3 boys working for Suncor, and my daughter works for Transalta. All my 3 boys have indentured into apprenticeship, all at the same time. I'll tell you the funny part. When I was a steward, I went up to management and I'd say, I have these boys, why don't you hire them. I'd ask and ask. Nobody wants to hire my kids. I said, back in 1973 when you hired me, you said to me, this is the future for you and your family. You work here, your kids will work here. Why can't I get a job for them? They wouldn't hire them. I became a vice-president. I never went and fought for my kids to be hired. They all got hired. That was Suncor's way to tell the membership, look what Cardinal has done for himself. That's the perception people had when my kids got hired. I was approach and they said, you became vice-president and got all your kids a job. When I became vice- president, I will not go ask anyone to hire my kids. I couldn't do it when I was a steward. I'm not here for me, I don't do that. But that's the perception people had, and Suncor did that purposely. In the back of my mind I thank them, but they're trying to make it look like when I became vice-president I got them jobs.

I wish my kids would get the proper education. Money is not the most important thing in life. I believe that firmly. The most important thing in life is to be happy, to live happy, and with that is love within the family. I'm a Christian, I'm a believer in Jesus. I think it's important to have that in the family, because that's where love is from. To have love within your family is the most important thing. If they get grade 6 and they're happy the rest of their lives and have a good family background and teach their kids about respect, loving your neighbor, I think they've done great. I also believe if they became the richest people in the world but never forgot where they came from, never forgot respect, never forgot loving others, I think they've succeeded. That's how I see it.

A gentleman came in here and wanted to sell me this painting. I looked at it and said, this is a union painting. There's the union up on top there, and there's the members. Members looking after each other. That's how I looked at it, that's why I bought it. I think it's a

union expression, if you look at it closely. It's an important painting, and that's how I see it. We have our flag, members looking after each other. I'm going to put that somewhere, I'm not sure where yet. That explain the painting and how I see it. The gentleman drops in now and then and asks me to buy another painting. Someday if I see one similar, maybe one that'll explain all the unions, I'll get it.

[end]