

Cecil Cardinal

March, 2009

Interviewer: Tim Dobson, Camera: Dianne Warly

Q: How did you get started in Correctional Services and what were some of the influences in your life?

CC: Thanks for inviting me. My name's Cec Cardinal. I've been employed with Alberta Correctional Services, Solicitor General Public Security Division, since 1980. So I'm now in my 29th year. I am presently the Local 3 chair, which looks after the Alberta sheriffs, Correctional Service workers, probation officers, and correctional peace officers, commercial vehicle enforcement officers in the province of Alberta. We're a province-wide local with approximately just under 2,500 members. I was born and raised in the Sucker Creek Indian reserve, which is located just outside High Prairie in Northern Alberta. When I graduated high school in 1979 my family relocated to move to a new challenge and get away from that tough environment that I grew up in, being in an isolated, poor reserve. So we moved to Calgary and within a few months I saw an ad in the local paper, applied, had an interview, and was successful. It was a really tough transition because first I'm from an isolated community on the reserve and moving to an urban centre was quite a shock. Plus, it was tough getting into the workforce after completing high school. So once I got into the jail environment, and it's kind of ironic that I even saw the ad or had any interest--The reason I say that is I'm from a large family of five boys and five girls and both my parents, so out of twelve. But out of those twelve growing up, approximately six out of my twelve family members that I just mentioned have been incarcerated at one point or another. So it's kind of strange. What kind of challenge is that? Why would I want to work for a jail as opposed to what my family has been through? So it was quite a transition period and plus when I joined Calgary Correctional Centre, also known as Spy Hill Jail, it was a really tough environment because it was really structured on the class system. They had a lot of ex-military, British military officers in the building. So when I entered, when staff were new, they would not talk to you. It took at least six months before any staff would

acknowledge that I was even there. I had to sit on the side in the corner and not talk to anyone, because I was new and they wanted to see what I was all about and how I fit in. So it was just a matter of time until I seen there was an opening for a position on one of the tag teams. So I joined a tag team. That enabled me to build some relationships and also build some trust in that tough environment. Remember at the time when I started the officers back then there was a lot of large strong men because of the nature of that business. When I started I only weighed 140 pounds and was 5'7." So I was pretty small; so right away my size was working against me. Also with that tough British influence that they had as far as officers go, a few comments were made to me about being First Nation. They said, okay here's a native guy. How long you gonna stay here? You'll probably only be here two weeks, either until I get drunk or my first paycheque and I wouldn't be there anymore. So that really drove me. I said, okay I'm gonna prove all these guys wrong. They know nothing about me whatsoever. That's what drives people, that's what drives you, that's what motivates me. So it was extremely, extremely challenging, and a really tough working environment. That's actually a big part of who I am today because all these obstacles are challenging that we face in our career, even in our worksite. That's what makes us who we are today. Working in a jail environment is very tough; it's a tough, volatile environment. We're used to dealing with confrontations we have to de-escalate. So that gives us the ability as officers that we have to stand up for ourselves and we have to stand up for others. I think that's one of my main strengths in becoming a union activist and holding a local chair position, which I do. I'm used to fight for our members' rights, fighting for issues, and pushing issues that are of key interest to our members within my local itself. As we were going through the challenges, a few things came up where I needed some guidance and some input, and I was looking for some information to deal with some situations that came up as far as labour relations go in the early '80s. I talked to a couple of union stewards and that's what made me kind of interested. I needed help. So, when you need help in a labour worksite, then who do you contact? Your union stewards. What I found and what I observed from my observation skills is at that time those union stewards were really representing the union. A lot of times in the staff lounge they'd talk about different issues, the issues of the members that they were representing. I said, this is not right.

Any conversations or issues between members and a union steward should stay between the union steward and the member, not brought out in the staff cafeteria or staff lounge in a coffee room. I was pretty upset by that. So what I did is I phoned the regional office and I contacted a membership service officer who I used as a resource and dealt with those issues. I said to myself, okay, it's easy for people to complain, it's easy for people to criticize. So how am I gonna change it? So that's why I became involved in the steward level. I decided, okay I'm gonna become part of the process. So when I'm dealing with members' issues it'll be confidential; I won't be talking about it or sharing that information with anyone else, because I knew what I felt when I needed help at that time. That was key and important to me. The only way you make change with an organization is becoming involved. I was pretty lucky too, working at Calgary Correctional Centre. Calgary Correctional Centre had a strong history of being a very solid worksite. So, all the issues were always dealt with right away with the stewards and there wasn't much flexibility with management. Management would not dictate what our working environment was. The workers at that worksite determined what our work environment was. That was an extremely valuable tool because things changed. That's how you work for creating better working environment for everyone. Also, in saying that, by having strong union stewards as far as addressing those issues and dealing with those issues at that worksite, I was able to watch and follow pretty successful union stewards in the past like Ken Catrell, like Terry McLain, Steve Sajak, Ronny Wallace and those guys, who were just absolutely like mentors. They didn't mentor me but I watched them close and tried to learn and take key things from them to see if there's things I could try to incorporate to make myself a better union activist. I was really, really lucky. They have a union strong chapter at Calgary Correction Centre and it's also extremely competitive and that's what I believe ultimately made me better and develop my skills as a union steward. To come out of a chapter to represent yourself on the local council level out of that building, you had to be a leader or be on top of all the issues, and respected from within that centre. That's what also gave me the drive to say, okay, what's the next step after that. Once I made council, after a couple terms of council rep I said, okay, now's an opportunity to try to join the executive. So I was successful and I had a two-year term served as provincial executive, and in my second term, my third

year, I had to step back because of some personal issues. Then after sitting out that following term I had the opportunity to come back into council and apply for the executive position, and it was a chair position that I was interested in, and at that point I was successful. So I'm presently now completing my second term, my fourth year as Local 3 chair. The biggest thing I stressed or pushed or worked or did my input as Local 3 chair within the organization of representing our members was to establish a better working relationship with the senior management committee. I had to let them know that I had to break down those barriers because I felt and we felt, as local executive, the best way we can improve our worksite or make changes and make it better for the workers from within Local 3 is to have a working partnership with the management team to let them know that we must break down those barriers. We're not the enemy; we do have a common ground. We should be working for the same objectives. Our goals and your goals for being more productive are almost identical. So, if we work in partnership, it makes for a better working relationship. That, I think, has helped and benefited many of our members, especially in the Correctional Services division, because we're structured as anti-management union guys that don't communicate with those guys; they're the enemy. It takes time, it takes a lot of time and effort, and I believe we've broken down a lot of barriers. Just recently two years ago they had a managers' conference from all the correctional service managers in the province. The assistant deputy of correctional services, Bruce Anderson, gave me a phone call and said, hey Cec, I need you to do something for me. Would you be interested in addressing my management team at this conference on the subject of employee engagement? In other words, how do we engage ourselves as union activists or union stewards or representatives from the union representing our members and dealing with the frontline workers and managers? So I thought it was an excellent opportunity, which of course I jumped at. It was quite an experience. Not too many locals and not too many members can say that they've had the opportunity to address the entire management team to engage and to improve benefits as far as the working relationship goes. Last year they invited our AUPE president Doug Knight and he had the same type of role. But then when it came to the answer period, then that's where I stepped in because I accompanied Mr. Knight and I took over and addressed some of the issues or feedback

coming from the frontline managers, and that was quite a big step. With working relationships with senior management from within our division and department, it gave me the opportunity to open the door with having engagement with our deputy minister. In the last three years I've had four meetings with our deputy minister. In the past it was Eric McGhan and then he got transferred to SRD and now it's Brad Pickering. I met Mr. Pickering on two occasions and that gives me the ability to address even more issues and having a working partnership with the very top of our management team, which has a big impact on the success and some of the goals that we want to achieve as far as making it better for our members. Some of the challenges that I've seen in the past as far as being a union steward or working in Corrections over the last three years with AUPE was of course--one of the biggest one we had was in 1990 when we had the strike. That was probably, I believe, ten days long. It's funny about that strike; well there's nothing funny about a strike. We had passion on the issues in the extreme. The first month I moved to Cochrane and purchased my home and it was the first month of my mortgage payment and I go, oh what do I do? Talk about pressure. You know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna be who I am, I'm gonna be a union activist and picket captain for the entire strike. I couldn't have it any other way. But those are things that all workers or all members have to be aware of. We have to sacrifice. But who do we represent at the end of the day? Who are we fighting for? The irony about what I just said is that basically the reason we came back in from a strike is we got information received – that's how I'll word it, because we didn't vote to come back to work – we got information received from our respective leaders at that time within Local 3 that there was an agreement between the employer and the bargaining team to address pensions. Pension was a big issue and is a real big issue in our workforce presently, especially law enforcement. Anyone who works in the law enforcement field, you can't expect to work 35 years and have the quality of life to enjoy your life. That's why, consistent with different police agencies, they have a 25-year-and-out, and that's what we wanted. But going back to the strike in 1990, we received a phone call. We said, okay, they're going to meet with us and talk about the pensions. We didn't vote on it. We took the advice from our representatives on our bargaining team at that time, and came back to work. You know what happened after that? Ya, they met all right. They said, we talked about

it. Okay, we satisfied our end of it. Nothing happened – no change whatsoever. You wanna talk about turning a workforce upside down with being frustrated with the representatives from within our union structure? That's how you do it. So it took a lot to try to gain confidence and trust from our frontline workers, because ten days on a strike line coming back without the opportunity to actually vote on it, it's unfair. We never once had the right to vote, the right to say in whether to come back to work or not. It was a really tough time as far as being a union activist at the time and supporting the organization. Of course I did support the organization but it does make it extremely challenging. Another big challenge in the mid-'90s was working with the Government of Alberta. They had the big rollbacks, the five percent rollbacks. All of a sudden they said, okay this is what we're gonna do. We're gonna roll back five percent of your wages and we'll guarantee we're not gonna lay off any employees. We're thinking, what do we do, what do we do? It's a threat but do we call them on it? So what they did, the representatives of Local 3 sent out the vote so every one of us had a say in the outcome whether we chose the five percent rollback or not or took our chances that the employer would try to lay off some of our employees. I was voting and our other members were voting to dictate whether I lose five percent of my money or not. I couldn't see myself, just my personal opinion, I did not vote for the rollback because it's not up to me and I should not be taking money out of your pocket. I think it was just a scare tactic that we never really called them on it. So we don't really know which way it would've went. But it was really tough to roll back five percent. That was another obstacle and roadblock as far as the workers within Local 3. One more thing that came up in the early 2000s is they talked about privatization. There was a lot of discussion, cuz Ontario just went to a super-private jail. So there was a lot of discussion about Alberta following the same way. So what the Alberta government decided to do: they have a backdoor release of information. It's like a feeler. What they do is they slip some information out there just to see what kind of reaction they get. What I'm talking about is they let slip out that potentially Peace River Correctional Centre, which is one of our worksites in Peace River obviously, was gonna be closed down, and that was their intent and that was their plan. So they wanted to see what kind of reaction it would get. Actually AUPE did an outstanding job in addressing it, because they said we couldn't

have it. So what AUPE did, working with the executive of Local 3, is they came up with a real quick campaign. They canvassed all the small towns, Peace River and surrounding areas, including the First Nations and aboriginal communities, to let them know what the government was planning to do and what type of impact it would have in their community. They generated immense community support and all of a sudden the employer, the government, realized that, oh that's gonna be a bad move, we can't do that, because of the impact it would have within Northern Alberta and fellow Albertans. The reason I mention that too is why it really interested me. Like I mentioned earlier, I was born and raised on an isolated reserve outside High Prairie, Sucker Creek First Nation. I did also mention that some of my family members were incarcerated back in 1973. I just need a drink of water, sorry. As I mentioned earlier, I'm from Sucker Creek First Nation and being an isolated reserve. My father had back in '72 been incarcerated in Peace River. So, being a strong upbringing from my mother's side – she was raised in a residential school and Roman Catholic; so her role and her duty at that time in that environment dictated that it was the responsibility of trying to keep the family together. So we travelled an hour and a half every weekend to visit my father at Peace River Correctional Centre. As a 12 year old, it was really tough. People kind of wondered, well why would you bring your children to jail? But for me at that time, a 12 year old, it meant everything, because family meant everything. All we had to do was just be in the same area, just see my father, and it meant everything to us. There was a lot of poverty on the reserve on the First Nations. So it was really tough. But my mother somehow managed to make sure that we went to that centre. It was challenging times. We'd travel an hour and a half and then we'd visit on a security phone through a glass. So I wasn't allowed to touch my dad and my mom couldn't touch my dad. That's how we visited, and it was for around 30 minutes and that's all we had. But 30 minutes is better than nothing at all, and that meant everything for us as far as our family. So now that kind of hit home when the government kind of made reference, okay, we might close down Peace River Jail. They have no idea how it affects the Aboriginal communities and different settlements as far as family and how far you have to travel. The reason I also mention that is I also had a sister that ended up being incarcerated and serving time in the early 1980s at the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre. At that time we travelled and I also helped my

mom travel all the way to Fort Saskatchewan to visit my sister on weekends. So that was another long journey. I personally looked at it and wanted to make sure that Albertans were aware of what was going on and the impact it has on those communities. By that campaign and the chair of the time of our local, Bill Fleming, he did a fantastic job of canvassing and networking in that quick campaign. If it wasn't for that quick action and successful campaign that happened right away, they withdrew their thoughts of privatizing or closing down Peace River jail. So that was one of the big challenges that we really successful as far as shutting down one of our worksites. It was actually quite successful, one of the positive highlights of being involved with that process within Local 3. Getting back to being a First Nation member. One thing that really interested me too once I became more involved on a local level or even just prior to local level when I was on provincial executive, I used to have an interest for the AUPE organization as a whole and the structure and the members we represent and our constitution and also I liked looking at the other labour movements from within Canada. Right now I've got all my links of my favourites on my computer – I have B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, I have NUPGE and AFL. I like to do a lot of reading as far as what the organizations are doing to address the needs and challenges of the working members in Canada. In saying that, what I've really noticed is there wasn't enough interest or no committees that really addressed human rights. Human rights are big. Human rights affect everything we do as Albertans and as workers from within our worksite or within our province. So, finally AUPE had struck a committee that went through convention and it was passed, and I believe we're in our fifth year as a human rights committee, which is a big step. So now we've taken that step AUPE has also just started an environment committee. In case you're kind of wondering why I'm talking about an environment committee, the reason I'm mentioning the environment committee is one issue as far as working committees that is not addressed with AUPE as far as a standing provincial committee is Aboriginal workers or workers of colour. Once you go back to the other labour movements within Canada, the other provinces, and you look at the union and what kind of issues are they addressing and who are their targets, they're trying to target the workers in the province because that's what a union does. They should be representing their members and challenges and how you do it: you have

specific committees to target those working groups. AUPE probably is the only one that does not have an Aboriginal worker or workers of colour committee, and that's I think one thing that needed to be addressed. As far as human rights go, we're ten years behind other labour organizations. So we have to definitely pull our socks up and those are things that need to be addressed as far as making our organization better. Our organization has grown drastically in the last 15 years. We used to be members of just over 20,000, basically all general service Government of Alberta employees basically. Now we're sitting at I believe just under 70,000 members. So we have to look at ourselves. Now we're representing 70,000 workers. So how do we address those needs or challenges or how do we track our members? How do we ensure ourselves as human activists or as a labour movement we're accurately representing the workers themselves, the grassroots members? So we should ensure that we're always dealing with the meat and potatoes of the organization, cuz those are the grassroots, the members that we have to attract. That's why within the human rights committee – I'll go back to that committee again – is we're in the process of working on a translative program, translative program with an increased amount of foreign workers within the workforce in the Province of Alberta. There's a lot of diverse members; there's a lot of members in the workforce that we have to find a way of relating to, giving them information. English would not be their first language. So we want to make sure we can properly service them. By doing that, we get the translative program so we have representatives to ensure that everything that is translated to them or interpreted as far as language, that it's passed on accurately. We want to make sure that we protect our members. So we explain a process, let's say in government. Let's say okay, you're allowed family illness and you're allowed to travel, you're allowed two days here and a traveling day, and you're allowed to have ten in a calendar year. But when you're reading a language they may have a tough time understanding it or they need an interpretation so the union office or your union steward can use your translative program and a resource program and contact the translator to make sure the information is translated. It's not interpret the contract; the translator is not there to interpret, but they're there to translate. That's key and that's one of the big programs that's key as far as identifying the diversity within our organization. One more thing that should be: we're

pretty successful with the ad campaign. We had two commercials and in the process of making a third. I believe the success of that campaign was we used actual workers from AUPE in that commercial to promote and advertise the type of services we provide Albertans as AUPE members. That was key. There's nothing better than seeing someone you actually know or people you actually identify with that you met at convention, that you met in labour school, that you met at a course at a regional office and say, hey I remember meeting him; we were on a course together. That identifies and that gives you more appreciation for within your organization. So in saying that, the ambassador program, which as a committee we've been discussing for two years now and we wanna get it rolling, the objective of that ambassador program is we wanna attract or find more workers and attract: I'm just trying to describe the best way to describe it. The success of the ambassador program is to make sure we go to the grassroots members. Who best knows the job or the services we provide Albertans but the workers themselves? That's how you attract them. By using ambassadors of the respective groups and diversity that also relates back to the membership. Wow that's great. Filipino community at the worksite, the membership is large but their representation may not be that large from within that chapter level. So how do you identify to them, how do you recruit them into interest within AUPE or even let them know more about AUPE? We need members, working members who do those jobs, who can be represent and can be ambassadors to speak on AUPE and recruit more members. The more information we can get to our workforce and the diversity of our workforce I think is going to be a big impact and have a big role as far as what our job is as senior stewards or activists within our respective locals. I think that's one of our key focus and should be one of our key target items.

Q: You've been in Correctional Services for 29 years. As local chair, where do you see yourself going from here?

CC: Actually presently right now serving as local chair I believe it's my responsibility as local chair is to represent our members. My role as local chair is to represent and make myself--I should be the number one resource person available. In other words, if there's

a member in trouble in Peace River or if there's a member in trouble at the probation office in Red Deer or an Alberta sheriff in Medicine Hat, that they should be able to contact me and by contacting me I'll be used as a referral reference person and I'll be able to pass on information or send them to someone who can address their needs. That's key. I must make myself, not just myself but the executive of Local 3, we must make our presence known from within our different work groups so when some issue comes up we'll deal with it. Traditionally when working in a jail environment, as I mentioned before, it's a tough working environment, and in the past Local 3 has been pretty successful activists from within the AUPE organization. But why is that? Because we have that personality that we need to exist in that tough working environment. In saying that, we tackle many issues and we mostly deal with our own. A lot of staff may be frustrated. They go, okay, there's a lot of issues coming from Local 3. Here they are again. But on the other hand I bet they appreciate it, because we do a lot of our own work or a lot of our own grievances all the way through. Our membership relies on a lot of our knowledge as stewards at our respective worksites within Local 3. So our job is to make sure there's services out there available to make it a better working environment. Like I mentioned earlier, we have the same objective as the employer – we want a positive working environment. We're concerned about the health and wellness of our workers. We're extremely concerned about the occupational health and safety concerns of our members. The reason I mention that is our environment has changed drastically over the last I'd say seven to ten years, the type of offenders we're getting, the profile of the offenders. The amount of Aboriginal gangs we have and organized crime that we have in the jails is absolutely incredible. It also changes how we do our business. Why I mention that is the amount of gang violence in the jails is incredible, and the effect it has on our working members. We're the first responders. When we're dealing with the offender population, we're there and the only protection we have, other than the communication of a radio, is a stab-resistant vest. When I started 20 years ago, if they told you they'd give me a stab-resistant vest as part of my working uniform, I wouldn't make any sense of it. But the changes in the environment and demands in protection of our frontline workers, it was key. We were successful about five years ago in finally getting more protection. We're one of the first provincial correctional facilities in Canada

to make sure all our frontline workers were issued stab-resistant vests, which is key. Occupational health and safety has always been a number one issue within the jail environment because of the type of work we do. It's a tough work environment; you've got to ensure the protection of our members. The reason I mention that also is the Alberta government finally after following their own rules of no smoking at their worksites decided to finally enforce it at their correctional facilities also. So, around four years ago, they made all jails non-smoking, which would be consistent with their policy. We don't want our facilities smoking anyway, because we believe in the protection of our members. Why would we put our workers at risk? We don't support that at all. So we want to make sure it's a good working environment. So the Alberta government decided to be consistent and make our facility non-smoking. They decided, how can we help the offender population quit smoking? Well I'll tell you what they can do. Give them snacks at night, which we do. We give the sandwiches in the morning and at night, plus we also give them a nicoderm patch; they can sign up or purchase nicoderm patches in their canteen. Oh, sounds like a great idea. But they forgot, these offenders are in a jail. So what the offenders decided to do, they decided to take apart the nicoderm patches. They broke it down in saline water; then they dried it out. They took orange peels, dried out orange peels, paper that was available, and they rolled it up and it was a makeshift cigarette. So the offender population was smoking the nicoderm patches in that combination. The effect it had on our members was absolutely incredible. There's nothing like going into a worksite doing a check or entering that environment, and all of a sudden you can smell the effect of the nicoderm patch. What it did was it tightened up your throat; it was hard to breathe, migraine headaches, and affected our members incredibly. When we asked the employer, we asked our solicitor general at the time and said, can you please, you have to take the nicoderm patches out of the jails because the offenders are misusing them and they're putting our staff at risk; it's affecting the health and safety of our members. At that point he still didn't. So we had to go to the occupational health and safety route and were finally successful after almost two years of canvassing him and putting in WCB claims, we were finally successful to have the patches removed, which is quite a success for us. It's just unfortunate the employer didn't realize or would not acknowledge the effect it had on our working members and

how affected and how it hurt the frontline workers within those correctional facilities. There was a study done on the contents of the nicoderm patch, because you kind of mention it and the public has no idea. If I told the public, oh by the way, we gave the inmates nicoderm patch and they broke it down and smoked it, and the effect it had, well obviously there's no smoking, so how would they light the cigarette? Well they start short-circuiting all the outlets and light fixtures just to get a spark to ignite the cigarette. How no offender ever got electrocuted is still beyond me, but that was just, they wouldn't understand. So we were quite successful in that. But one of the things with occupational health and safety too is we have to try and explore what were the contents and the effect of smoking a nicoderm patch. To this day it's unheard of. So the effect it actually had to frontline workers they may not ever, ever know until ten or 20 years from now. We don't know what type of contaminants could've entered them and put them at risk, and we have no idea. It's like a fireman. All the firemen were successful a few years ago as far as getting a disability pension because of the nature of the work they did. When they entered those fires, they put themselves at risk. So they were able to canvass and get legislation supporting that. I'm a firm believer that eventually hopefully we can go the same route, because our members at that time were put at risk by being exposed to nicoderm patch. That was a two year uphill battle but we were finally successful in having it removed.

Q: How do you want to be remembered?

CC: Well, if I had a choice, I would not want to be remembered as Cec Cardinal. I'd like to be remembered as the accomplishments or the changes that we had from within the organization or structure of AUPE. Cec Cardinal, not the individual, Cec Cardinal who represented or became a union activist and the accomplishments we had making a better workplace for the frontline workers for all of Local 3. That's how I'd like to be remembered as.

Q: How did the honour guard come about?

CC: It started a few years ago with our deputy minister at the time, or our minister at the time was Sienko [?]. He's an MLA ex-detective Calgary city police service. He had a police background. With anyone with a police background there was a lot of strong interest in addressing deportment, representation [of the] law enforcement field to support each other always. So what he decided to do also to help give us a better positive in the media, because how many times in the newspaper do you read negative articles in regards to Local 3 members in our field, like the sheriffs or the incidents at our correctional facilities. You never too often get that positive exposure. So what he decided to do is say, okay what I'm gonna do is identify ourselves, the roles we do, and the people we represent. So province-wide, every worksite, every adult facility, were given six honour guard positions. What that enabled us to do was have our representative from those worksites, so when there's incidents of officers going down or officer in trouble, whether it's an AUPE day of mourning celebration, that we can represent ?, and that gives so much recognition for the jobs we do and the roles we do and the people we represent. That was key. It's like I mentioned earlier with the ambassador program, the same type of idea. We're going there; we're promoting ourselves as honour guard members. Just last year at the general staff college recruit training – that's where our induction training goes where correctional peace officers and Alberta sheriffs get their training – it was day two and we were doing some morning exercise PT training. One of our members, Joe MacEwan, he was a correctional peace officer from Red Deer Remand Centre who was going through the exercises, wasn't feeling well. He had to sit down for a couple minutes and then he realized he couldn't get up. Hey, what's going on? I don't know, I'm not feeling well, I can't get up. Within minutes he totally crashed and they had to call 911 ambulance, and just a short time just after that he lost his life. It was ironic at the time when I got the call. I got the call from one of the members he supervised. One of his class recruits was at the site, called me right away and said, hey Cec, you better get up here, we just lost one of our members. I just happened to come out of the Red Deer courthouse because I was dealing with some worksite issues in Red Deer, so just happened to get off the phone and get the information. I went across the street to the Red Deer Remand Centre where he works and I ran into the centre director who was meeting with their senior

management team. Okay, I just heard what had happened. What are we doing for our members? The Red Deer Remand Centre is a smaller facility. They're like a close-knit family. So this could have a devastating effect on the frontline workers. So what he decided to do is call in all the members, call in a critical incident response team, and make sure they were getting counselling and start addressing their thoughts. It was devastating for the members at the Red Deer Remand Centre, let alone any fallen officer within Local 3, because as correctional peace officers we're proud, like anyone else in the law enforcement field. And even more so, we take pride in what we do and we recognize the nature of our employment and our roles as correctional peace officers. So after leaving the Red Deer Remand Centre, I went directly to a staff college and at the same time en route I'm calling, because of our working relationship with the senior management team on my level as local chair, the executive director, Adult Operations was en route to the staff college, same with his assistant, and he made sure he arranged a critical response team. He met with all the class to ensure they were all given counselling and services available because it was extremely devastating.

Q: Can you elaborate on the role of a guard?

CC: There's a policy just recently developed. Actually one of our members served on the OH&S provincial standing committee and he's also our Calgary regional honour guard resource person. He put together the policy as far as protocol, deportment as far as attending these events. Depends what the family wants or the type of service or if he got in the line of work as far as actual protocol we should be following. So we have a pretty big policy manual that's just been recently developed. I don't have the working knowledge of the military background but that's why he's an expert in that field, because that's what he's been doing for probably over 20 years before coming to the Correctional Services team. So there is definitely a protocol as far as incidents as to how we conduct ourselves, how we march, etc., as far as those processes go. One more thing too I must mention. Being an honour guard member, every year in the last weekend in September, the last Sunday in September, we have a National Peace Officers Day. It's held in Ottawa; it'll be the 12th year coming up this year. Also in saying

that we have one in Edmonton, a provincial remembrance for all peace officers who've lost their life in the line of duty. So, as a recognition at that venue, we bring in all honour guard members from the Correctional Service division, which is approximately 80 members province-wide, along with the Alberta sheriffs, with the RCMP, Edmonton Police Service, Calgary Police Service, Lethbridge Police Service, and every other police agency in the province of Alberta. We actually have a march and a word from our minister. So it's quite an honour and thrill to be part of that process. It gives us recognition and we acknowledge the members in our line of field and what we do, because we are also members that put our lives on the line every day we go to work.

Q: What's it like to work in that field?

CC: A day in the life of a correctional peace officer at an adult facility: an adult correctional facility is a tough environment. Number one, almost everyone who's there say they don't belong there – they were set up, they were framed, it was a mistake, they don't belong there. It's an extremely negative environment; so it's a tough work environment. It's like when you're going to school. Well, when I was going to school years and years ago it was always like, okay riding the school bus to school. The older kids rode in the back of the bus and the younger kids rode in the front of the bus. It was kind of structured; unfortunately that was the way it was structured. So if you have a lot of strong personalities or strong inmates or a group that can dominate that type of area or unit, they will. They'll take advantage of whoever, the smaller inmate. What they'll make him do is they'll say, okay now you're gonna bring this to me; I want so much money for my canteen, go make my bed, you're gonna do this, you're gonna clean my room up. That's just the way it is. They're just taking advantage of other offenders. The only reason I mention that because in saying that it's an extremely tough working environment. Our role as correctional peace officers is to run an effective unit and have a good understanding of the offenders, the type of offenders we have in that assigned unit. We rely on effective communication skills and observation skills. We must be able to observe to see if there's any change in behaviors that may be going on within that offender population. By noticing some changes, then we must get involved and interact

with the offenders like, okay what's going on, I notice you keep having words with this guy, looks like you're arguing with this guy, there's something going on. You must be able to interfere and deescalate as soon as possible, because if it escalates there are situations as a frontline worker, it's your role and responsibility as a correctional peace officer to de-escalate it and put it under control, because we need our control in that environment. And of course the law enforcement field offender population does not have any respect for the nature of work that we do. Same with any police agency. So there's always that conflict. So we gotta work around that conflict and try to let these offenders know what behaviours are appropriate, what behaviours are not, and kind of let them know, okay, this is what you have to do. There's rules and this is why you must follow them. It's like being a mentor and role model at the same time, like a case worker, a guidance counsellor all combined in one. With the changes in the offender population and the type of offenders we're getting, it's extremely volatile.

Q: Is there any political history from when you were growing up?

CC: From my family background, my grandfather was always chief on my reserve. My uncle was president of the Indian Association of Alberta; he ran for MP for Northern Alberta. Actually a funny story, we were talking about people we looked up to when we were growing up. My uncle, I really looked up to him. Back then they all went to residential schools on reserve. My first year of school was 1967 and that was the first year we got away from the residential schools and we went to our closest small town. That's where I was lucky – I avoided all the residential schools. But that was only in 1967. So my uncle was going to residential school and he didn't like what was going on there because you weren't allowed to speak your own tongue. Any time you spoke your own language, being Cree where we were from, he got strapped and beat on. Plus they take the children away from their parents. Can you imagine taking your children away and then bringing them back six months later or bringing them back on weekends as time goes? What kind of parenting skills do you have? But that's a whole different issue. So anyway my uncle was going to residential school and he said, enough's enough. He decided to take off and he went to Edmonton. He said, I'm going to go to school in the

City of Edmonton. Back then, being an isolated community, it was going to be really tough and challenging. The priest was telling him, oh you'll never make it; you'll be back within the next month. But next thing you know he went to St. Francis in Edmonton and then he graduated high school there, completed it, and then he went to university. Then he ended up going to Harvard University to get more education. So he was quite successful. At the same time he was also, let's say, on a little radical side as far as Native policies go. He joined the Indian Association of Alberta as president. I believe he was only 24, one of the youngest activists at the time, being First Nation. His first meeting he went to the Indian Association of Alberta, closed the door and said, okay all you white people get out, you don't belong in this organization. Kicked them all out. Ever since then he also wrote two books, and both books I know are used at Mount Royal College as reference books. So he was pretty successful and was a well known leader and activist.

Q: What are the titles of the books?

CC: *Unjust Society* and *Rebirth*. At that time it's kind of hard to explain cuz I'm gonna have to go back to how being a First Nation member was in that era. That was the era of a lot of radicals. The American Indian Movement was a pretty active right-wing group, anti-government. There was a lot of things going on at that time. So there was a lot of challenges for him. At the same time it was still before my time as an adult. So I followed some of it, but I couldn't quite get into it cuz at the time I wasn't an adult nor did I really appreciate the actually challenges he was dealing with and how he was dealing with it. He drove me a lot. I spent a lot of time with him, my uncle on my dad's side. Actually it'll be three years next month that he left us. He's no longer here but I definitely remember some of the stories that they used to tell us about the things he did. He stood up for others, and that was key. Whether people are Aboriginal or a different diverse group or whether you're a union activist, whatever it might be you need people to keep pushing to take those extra steps and remain focused on what they're doing. A lot of times, there's always been the same myths, I'll call them myths, as to some activists from within our organization. They'll say, ya, they lost touch of where they came from

and they're only looking after themselves, which is not true; they're myths. But there's ways of slowly changing that thought process and letting them know that, no, a lot of our frontline workers, union stewards, are elected members from our worksites. They do a lot of volunteer; it's all volunteer work. But they're there at the end of the day to help our members, to help you and I at the worksite. That's what they have to keep focused on. I'm talking about the membership.

[END]