

**Interview: Warren Williams (WW)**  
**Interviewer: Rod Mickleburgh (RM)**  
**Date: February 19, 2021**  
**Location: Video Conference**  
**Transcription: Donna Sacuta**

**RM** [00:00:04] But also, Warren, I'm going start off with you. Could you talk about your own background? I know your family was from Winnipeg, so you came here and you got involved with the union. Just want to sketch out your own background?

**WW** [00:00:16] Sure. So I actually transferred with Canadian, at the time it was Via Rail Canada. When I first hired on in the mid-seventies, it was Canadian National Railways and I hired on in Winnipeg and transferred to Vancouver, I think two years later. Anticipated that I would get laid off because I had no seniority. So I ended up being laid off in November, December, January, February, March, called back in March. And during that time I was able to acquire work at Canfisco down at the foot of Gore.

**RM** [00:00:52] Oh yeah. Right. Right. Right.

**WW** [00:00:54] I got there during the herring season and I'd never, you know, being from the prairies the only boat I'd ever been on was a rowboat or a canoe. And I definitely hadn't cleaned out the hull of boats at all. One of the jobs with that, with Canfisco. And it was interesting nonetheless. My first shift was, of course, I worked the graveyard shift, my first shift. I got on the bus down to Main and Gore to come because at the time I lived in up around Joyce and Euclid, and I got on the bus and early morning, around 6:30 - 7:00 in there. And of course, everybody that was on the bus moved away from me. And I didn't realize just how bad I stank from the herring. So I got off the bus. I realized that what was going on, I got off the bus and I walked all the way home and that was my first, my first real experience of the fishing industry here in Vancouver. And I did that for a few months until I got called back to work at the railway and, and I've been here—

**RM** [00:02:01] I just and we'll probably end up talking all about you because this sounds great, but so were you like on the line? You know, I don't know what you do with herring when that comes in. I know with salmon, you gut it and all the sort of, slice it and so on.

**WW** [00:02:16] Yeah, they had me on the line of course because I was a novice, right? So they had me on the line. But what I did is you used to—the herring went by and any roe that actually had come out you picked it off of and out of the bunches. And then afterwards I would go into different boats and spray them out with the power hose. And you know, you had all the fish stuff dropping on you and all that kind of stuff. And, yeah, it was interesting. It was interesting work. I did it for that one. That one season.

**RM** [00:02:50] Especially that was a crazy time. It was for the herring fishery because that was the Wild West, you know, It was unbelievable. Anyway, all right, now what do you do on the trains?

**WW** [00:03:00] I started out as a waiter in Winnipeg and then graduated up to sky train—sorry sky train bartender, steward, sky train steward they called it—

**RM** [00:03:19] Yeah.

**WW** [00:03:20] And then graduated from there to dining car steward and then of course did that for a while and went back to school, decided I wanted to get my chef's ticket, went back to school here at VCC in Vancouver, and then I got called by the railway again to come and train waiters and cooks and help out with that. And so I worked with them again for a few years after that, doing that type of work. But again, primarily at that time I went back, I went into the kitchen as the chef and was fortunate enough to be picked to cook for Queen Beatrix her last visit to Canada.

**RM** [00:04:02] And I know who that was.

**WW** [00:04:04] Yeah. So I was the executive chef for that. I took care of the entourage, she had about a 25-person entourage, and we had another chef that worked in her private car and I helped facilitate the meals etcetera with him. And it was it was really interesting. Well, it was really interesting.

**RM** [00:04:25] And I guess well, were there are a lot of blacks still employed by Via and so on?

**WW** [00:04:32] Yeah, there still were and a lot of blacks still working as porters, Canadian blacks, American blacks and of course Caribbean blacks and from the West Indies, etcetera. But by that time you had blacks working, as I said myself, as a dining car steward was unheard of back in my uncle's day and my grandfather's day. And so you had blacks working as dining car stewards and as service managers and sleeping car conductors. Still didn't have any blacks working as train conductors or brakemen or not that I know of, or engineers or firemen. That was still predominantly held by white. There were a couple of indigenous fellows doing that work in northern B.C., but yeah. But it was a it was a bit different. And then also when I hired on or shortly after I hired on, they started to hire women on the trains because at that time they didn't have women and that changed everything. So yeah.

**RM** [00:05:38] Did you like working on the trains?

**WW** [00:05:40] You know, I did and I didn't. It's not, it's not really, I found not conducive to raising a family. You were away a lot. And, you know, like there were times I'd be gone for nine days, you know, I'd go from Vancouver to Prince Rupert and I'd be gone for nine days there. Vancouver to Jasper or whatever. And if I was in Winnipeg, I'd be gone much also. The long runs on the Continental were Winnipeg-Vancouver, Winnipeg-Montreal, Winnipeg-Toronto. And they were generally five days, five day trips, total round trip and you know, it's a really good job for a student without a doubt. And of course, the wages were way better than my uncle's wages were at the time. And my grandfather. My grandfather, interestingly enough, was very upset when I hired on with the railway, when he found out that I had hired on with the railway, he was not happy about it at all. At the time you know, he had dealt with a lot of racism, etcetera and he made it quite clear that that's not something he wanted his grandsons to be doing. But he said, "it's nothing I can do about it now, you've signed on. I'm just going to tell you how to take care of yourself in close quarters." And that's the truth. He did that. "And be careful and do your job to the best of your abilities. And you'll be doing it better than most. And they'll have no reason to come after you. But they will come after you."

**RM** [00:07:11] Sounds like a good grandad.

**WW** [00:07:13] Yeah, he was pretty good at that. Yeah.

**RM** [00:07:16] So when did you leave the trains and get into something else?

**WW** [00:07:20] Oh, probably late '80s. Probably in the late '80s. I'd left in—oh jeez—I left in the early '80s and then came back in mid-'80s and then did that for a few years in the late '80s, early '90s. And that's when I started to—I realized that it's not what I wanted to do anymore. And so I started working in restaurants in town. And the same it's not something if you're raising a family, it's because it's, you know, it keeps you from your family. You know, you work long hours and, and it's, and at night and it's hospitality and you're always in service mode and, you know, it rubs off on you after a while, right? You start to hate the same way. So, but my cousin was working with youth in Burnaby, with St Leonard's Youth and Family Services of Burnaby and asked. And I'd been moaning and thing about, 'I don't know what I'm going to do.' He said, 'Well, listen, why don't you come try this out with me?' And I said, 'I got no patience to work with youth'. And he's like, "No, I think he'd be good at it." And, you know, turned out that he was right. I enjoyed it. And I did that for a long time, and that's how I ended up with the Vancouver School Board. And I did about four years at (unclear) drug and alcohol program for a youth residential program for youth and yeah, and ended up in the Vancouver School Board and then from there President of CUPE Local 15.

**RM** [00:09:00] Well, you're an interesting fellow!

**WW** [00:09:03] I've had a pretty interesting life I guess you could say. I realized at some point that at around every 14 years I change what I'm doing. Right?

**RM** [00:09:14] So you're going for the CLC presidency? (laughter)

**WW** [00:09:19] No, I think I'm at the end of it now. I won't be doing that.

**RM** [00:09:24] So. And before we get into your family history, of course, which is the major reason we're doing this interview, although as I say, you're interesting in your own right, in your work experience and so on, I mean, obviously not even well, I guess perhaps there's a little bit of an aberration still on the trains, but I mean, there weren't a lot of black workers, you know, I just wonder how that was for you and whether you did experience any discrimination or racism or anything like that.

**WW** [00:09:53] Oh, yeah, I was for sure. I experienced it most of my life, especially when I was younger. And then when I was on the trains for sure, I experienced that, I experienced racism, racist attitudes from not only the passengers, but from management and even though at the time— One time I was the youngest steward on, well the dining car stewards throughout the whole system and I was black. So that was a, you know, a really good feather in the cap, so to speak. But they did hold me back from advancing after that. Right?

**RM** [00:10:27] You really think that was because of the fact you are black?

**WW** [00:10:31] Yeah. Because the individuals at the time they were in the positions to promote they were from the old school so to speak, so yeah.

**RM** [00:10:40] Anything, any other examples you want to point out or—

**WW** [00:10:48] Just in from any example at all or?

**RM** [00:10:51] Well, sure. I mean. Well, yes, yes, yes.

**WW** [00:10:54] I mean, of course, growing up in Winnipeg, Winnipeg is a very, and was, and still is to this day, a very, very racist city. It's very hard to be a person of colour in Winnipeg. You're targeted. Without a doubt I was targeted most of my youth. Which is one of the reasons I moved to Vancouver was to get away from it. And in Vancouver it's not as bad, but it's still prevalent in Vancouver, but not like it is in Winnipeg. By no means, you know. I mean, I ended up I got a jaywalking ticket in downtown Vancouver. I lived in the West End, so I got jaywalking ticket at Robson. I think it was either Robson, I think was Robson and Jervis. And then about two weeks later I was crossing the street at by the Vancouver Art Gallery to go into the Vancouver Hotel at that time, now it's the Fairmont Hotel and I was going across, crossing the street. So I jaywalked right?

**RM** [00:11:49] Well, everybody makes that.

**WW** [00:11:51] Everybody makes that right? And so when I got my first jay—, I got the jaywalking ticket on Jervis, I was crossing to a 'no walk' with everybody, with about 15-20, and he pulled me out of all those people and gave me a— And I said, 'come one!' He didn't care, right? So anyway so now I'm crossing the street to go to the Fairmont, just I'm not going into the Fairmont, but I'm just crossing the street. And the motorcycle officer was giving a ticket, writing out a ticket down the street and apparently he stopped what he was doing, jumping on his bike and came all the way to the Fairmont. Caught me just before I got into the lobby, and I looked and I said, 'Come on, really? Like there's no vehicles.' And he looked at me and he said, "You know better, Mr. Williams." He remembered me before he even seen my I.D. So I was like, 'Oh, you just targeted me, right?' And he grabbed me, you know? So of course, there was always the name calling and that sort of thing. And, uh, and always the having to wait for service, you know, quite often, especially in the smaller towns when you're on the road, wait for service. Wait for service in Winnipeg too. You picked your spots, right. You picked your spots. The one thing I learned was to stand up for myself, though. And I learned that from my family, my mom's family and my dad's family.

**RM** [00:13:15] All right, let's talk about your family. So you were you—it wasn't your dad or anyone else who moved to Vancouver. That was your decision?

**WW** [00:13:24] Yeah, that was my decision. I mean, I had cousins that lived out here, but to my immediate family, no, I was the first one out here.

**RM** [00:13:31] All right. What do you want to say about your family? I mean, it's a family of of sleeping car porters, right?

**WW** [00:13:39] Yeah. Yeah. For the most part. And house working what you call them. Working in houses for women in for families.

**RM** [00:13:53] Service industries? Domestics?

**WW** [00:13:54] Yeah, domestics. Thank you. Yeah. Yeah. So, that's my dad's family came up from Waco, Texas, on his father's side in 1910, and they just settled in Hillside Saskatchewan, 1910. And on my dad's mother's side, my dad's mother's family are Lane's. And they came out of Oklahoma Territories in 1908 and settled in just around Maidstone.

The Saskatchewan government just recently, in the last ten years or so designated the church, there's a log hewn church built—they call the Shiloh people—by my descendants, my grandpa, my great grandfather, Caesar Lane built the church and they've just designated it a heritage site. And so there still, and my ancestors, some of my ancestors are buried there in the church there's a plaque there. And that's, you know, that's my family. Yeah, it's pretty cool.

**RM** [00:15:04] So what did they do? Was it Hillside?

**WW** [00:15:07] Yeah, Hillside. They were farmers. They came up with farming, I believe, at the time the government was—it's interesting—the government was offering in Canada it was 60 acres and a mule, I think. In the United States it was 40 acres. And you've probably seen the logo right? So that's you know, they're trying to of course, this is during the Jim Crow era in the United States. And so a lot of blacks were migrating north to Canada. And it got to the point that the Canadian government in 1911 put a ban on blacks migrating, immigrating—

**RM** [00:15:44] Most people don't know that.

**WW** [00:15:46] No, they did it for a year, apparently. Yeah, apparently for a year and I think the campaign I think started in Alberta, because in Alberta we had a large black population in Ambersville I think it's called Ambersville in Alberta. And in Manitoba and whatnot. And so for about a year, the government put a ban on Negroes (uses air quotes) immigrating to Canada right from the southern—and they actually had a campaign where they sent Canadian officials down to the southern United States to dissuade southern blacks from migrating to Canada. And it was successful in a lot of ways. Yeah.

**RM** [00:16:30] You mentioned your great grandfather coming from Oklahoma, did you say?

**WW** [00:16:35] Yeah, one from Oklahoma and one from Waco, Texas. Yeah.

**RM** [00:16:38] Were any of them slaves? Are you descended from slaves?

**WW** [00:16:42] My great grandmother on my father's side was born a slave. Yeah. Born in—yeah. Yeah. Well, she lived long enough for me to and my cousins of my age to know her. She lived long enough. Yeah. Well, she didn't talk about it, I mean, there was no— it was just. It just was what it was , right?

**RM** [00:17:05] Yeah, yeah. Well, often the people that go through it don't like to talk about it. It's subsequent generations that want the history to be known. Anyway, so then everyone moved to Winnipeg is that what happened?

**WW** [00:17:20] Yeah. So then, because of course, it was hard for blacks to get work right? And so the families eventually either moved east to Winnipeg or west to Alberta and, like my Uncle Lee, for instance, his first—he got a job in South Battleford on, and that's where he got his first job with the C.N.R.. And then the family migrated to Winnipeg, just like a lot of black families did. The railway was the hub for Canada at the time and Winnipeg was central to all of Canada at the time. And so everything based, everything went through Winnipeg at one time.

**RM** [00:18:02] Yeah, both rail lines.

**WW** [00:18:04] And both rail lines exactly went through Winnipeg too. C.P.R., Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian National Railway. And so my grandfather, Carl Williams and his brothers, Lee Williams and Chester and all, they migrated Winnipeg and started working on the railway. My grandfather and one of his, a couple of his brothers, Tommy and Roy, worked on for CP Rail and my Uncle Lee worked on Canadian National Railways with, and that time it was Canadian blacks from, you know had migrated from the United States and/or were born here, worked on the railway and then he started getting influx of Caribbean peoples. Black people from Caribbean. From the West Indies. Jamaica and Nova Scotia started to come to Winnipeg and migrated to Winnipeg for work.

**RM** [00:19:03] So were they sleeping car porters?

**WW** [00:19:06] They were all sleeping car porters. All sleeping car porters. My grandfather was a—he had a trade. He was a stucco-er, you might remember, what stucco is like—

**RM** [00:19:19] Oh, stucco. No.

**WW** [00:19:20] Stucco. Yeah. So it's you see a lot of the Vancouver houses that are stucco. It's like plaster.

**RM** [00:19:27] I know what stucco is.

**WW** [00:19:28] Yeah. Anyway, so at one time we didn't, you didn't have drywall. The inside of your house was stuccoed also. And it had slats of wood behind it and all that. And my grandfather did that type of work on the side when he couldn't get work. He was very good at it. When he did get work, people would watch him work and apparently he was that good at it and that was the thing. But he couldn't he just couldn't maintain work because they weren't hiring blacks in Winnipeg. And the only place that he could get hired was on the railway. And that's what happened with a lot of the blacks. And it was, you know, in the community. It was a good paying job. You know, steady work, wasn't good paying, but it was steady work, money coming into the family. You could raise a family on it and you had a bit of prestige in the community. I don't think I ever seen any of my uncles or my grandfather at any time not wearing a suit except if they were in the house. If they went out they wore a suit, jacket, tie, and off they go. And that's how they would go to work and that's how they presented themselves at work. You know, of course, they had their uniforms and you know, but it had its— It was a means to an end.

**RM** [00:20:41] It's an odd thing, isn't it, that this one job was all, all the people in it were black.

**WW** [00:20:49] Yeah, yeah.

**RM** [00:20:51] And it was expected. I mean.

**WW** [00:20:53] And it was expected. They were expected to be subservient also, right? Not only to the passengers, but to the white workers on the railway. And, of course, the employer, too right? So it was not a—it was the load that they carried, but they carried it well and were proud of the work that they did. They took a great pride in the work they did, which is why my grandfather put that lesson on me, to do it as best as you can, and you'll be doing it better than most. And, you know, it was, you know, I mean, I had the

experience of being asked by a passenger to shine their shoes back in when I was on the road and I told them, 'No, I don't do that.' And they were surprised.

**RM** [00:21:40] Because they used to do that.

**WW** [00:21:42] That's right. And there'd be no question about it. The shoes went out, you shine the shoes. And I just you know, I was one of the I just said, 'No, I'm not doing that. This, you know, like I'm already making your bed.' And that was only one summer I did porter for one summer because one of my, one of my buddies talked me into it. He said, "Look, we can do it together. We'll run back to back cars." And because I had two cars, he had two cars, 48 beds. And it was in those days, you'd have a train that was, you know, over 28 cars in length. It was massive. And, you know, and on the CP line, you'd go through the spiral tunnel and you go in the bottom and you could at the top, you could see the bottom, the tail end of the train just going into the tunnel, right?

**RM** [00:22:29] Right.

**WW** [00:22:30] The Super Continental wasn't that long back in those days. They were, you know, silver setting service, you know, five-five-five setting service. You know, there was they went, you know, you had prime rib and steaks and everything. You ate, when you were on the train, you ate good.

**RM** [00:22:49] Aw, I was a big believer in trains.

**RM** [00:22:51] And train travel. Of course, our family went coach.

**WW** [00:22:54] Yeah, yeah. But hey you coaches you know, if you had—

**RM** [00:22:58] 40 bucks youth fare across Canada.

**WW** [00:23:00] Flip the chairs around and you had you pretty much had a bed. If you put your feet up on —

**RM** [00:23:05] If you were lucky unless it wasn't crowded. Anyway, it's an odd thing these sleeping car porters because you know it was both good and bad, right: I mean it was good that it was a secure job and it was steady employment and all that kind of thing. And the downside is you could not be promoted.

**WW** [00:23:22] Couldn't be promoted.

**RM** [00:23:24] That was it.

**WW** [00:23:25] Yeah. That was. And you weren't even in the white unions. So the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Workers was predominant was a white union and three porters from Winnipeg, I can't remember the names right now. They tried to belong to the union, the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Workers and were told, "No," by the union. "You can't do it, you're black, you can't be part of this union." So John Robinson, I believe it is, in 1912 formed the—

**RM** [00:24:02] The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

**WW** [00:24:04] Yeah I think that's where that's yeah. The Canadian Brotherhood of, yes, the Sleeping Car Porters, is that what it was? Anyway but Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. And so they formed that union in 1912 and then in 1955 my uncle Lee Williams who had the fortune, who was fortunate enough to be on a run from Winnipeg to Vancouver, and he would pick up Prime Minister Diefenbaker when he was an MP. And Diefenbaker would get on in Saskatchewan. He'd ride the trains going east to Ottawa, but he'd ride the trains. And so my uncle was fortunate enough to get to know him, of course, because he rode on the sleeping car and my uncle would be the porter. So he got to know him. And he started talking to him about the conditions on the railway and not being able to be part of this, the union and the wage discrepancies and not being able to get promoted and being served food that should have actually been thrown out, that sort of thing, and the segregation of it. And so Prime Minister Diefenbaker talked to him about the Canadian—I think I wrote down, oh, there it is, the Canadian Fair Employment Act.

**RM** [00:25:28] Right.

**WW** [00:25:30] And so he talked to him about it, and then he told him what he needed to do in order to present their case, right.? And so through, you know, a few trips and phone calls, he (unclear) my uncle, he did that in 1955 and nothing changed. And then Lester B Pearson became the Prime Minister 10 years later, I think it was 10 years later. Pearson was the Prime Minister and my Uncle Lee contacted Prime Minister Pearson at that time and told him that he expected that the law will be upheld and given the situation. And four days later, the response from the Prime Minister at that time was to tell the railway, C.N.R. and C.P.R. that they would, they would toe the line and that's they became part of the same collective agreement as the white workers and were able to get promoted. My uncle was the first to, one of the first sleeping car conductors and then became inspector, service manager, inspector afterwards.

**RM** [00:26:38] I'm going to get into that in a sec. But first of all, just one last question about the sleeping car porters is, I mean, that was a really difficult job. I mean, you had so many duties and you could hardly, you didn't have any time to sleep. Can you talk—did your uncles ever talk about just what it was like doing the actual job?

**WW** [00:27:00] Yeah. You very rarely back in those days, up until 1940, you didn't even have a berth. And then after 1940, you may get a berth if there was room. But even if there wasn't, even if there was room prior to 1940, you didn't get a berth. And what you, what they had on each car was called the jump seat and is about just wide enough for you to sit on. And it, they called it a jump seat because the bell would ring and you'd look up on the board and you see, 'Okay, I had to go to this room.' So you'd jump up and then that seat that was on a seat on a hinge and it would float, jump back up into the wall right? And so that basically you slept in that seat basically. You didn't you didn't have, didn't even have the dignity of having a place to sleep. And of course, you know, like you're cleaning up people's messes and there's no air con—

**RM** [00:27:51] And serve them drinks and then you're at your beck and call, like basically 24-7, right?

**WW** [00:27:59] 24-7. Yeah. Any time of day or night at their beck and call without it. Absolutely. And you better be polite, you gotta be courteous, you gotta be smiling. You better not give them any reason to be upset because you could, they, you know, they would write you up and if you received 60 demerits, you'd be fired. There's no ifs, ands, or buts, about it. And if you became what was called in the day too familiar or too friendly (air



quotes) with white pass—female passengers, that was pretty much an automatic, "You're gone, fired." Right. You had to act like they weren't there pretty much you know, and just deal with them. It was not good.

**RM** [00:28:44] I've just been reading about it. You don't think about it, you just really think about them making up the beds, right? But there was all this other stuff like shining the shoes. People left their shoes out and you had to shine them, and then you had to put them back in exactly the proper way with the toes in and you know, or otherwise you get demerit points.

**WW** [00:29:04] Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

**RM** [00:29:06] (unclear)

**WW** [00:29:07] And you need to know, you need to know the territory you're going through, too. Because if they asked you where they were, they expected you to know where they were. So, the sleeping car porters from coast to coast actually, and coast, because they would go north to northern B.C., etcetera, northern Manitoba, Churchill, Thompson in that area, they needed to know the geography of where they were at so that they could have those conversations or share that information with the passengers right? And that's one of the beauties of travelling by train is the landscape and it's nice to know where you at. And people always want to know what mountain is that, what—

**RM** [00:29:44] Right on.

**WW** [00:29:46] And they would, you know, they became really good ambassadors for Canada in that sense. They knew where they were, they knew the history of where they were etcetera, so.

**RM** [00:29:56] At every stop they had to be outside the train, you know.

**WW** [00:30:02] Every summer, day or night, winter, summer, fall didn't matter. Beside the train all the time, dressed neat, shoes shined, you know, smile on the face. Didn't matter if it was 40 below they had to be out there.

**RM** [00:30:16] Gotta be a frozen smile.

**WW** [00:30:17] Yeah. And of course, you said you were reading 'They Called Me George'. Is that the book you said?

**RM** [00:30:23] Yeah, Cecil Foster's book.

**WW** [00:30:25] Yeah. And that is true. So, everybody that was a sleeping car porter. There you go. Was called George. All called George.

**RM** [00:30:38] Yeah. And again, just before you get into your uncle. Well, it involves him, I mean, did he ever take any of the runs to Vancouver? And if so, like, were there, there were layovers there, and I just wondered if he ever wandered down to Hogan's Alley.

**WW** [00:30:53] That's where they all went. They all went down to Hogan's Alley. Vie's Chicken. Chicken Shack was down in Hogan's Alley, right. So they would go to Vie's and they'd eat at Vie's. It wasn't until the late '60s, early '70s, that they even actually were put

up in hotels to sleep. They actually stayed, they actually had cars, sleeping cars on at the rail yard where they—

**RM** [00:31:18] The sidings

**WW** [00:31:18] Yeah. Where they where they slept, right. But yeah, they would go to Vie's and they would Hogan's Alley and they would go to The Cave. The Cave downtown was one of the hubs for black American and Canadian talent and jazz and blues and rhythm and blues. And, you know, Marvin Gaye was there. The Supremes were there.

**RM** [00:31:40] Duke Ellington.

**WW** [00:31:41] Yeah. Sorry? Duke Ellington.

**RM** [00:31:44] Duke Ellington. I saw him there.

**WW** [00:31:45] Yeah. Right.

**RM** [00:31:49] You know, did they talk a lot about what it was like at Hogan's Alley? Because, as you know, it's become this kind of legendary part of Vancouver.

**WW** [00:31:57] Yeah. No. What happened when I was probably 14. My Uncle Lee was a deacon in our church, Pilgrim Baptist in Winnipeg. And we formed, the church formed a youth group and youth services. And through that, my Uncle Lee and my grandfather and other uncles that were, they worked on the railway at the time, were able to get us all passes on the, you know, use the family pass and took us all to Vancouver, took about 30 kids to Vancouver. And part of that trip was to go to Hogan's Alley. This is the black community in Vancouver. And we went to Vie's Chicken Shack and and it was a good, it was a great experience, actually. It was a great experience. Yeah. One of the things about being black in Canada is we're so—now we're so dispersed, you know, like we don't have the same sense of community that I grew up with. But even with the sense of community that I grew up with in Winnipeg, I took the train when I was 16 to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. And of course, Nova Scotia is where there are, the greatest majority of blacks are and were. And it was even for me, it was an eye opener, but it was like being in heaven. You know, it's like, wow, all my people. (laughs)

**RM** [00:33:32] All right, let's get into. And of course, one of the reasons Hogan's Alley was where it was, was because it was relatively close to the Great Northern Railway Station.

**WW** [00:33:41] That's right. And it was the same like in Winnipeg too the families congregated. They lived in close proximity to the C.P.R. railway and more so C.P.R. but C.N.R. railway too. And the north end of Winnipeg and Point Douglas which is where the families lived and frankly it's because they couldn't— One, to be close to their place of work, but two, because other areas of Winnipeg didn't want blacks in the area.

**RM** [00:34:14] Yeah, and that was true in Vancouver too of course.

**RM** [00:34:17] So. Okay. Your Uncle Lee. Now, he was, I don't know whether he liked or didn't like his job. Well, he probably liked his job on the train to the extent that he did it all his life. But I mean, he became strong within the union and was really part of the fight to end the discrimination within the railways in terms of promotion and so on. Can you talk a bit about that?

**WW** [00:34:43] Yeah. So he as I said, they formed the—John Robinson formed the Order of Sleeping Car Porters back in 1912 is what it was called, right. They had the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Workers, which was the white union. They couldn't belong to that union because they were actually formed the Order of Sleeping Car Porters. And so with that, my uncle in 1930 started work—1930, yeah 1930—started working for Canadian National Railways, and he fairly quickly found out that working conditions for blacks on the railway were not, nothing to write home about and could see the injustices of it. And initially he would say that he tried to just do his job, not worry about it, and just come home, get up, go back to work, do his job. Blah, blah blah. He didn't really want to pay a whole lot of attention to it. But something along the way happened and he started to—people in the community started talking to him and trying to push him to become part of the union. So he became chairman, I think of the Order of Sleeping Car Porters and then went to convention because they were allowed to go to conventions. I think the first convention was in Montreal that he attended. And at that convention he put a resolution forward to end the discrimination in their collective agreement, and it was ignored. The resolution was ignored. And so the next time he went to convention was in Toronto, and he put the same resolution forward in Toronto. And he says, you know, from what he could see from the raised hands, he believed that they had a majority of votes, that the resolution would pass. But the president of the day said the resolution had failed and it didn't pass. And so then that's when he started looking at, "Okay, you know, what can I do?" And that's when he started talking to John Diefenbaker, Mr. Diefenbaker would travel—

**RM** [00:36:55] I'm just going to stop you there. I mean, we need to—I should we should make it clear that this is an actual clause in the collective agreement that says if you hire on as a sleeping car porter, you shall remain a sleeping car porter until you retire. That was it. You were locked in. It wasn't just subtle discrimination. It was written right into the contract that you had to stay as a sleeping car porter You couldn't be a conductor. You couldn't be a server, anything. You had to remain a sleeping car porter.

**WW** [00:37:27] That's correct, Yeah. Yeah. And that so, you know, so then that's when he had, as I said, he was fortunate enough to have John Diefenbaker on, running, travelling on his, on his sleeping car several times and got to know him. And Mr. Diefenbaker talked to him about the Canadian Employment Fair Employment Act of Canada because he was asking, "I don't know what to do now, and this is the conditions." And so Mr. Diefenbaker talked about the Canadian Fair—Canada's Fair Employment Act—and you know, what he needed to do to make a case, etcetera. So that was in '55, 1955. And so he did that, and the rest pretty much his history. It took 10 years. And then a new Prime Minister with Lester B. Pearson. Lester B. Pearson finally upheld the Act and that changed the collective and they became part of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Workers, and my Uncle Lee actually became President of that union shortly thereafter. Because the workers realized, white and black, realized that he was actually a fair individual and treated people fairly. And so he, though the white workers had were the majority, he got enough of their votes to become President of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Workers.

**RM** [00:38:54] And he was one of the first people promoted wasn't he? When the law, when it changed.

**WW** [00:38:59] Yeah. Yeah. He was one of the first to be, got promoted from sleeping car porter to sleeping car conductor because of course the sleeping car conductors were white, right, up until that time. They were white and they were the police on the train, the

sleeping car conductor and the train conductors. They were the police on the train. You're a black porter, you're always under the thumb of the sleeping car conductor. Always, Yeah.

**RM** [00:39:25] Because white—there started to be white sleeping car porters and I wonder if he enjoyed policing them.

**WW** [00:39:32] (Laughter) Yeah. Yeah. You know what? It wasn't probably wasn't until like the mid '70s. Yeah, probably mid '70s, early '70s, mid '70s before you actually would have seen a white sleeping car porter. I don't recall one when I was younger and I travelled from Winnipeg to Alberta, Edmonton really, or Calgary and I don't recall seeing them and I, you know, I don't recall my uncles or my grandfather really talking about it, they were all black men. They're all black men. And but then in the early to mid '70s, that changed. I mean, the wages became better for one. And the other interesting piece though too Rod, is that even though if you're a Canadian black, and you hired on, all you can hire on is as a sleeping car porter. But if you were a student and you're from the Caribbean, the West Indies, and you were a student you can hire on in the summer, you could work in the dining car. Before the amalgamation. So it's an interesting—

**RM** [00:40:49] That's weird.

**WW** [00:40:49] And it's just part of their, a part of the contract for something around students. Like I just found this out recently that— And so you had this clear line where blacks couldn't be promoted, but then you had blacks working that were students and they're of Caribbean descent. They weren't Canadian blacks, and they weren't American blacks, they were of Caribbean descent working in the dining car. It's interesting.

**RM** [00:41:19] You know, so many questions. But first, so what do you know? Do you know anything about what motivated your uncle to get involved like this and to work so hard to get something he thought was wrong? Because, of course and this isn't criticism, but most did not. And yet there was something that motivated him. Was there something in his family or is it something about Lee? Can you talk about his motivation?

**WW** [00:41:43] It's the family. So our family has always passed on the belief, the truth to all of us growing up, and it is the same from my Uncle Lee, and he's actually said it that you know, nobody is better than him. Nobody should be (unclear). That people should be given the opportunity on merit of who they are, not on the colour of their skin. So that's, we grew up that way. And we grew up, "Listen, don't take anything, be respectful, do your best. But just remember, you don't have to put up with anything. If you think something's not right then you have, then you should say something about it. Don't just be silent." So you'll find my family they're not quiet people. If they if they see something, they generally will speak to it. And I say, quiet. I don't think they holler nothing, right. But they'll speak to it. If they see an injustice, they have no qualms about speaking to it. And for the most part, a lot of them were active in the community, helping others, doing social active work, and especially my aunts and my grandmother. My grandma, my grandmother and my grandfather they took everybody in to their house. That was the hub in Winnipeg. If you were new to the city and you were black or a black person come to look for work, pretty much you'd find somehow you'd find your way to the Williams' household in Winnipeg. And my family, my grandparents would put you up, help you, help you get situated, you know, with with the help of the community and the church and all that. And there was just we just were taught to pull ourselves up, not to allow anyone to (unclear) on us. And at the same time, don't look down on others and do the best that you can and be respectful, etcetera.

And that's just how we were raised. And that comes right from my great grandparents, right from my great grandparents, and was passed down to their children (unclear)

**RM** [00:44:05] Well, they said, 'To hell with the United States, we want something better.'

**WW** [00:44:08] Yeah, they did. And they found out it wasn't quite what they thought it was going to be either, right. But what it was, we always and even I'll say this, racism in Canada is subtle. It's not as in your face in the United States, it's subtle. And it's been that way for, you know, well, since we came up here, since my family came up here, It's very subtle. But it's still here.

**RM** [00:44:35] Yeah, yeah. And, you know, I found that this whole drive to end the discrimination in the contract so that sleeping car porters could be eligible for promotion or better jobs. But it was in an odd way it was a two-edged sword, because they also had a guarantee that the job of sleeping car porter would always be filled by blacks. So there was an odd kind of security there, and not all the sleeping car porters wanted that changed too.

**WW** [00:45:11] Yeah.

**RM** [00:45:12] You know, I mean, they felt security. And I think your uncle might have, might have been sympathetic to that argument if I remember what I read in Cecil Foster's book.

**WW** [00:45:22] Yeah, no, that's true. There were those that that job security was a major concern, right. And there were those that were suspicious of it and concerned about that change because for the reasons that you said. But in the end, it turned, you know, it was the right thing to do. And so it was done. Yeah, another interesting piece during (unclear), the Winnipeg strike in 1919. Right, which you know. So at the time, sleeping car porters weren't part of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Workers. They were part of the Order of Sleeping Car Porters and 90 some of them stood by all the white workers and struck with them and when they, when the strike was over, majority of those porters were not hired back. Majority of them weren't hired back.

**RM** [00:46:27] Of course.

**WW** [00:46:29] And, you know they—

**RM** [00:46:31] Well, I will say that a lot of white workers weren't hired back either.

**WW** [00:46:35] That's true, yeah.

**RM** [00:46:35] But your point, of course, is a good one, but oh, that's very interesting. Well, yeah. So what about your dad and your other uncle? They weren't I guess as involved as Lee, but I mean do you want to talk about their roles too in this?

**WW** [00:46:50] Well my Uncle Roy, Roy Williams, my Uncle Lee, his brother, my grandfather's brother, he lived here in Vancouver, right. But he worked for Canadian Pacific Railway. And so he did and worked towards doing what Uncle Lee was doing with Canadian National Railway, he did the same thing and at the same time they worked together with Canadian Pacific Railway. It's just that my Uncle Lee is the one that pushed government, etcetera but they were—

**RM** [00:47:22] And knew Diefenbaker.

**WW** [00:47:25] And knew, I was going to say had the fortune to meet (unclear) exactly. They were doing that that same work. My father worked on the railway too, when he was younger, a young man, but he, my grandfather taught all of his kids how to plaster and stucco and that, how to do that work. And so at that time, blacks were able to get work elsewhere, other than the trains. But my father started on the trains, but then he worked, then he started doing drywall and plaster throughout all of northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, ended up in Ontario. He would just, he was more like where the work was, that's where my dad went. But it was because of the trade that they learned from my grandfather.

**RM** [00:48:11] And you're mentioning there your Uncle Roy. He lived in Vancouver?

**WW** [00:48:16] Yeah, he lived in Van—he lived in south, Southeast Van. Yeah. Yeah.

**RM** [00:48:19] He didn't live in Hogan's Alley?

**WW** [00:48:21] No, no, he was, no, he was up, I think he is up around Killarney area. Yeah I think he's up around Killarney area. He's since passed. My cousin Judy, I think my cousin Judy is here, but I haven't seen her in a couple of years now. She's older than I am, too, so.

**RM** [00:48:40] And so when you look back on your Uncle Lee and so on, I mean, has he left a legacy for you? I mean, is it part of you that got you involved in the union and so on?

**WW** [00:48:53] I think so, for sure. My immediate my Aunt Adela, my dad's sister, Adela Roberts. Or, Adela Williams but married, Adela Roberts married an American serviceman, Air Force, Lewis Roberts, my uncle. And you know, they travelled around the world because they would move with him but they ended up in Las Vegas and my aunt is still there in Nevada. And she worked in hospitality trades there with the UFCW. And I forget what local and I might even have the union wrong. But it was a food workers, hotel, hospitality trades local within the hotels. And she was on the executive and with UFCW, and she ended up being invited to Clinton's second inaugural dinner, right? Because she was very active in the union in the United States, in the food workers union in the United States. And she she ended up being invited to the dinner. And so I have that experience of activism in my family. My aunts were active, as I said, in the community. My grandmother was active in the community helping others. So I have that experience in my family, grew up around it. Social justice wasn't something that was foreign to us. We were raised around it. And so I, you know, I didn't think I'd find myself doing what I'm doing. And to be quite honest, when I was first asked to be a shop steward, I was like, 'mehhh', because I got used to dealing with collective agreements on my own and finding ways to make sure that my rights were being protected, right. I found out that as long as the employer knew you knew the collective agreement most often it was okay. But anyway, so it's not something I thought I was going to do. And then I started working for the Vancouver School Board and then a city member Santino and my wife started talking to me about getting active. My partner at the time, so we weren't married. And so I thought (unclear) I did. And, you know, it turned out that I liked it, built relationships with the members, employers, etcetera, learned collective bargaining, arbitrations, etcetera, and then was asked to run for President. And first off, I thought 'No, I'm not going to do that.' And then I was asked again and then I thought, 'Okay, well, I'll do it.' But I didn't really have my heart

into it. I was like, 'Yeah, I don't know, you know.' And so of course I didn't win and didn't even get close to winning, was often knocked off on the first ballot because I just didn't have my heart into it. And so people knew that they were like, "You know, you need to be more, because you can do this," right? So then the next time, two years later, I was nominated again and I went for it. This time I was like, 'No, you're right, we can do better.' And I won and became President of CUPE Local 15. As you know, CUPE Local 15 is one of the larger locals of CUPE in Canada.

**RM** [00:52:14] And when was that.

**WW** [00:52:17] That would have been—

**RM** [00:52:18] When did you become President?

**WW** [00:52:20] Six years ago now. So 2014?

**WW** [00:52:23] 2014, yeah.

**RM** [00:52:28] Wow. And when did your your Uncle Lee, when did he pass? Was he around for any of your union activity?

**WW** [00:52:39] No, he didn't. He didn't get the union activity, but he was around for when I became the youngest Dining Car Steward on Via Rail, which is Via Rail is actually Canadian National Railways, but they amalgamated the two passenger services.

**RM** [00:52:54] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**WW** [00:52:55] And so he was around for me becoming the youngest Dining Car Steward. So he's pretty proud of that fact. Yeah.

**RM** [00:53:05] Yeah. Did he ever talk to you about what it means to be part of a union or anything like that or did he just talk about just fighting for your rights kind of in a more general way?

**WW** [00:53:14] Yeah, just more, in a more general way. Just talk about your rights and stand up for yourself. And it's actually probably more my Aunt Anna that talked more about getting more active in the Union (unclear). One of the things I find in my family is that we're a matriarchy, wouldn't think it, but we're a matriarchy. It's the women in the family that, "This is how it's going to be," and then make it happen. But it's the women in the family, in my family, on my dad's side, anyway, that they're—my grandmother was called The Queen, right? And she was. Not that there's a royalty but in terms of, "If Grandma said it's so, it's so. If Grandma wanted this to happen, it was going to happen." If you had a problem in the family, with your family, you take it to Grandma. Grandma was going to sort it out, right? So yeah, so it was actually the women in the family that were the—

**RM** [00:54:06] Well, Vie's Chicken House, right?

**WW** [00:54:07] That's right. Right? Yeah.

**RM** [00:54:09] What was it like eating there? Do you remember it?

**WW** [00:54:13] I remember it being crowded and a lot of black people in the place. I remember that, right? And of course, had the chicken, I had the chicken. I remember the chicken. And (laughs) you know, I love fried chicken.

**RM** [00:54:31] So one more thing about your Uncle Lee, which I also noticed. I mean, he was also involved in this campaign to ban 'Little Black Sambo', which used to be a staple of public schools. A horrible book. Yeah, but it was considered cute or something. I don't know. Most people probably today aren't familiar with it, but I saw it. I read it as a kid and of course it was awful. And he was involved in that, wasn't he?

**WW** [00:54:57] In Winnipeg there was a campaign at one time back in the early or late '60s, I think Rod can correct me, but anyway, it was to remove certain types of literature from the school curriculum. So like Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, the book 'Little Black Sambo', you probably don't know the book Bailey, you're too young. It was awful. It was awful. 'Little Black Sambo' and he got chased. And you remember that Rod? He got chased around so much by around a tree or turned into a tiger.

**RM** [00:55:30] A tiger or something. Yeah, yeah. I read the book as a kid and, you know, my parents were appalled that I was reading it, you know? But it was a kid's book, right? Which no one really thought about it.

**WW** [00:55:44] Yeah. And I actually I probably would have been around 10 or 11 years old. And I was asked, I was actually I was told, that I was probably going to be brought out and I was probably going to be speaking about it because this, we had to get this out of the books, out of the school system. Not only that, but Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn and all that, out of the school system. And so I was spoken to by my family about—not only me but my other young cousins in my age—that, you know, you're going to probably be asked this question and this is why we're doing it etcetera, etcetera, right? And we were all called 'Little Black Sambos' when we were kids by white kids. So we were, that's the one thing we were always fighting. (Laughs)

**RM** [00:56:30] Yeah, but still awful.

**WW** [00:56:32] Awful. It was awful.

**RM** [00:56:33] You know, And just a couple of random questions. It was ironic in a way that, and Cecil Foster points this out is that, you know, black railway employees, sleeping car porters finally got the right to advancement just as rail travel was declining. So there were fewer jobs available. And that must have had a big impact on the black population.

**WW** [00:56:58] It did. And another thing, too, that's not well known is that another barrier that was put in place in the mid to late '70s was bilingualism, right? In order to be promoted, so to become a sleeping car por—a sleeping car conductor and then after that a sleeping car manager, service manager, you had to be bilingual, right? And so that kept a lot of the black porters of the day from moving into those positions. My Uncle Lee, of course, was able to move into it earlier, but my other, one of my other uncles, my Uncle George, my Uncle Carl, Georgie, we all called him Georgie, my Uncle Carl. But he at 47 or 48, wanted to be a service manager. He was a sleeping car porter. He was like, "No, I'm going to be a service manager." And the holdback was he wasn't bilingual. Well, he went and to school, went and studied and became bilingual, so he'd be a service manager. But it deterred a lot of guys that should have and could have done that job quite easily from moving, from promotion.



**RM** [00:58:13] I would only add though, of course, you know, that was true of some white workers too, I mean.

**WW** [00:58:19] Would have been, yeah.

**RM** [00:58:20] That's pretty admirable to go back and learn another language when you're 48. My God, it's not easy.

**WW** [00:58:26] Yeah. I mean, you know what? It's, even though you had the white workers, predominantly in the dining cars, etcetera and those are the prestige jobs (air quotes). They weren't treated a whole lot better by the employer, you know?

**RM** [00:58:42] It's why there are unions.

**WW** [00:58:44] Yeah, that's why there are unions, exactly right.

**RM** [00:58:47] So could you. I don't know how much you've kept up with it, but can you talk about the state of black employment within the—well, what's left of—of rail travel today?

**WW** [00:59:00] Yeah, No, I haven't. I really haven't kept up with it. I would think that it, well even when I was on there it started it, it had already started changing. You had, the railway had become a very multicultural place of employment, you know, primarily the wages were better, right? The wages or benefits. Benefits. Wages and benefits and you know, people would come on there. Like I said, it's a great job for summer students, for summer work. You can make really good, really good wage and then tips on top of that and you know, four squares a day, so to speak. And yeah, so yeah, the culture of the railway has changed for sure. It's more multicultural. Like we'd like to say we are here in Canada and you know, lots of Asians, lots of Chinese, lots of at one point indigenous workers on the railway, lots of Caribbeans, lots of blacks and black Americans, etcetera and lots of Eastern Europeans working on the railway too, right? So it has changed for sure, but predominantly, I'd say, because of the wages.

**RM** [01:00:15] And fewer and fewer jobs, too. But you mentioned the culture. I mean, I wonder if you could talk a bit about—because it always intrigued me—you know, if you think about it, the sleeping car porters, all you know, in the States and in Canada were all black. And that must have created a kind of culture among the sleeping car porters. I mean, Oscar Peterson's father was a sleeping car porter. And so, I mean, I don't know. I mean, you came in towards the tail end of it. Could you talk a bit about the kind of culture they had? Some of it might have been It was positive, I assume.

**WW** [01:00:52] They were all storytellers. They loved to tell stories. They carried the history of families and the railway and they loved the stories, and play pinochle, I don't know if you know the card game, they played pinochle, played whist and Canasta and that, and they would get together as family units when they weren't working. And we'd have in Winnipeg it was called the Coloured People's Picnic, and it would be all the black families in Winnipeg. And they we would all go to Grand Beach in Winnipeg, which is Lake Winnipeg. White sand beach, all white sand dunes, etcetera. You could walk out until you were up to here for, you know, a quarter mile, mile and Winnipeg is hot in the summer. But we'd have our picnic there once a year, and everybody would either take the train to Grand Beach or they'd pile up in cars, etcetera, or buses and there'd be you know, a good 100

families up there, barbecuing and sharing food and just talking and just being a part of the community. And so it did create community.

**RM** [01:02:06] You know, it's also to the credit of the sleeping car porters that they did form their own union, didn't they?

**WW** [01:02:12] Yeah.

**RM** [01:02:13] I mean, they didn't just take it. They were frozen out of the white union.

**WW** [01:02:16] Yeah. Yeah. That was like really, when you do think about it, Rod, It's like, "Wow, that's pretty—" Some people would say, "Pretty, pretty ballsy." And they did. Pardon my language, but yeah.

**RM** [01:02:32] And go ahead.

**WW** [01:02:34] It didn't, it didn't really provide them—

**RM** [01:02:35] And it's not like the railway. Sorry

**WW** [01:02:39] It didn't provide them a lot of protection, but it provided them some. Right? Because—

**RM** [01:02:48] Well, you know, and of course, the railways fought it every step of the way as they fought all unions and union organizers. I read in the book, you know, were fired just like that for trying to organize these sleeping car porters. One guy was fired, he had eight kids and was just shown the door. I mean, so, I mean, I don't know whether Lee was involved in that early organizing, but I mean they were really heroic, courageous people.

**WW** [01:03:16] He said that if hadn't of known Diefenbaker, if he hadn't known Diefenbaker, he'd have been fired. That's what he said.

**RM** [01:03:23] And that was much later.

**WW** [01:03:25] That was much later. He said, "If it wasn't for the fact that I knew Diefenbaker and the employer knew that Diefenbaker and I were speaking I'd have been fired." Yeah.

**RM** [01:03:36] You think in spite of all the hardships there were and discrimination, of course, and the appalling situation where they couldn't be promoted out of the job though, there was something positive lost with the decline of the sleeping car porters. Is there a kind of a nostalgia about it at all? Or not?

**WW** [01:03:56] There is for me.

**RM** [01:03:58] Yeah.

**WW** [01:03:58] There is for me. And I still think that the best way to travel is by rail. It's very disappointing with the railway. Railway travel has come to what it is. I think that our government let the ball fall when they let the travel by rail decline. And they had outside pressure, as you know, from the airlines and from Greyhound of all companies.

**RM** [01:04:27] Well, and cars.

**WW** [01:04:29] And cars and all that. But, you know, it's become really expensive to travel by—

**RM** [01:04:36] I was thinking more along the lines of the black sleeping car porters because it's got its cons obviously.

**WW** [01:04:45] Yeah, I would say that— I say there's too much stigma with black sleeping car porters that you know even though it provided a living, there's you know, you're beneath everybody and that's the stigma (unclear). So I would say that you know, I know that my family's happy I'm not working as a sleeping car porter.

**RM** [01:05:14] Yeah. Good riddance.

**WW** [01:05:15] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**RM** [01:05:17] All right, well, one last question, Warren. What would you see as the legacy of your Uncle Lee?

**WW** [01:05:29] Well, I think that what he really showed people, you know, we are, when he was first involved, and he died in 2004. And throughout his life, he would say, "I'm Canadian." And he believed we're equal and people should be treated as equals and people should be treated with respect. And I think that's one of the legacies. And the other is you don't have to settle, like you don't have to settle. If you're willing to work for it, you can achieve. But it doesn't, it's not just going to be handed to you. So if you're expecting it to be handed to you, it's not going to happen. But you're willing to work, I think that's the big one. And I think that for a lot of our family, especially my age group and maybe, you know, 15 years younger. My younger cousins, they all learned that. They all learned that if you're willing to, if something is important to you and you're willing to step up for it, you can make it happen. I think that's the legacy.

**RM** [01:06:35] And reminds me of one more question. Did he ever talk about what it was like to finally be promoted after all those years?

**WW** [01:06:44] He was very proud of that. Very proud. Very proud. And family is very proud. The community was very proud of. He, even in the Caribbean community, he held a stature in the community. And to be honest, when I first started working on the railway, all the, like not just the black porters but the white dining car stewards and waiters and managers, etcetera they would all talk about him. "Oh, you're Lee Williams' nephew. Oh, great man. Oh, he did so much for us. And we're so happy. Blah, blah, blah." Right? So he was, he had a really good standing with the railway afterwards and with the community and with our family, of course. And then of course, with me. And like I said, I mean, I grew up in the church and my Uncle Lee was a deacon in the church and was (unclear) treasurer and all that.

**RM** [01:07:42] And he knew Stanley Grizzle.

**WW** [01:07:47] Yeah (laughs). Yeah. I didn't know—

**RM** [01:07:52] Did you ever meet Stanley?

**WW** [01:07:53] No I never did. No, no, not that I can remember anyway.

**RM** [01:07:59] Yeah, the book says they worked together. Anyway. I could go on about Stanley. I kind of knew him a bit. He has a huge record in Ontario for fighting for what's right. But he and he also joined in with Lee on this fight to end (unclear). Anyway, that's off the record. Not off the record. Off the topic we're in. Warren, this is great. Is there anything you'd like to or you'd like to add that you think maybe we haven't covered?

**WW** [01:08:21] No, I think the interview went very well and—

**RM** [01:08:26] Well it was interesting.

**WW** [01:08:27] It's interesting and I was glad to do it. I will say that he received the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal. He received that medal. And a Wazee medal also. A recognition. Wazee is for senior elders that have contributed to their community, to our country, etcetera. So he received that award also. I thought he had received the Order of Canada. But he hadn't. But I have to work on that. And I also want to get him on a stamp. I think he belongs on a Canadian Post stamp. I'm going to work on doing that with my cousins.

**RM** [01:09:05] That would that would be, of course, wonderful. And this is a history Canadians don't really know about. Do they?

**WW** [01:09:12] No. They don't know about it. No.