
CHRIS HOLOBOFF

Date and place of birth (if available): Cold Lake, AB; 27 June, 2012

Date and place of interview: June 27, 2012 at Cold Lake Oil & Gas Galleries at the Cold Lake Museum

Name of interviewer: Peter McKenzie-Brown

Name of videographer: Peter Tombrowski

Full names (spelled out) of all others present: N/A

Consent form signed: Yes

117 Minutes

Initials of Interviewer: PMB

Last name of subject: HOLOBOFF

PMB: So, we're at the Cold Lake Oil & Gas Galleries at the Cold Lake Museum and I'm talking to Chris Holoboff. It is the 27th of June, 2012 and the only other person present with me is Peter Tombrowski, our videographer. So, that's the brief summary.

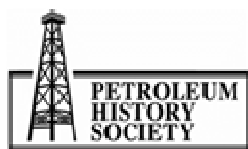
Chris Holoboff is a vice-principal of the high school at Cold Lake and he is also the chairman of the Cold Lake's Museum Society (you can correct me on that) and has been since the late 1990s and he is one of the key players in the development of the museum that we're now sitting in. I want to ask you, first of all, will you tell me a little bit about your life and your career. Start at the beginning and give me as much detail as you feel is appropriate.

HOLOBOFF: I was born and raised in Surrey, B.C. Attended high school there and graduated from Simon Fraser University in Burnaby and moved to Cold Lake in 1985 for my first teaching job. My wife moved up here a year later, we loved the community and decided to make it our home. So, we've lived and worked in Cold Lake since '85.

PMB: During that whole period have you been with the high school?

HOLOBOFF: I worked at Grand Centre Junior High School for the first nine years and taught one year in Bonnyville. And, since 1994 I've been with Grand Centre High School, now Cold Lake High School.

PMB: My friend Danelle tells me that your wife's name is Beth?



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

HOLOBOFF: Yes, yes.

PMB: And, is she also a teacher?

HOLOBOFF: Yes, she teaches elementary school, yes.

PMB: And, you have how many kids?

HOLOBOFF: We have two children.

PMB: And, they are? Their names are....

HOLOBOFF: Daughter is Michaela and she just completed her first year at university. She's attending Grant MacEwan. And, our son Cameron is just finishing Grade 10.

PMB: Good. And, you have no intentions of leaving Cold Lake?

HOLOBOFF: It is home for now, yes. We're happy to finish out our careers here. And, we're not sure where retirement will take us. But, for now we really enjoy the community. We've got great friends here. It's been a wonderful place to raise a family.

PMB: And, you came in 1985. If I'm not mistaken, that was the year before Imperial began operating its Cold Lake Oil Sands Project, the big project?

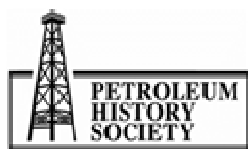
HOLOBOFF: The big plants, I think were brought online, if I'm not mistaken.... Masquaw I think, was brought online in 1985. Prior to that, they had Lemming Plant and May Plant. May was mothballed quite a number of years ago, Lemming still operates as a development plant.

PMB: But, those were essentially, experimental projects.

HOLOBOFF: They were, yes.

PMB: Do you have any memory or any history of when, I think it was in 1979, that they announced that they would have this huge upgrader here and some enormous project. And, then of course, the National Energy Program killed that idea.

HOLOBOFF: I don't recall that. In '79, I was still living in Surrey, B.C. and had just graduated high school and was starting university. We'd all heard about the development in Fort McMurray. And, in fact, we had a neighbor that lived across the back alley from us. He and his son moved up to Fort McMurray to work there. And so, there was a lot of talk about that. And, the huge operations going on up there and the jobs and the fact that people were flocking to that area to work. Obviously, becoming the big money and I don't think that has changed a whole lot.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

PMB: Now, in your opinion, how has the oil sands development... because you've been here just exactly with the beginning of it ...how has it affected the community here?

HOLOBOFF: Well, I think it has led to a great deal of growth. Prior to the oil sands, the Air Force was the major employer in the community. I think the oil and gas industry helped to bring a bit more stability to the community. A little bit less transiency is something that we've always suffered a little bit from because of the military postings. Over the years, people have tended to stay a little bit longer in Cold Lake than previously, particularly in the military. But, I think with the development of the oil sands we've seen people stay here a lot longer; People being employed in that sector.

PMB: Now, when you were at Simon Fraser, you studied....

HOLOBOFF: History.

PMB: History. So, your major actually is in history and then you have an education diploma or something as well.

HOLOBOFF: Yes. Yes, that's correct.

PMB: Did you come here to teach history or what did you come here to teach?

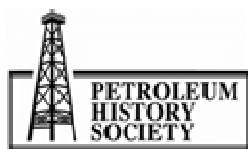
HOLOBOFF: I started teaching junior high school. My first year, actually, is a little bit of special education. And, I did some junior high courses, social studies.

PMB: Now, I want to ask you about your involvement with the Cold Lake and Area Museum Society. I'm sorry, I can't remember what it is, but perhaps you could explain to the audience, the viewers and the readers of this, what is this building that we're sitting in? And, how did it originate?

HOLOBOFF: We're on the site of what was known as 42 Radar up on Radar Hill, it's one of the highest points in the area.

PMB: 42, four-two Radar.

HOLOBOFF: Four-two, yes. It was the name of the radar squadron. And, it's one of the highest points and land areas in the region. It was built in the early 50s along with the Air Force Base and operated as a part of the Pine Tree Radar Line. There were a number of buildings here, a number of them have been taken down. There used to be three large Radomes on these buildings which were visible for miles and miles away. And, they're like giant golf balls with antennas inside them. One antenna was a range finder and one antenna was a height finder and then one was a back-up system. See, these were landmarks visible for miles and miles around. So, there were a couple other buildings on the site that have since been taken down. There are currently, I believe, five buildings still on the site. The Museum Society took possession of the site close to 20 years ago now, after the military had decommissioned it and removed all of their belongings. The property was sold to the then town of Grand Centre.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

The property sits within the Municipal District of Bonnyville but this particular piece was sold to the town of Grand Centre. And, so the Museum Society took over the site. They were looking for a new site because the site they were in, at the time, in Cold Lake North, was a little bit too small and so they were looking for something a little bit larger. So, the opportunity came to take over these buildings here and to convert them into a museum; huge undertaking, just because of the size and scope of the project. At the time, I wasn't involved with the then Tri-Town Museum Society, called the Tri-Town because of the then towns of Cold Lake in the north, Grande Centre in the south and Medley, which is the town on base, which is known as Four Wing, Cold Lake.

My involvement with the museum began around 1996, 1997 in that range. We had struck up a business education partnership with Imperial Oil. At the time, Sue Trefry who worked with Imperial Oil, she and her husband, Mike, both worked for Imperial Oil. She was interested in getting a business education partnership on the go, something that she had heard about and approached our school. And, Ray Coates, who was then the assistant principal at Grand Centre High School, met with Sue and they initiated this and brought the staff in.

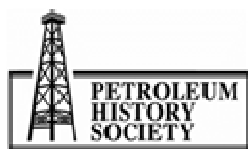
We were looking for ways to make education a little bit more meaningful to students. And, Imperial Oil was looking at ways to give back to the community, get people more involved in the community on the education side of things to see what they could do for students and teachers as well. So, we began with bringing some of the staff members from Imperial Oil into the school to see what we had to offer. I think it changed some attitudes a little bit. Because, in the 90s schools were progressing with technology and it wasn't the box that we were so familiar with in earlier decades. You know, with the chalk board and the teacher standing at the front and lecturing.

PMB: I remember it well.

HOLOBOFF: Yes. Things had started to change quite dramatically in education. So, I think that opened up some eyes as to what students were doing and what they were capable of. We also took a tour of the plants on a computer of Imperial Oil. For most of the teachers on staff, it was the first time that they'd had an opportunity to see what they were doing on site. It opened up our eyes as to the, again, the level of technology; the integration of technology, the industry and just the methodology in which they were pulling the oil out of the ground. It went on from there and we started a number of projects with the partnership involving students in various things and Imperial Oil staff in other things, getting them into the school to work with students.

PMB: So, can you explain to us how that project worked. Imperial, or Esso, would have provided the funding?

HOLOBOFF: Yes, it wasn't so much funding as much as it was personnel. We don't receive a great deal of money every year from Imperial Oil as part of the partnership. But yet, the staff there are heavily involved in a number of areas; coming into the school and working with students in employability skills and junior achievement to economics of staying in school in our science departments and so forth. There are a number of areas in which they are involved in the school. So,



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

it more in human resources that we see the real benefits, in coming in and mentoring students and working with students. But, one of the things that we really wanted to get off the ground was real world projects. Projects where students could get involved...

PMB: The expression you used was, “real world”.

HOLOBOFF: Yes. We had been approached by Jim Farrell. Jim was with the Department of National Defence, worked on the base. And, he was involved with the Tri-Town Museum Society. Jim had huge dreams for the site and wanted to develop an oil and gas gallery. He had heard about our business education partnership at the high school and approached Sue Trefry and asked if we'd be interested in helping to develop the oil and gas museum. At the time we didn't realize the scope and magnitude of what we were undertaking. But, we thought it would be an interesting real world project and one that we could involve the students in at the high school.

PMB: Okay, now. Before you continue, I would like you to go back if you don't mind, just a couple of minutes to, you talked about this being a part of the Canadian Air Force's Pine Tree Line of Radar Intelligence, basically.

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: Could you please give us a couple of minutes on what exactly that meant. Please put it into the context of the Cold War.

HOLOBOFF: Oh, gosh. Well there were a number of lines. There was the DEW line, one of the early warning lines further north and then the Pine Tree Line that ran right across the country. It is explained fairly well in the Air Force Museum down the hill from us. But, in terms of the technology of the day, during the 50s and 60s, they needed much larger sites and massive buildings and massive radar antennas to operate these lines. Now, they can operate all of that out of the back of a trailer, I believe. So, technology has come so far.

PMB: But, the idea basically, was that if an intercontinental ballistic missile was headed to Chicago it could very well go over Cold Lake.

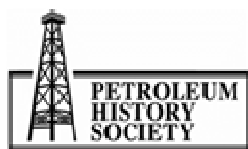
HOLOBOFF: Right. It was likely to fly over some area of Canada, the Canadian North. And, the idea was to intercept any incoming planes or missiles before they reached major population sites.

PMB: So, the building that we're sitting in right now...

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: ...is part of what was a huge military complex in those days?

HOLOBOFF: Yes, yes.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

PMB: Do you have any idea how many personnel were here in those days?

HOLOBOFF: No, no I don't. We've got some interesting archives, as I say, down the hill in the Radar Museum which operates as a part of a network of national defence museums. But, they've got some archives down there that would certainly be able to answer.

PMB: Okay. Thank you. Sorry, I just wanted to get that bit of context. Now, moving back to where you were. You were given this building to turn into an oil and gas gallery.

HOLOBOFF: Right.

PMB: And here were are about 1996 here, I think?

HOLOBOFF: Yes, just early 1997. The first step was to really come and take a look at the building, what we had to start with. It was in rough shape. They really hadn't done anything to modify it or to clean it up to any extent. We had to decide whether or not this was going to be something we wanted to do first of all. Just because, again, the large scope and the magnitude of the project and to really sit down and think about it; if we are going to do this we don't want it to be something half baked. It has to be done well, on a professional scale. That involved making sure we had the right people involved in the project.

Sue Trefry was an acquaintance with another young lady in the area, Heidi Roberts. And, Heidi had recently moved to the Cold Lake area at that time. Her husband was a pilot with the forces. Heidi had a background in museum work. So, we brought her on board to help us with the project and to work kind of as an intermediary between the Imperial Oil resources, the high school, the students and the museum. So, she kind of brought all three parties together. The project really began with getting students up here in the evenings and afternoons to tear apart and gut this building. So, we were starting with a blank slate.

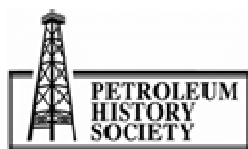
PMB: So, you had high school kids come in here and basically remodel the...

HOLOBOFF: Yes, teachers and high school kids and Imperial staff, ripping up flooring and floor tiles and tearing down walls and taking out air conditions and you name it. It all had to be gutted. That took the better part of the first year. Because, it was on a volunteer basis and we couldn't do it on an everyday. But, it took quite a while. Then we wanted to develop the, move on to developing the gallery itself and that was done in stages.

PMB: Now before you would go, somebody told me I believe, that by this time you were the chair of the Museum Society?

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: A job you haven't been able to shed for the last 15 or 16 years?



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

HOLOBOFF: No. 15 years, I think it is now? Yes, what had happened there was because we were asked to develop this project we had decided to take it on. By default, I suppose, Sue and I both ended up on the Board of Directors for the Museum Society. That first year the chair of the Museum Society wasn't really at attendance at most of the meetings and for whatever reason was unable to make the meetings. So, after the second or third meeting I ended up serving as acting chair for the better part of that year. And, when it came around to our annual general meeting at the end of that year it was by default, I suppose, that I became the chairman. And, I've never really been able to shed that, as you say. And again, the reason we got involved on the board of directors was we thought if we're going to do this, we want to do it right. It is not that we weren't happy with how things with the board of directors were going and what direction they were taking. It was that we have some input and some say as to how things are going to be done, because we wanted this to be done well. If it was going to have Imperial Oil's name and the school's name attached to it we wanted things to look good.

PMB: So, the building was given over to the Museum Society? Roughly, when?

HOLOBOFF: Oh, gosh. The Museum Society took over the site, it has to be close to 17 to 20, in the 17 to 20 year range now.

PMB: So, '94, '95?

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: Did you have pay \$1.00 to buy this site here?

HOLOBOFF: I believe we signed a lease with the then town of Grand Centre and now the City of Cold Lake. Our lease is for a \$1.00 a year. Which I do not think they...

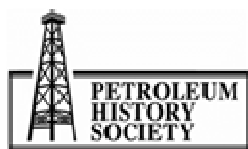
PMB: They've never collected.

HOLOBOFF: They've never collected.

PMB: So, now let's move forward.

HOLOBOFF: This all began with the major undertaking of developing the gallery. So, it involved some meetings with Imperial Oil staff, sitting down with Heidi and our partnership, Imperial Oil and the high school and teachers and students. We decided to develop the museum in bits and pieces. We knew it was too much to do in one year. So, I believe the first year we looked at the geology background and story. Some students did a lot of the research for that, interviews with Imperial Oil staff and we tried to incorporate as many disciplines in the high school as possible.

So, we have art students doing sketches, we had computer students doing the graphics and the transferring to text. We had industrial education students building the boards and the cabinetry, students doing the welding. We had students in our multi-media courses doing computer animation,



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

doing interviews. So, it was a broad, broad project. In the end, it took about four years to complete, to the stage that you presently see and it was just, again, a huge undertaking. The benefits to the students wasn't so much the end product but the journey itself and the learning that took place when they were doing all of these. I can honestly say, I was in the industrial arts room a number of times when Heidi was working with these students. And, she would say, "Sorry, that's not good enough. Take apart and do it again." And, students were learning the lesson that mediocrity isn't acceptable, that if things are going to be done to an industry standard, then it has to be done well. I think that is one of the biggest lessons the students got out of it. I think also the satisfaction that knowing that they were contributing to their community by building something that was going to be around for quite some time.

PMB: So, all of the displays in this gallery were created by the students?

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: Behind you is sitting a Christmas tree.

HOLOBOFF: Right.

PMB: I presume that was donated by Imperial or somebody?

HOLOBOFF: That was yes, yes.

PMB: So, it became a really meaningful part of the community.

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: And, each of the kids could say, "I played a role in that."

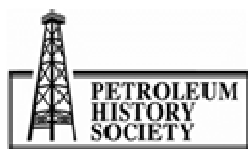
HOLOBOFF: Yes. Yes. We tried to recognize their contributions with plaques on each of the displays that had their names on it.

PMB: Oh, okay. I can see that now.

HOLOBOFF: Some students will often come up and say, "You see, I did that." And, we do the year end celebration, invite their parents and relatives up and open the doors to the museum and they could come in and show their parents the finished product and what they'd worked on.

PMB: Now, I saw a sign as I came in the building, that Imperial donated \$50,000.00 and I forget which other companies donated a lot of money toward the Museum Society.

HOLOBOFF: Yes.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

PMB: What are your operating expenses for this little museum or couldn't you break them down just for this one?

HOLOBOFF: I can't break them down just for this one. We operated on a more or less a shoe string budget. We have one and a half staff members. We hire some of the staff through grants, like Young Canada Works and so forth. So, we'll usually hire anywhere from two to four summer staff. But, throughout most of the year it is the one full time staff member and then a part timer. We operate, up until this year, on about \$100,000.00 a year, which goes towards operations and expenses.

PMB: Keeping the lights burning.

HOLOBOFF: Keeping the lights burning, the furnaces on, that is staffing, that is everything. The Air Force Museum down the hill operates somewhat separately from us because they are a recognized National Defence Museum. So, we share the same site and they are part of the Museum Society but they operate on a separate budget.

PMB: Ah, I see, because they have a fabulous collection of old jets and planes and things that are really are tremendous.

HOLOBOFF: Right, yes. So, on the site we also have a Heritage Museum and Aboriginal Museum. So, there are four actual museums on this site; the Air Force Museum, the Oil and Gas Gallery, Heritage and Aboriginal.

PMB: Good.

HOLOBOFF: It is all connected by a walkway that is over 700 feet long, a covered walkway.

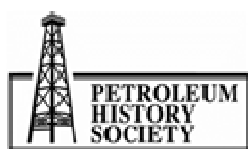
PMB: As somebody was explaining as we came here, that was to protect the military personnel from the elements.

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: During that Cold War period.

HOLOBOFF: Yes, yes. During the winter, because at the time there was at least one or two other buildings connected to that walkway as well. Right now, we have a fifth building, the power plant building that used to power the entire site that we are kind of in the process of turning into a fifth museum as part of the site. But, it is not ready for opening yet.

PMB: Anything more that you want to talk about in respect to that, in respect to the development of this project? I do believe that you got an award for that, for that particular project?



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

HOLOBOFF: Yes, our partnership was recognized a couple of different times, provincially. Nationally, we received the Conference Board of Canada Education Award, Partnership and Educational Award. I believe that was 1990, pardon me, 2001. In 2000, I may be mistaken, I think it was 2004 but I could double check that for you. We received an award or recognition from the Canadian Museums Association and the Canadian Museum of Nature for a museum and school partnerships. They recognized the work that we had done between the Cold Lake Museum Society and the school and of course, Imperial Oil in developing this gallery.

PMB: How important a force is Imperial Oil in the Cold Lake community?

HOLOBOFF: Well, I think it's huge. They're currently one of the largest employers. Until they began their large operations, the largest employer, I think the largest employer is still the Air Force, Four Wing and Cold Lake. But, they added a great deal of stability to the community. So, yes, it is very important.

PMB: I would think they would bring a great variety of their skill sets. The expertise, the educational knowledge...

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: ... the business expertise and so on.

HOLOBOFF: Yes, yes. Well, and they're involved in so many aspects of our community there. The people that work there and I think that that is something they encourage, is community involvement.

PMB: So, you talk about the involvement with the school. What would be some other examples?

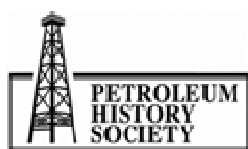
HOLOBOFF: In our school partnership?

PMB: No, sorry. Imperial's involvement with the community of Cold Lake?

HOLOBOFF: Well, I think it's on an individual basis. They are involved in coaching. They are involved in local politics. Gosh, any number of areas.

PMB: Supporting local charities, I'm sure.

HOLOBOFF: Absolutely, they're very involved in the United Way campaign every year and other local charities. Yes, they're big on that. Imperial Park which is becoming one of the center areas of the community was a large area of land between, then Grand Centre and Cold Lake. As the communities have grown, they've started to grow closer together. We went through an amalgamation a number of years ago and became the Town of Cold Lake, the City of Cold Lake. But, Imperial Park is now the site of what they call the Energy Centre which is a large fitness centre. Attached to that is Portage College and Cold Lake High School. That is the site where they are also



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

building a new arena and events arena there which will open this fall. So, it's like becoming part of the hub of the community. They've got soccer fields up there, rugby field, ball diamonds. There are plans to further develop that site. One of my other areas of volunteering is to, I sit on the Recreation and Culture Advisory Committee for the City of Cold Lake. We've seen the site plans and it's again, going to become the center of the community. That is what we want, it is the place where people come to meet.

PMB: Okay. Well, that's great. Unless there is something else you want to talk about in this area, speak now or forever hold your peace.

HOLOBOFF: I think we've covered it.

PMB: Oh, you've done a great job of covering it. One of things that I find when I talk to young people and I include my daughter in this, is that whether they are knowledgeable or not they basically hate the oil sands. They have kind of picked this up from their fellow students. I guess my question is, I suspect that is not the case in Cold Lake, but I don't know. Can you talk about that?

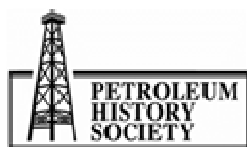
HOLOBOFF: So, much of it depends on opinion and whether it's an informed opinion or not. As an educator, we've always tried to make sure that our students are making informed opinions, fact based. I think that's what it comes down to for people. I think if you're going to have an opinion about something find out what the real story is behind it. I think a lot of our students in school, a lot of them look to the oil industry as being their future employer. Or, they've got parents employed in the industry itself. So, they may have a different opinion about it, much more supportive of it than they might in other communities. But, I think until you get out and see the projects themselves and meet the people that work on the projects and see what they do and understand the care for the environment that they have, it's... until you do that, I don't think you really appreciate the story behind the oil sands development. They really do care, because it's their community that they live in as well. And, they want to protect it too.

PMB: What do you do within the school system to help the students make informed opinions, developed informed opinions?

HOLOBOFF: I think you have to present both sides of the story.

PMB: But, I think you mentioned earlier on that, for example, you have to go work days and that kind of thing?

HOLOBOFF: There's a national, what they call, Take Our Kids to Work Day, the learning partnership based out of Ontario, started promoting this close to 17-18 years ago. It is usually the first Wednesday every November. The Grade 9 is the target audience. So, on that day, school divisions across the country encourage parents to take their Grade 9 son or daughter to work with them. It's really the introduction to job shadowing where students can see what mom or dad do for the day. Or, they can visit another worksite under the mentorship of a friend, or family, or neighbor, or aunt, or uncle and see what they do on those sites. Imperial Oil has been a large supporter of this



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

for a number of years. Sometimes, we'll see upwards of 50 students there for the day, that they'll take out, do a safety orientation with...

PMB: So, put that context. 50 students from the Cold Lake High School, would be what percentage of the Grade 9s?

HOLOBOFF: It wouldn't just be 50 students from Cold Lake High School. It would be Grade 9 students from the Catholic high school in town, from the Francophone School, from Bonnyville schools; anywhere that students have parents employed on-site. And, it's not just Imperial Oil employees. It might some of the contractors to Imperial Oil like Flint Energy Services. So, it's 50 students from the region.

PMB: So, in context then. In 50 students out of how many other Grade 9 equivalents?

HOLOBOFF: Oh, gosh. At our own school we would probably have about 130 Grade 9 students. Other schools might have fewer. I suppose we'd be talking about...

PMB: So, might be 10% to 15% of all students?

HOLOBOFF: Easily, easily. Yes.

PMB: Or, at least that, so fairly big percentage.

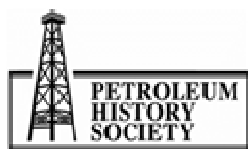
HOLOBOFF: Yes, yes.

PMB: What is the feedback that the students get? Or, what more can you tell me about that? I've never been part of one of those projects before?

HOLOBOFF: Yes, well they expose them to... They'll take them out to a drilling site where they get to see huge drilling rigs. Talk to the supervisors on site, some of the derrick hands and see what they do, talk about their jobs, what they like about them what they don't like about them. Get to see them working. They'll take them out to a C-Pad that's under construction.

PMB: What was the word you used?

HOLOBOFF: C-Pad, it has to do with the formation of the pump jacks, a C formation. There they'll talk to you, pipe insulators, electricians, boom truck operators, whoever happens to be on the site working. They'll tour the construction site and talk about what it is they do out there. They'll get the tour of a completed C-Pad and see it in operation. They get to tour one of the plants and go into the control rooms there. Talk to control room operators and power engineers. Talk to instrumentation technicians, millwrights. It's a lot to take in for a day and can be a little bit overwhelming for students. But, they get a pretty good snapshot of what it is that the company does out there.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

PMB: But, what about people... I think the picture your drawing is of all kinds of trades in the... what about the scientific staff, geologists for example or engineering?

HOLOBOFF: Right, again, too much to take in one day. But, they do talk about the different types of jobs out there. Like you say, the engineering jobs, there is lab technicians and environmental engineers. Some of them will come in and talk a little bit to the students about what it is they do. But, there is not a whole lot of time to spend doing that. They want to get the students out onto the site and that's a bit more interesting to them than sitting in a classroom type setting and listening to someone talk about themselves.

PMB: Talk about engineering.

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: Oh God, yes. How boring would that be?

HOLOBOFF: Yes. Kids love to be seeing things and touching things and doing things. So, that's a little bit more interesting to them. But, the message overall is stay in school, get an education, there's a lot of great jobs out there but what you need is a good education. That's really what's driven home.

PMB: Are you familiar with a lot of cases where the kids did eventually end up joining their parents at the Cold Lake Project?

HOLOBOFF: Yes, we've had a number of success stories, actually, through our school itself as part of our business education partnership in providing opportunities for students. Imperial Oil takes on registered apprenticeship students in millwright and instrumentation. We've had a number of students over the years, let's see, our figures up until last year were I think, 19 students went through the program and of those 19 students, I believe 18 of them are still working in the trades in Alberta; a number of them back at Imperial Oil here in the community. So, they start their apprenticeship program while they're in high school and for instrumentation, for example, what most of those students would do was then go onto NAIT and complete the two year program at NAIT and then be looking for work as an instrumentation technician.

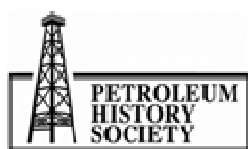
PMB: Wow.

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: Well, that's a great story. Anything else that you would like to talk about, in terms of the community and the oil sands and how it has affected people here, I don't think you do? If not, I'm going to go through some of these more generic questions to try to get some ideas from you?

HOLOBOFF: Okay, yes. That's fine.

PMB: Anything you want to add?



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

HOLOBOFF: No.

PMB: You've done a great job so far. Let's start with this one, during the 90s, well about the time you came here, in fact was it May, 1985 there was an oil price crash. Oil prices remained really low for 15 or 17 years, something like that. Do you happen to recall anything about that period? I'm guessing that even though there was a developing oil sands project here. I'm guessing that the economy was a little bit slow, or maybe not and I'd like your opinion on that?

HOLOBOFF: Again, a little bit sluggish. But, we lived in an area that was somewhat insulated from that. Thankfully again, to the Air Force Base as being our largest employer, it added so much stability to the community. So, we're not drastically affected by the boom and bust and the swings in oil prices. So, when the market fluctuates like that, our community isn't really affected terribly by it because the stability provided on the Air Force Base.

PMB: So, it's interesting to think about the way you talked about stability. Imperial brought stability, because people came here to live for the long term.

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: And yet, of course the military people are here for short periods and then they move on.

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: But, they bring a stability of... even though the people are changing the paycheques...

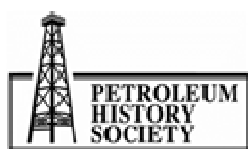
HOLOBOFF: The paycheques continue.

PMB: ...continue to come.

HOLOBOFF: And over the years, we've seen a great deal more of our people from the Forces remain in the community, choosing to make it home and to stay here. Our community has grown and the community provides more service as it is a more attractive place for people to stay in. It is a great place if you love fishing and hunting in the outdoors. It's a fabulous community. Everything is just so close at hand.

PMB: If you, in your period, I'm going to ask whether there were any really notable people that you've encountered that were somehow involved in the oil sands. And now, I'm guessing that you would've been involved with the local managers, the senior managers here locally. Anybody that you would like to talk about that quite impressed you or was influential?

HOLOBOFF: There are a lot of people over the years that worked for Imperial Oil that I had an opportunity to meet and become acquaintances with. I mentioned earlier on, Sue and Mike Trefry became very close with them because of the number of years we worked together. Mark Little, who



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

was one of the heads up here for a number of years. I'm trying to pull names out of my back part of my brain and it's tough.

PMB: Okay, I'm thinking of people that maybe that were so influential that their opinions might've gone outside of this area or in that respect, they might've gone on from Imperial and become a Puba of some sort?

HOLOBOFF: Yes, nothing coming to mind right now.

PMB: Role of government in oil sands development. There's a lot of controversy about this and I'm very interested in your point of view. Has the government been supportive? Has regulation been effective? Should regulation be more stringent?

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: What thoughts do you have on that?

HOLOBOFF: I think the government's been supportive because I think it pays the bills, especially in a province like Alberta. Have all the decisions been the right decisions in terms of royalties and so forth, I guess one could argue that they haven't always been the best decisions. But, I do think the government does support the industry. Do they do it blindly? I don't think so. I think there's a great deal of thought and care that goes into it. They have to protect the environment and the province and again, it is one of the big money makers for our province. So, in that sense, it is supported.

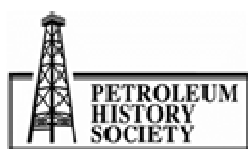
PMB: It's a lot of controversy and I'm just talking about people who maybe are not too well informed. There's controversy among very well informed people about whether the oil sands and oil companies in general, really are good at looking after the environment. And, so I'm not talking the media reaction that says, "Oil companies are terrible and they destroy the environment."

HOLOBOFF: Right.

PMB: They're very knowledgeable people who say, "Really, not." That reclamation could be better and that could be a lot better and that kind of thing. It is having a bad effect on the environment, any thoughts on that?

HOLOBOFF: Not really, no. Again, I think there needs to be a balance there. It is part of their duty to look after the environment. And to, like you say, reclaim it and restore it when they are finished with it. We see where they do that on the Imperial site, they do a good job of that. But, it's... you're always going to have the Nimbies out there that don't like this development because of the dangers to the environment. But, those people all drive cars and live in houses that are fueled by natural gas.

PMB: And fly to environmental conferences.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

HOLOBOFF: Yes, yes. So, it comes right down to it. All of that stuff has to come from somewhere. Right down to the pens that we hold in our hands every day and write with, I mean they're petroleum based products. The Ziploc sandwich bag that you put your sandwich in every day, the list could go on and on and on.

PMB: A lot of the clothes we wear and I look at your shoes, for example.

HOLOBOFF: Yes. One of the displays we had our students build over here years ago shows all of our products that are oil based, petroleum based products, down to the tar paper that goes under your shingles, the shingles on the roof, the vinyl siding on the house and the products inside the house. We couldn't live without it.

PMB: A lot of textiles.

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: In things we wear, in many cases.

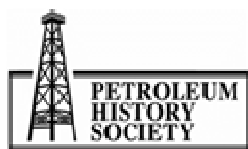
HOLOBOFF: Yes. So, often I think, there is bad publicity that comes with the oil sands development. But until we change how we live our lives and not just talking in North America, we need that oil based... that oil industry. Unless we are going to change how we live our lives quite drastically.

PMB: I agree with all of that, by the way. But, let me ask you are you optimistic about the environmental future for us as a species, for the world that we're living in?

HOLOBOFF: Personally, we have concerns obviously about environmental changes and global warming. I think we can see what's been happening in the last couple decades when we look at trends. But, I am optimistic, by nature I'm an optimist. I think changes can come. I think as long as we teach our children to respect the environment and to look after it. It'll be there for them and it will be there for their children. It's important that we be stewards of the environment and I think oil companies have to be those stewards as well. Do they always do a good job of it? We've seen incidences where things haven't always gone well and those are the ones we often see on the news. But, we don't always see the good stories, the good stuff that they're doing.

PMB: Media, you have raised the point at a very timely point. Media coverage of the oil sands, how fair is it?

HOLOBOFF: I'm not sure it's... you can blame the media for what they do because their job is to report the news. News as sensational always sells more. Whether it's reporting the homicide downtown or the floods or the roads washing out or the pipeline break or oil spill, it's that sensational news story that brings attention. The good, the feel good news stories are not big sellers. They'll stick one or two of those in every newscast but...



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

PMB: It's not like maybe every third cast.

HOLOBOFF: That's why people turn the news on that night.

PMB: But, there's the old story that if a dog bites a man, that's not news, but if a man bites a dog, that is. And, of course, the men biting dogs gets the reactions.

HOLOBOFF: Again, I don't want to blame the news organizations for that because that's their job and that's what sells.

PMB: It is, increasingly, it seems a money making business. There aren't a lot of media out there that really work hard it seems to me, that work really hard to be impartial.

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: So, there are feds in media too, my opinion. Sorry, I shouldn't be getting into that. I think those are most of my questions. In terms of the environment, and I don't want to trap you in this because I know this is not your expertise at all. But, you can talk about land, you can talk about reclamation, biodiversity, air, carbon, ground water, surface water, all of those things are affected by the oil sands. Anything there that you think particularly needs to be, people who need to be particularly concerned about... of that list, which ones would you be most worried about if you were worried about any of them?

HOLOBOFF: Well, I think our air quality. Certainly, our water quality is extremely important to me. That is something we definitely have to protect, the air and water quality. We have to have faith in government industry standards and that those standards are being kept up and being monitored. Is that blind faith? That's the part I'm not sure about.

PMB: You mentioned global warming, so that would be the carbon and the air quality to some extent.

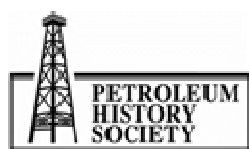
HOLOBOFF: The emissions, yes.

PMB: An important concern to you, a minor concern, a main concern?

HOLOBOFF: I think for our future, the future of our communities and the future of our planet. Yes, it's a concern. So, we have to do what we can as a global community to reduce the carbon emissions.

PMB: If I come back here in ten years to look at this museum, what will it be? What will it look like? How much bigger will be than what we have today?

HOLOBOFF: I'm not sure the site itself will be any larger in terms of additional buildings. We might see some new stories within the museum. We all say the museum is something that you need



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

to keep changing. You wouldn't go to the movie theatre if they always showed the same movie. You might go once or twice but you're not going to keep going back. You don't turn on a radio station and they keep playing the same song over and over. Museums are the same way. You need to keep them fresh by changing displays and bringing in new exhibits. So, I think if you come back in ten years you'll see some new stories as technology changes, as the community changes. We'll start to bring in those changes here in the museum as well.

PMB: Now, I'm going to go after the historian in you. Here's an idea, most people think history doesn't change. My view is that history always changes because as our perspectives change we look back on the past in quite different ways.

HOLOBOFF: Yes.

PMB: That's my view. So, when you say the museum always has to change, to what extent does that reflect the change in history? And, to what extent does it reflect our changing perspectives?

HOLOBOFF: I don't think it reflects the change in history so much as it might reflect the current changes or the changes that will occur. I think that story will need to be told. So, what we've tried to do here is take a look at the geological past, and then the early development in oil in the Cold Lake area and the current processes that they use to extract oil from the ground. So, we've tried to tell a bit of a story here in the gallery. But, as that changes here in the Cold Lake area, we'll need to change with it. But, does history change? I think our opinions of it might and if that were the case, we might...

PMB: New evidence emerges.

HOLOBOFF: New evidences, yes. We might have to tell that side of things.

PMB: I think that covers it off. Anything that you would like to add to what you've said so far?

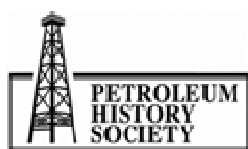
HOLOBOFF: No, I don't think.

PMB: Well, you've done a great job. Thank you very, very much for your time.

HOLOBOFF: Thank you.

PMB: This has been fun.

[END OF RECORDING]



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.