Ernest Debassigae was born in 1925 on the West Bay Reserve, Manitoulin Island. He is a World War II veteran, a band councillor and a self-taught historian.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Experiences at school and his attitudes to the education of the Indian people.
- The role of the Indians in the history of Canada - particularly the military role.
- Experiences in the army during WW II.
- Demonstration in Ottawa against exclusion of Indians from draft of Constitution.

**Tony:** It's February 16 and we're in the Ojibway Cultural Foundation in West Bay on Manitoulin Island and we're having a conversation with Ernest Debassigae. Maybe we could start with
some personal information like when you were born and where and maybe you could tell us a little bit about your life.

Ernest: Well, I was born here in West Bay but I always figured May 21 was my birthday. That's what was on the Army discharge. And then I asked for a treaty card or a treaty paper and it says I was born May 24 so I don't know which is....

Tony: Which is right.

Ernest: Which is right.

Tony: Which year was that?

Ernest: 1925.

Tony: What do you remember about life here on the island when you were small?

Ernest: Well, we were not a trapping people like the people on the north shore. Mostly an agricultural way here on the island. And working in the bush; most of our people worked in the bush. Some worked in lumber camps. There weren't any of these big timber companies then. They were farmers mostly on the island, that had bush lots. They would cut pulp wood mostly, stove wood or logs. They were known as very good lumber jacks and there is still some boys employed in that.

Tony: When was this, in the late twenties?

Ernest: Yeah, all through the years. Right up to, well, right up to war time I would say, the Second World War.

Tony: And how did your parents make a living?

Ernest: Well, I had things pretty good because my dad had a very good business. He had a store business, he had a trucking business. He had a couple of trucks and we lived very good. So, even in the depression we didn't feel it as bad. In fact, I think it's the city people that really suffered. But here in the country you could fish, you could get rabbits. You know, you could....

Tony: So even through the depression, life on the reserve here wasn't too bad.

Ernest: Wasn't too bad, you could always.... Because people at that time all had gardens. You know, people were still pretty heavy in agriculture. I think before the war, the relief rations.... Indians were not eligible for old age pensions so the relief ration was something like four or five dollars a month. And there was a list of things, items that you were supposed to get. So many pounds of flour and this and that. But usually the storekeeper just gave you five dollars worth of groceries and that's it. And he sent this thing in to the office to get his money.
Tony: From the department?

Ernest: Yeah. But I remember after the war, they increased it. Terrific increase to fourteen dollars a month, after the war. And that's all they were living off. But most of these old people... I remember one man in particular. He had a big garden. He had a root house and he put away a barrel of herring, salted herring. And he raised one pig and he'd have that in the shed say in late November, freeze up. That would be his fridge. And then he had an old horse and a little sleigh and he'd go into the bush every day. Little by little, he'd cut by hand with a buck saw, just a little bit every day. Pretty soon he had a whole pile of wood. He was better off than these young bucks that were tough and strong. They were boozing their... they were borrowing money off these old people. But just puttering away, little by little, by winter he had enough wood for the winter and he'd just sit there and smoke, you know. All kinds of food. And that's all. The only thing that he got - I remember coming to the store, him and his brother - and they would each get a 100 pound bag of flour and a 20 pound pail of lard. That's about it. The rest they got themselves. Or items that they couldn't grow like say tobacco or pepper or salt. That's about it.

Tony: How long did you live at home? As a child?

Ernest: I just stayed on there and I joined the army. I left and joined the army. I believe I was seventeen and I couldn't get in. I tried to get in several times, several places, and I finally got in and I finally enlisted in Peterborough and I was shipped to Kingston. I finally got in in 1943. But prior to that, my mother sent me to school in Little Current because the schooling was so horrible here on the reserve. There was nothing being taught at all.

Tony: This was one that was run by the DIA?

Ernest: Yeah, yeah.

Christine: Was it a day school or...?

Ernest: No, it's a day school. And the way things were done. I guess they were just people that weren't qualified or maybe the outcasts, the teachers that couldn't hold a job outside, that's the type they sent in. Or old maids, people that couldn't get married off, you know. They shipped, they were good Catholic families, and they shipped off. And one in particular we had for two generations of kids she taught. And I've always been bitter, I've always been very bitter about this. A lot of people say, "Oh, if I'd have gone to school, that's what I would've been." I've never said, I would have never been a scholar. No matter if I'd got the opportunity, I'd have never been a scholar. I know my mental capabilities because I right away would have never absorbed higher education, I don't think. But I know we had several of my
classmates that were very brilliant. So, there was no report cards, there was no grades. We just went there until we were too big.

Tony: Well what did you do all day?

Ernest: Well, we had a thing called a primer and the first reader and when you finished that fourth reader or something, there was just no system at all. I don't know what they were being paid for. The only thing that drew me to the school, most of us, we had a ball game going. You were leading yesterday. (chuckles) And we had to come back and catch up the next day. That's about that...

Tony: A lunch game.

Ernest: And religious instruction was very heavy. I guess, the church, where we were in church, either the Anglican or the Catholic church, they were very influential and that's what we were taught. The lives of the Saints and this and that. I knew the life of a lot of Saints. But it makes me very sad to think of my people because as soon as they finished religious studying, cutting pulp wood. People with the brain power capable of being surgeons or whatever, had to just go back to the way their fathers lived. Our girls, they just went away to be domestics. Some of them ended up as prostitutes. Just drunk and skid row, some brilliant girls. I knew one. Her name was Mary, very brilliant. I don't know what happened to her, I don't even know if she's alive. And I blame it on this system. They created this suffering, they destroyed these people of promise. I was talking to an old man here during one of our wakes and he was telling me that there was, I won't mention this priest. This was when they had the Indian Residential School in Wikki (Wikwemikong). He says he used to visit my grandfather because he could speak French. And he used to confide in my grandfather and he says, "We have orders not to teach very much. Just the bare, you know, just how to read and write." They had orders, strict orders not to.

Tony: Why was that?

Ernest: I guess they were just afraid that we'd have somebody that would maybe speak for our people. They didn't want anybody to rock the boat. They wanted - and, like I have no complaints about the church myself. I was raised as a very strict Catholic, I was an altar boy. I'm not a regular churchgoer but I have nothing against it. Like I've heard one medicine man say, "I have nothing against the Christian religion. It's a very fine religion. But I only wish the whites would live up to their religion," he says. That's Chief Tootoosis, when I first met him that's what he said. Nothing against it. And we feel the same way. I'm one of these people that is very comfortable in both. I attend pipe ceremonies. I try and learn as much as I can about our old ways and I feel comfortable in both. This Catholic religion is my mother's religion, my father's, and I respect it. And like one of our
chiefs said, "After all, there is only one God." So I respect the way my mother, my father worshipped and also my ancestors. So I feel comfortable, very, very good.

But the only thing that bothers me is why the church just let this happen. They saw what was going on. It was like, what you call, what's the term you used? Silent acquiescence or whatever. I think they were wrong there. And I believe they realize that now. You know, I think the Pope has said something about the church trying to incorporate as much of our traditional customs into the Catholic liturgy. So I attended a mass not too long ago where an Ojibway priest with the Franciscan Order said a mass in the Jesuit Spiritual Centre in Anderson Lake. And he uses the sweetgrass, no altar. He has his pipe and his medicine bag beside him and it was a beautiful service.

And I think that's the way to go because I asked John Tootoosis, an elder from Saskatchewan. I asked him about it. We've lost a lot of our traditional ways. We had to come to the plains Cree to learn and we took them back. And where we do this pipe ceremony according to the plains Cree because we had lost everything here. So I asked John Tootoosis, "I would like to learn everything and I would like to take it back to my people. But you know what would happen to me? The parish council would jump all over my back." And I just wanted to get his reaction. He said, "Why don't you combine it?" You know, I was surprised to hear this from this traditional elder. "Why don't you combine it?" And I said they can't forever fight. So I've been doing a lot of thinking about that. And after all, all through history, every culture has taken something from some other culture, gradually. And that will always happen. Our people will be that much different, say, a hundred years from now. It happened in Europe and it's happening here.

Tony: When you said that you tried to learn all the old ways and things, what sort of things did you learn?

Ernest: I was always very much confused about what we ourselves should know. Like right now, we talk about incorporating Indian things or the way Indians did things into our structures or our government structure, our band government structure. In fact, that was one of the themes of a workshop in Toronto, to restructure this A.F.N. according to more traditional lines using the circle as a model instead of the white, they say pyramid structure, they called it. You know. So, it used to be at the very beginning, these Indian organizations, they tried to copy the white system so closely. The necktie crowd we called them.

Tony: (laughs) Yeah.

Ernest: Now, I see people now, trying to get away from it. Trying to go back to their old traditional ways as much as possible. You know, you have to stay within this other form too in order to keep up with the government, the other governments. But I mean, to try and incorporate some of the
Indian things. They are very informal now. You see people in jeans, our top speakers, talking to these government people with their neckties.

Christine: (laughs) Jeans and neckties.

Ernest: Yeah. I remember my brother Gus when he was chief. After he lost out as chief, he got a job as an assistant Indian agent up north. And he just went around in a jacket. He carried a briefcase like the agent. And the agent always had a suit and necktie. So, the Chapleau chief came to him and asked him, he says, "Gus, my people keep asking," he says. "How come? Gus is an Indian agent, too. How come he doesn't wear a necktie? So I told them Gus is Anishnabe." So...

Tony: (laughs)

Ernest: And not long after that I was reading an "Akwesasne Note" and one of these very first Metis leaders... I don't know if it's Belle Coeur. There was a Belle Coeur, eh? Tony?

Christine: Yeah.

Tony: Balcour.

Ernest: He said the same thing just like Gus says. "We want to get away from this necktie, business suit thing. Let's just be the way we are, the way we want to be. That's not our way." I noticed some of our speakers there, very nattily attired down there, but that's their choice.

Tony: Yeah. What sort of things have you learned personally in trying to find out things, the traditional things of the things that were done the old way? What have you learned yourself?

Ernest: Well, I'll put it this way. Some people that are against this will tell you why we can't go back to the old way. Well, that's true. We can't live like we used to, in wigwams and that. Catch, try and hunt and fish like we used to. You know, we have to live just like everybody else. But no matter, I've always thought how, what I do. What could I do, maybe talk to young people. So the only thing that I thought is to try and tell our people about the contributions that we've given to the country. Say what the things that the white men have given us, that we've given to the white society, you know, say in the way of food. But also militarily. I stress that. Especially in the light of what's happening. That the country owes us something for our loyalty besides, not only just our inherent right to our land. Because they've got to consider our contribution, our military contribution which has been really heavy. In fact, the only reason Sir William Johnson got these people together in that Royal Proclamation is to get the Indians on their side because they needed them.

Tony: What are you referring to?
Ernest: The 1763 Royal Proclamation. This is when they got the Indians together. Because we were feared militarily. That's a fact, this is a thing they can never get away from. And we know now, from the material we are gathering, and from Pierre Burton's two books, where our contribution was absolutely necessary in stopping the Americans from coming over and taking our country. I mentioned that at the workshop in Toronto. We wouldn't even be talking about Canada. There would be Stars and Stripes here if it wasn't for our people. And we want recognition for that. And also, we will have to do something about these textbooks to get this across.

And then our spiritual side, too. I think you can't get away from it. I think that's the basis of just about everything. The spiritual side of things. You can't get away. Well, we're Catholics now, United church and this, but still I still think it's important that we learn about the pipe ceremony, why the tobacco is so important, all these things. If we teach these to our children, they don't necessarily have to... as long as they know. I think they should know that.

I have mentioned this at a few meetings. That we're so different in our minds compared to the way our fathers looked upon, you know. They lived the spiritual side of their lives. They were continually aware of God. Every day, every waking hour. Maybe it's because they lived so close to nature. I think in these cities where everything is concrete and you're living in enclosures and you just seem to get away from that. You know, the cars and everything, you're just in such a materialistic way. It is very hard. That's why even city people like to get away to the country and then something comes into their being which is very spiritual. That's their contact with the outside world. Really reminds you of the beauty of this. I mean, no human could create this beauty. You know, it's got to be something beyond, the Creator. And that's the way our people lived. They couldn't lie. How can you lie when somebody's watching you? And we've lost this way of living. We were taught a culture where you figure if you build a church and put a cross on it and go in there every Sunday, that's the only time he sees you.

Tony: Yeah.

Ernest: The way the society is going, as long as you go there, you figure you can screw your neighbour the rest of the six days, but this other way.... And then somebody will throw up to me, "Why did you kill one another?" Well, that was maybe territory, you know, hunting territory. Or I don't know what all was involved but I believe it was mostly that. And a lot of things was caused by the fur trade, too. A lot of it was created by some other forces that came to divide us. But one thing I wanted to mention. Chief Joseph said, "We may fight over different things but one thing we never fight about is God. You people fight about God." You know. And that's happening in Ireland, it's happening in Lebanon. Those are
religious wars over there. But this is one thing our people never fought about.

Christine: When you were a child, were there people around here who still practised traditional things? Like religion?

Ernest: Yes, well, there was no pipe ceremonies but we were very much like the Mexicans. I read about these Mexican Indians that are both; they really combined the two things. And all our old people were very strong churchgoers but they believed strongly in the Bear Walker, you know. That the people could use their power to hurt you.

Tony: The Midewiwin.

Ernest: Yeah, Midewiwin, well, we didn't have Midawiwin. I never even heard that till just lately you know. This is what we've lost. But this is one thing that was strong. I had an aunt there. Oh, you couldn't convince her any other way. And I still remember, we had a little white plant. It's a kind of a weed and when it's dried looks, feels like crepe paper. I don't know the name of it but I remember when I was a kid, almost every house had a sprig of it on the wall. That's to keep the witch away. It's like garlic in Europe to keep away the vampires. (chuckles)

Tony: So you were a child with the European influence, pretty well supported all of the traditional Indian things here?

Ernest: Oh yes, very much so. Except this Bear Walk belief.

Tony: That's not so long?

Ernest: Yeah. In fact, there are still people that believe that.

Tony: Why do you think that's alive?

Ernest: I don't know. Just like some people say they are psychics or they give you the evil eye or something. You know, it's in white society, too. You see this person, well he has the power to hurt you. There is still, there is some of it. I worked in Chicago among the Puerto Ricans. The Mexicans too, the Mexican community, they still have their medicine men. They go there to try and stop a curse. They have these people in Chicago they still go to. And we still have up north, eh. I know people used to come to Sagamok from southern Ontario. Well, they still do for medicine. There is still people in Sagamok that make medicine and they come up because they don't make it down south. All the people have died. And they sell some here in the foundation; the two main ones they always have. In fact, I carry one right here with me.

Tony: What are they?

Ernest: It's, we call it, the one I carry, Aubzitchigun. It's like a cure-all. Since my heart operation about five years ago
I've never been to a doctor since and this is all I ever take if I don't feel right. Maybe I'm wrong, maybe I'm doing wrong. Maybe I'm afraid of having another operation but I feel all right. You know.

Christine: It makes you feel better, it's just (inaudible)..?

Ernest: Yeah, maybe it's just like, I just believe it does me good. And I saw a couple of my friends that had the same operation. They took all kinds of pills and everything but they're gone. I may go just like them. I may go any second, but I feel good. The only thing that bothers me is that I have ulcers, but that's the only thing that bothers me. But my ticker, oh, once in a while I'll get the odd little, but I don't worry about it.

Tony: What is the other plant?

Ernest: Oh, no, this is - these are several plants ground together, mixed together, yeah. I think they have two down there, that they sell here. And people still come to buy. And I believe there is only one lady in Sagamok that still, that's where they get it.

Tony: Isn't that something.

Ernest: Yeah.

Christine: Yeah, I should get some.

Ernest: Oh, it's a very strong smell to that.

Christine: It is, isn't it.

Ernest: The last one I bought, I put it in a plastic bag you know, to... and what's that smell? This is Aubzitchigun.

Christine: How do you take this?

Ernest: I just, some put it in water, like I make a tea. But anytime I feel, oh a little under the weather, I just put some here and I lick. But that's one of the oldest medicines of the Ojibways. One of the oldest.

Tony: And there is several things mixed together?

Ernest: Yeah.

Tony: Do you know what they are?

Ernest: I asked Dan Pine and he mentioned three things. Ronny Wakegijig, he is our chief in Wikki (Wikwemikong), he is very heavy into this. And Ernestine down here, too. Because they go out, people have taken them out and shown them, what the plants are. I was just listening to a chemist, she's a woman from the National Health and Welfare. She was talking about...
they had a program on the Journal about these herb, these stores. And some of them are very powerful, they can poison you. And she mentioned pennyroyal and that's one of the things that they have here. And Ernestine showed me there, along the lake there in Birch Island, that where they make a tea out of it. And there is another little plant that almost looks alike and that's... well, just about everything has medicinal, some kind of medicinal value.

Christine: What do you call this again?

Ernest: We call it in Ojibway, Aubzitchigun. What that means is anything that kind of picks you up. You know, if you are down, have Aubzitchigun. Or if you're sick and you're being healed, that stuff. I always carry it. I went to an all-Ontario hockey tournament and there was an old man from Walpole Island. So I asked him, I says, "Did you ever heard of Aubzitchigun?" "Yes, they used to make it where I come from. They don't, nobody." "Here." "Can I have some?" So I went and got some Kleenex and oh, he smelled it, "Oh yes, we always had this. Where can I get this?" So I gave him the address, I don't know if he ever wrote. "I haven't seen this for years." But it's still up here.

Tony: Go back to, you never went to residential school, eh?

Ernest: No.

Tony: They never sent you off there?

Ernest: No.

Tony: So you just went to another school in Little Current?

Ernest: Yeah, I went there; my mother sent me there. She had a friend of hers, and she sent me there. And it was a very traumatic experience. I even hate to think about it. I could hardly talk English and kids were making fun of me. And the very first day, this is the worst one. The teacher says, "What grade were you?" I don't know what a grade is. "Where is your, have you got a report card?" I didn't know what that was. And he said, "What kind of a school did you come from?" All the kids started laughing.

I was forced to go, I had no choice. My dad would've, you know. I hate this part of my life. So I went there and that's the first time I played organized hockey. Where I went we just used to skate. So I played on the juvenile team. And those kids gave me the business too, the first day. Pretty near broke my, shattered my elbow. They come and lifted both feet, you know. But I stuck, I held on. I still meet my old chums. I played senior hockey after the war years later against the same crowd. And I have very close friendship with them yet, you know. Talk about old times.

Christine: So how old would you have been then when you went
there?

Ernest: Oh, I was about thirteen, I guess.

Christine: Oh yeah, so it was sort of like high school?

Ernest: Yeah, fourteen. I just went to grade school, Catholic school, under that church basement in Little Current.

Tony: When you went there at age thirteen, in fact what grade did they put you in?

Ernest: In grade seven. Yeah, grade seven. That's strange though. My dad bought the, subscribed to the Toronto Star. So that was our education. My brother and I, we read a lot. And I don't know where, I got an old British history book and I used to read that. My brother and I would take turns reading it. We used to have an old ice house there with sawdust. I used to lay there, put my feet and go through this. So I learned about British history when I wasn't even in - that was maybe beyond my - so I used to be able to come up with answers and they'd turn around, "Where did you learn this?" "Well," I said, "I just picked up an old...."

Maybe that's what led to my fascination when I was in England. I've always had a sense of history. The first night I come into London, England. I landed in Waterloo Station, I come in at night, walked across the bridge and I went, I'm looking at Nelson's monument. There was always a picture in our geography book and I thought, "Well, I'm here," you know. And I always felt this. My brother is the same way. He wrote to me, before I went overseas (he was already ahead of me) and he said, "I'm in Aldershot, the stamping grounds of our dad." Our dad was in the same place. Our uncle, you know.

Christine: During the First War.

Ernest: Yeah, yeah. So that's where, they always shoved the Canadians in at Aldershot. I'd still like to visit it today though, if I could ever get over there.

Christine: Yeah.

Tony: When you were, so you were thirteen when you went in grade seven. Were the other kids there about the same age or were you...?

Ernest: No, I was much bigger.

Tony: You were much bigger than they were?

Ernest: Well, not too much. Some were, I guess, were a little backwards.

Christine: Were you the only Indian?

Ernest: No, there were other Indians there but they had lived
there. Their father had enfranchised. There was one family there, the Roy family. They were going there. But they were very, very quiet. I met them years later, they were a lot different. But then, you know, you're always - it's like the blacks. You were told to keep your place and you believed it, you know.

Tony: Yes.

Ernest: You still notice. Subconsciously you move to the back of a room. You go to the back of a bus. I do. You know, it's....

Tony: It's ingrained.

Ernest: It's ingrained in you. It's been drilled into you for so long that it's, you were taught. This is why it's so important to bring back these things that were used. Because although you may learn as much about anything else, it's still really not yours. You know, you want a part of you; you want something that was a part of your people. Then you'll feel, then you know how your, your self esteem and all this. And I think that's very, very important.

Tony: Did those feelings persist of being... as you say it was very traumatic and you didn't like it, you hated that time... does that persist all the time you were in that school?

Ernest: Yeah. Well after all I got to know the kids, it wasn't too bad. But the very first day, I'll never forget that. It's, it'll always be there. And then at Christmas time, I refused to go back. I told them I'm not going back. So I come home, my brother and I and a bunch of others were out skating and I come in Sunday night and who's sitting there in the kitchen, my teacher. His name was Fernandez. He was from Toronto. He became assistant superintendent of separate schools in Toronto later. He married a Killarney girl. He taught in Killarney and he came there of Spanish decent. He was there to make me come back. Oh God, I felt bad. There is another black moment there in my life. And he says, "I want him to come back and he can stay at my house." So I had no choice, I was forced to. And living in your teacher's house and then the kids call you a teacher's pet.

Tony: Made it worse.

Ernest: Made it worse. I had misery.

Christine: So you went and lived with....

Ernest: Yeah, I went and lived in his house until the end of the school year. So, that was it. I think he left for Toronto. Then there was a teacher came to West Bay. His name was Mr. Bernie Joyce. He was studying to be a priest I think. And he met one of those woman teachers at the girl's residential school and they got married and this was their first... very
nice couple. He was a great hockey player, too, you know. We had a great time at our outdoor rink. Kind of taught us a lot about hockey. And he moved on to Chapleau. So he heard that I'd been – oh yeah, I forgot, that year, my mother made me go to Sault Ste. Marie to go to school there.

Tony: Which year was that?

Ernest: That's, Holy Angel school anyway, I forget, maybe 1937 or something around there. And that was alright. I didn't mind that. And one thing I could never get in my head was figures. Even today, I have a mental block about figures. I just can't. I have an awful – I even hate people that are good at mathematics. (chuckles)

Christine: (laughs)

Ernest: I had a lot of fun there. My aunt was living there and those kids too, my aunt married a white man, an ACR conductor. But after our mothers died, those kids didn't want to be associated with anybody Indian. They're my first cousins but they don't want to be related to Indians. They cut us off. So, I did the same thing. I refused to go back after Christmas. I just, "What's the use?" I said. And the only reason, the main reason I come back, I had a big St. Bernard dog that really loved me and I loved him. Boy, he jumped all over when I come home, licking my face.

And I remember one incident I'll tell you. We were always so afraid of showing emotion. That's part of the old way. Like I remember coming back and I shook hands with my mother. Today, kids woo woo, you know. And you didn't cry in front of anybody. They say Indians, when they lost somebody, they went someplace and cried. It was not manly to cry. Now everybody sobs just like they, anybody you know. Our kids show their emotions in public. I didn't then and I'll never forget that. That just shows you that the old ways were still in us. So that's when I found out that Mr. Joyce was teaching. Then he come to my mother, my dad. "I'll get him his high." I remember you had to get your high school entrance; now they just send you automatic. We had to get a certificate, remember. So he says, "I'll get your entrance and you come and get your grade eight." So he asked me to come to school. And I'm big you know. So I did, on purpose. I'd come in ten o'clock. I wanted them to throw me out. I'd come in almost noon. And didn't say anything, he just gave me what I'm supposed to do. Sometimes I'd leave early. I'm trying to get kicked out. But he wouldn't say. I guess he knew my game.

Christine: Yeah.

Ernest: And he was very close to my mother and they didn't want to have a fight I guess. So at the end of the year – oh, here's another thing that happened that proved. Remember you used to be able to pass on your work. You know, you didn't have to write exams. They passed you on your work. So he gave
me a little exam there and I guess I did good and (chuckles) I guess he sent that in. I don't know where he sent that. Maybe the education department, maybe Indian Affairs. Anyway, he got a blast from the Indian Department for teaching me that, trying to get me my entrance. I wish I could get it from him today. If he's still living. He went railroading; he went with the railroad because his father-in-law was a railroad man. I don't know if he'd still be living. Well, I wouldn't want to bother him with that anyway but that's what he told me. He was very mad. In fact, I think that's why he left, one reason he left teaching. That just shows you that they were ordered not to teach Indians anything.

So, he says, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do." There is three places that you went and wrote in those days. There was Mindemoya I think, no, Gore Bay, Little Current, and... I guess there were just two places. The ones that had to write and usually that was two days. And he says, "I'll lend you, my wife gave me this Parker pen," which was THE thing. "For good luck." So I knew this family, the Jibwes(sp?) in Little Current so that's where I stayed. My dad took me over there. So I didn't know....

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Ernest: But what impressed them. I wrote something, like a little essay, that I still remember. I think it had to do when you walk someplace, you know, to make the walk short, try and take in what's interesting, something like that. I happened to come out, you know, very nice thing about that, you know. About everything noticed what's going on or here and there. Just a simple thing like that. But they took note of that and they said that's what impressed them, the judges, I guess. So, my mother died that year. So, I'm glad....

Tony: Which year was that?

Ernest: That was 1941, I think. And I think my brother just left. My dad started drinking heavy and he just blew the business right out, you know. He couldn't do anything. We tried to help run it; we were just kids in there. He would just come and grab the money and he would disappear for days. He had a car, you know. He just started blowing everything. Go to Sudbury and blow. He had no control. He had a lot of property. He sold the land and.... Well, I was free. You know, by my mother dying, I didn't have to go through this traumatic experience of going to someplace else. It's a bad thing to say but.... And my brother got fed up and left and joined the army. And I soon followed a couple of years later.

But I remember, I'll tell you what happened. The head of the public school, Mel Bloch, he's still living. I guess he was head of this entrance board. Very fine man. He was born and raised in the farming area here, Providence Bay or Spring Bay. And he had a summer job. My dad made money that year. He had
this Muskoka Construction. They were raising the road from Kagawong and he was selling the crushed, the rough rock they were crushing. And this Mel Bloch had a summer job on the weigh scales. So I'm in the kitchen. My dad, the store was still going. He'd come in, he'd just dropped by on the home to Little Current; he wanted to talk to me. And my dad said, "Somebody wants to see you here." And it was Mel Bloch. I'd never talked to him, just seen him or heard of him. So he called my dad over and he said he wanted me to go to high school in Little Current. And I says, "I don't want to go. I'm finished there." So he told my dad, he said I had one of the highest marks on the island. That's why he wanted me to go. But no, no, I don't want no more because I'd been driven crazy enough already. And, like I say, I would have never been a scholar and I'm not one of those guys that say I would have been this and that because I would have never been, I know. Because of this blockage that still persists to this day. Other things I could pick up. Useless things. But like that Fernandez used to tell me, "Ernie, you're good in everything except the most important thing and you can't go through life without mathematics."

And it has hurt me all my life. Like when I worked in Chicago and that warehouse, they said they wanted to make me a foreman but I had to make out worksheets, figuring and no. So I always had to do dirty jobs to get away from figuring. It's hurt me all my life. Even today, I'm not much use. Like say, administratively, I could never do anything. I think that's the most important thing, if you can do that. And yet I had a buddy in San Francisco, he was a CPA and he was always in the hole and in trouble. He couldn't seem to cope with life.

(chuckles) I thought if you had that, you had it made but he was always getting into something that didn't pan out. He owed money. (chuckles) Trouble paying his rent. And he's a CPA from that Jesuit University of San Francisco, one of the highest rated schools in the country. And he couldn't, and he had troubles surviving. He works with a bank, he was a banker. He should have stayed there I guess but, like, people want to go on their own, I guess. But I still say you need that.

Tony: So that was the end of your schooling was it?

Ernest: That was the end of it.

Tony: So what did you do then?

Ernest: Well, I just hung around my place and I finally left and I knocked around all over here and there, trying to join the army. That was the main thing. I was half-starved here and there. Toronto, Montreal. I almost made it in Montreal. I passed the tests and the doctors called me back in. "You know," he says, "you're in perfect condition except you're too light." I only weighed about 115 or 116. He says, "We'd like to take you." I almost cried in there. They just typed out a rejection card for me. I was out on the street, no food, no money. Had a rough time. I was just mad to get in the army
and I didn't want nothing else.

Christine: Why did you want it so bad?

Ernest: Well, it's a traditional thing, you know. My father and my uncles and my brother. And finally I got in. And I loved the army. So did my brother.

Tony: What did you like about it?

Ernest: Well, I don't know. Just tradition I guess. And I didn't mind the discipline. My old man was pretty strict so I said I already had a Sergeant Major in my life so this was nothing.

Tony: Did you run into any of the same problems that you had in school in the way you were treated because you were Indian?

Ernest: Where, in the army?

Tony: In the army?

Ernest: No, no. This is one thing I've always said about the army. Well, you might get the odd mean guy like you do everywhere but there were very few. And then in the army, that's one thing about the army, you're all very close. You know, there is no discrimination then. You're all brothers. You're all part and it didn't matter who it was. You know, you were all part of it. There is a closeness I think, that developed that... that's why these reunions, they are so strong. They are just like brothers. Some of them are closer than their own families.

Like, I think when you leave army life, you lose this cohesiveness again, you just go back to your old ways again. Like these people go back to what they were living. Maybe city people just go back and making a living without... they just have a few friends. They may not even be friends with their neighbors next door. But in the army, there was this closeness, that cohesiveness, eh. Sure there was discipline. Sometimes in basic training that Sergeant, your instructor, would insult you so much that you, you know, really make you mad, you know. He'd scream at you, throw the rod. They never give you the rifle back. Take it and show you. They try and catch you off guard and throw it back. You got to catch it. If it hits the ground, it breaks; you pay for that. But all that is to make you alert. You don't want people, you know, that can - and what I like about it is it instills discipline. And it's like say, here, maybe a bunch here, "Let's go." "Oh, wait, I got to get my coat, I got to do this, I got to make my face, I got to use this." By the time, you know, it takes about an hour. But in the army, that's what I like about it. And he say, when you move, you move. That's how they're able to move huge people, because of this, huge groups of people.

Tony: Whereabouts did you go?
Ernest: I'm still like that. If people don't go according to plan. We were just talking about that.

Tony and Christine: Yeah.

Ernest: It disturbs you, you know.

Christine: Yeah.

Tony: It still bothers you, right?

Ernest: It still bothers me.

Tony: Did it bother you this morning? It took us a while to get going.

Ernest: No. Now I'm on a pension. I really don't have to, I have enough to live by. And why should I have any more stress in my life? Maybe I haven't got too much left so I might as well just...

Christine: Take it easy.

Ernest: Take it easy, yeah.

Tony: Where did they send you? Where did you go in the army?

Ernest: Well I, from Kingston, I went to Petawawa. I was artillery you know, put in artillery. Then, that's the same thing that happened, after I finished my training, I was what they call a category, I was too light to go with my draft. So I asked what the quickest way to get over. And the dental corps, service corps, and the medical corps. I says, "Which is the quickest?" They says medical. So as much as I hated that... it's not the army, you know, you are not combatant. But I thought I could transfer over there, which I did. I went to Camp Borden, a bunch of us. And then I, I missed one draft over there. I had pneumonia. There was a wave of pneumonia swept the camp and I pretty near went under there. I still got a scar on my lungs from that. And then from there I went over to Debert for a while, Nova Scotia, then went over the England. And then we had no trouble transferring. A bunch of us, we transferred to infantry.

And I remember, there was another funny experience I had there. I was only about, maybe 20 I was. So the trucks came. In England they had the training camps. Number one was for all the western regiments, the Seaforth Highlanders and Calgary and all those. And then number two was for all the Ontario. That was the biggest camp because they had so many regiments here. Number three was Maritimes. It's Cape Breton Highlanders, and these other Quebec, New Brunswick north shore. And then number four was the French, the French-Canadian regiments: the Chaudieres, the Maisonneuves, the Deuxieme-Montreal, and the Royal 22nd. So when the trucks come up, number one truck backed up and the corporal or sergeant jumped out and called,
had the names all ready. So I shook hands with my buddies, the Number One Western Regiment. There were a couple of guys there and then we just moved up. Number two, oh that's mine. I want to get into my brother's regiment. That's the Scottish; that's what I'm going to ask for if I got a choice. That pulled out without me. So I move up again, another truck comes in, that's number three. Well, what the hell I said, there is nothing wrong with being a Cape Breton Highlander, you know. They were great fighters, a great regiment. Over there, the Cape Breton Highlanders, the New Brunswick North Shore, West Nova Scotia Highlanders, North Nova Scotia, they were great fighting outfits. God, that's all right. That truck left without me. I got moved in with the French-Canadians. And I suspected something. When I went before the army examiner, called us in. So he looks at where I'm from. "Oh, you want to go into the Van Doos, eh?" "No, sir," I says, "I'm Indian." So he just disregarded that because they were having trouble. See they were having trouble with having enough French reinforcements because a lot of people were against the war in Quebec. But these were all voluntary. So I guess anybody that could, well from Sudbury area, you know. So I got in and, God, I don't know what the hell. They are all screaming in French there, these guys.

But it's good thing there were two of the fellows I had gone over with. You know, one was, I think his name was Dehay from Montreal, and one was Eddie Legault from Sturgeon Falls. I have never seen Eddie. I'd like to. Never bothered to go and see if he's still there. Real nice kid. He went into the Royal 22nd. So, he says, "Don't worry Ernie," he says, "we'll translate for you." And we got off the bus right inside the gate and just lined up, assembled, and I made sure in the middle. I always made sure I got in the middle because every time you form up in the morning, they count, you know, from the left. Number, you know. So they count in French. I had to make sure I stayed out of there.

Because that happened, I will never forget that. We were sent into a bush fire in Petawawa, mixture. Lined us up and they said one, two, three, and there was a French fellow who couldn't speak English. (chuckles) He couldn't pick up the count.

So, there was a fellow came over to speak, little short guy with a big black mustache, Major Musseau (sp?). They introduced him, Major Musseau, and he said something in French. They talked to us, welcomed us to the camp. So we moved, and then they marched us over to our barracks where we were going to stay. And I'm really confused. It's all in French. So, I asked the boys after we got settled, "What did he say?" "Well, he said that if anybody goes into the Chaudieres, he says we've only taken forty prisoners since D-day. Maybe I shouldn't be saying this but this is what they did and it worked against them. See, the German intelligence, they know this so that's when this came up in the war crimes trials against Curt Myer and that's what he said. That's kind of what saved them.
Because the SS men, that Twelfth SS Panzer, anyone wearing that black, those black devils from Winnipeg?

Christine: Oh (inaudible)...

Ernest: No, this was a regiment, a lot of Metis there.

Christine: Oh, yeah.

Ernest: So they, when they come up, the SS shot them, you know. But in retaliation, they were doing the same thing. See, there is an unwritten law pertaining to front line soldiers. It says if you surrender, well, but if you do that, if you kill our people.... So the Chaudieres had started this first, you know. So they got it. So that's what he was telling the boys. We've only, that was just a hint to keep on. That's bad, you know. But anyway, I asked for a transfer to an English regiment and I finally got in after about three weeks. I'd be on the parade scourgés, drilling and gauche, droite, gauche, droite. (chuckles) And I finally got in to the adjutant. He was an FMR. He was in Dieppe, too. And, oh, he gave me a blast. And he says, "Are you ashamed of your French blood?" I said, "I'm not, I'm Indian." "Oh," he said, "oh, I didn't know." So, I got transferred. But to this day I'm sorry. To this very day. If I would stick around, you'll learn. I would have been able to speak perfect French today. That would have been a big advantage. You know, just by travelling and just being able to speak it.

Tony: Sure.

Ernest: I understood quite a bit by the time I left. (chuckles)

Tony: By the time you got out.

Ernest: I got out of there. And what I didn't know then, I think I told you before, my mother was a Bussaneau who was a Metis. So there is that in us. That's what's in it, that's the other blood that's in us. And if you've noticed, a great many were people, that's the predominant blood. The other blood that's beside the Indian blood is the French blood from the Metis people. There was the original explorers and trappers. I remember when I was a kid, my mother used to go visit her uncle. And the people that were in the house, that's all they spoke was French. And they could speak three languages. I don't know if there is anybody in Garden River anymore. And I visited Caughnawaga in war time and most of those people could all speak three languages. So, they didn't seem to have any problem just drifting from - but maybe, that's what created this. We've adopted a lot of French words. There is a lot of French words in our language, for things that we didn't have that they brought.

Christine: Yeah. So then after you got out of that regiment, where did you go? After you got transferred?

Ernest: Well, I wanted to, I didn't go to a regiment there.
Just kind of a, I don't know, a mixture of, it wasn't very good. It was just a hodge podge of guys. We just got an instructor to drill us. He didn't do very much. I'll never forget him. He was from Windsor, Corporal Dicks. He'd been knocked down from Sergeant-Major. And he'd take us. We'd march over to Farnborough across the river and he'd break us off. He says, "I've got a list I'm supposed to teach you but I don't think you need this. You want a drink? I'll meet you guys here." (chuckles) And then we'd go out in the park on the way back, a nice park there in the bush. We'd lay around. And then he'd say, "I'm supposed to teach you field training. This stuff! These guys that make up this stuff," he says, "they don't know anything." How to crawl. He said, "The first time you're shot at, you're gonna know how to crawl so this is all a bunch of bull," he says. And to shoot, too. Show you how to fire, you know. How to put your leg. Put your leg this way and this and that. "Listen, that's another crazy thing," he says. "I don't care how you fire that. You can stand on your head as long as that thing goes off," he says. I loved that man. You know, he never went by the book.

But on the drill on parade square, he was oh, for working the weapon, that's what he had. But I admired him. He had taken this card string. You know, that grenadier hop you know, fall on the parade square, God he was sharp. And he'd come at night. Like some of your NCO's, instructors, you wouldn't see them. But he'd spend the night with us, come around and talk, tell us tall tales. And he says, "Oh, you fellas," he says, "call me Dixie anytime. But on parade, I'm Corporal Dicks and remember that. But the minute off parade, call me Dixie. But on the parade square, no fooling around. You're all soldiers." (chuckles) Yeah, he was funny.

Then when I finally went over, I went over to Belgium. Landed in Ostend, we were trucked in over to Ghent and by that time the war was over. I didn't get to see any action. But I went into a regiment for guarding prisoners and transferring wounded to the coast. From Aalst they were sent to Bloemendahl on the north sea. Just occupation duty, you know. And that broke my heart. After all this trouble, you know. If I hadn't gotten pneumonia and if I hadn't gotten these transfers, you know, and this. I felt really bad.

So I came back early. They were forming a division to go to south Pacific, the Canadian Army Sixth division. So I come back early with the old timers but, oh, the war ended, well. But like I say, I loved the army. My brother lost a leg over there and he's still very much... he really loved the army. It's tradition, a tradition.

Tony: Yeah.

Ernest: Yeah, traditions.

Christine: Your father was in the First War?

Ernest: Yeah. Yeah, he survived. He went through and he
survived. He was in the battle of Vimy Ridge. He survived that. He was wounded. He was wounded around Arras, they called it. Lens or Arras. I asked him one time where he was but he didn't go to school, didn't know geography. He just said the Slag Heap. It was a coal mine and so I talked to a Six Nations. They had these Indians all pretty well trying to form an Indian unit and, well, he was an officer so he knew. He told me where it was. He says, "I know where it is." He knew my dad. But I was trying to pinpoint. The reason I asked my dad, I was trying to pinpoint how close my brother... my brother was hit the same day as he was. Very strange coincidence.

Christine: Gee.

Ernest: My brother was hit July 17, 1944 between Caen and Falaise and my dad was hit July 17 in the First War, the same day. So I just wanted to narrow the coincidence, you know. But they were quite a ways apart. I think this Arras is in Belgium if I'm not mistaken, or in France.

Christine: So what happened to people when they came back here then, if they were wounded or whatever, how were they treated? Did they get land and stuff the way the other soldiers did?

Ernest: They were organizing an Indian War Veterans Association. I wish they had done that years ago. But I guess that's because of the factors and maybe not too many people educated or they weren't as politically aware as our people are now. There wasn't that sense of urgency. And that's the biggest mistake we made, I think. I talked to these fellows that are trying to organize this. Because if we had formed an Indian Veteran's organization, this size is only in the Legion. I think we should still join the Legion but still be formal. We would have been one of the most powerful lobby because they would have had to deal with the conscience of the country and they would have had to listen.

Christine and Tony: Yes.

Ernest: And I told Dave Ahenakew, I told him, I mentioned that. This was in Toronto before, I told him we should have done that. "Yeah, yeah, I know," he says. Well, it seems to be an awakening of that feeling there in Alberta. I've seen it. But it's a little late. We've lost so many people. Wikki (Wikwemikong) had a hundred and there is only about, maybe, forty left. There was a car crash there where the chief and three veterans died in one. They were coming from Toronto and they were doing their road work there for the Sault for the waterlines and they hit that big shovel. It sheared off the top...

Tony: The top of the car.

Ernest: I think it decapitated the driver. And they were all killed. Fine, fine people. Ron Wakegijig, he's dead. Chief
Wakegijig, and three other veterans, fine men. Really miss
them now.

But David Pelletier from Wikki (Wikwemikong) came over and
gave me a couple of forms to pass to another veteran here,
Johnny. Johnny was our longest time, served the longest of
anyone. He was with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, the one
you met. And it says Indian War Veterans Association, two
forms to fill out. See what happened when we come back, we
didn't get the same kind of a deal as the white veteran. They
got quite a bit more than we got. I think they got forgivable
loans and oh, you could buy a house and all this. But we were
restricted to just a straight outright grant of $2320 and no
more. And you couldn't do much with that. But that's all we
got. So they're bringing this up. They're bringing this up.
I think this is part of their argument.

Christine: So you got money but no land?

Ernest: We didn't get money. The Indian Department looked
after this. They did all the paper work. And you got whatever
you wanted, say in the way of farm equipment. You could just
pick out what you wanted, but they handled the money. You
didn't get any money yourself.

Tony: Well, what you said you got $2320. Was that in goods or
was it in money?

Ernest: In goods only.

Christine: So that went to the department and then the
department spent it for you?

Ernest: What I did with mine, my dad knew I had some money
coming so he sold my house in that little property I had for
that. So he got it all. There wasn't much you could do, so
now they're bringing this up. The disparity in benefits.

Tony: How do you feel about that?

Ernest: At the time I didn't care, you know. I was a drifter.
I started drifting around. From there I went to Chicago. I
didn't really care. Montreal, and knocked around. So I didn't
really care. And then by the time I got married and kind of
settled down, Dad had already... I had already used that but
now.... I don't know just what the idea is. They will maybe
get, maybe just to get further benefits. Maybe if somebody
wanted, I don't know. I'd like Dave Pelletier, he's been
going down to these meetings in Ottawa and he doesn't give us
much information. We'd almost have to go and attend a meeting
there. The president is in New Brunswick.

Christine: For the veterans?

Ernest: Yeah. Like, and I'd also mention about Tommy Prince,
if I ever got down there. To have something done to perpetuate
his memory, like in the form of a scholarship. Or push the
government, force the government to really recognizing that man. And we're the people that can do it.

Christine: Were the contributions of any of the veterans, Indian veterans, really recognized? I mean, how were you recognized by the people around?

Ernest: No, nothing since I've been home. I've been home about five years now. We have a very big Veteran's Day, one of the largest in northern Ontario. It's been a tradition. And there is a monument. It was right in the middle of the crossroads but somebody hit it and knocked that statue off. So they put it on the side. So for years, even the Sudbury Legion has come. Copper Cliff, Espanola. It's a huge affair. And they'd line up and parade. There'd be, usually Pearson used to speak. Political, big politicians. And it still continues. Not as big as it was. Now you're getting some of the Korean veterans in there, too. So I told two years ago - and that's what makes you mad, too. You can't get your people to go along. I said to Mary Lou, you know, "I've always wanted our people to be represented at the monuments so that white people can see a visible, that would be a visible way of seeing our contribution." No, they had their own service all the time, separate. There was almost a hundred of them so they'd have their own. You know, that monument when you go into Wikki (Wikwemikong) just before you go down the hill?

Christine: Yes.

Ernest: Cody's dad made that. He's a good stonemason. So, that's where they had their service and then they had a dinner. But I wanted them to, I always wished they would put in an appearance there. And they'd be seen. So, since I've been home, I told Mary Lou two years ago, "Would you pay for a bus, this outfit pay for a bus if we picked them up?" They have a mass, they still do. They had a mass in morning, a veteran's mass. Picked them up, that doesn't start till three o'clock, there's lots of time. And then they stop in West Bay; that's a traditional stop. They stop at our graveyard, the whole crowd. They have a pipe band every year. And so I went, we'll go there. But the guy that I hired to, I don't know what happened, he didn't show up. And all the guys, half the guys were drunk and I give up, you know. Nobody wants to, you know, I try to tell those guys, "Let's go over there." Even, I counted at the graveyard, at the service at the graveyard for the last post, I counted thirty. You know, which would have been even thirty. But after a while they had a little lunch and they started drinking and nobody seems to feel the same way as you do.

Christine: Yeah.

Ernest: But one thing we did do was that demonstration in Ottawa. After they decided that they were going to leave us out of the picture altogether remember? When they threw us out altogether? The Indians, remember in the Constitution,
remember they threw us out altogether? So we had an emergency meeting quick in Garden River. That Sunday, on a Sunday I think. Saturday or Sunday. Two nights I think.

Christine: When was this?

Ernest: This was just before the, when they made up that constitution. Remember, with the premiers?

Christine: Oh, yeah.

Ernest: And the Indians put a big demonstration on all across Canada. So I remember my son, Terry, telling me about a demonstration they had in Ottawa one time where the Mounties clubbed the hell out of people. One girl was, I think there was brain damage, you know. The Mounties clubbed them mercilessly. And I heard what created that a lot. While the Indians were marching, the Communist party came out of a side street and joined in so that, maybe that was set up. The Mounties then had an excuse. But that was one of the things that we talked about. The parade was being readied, a big demonstration. Paul Williams was there and he says, "We're going to watch those Communists. We told them to stay out of it." You know, this time.

So I said, that was my chance and I said, "Before you go home," I said. There were Six Nations; two reserves come up for that meeting. You know, the southern chiefs. I said, "Tell all your people, tell all your veterans to show up there with their medals because we want to avoid that clubbing by the Mounties. And we'll lead the parade with our ribbons." So, that didn't give us much time. We had that meeting on a Sunday. We had an emergency meeting here in West Bay with Wikki (Wikwemikong) about bussing. We sent two busses from here, two Greyhounds. Plus cars. I think we had the largest group in Ontario from this little reserve.

So when we got down to that park in Ottawa where they formed up. So we had our Indian flag that they use at the powwows with the feathers; Wilfred Chamly (sp?) brought it. So that's what we did. There was maybe forty of us. But if we'd have had time, if we'd have had time we'd have had a regiment of Indians there, you know. From all over, west. It was too short. So I carried the new flag, Chief All carried the Union Jack. No, he carried the new flag, I carried the Union Jack. We made sure, we says, "We'll carry this too because that's the one we served under, our fathers served under." And Wilfred says, "I forgot to bring the American flag." Because a lot of our boys served. Some Wikki (Wikwemikong) boys were in the U.S. Navy. Some were in Vietnam. Some were in the Korean War with the American Forces, some Wikki (Wikwemikong). So that would have been the thing to come. The Indian people would have reporters, "What's that doing?" "Well, that's to show you that North America is all our country."

Christine & Tony: Yes.
Ernest: "And I forgot it," he says, Wilfred says. (But when we had our Veteran's Day out here in Birch Island, that evening we had the American flag.) So Johnny carried the Indian flag. We put that ahead of the other flags in Ottawa, directly behind the drum. And so they organized it. Right when we hit where the monument was, we broke off separately and then the rest of the Indians marched away around. And they timed it so we lined up and we layed a wreath at the cenotaph and we had all the reporters and cameras on us. But I didn't see anything in the paper. But the United Press reporter came to speak to us, to Wilfred. He wanted to know about that flag with the feathers, you know, that stick with all the feathers. Wilfred explained to him what that meant. And, oh, there was a lot of shots taken of us. And then we marched off and then we just timed it. We met the rest and we led the parade right to the front of the parliament buildings. And I remember looking at those Mounties. They were up there, all guarding the parliament buildings and I said, "You bastards, you're not clubbing us this time." There is no way they would have clubbed the veterans in front of the Canadian public.

Christine: No.

Ernest: And I still say - well, you heard Joe Muskokamin (sp?) talk. "I hope as many of you people come to Ottawa because it gives us a big moral uplift. And just to even hear the drum outside," he says, "picks you up." And I was just thinking the last couple of days, us veterans should do the same thing. Now we got time to plan. I mean, I don't know if we should have a demonstration again. Sometimes if you overdo things, you get a backlash. I don't know. What do you think?

Tony: No, I would say that it's a good idea if you could organize, as you say, a regiment of Indian veterans and then tie it in. Tell the political leaders what you're doing and organize a march and get them to alert the media to it. So that you can publicize that this is the Indian Veterans marching in support of their fathers' rights.

Ernest: Yeah, I was thinking about that last night. If anybody would have gone, I don't think Ahenakew was there, but if he was going to be there I was thinking of bringing that up. You know, because this would be a very good thing to do.

Christine: It would be a good time to do it, too.

Ernest: It would be a good time to do it.

Tony: I think it would be excellent.

Ernest: Yeah, and remind the country of our contribution. Not to forget that, not to leave us out. Because it's our old Indian warriors that made this Canada.

Christine and Tony: Yeah.
Christine: Yes, they need to be reminded of that.

Ernest: They need to be reminded. So I still think, I was thinking of getting in touch with David Pelletier and maybe broach that subject to this new leader of the war veterans.

Christine: Is that that Dockstader fellow? Is he the one?

Tony: No.

Christine: No.

Ernest: There is one, he's got a list. I think there is a doctor. He's part of it I think.

Tony: Yeah, but he's doing the research.

Ernest: Yeah.

Tony: He's got a research grant.

Ernest: Oh.

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(End of Interview)

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