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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Account of Ojibway flood legend.
- Migration of Ojibway Indians.
- Attitudes towards integration.

Alex: The following is an interview with James Mason of Saugeen Reserve. Mr. Mason is an elected Hereditary Chief of that reserve. The interview is being conducted in Toronto, on June 7, 1983, by Alex Cywink. The interview was held at the Skyline Hotel, which is close to Toronto International Airport. The background noises heard are those made by planes that are landing or taking off. Mr. Mason has a lot of knowledge of Indian folklore and another interview would enhance this collection.

Alex: Now maybe you could start with your name.

James: I'm James Mason. I'm chief of the Saugeen band of Indians. I was elected as chief in 1968 and I have been chief since that time, with the exception of ten months when I, I was voted out and then I was re-elected again ten months later. So I have been the leader of that band actually since 1968. I am a descendant of a, of a chief. My great-grandfather was the chief of the Saugeen Reserve, he was a hereditary chief. He was elected to the office of chief after the changeover, the government changeover. They did away with that hereditary

chiefs in, in our band, and in 1895 they brought in the elective system and done away with the hereditary chiefs.

My band at that time had five or six chiefs and a number of councillors -- what they would call headmen. And they operated in this traditional fashion. And then in 1895 my grandfather, who was a hereditary chief, he was elected to the position of chief by a vote of... and he was elected for a four year term at the time. And after his election he ran every four years after that, and he was elected for thirty-five years. He spent thirty-five years until he became too old to -- he became senile and he could not operate, you know. But he spent a lifetime in the position of chief, and his father before him was chief.

So there was a break in the line of chieftains, because my own father died at a very early age and didn't have any opportunity to go into politics... and their politics. Otherwise, perhaps, if he had lived, he would have likely have been voted into that position too, because we still really follow the hereditary system, and once, if you are a descendent of a chief it's pretty easy to become re-elected. Our band is composed of the Odawa nation; we have members on the Odawa nation. We have members from the Ojibway nation, we members from the Shawano(?) nation, and we have members from the Potawatomi nation. So its a multi, multi-nations -- people compose my reserse.

Originally, we came from down in, in, in the Ohio valleys from the, along the, close to the... Well, southern Illinois was our homeland, and during the wars with the United States and they migrated to Canada. When the migration first was in the late 1600s when the, when the Iroquois were fighting with the Ojibway nation, and the Council of Three Fires that was composed of a, the Potawatomi, Odawa, and the Ojibway nations, they formed a coalition to do battle with the... with the Six Nations, because in the late 1600s the, the Iroquois took over most of this land in Ontario; and harassed the fur trains going to Montreal from Wisconsin and the western provinces, and, well, western states now and southern states mid-, mid-south states I guess you would say.

And so they declared a war against the Six Nations and they were able to defeat them on my own reserve. There is a famous battle where they fought the Iroquois and beat them. Of course when the Ojibway nation came in the invasion of the, of the Iroquois lands, they did it in a kind of military fashion. There was a huge pincer movement. There was warriors came down from the east side of Georgian Bay, from Sault Ste. Marie. There was the warriors came across from the Bruce Peninsula from Manitoulin Island, and then there was the southern group who came up through what is now known as Sarnia -- the Sarnia

area -- up in to do battle with the Iroquois. And on my reserve the Saugeen clans(?) it's called... there is a plaque there commemorating the battle when the Ojibwas fought the Iroquois there. And it's called the battle of Skull Mound. And so many warriors were killed on both sides that they...

And the ground was so hard at the time -- it's clay -- and they couldn't bury them very deep. And of course the wind, you know, eroded the graves and exposed the bones - so they call it the battle of Skull Mound.

From there they followed, they pursued the Ojibway, rather, the Iroquois from this, our area in the Bruce Peninsula today, in that area. They pursued them to the Finger Lakes in the United States deep into Iroquois country at the time. Of course, they also drove them from the east and from the, from the north. In fact, the Iroquois was pushed out of Canada until after Joseph Brant's... Well, Joseph Brant, he was the Iroquois chief who was famous in the wars that the United States had with the, with the, with that internal war that they had, you know... when they broke away from Great Britain. And of course Joseph Brant was very prominent in that, in them battles and they gave him lands along, along the Thames River, not the Thames, the Grand River... it's... I think it's the name of that river, I guess that's what it is, Grand anyway. Anyway they gave to Joseph Brant six miles on either side of the, that river -- from its mouth to its tributaries and that practically took all of central Ontario -- central southern Ontario. And it was land that didn't belong to the Mohawks because they had lost it to the Ojibway by battle, eh.

So we have stayed now on the Saugeen since late 1600s. There was three reserves there. There was the, a reserve at Wiarton. There was a reserve at Cape Croker. There was a reserve at Owen Sound. And, of course, Saugeen, which was the headquarters of the reserves in that area, for that nation. And so these in the department had eroded, two of these

reserves now, there's only... three of these reserves have died. There's one at Wiarton, and two at Owen Sound, and one of, one at Wiarton and two at Owen Sound, yeah. That was the three that's been taken over by the government -- surrendered by the Indians as land sold.

So that takes us up to, that's the late 1860s when they took them reserves away. And since then we've, uh, we've, uh.... we gave away a million and a half acres south of us, south of London, a line from Owen Sound to Southampton. This tract of land including... went down eleven mile, eleven miles below Goderich, east above to a spot above Guelph, and then north to Collingwood. This was given away without one penny given to the Indian people by the government. They just came and they said to us, they said to us in Manitoulin Island... they invited the Indians up there to receive presents. The government was giving presents to Indian peoples at the time, and it was an annual thing, so they went up there to get their presents. While they were there an Indian Agent or Indian representative, or government representative suggested that they surrender that, that million and a half acres, because he claimed that the white man was very hungry for land and that they would fight and kill all the Indians if we didn't give this land away. So of course the Indian, knowing if they were not, that the white man are superior in numbers and they couldn't fight

them, because there were too many, so they conceded and they gave that land away. Which is wrong, because according to the Royal Proclamation in the 1867, that the any lands that was taken over by any government had to go through the Crown. They had to get permission from the Crown to conduct a plebiscite, or to make a treaty with a band for the sale of land. And this they didn't do so... all in all everything was in illegal sense actually, it was a matter of stealing the land from the Indian people.

So that again brings us up to in the late '80s, 1880s... And so we are a race of people that you, that have been... It was customary, you know, to travel from place to place; because they lived off the land and when they had killed all the game in the area, practically, they, you know, that was feasible to support them, they moved to another area. And they would stay there for a number of years until that same procedure went through again and made it difficult to get enough food to feed the people and they would move again. And then perhaps in, perhaps, although, we came back to this reserve in the late 1600s it's possible to, this migration on this, looking for different lands for game, we may have lived here before that. Maybe countless times -- we don't know. But we do know up until the 1600s, that was when our first history starts for this area.

So that, uh, is a brief outline of how we come to be Saugeens. Of course Saugeen is a, is an Indian word. It's, uh, corrupted by the white people. Actually the word is Zawkeen. And what the word means is the, is to come out, and they referred to this as the coming out of the river, at the mouth of the river, of the Saugeen River, eh. And actually it was called Zawkeen, because it was at the place where they came out river, came up, but it didn't, the translation doesn't mean that it's river. It could be Zawkeen, could, you could come from anyplace from Zawkeen. You would walk out of the door or you could... It just that's what it means... coming out, coming out. So that's how come we have our name; this referred to in the olden times as a Zawkeen nation. And we still contend that we are a nation. We never, we never surrendered our sovereignty. We never have been defeated in war, and no one's every asked for our sovereignty and that we would voluntarily give it away, as which we have never done. And so we are still today a sovereign nation. And I heard a lot of different versions of

a, what sovereignty actually meants, means. But I know a lot of our Indian people don't know the difference. They think that a sovereign it means, it means the Crown of England, you know. Well, of course you can be a sovereign from any, any race. It's a God-given right. It's something that God gives you -- you don't get from a country or somebody else gives it to you. It's a gift from God. So we are a sovereign people and I, we, have joined the First Nations when they first became active. I myself am, am an elder in the organization. I've been there for, now, for about four years as an elder. I'll be

there until I'm dead -- it's a lifelong appointment. And I'm also an elder of the Union of Ontario Indians, and, of course, I am an elder of that Anishnabe(?) nation as well.

And I will continue to be politically inclined until the rest of my life. So that is my... I want to, I wouldn't want to do otherwise. I think I have an obligation to my people that if I am able to do something for them then I should be doing it, like. I shouldn't say, "Well, I'm not going to try and help my people, I would sooner look after myself. The heck with my people." I don't feel that. I feel that I, if I have something, God gave me something to give to my people. Then it's the divine right that I am a chief, I'm an elder, and I'm everything else and, uh, well... For that direction from the Great Spirit I will continue to serve my people. As long as I would be able to draw the breath of this great land and I'm grateful to the Great Speaker, the Great Spirit for the privilege and opportunity that he has given me to serve my people.

And I am very, I am very spiritual-minded. I believe in the Indian religion. I was taught my parents, my grandparents, who I lived with when I was, who raised me... taught me in the Indian religion and beliefs. And I find that they are, are practically the same as the Bible teachings. And the only difference, I guess, between my religion and the Christian

religion is that they had scholars, and they had a written language that they could put down into a book; and have. And I think if my people had that, had that opportunity to have someone devise a language -- and a written language -- they would likely would have had a Bible also. Because we believe in one spirit and I think we have believe in one Creator and also the Christian people believe the same thing. And I also believe in Mohammedism that the Mohammedians -- I don't know how you say that -- but anyway I believe that they are, they are following a divine route like everyone else. I believe in Shintoism and Buddhism. All of these religions, they have something in common. They are following one Creator, and no matter what you call the Creator, or what, what race has a name for the Creator, there is still only one the Creator here, there's just one main. And so I think I know my religion is in line with any other religion in the world, eh. And with respect to the loving the Creator and respecting what the Creator has done for us, and what the Creator will do for us in the future. I think everything is tied in, I think that my actions are, are actions that are, are given to me by the Great Spirit and I have to act on them. And if I don't have direction from him I don't do nothing. I can't, I can't do anything myself. I have to get that direction from the, from the Creator. And so my life is tied in with the spiritualism of, of the Indian religion. And again I appreciate that opportunity and will never stop working for the betterment of the people.

I have a family. I have nine children -- had nine children. I had one boy was lost when he was seventeen -- he was killed in

a car accident. But the other members of my family are, they have been gifted with... I have a daughter who is a director of the (inaudible) nation. And I have a son who is a... well, he went to college and now he's a welfare administrator for my band. He was the administrator for my band for a number of

years and he quit and went on to, to welfare program; and he's very successful at that. And other sons who are heavy machinery operators. They operate bulldozers and graders and stuff like that. So they all seem to be gifted with some sort of a gift, and they been using this gift. Now the boys that are heavy machine operators are very, very you know, very well paid. It's a... in order to operate one of those machines you have to, have to have a sort of a brain that is in tune to operating heavy machinery. Just anyone can't get on one of them machines and start to make a career of that. In fact, I've known different people who've tried it -- tried to learn it -- and they had to give it up because it just wasn't their, their field of... what they were going to derive their livelihood from. But they seem to be very well able to do that.

We have a council on my reserve that is... We have an eight man council, eight man we have, as I say man, I should say man and woman, because we have a three women in our council and those five men. And we have, we'll be having more councillors in... next year, next election. When the last few years we've been putting one on to keep up with the hundred for each councillor, you know. We've been increasing rapidly, very often in the last few years from when I started there was only five councillors, and now today there's eight, and next year there will be nine. So our council is growing.

Our economy is very good. We have a piece of land that we have leased and it's, it's leased to tourists. And we have a beach there that is, uh, five miles long and it's about two, two hundred feet wide. And it's pure sand; you just drive on it like a highway, eh. And it's wonderful recreation area. So we lease the land and we also charge a service fee, so it makes us pretty independent. We have, we have our own roads

department, and we have all kind of machinery. We have bulldozers, graders, trucks. The whole complement that you need to, to develop roads with. And we have a police department, a four man police department. Again we could be independent of any funding from any other outside organization, but of course the federal-provincial agreement on leasing states that in order to be a police officer they have to be under the O.P.P. So we are, we are in the federal police agreement program. But we could be, as I've said, be independent. We have done it in the past and we could do it again and pay for our own police department. And we have our own garbage collection system. We collect for the people on the beach and the non-Indian people. We collect for our people. We have a fire department that is... as good or perhaps better than the adjacent white community's. Fire departments. And our personnel, now, we have twenty-three

firemen who are very, very... they take pride in being a fireman. And they attend all the seminars that they can attend, and they meet, you know, a couple of times a month and try and figure out different ways of perfecting the fire departments. And their, their efforts have been, they have been successful. We've been, we've been able to get to fires within five minutes after someone notified that there was a fire. So we're very good in that way and we feel very proud of our, of our fire department, our police department. We're proud of our roads department, and also our police department.

That is... we manage all our own programs. We have two band administrators. We have clerics, of course, we have recording clerics and, and this and that. We have different, different offices there on the reserve. And also we have different programs that, like the alcohol abuse program. We have a health person, an Indian person from the reserve. And we try and do all the things on our reserve that, that normally that the white people think that we can't do. And I don't know where they ever got the idea that, that Indian people couldn't

be trained or couldn't, didn't have the mentality to, to do work; but we find we can do our work better and sometimes a lot better than the white person can do it. And we seem to be getting along. We're prosperous and we're happy, and if they would leave us alone, let us on with our own business, we would be much more happier, because they cause a lot of problem, and Indian Affairs intervene when we are doing something -- that they generally throw a monkey wrench into the thing and it just takes off, and it costs us more in the long run. If they would leave us alone we would do things and get them done, and we wouldn't have no, no squabbles with the, but they seem to be a, an organization that is out not to improve us, but to, to do away with us in fact. So that is the (telephone rings)...

Well, changes I see as are, you know, physical. The old tribal ways have, have gone and been eroded by the white society. And that's... even our former government has been, was eroded by the government. And our religion is, is... it's there in a sense and again, in a sense, it's not. It's, it's... some of the older people retain it in a way. But yet they have been brainwashed and they have, they seem to, you know... In the old Indian religion was the, the communication was with you and God. With you and the Great Spirit. And nowadays there's... the communication is now through you and perhaps the preacher, or, or whoever is conducting the sermon or something. It don't seem to me as much as the old way of, of communicating with God where the Indian used to go by himself somewhere and meditate and be close to the Great spirit. But this is not done anymore. You don't hear tell of people meditating, or spending a time by themselves where they could be with the Great Spirit. This is not done, it's, so that is a way, one way, that, that our, our spiritualism, you know, is, is gone. It's not practiced. But it is, there is a movement to try and restore

it, or try to bring back our, our philosophy of, of religion. And I think this is gaining ground. I, myself, I went out to

the ecumenic, ecumenicical council in, in Alberta. And I was at the W.A.F.N.* meeting last year in Saskatchewan; and they had Indian spiritualists there, and they had an elders' council and it was strictly in the, they had Indian people who were Medicine Men, and they were speaking on religion. About Indian religion, how the Indians had their own type of religion. And the white man had their own and they couldn't see how, why there was any benefit in the Indian following the white man's religion, or the white man following the Indian's religion. So they had a sort of, an open-minded, that they, everyone, should follow their own beliefs, and try to live a better life in the, the... And if they could live a better life then it would be, it would be better for everybody. So this way, as I see, our movement that Indian people will be, in time, will be returning back to the, to their own religion and their own beliefs in the Great Spirit, and how we should conduct ourselves.

I've seen an awful lot of changes, of course. The physical changes, like, of cars, and when I was a boy there's no such thing as a car, very rarely was there. They were just starting to manufacture them in 1915. So autos were relatively a new toy and I remember when I was a kid, maybe six or seven... And if you heard a car coming they started yelling from house to house through the village: (Indian words) -- that means "car coming," eh. And everybody get out to the road and watch this old Model T. And there's all this noise and a guy driving it would make a big show, he would be blowing the horn and everything else. It was a real parade on one car, and now he, and now I... I remember sitting with my grandfather in 1926, sitting outside the house. And, you see, that after supper he'd go... you see he smoked a pipe. And he'd go out and sit out there. This is where he used to teach me the Indian beliefs and told me the Indian stories, and one thing and

*W.A.F.N. - World Assembly of First Nations

another. And this I thought, you know, I used to be anxious at the time, wanted to go and play and he wouldn't let me go, he'd make me listen to these stories. And I thought, well I, they weren't very good stories I thought. And there wasn't, but my young mind wanted, I wanted to go and try and make a car like I seen going by. And I used to get a board and wheels and I used to try and make this. And I would be occupied with them kind of thoughts and when he would be trying to tell me Indian lore, eh. And I thought, "Well, drive me home. Please hurry up and get done talking so I can get out and play." And eventually he would get done and let me go and I'd go and play. And I thought, well, I wasn't getting nothing out of those meetings with him and it was practically nightly we used to do it. He used to do that and so maybe an hour he keep me, teaching me the Indian, Indians, Indian lore and I thought, as I said, I wasn't getting anything out of it at all. But I find that my subconscious mind must have stored it away, because a lot of these teachings came back to me in later years, after I got middle-aged and, and I could start remembering these stories he told me. And they were, they were locked into my mind and yet I didn't know that it was happening, you know, that he was teaching me and it was, it was registering.

He himself had, he went to a, did, he went to get a, to have dreams, eh. He had, they had a place in the Saugeen and somewhere. It was a sacred place and they used to send the young men there to have their dreams. You know, to find their totems and they would... if you could go through it you will eventually get a dream. But sometimes they didn't have dreams and they pretty near died and would have to be brought out. And my grandfather, great-grandfather, he was one of the people that couldn't go through and get a dream, and so he never had a totem. And of course we were, we were of a clan that called

the Chief's clan. There's a bunch of, there's an awful lot of clans, there's Deer clan, the Turtle clan, different clans in the, in the Indian's society; and again that's something that has been eroded. We've lost the, the clanship too, now. And a lot of people don't know what their clan was originally or anything but fortunately I've been able to retain our clan, eh.

So again the, the changes I seen is in our living, our living habits. Our... the food at the time when I was young was mostly wild meat. It's all, well, either homegrown or, or it was wild. We ate an awful lot of wild food for wild meats. We ate even groundhogs and rabbits, squirrels, porcupine, and beaver. We ate all of the wild deer and stuff like that, bear. We ate all that kind of meat. But my people couldn't eat bear meat, because it was part of their religion that they couldn't eat bear meat. So I seen the changes. And in our diet was, our diet was practically nature's way of feeding people, off nature's foods. I seen a change to canned goods, to beef now and pork that you buy in the supermarkets. It's laced with chemicals, preservatives, laced with chemicals to make it look red as... It's just... it's just a chemical compound that you're eating, it's not the meat that we had before, the diet that we had before. It's... I think it has done a lot to us, because I know that the Indian people are the highest percentage of diabetics amongst a population. I think that's around fifty percent of the Indian nation that is diabetic. So that's a very, very high percentage. But what caused it, you know? We never had this in the past, and we were never aware that the, there was diabetes until this last few years. And we find that it's so very high it's, it's way out of proportion to the, any other race of people. But I believe, of course, I've stated this and I said it's our diet that has caused this. But the scientists don't believe that. They don't think... they

think it's something else, it's some deformity amongst the

Indians. They would like to see us, have some reason to say the Indian's not as good as anybody else, eh, that they are inferior. And I'm just on the opposite. I think the Indian is more, more, more capable of doing things than the white man. We have to live with white man. They didn't have to do, that we were, we were forced to. And if they had to live with themselves, they would find that it would be very difficult for them to live -- they are the hardest people in the world to live with, because they're so prejudiced and everything else.

Anyway, that's the change that... even the band level with the, the young people, their life style has changed that the... Now the alcoholism is a problem, drug use is a problem, and the, they don't, they're not as... Well, I know when I was a kid, when I was young you know, we would work at anything. Anything -- a job -- anything that was available we would do it, because we wanted to get money to buy us some of the staples as we needed. But today you can't get these young people to work. They've got to have a great big wage and they got to be... They won't to walk three blocks to a job, they got to have, get a ride for that, or... I know we have projects on the reserve where we hire groups of young people. And, oh, you have to take them there. You got to take them... they won't take, carry a lunch, it's too awkward to carry a lunch. They want to be driven back home for lunch at noon hour. That's the truth, yeah. And so they have no, no, no idea of how to get out and do... they want everything done for them. It's too bad and I, I'm sorry to see it, but it has happened and this, we have to contend with it. Maybe we, ourselves, because we are trying to make a better life for everyone, and have made it worse instead of better at some times, in some cases. I guess it's conceivable that we have done that because we are too zealous in making a better life for our people and we made mistakes. That perhaps to one of the mistakes.

So that leads us up to now and where we're going from here is... What we are trying to do now is we are trying to create a place for our people, for our children and their children. We are trying to get our, our rights entrenched in the Constitution of Canada so that they can never be eroded. And we want a different rights that, that is, any person is entitled to, any human being is entitled to. We're not asking for some outrageous things. We're not, we are only doing things are that essential. That's what we want and that's every decent people needs -- not just the Indian. But many like...

(END OF SIDE A)
(SIDE B)

Stories my granddad used to tell me was always about Nanabush, and what kind of a character he was. That he was a person who did tricks to people. And yet he was a person who did a lot of good for the people. He was a funny spirit that person, that he, he did a lot of things. He made, of course, you know the story of him making the world; and also of the Flood. He, I remember my grandfather telling me about the Flood, how

Nanabush was in a canoe. It had rained and rained and rained and there was no land. It was a big flood and there was, there was no land. And Nanabush had, had a, had a muskrat and a he had a, he had a, a crow, and, uh, he had a beaver. So it rained and rained and rained. And it flooded, flooded -- the world was flooded. So and after a while the rain quit, the sun came out and it was nice and that. So Nanabush sent the beaver down to see how deep the water was, see if the water was going to down, receding or not. He sent him down and he never came up. He came up after a while -- he was dead. He just never, never made it to the bottom. Then he sent the, sent the muskrat down after a while, and a few days later he sent the

muskrat down to see if the water was receding. And the muskrat came up with a bit of mud in his paw. And so with that mud then Nanabush started to make the world. And then he set, let the crow go. See if the crow would find enough land to live on, and the crow never came back, signifying that the land, it was ready for humans to live on again. So that is how Nanabush created the world after the Flood. That was one of his stories that he told me.

And then, of course, there's numerous other stories that are, that was told about Nanabush -- how he always used to -- thought a lot of his grandmother. How much that he used to, that whenever he went anywhere he always took his grandmother with him. Because he always, although she was old and he had to carry her, he made a special basket for carrying her, and he always... no matter where Nanabush went he always had his grandmother. She was the person who gave him intelligence, you know. When he wanted to know something he always went to his grandmother. That is the teaching, yet a part of Indian people today -- that's why we have the elders. They are here to teach the younger people. And this is, was again shown by Nanabush, that showed the people that you have to listen to your elders and have them with you all the time. This was the idea of him carrying his grandmother with him. Then, of course, there is numerous, numerous stories of -- some of them funny, some of them sad -- that he did tell about his travels with his grandmother. And of course I could go on for hours relating the different stories, but that's just some of them -- ones that he's told me.

Alex: How did you get your name?

James: My name, actually, my name is Mazon. M-A-Z-O-N. But when the, when the white man, when the Indian Agents at the time was registering us, they asked my grandfather what his name was and he said, "Mazon." So he says, "I'll call you John

Mason." That's the closest he could, white man could come to say Mazon was Mason, eh. So he called him John Mason. And that was where my father, grandfather got his, where we got the name of Mason; because it's a, again, the white man can't say Indian words. And what may, what Mazon means in the Indian

language is, the burr -- off the burdock. You know you're going, burr sticks on you? That's what they got -- that is Mazon.

Alex: Was there any ceremony or...?

James: No, there's just a... When these, when they assigned them names, when they signed, when they registered the Indian people, the government person came from, wherever they came from at the time. But anyways they came and registered everyone. And they had all people, you know, come and they had... It was compulsory to go, you had to go and give your name and who you were and everything else, your age and then they give you statistics. So when that man came, I know, I know there's one family that she had two sons, and one of them's name was Neewash, and so he came and she was registering these boys. He says, "What's his name?" She says, her name, her husband's name was Josh, not Neewash; so they took the name of Neewash as a surname and he asked "What's the name of this boy?" And she said, "John, John Neewash." And then he asked what was the name of her other son? And she said his name was Shawn. The Irish version of John. So he said, "No, you can't have that. You can't have two sons by the name of John. You'll have to change them." Well, no, she didn't want to change. She wanted them both called John. So then he, the agent, then put the name Newman and John Newman as the other brother. And that family is known by that today, is Newman, you know. And actually they are, you know, a Neewash family. So that's they got their names that we have today. But my, my

great-grandfather, his name was Mindawapp; that means, that's again a white way of saying it. Actually the way to say it is Mindawapper. That means to see beautifully. See something beautifully, like see a beautiful river, see a... Mindawapper... means that I enjoyed looking, eh. That was a beautiful view I looked at or something. That was the translation for that name.

Alex: Why was it compulsory to go register?

James: That was... well, it's compulsory today to register - to be, to be recorded. So that's why it was compulsory then, so that they could record the people. If we didn't have, have that register, registration, we would never know how many people are on the reserve or how many people are members of that reserve. So you have to have statistics, eh.

Alex: Did the, did the Depression affect quite a bit the reservation?

James: We were better off than municipalities around us -- I'm only speaking for my own band -- because we had vast resources there of timber. And during the Depression we cut out all of that timber, eh. It was sold, sold by the foot, and our people logged summer and winter, eh, and through the Depression and into the, right up to the time of the Second World War. They maintain that they were better off, through

that time, through them trying times of the Depression. I, I worked out too, then, and I got married then in the early '30s and had to go out and make a living for my family. I used to go out and work for fifty cents a day. Some... I worked from seven o'clock till six at night, and thus was able to make ends meet, and everything. But there was no welfare for the Indian people. I remember my grandfather -- he went on old age pension that the bands provided for him, and he got fifteen

dollars a year. That was, he was supposed to live on it for a year. And so there was no programs, you see, none of these here programs, this old age, welfare, and all this stuff never came in till the 1960s. It just, very, a, a little while ago that we got these benefits, eh. We never had them before, but yet we were, in the Depression, we were better off than, than the white community. I know the white community adjacent to us, we supported that town through the Depression, and we are still supporting that town because we, our money goes there. We have the stores and everything else there, and this is where we spend our money. Of course, the beverage rooms too are there, and spend some more money there. (laughs)

Alex: Did the economy be as good during the war?

James: Yeah it was. We've been fortunate, as I've said. We've even, maybe, we've been self-sufficient, and up until... And then we started -- after the war we started to rent our land, eh. Now we have about three thousand tenants live on our land. And they pay about oh, there's two programs we have there. One is a, a rental program that we charge them so much a year for a lot along this, this beach, this, along Lake Huron. And then we have another charge for services -- them people. And we service them, we provide policing, fire protection, garbage collection, and road maintenance for them, for them people. And we charge them two hundred dollars a year for that. So actually the band is getting nine hundred dollars, yeah, nine hundred dollars per lot, and there's about three thousand lots. So that's a nice living -- it makes us independent, and we maintain our, our own, our services for ourselves.

We have, on my reserve, we have running water in every home, and we been able to do this by spending our own money for water services. We buy for the Indian village which is adjacent to the town and we buy our water services from them. For outlying

homes we have deep wells dug with reservoirs and supplement each reservoir supplies, each pump rather, supplies about ten homes. So we service all our people, all over, with the running water. And since we've developed a farm we have about two hundred and fifty head of cattle now. And we have... The land on the reserve is not suitable for agriculture, so we had to go off the reserve and buy land off the reserve. But a stipulation in the Indian, in the Indian Act says that any interest that we have in, in surrendered lands is not taxable, so we don't pay tax on it. And we bought, well, about four

hundred and fifty acres, now, off the reserve. And we want to buy more, we want to get about ten thousand acres of, of farm land, land that can be farmed there. So this is our goal, and we figure we're looking at a base herd of about three hundred in about five years, and about a thousand in ten years. So that's a long range program and we are employing our own people. We have a trainer in there who's training our, our people to become farmers -- how to manage these farms, and this is something that we've never done before. We never had any training in agriculture whatsoever. So this is a step ahead for our people in another field where, where we have to compete with the, with the non-Indians to produce a cattle beast just as a, as good as they can, and we hope better. Because we are going to be dealing with thoroughbreds.

Alex: How do you feel about all these changes?

James: I'm happy. You see, I've seen this change in my day since my, my tenureship as chief. It's been, it's... You see, when I became chief and they had this here rental program, and the taxes... that the municipalities adjacent to us could tax any Indian land, or any Crown land. Anyone living on any Indian land or Crown land could be taxed by the nearest municipality. So when I became chief, the rentals were forty dollars a year. And the municipality adjacent to us was taxing us. So what the first thing I did when I became chief was change the rentals from forty dollars to three hundred and fifty dollars. And that caused quite an up... and if... we pretty near had a riot up there. Our tenants, you know, were saying we were raising their rent six hundred per cent and stuff like that. But yet it was only bringing it in line with the times.

So then I went after the municipal, went after the province about the Municipal Act. And in 1972 I was able to wrest from them the power to tax. So they transferred that power to us, to the people, and the Indian people and now we, we been taxing it since that time. This here service charge is a tax, eh. So we've been able to realize that tax that the municipality adjacent to us was getting before. And I fought the city hall, not the city hall but the province over the, to change the Municipal Act. The Indian Act, the Indian Affairs, they never give me any support. They say, "Oh, you can't beat them. You can't do nothing." I asked for their support, "Nope," they said, "you can't do nothing. The law is the law and you can't do nothing, you can't change it. It's just like butting your head against a brick wall." So I said, "That's fine. I got just the head that can butt against a brick wall." So I fought them and I eventually got a commitment from the premier of Ontario at that time to bring it up in, into the legislature. And on May the 7th, 1972, I was at the legislature when they put the bill in that they would not tax Indian lands, eh. They could not tax Indian lands. And on the 15th I heard... they read the bill twice and it passed and became law. So I was instrumental in seeing that. And they wanted to just use it on my

reserve... make a case, case, a study of it on my reserve. But I wouldn't have that, I said, "I don't want it just for my reserve. And the whole province of Ontario, our Indian people here need it for their reserves." So I got that. It did come, it did. The law was changed and Indian Affairs, who didn't

support me, I don't know how they feel, how they felt about it, because they certainly, you know, were saying that I couldn't do it, because it was like, like I said, well, butting my head against a brick wall. But I butted my head against that wall and I broke it, so I'm very happy about that. (laughs)

Alex: The programs you have on the reserve, are there some that are geared to the children and to younger people?

James: Well, yes, we have a recreation, we have a recreation program. And it's supported by, of course, we get so much money from the Department. We get five dollars per capita for, from the Department. And of course we match that, and more, from our own resources. So we have a very good, we have good... We're going to support, we're going to sponsor the southwest region for softball. We have two ball diamonds, they're both lit. They have lights on both of the diamonds and we are very happy with our reserve. We are very proud of it and the things we do. We try to help the children, but it's a, it's an awful job, because, uh, spending of money is so hard you know. If you get one group will say, "Well, we should do this," and another group will say that. And another group will oppose it. Now if, say, we were trying to do something for the children -- if we wanted to build a big recreation centre -- the majority of the people would be opposed to it, eh, because they don't want to see the money being spent. And yet it's a dollar well spent if we spend it on, for the benefit of our children, and keep them off the roads, and keep them occupied, and keep them out of trouble. And I, I think, you know, that's, that's wrong, when we are so concerned about the dollar. I always tell my people that we should not be thinking about the dollars. Just think about what, what good it's going to do. That, what, if we spend anything for the people, or to assist the people in any way, they always look at the cost of

it. But they shouldn't be doing that, because they should be looking at the benefit that the people derive from it.

Alex: Is there any cultural... the language preserved, any of the old ways?

James: No, this is another thing. You see, we're surrounded by white communities, eh. And in order to work we have to work out in the white community. And in order to go to school we have to send... we're integrated, eh. You see we're only between the reserve and the, and the town Southampton. There's only a boundary, there's no land in between, just a boundary from the reserve into the town of Southampton. So then, so we, 1965, they started to talk integration with us, that we should be -- get integrated with the town, and bus our children into town. I opposed that at the time, and a number of us opposed

it. And Indian Affairs wasn't satisfied. At that meeting, he said, "Well, all people in favor of this, raise your hand." And very few raised their hand and those opposed would raise their hand and they did that. And Indian Affairs wasn't satisfied. So they had another meeting, and at this meeting they said, "All in favor stand up and be counted." And so a bunch stood up, very few again, and then they said, "Opposed stand up." And there was way over three-quarters opposed, and so it didn't go. So then they came around and they said to have another meeting. They were determined that they were going to force us into integration. So they came again and this time they had a questionnaire, "Yes or no." So we signed. Well, I signed, "No, I didn't want to be integrated." Put them in a box. They didn't count them there. They took them away and the next day they counted them at the Indian Agent's office -- we had a Indian Agent then at the time -- that's another thing I done away with was the Indian Agency at our reserve. So they took these ballots to the Indian Agency the next day to

be counted and then they notified the press. They didn't come to us right away, they notified the press that the, the Indians had voted for integration. It was ninety percent in favor. Now I know that was wrong because they never, they never... It's either the way they worded that questionnaire, or they juggled the tally of the, how it went, because I'm pretty sure that the Indian people they weren't, they weren't for integration. Anyway we became integrated. And, and we kept a school on the reserve for people who didn't want their children to go to school. And it was so small, like, that they eventually had to close it up. It wasn't feasible to hire a teacher for the amount of pupils going. And so then we had to become fully integrated.

And it's unfortunate that Indians can't integrate, they can't mix with another culture, another race of people. I know they, we are integrated on paper, but of course we were not because I can go to them schools any day and at recess time find all of the Indian children in one group. They don't mix with the non-Indians. And now that we have two schools, now we have a Catholic -- a separate school -- that we send some children to, and of course we have the public school. But you go to either one of them schools at recess time -- see where the Indian people are. They're by themselves, all in a group, they'll play by themselves. They devise their own games and everything else, and they stay by themselves. They're not integrated. Integration is only on paper and it's a, it's bothering their studies, because there is discrimination. The kids, the white kids, are always picking on them, you know. Always yelling at them, and saying they're, saying they're... bad things to them. And it's hard for a kid, an Indian kid, to go to school in that environment. It's hard for them to concentrate and to learn. And if he's only thinking of, "As soon as I'm old, I'm going to get heck out of this rat race and I'm not going to be heckled or made a fool of, or anything. I'll be free, free. And the sooner that happens the better." So you find that the

drop-out is very high on account of this. There's no incentive to stay on and go to school because of this heckling and this, this degrading attitude that the white people have for Indian people. And of course they are taught that at home. And another thing is, the white people discriminate against the Indian because of ignorance. I know people who live adjacent to the reserve, right side by side with Indian people. Yet they're not friends with these, they don't take these Indian people in their home. They do not become friends with them. They don't even know a member. They could live two hundred yards from the reserve and yet know not one person on that reserve, or have a friend there. They always, you know, they... it's bad. When you think of the discrimination that exists and they're trying to say that it doesn't exist. But it does exist and it's too bad, you know, it's too bad we have to suffer. But I suppose maybe if we were the majority maybe we would be discriminating, but I don't know, eh. That's something we're not sure of. I, I doubt it though. I don't think Indians -- it's not their nature to discriminate.

Alex: Has that always been the case in Saugeen?

James: Yes, it's always been the case in Saugeen. We are aware of it now, it's a modern day thing. But I, you know, the law doesn't change. I know, uh, there's a place near my home where the Indians call (Indian word). That means "Indian hanging." There was an Indian hung there for stealing a chicken from a farmer. And the farmer caught up to him and hung him. So this a... it's a... something that they always thought the Indians were thieves, eh. Even the white people today think that the Indians... Now who is the biggest thief? It's the white people that stole everything the Indian had.

I have to laugh at... An old Indian was telling about when the first white man first came here, he said, "Oh, I don't want your land. All," he says, "all I want is your furs. I'll take all your furs you can give, and I'll give you ax, something very valuable for your...". So the Indian trapped out the country and sold the furs. And then the white man came along and he says, "Well, I would like to get your timber. So we don't want your land, we just want your timber." So the Indian again permitted him, permitted the white man to cut the timber. They cut all the timber. Again now, and that's all gone, and he come back to the Indian again and he says, "I don't want your land, I just want the rocks now, I'll dig the rocks out of your land." So the Indian gave him the rocks now... And talking about Elliott Lake, you know, the uranium deposits there, eh. So the white man again took the rocks. And now, he says, now he says he's got, the white man's got everything now, he says, "I don't know what he'll come after next." Well, I guess he's very right because the white man is forever wanting, wanting, wanting, you know. He wants everything that he can get a hold of. Although now our reserve lands are just little wee postage stamp things, and they still want them lands. They're still trying to devise ways and means to take this land from the Indian people.

Alex: Could you maybe describe what your home was like when you were growing up?

James: Well, my home was, was... the culture... economy was different. I, we were trappers, fishermen, and in the summertime when we had we did some agriculture. Of course we were in the corn belt area so corn was one of our main crops, and of course, the Indian corn soup is very famous. It's one of our major, major products. And then after the Depression came, you know, well, that changed the way of life for the Indian people. They had to get away. There was no work on

the... there's... on the... Small farms didn't produce, and of course the land that we were was not suitable for agriculture. And it was soon... all the life went out of it, it just couldn't grow anything, eh. And so they lost what agriculture they did have. And then, of course, the fur trade went under. They couldn't, the furs weren't, they couldn't sell the furs. There was no market for them. So that went under. And they then started to work out and started timbering and stuff like that, and then they completely done away with farming. It was just something that disappeared completely. And went to a, went to working off the reserve and... And I remember our people used to leave, leave the reserve in the spring, come down to around Toronto here to the fruit farms and work all summer there, and go back in the fall. And so this changed our way of life altogether. And we're slowly coming back to agriculture so... But I don't think you'll see any... there will be any... there might be a commercial thing for the band. But it will never be picked up by the band members, because the land is not suitable for agriculture. Unless we can keep buying land off the reserve and get people to farm that way, is to assist band members in buying land off the reserve that is suitable for agriculture.

Alex: Did you live in frame houses?

James: Yes. Yes, we lived in framed houses. In our area of... They, they... in the early, the middle 1800s they started a frame house. They built a water-powered mill and was able to rough, cut rough lumber so they made rough, they made log houses. And then they started to, in the late 1800s, they started to do frame houses. And, and that's the way we've lived for the last one hundred and twenty-five years.

Alex: What kind of duties did you do as a child?

James: Well, I remember we, you know, we... Our heating, way of heating our homes was of wood, and that was one of my jobs when I was a kid, is to, to... had to carry in wood, help cut wood. And I can remember being very small, maybe seven or eight years old, and I had to go out and get a hold of one end of the crosscut saw and pull that back and forth to cut wood for the house, eh. And then, then we had horses, eh. They were timbering and logging so they had a lot of horses. We had three teams of horses and they used to call the driver, a light

little horse that used to pull the cutter or a buggy. And I used to have to look after these horses. I had to feed them, and throw bedding for them, and used to have to clean them. If they became dirty they had different brushes to clean the horses with. They were very proud of their horses and used to keep them, you know, just sparkling clean, and always looked after their harness. And they were very proud of the collars that they had for them, and they were decorated with ribbon and stuff like that. They thought an awful lot of their horses, and they looked after them very well. And of course, as a child, that was my duties -- to keep them, to see that they were fed, and to see that they had the proper bedding and stuff like that.

Alex: Were you... had any formal training?

James: No, I went to school till I was fourteen. And I got to what they call, see, they used to call it Junior fourth, and that would be grade seven today. So when I became chief, knowing that I, I didn't have very good handle of English, so I went and took two years training in English at the age of about forty-five. And so I took two years of English and two years of mathematics and I don't know what grade it is, or what it is, it was just that training for that, I took that for two

years. And so I'm able to able, I'm a little more able to master the English language than I did before. So it was beneficial for me and, and I'm glad that I did take it so that I can communicate a lot better than I could before. But as for formal training that's, that's, that's all the education that I had.

But I was fortunate I was... any job I took I managed to become the head of it. I've went to work for General Motors as a laborer... I became a foreman in there. I quit General Motors and I went to work up at my town, town work, with the town of Southampton. And I worked there for seven years, one of the furniture factories. I became a foreman there. I went into the fishing industry. I started as a deck hand and I wound up as a captain. I went as far as I could in that field and I never tried, I never became a councillor, but I became a chief of my reserve. And of course I'm chairman of the board of directors for the Union, and of course, I'm an elder, an elder, too, so I have two positions there with them. I've been fortunate in getting ahead of the local, of course I then came to the, been able to lead, eh. That seems to be a natural trait of me is to lead, and I've been able to get positions that put me into leadership roles. But formal education I have none.

But that is something I do advocate. I, I would like to see every Indian get a real good education. I would like to see our own, my, my people in my job get education so they can carry them on better. I would like to see my council become people who has an education. And the more our people go to school the more this is going to come about in the future --

that, that in order to get this position of chief or councillor you must be qualified. And I think this is, this is going to be a step in a direction that's going to benefit the people.

Because in the old way, when we didn't have education, that was fortunately they got as far as we did, it's fortunately they got the Indian Act -- the Indians got the government to get an Indian Act for them. It's their fortune, their fortune, in that they were able to make treaties that they are binding yet today. They were, they were very smart in doing that. But I something wonder at their ability of looking not far enough ahead, perhaps, that they should have been looking at more land, keeping more land, retaining more land for the people than what they did. Because I know some reserves are so tiny, maybe a half a mile square, and that's all the land they have and there's room for expansion, they just can't move. And this is a mistake I think they made in not retaining enough land for themselves. And we are trying to change that, of course. We are trying to look at them treaties again and see if they can't be changed, and see if they are, if they were done properly. If they are not done properly then we can maybe renegotiate them and look for more land as, as ours... as we can develop on. And in order to substain us some, but this is something down the road that we'll be looking for.

Alex: Can you explain to me the importance of land?

James: Well, let's... Land is something that the Indian always associated with as being one of the, one of the, the benefits that the Great Spirit gave him. It's a, he gave him this land to look after. But he says, "You don't own it," eh. It belongs to the Great Spirit. And you can never own it, you can't, you can never do, you can't take it away. Really, you can't do anything -- it's here -- it's something that's permanent. And you're only allowed to look after it. But I don't know... the, since the coming of the white man, they take so much importance in owning it, owning it outright, you know. It's, I don't know how we, still, I still can't understand yet, you know, how they can own it, you know. It's just something I can't understand. I suppose, I suppose I'm one of the modern

Indians and yet I still have that feeling that we don't own the land. Neither do we own the air that we breathe. Either do we own the waters. And neither do we own the sun or the moon or the stars -- we don't own none of these things. They're here -- they're gifts from the Great Spirit. But the way the white man has it, he says, "Oh boy." He's got a, he's got to own everthing. He wants to grasp and hold land and say, "This is mine." And we don't feel that way. We still know we need land, and because land is our mother, which we live on, eh. And it's something that we have, we need, and something that we have to have in order to live. That's pretty difficult to try to realize a future if we haven't got a land base big enough to survive on. And I, I personally hope that we, you know, that we can acquire this land -- whether we have to buy it back from

the white man, or how we, how we go about it. But we should be getting more land back for our people.

Alex: Is there any special traditions or ceremonies that go with taking care of the land?

James: Not that I'm aware of. Any special ceremony that they... that has ended landed. That's a feeling that a person has in their heart, eh. It's, uh, it's something I, it's hard for me to explain. It's hard for me to explain the way I feel about the land. I feel as though that, not that I own the land, but I feel that the land owns me -- it's visa versa. I don't feel as though, you know, that I can own the land, but I feel that the land can own me. Because I have to depend on the land. And I think that's one of the reasons why the Indian people referred to the land as mother, because of the, of the support that they had to get from the land.

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