Alphonse Antoine, a former councillor on the Wikwemikong Reserve, has led an interesting and varied life. He fought in the Second World War and in Korea. He has worked in the U.S. and Canada at a number of different jobs: auto factory, railroads, lumber camps, river drives, etc.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Experiences overseas in wartime.
- Bootlegging and other ways of surviving in the thirties.
- Band council - his work on it.
- The Catholic church - demands made on Indian people by the church.
- Changes on the reserve. Dependence on welfare, failure to work together and help one another.
- Work on the river drives and in the lumber camps.

Tony: ...with Alphonse Antoine. Okay, go ahead. You were saying you spent some time in Japan.

Alphonse: Yeah. Got into some kind of an accident there in the base, you know, in the back of the lines. And they sent me over to Japan before the cease fire. I wasn't over there long, about a week and then the cease fire come on. There is nothing
there, like, far as minerals is concerned, in this country; it's all shale. Might be oil somewhere. I don't know if there is or not. As far as minerals, nothing. Nothing but shale. Hills and hills and hills and hills. And they don't plant nothing except rice paddies. Very poor country, that I seen.

Tony: So when you came back from Korea, you'd left Korea, did you come back to Wikki (Wikwemikong) or...?

Alphonse: No, I was living in the Sault (Sault Ste. Marie) then.

Tony: At the Sault (Sault Ste. Marie).

Alphonse: See, I was on my own. I stayed with my aunt up there most of the time. My mother was married already but my mother had died after the Second World War. I more or less, you know, when I wasn't working, I'd stay at my aunt's in the Sault (Sault Ste. Marie).

Tony: Garden River or right in the Sault?

Alphonse: No, right in the Sault. They had a big building there and on Main Street. Oh, we got a newspaper welcome and all that. But generally a soldier, he don't care about all this write-up business. We got all drunked up and pretty near could hardly stand when we got off the train. (chuckles) But anyhow, we got a big write up in the Star and that. Then I went back to civil life after. I got a discharge not long after.

Ernest: Al, do you want to show Tony and Christine your pictures from the celebration in London? The Centennial. Your picture of Prince Philip.

Alphonse: Oh, yeah.

Ernest: Have you got them here?

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: Yeah, show them. He went to the 100 year celebration of the regiment in London. And Prince Philip was there. He was the Honourary Colonel, I guess.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: All the old timers from the RCR from all the wars, First, Second World War were.

Alphonse: I know something more, I forget just what number, anyway not over 39 but, and all them Canadians they had their hands tied behind their back and then they got shot after....

Christine: Where was this?
Alphonse: Normandy there, you know. The invasion in Europe. That's why we got small groups. We got orders from the division commanders, no prisoners. See like that time, we took that one there. Cut that one open, guts spilled out right there, just throw it back. And the others just sprayed them with bullets, killed them right there. I seen this with my own eyes right in front of me. But what you going to do? Any civilian caught with the army, fighting with the army, automatically you can kill. That's what war is all about. After I got in there, after a certain time. That would have shocked me maybe the first two or three days. Or first week even. But after that you had no damn feelings about people or nothing. You just went ahead and done what you had to do. You didn't cry over anybody even if it was your buddy who got killed. Well, he got killed. Kept on going. Enemy or friend or anything. Sort of a different person after. It's like you got no feelings, eh.

Christine: Did that ever bother you afterwards? After you came back?

Alphonse: No, just slowly you kind of forget. I never talk about that. You know, the war. Some guys do but I don't. It's over and I like to forget it, that's all. I seen a lot of things and you would think they shouldn't even have been allowed but....

Ernest: I guess they used a 25 pounder in Korea, you know.


Tony: When you got back to the Sault (Sault Ste. Marie) and living with your aunt, what were you doing then? After you got out of the army?

Alphonse: Oh, I work wherever I could get a job mostly. One winter I worked a construction outfit right across the street from me, Fourth Street Branch, high building. I should have stayed with them. They wanted me to stay with them. I done my work and a lot of things I could do. They found out that I was really handy with everything. I spliced ropes, cables and things like that. I learned that in the engineers. And then I build these here....

Tony: Scaffolds?

Alphonse: Scaffolds, yeah. I build them way up, two, three stories. And that never bothered me. I climbed around up there. And they wanted me to stay with them but I went down to Detroit, worked in the Plymouth plant there, car plant for a while. I quit there, you know. When you're single, you don't care. You can take off when you like, eh. So, and that's what I done. I roamed around quite a bit. The longest I stayed was at Waukegan there because I had a good go there. In the summertime, I used to go and ask the foreman, take off and go someplace else, going to work someplace else for maybe a month.
Just to get away from the Waukegan. "Yeah, sure," he says, "when you want to come back don't go to Chicago. Just come right straight here. I'll put you back on." Yeah. That big Italian, Gabriel, he used to put me back on, and in the summertime I'd go out west someplace.

Tony: Whereabouts out west? You mean on the prairies or...?

Alphonse: Yeah, Iowa and corn state and all different places. Just for a month, you know, just to travel around.

Tony: When were you bootlegging up in Cutler?

Alphonse: During the hard times.

Tony: When was that?

Alphonse: Thirties. About 1936 after my mother moved to the Sault (Sault Ste. Marie) and I couldn't get no jobs, no nothing. So one day, one of the fellows I knew, he says, "Let's bootleg some wine." That time you could get a jug of wine for a dollar and a half, big jug of wine. We put it in them little, not beer bottles but coke bottles. I had a friend of mine, he used to be a guide and they left a lot of bottles there, filled them up. Seventy-five cents for one of them. And you would get a lot of bottles out of one gallon, eh. One day a priest made a bazaar up there in the ball field, summertime. And you know, they sell everything. You know how bazaars, they make a little bit of money. They made somewhere around $94. We made $97.

(Tony chuckles)

Alphonse: So that night I went to a dance, sold a few more and then I, I went to someplace. I don't know where I was that night and I come home in the morning anyway and the woman says to me, she says, "The police were here this morning looking for you." "Yeah?" "Somebody must have squealed on you." So I went out to the bridge in the road there you know. Just lucky, the first car I got was a guy from Quebec going up to the Sault (Sault Ste. Marie) and starting a business and shoe shop. He was a shoe maker. I got talking to him, got him coming across the river too and the American side, you know. Spend a little bit of money, have a good time.

Tony: Well, when you say that you were living in the Sault (Sault Ste. Marie), were you living in the Canadian Sault or Michigan Sault?

Alphonse: Canadian Sault. But I had a lot of relatives on the other side, too. My sister's children and, my sister was living that time. They were over there, you know. So I could live on either side but I went across. The Mounties were after me so I stayed in the States then for quite a while, the rest of the summer.
Tony: How did you get hold of the wine in the first place, because Indians weren't supposed to buy liquor?

Alphonse: Well, there was a fellow I was in the company with. I don't think he was a band member to Cutler or around there but after a while they moved out just south side of the reserve there beside the bridge. Yeah, I don't know what they were but they didn't belong to the band, anyway. And he was able to go in the liquor store, you see. Me and him got figuring this out.

Tony: So you made a living running wine.

Alphonse: Oh, yeah.

Ernest: (Inaudible)

Alphonse: Viso (sp?). Willie Viso, Willie.

Ernest: (Inaudible) were never admitted.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: There were some that still lived there but they were...

Tony: Never got on the band roll.

Ernest: No.

Tony: So you didn't do that for too long, then?

Alphonse: No, not too long. We were at it for about a month. You know, dances - them days they used to make dances in the private homes, no hall or nothing. Private homes. And they say, "Oh, we'll make a dance." Alright, get a big house, as big as they can. The bigger houses, make a dance there.

Tony: This would mainly be on the reserve or...

Alphonse: Oh yeah, yeah.

Tony: So this was the reserve at Cutler.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Tony: This was Spanish.

Alphonse: Cutler.

Ernest: (Inaudible)

Alphonse: Them days there were no halls or nothing. Private houses, you'd make a dance. They had a space there in the middle of the floor and fiddlers and guitar players.

Tony: Step-dance mainly or....?
Alphonse: Oh no, square dance.
Tony: Square dance.
Alphonse: Mostly square dancing.

Ernest: The bootlegger had all the dances back then. He loved, he actually loved square dancing. James (last name - Lavoon? - inaudible).
Alphonse: Oh, yeah.
Ernest: But he also bootlegged.
Tony: Very enterprising.
Ernest: When he died it kind of just went away.
Christine: The square dancing?
Ernest: Yeah, he'd call off, too. Oh, he lived for them. When he died it just went to pieces.

Alphonse: (looking at photograph) See, that don't look like me. That's me right here.
Tony: Yeah, I could recognize you there.
Alphonse: Yeah.
Ernest: (Inaudible)

Alphonse: This fellow here, his name was Chikar (sp?) from Sudbury. Brought his family here and when they did, he kind of embarrassed me - brought his children, eh. He says to them, "Here's the fellow I tell you about." And I don't know what he was telling them. He said I was a hero and I wasn't afraid of nothing, not even the devil or what all, he told them. Those kids look at me with big eyes. Don't know what kind of a guy I was. I don't know what he told them. But I say, like in Korea, the guys were scared of me. I don't know why. You know, I was always on the alert, eh.

Like one night, I walked around. Just get up, I wasn't a corporal or nothing, just wanted to see what these guards are doing. I see one fellow that's sleeping. He was supposed to be a Green Beret guy, sleeping on the post there. I just went up to him and raised my foot and kicked him in the chest and he rolled back. I jumped right on top of him and put him in a rack. I says, "You son of a bitch, (inaudible). What the hell you doing sleeping on duty," I says. "You know that if the enemy sneak up here, you get us all killed. You're supposed to be joining the Green Beret. You're supposed to be a good man. You're no good, sleeping on guard." And I reported him the next day to the officer. I don't know what the hell they done...
with him. I told the officers, "If I catch any more men sleeping on the job, I'll do worse next time," I said. And the guys were scared of me, you know. But I say, I knew my business, eh. Because of my experience in the Second World War. They knew that, too.

The first day we were there, from the very first day, and they were looking in the field glasses and they seen a bunch of tanks way up ahead about three miles. They wanted to find out who the heck was up there. You know, was it the enemy or who. They didn't know who it was. They were just in front of us up alongside the hill. So this officer, real green he was. He says to me, he says, "Let's go up on the point." No, they'd asked him, I guess, to go and find out. So he wanted a volunteer to go with him. Nobody, no volunteers. Everybody was scared, you know, because it was the first time up on the line. Most of these fellows, first time they'd been in a war. So the first thing I hear, "Where's that Antoine?" (chuckles) "Come on Al, you're the veteran," he says. "You know your business." So we went up, and he, this fellow, followed the road. Me and him walking together. I went up a little ways. I says, "What's the matter with you?" I says. "You walk on your side, on the shoulder on your side. If we get fired on, we drop in the ditch. You don't walk here. You're not walking downtown any place. If you're going to take a few shots then both of us will get it. Walk on the shoulder," I said. "If they fire at us, you roll down in the ditch." After a while, we went right straight. Nothing but open country. Right straight over there towards where they were. We were lucky they weren't enemy tanks. It was Americans up in there. He says, "Holy Christ," he says. "What are you doing over here?" I said, "We're going to find out who you are." "Is that the way you do? Just walk right up anyplace? That's the goddamn Canadians for you," he said. "They're not Americans."

Ernest: They had these berets.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: We were all issued berets and then the Americans copied. Copied everything we did.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: And they all wear berets.

Alphonse: But anyway, they were glad it was us. They seen us coming.

Tony: They saw you coming.

Alphonse: Across an open field, yeah. Then I left, told them what our positions were. And of course, "Hey, where are you guys going?" "Come find out who the hell you are." "Jesus
Christ, that's the Canadians for sure." They give us cigarettes and everything, you know. Walked back, went back to our line. Just lucky. If they would have been enemy tanks, we'd have got killed there, right there. They would have fired on us first. That's inexperience for you, you know.

Tony: When did you finally come back to Wikki (Wikwemikong)?

Alphonse: I was still working in Waukegan, because that's when they wrote me the letter. "After another year," they said, "if you don't apply for your grant, overseas grant, well then you lose it."

Tony: So after, you farmed for about ten years and did some other things.

Alphonse: No, I come down here.

Tony: Oh, did you?

Alphonse: Yeah, I started getting in politics. The guys, councillors, started to come after me. So then I get into council.

Christine: Why were they coming after you?

Alphonse: I don't know why. I suppose they figured I knew something. Being around quite a bit and all that, you know.

Tony: They wanted you to run for council?

Alphonse: Yeah. One time what they done, actually done, they tried to put me in as chief. They never even let me know or ask me. And I pretty near beat the old chief, the chief that was in for about 25 years. He beat me by seven votes.

Christine: Who was that?

Alphonse: Johnny, John Walker. That's this chief here now, that's his dad. I didn't even know they had done this, you know, without me knowing it. That's the middle-aged people and older. They knew. I'd been in the council a little bit then, you know, a year or two. Seen what I was doing.

Tony: Did you still have an Indian agent in here then?

Alphonse: Oh, yeah.

Tony: Did you? Couldn't do much without him?

Alphonse: You know, actually, the chief that time, they weren't getting no money. Get about $30 a month. Just a token wage, you know. Council, they didn't get nothing. They didn't even get paid for meetings, eh.

Christine: What kinds of things did the council deal with in those days?
Alphonse: Ah, geez, I don't know. Probably about farming you know, and....

Ernest: Roads.

Alphonse: About the roads and that, appoint the road foreman and....

Ernest: They didn't do too much housing yet then. They were just starting.

Alphonse: Yeah, they were just about starting that time when John was on, before he got kicked out.

Tony: But everything would have to go through the Indian agent? All the beews and...?

Alphonse: Well, they have a meeting here. And then they bring up their motions and all that and the agent puts them through all right.

Tony: What if he didn't?

Alphonse: Nothing done.

Tony: So really, he had a lot of power over you.

Alphonse: Yeah, too much. I mean the chief and council here didn't have much power. But anybody coming in or trying to get in on a reserve, you know, start a job or anything, that's where the members were pretty strong. The chief and council was strong in there. The Indian agent just better keep off the road then. But he had the biggest say, you know. Boy, and that's when the first welfare started to come on here. Eight dollars a month, families with about five and six. Eight dollars. Enough to get salt, tea, lard, them kinds of thin. And you get that once a month, for the whole month. That's gonna do you the whole month. I come up here one time, I was still living in Spragge, just before I move out. And I come here. We couldn't get no welfare, nothing, in a white community them times. You had to come to your own reserves. Now you can get relief anywhere, eh, welfare. So I come down here. Come down on a freight trains and hitchhiking and I got here anyway. And I got two days work on the road, $2 a day. I paid a dollar a day for my board up at my aunt's there, so I made $2. And then I went to see this Lewis, a fellow named Bob Lewis. Oh, he was ever a mean old bugger. And I asked him for relief for my mother up there because I had no way of getting back here to the reserve. I had no house here either or nothing. "Ah heck, you're all right up there." He says, "You're well dressed." I had running shoes on and there was that much snow already, you know. Making fun of me, eh. I caught him by the throat and I just shoved him against the wall. I said, "You son of a bitch, making fun of me." I pretty near choked him. I let him go after a while. I didn't
Tony: He was the Indian agent was he?

Alphonse: Yeah. Oh, was he ever, ever, the worst one I guess, eh. He was really against Indians. Just to hold his job, I guess. But after I got back, I went to the company and told them what was happening to me. That company knew me, eh, the office. They used their letterhead, and they wrote the Indian agent all about me and what happened to me trying to get welfare. Boy, did this old Indian agent ever get a blast down here. He got a letter from the DIA, Department of Indian Affairs, apologized to me and we got $20 a month. My mother alone, just alone. After that, I went up to Blind River. There was an Indian police there. He used to help out Indians quite a bit. Brown, provincial Brown, provincial police. So I asked him, I says, "Write me a letter, get me job down there at Cutler." It was only $10 a month anyway but still, something to eat. And $10 I would have to turn over to my mother, or maybe about $7-8 anyway. Money was money them days. And sure enough, I got a job. So we got $20 and I give her about $8 out of my $10. I smoked a little bit and spend money for that. She was living good up there, you know.

Christine: What year would that have been?


Christine: So you did get some relief that far back? Like, there was some welfare?

Alphonse: Oh, yeah.

Ernest: They called it... what did they call it?

Tony: Was it family assistance or was it rations?

Ernest: You can still get copies of this. My dad had a store and you had a list for one person, two persons, and so much lard and so much. It was laid out just what you were supposed to buy. And it took maybe $4 then, in those days. So most people would just buy flour and lard. The rest, what you couldn't even buy or make yourself like pepper and salt or tobacco, the rest everybody had a garden pretty well, eh. A root house or something. Just the bare, just enough. And sometimes they raised hogs, and everybody put away fish. But this lard and flour was all some people buy out of the whole thing. You could take, you didn't have to go by that scale, you know, so much this and that. You can just get that $4 worth as long as the storekeeper doesn't....

Tony: Put his $4 in there.

Ernest: And that's all we got. After the war I think it was $14. It was still, and that's all. I remember I drove Pete
Debassigae in to go to town once and just a hundred pound bag of flour and a twenty pound pail of lard and that's it. Nothing else.

Alphonse: I think sometimes they used to get a little bit of clothes. Couldn't have no money to have a pair of pants or a jacket.

Ernest: They used to distribute clothing, too, once in a while.

Alphonse: Yeah, I guess so.

Ernest: I remember we were in the school yard one time and the agent drove up. Opened the trunk, called everybody. That day it was World War one army jacket and those caps. Everybody, that whole, there was an army in the yard all running around. My hat coming over my ears like this. But was I proud, I had that uniform.

(All chuckle)

Alphonse: Yeah. I know how the kids felt about it.

Ernest: They made a bunch of clowns out of us. They must have laughed when they get together, these agents.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Christine: So they would give away old clothes or surplus things.

Ernest: Surplus things.

Tony: So I guess back in that time, there was really no employment for Indians?

Alphonse: Oh, nothing. They put you on the road. They had $10 a month when they started off. Finally they come down to $5 a month, well, they'd spend most of that. And then they took another half a dollar off of that for a doctor who we never seen. So there was $4.50 a month. Imagine working for $4.50 a month. That's ten hours a day.

Tony: How many days a week?

Alphonse: Six days.

Tony: Six days a week?

Alphonse: Yeah.

Tony: For $4.50 a month?

Alphonse: $4.50.

Tony: Who actually paid you? When you say they gave you work on the roads, who gave you the work?
Alphonse: The government.

Tony: Provincial or federal?

Alphonse: I don't know, I couldn't remember now.

Ernest: It would be all federal then I think.

Alphonse: Probably, yeah.

Ernest: Even on the island, the whites, they were barely getting by. So on the road work, there was a set scale for taxes. So instead of paying - they had no money either - so they'd work it off. There was a name for it. You worked say three days a year, that paid your taxes. That's how most of the townships operated because they had no money either.

Tony: People never worked for any of the white farmers or anything like that around?

Alphonse: No, I don't think so. They never had nothing anyway. They might have cut a cord of wood or something like that, you know, or some little thing.

Ernest: Like Jim said.

Alphonse: Give you a little bit of food.

Ernest: These fellows would be working on the west end. Cutting pulp wood or store wood for farmers.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Christine: What kind of health care did you get? You said that you never saw a doctor. Was there a hospital or, what kind of health care was there around here?

Alphonse: Oh, that time, oh I don't know. We had to go to Little Current, I guess. No, they had a sort of a clinic down here in Manitowaning.

Christine: For the reserve?

Alphonse: Yeah. And there was a few beds upstairs where they kept, until they got them to Little Current. That's where we used to have to go, to Manitowaning. Doctor came that far. Never came here.

Tony: Did they have a resident doctor there or was it just one that travelled around?

Alphonse: No, he come from - yeah, he had residence there. Yeah, he was a resident.

Ernest: Oh yeah, I remember. I spent a week there. I got hurt playing hockey and I had a charley horse. Two of us spent
almost a week and there was a Dr. Mulvahalic (sp?) there at the
time I was in there, young fellow. I had several doctors.

Christine: Dentist?

Ernest: No. Not that I know of. They just used this - bring
around these people like I mentioned before.

Christine: When you first got on the council, did the priest
still have a lot of influence with the council and the chief?
Still at that time?

Alphonse: No. I don't know. Just before I came I guess the
priest here, you know, their authority more or less was waning
all the time. Especially after the war probably, too.

Christine: Why was that do you think?

Alphonse: I don't know.

Ernest: One of the things, people were out. Not only were
there a lot in the army but a lot of people were working out,
all over, and then they seemed to see things a little more
clearer after they come back. Like these fees, do you know
that it was compulsory to give a cord of wood to the church, eh
Al. Now you had to give wood to the church.

Alphonse: I know, I wasn't here then.

Ernest: I know that's when you were gone. That was required.
You know, almost on pain of... you have to give a cord of wood
without even asking....

Alphonse: Today they had to make that, they don't need wood.
They are probably burning oil or electric heating.

Ernest: Well, that's what they had to do because after all,
nobody would be forced to do it. But if you had to go, people
got scared, you know.

Alphonse: Yeah. Right now, you talk to this generation now
the way they used to talk to people years ago, they tell them
to go to hell and mind your own business. This generation here.

Ernest: This must have happened in Ireland. This Joe Daly, my
bartender used to tell me what happened in Ireland. And him
and some Irishman would be talking and that's what they brought
up one time. They had to give so much to the church and then
the priest would say out in public who was behind.

Tony: Shame them into giving.

Ernest: Yeah, yeah. And he'd still go down on them hard.

Tony: Wouldn't be surprised.

Alphonse: Well, one of these things I thought was really awful
here. One time, it was sometime just before I got up to my farm, when I first come back. They had what they call here, they had a name they called it now. Pledge, yeah, pledge business, you know.

Tony: Was this for the church?

Alphonse: Yeah, for the church. And they got a trained organizer and it was all women. All women was working for this priest. He is over in Sheguiandah now. And what they were supposed to do with this pledge business, every family on the reserve, if you were working at a job, the pledge, whatever you want. Five dollars a week. Five dollars a week for three years. That's every week, fifty two times. And what they done, this organizer or the priest himself, the school teachers had to pay $15 a week. Oh, gee, what in the heck was that. Where's my pen? Just a school teacher, fifteen, fifty-two, twenty-five, seven. Seven hundred and seventy dollars a year. Now, but this thing was supposed to go on for three years, see. Twenty-one, twenty-two. Two thousand, two hundred and ten dollars. That's one person. One person. How many school teachers? If you add this all up and that's....

(break in tape)

Alphonse: I was staying up at my cousin's, you know, the first year I came back. Well, we were just like family anyway. Her family and me, I always stayed with them you know, even after she moved on here, I come home. So she says, "Why don't you stay here," because I had no place to stay. And she says, "You can work around the house and clear land and make a nice part in front and the back." I said, "Okay, good." No matter what, you know, help around. But that's where they used to meet all the time.

Tony: Who was that?

Alphonse: This pledge outfit. And I was working out there when they asked me to come in and have tea with them. We were talking there a little bit there and sitting around. They asked me, they said, "What do you think of this pledge?" I said, "I wish you hadn't asked me that," I says. "But I'm going to tell you what I do think of it," I said. I said, "I've been around all over. In the wars, I've been in the schools in Spanish, and you don't know what I'm going to say to you. Considering all my experience, I'm a man that talks right out. I don't care if you're a priest or bishop or what you are, I'll tell you what I think of it. According to that Bible of history, Christ never made these kind of things to get money from the people. Some of the people here you are asking money, they haven't even got enough money to put shoes on their children's feet and you're still asking money. Another thing, if they get behind someday, you're going to write to them people and be after them for back payments." "Oh no, oh no." "Oh yes," I said. And anyway, after that I got out of it, I don't think much of it. "You got no business, that's not
according to the church as far as I'm concerned. Christ didn't
go around making bingos and pledges," I said, "to make money
when he come here. That wasn't the example he showed when he
goes around according to the history, Bible history." I said,
"What you fellows doing, all you're after is money." I told
them right straight. Oh boy. My cousin there, this Rosemary,
turned all colors, eh.

Ernest:  (Inaudible)

Alphonse:  No, no. She died, that's Scotty's wife.

Ernest:  Oh, yeah.

Alphonse:  Scotty Fisher. She died. Me and her were like
brother and sister and it was her that asked me to stay up at
her place. So I left, I went outside. My cousin would hardly
talk to me for about two weeks after. (chuckles)

Tony:  Which year was that Al?

Alphonse:  That was about 1960.

Tony:  Was it?

Alphonse:  Somewhere around there, yeah.

Tony:  When you say that the teachers were supposed to give
this $15 a week, were they Indians or non-Indians? Indians or
white people?

Alphonse:  That's all I heard was teachers. These people that
were running this pledge, they didn't go and ask the people,
"How much are you willing to give?" or "How much would you
donate for a week?" They just put it down, that's what I
heard.

Tony:  And what became of this money?

Alphonse:  I don't know if they carried it, so I didn't follow
it. But sure enough, a few years after I'd been up on the
farm, I come to a friend's house one day and he showed me, he
says, "Read this letter." I says, "Sure." He got this letter
from the priest. They were trying to collect for this pledge.

Ninety-two dollars, I still remember how much. They showed me.
They were behind in their payments $92 and you promised the
pledge. "When you make a pledge, you made a pledge to God."
To me, what this meant was they were using God toward making
these people pay that little bit of money that they promised.
Now, how bad can they get? Well, look at it good. They're
using God to go and have the people fulfill this pledge.
You're going against your promise. You made a pledge to God
and you pay this. Imagine the priest using God to collect
money. That's what it looked like to me, anyway. Actually,
that's what it - no, I didn't think much of that. And I told
them. I pretty near got kicked out of where I was staying.
(chuckles) But that's the way I was, you know. If I thought anything, if I wanted to say something, I say it. Yeah, those kind of things went on.

Ernest: They don't get you any more of that (inaudible). People are leaving the church and they are hanging on...

Alphonse: Their turn might, they could turn into another religion. Just like that, they got a church down here now in the bay. It's all young people that's in there.

Ernest: And when people dredge up the things that happened in places like Spanish (inaudible). It adds and adds up. That's what we were saying. What happened in Pine Ridge was recorded by the FBI. This is going to come up in history. Not everything, what I'm doing is going to be in the book someday. It can be very, it's just now. But they don't think about - oh, what they were discussing last night was paying some kind of a recreation for the incoming Japanese, the Japanese. That was what was discussed in parliament yesterday.

Alphonse: Oh, yeah.

Ernest: They were asking the opinion of these three people, this morning. Trudeau says they shouldn't pay. But that's never going to go away, never.

Tony: No.

Ernest: Neither with what's happened to us or - what's happened to us will never go away. Like Ahenakew told Trudeau, "We have always been here, we are here now, and we will always be here."

Christine: How long did you stay involved in politics?

Alphonse: Oh, until last year I guess. The last election I told the people, "I don't want to run. I want to take a rest."

Christine: That's quite a long time, eh?

Alphonse: Yeah, about 1960...

Christine: You must've seen quite a few things happen in that time.

Alphonse: Oh, yeah.

Tony: So you've been a band councillor since 1960?

Alphonse: Yeah.

Tony: So you've seen a lot of change.

Alphonse: Oh, yeah.

Tony: What do you think or what are your perceptions of what
the greatest changes have been over that period of time?

Alphonse: Personally I think it was all right in a way. But I didn't think the people here actually had enough experience to govern themselves - to carry on the business - for the simple reason, look at where they landed. They started to make this over here without any approval or anything. You know, they went a little too far.

Tony: Started to make what?

Ernest: This band complex.

Alphonse: This band complex up here. They spent a million on it. They've got $800,000 to finish it yet. They (inaudible) close to $2000. I went against it there for about four meetings. Finally I gave in.

Ernest: That's what my brother....

Alphonse: The majority of the council gave in.

Ernest: He's like you. He's been in council for years....

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Ernest: ...just can't move.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: I guess they realized that, too. This is one way, you can always use money to corrupt you.

Alphonse: Even this pow-wow here, eh. We went to the council, me and this other fellow that was putting that on. He was hired to put it on for the reserve. This Wilfred, Wilfred Sound. He asked me to help him - give him advice sometime, here and there. And for years they've been getting money, grants. And what they done, where they kind of screwed that up is they never made an account for all their expenses and what they done. How they spent the money and all that. Any time you get a grant from the government, that's what you have to do. They want to know what you done, how you spent it and how much for this, for that. Itemize all your expenditures right on there. That's what they want to see. They don't want a grand total. Anybody can say that cost us $5000. Where did you put this $100, another $200, what was that for? That's itemized account, you know, how you spend the money. And if you can do that, next time you ask for it they say "Okay, good. I know what you done, you made good use of your money last time. Here's $5000 more." Then these fellows got, I don't know, about $30,000 and they never accounted for it and that's why last year we couldn't even get one cent from nobody. Grants from no place. See, that's what these other fellows that carried on this powwow done you know, they spoiled it.
And now you ask the guys to work, you know, to help around there and all that. "How much you gonna pay?" That's the first question. If you got no pay, no work. And that was the biggest thing years ago with the Indians telling me and I seen them myself as a young boy. If anybody was in trouble, they'd all jump over there and help the guy, this one guy. If you want to build a house, you would all go over and put up the house in two or three days. All you had to do was try and feed the best you can, you know. If it was haying time, they'd all go over there. After this fellow's was done, they would all go over to the next guy. There was always a bunch that helped. You didn't ask for wages. And that's the thing. All that is changed today. Call it what you may, modern days and whatever.

Ernest: I guess you can say that for the white communities, too.

Alphonse: That's what it is today.

Ernest: Existed, the early settlers.

Alphonse: Yeah, they helped each other. There is no more of that.

Tony: When do you think that started to change?

Alphonse: Ah....

Ernest: Since the grants come in.

Alphonse: Somewhere around the fifties, I guess. 1960, somewhere around there. That was when things started to change then. Like here, as soon as the Indian agent went out, we had our own, we give our own welfare and that. And I think they spoiled a lot of the people, especially the young people. You don't see nobody want to work on the farm, eh, they don't farm. Years ago, we had some of the biggest fall fairs on the island right here. People...

Christine: Oh yeah, you and Ernest were talking about that the other day at the Foundation. Could you tell us a bit about those fairs?

Ernest: That's the biggest time they had on here.

Alphonse: Oh yeah, they had everything. Horses, cattle, pigs, sheep, and everything. Like vegetables, potatoes, corn, cucumbers, carrots. And then they'd cook up. Make nice pies, nice cakes and they bring them over there. Or they make a nice blanket or crochet something, anything, they bring it over there and display, you know. And it used to be, they had an old skating rink down here one time and that was chock full. And then they had outside, you know, cattle. They had a few games, contests. Pulling with horses, and just like a regular fair like in Massey in the summertime.
Christine: Any races? Horse races?

Alphonse: I don't know. I wasn't here that much. That's about as much as I know about that.

Ernest: They claim years and years ago, they say they used to have horse racing out on the hill towards the sun. There used to be like a plain over there and they used to have horses.

Alphonse: Somewhere in the back of my mind it seems to me I used to hear people talk about racing, the old guys, eh. Talk about how they raced their horses with some other neighbor and supposed to have a fast horse and they'd say, "I got one to beat yours." And okay, they'd have a celebration day to put them on. Show who was the fastest horse. Years ago they had ball teams, they would go to Gore Bay and all around. They didn't have no, they just got in whatever rig, automobile they could. Throw money together for gas and away they went.

Christine: Were those fall fairs for the whole island, like the white communities too, or was that just here it would be?

Ernest: No, it was just for Wikki (Wikwemikong).

Alphonse: Yeah.

Christine: Would the other reserves on the island come for that to Wikki (Wikwemikong)?

Alphonse: I guess they could have come if they wanted to.

Christine: But they didn't too much, eh?

Ernest: They didn't compete in any way, they just come to watch.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Christine: So it was just a Wikki (Wikwemikong) thing.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: I used to see pumpkins that were still green and were great big. They were great big pumpkins, the ones they grow there. And this wasn't particularly good land for farming, Wikki (Wikwemikong), eh.

Alphonse: No.

Ernest: Rocky. I don't know what they could have done with good farm land.

Alphonse: But years ago, everybody planted, you know. Food like turnips, potatoes, carrots. You didn't have to run to the stores for everything. Just salt, lard, tea, things like that, you know. And years ago they tell me they didn't even have to
buy flour. With the wheat they grew on the fields here, they took it to Manitowaning flour mill and that's where they grind it. Took it back home and had their own flour.

Ernest: Different kinds of cattle feed, too.

Alphonse: There's a lot of business there, you know, crushing the grain or mixing it or whatever they do. And for people for flour, they didn't buy it. They get their wheat ground up over here and they made their own bread out of it. They didn't buy bread and run over to the store every time they wanted a loaf of bread. They cooked it, they made it. Yeah. I just heard somebody talking the other day; they used to burn coal oil lamps. You buy a gallon of oil and they were good for a whole month. How much did a gallon of coal oil cost you? Maybe not even a dollar them days. And that would last you one month. Today I'm paying $170, $175 every three months. That's what my hydro bill is. And I got no electric heating.

Christine: When would they have got hydro here at Wikki (Wkwemikong)?

Alphonse: Gee, I don't know how many. Quite a ways back, eh.

Ernest: Yeah.

Alphonse: Forties?

Christine: Oh, that long ago, eh?

Ernest: No, let's see.

Alphonse: 1950?

Ernest: Around the fifties I think.

Alphonse: Must be around the fifties.

Ernest: I'm trying to think of the date.

Alphonse: But around there anyway in the fifties, eh.

Tony: Who was responsible for getting rid of the Indian agent?

Alphonse: I don't know.

Ernest: Gus is the only one that ever did that.

Tony: But how long has the Indian agent been gone here?

Ernest: Well, that's when they started looking after their administration, eh. That's when they started to go.

Alphonse: Yeah.
Tony: Oh, so they didn't throw him out here.

Ernest: No, that was just a change in the system.

Tony: Just waited until, just a change in the system.

Christine: When was that, back in the sixties?

Ernest: Yeah, I think so.

Christine: Did you have, like out west, (inaudible).

Alphonse: Yeah, a little after 1960.

Christine: Do you have treaty days where they would get their five dollars or whatever from the government?

Ernest: Yeah, four dollars.

Christine: Do you have that here?

Ernest: Well, we just have a day, they put up a poster. I think ours is on the 16th of May. Usually on...

Alphonse: They still have it every year, in the spring and fall.

Ernest: What they used to do, the agent would come with the Mountie. The Mountie would dress up in his red, this was until a few years ago. Custom you know, brand new dollars. You were paid in cash, four dollars each; but now they quit that. It's just a cheque now, four dollar cheque. They used to have the money. One time I went and got my cheque in the morning. I mean my four dollars in the morning. So Ross Johnson was there and the Mountie was sitting beside him and so I went and got my kids. Terry and them were real small. "Do you want to see a real Mountie?" So I took them back at noon and we were sitting at the back and they were staring. And Ross says, "I thought you come and got your money?" "Yeah, I got it but my kids wanted to see a real Mountie." "Well," the Mountie says, "Come on up." So I took my kids up there and he got up. "Take a good look," he says, his gun. But they used to have, and Joe announced last year. He says, "Well, treaty day, what do you want? Do you want a Mountie dressed up this year or what? You can have it if you want," he says. Nobody said anything. But I guess you could ask if you wanted.

Tony: Do you not have a celebration around here?

Ernest: No, no.

Tony: Like they do out west in a lot of these places.

Ernest: Yeah.

Tony: Yeah, it's really strange.
Christine: Treaty day is a big holiday.

Tony: Big event. They have games and races and you know, have...

Christine: Dances, powwow.

Tony: Dances, powwow and stuff.

Ernest: Each reserve?

Tony: Yeah, it's sort of strange, isn't it?

Ernest: Yeah.

Tony: That they should celebrate getting something like that. But that treaty money, I always wanted to tell you....

Ernest: Odd amounts of flour, sugar, you know. Not the way it comes in packages now. Even two and five. It was an odd amount like three pounds. So the Indian Department had to hire people to bag up these odd amounts.

Tony: This was down at Six Nations?

Ernest: Yeah, Six Nations. And the government says, "Can't we just give you money? This is a lot of bother." "No, the treaty says that."

Tony: So they made them do it.

Ernest: They made them do it. And I heard over in New York State that they were supposed to be given a piece of cloth that they don't manufacture anymore. So they have a little mill set up. And they manufactured this outdated cloth. I don't know what it is. So, it's...

Tony: Who has that - somebody has a blanket or old piece of cloth that's very, very old. Who is that?

Ernest: I think Al told me something about river drives there one time. You were on the river drives, too, eh?

Alphonse: Oh yeah, I used to go every spring. That's something to pass down; they don't have them anymore, you know.

Ernest: They've all disappeared now.

Alphonse: There is logs and pulp wood; they drive it down the river. They float it down.

Christine: Where would they do that?

Alphonse: Oh, all along the north shore here. Clean up to Thunder Bay. You know, they work in the bush sometime and they dump them in the river. And then they throw them in there in
the spring when break up comes and right down to Lake Superior.

Christine: What did you have to do, what did the men have to do?

Alphonse: Just keep, you know, floating this river. If it gets up on the shore, break it up. Or sometimes there is a great big rock in the middle and swing back up. You'd break that up and keep them going. The whole idea was to keep these logs or pulp wood floating down towards the down river, down to the mill.

Tony: So where would they take them out? Out just on the north shore here somewhere?

Alphonse: Yeah, on the shore of Lake Superior or if it's along the north shore, anyplace. They make big booms on there to catch them, you know. They have a tug that take these rafts to wherever they want to take these.

Tony: When were you doing that, you worked on the river drives?

Alphonse: Oh long, that's before I come here. When I was up around the Sault (Sault Ste. Marie).

Christine: Is that pretty dangerous work?

Alphonse: Oh, yeah. Very dangerous. A lot of men get drowned. You know, they break these - one time they used to break all these jams by hand. And later on, they started using dynamite. But that was easy. You going to light up your dynamite and then get a place ready before you do it, light it up and just go and put your dynamite in there. Blow up and away you go. One year I blew up about 10,000 cords around the Mississagi. Hung up in the summertime. Fellows weren't watching, they fell asleep; they were sleeping. And this thing got jammed way up to the back, big rock cut on both sides about 200 feet high. And this backed right up way back to the falls. And finally they found out what's going on and they put the boom across so no more would go down. But all the river was, all the water was caught in the back, see. There was none of the water in front and them darn things wouldn't float. Little by little, we blew that away, blew them apart.

And this Bishop from the Spanish area. A fellow was a foreman. He was from Cutler, an Indian guy. He fired him. And then Bishop says, "Anybody around here got experience in river driving?" I didn't say nothing. I was a new man. After a while I spoke up. I says, "Yeah, I've been on quite a few river drives. I know how to blast." I says, "Let me go and see that. Maybe I can tell you what I can do with that down there." There was no way you could float it other than blow it and scatter it you know, all the way back. He said, "How long would it take you?" I said, "It'll take me a week, six days, anyway." And I done it in five and a half days. The last day
I put two big boxes, two big cases of dynamite, one on the falls and one down in the eddy there, the water. Wanted to let the water go through, eh. Boy, she lifted everything just like thunder going down there. Especially the echo of the thing. There was a tunnel down at the end over there; they were building hydro there, too. But I thought to myself, this water will go down there. It is going to plug that hole and we'll knock this whole thing the hydro is trying build there. If it plugs up, well, I'm hitting the bush, hitting the road. They're not going to see me.

Ernest: Is that the time before they built the dam there? Thessalon?

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: I worked in the Thessalon dam. And they brought miners in and they drilled a bypass through the rock and they blocked off the water. And they were still river driving. There were guys stationed there just to - they were coming in light so they wouldn't jam up inside the tunnel. So we worked inside there with the cement pouring in the forms.

Alphonse: Tell you what they were doing in that place there in Mississagi that time. I was scared. If that tunnel would have ever got plugged up it would just knock that wall right down. 'Cause it wasn't ready yet.

Ernest: Remember there was a Bailey bridge there. We'd go for dinner, get out of there and go for dinner across that Bailey bridge. That's pretty high over the river. And one time when there was nobody there, that thing fell down.

Tony: The whole bridge?

Ernest: Yeah, the whole bridge. (chuckles) My brother - that was after I left - my brother Gus, that was one of his first jobs. He was driving one of the mules. You know, you always backed up to shovel a little bit and there was a lot of back driving. Gus was always a good driver. He put one down the hill. They say he was half asleep. I don't know. But he parked right out on the edge of the hill there and he come in half asleep and he started it and it jumped. And he just barely cleared out, he just barely out. He said, "I fell down the hill a little way but this thing went right down to the bottom." That's where he learned one of his first jobs. Then he finally got in the garage. Couple of those mule drivers killed. But that was quite a job, tunnelling a bypass under the miners.

Alphonse: Well, this was that building over there, that big dam there. After a while I guess they must have plugged up that tunnel.

Ernest: Yes.
Alphonse: Go through the rock. That must have been about twenty feet across.

Ernest: That's one of the first times I saw Caughnawaga. The iron workers, they come in, Reiner construction took a contract on that dam. And they put up a stationary crane where it collapsed. So I guess the hydro got mad, so they got the steel workers at Caughnawaga. All of Caughnawaga, from the foreman to the crane man. And they had a huff, you know, they didn't mix with us then. They were very clannish. They had one big hut, a lot of Mohawks. And they come and put that crane up using steel. There was an old guy just giving signals, just sitting there, an old timer. They come and put that up with no problem and left, Dominion Bridge. Mike Deer, I remember Mike Deer, that was the foreman from Caughnawaga and he had mostly Mohawks, a few English speaking guys and some Frenchmen. And they'd curse away, curse away in three languages.

Alphonse: Yeah, the last river drive I was up for KVP. That's the Espanola Pulp Mill. I was out of work here and finally I thought to myself, if I'm going to get a job I'm going to have to brag a little bit. So I wrote a letter to the office in Espanola. Told them I could do anything. The river drive had started, I know it had started. I would do anything from foreman to what have you, anything. You name it, I said I can do it. Sure enough, the next day I got a letter; I got an answer right away. "You go up with this bunch." Five of us went up and they must have sent that letter in to that foreman up there. He was from, what the hell they call that, down towards North Bay there.

Ernest: Nipissing.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: You know, the assistant district manager for DIA, Fred Macleod. He used to be river drive foreman. Fred Macleod?

Alphonse: Yeah, this fellow's name was Macleod.

Ernest: Fred, maybe.

Alphonse: Fred, yeah, Fred.

Ernest: That's the assistant district manager.

Alphonse: Yeah, that's the fellow that was up there. The first morning come there, we were still shakey from drinking, eh. Anyway he sent me down the road with another guy and a bunch of dynamite to the place where we were getting plugged up. He said, "Blow it out." One day he told me, he says, "I heard you could do anything, foreman, anything at all, you name it?" I says, "Yeah." I says, "I've been on river drives, lots of them and I know what it's all about."

And the one day a bunch of the guys that was ahead of us, they
took a different route, and they got swamped. They lost all their load, supplies. And I followed, like I had the blankets, eh. I was loaded right down to about that far from the top. I followed the river and I cut it right into the jam but I sliced that right off and I went through.

One morning I was up there in the fog, some kind of a fog there. Supposed to have been two guys drowned that day. And Fred was foreman. I was about pretty near the last making my lunch one morning. And there was a fellow there they called

the Cookey. He had to cook, eh. He was a great big fellow, he was a student. He was going in for dentistry, you know. Be a dentist. Quite a big guy, about 300 pounds. When I come there after waiting my turn, he said, "Hurry up, you goddamm Indians," he says. You know, I heard him. I walked right up to him and I put him over. And he started to get up on me. I had him down and he tried to pull me on the side. A big man, strong. I just reached up, back down again. "You're gonna stay there. Right now I'm going put the boots to you," I says. I had the nails in my shoes. Just then Fred come in. What was his name? Fred...?

Tony: Macleod.


Ernest: He was here that time we were on, in (inaudible), remember?

Tony: Yeah.

Ernest: That's Fred.

Alphonse: Was Fred here that time?

Ernest: Yeah, Fred was here. Remember he got a hard time. We asked for Harrigan and he got a blast, both of them. Him and what's his name. They were pretty, they were nice guys but Bob and Joe here really got after them because "When we ask for Harrigan, we want Harrigan. We don't want you guys," he says, "From now on, we get who we ask for." So they got the hell out. I felt sorry for them, you know.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: Nobody would let up.

Alphonse: When I got up there, I told him, I said, "What did you fellows come down here for? I'll send you guys, why don't the big guys come down here?" Then I started to tell them off about the treaties and that. They was never kept, promises. I says, "You fellows, what I'd like you to do," I says. "Go and
tell them big guys what I said. That's all I'm going to ask you to do," I says. "Because you can't do nothing else, anyway." (chuckles)

Ernest: Yeah, they call those their helpers.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: Kitchen helpers, anybody helping the cookey. There is another name they gave those guys, construction. It was funny, bull cook.

Alphonse: Yeah, oh yeah.

Ernest: After the bull cook, cookey. And in construction, those guys come in. They're usually gamblers or bootleggers. That's the kind; they don't want to do any heavy work. They just help in the kitchen, wash dishes. But they hit the bunk houses at night and take your money. Mostly it was the poker players or cookeys, you know. They hit everybody. Or bootleg. All those guys in the canteens bootlegged. We were drinking one time and a Spanish American. I wanted to sleep but there was a party in my room and I finally had to drink; I couldn't sleep. And they kept going to the canteen, getting a bottle. And they dropped - I never saw this before - they dropped the bottle and it broke, but it broke lengthwise just as clean. And part of it was still there so they drank it.

Tony: Drank from the bottle.

Ernest: And there was a fire that night. This is funny. Our boss was an Italian. Kind of an active, really gruff - Columbo. And his brother come over, so they were celebrating. They come in our room and everybody got.... There was a guy by the name of Saunders from Nova Scotia. He'd been in Italy and he'd been trying to get to Novia Scotia but he'd drink his money. So he used to show me his grip, he had cheques. "Ernie, I'm going to get home this time." So he got in that party so he started blowing his money. So I started drinking and I guess I got real drunk up. And everybody passed out and I guess they eventually left. And I puked. I was on the top bunk and I puked up against the wall and here Saunders was asleep against the wall and my puke fell on his face. (chuckles) And it's a wonder we didn't die because he burned the mattress and there was smoke. That woke me up and I got the window open and the door. But we had just moved in those camps. It was bare and there was the huts. And there was nobody registered yet, you know, by name, by band number. I couldn't wake him up so I picked up my packsack and moved to another hut. But everybody that was in there, that was found in there, was fired. (chuckles) And I got out of there.

Alphonse: You know, I was with the Human Rights here for a while. You know, they give us $2000 but it was supposed to be all workshop, you know. This $2000 was to buy coffee and a little bit of this and that. So, there is lots of time they do
that here, like that time there. Well, let's make Antoine chairman. That's what they wanted to do with that money. "Well, what workshop is good?" I said. Telling the people all kinds of things. What they were going to get out of it? They are going to forget it a day or two after you quit talking or even when they left, that's the last of it. I says, "I'm going to get this money to work." So between me and Vaughn George, we started to take cases. Like kids who were not being sent to school, high school. I got it all on my record yet. I had twelve cases and I won every one of them. I went after the police here too and even the, what you call it, the fellow that just left there? Pitfield.

Ernest: Pitfield.

Alphonse: Yeah, I got him down. "This new thing here we got going," I says, "and if you want to work with us and work together, alright. If you want to work against us, that's your business. But," I says, "things are going to change around here." It used to be pretty bad around here, you know. The police, they'd beat up the guys and that. Have to get them in jail and that. But I didn't get much of them. That kind of stopped. One time they kicked a door in over here someplace and they went up to this house, anyway. They tried to scare the people who were making the statement and they phoned down to us right away, me and Vaughn. "The police are here trying to get a statement from us. Come on up, we don't know what to do." We went up there right away, you know. So I told the police, I says, "You fellows got no rights to make them give a statement." I says, "They got a first choice and if they want to talk to a lawyer first without making a statement, that's their privilege," I says. "You know that. Now, we want you to get the hell out of here and leave these people alone." And they did. They had one Indian police with them and one provincial police and they took off. I said, "We'll take this case right to the highest human rights."

Ernest: That's one problem we got to get resolved yet. More control. We have to approve of the police. It's got to go through band council. But beyond that, we got no control. The OPP (Ontario Provincial Police) has absolute control. It's no good.

Alphonse: No.

Ernest: (Inaudible) but they want absolute control. We got to phone Sudbury to get a cop. And they are partly by the federal government and provincial government. But Louis Debsaiga councils councillor says they are paid by both provincial and federal because this is already enclosed in this block transfer of money. This is already budgeted for, it just goes around in this way. So it's actually funded by federal government, both sides of that appropriation for police. So we should have more say.

Tony: That's right.
Ernest: So that's one of the sore points. And the Justice Minister McGuigan in a talk to some Indians in Alberta says we want more input into the justice system. They want Indian J.P.'s, they want maybe tribal judges like they have in the States. Now why won't they give us control of our police. That will always be a sore point because that's one of the first things you're going to have for self-government, so let's have it now.

Alphonse: Yeah, and the provincial will still control the Indian police here.

Ernest: I want to bring it up at UCCM (United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin) and I told Bobby after, "Why didn't you bring it up? We got the same problem. We'll have that maybe create some trouble, you know." He said, "Because I thought maybe you were doing alright." "No, no, we're in the same boat." He is pretty active in there. But that should be brought up in Ontario because it's province wide. It should be brought up at the next, or the chief's meeting.

Alphonse: I come and raised hell here one time. You know, you drink in their house, come over here drunk. And I told him after a while, I said, "I'm going out, you got to leave." "You're going to put me out," he said, "I'm not going out." He pulled up his sleeve and he said, "See that, nobody ever beat me," he said. So I put him out there and he fell against the door, and he was drunk anyway a little bit. I grabbed ahold of him. He could have cut his throat there, you know, there was glass there. Pulled him back and then I got mad after he broke my door, eh. I shoved him outside and said, "Go on, get the hell out of here." Oh, he wanted to fight then. So I went outside and shoved him off the porch and I gave him a few and I put him two days in the hospital. And you know, it ended up I had to pay $250 fine. Yeah, he come and raise hell right in my home, hit me with a poker, too.

Ernest: And you're an old man.

Alphonse: Yeah, and in my own house. $250 I had to pay. He come back after a couple of days, got off. Actually I thought he was coming, wanted to fight it out again. "Well," I said, "you're coming to fight. Okay, but this time you'll go back for a month." "No, no, no," he says, "I come here to apologize."

Ernest: Give me back my $200.

Alphonse: Yeah, oh that came up later on. You know, the way the law goes sometimes, I wonder what the hell it's all about.

Ernest: Yeah, I asked my buddies in the bar in Chicago, if you see something in a city. Say, especially a place like Chicago where there are crooked cops. If you know who they are they'll try and tie you in with them just to prove the case. You know,
they're so rough. All right, so I told my bartender, "Say, Red, if I see somebody bleeding on the street, bleeding to death, should I walk by? Like if I was a humanitarian in a civilized society, I would call the police and a doctor. But in the city of Chicago, if I call the police I'm going to be dragged into court. I'm going to be questioned, I'm going to finally be accused. So what should I do if there is a guy sitting there?" "Well, he should report." "Yeah, you're saying that but would you?" No, he didn't know what to do. See, this is the society, you can't do anything. Like in California they're so suit crazy, "I'll sue you." Doctors go by accidents. They won't even touch an accident victim because of malpractise suits; so they let the guy die on the highway.

Alphonse: And then when you get up in court, nine times out of ten, you're gonna side in with the police anyway.

Christine: Alphonse, can you tell us much about the treaties here? You mentioned that when you got up to that UCCM meeting you gave those guys a blast and told them what the treaty rights were and the promises that had been made and not kept and so on. What are those?

Alphonse: Well, there is all these from way back, the time they started to hand out the reserves to different groups. And then here, I think the priests here, the Jesuits, told the Indians, "Don't give in. Don't give up your land." But the rest, they took it, you know.

Christine: The rest of the people on the island?

Alphonse: Yeah, and they put them in different groups and, clean down to Sheshegwaning. I don't know. I think they called them the Robinson Treaty. That's the ones that get the money you know. Every spring and every fall.

Ernest: You're not treaty.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: You're with the original Wiki (Wikwemikong).

Alphonse: Yeah.

Christine: So the original Wiki (Wikwemikong) people don't get any money?

Alphonse: No.

Tony: They have no treaty rights?

Ernest: No, because they didn't sign the treaty.

Alphonse: No, not the land treaties anyway. But then I think what's happening here as far as being an unceded reserve, the government just ignores that. It's usually like one of the
treaties or one of the reserves, you get the same privileges and grants and what have you. So you're not different from any other reserve.

Ernest: They would be under the 1836 treaty yet. That's still a treaty.

Tony: Yes.

Alphonse: So actually, it comes right down to the law. This is a country of its own and we didn't sign no treaty with the government.

Ernest: I asked a lawyer one time - this Judge Boyd, he became just a young lawyer, so I knew him from a kid. I played ball with him. I asked him, "What's your opinion?" He was just a young lawyer then. "Well, as far as I can gather it's neither Canada or Ontario," he says.

Alphonse: Yeah.

Ernest: That's the only unceded land in North America.

Tony: There is a lot of B.C. And until the James Bay settlement, that had never been ceded and there's a lot of the Northwest Territories.

Ernest: Oh, I didn't know that.

Tony: Sure. That's unceded land.

Christine: So then what do you consider the rights of the people here to be in that case? What rights have they got that are different from the others that signed?

Alphonse: I really couldn't say because, you know, for the simple reason that they have been, as the government says and I know it myself, they've been getting all the privileges the same as the other reserves. Such as housing, hydro is coming in. They got the water system here.

Ernest: And now that they can vote, they got a bigger power block, voting block than any other reserve. And they got to take that into consideration.

Alphonse: You see, all these things they get you know, housing. They are not paying, the people are not paying here. Just mismanagement on the council from the start, it was never carried through. You know, the way it was supposed to be handled. But I think, what the government now considers they've been given all these privileges so why should there be any difference between this reserve and say, the other reserves on the island? That's what their feeling is. But it arises, it comes right down to court, legal court. If you say, really justice was handed out according to legal rights, what you call legal rights, see these treaties you know, the way they were. In the first place, Canada was Indian people. That was their
land. Now if you don't sign any treaties with the governments over the past, regardless if they were from England or where they were from, this is still your land. That's the legal side of it. But you know, I know that treaties and all different agreements and what have you was made overseas like Russia and I seen what them do. Russia, you know, they sign a treaty with another, other nations. That's nothing. If they want to change their mind, this is only a piece of paper. To hell with that, we're going to do what we want. Because they've got the power; they've got the army. And the same thing with us. What the hell could we do if the government was to send an army in here and...?

Ernest: The Canadian government is almost hinting that they won't put up with a threat like they did in 1862. But so was Washington doing that to Canada as far as water goes. They listened and boy, they don't get too uppity. I hear MacEachen went after Schultz yesterday.

Alphonse: See, the Indians from here, right now, we'll say where did these Indians come from on the Manitoulin, that's on the Manitoulin along the Georgian Bay? They actually come from the States. But that time there was a war on in the States and Canada. And the Indians, as far as the Indians were concerned there was no border. You know, and they were over here in Michigan. Some of the Indians there fought for the English, that's Canada. Some of them didn't, they fought for the States. You know, they took sides. After the war, and during the war, when these Indians found out that they were fighting for Canada, they shot them right over here in Michigan. So they had to run away. That's how come they come across the lakes. They come over to Drummond Island and followed the land you know, the islanders, Cockburn Island. Then there was over here. They come around that way and settled all around down in Georgian Bay. Like some people right here in Wikki (Wkwemikong) they have relatives over here in....

(End of Side B)

(End of Interview)
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES
-attitudes toward
DEPRESSION (1930s)

DISCRIMINATION
-against Indians

FOOD
-rations

GAMES
-gambling

GAMES
-horse-races

GOVERNMENT BY INDIANS
-band elections

GOVERNMENT BY INDIANS
-band management

INDIAN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF
-Indian agents

IROQUOIS INDIANS

LAND
-unceded

MISSIONARIES
-influence of

POLICE, PROVINCIAL
-attitudes toward

RESERVES
-unceded

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
-and employment

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE
-electricity

TREATIES
-treaty rights

TREATY, MANITOULIN ISLAND (1862)
-payment of treaty money

INDEX TERM | IH NUMBER | DOC NAME | DISC # | PAGE #
---|---|---|---|---
VALUES
-loss of | IH-OM.01A | A. ANTOINE 2 | 79 | 20, 21
VALUES
-sharing | IH-OM.01A | A. ANTOINE 2 | 79 | 20
WAR OF 1812
-aftermath of | IH-OM.01A | A. ANTOINE 2 | 79 | 37
WAR, KOREAN
-overseas experiences | IH-OM.01A | A. ANTOINE 2 | 79 | 7, 8, 9
WORK
- for wages IH-OM.01A A. ANTOINE 2 79 4,11,13, 26-29
WORK
- shared IH-OM.01A A. ANTOINE 2 79 20
WORK
- welfare IH-OM.01A A. ANTOINE 2 79 11,12,21
WORLD WAR II
- overseas experiences IH-OM.01A A. ANTOINE 2 79 3
WORLD WAR II
- treatment of returning veterans IH-OM.01A A. ANTOINE 2 79 2

PROPER NAME INDEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROPER NAME</th>
<th>IH NUMBER</th>
<th>DOC NAME</th>
<th>DISC #</th>
<th>PAGE #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COCKBURN ISLAND, ONT.</td>
<td>IH-OM.01A</td>
<td>A. ANTOINE 2 79</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRUMMOND ISLAND, MICHIGAN</td>
<td>IH-OM.01A</td>
<td>A. ANTOINE 2 79</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANITOULIN ISLAND, ONT.</td>
<td>IH-OM.01A</td>
<td>A. ANTOINE 2 79</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANITOWANING, ONT.</td>
<td>IH-OM.01A</td>
<td>A. ANTOINE 2 79</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSISSAGI RIVER, ONT.</td>
<td>IH-OM.01A</td>
<td>A. ANTOINE 2 79</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAULT STE. MARIE, ONT.</td>
<td>IH-OM.01A</td>
<td>A. ANTOINE 2 79</td>
<td>2,4,5,26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESSALON, ONT.</td>
<td>IH-OM.01A</td>
<td>A. ANTOINE 2 79</td>
<td>27,28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIKWEMIKONG RESERVE, ONT.</td>
<td>IH-OM.01A</td>
<td>A. ANTOINE 2 79</td>
<td>9-11,21-24,35-37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>