DL: I'm Deborah Locke on January 19, 2012; I'm at Dakota Tipi and I'm interviewing Mr. David Pashe for the oral history project. Could you spell your name for me, please?

DP: P-A-S-H-E.

DL: And David is, of course, regular spelling?

DP: Yes.

DL: When and where were you born?

DP: I was born April 9, 1950 in the old Sioux Village, which is just south of Portage la Prairie. I was born in a log cabin; I wasn’t born in a hospital.

DL: Who are your parents, or were your parents?

DP: My parents were Leonard Pashe and Agnes Pashe, but she was a Chaska from Sioux Valley.

DL: And your brothers and sisters; how many did you have?

DP: I had 7 brothers and 2 sisters.

DL: And who were your grandparents on both sides?
DP: My grandparents were Edward Pashe and Amy Pashe, and on my mother’s side it was Norman Chaska and Carrie Chaska from Sioux Valley.

DL: How long have you lived here, or wherever?

DP: I lived here at Dakota Tipi- actually we lived, when I was born my dad went to work on a farm.

DL: I’m going to try and adjust your microphone better. (pause) I just made an adjustment with the microphone. We were talking about how long you had lived here at Dakota Tipi and you said…

DP: When I was born my dad took us on a farm just south of Dakota Tipi here, and we lived there until I was 12 years old. So we moved back to Dakota Tipi in 1962 and then I was raised here until I left the community in ’75. And then after that I went to get educated in Brandon, Manitoba, took a course there, and then I came back and lived on Dakota Tipi again from ’76 to ’86. And then I went back to Brandon to get more education for a year and then I got hired in Brandon, Manitoba and lived there for 26 years.

DL: Do you have family members at other reserves?

DP: Yes, my mother was from Sioux Valley, so I have family members there, on my mother’s side. And then my dad’s sister is living just down the road here at Dakota Plains; her name is Audrey Pashe.

DL: What’s your earliest memory as a child?

DP: Earliest memory when I was a child was when I was about four years old and we were loaded onto a grain truck, being hauled away to the farm. I remember that still, clear as day, and I still remember that and I often wondered why we moved from the reserve. But we also had a good life on the farm.

DL: What’s the first news story you remember from your childhood? That would be a news event from the world, or perhaps from Canada.

DP: For me, this one thing that impacted really hard on me was that there was a pipeline that ran south of our community and I remember that thing exploding that day and there was fire balls way up in the sky and I thought the world was ending. And another one was when President Kennedy was assassinated.

DL: Did your family have a TV set or a radio?

DP: When we first moved here we didn’t; we had a radio. When we lived on the farm, prior to moving to the reserve there was a Dutch lady there [and] we used to go and watch her TV. But no, we didn’t have a TV set until, oh, probably 1966 or ’67.
DL: Which relative had the most influence on you?

DP: Which relative- well, I guess it would have to be my dad's mother's brother. He was called Uncle Mike, and he lived on the Pipestone Reserve, or Canupawakpa, which it would be called now. And I remember I used to go and spend the summers at his place, and he was just such a great storyteller, and he used to tell us stories about how we came to be in Manitoba, in Canada. And all this time I thought I belonged in Canada, that I was a Canadian- well, I was, but I hadn't realized we had some from somewhere else. But I remember he made quite an impact.

DL: Did you learn of Dakota spirituality as a child, or as an adult?

DP: That is a very good question, because my dad was a medicine man and my mother was a Christian. So when I was brought up, I was brought both ways. My dad always wanted to take me to see people who would do the traditional healing things, and my mother on the other side, wanted to take me to church. As a matter of fact, she said, "One day I would like you to be a preacher, a minister of the bible."

DL: Which church was it?

DP: At that time she was going to the Jehovah Witness, but we had the Presbyterian Church here on the reserve, and I remember that minister used to spend a lot of time with me. I was even sent to Montreal for summer holidays between '75, '76 and '77, and I spent my two months in Montreal in the Montreal Presbyterian College. And so I used to spend my summers there and then I used to come home and I used to spend the rest of the time with my dad. And my grandmother was a great one for teaching me spirituality, and her name was Carrie Bell. And she used to go out into the bush and I used to go with her out into the bush and collect leaves and bark and roots.

DL: Is it possible to be both Christian and Dakota?

DP: Yes, I found over the years, because I married a Christian lady from Sioux Valley, another Native girl, and I found she was a big emphasis on my becoming a Christian. So I spent a lot of time- as a matter of fact, I ran the church in Sioux Valley for many years and I just moved back here in 2007, which was just 4 years ago.

DL: So you learned traditional ways.

DP: Yes.

DL: Do you have a Dakota name?

DP: I was given just a name my grandfather used to give; it wasn’t anything: he used to call me Big Bear, and he said because of the three David Pashes, he said, "I will give you this name."
DL: Did you learn about Dakota history while you were growing up?

DP: Yeah, I learned. But the first 12 years, being out in the country school with mostly white kids, I hadn’t realized I was an Indian until, oh, I think I was about 9 or 10 years old. I got into a fight with another white boy and we duked it out and he called me, “dirty red Indian.” So I ran that whole mile all the way home from the country school to where we lived on the farm and I burst in the door and I asked my mother: am I an Indian?”

And she said, “Son, sit down, I got something to tell you.” So I sat down at the kitchen table and she filled me in that we were Native, aboriginal people, Dakota people. But she didn’t say right then, where we came from.

DL: Did you ever hear of the 1862 U.S.-Dakota War during your growing up years?

DP: Actually, I learned that later in life. During my high school years I learned a little bit about my Dakota people, only because when I was in high school the other Native kids, like in Manitoba, they were Soto people and they used to call me a refugee all the time, and I used to wonder what they meant. And so I started doing a little bit of research, asking my dad and grandfathers, and they told me why we were from in and around the Minnesota area and we moved over here because of that uprising. But my grandfather also said that because we had ties with the Queen Mother, she allowed us to stay here; to come to Canada as long as you had something to tell you that your people were involved in the War of 1812, where our people helped the British Government against the U.S.

DL: What ties did you have with England?

DP: Not too much; just by treaty. Well, not even treaty- no ties, I guess.

DL: You said you had ties with the Queen Mother.

DP: Oh, I was just speaking about the Dakota people.

DL: Oh, the Dakota people who had a relationship with Great Britain.

DP: Yes.

DL: And you’re saying then, that the Dakota people were held in high regard by Great Britain because of that?

DP: Yes, and they allowed our people a place to stay.

DL: Which would have been in Canada.

DP: In Canada, yup.
DL: Did the war have a direct impact on you and your family?

DP: Yes it did, because it was my forefathers that were chased out of Minneapolis and into Canada. And I got an interesting story to go with that: My name, Pashe, was supposed to be a longer name than that. It was supposed to be Pash-ee-ah-paw-naush-ee. It was a long name. And that long name was actually-I remember the story about two Native people that put a man in a corral and stuffed grass in his mouth. Well, that was our great grandfather, Pazed-ya-pa, that did that. And then Pazed-ya-pa and Inkpaduta, they call him, he was another guy that lived in Sioux Valley and the U.S. government had always been after him to capture him and bring him back. I don't know what the story really is, but in my storybooks with my auntie, she says it was an Indian Agent that started the whole war in Minneapolis. That Indian Agent was supposed to give out all this money and cattle and farming implements and everything that was supposed to be for the Dakota Indians, farming, and he didn't do that. Instead he gave all that stuff to his friends and family, and so the Sioux were starving. And they went to the Indian Agent and said, give us something, we need food. And the Indian Agent said: No, you're dogs, so you go out there and you eat grass.

DL: Andrew Merrick [Myrick].

DP: Andrew Myrick, okay. And he was the storekeeper? Okay. I just saw a film of that not too long ago with, oh, what's his name- he was narrating it. (sounds like) The Gambler was narrating it. So Andrew Myrick was the one that they killed and stuffed grass in his mouth and everything.

DL: And you're saying it was one of your family members who did the grass-stuffing.

DP: Yes, it was my great grandfather.

DL: And what was his name, again?

DP: P-a-zed-a Y-a-p-a. When they came into Canada the U.S. government couldn’t pass the border to get at him, so when he died the U.S. government came during the night and paid one of our family members here to show them where his grave was, Pazed yapa, and then they went over there and they dug his grave out in the middle of the night. My grandmother, my aunties told me of that story.

DL: What did they do with him?

DP: They took him back to a museum in New York and he was on display for many years, and then all of a sudden- I'm just in the process of getting his bones repatriated back to Canada, back to our reserve. We believe that the Nation’s hoop is broken; one of the links is broken, and he’s the link. If we could ever find that link and put it back together, maybe our community might come back together some day and be harmoniously living together, eh?
DL: You have a very direct tie to that period. What was his fate, then? If he did this, it seems to me he would have been a very clear enemy of the U.S. government and Cavalry.

DP: Yes.

DL: Were they aggressively trying to find him, but he ran to Canada?

DP: Yeah, he ran to Canada and then he'd go back and sneak in and have a fight with Custer and all of them over there, and then come back over here. But he died, I don't know exactly the date; I'm still researching a lot of that. And when he died he was dug up by the U.S. government and taken back to the U.S.

DL: You mentioned another name, Inkpaduta. Now, who's Inkpaduta, again?

DP: He's one of the other two men that were tied to that tying of that man and putting grass in his mouth.

DL: I know there were efforts to capture Inkpaduta.

DP: Yes, they were after those two for quite a while.

DL: Have you been to Minnesota?

DP: I been there once or twice when I was a Band counselor here from '76 to '86. My chief was my cousin, Dennis, and he was really into a lot of that stuff.

DL: What was it like to cross the border? Did it feel like a foreign country?

DP: Not really. I felt like it was home; especially after knowing about it, eh? Knowing that my grandparents were actually from over there. So it didn't feel foreign at all.

DL: Are you related to any of the chiefs from that period?

DP: I haven't looked at the names yet; I saw the names, but imagine my family would have had some ties to one of those chiefs.

DL: Have you been to Mankato, to the execution site?

DP: I've been to the town of Mankato, but I wasn't shown exactly right where the hanging was.

DL: Did you feel any special emotion when you were there?
DP: I felt anger. Anger that the president would on one day free the slaves and on the next day hang 38 of our chiefs. It just made my blood boil.

DL: Have you ever visited relatives in the United States?

DP: We’ve been trying to track- as a matter of fact, I was going to go last summer, but I didn’t get to go. This summer I might try and go to Sisseton and in and around Mankato there, to go and visit. I know we have relatives there; my great-great grandfather, John Pashe, who was our forefather, his first wife was from Sisseton and had two kids, and so those two kids must have lived and had their own children, so we’ve got to research those out.

DL: What other places did you visit in Minnesota?

DP: The city of Minneapolis; we usually went to meetings and things like that there.

DL: What’s your opinion of the war? The war of 1862.

DP: In my opinion I feel it shouldn’t have happened. The Dakota people got to be very good farmers. And the same thing happened here in Sioux Valley. In the early days the Native people were said to be good farmers; they helped the local farmers, and so when they were given a chance to grow their own crops and all that, they were successful. They were like the Hutterites of the day back then. They had good crops, so they ended up buying good machinery and good implements of that day. And then the Native farmers helped each other and the white farmers around the reserves found that, hey, these Indian farmers are making good money and they’re getting better than us. So they went to their government and told their government: hey, what are you doing? You’re supposed to be helping us- not them. And so the Indian agent was told not to sell any of the crops that the Native people brought for him to sell. So that’s what happened, and I think that’s what happened in Minnesota too- like a lot of those farmers were all given lots and the reserve was huge and they were all given lots and they were supposed to farm them.

DL: What does that have to do with the war?

DP: Well that’s what I think led up to the war. Like the Indian agent stopped giving all the things to the Native farmer and so they couldn’t sell their crops anymore and then the Native farmer was put out. They had no food and they were starving. When I look back at the pictures from that community before the war happened, a lot of the Native people lived very good, they had nice little buildings, log cabins, and there were horses and you could see the farm implements there. They seemed to be living a good life before the war started. And then when the war happened, the Native people starved and then they started raiding the farmers, and that’s what led to the war.

DL: Did you marry? Do you have children?
DP: Yes, I got married in 1973 and I've got four boys.

DL: Any grandchildren?

DP: I've got seven girls. I've had all sons and now I've got all girls; no grandsons yet.

DL: If you had a magic wand, what would you wish for Dakota people today?

DP: For Dakota people today, I've often thought about that: I'd wish them a good education and good prosperity, like not to live in poverty. Like, today our people are just living on the reserve and drawing welfare, and that's it. And there's nothing happening; no jobs or.... At least back in '76 to '86 when my cousin and I were in power, we had a lot of jobs here and there was nobody on welfare- everybody was working.

DL: We're about at the end; is there anything you'd like to add about the war, or about your family history?

DP: Is there anything I'd like to add? I would have loved to have seen a better outcome and to not have seen my people being chased across the country and into a different country.

DL: Thank you for your help.