

Cont'd p. 1 Anishinaabeg Zhimaagnishag: Veterans

people have wondered why they volunteered and some veterans have provided answers. For some that lived through the Great Depression, the war offered a means of employment, others have stated that they wanted to get off the reserve and see the world. However, some scholars offer that the Anishnaabeg have an inherent war like disposition. It is hypothesized that this war like disposition, or warrior ethic, led young men to try to distinguish themselves on the battlefield, just like their ancestors. Whether or not this is true is subject to debate. However, there is no debating the skill, courage and bravery that the Native men brought to the battlefields during World War I and II as evidenced by two highly decorated and distinguished veterans, namely Francis Pegamahgabow (see picture below) and Tommy Prince, both Ojibwe. It has been recorded that Pegamahgabow “loved his country” and that has often served as part of his reason for



Francis Pegamahgabow wearing his medals as well as 1860 Prince of Wales medal with Queen Victoria's face.

“The Anishinaabeg have been allies to the British Crown since 1764 when they accepted Covenant chain Wampum Belt”

signing up. However, I have heard it said that some veterans volunteered because they were allies to the British Crown. There is a difference between being subjects of the Crown, and therefore being ‘subjected’ to the draft, versus being allies to the Crown, and thus voluntarily tak-

ing up arms for the cause.

The Anishinaabeg have been allies to the British Crown since 1764 when they accepted the Great Covenant Chain Wampum Belt at Niagara. This alliance had been honored and re-pledged every year by Great Britain’s annual delivery of ‘Indian Presents’. Delivering presents meant that the alliance was still being honoured. The wampum was referred to as “the body of the Great Father’s [the King] words” and the delivery of presents was the embodying act of that alliance. In fact, at the commencement of the War of 1812, the Anishinaabeg were given another wampum belt. A delegated British officer stated in council to the Anishinaabeg “I have not nor will I lose hold of the Belt [the 1764 Covenant Chain] which has been so long among you – on the contrary, I will now make it stronger by the belt which I now present to you.” The presentation of another belt solidified the alliance between the King of England and the Anishinaabeg.

Eventually in 1854 the colonial government ceased to deliver the Indian Presents. The Anishinaabeg wrote numerous petitions to have the delivery of presents reinstated. At a Grand Council held in Little Current in July 1870 and another Grand Council held at Garden River in 1879, petitions were drawn up by the Grand Council. In each petition the Anishinaabeg Chiefs ask



Prince of Wales medal issued to Anishinaabe Chiefs in 1860. Note Pegamahgabow's picture to the left.