

Name:	Ivan Nitua
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Chief interviewer:	Javith Abavu
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Image:	

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

Time	Transcript
00:06	[INTERVIEWER]: Right we are starting the next interview with Ivan Nitua from Kovelov village, Isurava village. He will be telling the story of his father who also made a contribution during the war as a carrier, so he will be telling us the story. So we would like to hand this time to Ivan. Ivan, please can you lead us the story to your father. Thank you Ivan.
00:35	Thank you Deakin University and the Kokoda Initiative. Thank you for this privilege you have given me, to share my daddy's experience in 1942. Firstly I'd like to highlight bit on what time and who the administrator was here and the war came in Kokoda. Mr Paul, he was a administrator here, in Kokoda here, and the war came. So Australians were not first, we met them at the first here at the time of war, but they were already here. So the program the Australians used to conduct around the villages here is they used to go for personal hygiene patrol, and check on the roads and how people lived so they did the patrol all over the region in Biage area.
01:33	So that's the information about how Australians were first met. And first Australian war met in Gagave, that is a person named Fueva. Fueva met the first Australian there. And that's how we first met the white man. So when us ... Mira and Wisi are on first, and we tasted the salt. So up here we're the first locals to know the first white man. And before that, May 1942, World War 2 came here. We never know what is war all about. It was very new experience to our locals here who live along these areas. So but through our administrators who patrol the villages, through Australian and also British government rule.
02:34	So they give us information on how to escape from Japanese, because once they were in their villages, Japanese would come and attack and they would have been killed. So danger of war has been shown or told stories by the administrators to the locals who stayed in this area in the village, so we know what's happening. So most of our parents they escape in the bushes and they were hiding away and what they did was at night they collected the food supplies along the track here, and also, track ends, they have a scout man. One person have to stay at the end, the other person that people walk by in between, and they collect the food items and they go hide in the bush, and the war still come on.
03:25	So that's how our locals here at Isurava they experience. OK. My daddy was only 19 years old. 19 years old in 1942. And he was a young man, and during that time the war came. And they experience by looking at how the aircraft and soldiers exchange in fights together, along the track here with Japanese. So my daddy went away and stayed away for some time and then he came and joined, he was 19 years, big boy, so he came and joined the Australian forces again.
04:05	They, with the Americans, and they went down to Oro Bay. That time 1942, at Isurava the war came, and it was August 26th and 27th, that's the dates. August 26th, 27th, 28th, within this time, war four days, battle was taking place there. They were still on the way fighting under Ralph Honner's command, with his mates Kenoki [?], they were on the track here fighting.

04:41	My daddy came back and then joined those forces and with one person his name is Kiko, two men from Isurava here, so they went down to Oro Bay and they were helping down at the Marine bay, Oro Bay, they were helping the Australian because they were very young, so they thought that they were not fit to become soldiers, so they have to be helpers, they went down they were helping the Australians. While Japs were throwing bombs at them they used to hide under the tunnel and come out and help, help the Australians. Within that time the war ended, so they had to come back. But Mr Kiko was taken by the Australian or American to their land and he never returned back from that time.
05:28	So he's now maybe in Australia, citizen, or his family's in Australia or America now. So that's how that man is gone, and we know his record but he never come back because my daddy came back and told us this story. OK. In Isuwara area we are not trained as VIPs [?]. Or we become soldiers, no we were carriers only. So Gileni was my daddy, uncle, he was a porter, or he was a carrier, and then Kudi was a cartridge carrier, used to carry the bombs straight from Isurava to Eora Creek and back and forward, Kudi. Gumelo. OK, Inove, he was a wireless man, wireless telephone, so he used to pull the line along the track here. Moni was a carrier. And then about four or five carriers there are the policemen, that time – Sinisi was a policeman. OK. And in Isurava area is Nave, Nave Nahoma but Nave was not involved in, he got a bit scared about war, so he was at Bala that time when the war came.
06:50	OK, so those six people, they involved in assisting the Australians along the track here. And with that record, my daddy help, and then he came home after the war. He was there until 1952; he became a village constable under Australian administration. So he's the last constable. He work under Australian administration for about 25 years. So you imagine from, or you can quote from 1952 to 1975, September 16, so that's where my daddy at. But a story told was my daddy at the time, he told me about the battle of Isurava.
07:46	And at battle of Isurava, he told me that it was a heavy fight there, and that our streams, our crops, our food gardens were destroyed, our huts were burned down, by Japanese. Also, domestic animals were killed by Japanese. And even our people, they were frustrated, they got spears and they missed those Japanese with spears. Because they killed our domestic animals. Pig at that time was very important to the society of PNG. Once you kill a pig, you kill a man. So they had to attack him. So a man there was trying to attack the Japs but Japanese got a gun, so he has to escape before he was shot. Some of there, our area there was destroyed by Japanese. So that's the story.
08:38	A lady there was raped, her name was Moiri. Moiri was raped at that time, she was also - Japanese came and everyone escaped and she was wandering and they caught her by hand and they rape her. So Moiri was raped that time. My small area, my kunai was Bugula [?], that place was location where kunai was, the food supply, the Australians' food supply, So there's a food supply centre in my own land there. My daddy told me a story about what happened in Isurava. Because he was with the Australians during 1942 in Oro Bay, and he came and witnessed very clearly what happened there. So in that area it was about 1500 Australians, first in with 6000, so 6000 that was reportedly advancing, but my daddy told me the story and said that this place was big battle ever taken place.
09:43	Some of our creeks that time, we never drink since until now, because the bones are still remaining there. So he told me a story about 4 days, 4 nights battle there. That's

	<p>why since I was councillor in 1997, October 27, we were elected under reform government. So I become a councillor. And one of my thinking was that, because of tourism on the Kokoda track here, so my daddy told me story that leads me to make a decision that I should work more harder because the track here people can walk, I can see Australians walking, but what happened here, I must help assist and identify that location. So that's how I got in touch with Mr Charlie Lynn, in 1998, April 4, I met him. And I talk to him and he said do you know whereabouts is the Isurava, the original village?</p>
11:01	<p>I told him I know. He was asking for the waterfall, I told him yeah I know, he told me where the front creek, yeah, I know, I told him everything. And he said you going to mobilise the locals here, so I mobilise the locals, I mobilise the group of people, and in 1998, August 26, 27, the mission of war veterans, the last patrol, last parade, I organise that, and they came there with the help of Charlie Lynn. So they came there and they were not sure because that time the vegetation was very high, and all the items, war items were hidden right deep in the ground. So they had to go back. And I got in touch with one of the guys from Victoria, his name is John Rennie, and he was government advisor in Port Moresby, so he helped me with the metal detectors, about 3 metal detectors.</p>
12:03	<p>So we identify that location, so in 1998 all the way to 2000 I was undertaking that job. At the same time, now KI come up, but it was the time the Kokoda Track Authority, we were pushing it because I was councillor. And we were at the side of stories, we have to push the Kokoda Track Authority, I was going with the project, the memorial project. And then it took me up to 2000. Nick Warner from Australia, he came with both of us we signed the agreement. And war veterans, with a person, I forgot the person's name there, but I signed the agreement with 39th, 2nd/14th Battalion Association president was, his name is Stan Bisset, so he came that time. Hopley came up and I signed the agreement with them.</p>
13:06	<p>And they went back, and they came back with to me again, telling me what would you like to put on this area. And I request for a memorial park, because why I'd like the memorial park to come up is that it would be a car park, you know car park? In my imagination, it gives me a clue for the memorial park. So I started telling them, that yeah, we have to put a park here because this spot is a significant spot. Not that story only but up on the higher ground, 10 platoon, I'm the guy who identify, Thomas Harold Bisset, where he was shot in April 27th at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. So he himself, he told me, his daddy, his brother, was shot here. And that location was identified, five locations accommodating 500 Australian soldiers. Front Creek, Back Creek, in each position about 5 locations, headquarters right in the centre, namely E Platoon, C Platoon area, Delta Company, A, B Company, 10 Platoon up on higher ground.</p>
14:14	<p>So they were facing the odds, and that's where the Japanese lost four valuable days. Four valuable days, in August 1942, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th they lost the four valuable days there at Isurava. That memory, my daddy told me the story, so that information was with me, and I ask John Rennie to bring a metal detector, so both of us went around identified those locations. And on behalf of me, he liaised with the war graves. And now the report make clear that it was true that the battle they fought was very significant spot there. So we identify. And not forgetting Kingsbury rock was not yet identified so we went around until we come up to the map, and I led Mr John Rennie, we went up to the rock, it was 6 to 7 feet high, and it was now</p>

	<p>true, that's where Kingsbury was shot, Private Kingsbury was shot, and then he was held by, was carried by his friend Allen Avery, and they went up to the Con's Rock, and that's where they gave an operation.</p>
15:23	<p>So that time both Bisset and Private Kingsbury were operated on up on the Con's Rock – that's why now they call it the Con's Rock, because that is the operating theatre area. OK. So, that area now we sign the agreement so we have to build a memorial park. A person from Sydney, the Rocks, you come to Darling Harbour you look at the Rocks, that's where Michael Pender come from. He's the guy who did the designing, he did the design, and Fenega Leo [?], from Brisbane he was a contractor. And then in 2002, May, June, July we build Isurava memorial park. And then it finishes, and then now the two prime ministers come: John Howard and Michael Somare. They came by Blackhawk. They didn't walk the track, no no, they come by Blackhawk.</p>
16:24	<p>And then it was only a half an hour program, half an hour program there. So then they give me opportunity to say as councillor on behalf of Oro provincial government, on behalf of local level government here, president, on behalf of the people living on track here, so they ask me, they ask me whether I could match those two leaders by giving them a welcome speech. So that was the opportunity given to me. I give a welcome speech to John Howard and Michael Somare that time. It was August 14, that time, 2002, August 14 that memorial park was dedicated. But what comes to my mind, is that I am the son of the fuzzy wuzzy angel, that the road here must need a beautification, so it comes to my mind that the road must become, as a beautification so that memorial park become one of the significant areas, we beautify the track for the tourists to walk, and they'll recall back what happened in, along the track here in the Kokoda campaign, that time in 1942. August 26th, 27th, 28th.</p>
17:36	<p>But the battle of Isurava recorded that it was because of Isurava battle it retreat was at Ioribaiwa. Because Japanese lost their four valuable days there. And then heavy casualties were uncounted. So namely how many battles were taking place there, 39th Battalion, 2nd 14th Battalion, So Isurava memorial park now is very very significant place there. It's very very significant. If you go now and you will witness ... they ask me what type of memorial you want and I request for concrete one, because I think that Front Creek and Back Creek we will collect some of the stones and sand and build that memorial park so that it can become as part and parcel of its own nature.</p>
18:36	<p>So that's how the memorial park is built. So first you see it will be written 'courage', 'endurance', 'mateship' and 'sacrifice'. It's written in those. The memorial park there is evidence of the Kokoda campaign, the memorial park is evidence of that. In that spot, a bit about military history is 39th Battalion withdraw from Menari for relief, 2nd/14th took place, in between 2nd/14th and Colonel Keys got a wound from Japanese attack, because Japanese were breaking through Delta Company and they were trying to capture the headquarter, that's why Colonel Keys got wounded.</p>
19:22	<p>He was wounded by [?] and also teeth [?]. He was bleeding and he hand over his machine gun and Bren gun to Private Kingsbury and gave him the Japanese positions, and that's why he first cut down 30 men on the first move, and then he kept on moving, he shot 300, plus counter-attacking in that time. That's where Japanese lost four valuable days, and they lost heavy casualties in that [?]. So in 2003, Aoki and Kono came from Japanese, they were Japanese secretary, they</p>

	<p>came, they were official government officers, I gave about three bones to them. And on the higher ground, 10th Platoon, I found with the help of a metal detector, we find a human wearing a leather boot sleeping under the ground. We find it and we give to the Australian archaeologists, that's Chris Drift, and Chris Drift gave a test and give a report back that it belong to Japanese, so the bones were returned to Japanese embassy.</p>
20:26	<p>So that's the report, few reports about. We went along some of the spots were combination of burial, and we could experience black ground and all this moistness, we dug a lot of bayonets belonging to Japanese, items and Australian mixed. We find and then now it's kept in the museum down at the battle area, main battle where Isurava memorial park is now. So I'd like to highlight the memorial park, the memorial park, it will bring the memories of the Kokoda campaign here, and it will beautify the track, and that's where the memories of wartime 1942 will never be forgotten, that's the encouragement.</p>
21:18	<p>So that once the new generation walking along the track here, they will go back and they will tell the stories to their friends that they meet or their families. The other thing is that very highly educated people, they are working along the Kokoda track here. You talk about professors, you talk about highly educated guys that go there, so some of them are journalists, so they wrote a book about, so you read a book; Bill James wrote book about the Kokoda track here. It does not exist, but Pat Lynch exists. Pat Lynch, I work with him for whole of Isurava memorial park so he wrote about the book there, so you read a book <i>The Spirit of Kokoda</i>, index, 163 you read my name, Ivan Nitua's written there. So you read how did area was identified and that there's the story.</p>
22:14	<p>But a story is that it brings more tourism, and more capacity of employment opportunities. That is, now you can see our porters are carriers along the track here. They were paid. And also our items will sell along the track here and they were bought by trekkers that walk along the Kokoda track here. And guides, whoever got the mine, he can come with this small tour operator company, they can operate along the track, so that's the opportunity. So some of us who are here in big isolation, we work very hardly through track route, we stay right in the bush, so what happens, we depend on our markets, we depend on what we sold, we depend on who walk along the track and then helps us. So that's how they help us.</p>
23:11	<p>Today you can see because of Isurava memorial park, there's a lot of interest coming in. One, KDP becoming Kokoda Track Authority established by ourselves here, and KDP coming, KTF coming so those assistance is now along the track here. In education-wise, they give us a school, they give us health, all that what's here. Departments come in and they assist them. So KDP, we work with them along the track here, we work very closely with KDP. So those are the stories, and not forgetting our parents who were fuzzy wuzzy angels, theyre very important to us. Because those stories they tell us will never be forgotten. It will be lasting in our heart, in our mind, and we will pass these stories to our new children who exist who are coming up, so they can recall back what really happened along the Kokoda track here.</p>
24:09	<p>Lastly I would mention this, because of the Kokoda track, and also war in Papua New Guinea and Kokoda track here plays an important role along the track here, that's why your land is free, my land is free today. Am I right? I'm right. Your land is free my land is free. Because that opportunity, our comrades they have fallen. They have</p>

	stand, side by side. So Fuzzy wuzzy angels, with the Australian Allied forces, they combine together and lift that banner and they sign [?] for us and we ... we own that freedom today. That opportunity they have will never be remembered, will never be forgotten, what I mean. We will remember that debt forever in our hearts, because that's a big story. And Australian government and Papua New Guinea government today, they are friends because of what happened around the Kokoda track here.
25:06	And also not forgetting Buna, Sanananda, Awala, Wairope, Oivi, Gorari, Kokoda, Deniki, Isurava, Eora Creek, Templeton's Crossing, Myola, Myola to Brigade Hill, to Naoro, and Daro, loribaiwa ended, war ended here because Australians were waiting for Japanese last fire at Brigade Hill, up, Brigade Hill, and Imita Ridge, they call it a step ladder, so that's where Imita Ridge, Australia last and before 40 kilometres, they will go to, they will march into Port Moresby city, and maybe they go overtaking us or no, but military history, is the 2 nd /14 th , 53 rd , floating 2 nd /15 th , 53 rd , 2 nd /16 th was yet floating, and they came and joined their comrades, and then went across to Abore, came by rope, up the back to Eora Creek.
26:06	The important part of the story now is that because of Kingsbury action, make it clear or helps, or give the breathing space to his comrades to withdraw to Alola, and then they have a new gunner's position at Eora Creek while Japanese was trying to circle or overwhelm, they want to overwhelm around because 500 Japanese were cutting across that way and trying to block Eora Creek and up the hill. So 500 Japanese were going up that way, Kingsbury actions gave us space and good opportunity for his comrades to withdraw, that's how they went across and they got a new position there, they were ready to attack the Japanese, and the Japanese they lost the battle there, because 2 nd /14 th went that ways, 53 rd , 2 nd /16 th , they went across to Abora and they block those 500 Japanese and killed them there.
27:07	Colonel Stan Bisset, Thomas Harold Bisset's brother was sitting with Lieutenant [?], maybe I'll visit them this year, December because they want me to go because of that help I did, but, not forgetting my father, Novila Nitua, Novila Sinova, he was a person who give information because he was down there at Oro bay, he was up here at Isuwara, and the battle that took place he witnessed.
27:31	Yeah we people, we live along the track here, we did not help, we did not spoil one of the Australian soldiers, we did not even go and attack them, nothing. But we help. One of the occasions they met eight Australians at Manuma Road, they lead them to Brigade Hill, they know what's there, their friends, they went and lead them to the friends – goodbye. But they met them on the way, they slept with them at the campsite, they give them ripe bananas, they ate because they have no food supplies so they help them, and they take them, and none of them were killed. So that's our spirit towards Australians today, and we are helping, you can see this too, walking along the track. We will never spoil one of them. We have to protect, we have to work together for betterment of Australia and Papua New Guinea. Thank you for listening.
28:19	[INTERVIEWER] Thank you Mr Ivan Nitua, for your wonderful information. It was very great to us to listen I believe. I want to ask you one ... I want to get your memories back to your stories that you told us about your dad and the other mate. I wonder, did you guys do any follow up on that guy? Whereabouts he is now?

28:46	He is, that was in 1982, we were in Six Mile, while those families they were looking for their relatives when they came. They came in Seraga but they were looking for their friends, and then the person that welcomed them did not give a clear information, they went back. But they, Kiko went and his generation now they still ask the Australians, Americans called a man there and went, what time... they don't know now, so they in darkness now.
29:34	By that time, in 1982 the children came but they were looking for their relatives, but then nobody link that information, so they went back again. But my daddy, he gave that information, he said I came back and Kiko, he go away, and so our friend Kiko's gone to another area, another village, other country now, so we'll never see him back. So that's how they... they are now trying to trace but nobody have a trace, because, you know, once you know bit about how to make a white man, and talk and all this language, and then you going to move, but if people they not local tumas, they come. If we would like trace, yeah we know the name, so we collect the letters and we trace, where is this family about, whereabouts is now.
30:16	[INTERVIEWER – JW] Ivan, I'm very pleased to hear directly from your voice, someone who has very very, taken active part with this track, Track Authority. Now you give us a very very important history, now to contact Mr Kiko, how do you use this occasion to or putting something in the air, radio, through the government and through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, our Minister of Foreign Affairs, and through the Australian High Commission to see what can be done to contact and link Mr Kiko... and the family. Can you please indicate now on camera how that will be done?
31:37	Only one way to contact is through Foreign Affairs, also through our embassies, our embassies, representatives there in Australia and America. And then also we go through the relatives of that man, so from there they can, family can follow up. But we put in an open, in the air, I think people can trace, and they will find, because none of the person can be lost in Australia or America we will always find them.
32:21	I believe and trust that through Australian government assistance, and also the relatives here, we pass the messages, they come together, and then we will follow them, follow... the families will follow through governments and the we will find the man, that's Kiko. With only our own knowledge here we can't do that, because through our government only is only one way, you know because we cannot walk over there, we cannot walk over the water, salt water, it's a very long way, because he's taken by boat to another country, and he's dead, he'll never come back, but what happened is that we'll go through the right channel, that's through the government, government of Australia or America.
33:01	[INTERVIEWER – JW] What year did Mr Kiko's children come to Papua New Guinea?
33:14	This was 1982.
	[INTERVIEWER – JW] 1982?
	Yeh, I was grade ten.

33:20	[INTERVIEWER – JW] Were they able to find contacts or follow Oro province, to meet and live with the family here?
	Yeah. And that's why they came back, They went back, and never came back, because they were with the wrong family, so those families they kept them in their houses, they didn't want to spread information, so they kept them there, and they were not sure so they went back.
33:47	[INTERVIEWER – JW] But who kept them? Who kept the family?
	That's in Soraga, Homoka, the land owner there.
	[INTERVIEWER – JW] But the relatives and friends of those people who harboured them, who put up with them, they are still, you know them?
34:04	Yeah I know them.
	[INTERVIEWER – JW] Why can't you go through them?
	One way only is through, we refer back to what date, what time he was taken. And Oro Bay, the date will be recorded, and that will be in the story, it will be in the diary, so once we follow that way through the government, we'll identify them, otherwise we go through war graves or Australia high commission. And then we'll find him that way.
34:32	[INTERVIEWER – BW] Ivan, you give very vivid and strong account of the war. If we can go back to your father, and him telling you the stories, in your mind, your experience of story that reflects the bravery, the courage, the sacrifice that your father gave to the Australians, the friendship that was forged between Papua New Guinea and Australia. We really would like to know a bit more about your father's experience in the war, and if you could tell us one story that sticks out in your mind that reflects all those emotional experiences of your father and his participation in the war.
35:16	OK, I'd like to just story about the nature of my daddy. My daddy, when he was policeman, he was a very very tempered man, so he never get scared of one person, but he goes for, what he want to do, he do it. He was under command he arrested lots of people who misbehaved in my area and put them in jail there for not listening to the government. That's how he was in the war. So he helped the Australians with a good spirit, firm with not getting scared. So in our custom way, if we get scared we'll die. If we don't scared, and we go for what we aim for, we'll receive it, we get. So my daddy was like that. In the time he was at Oro Bay he did not get scared. While Japanese try and bomb they go hide under the tunnels come out and help the Australians while Japanese, because Dean Kienzle was telling them, 'my sons don't worry, we're going to go back home, we just going to finish work and then we'll go back home'.
36:17	And then my daddy was helping Dean Kienzle. His memories down here built here, at Kokoda station here, at the memorial area there, and then because he know my

	<p>daddy very well, so he employed him at the Kokoda plantation there. My daddy, he worked there for eight years when I was small but I was there until independence Mr Dean Kienzle went back. And then we were no job to put in so we had to go home and stay in village here. So that's how my dad is. My daddy's a hunter. He hunts well. He goes and he feed us with his gun, because that time the Australian government gave him a gun, so he goes and he shoots pigs, he shoots wild animals and come feed us. Because he experienced the wartime, and then they give him a gun. He was policeman. So use him that way. And they also, that encouragement gives, he was a very very brave man, my daddy was a very very brave man, so he never get scared. So he helped the Australians there and he came here and he helped the Australians again.</p>
37:22	<p>Because he became a village constable for twenty – 1952 September 16, September 16 1975, how many years that? I don't know. But my daddy work for that long. So he's a very brave man. He's the last man to finish Australian administration time work. Their duties were finished that time. My daddy was, my work is over here, now hand over to Papua New Guinea. Now we are Papua New Guinea. So and that time, 1975, September 16, they give us this paradise, with sort of council badge, we put it on and then we were celebrating down at Kokoda school, up there where we come to the main. So that's how I experienced, and my daddy's a great man, he help, and then I know the stories. That's why that leads me to help the Australian war graves and put up the memorial park. So I'm very thankful to my daddy, and then I grew up as an adult now, and now I'm 53 years old. So that's my stories.</p>
38:30	<p>[INTERVIEWER] Thank you.</p>