

THE IPPERWASH INQUIRY AND THE TRAGIC DEATH OF DUDLEY GEORGE

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Abstract / Résumé

This paper is a discussion of the Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry which was released on May 31, 2007. The mandate of this inquiry was to investigate the event surrounding the death of Dudley George, a member of the Stoney Point First Nation in Ontario, who was shot in 1995 during a protest at Ipperwash Provincial Park. First, an overview is presented which describes the various historical event leading up to the Ipperwash Park protest. Second, several of the more salient recommendations of the Ipperwash Inquiry Report are discussed, especially as these pertain to the proposed establishment of a Treaty Commission and Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs in Ontario. Third, a broader view is taken which views the proposals of the Ipperwash Inquiry in the context of the previous Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples of 1996, especially in terms of RCAP's recommendation to institute an Aboriginal Parliament, or "House of First Peoples."

L'article examine le rapport de la Commission d'enquête sur Ipperwash, qui a été publié le 31 mai 2007. La Commission avait pour mandat de mener une enquête sur les circonstances du décès de Dudley George, un membre de la Première nation de Stoney Point en Ontario, qui a été tué par balle en 1995 pendant une manifestation au Parc provincial Ipperwash. L'article présente d'abord un aperçu des événements historiques qui ont mené à la manifestation. On discute ensuite de plusieurs recommandations importantes du rapport de la Commission d'enquête, en particulier celles qui portent sur l'établissement proposé d'une Commission d'étude des traités et d'un ministère des Affaires autochtones en Ontario. Troisièmement, on adopte un point de vue d'ensemble pour examiner les propositions du rapport à la lumière de la Commission royale sur les Peuples autochtones de 1996, en particulier la recommandation de la Commission royale de mettre sur pied un « Parlement autochtone » ou une « Chambre des Premiers Peuples ».

Introduction

The Ipperwash Inquiry was established by the Government of Ontario on November 12, 2003, under the Public Inquiries Act. Its mandate was to inquire and report on events surrounding the death of Dudley George, who was shot in 1995 during a protest by First Nations people at Ipperwash Provincial Park. The inquiry was also asked to make recommendations that would avoid violence in similar circumstances in the future. The Honorable Sidney B. Linden was appointed Commissioner. The inquiry was separated by the Commissioner into two phases that ran concurrently. The first phase dealt with the events surrounding the death of Dudley George (the evidentiary hearings) and the second phase (the Policy and Research part) was concerned with the issues directed to the avoidance of violence in future Aboriginal protests. The hearings began in Forest, Ontario, in July 2004 and ended in August 2006. The commission delivered its final report, containing the findings and recommendations pertaining to both phases, to Attorney General Michael Bryant and was made public on May 31, 2007.

This paper is a discussion of the implications of the Ipperwash Inquiry for an understanding of contemporary Aboriginal issues in Canada. It considers first the historical facts pertaining to the appropriation of the Stoney Point Reserve, and then describes the confrontation between officers of the Ontario Provincial Police and Aboriginal protesters leading to the death of Dudley George. It also considers the recommendations of the Ipperwash Inquiry in light of these events, and draws some comparisons with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) of a decade earlier. Finally, some observations are made concerning the role of Royal Commissions and other public inquiries in dealing with Aboriginal issues in Canada.

The Appropriation of the Stoney Point Reserve

Dudley George was a thirty-eight year old Aboriginal man from the Stoney Point Reserve near Windsor, Ontario. He was one of a number of Aboriginal people, including men, women and children, who had gathered at the Ipperwash Provincial Park on Labor Day, September 4, 1995 to protest the refusal of the federal government to return the Stoney Point Reserve to its original inhabitants. Under the War Measures Act the federal government had appropriated this reserve to be used as a military training site with the promise that reserve lands would be returned to the original Aboriginal inhabitants after World War II. However, over the ensuing five decades the appropriated reserve lands were not returned to the Stoney Point people. Frustration among the Aboriginal

people grew as their persistent attempts to persuade the Canadian government to return its land were not successful.

Ipperwash Provincial Park was occupied on September 4, 1995, by former residents of the Stoney Point Reserve and other First Nations people to protest the lack of action in returning the reserve to its rightful owners. A confrontation developed two days later between Aboriginal people outside the park and the Ontario Provincial Police at which time Dudley George was shot and killed by a police officer named Ken Deane. In order to understand the reasons behind the Aboriginal peoples' occupation of the Ipperwash Provincial Park it is necessary to discuss some of the details pertaining to the history of land settlement of the Stoney Point Band.

The ancestors of the Stoney Point people, called Anishenabek, lived near the St. Clair River and in the area around Lake Huron during the eighteenth century. The British Crown sought to establish a friendly relationship with the First Nations people in the area and issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763 under King George III, sometimes referred to as the 'Indians Charter of Rights.' This Proclamation acted to situate the British Crown between the Aboriginal inhabitants and the colonists. It stipulated that the land inhabited by Aboriginal peoples had to be voluntarily ceded to the Crown before the non-Aboriginal settlers could occupy it. The Treaty of Niagara followed in 1764 securing an alliance between the British Crown and the more than 1,500 Anishenabek Chiefs and warriors gathered at Niagara Falls.

In 1827 the Anishenabek ceded some 2.1 million acres of land to the British Crown with the signing of the Huron Tract Treaty. The British Indian Department treated the Anishenabek, or Chippewas as they were called by the Europeans, that had signed the Huron Tract Treaty as one large Band who had a shared interest in four reserves, namely, Walpole Island, Sarnia, Kettle Point, and Stoney Point. Between 1860 and the 1880s the various reserves began to separate from one another.

Further land surrenders followed. The Kettle Point Reserve was pressured to surrender its beachfront property in 1912 for recreational development. Similarly, the shoreline at the Stoney Point Reserve was surrendered in 1928 under pressure from the Indian Agent and the Department of Indian Affairs on the rationale that such property had little value because it could not be used for agricultural purposes. In 1936 some of the surrendered land was used to create the Ipperwash Provincial Park. A year later the Chief and Council of the Kettle and Stoney Point Bands indicated that a burial ground was situated on park property and asked that the burial sites be protected. There were apparently never any steps taken by the Ontario Government to protect the burial site. Human re-

mains were discovered at the Ipperwash Park in 1950, and photographed by the park Superintendent's wife.

The Department of National Defense decided during World War II that it should establish an army training facility on the site of the Stoney Point Reserve. Despite protests by the residents of the Kettle and Stoney Point Bands, and a vote of 82 percent against the proposal by eligible voters, 2,240 acres of Stoney Point Reserve property was appropriated on April 14, 1942, under the War Measures Act. Residents of the Stoney Point community were evicted from their land, many houses were bulldozed over, and others were moved. The people were forcibly relocated to the much smaller Kettle Point Reserve, which was not prepared to house its reluctant guests. Furthermore, Aboriginal soldiers returning home after the war were shocked to find that their homes were gone and their community had disappeared.

The land at Kettle Point lacked the resources necessary to sustain the additional families. The residents for both the Kettle and Stoney Point Reserves suffered great emotional and physical hardship as a result of the forced relocation. It was not long before tension was created between members of the two communities, which prior to the relocation had lived a mutually harmonious or compatible relationship.

The Occupation of Camp Ipperwash

After the war, the Stoney Point people expected that the federal government would return their land as promised in the original appropriation order of 1942. Over the next several decades numerous attempts were made by the Aboriginal people to negotiate the return of the Stoney Point Reserve, but the Department of National Defense insisted that it continued to need the camp for military training (of army cadets). Since all attempts to persuade the federal government to return the reserve had failed, the former residents of the Stoney Point Reserve out of a growing sense of frustration decided to occupy the military ranges of Camp Ipperwash in May, 1993.

A group of Stoney Point people entered the military camp through the main gate and set up tents and a trailer. Their intention was to push forward the negotiation process and to reclaim their land. Members of the Stoney Point Band also marched to Ottawa in September, 1993 in protest over the Military's persistence in remaining on the Camp Ipperwash land. First Nations people continued to occupy the military camp into the summer of 1995.

After several altercations between Aboriginal occupiers and the military police, the military eventually left the camp on July 29, 1995. The Department of National Defense made no attempt to re-enter the mili-

tary camp after this date. However a dozen officers of the Ontario Provincial Police's Emergency Response team traveled to the area. Four of the officers were assigned to Ipperwash Park disguised as campers. Apparently the OPP were of the opinion that Aboriginal people planned to assume control of Ipperwash Park, in addition to the military camp.

Entering Ipperwash Provincial Park

On August 28, 1995 a meeting of senior OPP officials took place. Tactics were discussed with regard to the possible occupation by Aboriginal people of the Ipperwash camp ground. On September 4, 1995 First Nations people entered Ipperwash Provincial Park. The reason for the occupation stemmed from the belief that the provincial parklands were part of the Stoney Point traditional territory. Stoney Point people believed that they had a right to this land because their interests had not been adequately represented by the Indian Agent when the land for the park had been purchased from the Band in the 1920s. Another reason for the occupation of the park was to protect the sacred burial sites that had been neglected since the creation of Ipperwash Park.

On September 4, 1995, several altercations developed between the OPP and the Aboriginal protesters. A car door made contact with a police cruiser causing minor damage. Flares were thrown in the direction of the officers by an Aboriginal person. The rear window of a police cruiser was smashed with a stick. Tension escalated throughout the day. Around 11 a.m. the Ministry of Natural Resources and the OPP attempted to serve legal papers on the occupiers who refused to accept the documents.

Throughout the day of September 5, 1995, First Nations people arrived at Ipperwash Park to support the occupation. They included Stoney Point people who had been living at the military camp, residents of the Kettle Point First Nation, as well as people from other reserves and communities such as Oneida and Walpole Island. The OPP were attempting to arrange for the transport of armored vehicles to the area for defensive purposes. The occupiers were being monitored from the air by helicopter, from Lake Huron by boat, and in the dark with night vision goggles. There was a noticeable increase in the number of OPP cruisers and general police surveillance.

The next day (September 6, 1995) OPP officers marched into Ipperwash Park with shields and guns. Evidence indicated that the Aboriginal park occupiers fluctuated from ten to forty people, including women and children. From all reports at the time the protest was a peaceful, non-violent one with no visible weapons. There did not appear to be any immediate risk to public safety. Government representatives later

claimed that they had little specific information on the grievances of the Aboriginal occupiers other than the claim that a sacred burial ground existed in Ipperwash Park.

On the morning of September 6, the day Dudley George was shot, Attorney General Harnick told Deputy Attorney General Taman that Premier Mike Harris wanted an injunction immediately and the Aboriginal occupiers of the park out within twenty-four hours. This decision was made during a twenty-minute meeting at the Ontario Legislative Building in a 'dining room' next to the Premier's Office. This meeting was attended by the Premier, various Ministers, and their support staff. Attorney General Harnick testified that while he was taking his seat for the meeting he heard Premier Harris say in a loud voice: "I want the fucking Indians out of the park." Mr. Harnick testified at the Ipperwash Inquiry that he was "stunned" by the Premier's "insensitive and inappropriate" remark. Premier Harris denied that he uttered the words reported by Mr. Harnick and that he considered such words a racist statement. Mr. Harris did however acknowledge that he could think of no reason why Mr. Harnick would fabricate or concoct such a statement.

It was also certainly not in Mr. Harnick's best interest to provide false information to the Ipperwash Inquiry or to testify that he had heard such a statement by the Premier if it did not occur. More than ten years had elapsed since the former Premier was reported by Mr. Harnick to have made this derogatory statement. Furthermore, there was no evidence that the Premier's statement had any influence on the OPP operation on the night of Dudley George's death. However, as Commissioner Linden has indicated in his written summary of this situation, "In my view, Premier Harris's comments in the dining room, and generally the speed at which he wished to end the occupation of Ipperwash park, created an atmosphere that unduly narrowed the scope of the government's response to the Aboriginal occupation. The Premier's determination to seek a quick resolution closed off many options" (2007: 49).

From testimony delivered at the Ipperwash Inquiry by the Aboriginal occupiers of the park, the evening of September 6, 1995, was a terrifying and unsettling experience. At approximately 9:00 p.m. the OPP closed the roads leading to Ipperwash Park. Thirty-two OPP officers from the Crowd Management Team (CMU), an additional eight officers assigned as an arrest team, two canine teams and two prisoner vans, assembled at the park boundary. The CMU commander and his force marched in darkness to the park. Members of the CMU were dressed in 'hard Tac' equipment shin guards, thigh guards, forearm guards, helmets and visors, bulletproof vests, batons and guns. The arrest team wore the same

equipment as the CMU but did not carry shields. In turn, the Aboriginal occupiers, numbering about twenty to twenty-five people after the departure of women and children, collected rocks, stones, sticks and a few carried baseball bats. OPP officers testified that they believed, mistakenly as it turned out, that the Aboriginal protesters were armed with a “number of assault weapons... AK-47s, hunting rifles, and Molotov cocktails” (2007: 65).

At about 10:27 p.m. the forty officer unit, canine teams and prisoner vans marched toward the park in a tight ‘box formation.’ The Aboriginal people had no protective clothing, no body armor or head protection. They had stockpiled some rocks and sticks near the park fence. By accounts given at the Inquiry, the Aboriginal people “felt greatly outnumbered. As the police officers marched toward Ipperwash park, the First Nations people were anxious and terrified” (2007: 66).

The first casualty was a protester’s dog who was kicked by an officer as it was barking, sending the dog spinning in the dirt. The Aboriginal occupiers then began yelling that the officers were standing on sacred ground; grandfathers were buried on this property. One of the CMU officers then yelled “punchout” a tactic used to intimidate and frighten the protesters and the police, beating on their shields, quickly advanced towards the Aboriginal occupiers. An Aboriginal man struck an officer on the edge of his helmet with a steel pole breaking the Plexiglass shield in half. The officer responded by striking the man’s shoulder area with his baton, sending the man reeling to the ground. A number of other confrontations broke out in the virtual darkness.

The Shooting of Dudley George

Acting Sergeant Ken Deane claimed that he saw a muzzle flash originate from the interior of a bus, driven by a sixteen-year old boy. Suddenly a car swerved towards about ten CMU officers. Several officers opened fire on the approaching vehicle, firing several rounds into the driver’s compartment. Bullets also hit the bus, shattering a window. Acting Sergeant Ken Deane also claimed to have seen two muzzle flashes coming from the bush area. He then saw a man who he thought was responsible for the muzzle flashes walk towards him onto the roadway. Deane also claimed that the man, Dudley George, shouldered a rifle in a half-crouched position pointed at several OPP officers. Ken Deane then fired three shots at Dudley George in rapid succession. Dudley George, who dropped to the ground immediately, was then carried away by Aboriginal people who had come to his rescue.

Ken Deane claimed that Dudley George’s gun fell to the ground after he shot him, however, Deane did not attempt to retrieve the rifle but left

it on the road. Other officers could not corroborate Deane's version of the events as they did not see a firearm carried by Dudley George. At no time during the confrontation, in fact, were any Aboriginal occupiers reported by the police to have been seen carrying a firearm.

It was a puzzling matter to the Ipperwash Inquiry that Acting Sergeant Deane did not attempt to retrieve the rifle allegedly in Dudley George's possession, especially since there was a danger that other occupiers could have used this gun to threaten other OPP officers. One would also have assumed that such a rifle would have been an important piece of evidence that weapons were in the possession of Aboriginal occupiers of the park. Officer Deane also did not report over the police communication system that an Aboriginal occupier had tried to shoot at the police officers; he simply reported that an individual was down and an ambulance was needed. The Inquiry did not accept Acting Sergeant Deane's version of the events, concluding unequivocally that "Dudley George did not have a rifle or firearm in the confrontation with the police on the night of September 6, 1995" (2007: 72).

Ken Deane died in a car accident shortly before he was scheduled to testify at the Ipperwash Inquiry. In 1997 he was convicted of criminal negligence causing the death of Dudley George. The Inquiry concluded that besides Acting Sergeant Deane and Inspector Carson (the OPP commander) "the OPP, as an institution, also needs to be accountable and take some responsibility for the tragedy that resulted on September 6, 1995" (2007: 77).

Recommendations of the Ipperwash Inquiry

The recommendations emanating from the Ipperwash Inquiry fall into three broad areas. The first area, termed "Investigation and Findings" deals with matters principally pertaining to police planning for responding to Aboriginal protests and occupations. The second area, termed "Policy Analysis," is concerned with suggestions relating to settling land and treaty claims in Ontario. The third area delves into the nature of public inquiries and will not be discussed here. Altogether the Inquiry makes one hundred recommendations, the majority (seventy-eight recommendations) fall into the second "Policy and Analysis" area.

Of the nineteen recommendations in the "Investigation and Findings" section, two of these in particular appear most significant:

5. The Ontario Secretariate for Aboriginal Affairs, in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, should compile a list of available negotiators and facilitators who could assist the government to quickly and peacefully resolve Aboriginal issues that emerge. (2007: 96)

As the Inquiry report indicates, “Failed intelligence and miscommunication led to tragic consequences...the OPP’s lack of communication in this operation was a serious failing” (2007: 61). The police were largely unaware of the underlying reasons for the occupation of Ipperwash Park by First Nations protesters. The OPP were apparently not aware that the occupiers were in the park to protect a sacred burial site and that this was a deeply felt emotional and spiritual issue for the Aboriginal occupiers. The police were only aware that Aboriginal protesters were in the park illegally and that the Ontario Premier and his Cabinet wanted the occupiers removed in an expedient manner. A facilitator or go-between could have communicated to the OPP and governmental representatives the reasons for the occupation of Ipperwash Park which, in turn, could have set in motion a series of actions which might possibly have diffused the issue of sacred burial grounds and thus avoided such “tragic consequences.”

19. The federal government should immediately return the former army camp to the peoples of the Kettle and Stoney Point First Nation and guarantee that it will assume complete responsibility for an appropriate environmental clean up of the site. (2007: 97)

If the appropriated lands belonging to the Kettle and Stoney Point First Nation had been promptly returned, as initially promised, to the original owners of the Ipperwash military camp shortly after the war it would have saved decades of grief, frustration and wasted mental anguish. Instead the federal government, in particular the Department of National Defense, went back on their promise to return the disputed lands, resulting in the eventual death of Dudley George and the needless sixty years of confrontations between band members and the forces of the Canadian military and OPP. On a related matter, aside from an environmental clean up, should the Department of National Defense not also be responsible for restoring the Stoney Point homes that were destroyed during the removal of 1942, a matter that was not dealt with in the Ipperwash Inquiry recommendations?

In the second set of recommendations dealing with “Policy Analysis” three of these are of a particularly salient nature because they have far reaching implications for Aboriginal land claims in the province and elsewhere in Canada:

1. The provincial government should establish a permanent, independent, and impartial agency to facilitate and oversee the settling of land and treaty claims in Ontario. The agency should be called the Treaty Commission of Ontario (2007: 99).

2. The Treaty Commission of Ontario should be established in a provincial statute as an independent agency reporting directly to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The Treaty Commission of Ontario should have permanent administrative, legal, and research staff and should be fully independent from the governments of Canada, Ontario and First Nations. The Statute should specify that the purpose of the Treaty Commission of Ontario is to assist Ontario in discharging its treaty responsibilities. (2007: 99)
32. The provincial government should create a Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. This ministry should have a dedicated minister and its own deputy minister. (2007: 103)

Discussion of Ipperwash Inquiry Recommendations

Every year across Canada there are numerous Aboriginal protests. Roads and railways are blockaded. Marches to Ottawa take place. Buildings and parcels of land are occupied. In various instances the Aboriginal protests lead to confrontations with local police, the OPP, the Canadian army and even with local non-Aboriginal citizens. The protests sometimes lead to injury or even death on the part of the protesters or those who confront them. There hardly ever appears to exist a sense of orderly behavior with proper rules of engagement during these episodes. When emotions run high and frustration mounts the gathered assembly begins to appear like a mob out of control. Why do the same unfortunate scenarios play themselves out in Canada over and over again without apparent order or resolution? Why have our Canadian legislators, who are empowered with the means to provide structure and coherence to such protests, turned a blind eye to such catastrophes? Surely in the civil democracy that Canada purports to be there are other means to deal with Aboriginal peoples' frustrations other than using armed troops to pummel protesters into submission.

The three recommendations quoted from the "Policy Analysis" section of the Ipperwash Report proposing to establish a Treaty Commission of Ontario and to create a Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs has the potential to deal with Aboriginal land claims and other areas of grievance in a constructive manner without resorting to violence. It is unfortunate, and not often recognized, that Canada has a long history of suppressing of Aboriginal cultural practices and political dissent. The potlatch was banned in the 1880s and some of its Aboriginal practitioners were incarcerated. In 1906 a petition to King Edward VII over the lack of land settlements in British Columbia led by Chief Joseph Capilano of the Squamish Delegation was denied (LaViolette, 1973). A national ban

on Aboriginal political organization was enacted in 1927. Aboriginal people were denied the right to vote in provincial elections until the 1950s, and in federal elections until the 1960s. the Trudeau government's White Paper proposals of 1969 were termed a "thinly disguised programme of extermination through assimilation" (Cardinal, 1969: 1). In the late 1960s the OPP used armed force to suppress a burial ground protest at Anishenabe Park near Kenora, Ontario.

Such events and situations have continued unabated into present times. For many Canadians it is difficult to identify which First Nations peoples are protesting, and to understand what their claims are about. Government legislation has had the tendency to fragment the First Nations of Canada into a myriad of competing interest groups treaty vs. non-treaty, status vs non-status, and reserve vs non-reserve. Making matters even more confusing are the different political groups which at times appear set against each other, such as the Métis National Council, the Assembly of First Nations, the Aboriginal Congress of Canada, and the Inuit Tapirisat. Aboriginal occupations and protests seemingly occur without warning. The issues are often quite diverse and complex in nature, ranging from a perceived desecration of burial sites, unfulfilled land claims, intrusions on hunting and fishing rights, resource development issues, or protests over various transportation initiatives involving highways, railroads or bridges.

Many people are familiar with such names as Oka, Caledonia, Ipperwash, Burnt church or Gustafsen Lake. One wonders if we will ever see an end to such protests and occupations. The recommendations of the Ipperwash Inquiry, if acted upon by the Government of Ontario, have the potential to lead to constructive changes in the laws and public institutions of Ontario. In turn, such legislative changes would diminish the need for such enervating protests as those mentioned above, and hold out the possibility of building more constructive and peaceful relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples over the ownership and control of land. As the Ipperwash Inquiry reiterates, "Nearly all of the lands and inland waters in Ontario are subject to treaties between First Nations and British and Canadian governments. These treaties are not, as some people believe, relics of the distant past. They are living agreements, and the understandings on which they are based continue to have the full force of law in Canada today" (2007: 80).

The experience of the Kettle and Stoney Point First Nation peoples serves to illustrate the deep felt anger and frustration that results from a failure on the part of provincial and federal governments to deal constructively with their extant treaty obligations. The proposal of the Ipperwash Inquiry to establish a Treaty Commission and an Ontario Min-

istry of Aboriginal Affairs has the potential to deal constructively with disputes over treaty rights and other unresolved issues concerning burial and heritage rights. These proposals would also serve to mitigate the deleterious consequences of a failure to take seriously Canada's legal obligations towards First Nations people and hopefully prevent the needless loss of life such as that which occurred with the tragic death of Dudley George.

Conclusion

It is appropriate that the concluding remarks of this paper broaden the scope of discussion to include mention of another public inquiry, namely the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) of 1996, and to draw comparisons with the Ipperwash Inquiry of a decade later. RCAP cost the Canadian tax payers, which of course includes Aboriginal peoples as well, \$60 million and produced 400 recommendations. As far as has been reported in the literature (Cairns, 2000: 5; Frideres, 1996, 1998: 229), the federal government has virtually ignored all of the Commission's proposals. Since RCAP is reputed to be the most expensive federal inquiry in Canadian history, one is entitled to ask "What was the point of this huge financial undertaking, and how has it benefitted Aboriginal people in Canada?" RCAP has been described as the embodiment of "the politics of ambivalence, shifting identities and elusive borders...most Canadians and all politicians found the recommendations too unrealistic even to inspire backlash" (Darnell, 2000: 171). The failure of RCAP to get a response from the federal government has been described as "disturbing and astonishing" (Cairns, 2000: 5).

Unlike RCAP, the Ipperwash Inquiry cost a more modest \$13.3 million, which is a relatively low price tag compared with RCAP's \$60 million, and made 100 recommendations. It is too soon to tell if the Ipperwash Inquiry will suffer the same fate as RCAP. The Ipperwash recommendation to create a Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs for Ontario is similar to RCAP's proposal to institute an Aboriginal Parliament, or "House of First Peoples," which would act as an advisory body to the federal government. Either of these proposals would seem justified given the lack of intermediary links between the local reserves and higher levels of provincial and federal governments. Lacking such effective links, communication of Aboriginal peoples' concerns to appropriate governmental agencies, such as employment, land claims, housing, or breaches of treaty agreements, is often not effective. Aboriginal political organizations, such as the provincially-based Union of Ontario Indians, or the federal level Assembly of First Nations, often do not function effectively in fulfilling such an intercalary communicative role because such orga-

nizations tend to serve a limited Aboriginal constituency and at times act in an adversarial position to federal and provincial governments. In any event, one wonders if the \$73.3 million spent on these two inquiries would have been put to better use in improving the housing conditions of Canada's Aboriginal population, or in job creation efforts in their communities anything, rather than have this precious money gobbled up by commissioners and their witnesses for plane fares, car rental, hotel accommodations and dining at city restaurants.

We can always hold out hope that in the long term such public inquiries as Ipperwash and RCAP were worth the expense and effort. A cynical view might see such commissions as a waste of money designed to give governments some breathing space in times of crisis and to deflect criticism away from them. As Darnell has observed, "Royal Commissions provide politicians with space to avoid confrontation and conflict. Extremists on both right and left are wont to mutter about the 'anesthetic' quality of the always numerous and broad-ranging recommendations" (2000: 171). A similar perspective is offered by Frideres, "Royal Commissions...can be used as a 'stalling' process to deal with issues politically embarrassing to the government in the hopes that the issues will 'go away'" (1996: 251; see also Doern, 1967). Canadians have an obligation to ensure that such cynical views does not prevail, and that Dudley George's ultimate sacrifice was not one made in vain.

Notes

1. I am indebted to Trish Strand for her careful reading of this manuscript and for her helpful suggestions; any errors of course remain mine alone.
2. Anthony O'Brien (Dudley) George was born in Sarnia on March 17, 1957.
3. The promise states that "if, at the termination of the war, no further use of the area is required by the Department of National Defense, negotiations will be entered into with the Department of Indian Affairs to transfer the lands back to the Indians at a reasonable price determined by mutual agreement" (Koehler, 1996).
4. In March, 1992, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal People recommended in its tabled report that the appropriated land be returned to its former Aboriginal inhabitants. The report also indicated that the federal government's reasons for continuing to occupy the land were "spurious and without substance" (Gordon, 1996; Steckley and Cummins, 2008: 205).

5. According to linguist John Steckley, in the Ojibwa or Anishenabe language the name of the Stoney Point Band is Aazhoodenaang Enjibaaig (Steckley and Cummins, 2008:203).
6. The Stoney Point Reserve was “two miles square at the River aux Sable which empties into Lake Huron” (Gordon, 1996).
7. The issue over Harris’ denial once again became an object of public attention in February, 2006, when CTV showed a television movie called *One Dead Indian*, which was based on a book by the same name written by Peter Edwards, a Toronto Star reporter, in 2003.
8. For the purposes of this paper all quoted material pertains to the ‘Executive Summary’ which consists of an abridged version of the final report comprising the ‘Investigation and Findings, Volume 1,’ ‘Policy Analysis, Volume 2’ and ‘Recommendations.’ Unless otherwise stated, all details described or reported in this paper are derived from the Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry (2000).
9. According to the findings of the Ipperwash Inquiry, this crucial information on firearms was provided by a Councillor of the Kettle and Stoney Point Band named Gerald George. Mr. George had not agreed with the occupation of Camp Ipperwash and Ipperwash Park. In a letter to the editor of the Forest Standard newspaper he had criticized the occupiers for taking control of the barracks at Camp Ipperwash, referring to them in derogatory terms such as “animals” and “army camp Indians.” Mr. George approached the OPP officers at a check point and indicated that the park occupiers were in possession of “AK-47s with a 30 round mag duct taped to the back, Mini Ruger 14s, and hunting rifles” (2007: 55). As the Ipperwash Report indicates, a “fundamental problem was that the information about guns was not authenticated or verified by OPP intelligence officers” (2007: 56). Gerald George’s description of the different firearms was recorded in a notebook by Detective Constable Dew, who referred to Gerald George as an “anonymous source.”
10. Dudley George was transported to the Strathroy Hospital some 50 kilometers away, not by ambulance, but in a car accompanied by his brother Pierre and sister Carolyn.

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