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Our opinion

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# Police must enforce laws

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It's going to be another long summer for residents of West Ipperwash Beach.

The owners of the approximately 140 residences sandwiched between Ipperwash Provincial Park and the Kettle and Stony Point Reserve complained of almost constant harassment last summer from natives.

This past Victoria Day weekend the situation reared its ugly head again, like a recurring nightmare for residents, many of whom have lived along the beach for decades.

The problems stem from the fact the Kettle and Stony Point Band lays claim to the waterfront property. They are questioning the legality of an agreement signed more than 60 years ago in which the land was sold to the federal government at the band's request.

In 1992 the band filed a land claim, and that's when the trouble started for the landowners.

It's a difficult situation, indeed. The trouble appears to be the work of a few hotheads who are engaged in a campaign of harassment. Residents complain of natives climbing their decks, banging on their windows and threatening them on the beach.

The vast majority of the natives at Kettle Point are law-abiding people who want no part of the intimidation and harassment that's going on at the beach. But unfortunately, they're all being tarred with

the same brush.

It's up to the police to enforce the law along that beach area so residents, who hold lawful deeds to their properties, can feel safe. Regardless of any land claim, natives must obey the law. They simply cannot be allowed to do as they please in that area.

There are other problems in the area of Ipperwash Provincial Park, where natives who claim to be a separate group from the band at Kettle Point are getting involved in confrontations with campers who are wandering onto land that is part of the Camp Ipperwash military facility.

Hopefully, the federal government and native leaders will soon get involved in meaningful negotiations so the camp can be returned to its rightful owners and a 50-year-old wound can be allowed to heal.

Until then, however, cooler heads must prevail, and the police must become a stronger presence in the area and lay charges whenever warranted.

The situation cannot continue, in which parents are afraid to bring their children to that area because of potential confrontations with natives who choose to take the law into their own hands.

Until the land claims are settled everyone must abide by the law, and the police must patrol the area in sufficient numbers to ensure they do.