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Mary-Lou LaPratte and other residents have been hit again by a different native land claim.
Observer Photo by Glenn Ogilvie

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Victims of crime spree want action

Because suspects in native camp, police cautious

By **GEORGE MATHEWSON**
of The Observer

IPPERWASH   Property owners near the former Camp Ipperwash military base are the victims of a crime spree that government leaders won't do anything to stop, residents claim.

Ipperwash and Port Franks have been hit by 72 incidents of break and enter, theft, and vandalism in the past two months, including two suspected arsons in Port Franks that left homes burned to the ground, according to figures compiled by the local neighbourhood watch.

"Just about every house on East Parkway Drive and West Parkway Drive along the lake at Ipperwash has been broken in," said resident Mary-Lou LaPratte.

"Some of these people are into their fourth and fifth break and enter."

The OPP didn't have a tally, but OPP Acting Staff Sgt. Fred Wessels confirmed "a substantial number" of break-ins have occurred in the area that police are working hard to solve.

Residents are angry because the OPP refuse to enter the nearby military base, which was reclaimed by Stoney Point natives as ancestral lands in 1993. They suspect a secret pact with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has created a "hands-off" policy at the camp and nearby Ipperwash Park.

The OPP issued arrest warrants on April 20 for three natives living on the base, known by Stoney Pointers as Aszhoodena.

Jonathan Wolfe, 24, was arrested Thursday in connection with an arson and half a dozen break, enter and thefts. He was taken to the OPP Forest detachment about 2 p.m. by a member of the Stoney Point community and was scheduled to appear at a bail hearing in Sarnia this morning.

Sennen Sands, 30, is wanted for arson and three break and enters, while Marsha George, 22, is sought for three break-ins.

Sands and George are still on the loose and hiding, and non-native residents are skeptical of the effort being made to apprehend them, said LaPratte, president of the Ontario Federation for Individual Rights and Equality.

Const. Luke George said the OPP have liaison officers who work closely with

native peacekeepers on the base. Without the co-operation of the Stoney Point community the warrants could not have been issued, he said.

George denied police have a secret pact with Indian Affairs, but he conceded officers won't venture onto the base without permission to avoid a confrontation.

"Why stir the pot? Plain and simple, it's a health and safety issue that we're talking about," he said.

About 120 residents of Bosanquet Township are backing a class action law suit seeking \$2 billion from the federal and provincial governments for turmoil and lost property values. A statement of claim filed April of 1999 says residents live in fear because the federal and provincial governments have failed to provide adequate policing.

The idea of a pact preventing police from entering lands claimed by natives arose in 1996 when a Michigan boater's cabin cruiser was ransacked after it ran aground at Ipperwash. No charges were ever laid charged, even though witnesses watched natives seize and strip the boat.

The issue is complicated by the fact the former base is a federal responsibility but policing is a provincial matter.

Ottawa has no jurisdiction over law enforcement in the area, said Ralph Brant, of the Indian Claims Commission.

"There is no pact. There never has been a pact."

And the MPP for the area, Marcel Beaubien, said the province can't get involved in day-to-day policing. He offered to arrange a meeting with Ontario Solicitor General David Tsubouchi so residents can present their complaints.

"I certainly can appreciate the level of frustration. It's a difficult situation to deal with," Beaubien said. "I wish I had the answers but I don't."

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