

THE IPPERWASH PAPERS

by Mark Vandermaas
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The Ipperwash Papers consist of:

- victim impact statements
- government correspondence at all levels
- documentation obtained under the Access to Information Act
- witness statements
- news reports and editorials before and after the death of Dudley George.
- investigative reports from journalists
- submissions to the Ipperwash Inquiry
- documents from the Inquiry's website and...
- correspondence to and from ONFIRE, the Ontario Federation for Individual Rights and Equality, an organization created to give a voice to traumatized residents in the aftermath of the unfortunate events of September 1995. ONFIRE had 1250 members at its peak. By way of comparison, the Ontario government had meetings with the Caledonia Alliance – a group consisting of just 12 members.

This shows the importance of both ONFIRE and Mary-Lou LaPratte who served on its executive for more than 10 years.

Unfortunately, ONFIRE's leaders were excluded from testifying at the Inquiry.

- The public will not hear that – during the two years preceding the unfortunate events of September 1995 - the Town of Bosanquet – now Lambton Shores – warned provincial and federal government cabinet ministers, politicians and bureaucrats of the real potential for injury and death in the area.
- The public will not hear how the residents were traumatized by the violent takeover of Camp Ipperwash in July 1995 by native rebels – just two months prior to Mr. George's death. How the violence and destruction was so extensive that the Base Security Officer for CFB Toronto requested commendations for the soldiers involved for their courage.
- The public will not hear how the Town blamed the Department of National Defence for the death of Dudley George and the terrorization of their community due to DND's failure to remove illegal occupiers, failure to permit the law to be upheld, failure to protect its boundaries, and due to the military's retreat and desertion in the middle of the night.
- The public will not hear how residents and tourists were victimized by native criminals in the years prior to the death of Mr. George and afterwards. How they were re-victimized by OPP Two Tier Justice since at least as early as 1990.

And...how in May 1993, the Sarnia Observer issued an editorial titled, "Police must enforce laws."

Compare this ominous warning a full two years before Mr. George's death with the Toronto Star editorial recently quoted by John Tory in the Ontario Legislature on December 22, 2006 that called for a return to the Rule of Law in Caledonia. The circumstances are disturbingly similar and we should all be gravely concerned.

- This means that the public will not hear from a witness who says he saw Dudley George holding a rifle with a scope on it just weeks before his death. Why? Because the Inquiry didn't call him to testify.
- The public will not hear from a witness who says he saw natives at the unsecured crime scene raking the sand in the exact area where Dudley George fell and removing objects out of the sand, trees, fence posts and shacks. Why? Because he was never called to testify.
- The public will not hear from residents who were told by their insurance companies that there would be no coverage for any damage or mass evacuation because the Ipperwash situation was considered to be a rebellion and an insurrection.
- The public will not hear how Ipperwash residents felt when the OPP fled the area for their own safety as per the instructions of native militants and didn't return for almost a month. How residents calling for OPP assistance were told that the police would not come because they had become targets for native criminals.
- The public will not hear how sick and elderly residents were abandoned in their homes by the OPP who promised to come for them and never did.
- The public will not hear how CSIS was so worried that the undefended residents would take the law into their own hands that they met regularly with ONFIRE members.
- The public will not hear about how 8 natives beat a resident into unconsciousness with such viciousness that he suffered permanent damage to his hand. Or how a witness to the event had to call 911 seven times before the OPP responded.

The question, of course, that you must be asking is HOW we can be so sure that the people of Ontario will not hear any of this from the Ipperwash Inquiry? Because the residents were not allowed to speak at the Inquiry.

- Out of 139 witnesses who testified during the Inquiry not one was a full-time resident.

- Not one resident was permitted to testify to the Native violence that occurred for 4 years prior to 1995 and not one resident has been allowed to testify to the violence since 1995
- In short, the people of Ipperwash have been silenced.

In July 2004, the Inquiry received a chronological account of the Ipperwash tragedy, which is in your press kit.

- The Ipperwash Inquiry has never published this chronology of events at Ipperwash. The ONLY project submitted to the Inquiry that directly addresses the suffering of the residents, AND the possible relationship between the OPP/DND refusal to enforce the law against native criminals and the death of Dudley George is nowhere to be found on the Inquiry's website.
- The Inquiry gave standing to the occupiers who had violently overthrown the former Army camp, but denied it to the residents who suffered through more than a decade of violence, intimidation and crime by natives operating from the base – an area known to local residents as 'The Homefree Zone' because the OPP do not police it – even to this day. An area where the remains of two dismembered bodies have been found.
- The Ipperwash Inquiry cannot and will not reveal ANY of the residents' suffering because, during the past three years the Inquiry allotted a grand total of just - 90 minutes – for 'Community Consultation' that took place during a single meeting on June 21, 2006 at the height of tensions in Caledonia.

What is disturbing about this so-called 'Community Consultation' is that the Inquiry's minutes and its characterization of this meeting differ SO dramatically from a reporter's account of what was said by the residents that night that I felt compelled to contact her in order to confirm that she was indeed writing about the same meeting. A copy of both the Inquiry's minutes and the reporter's story are included in your kit.

Even more troubling, however, the Inquiry's summary suggests that the Inquiry's conclusions MAY well have been decided in advance:

Since the Inquiry's summary is not even close to accurately representing what was said by residents to the Commissioner, one cannot discount the possibility that it was deliberately sanitized to fit pre-determined conclusions:

1. There weren't any serious problems between natives and residents.
2. Residents were racist and/or ignorant of native culture.

Even worse, the Inquiry will NEVER be able to answer the question of how to prevent violence against innocent residents in Caledonia or any other town facing land claims.

Why? Because...they never asked the question. The Ipperwash Inquiry NEVER addressed the issue of preserving the Rule of Law during land claims:

- Not a single symposium was held by the Inquiry to address the issue of preserving the Rule of Law during land claims.
- Not a single project prepared for the Inquiry by other third parties focused on the trauma suffered by innocent residents, and how to prevent it in future land claims.

The frightening reality is this: if the Ipperwash Inquiry released its report today and the government could implement its findings tomorrow, the next town to face a land claim would have no guidelines for preventing Landclaim Terror against innocent residents.

Another glaring failure un-noticed by the Ipperwash Inquiry is the absolute paralysis of government in the face of the OPP's failure to enforce the law. Even though everyone from the Deputy Prime Minister, to the Solicitor General of Canada, to the Minister of National Defence, to the Minister of Indian Affairs to the Solicitor General of Ontario made it crystal clear to residents that it was the responsibility of the OPP to enforce the law – but, the OPP was unable or unwilling to do so.

In effect, an un-elected OPP Commissioner became the most powerful person in Ontario during an insurrection and was utterly un-accountable for the failures of his force. In a letter dated August 13, 1996 OPP Commissioner Thomas O'Grady denied an ONFIRE request to have the RCMP police the former Army camp, saying that the OPP was doing their job 'a little more slowly than you might wish' and asked for their "understanding and patience." [J2]

In conclusion:

The Ipperwash Inquiry never truly listened to the residents of Ipperwash.

The Ipperwash Inquiry cannot address the future innocent victims of Land claim Terror.

The Ipperwash Inquiry also deprived Ontario – and all of Canada – of the opportunity to explore what role Two Tier Justice policies played in the death of Mr. George.

I know that Gary McHale will be offering his own comments and call to action, but as the lead investigator for the Ipperwash Papers, I feel it is my duty to call upon every member of the Ontario Legislature and on you, the media, to hold this government accountable for the failure of the Ipperwash Inquiry to address the vital issue of Landclaim Terror directed against innocent people.

We will now hear from Mary-Lou LaPratte.