

# Ipperwash and the Media

A critical analysis of how the story was covered

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DRAFT REPORT

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‘ CLEARLY, SOMETHING MAJOR HAD HAPPENED THERE. STILL, THE CRISIS LACKED A DEFINING IMAGE IN THE PUBLIC MIND. IT WAS JUST SO MANY WORDS, AND MANY OF THOSE WERE CONFUSING’.

Peter Edwards  
in *One Dead Indian: The Premier, the Police and the Ipperwash Crisis*  
page 123



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## Executive summary

**T**

hree days after the shooting of Anthony (Dudley) George at Ipperwash Provincial Park, Gordon Sanderson wrote a column for the London Free Press that focused on media coverage – or, to be more precise, what he felt was missing from that coverage. He was writing as the paper’s “readers’ advocate,” a job that is now almost extinct at Canadian newspapers but one that essentially tried to explain the role and performance of journalism to its audience. His column is notable since, of 435 news and opinion articles that were written by journalists and examined for this study, it was the only one that mentioned the role of the media in the tragic events.

Sanderson noted that no reporters were present the night of Sept. 6, 1995, when about 40 riot police marched on a small group of First Nation protesters who had been peacefully occupying the park in a dispute over a burial ground. This meant, he said, that “the public was left with widely conflicting accounts of what happened, without independent verification by a media witness.”

Gently chiding his colleagues for the “nine-to-five routine of most reporters these days,” he concluded: “With the benefit of hindsight, it is apparent the media would have served the public better had they kept a closer watch on the deteriorating situation.”

He was articulating one of the core values of journalism – that reporters have a responsibility to serve as independent verifiers of facts, so they can provide people with reliable, impartial information upon which to base their decisions as citizens in a democracy.

Rather hopefully, he added: “Now that everyone has been galvanized into action, an accurate account of what happened will perhaps emerge, pieced together from various sources.”

Unfortunately, this didn’t happen. An analysis of nearly 500 news stories, editorials, opinion columns and letters to the editor published about Ipperwash in Canadian daily newspapers between July 31, 1995 – approximately a month before the shooting – and Oct. 16, 1995 – slightly more than a month after it – reveals the following:

### Nature of the coverage:

- \$ In the month leading up to the shooting, newspapers carried 68 news stories, 28 opinion stories, and 6 letters to the editor mentioning the Ipperwash occupations. In the month after the shooting, they carried considerably more: 275 news stories, 64 opinion articles, and 55 letters to the editor. Total number of original articles: 496, plus one correction. In several cases, news stories (mainly from the Canadian Press wire service) and columns were published by more than one newspaper the same day. Counting duplicates, there were a total of 691 published articles.
- \$ The story attracted very little interest from the national media before the shooting happened. Only 21 of the 68 news stories in that period were by staff reporters who were sent to Ipperwash, and most of those were from regional papers that considered it to be within their local circulation areas (Sarnia Observer, London

Free Press and Windsor Star). Only four of those 21 were written from Ipperwash by staff members of national or international media outlets (The Globe and Mail, Canadian Press and the New York Times). Other papers printed the CP versions of the stories, mostly written in Toronto using material filed by reporters for newspapers who were at the scene.

\$ Up until the shooting, the story did not get prominent news play in those newspapers. Only 9 percent of all stories published about Ipperwash between July 31 and Sept. 6 appeared on front page (13 of 163). That changed when George was shot and killed. One hundred and forty-four versions of stories were published in newspapers in the three days following the shooting (Sept. 7-9), and 15 percent of those, or 21, appeared on page one. It became a bigger story, and more news organizations sent staff reporters to Ipperwash.

\$ As the story went on, the roots of the dispute seemed to get lost. It became less and less a story about a land dispute between the Chippewa people and the federal government, and more and more about a police investigation into troublesome events caused by First Nation people.

\$ Despite the limited amount of reporting from the scene before the shooting, Canadian newspapers were quick to pass judgment. Twenty-seven percent of the total number of articles that appeared in the month leading up to the shooting were opinion columns or editorials. This percentage went down slightly following the shooting, to 16 percent, but that still constitutes a high ratio of opinion to news, especially when some key facts, such as whether the occupiers were armed, were in dispute at the time. A majority of this opinion was critical of the Stoney Pointers (as the occupiers of the park preferred to be called).

### Quality of the coverage:

\$ None of the newspapers or wire services that sent reporters to cover the aftermath of the shooting succeeded in piecing together

a comprehensive eyewitness account of what happened during the fateful night of Sept. 6: Who shot first? Why did police storm the occupiers, and at night? Who ordered them to? In this respect, the most basic function of journalism – to convey accurate facts in context – was not exercised.

\$ Reporters relied heavily on interviews with “official” sources – police, outside First Nation leaders and politicians – in the aftermath of the shooting. Very little ongoing news coverage was told from the perspective of those occupying the park. Not one reporter succeeded in covering Ipperwash from inside the barricades.

\$ Before the occupation of the park, few reporters investigated or seemed to appreciate the legal dispute between the Stoney Pointers and other members of the Kettle and Stony Point band, caused by the Stony Point displacement in 1942. The Kettle and Stony Point band was treated as the only legitimate claimant for the land under dispute. The occupiers were usually described as “a splinter group” or “rebels.” Once the Stoney Pointers moved into the park, they had no relationship with the media and may have felt they had good reason to regard reporters as being hostile to their interests.

\$ Kettle and Stony Point band Chief Tom Bressette was most often quoted as the authority for what the occupiers were up to. There were many reasons for journalists to be more skeptical, especially since Chief Bressette was negotiating for the return of the base to his band and may have had reasons to discredit the occupation. He was the source who first said the base occupiers were believed to have guns and were being whipped up by outside agitators – allegations which showed up frequently in subsequent news stories, although there was never any evidence to confirm them.

\$ The story was “framed” most frequently as one about violent, lawless First Nation people causing a fuss, instead of one about people who believe they have a legitimate right to their land.

- \$ “Warriors” were reported to be in the military base and park from time to time, but no reporter ever talked to one or defined what that term meant.
- \$ The events at Ipperwash were frequently linked in the same story to other First Nation disputes, including a simultaneous confrontation at Gustafsen Lake, B.C., where the occupiers had guns and used them. This tended to create a “moral panic” that First Nation people were on the brink of a co-ordinated and potentially bloody nation-wide revolution. Some “analysis” articles reported this as about to occur, even though hard evidence for this interpretation was lacking.
- \$ The Stoney Pointers’ claim that they had no guns at Ipperwash was almost always mentioned in stories after the OPP’s version of events – that the occupiers attacked and fired first. That served, over time, to discredit them.
- \$ Editorials and opinion columns rushed to judgment on the meaning of the confrontation, and they were generally unsympathetic to the Stoney Pointers. The first commentary appeared just two days after the shooting, and seemed to disregard the fact that there were contradictory accounts of what happened. Only three of the total of 92 opinion articles were written by journalists who actually went to Ipperwash and did their own reporting. One of the most extreme examples of ill-informed opinion was a columnist writing from Singapore who noted that

One of the best things about being 12  
time zones away from Canada is that I  
no longer have to cover obscure and  
occasionally bloody Indian standoffs  
such as those at Camp Ipperwash ...  
No longer do I have to travel hundreds  
of miles down bad roads with scores of  
other journalists to dusty mosquito-  
infested villages for a media  
opportunity with a bunch of unkempt

and menacing thugs who are eager for their moment of fame.

- \$ The second wave of opinion/analysis, published two weeks after the shooting, led us further away from the facts as they were known at that time, almost as if the wrong co-ordinates had been punched into the sophisticated media guidance system. These articles fit some of the “frames” associated with racist dialogue -- a Canada-wide Indian revolution about to begin (moral panic), a lack of tolerance for First Nation people who break the law (blame the victim), and mainstream Canadian society under assault (white victimization).
- \$ Stories that fit common stereotypes – First Nation people as troublemakers, as unruly and violent, or benefiting from double standards of justice – tended to get picked up or reprinted in other newspapers; those that challenged common stereotypes – First Nation people without guns, or with a legitimate land grievance – generally did not.
- \$ By and large, letters to the editor written by readers were more supportive of the First Nation peoples’ point of view after Dudley George died than were newspaper editorial writers or columnists. A few of the letters directly challenged the conclusions reached by journalists. One, published in the London Free Press on Oct. 6, a month after the shooting, said:

I suggest your paper should try to find someone from the reserve who might be willing to tell their side of what the events of the last few weeks have done to them and their families.

### **Conclusions:**

The news coverage of Ipperwash performed a public service by bringing to light an alternative view of events that challenged the OPP’s

statements that the occupiers fired first and police were acting in self-defence. But the press did not seem to give enough credence to the claims of the Stoney Pointers or consider them worthy of further investigation. Neither did they pursue the calls for an inquiry into what happened, or critically examine the role of the Harris government. In this respect, the news coverage frequently strayed from what are commonly understood to be the core principles of journalism (first obligation to the truth, the discipline of verification, an independent monitor of power).

Journalistic standards for articles of opinion generally acknowledge that they can be outspoken and provocative, but they should always be based on accurate information. Much – and there was a lot of it – was based not on the facts of the Ipperwash occupation, but on crude generalizations about First Nation people that fit many of the racist stereotypes that academics like Augie Fleras, Frances Henry and Carol Tator have identified. It doesn't matter if this was intentional or unintentional. It existed.

The way the story was “framed” after the shooting tended to seek broader explanations for what happened at Ipperwash, such as by linking it almost gratuitously to other disputes, usually violent ones that had no common link other than the fact they all involved First Nation people. Very little attention was paid to other frames, like finding out what happened the night of Sept. 6 by piecing together eyewitness accounts from both sides, or examining the slow progress in settling land claims, or exploring which side was correct in law – the government, which claimed the occupiers were trespassing in the park; or the Stoney Pointers, who said they had a right to protect their burial ground.

Although there were exceptions, the story was covered by reporters who would have benefited from more understanding of First Nation customs and behavior. That, combined with the limitations of “parachute journalism,” when reporters are sent in without preparation to cover a sudden outbreak of violence under tight deadlines, served to produce stories that lacked historical context and relied heavily on the most available and convenient sources (outside First Nation leaders, politicians, the OPP, and local residents).

Reporters and columnists were reluctant to question the motives of those in power, especially the OPP and the Harris government. There

was very little evidence that reporters took the claims of the Stoney Pointers and outside First Nation leaders seriously – that politicians may have prodded the police to act.

To his credit, one of the first reporters on the scene after Dudley George was killed – Peter Edwards of the Toronto Star – later wrote a book that reconstructed what happened. *One Dead Indian: The Premier, the Police and the Ipperwash Crisis* was published in 2001, and contained the kind of reporting that might well have changed the course of events if it had been done by all concerned in the days immediately following George's death.

Although there were certainly some examples of excellent journalism (and I shall point those out), all in all, the Ipperwash crisis was not journalism's finest hour.

# Ipperwash and the Media: How the story was covered

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## 1. Aims of this analysis of media coverage.

This research paper reviews media coverage before, during and after the Ipperwash confrontation in the summer of 1995, and provides a critical analysis of how well that coverage met established journalistic principles.

It is hoped this study will assist the Commission as it deals with the second part of its mandate – to “make recommendations directed to the avoidance of violence in similar circumstances.”

Media coverage plays a key role in determining how events are dealt with in a democratic society. Reporters act as surrogates for readers, with access to events and sources that the public does not have the time or opportunity to see and hear. Similarly, readers rely on journalists to bring story layers and patterns to light. How a crisis is reported, the sources that are used or ignored, and how those stories are “framed” can impact the actions of governments, participants, police and onlookers, who frequently act according to how the media set the

agenda. Accurate, comprehensive coverage can promote understanding and resolution, just as inaccurate, incomplete and myopic coverage can exacerbate stereotypes and prolong confrontations.

Consequently, society has a right to expect reporters to exercise a greater responsibility than members of the public to get it right. Reporters are professionally trained to engage in a discipline of verification, a process that is often mistakenly referred to as “objectivity.” But, according to sociologist Augie Fleras, academic and professional research shows that news is not selected randomly or objectively:

What eventually becomes the “news” is not something tangible, with clearly marked labels that everybody can agree upon ....News is a socially constructed process, shaped in part by a collective set of intrinsic values and created through the interplay of uneven forces .... Decisions about “newsworthiness” must take into account media perceptions about who or what is important to the audience. Gatekeepers (such as editors) are actively involved in the news selection process, which is influenced by various factors including organizational imperatives, personnel demands, audience constraints, sponsorship needs, and the bottom line.... Various biases are inherent within the news process, but especially vulnerable is coverage, news collection, reporting, the news source, editorial gatekeeping and presentation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fleras, Augie, “Please Adjust Your Set: Media and Minorities in a Multicultural Society,” in *Communications in Canadian Society*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, ed. Benjamin Singer, 406-431. Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1995.

Fleras adds: “Despite protests and pretensions to the contrary, the media are part of the establishment. They rarely occupy the cutting edge of change, are poorly equipped to deal with race and aboriginal issues, and resist the voices of the marginal and disorganized.”

Ipperwash was a complicated story to cover. A peaceful protest took a sudden turn to violence with little warning; few reporters covering it had any background in the issues that divided the main band and the Stoney Pointers; and there was an important historical context – the broken promises of the federal government to give back the land it seized in 1942 – that explained the frustration of the Stoney Pointers.

This study contends that important lessons can be learned by examining how well the media initially covered the key events of Ipperwash. Did that coverage “frame” the story in such a way that it has taken us more than 10 years to learn what actually happened?

## **2. Statement of methodology.**

### **i. What was studied and how.**

The challenge was to choose a time period short enough to allow for a detailed analysis of news and opinion articles, and long enough to span enough key events before and after the shooting of Dudley George to discern a trend. We chose July 31, 1995, as the starting point because events that weekend ended the peaceful co-existence between the First Nation people occupying Camp Ipperwash and the Canadian Armed Forces (the occupiers were reported to have crashed a bus into a drill hall and the military withdrew). Ipperwash became a significant story then.

The end point was established as Oct. 16, 1995, roughly the same length of time (a month) after the occupation of Ipperwash Provincial Park and the shooting of George. That date was chosen because it marked the release of a study by the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point verifying that burial grounds exist on the park land – in other words, that they may have had a legitimate “colour of right” claim to be there, contrary to earlier statements by the Ontario government that there were no burial grounds. Significantly, the press release put out by the Chippewas announcing that fact was not reported in any newspaper chosen for this study.

The time and resources provided by the Ipperwash inquiry to Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto made it impractical for the researcher to examine media coverage beyond these dates. A more extensive study would be worthwhile since the coverage changed over time, especially as more documentation was made available to the media as a result of criminal proceedings stemming from the Ipperwash shooting, in particular the high-profile trial of Acting Sgt. Ken Deane, the OPP officer who shot Dudley George. Later media coverage, and a change in government in Ontario, eventually led to the calling of an inquiry, although that process took nearly 10 years.

This study, of the key period between July and October of 1995, is important because it shows how the story was initially “framed” by the media, and how that framing may have delayed the verification of what really happened on the night of Sept. 6, 1995. There is generally a correlation between the thoroughness of contemporaneous reporting of a disputed event, and the time it takes to resolve it or call an inquiry. This has certainly been shown recently in the cases of the sponsorship scandal and Maher Arar, where intense media coverage resulted in prompt judicial inquiries.

All newspaper articles mentioning Ipperwash were selected for the two-month period in 1995 from three online databases available at the Ryerson University library. In addition, copies of stories were obtained from two key regional newspapers which did not appear on the databases. The London Free Press, through editor Paul Berton, kindly furnished all the Ipperwash articles from its archives. Articles published by the Sarnia Observer were culled from submissions made to the Commission. I am indebted to researcher Cybele Sack for assembling the 691 versions of stories that were published and coding key information. The articles appeared in a total of 19 Canadian daily newspapers, Maclean's magazine, and four wire services:

**(a) From Canadian Newstand:** Financial Post, Calgary Herald, Edmonton Journal, Kingston Whig-Standard, Montreal Gazette, Ottawa Citizen, Toronto Star, Vancouver Province, Vancouver Sun, Victoria Times-Colonist, Windsor Star, Hamilton Spectator, Kitchener Record, Halifax Daily News.

**(b) From Factiva:** Globe and Mail, Winnipeg Free Press.

**(c) From Lexis-Nexis:** Toronto Sun, Maclean's magazine, wire services (Canadian Press, United Press International, Agence France-Presse, Associated Press).

**(d) By special arrangement:** London Free Press, Sarnia Observer.

The time period allowed us to look at coverage during four key periods: the pattern of events leading up to the occupation of the park on Sept. 4, 1995; the breaking news of the shooting and its immediate aftermath, when two versions of what happened emerged and there were calls for an inquiry; the period of negotiation leading up to police investigators being allowed into the park on Sept. 18; and the month following that when the pattern of how the story was being "framed" by the media became clear.

All stories were catalogued chronologically by date, whether there was a byline, what page it appeared on, where it was written from (placeline), and the identity of the lead source. Stories were labelled as news reportage, opinion columns or editorials, and letters to the editor, and a count was made of each.

When the identical news story or opinion column appeared in more than one newspaper on the same day, it was marked as a duplicate. This accounts for the two numerical counts: 496 different articles, and 691 total appearances. Unless otherwise indicated, the content analyses that follow look at the 496 original articles, not the duplicates.

Next, a chronological file of press releases, including those from the OPP, the provincial government and First Nation organizations, was compiled from documents submitted to the Commission. We did this to examine when and how the media made use of information from various key sources – and, as well, when it was not used.

Attempts were made to obtain tapes of television coverage of Ipperwash that aired on the two largest networks, CBC and CTV, but footage from as long ago as 1995 is not available from commercial archives. Bowden's, the main such provider, said it could not furnish them. Requests were made by Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto to officials at both networks, but these requests were repeatedly disregarded.

The print coverage of Ipperwash was examined to see how it conformed to accepted standards of journalism.

As a follow-up to the analysis, several reporters who covered the story at various stages of the Ipperwash standoff were interviewed by phone and asked about their access to sources, the challenges of the situation, and what they felt they might have done differently. The reporters are Peter Edwards of the Toronto Star, Julie Carl, formerly of the London Free Press, and Marsha Barber, formerly of the CBC.

## **ii. Journalistic principles used in analysis.**

While journalism is not a profession and has no equivalent to the Hypocratic Oath, journalists recognize that they have a duty to strive for certain standards of accuracy, integrity and fairness. Those have been best stated by the Project for Excellence in Journalism, a U.S.-based think tank that set out to clarify and reassert journalism's core standards at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It published its findings in *The Elements of Journalism*. This book is used by many journalism schools, including those in Canada, to help students appreciate the professional and ethical underpinnings of their craft. The Project for Excellence in Journalism is part of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University.

After what the Project calls “extended examination by journalists themselves of the character of journalism,” it says the purpose of journalism is clear – “*to provide citizens with accurate and reliable information they need to function in a free society.*”

Over time, the Project says, journalists have developed nine core principles to meet the task. They comprise what might be described as the theory of journalism, and they are quoted here in their entirety: <sup>2</sup>

### **1. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth**

Democracy depends on citizens having reliable, accurate facts put in a meaningful context. Journalism does not pursue truth in an absolute or philosophical sense, but it can – and must – pursue it in a practical sense. This “journalistic truth” is a process that begins with the professional discipline of assembling and verifying facts. Then journalists try to convey a fair and reliable account of their meaning, valid for now, subject to further investigation. Journalists should be as transparent as possible

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<sup>2</sup> Kovach, Bill and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (New York: Crown Publishers), 2001.

about sources and methods so audiences can make their own assessment of the information. Even in a world of expanding voices, accuracy is the foundation upon which everything else is built— context, interpretation, comment, criticism, analysis and debate. The truth, over time, emerges from this forum. As citizens encounter an ever greater flow of data, they have more need – not less – for identifiable sources dedicated to verifying that information and putting it in context.

## **2. Its first loyalty is to citizens.**

While news organizations answer to many constituencies, including advertisers and shareholders, the journalists in those organizations must maintain allegiance to citizens and the larger public interest above any other if they are to provide the news without fear or favor. This commitment to citizens first is the basis of a news organization's credibility, the implied covenant that tells the audience the coverage is not slanted for friends or advertisers. Commitment to citizens also means journalism should present a representative picture of all constituent groups in society. Ignoring certain citizens has the effect of disenfranchising them. The theory underlying the modern news industry has been the belief that credibility builds a broad and loyal audience, and that economic success follows in turn. In that regard, the business people in a news organization also must nurture – not exploit – their allegiance to the audience ahead of other considerations.

## **3. Its essence is a discipline of verification.**

Journalists rely on a professional discipline for verifying information. When the concept of objectivity originally evolved, it did not imply that journalists are free of bias. It called, rather, for a consistent method of testing information – a transparent approach to evidence – precisely so that personal and cultural biases would not undermine the accuracy of their work. The method is objective, not the journalist. Seeking out multiple witnesses, disclosing as much as possible about sources, or asking various sides for comment, all signal such standards. This

discipline of verification is what separates journalism from other modes of communication, such as propaganda, fiction or entertainment. But the need for professional method is not always fully recognized or refined. While journalism has developed various techniques for determining facts, for instance, it has done less to develop a system for testing the reliability of journalistic interpretation.

#### **4. Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover**

Independence is an underlying requirement of journalism, a cornerstone of its reliability. Independence of spirit and mind, rather than neutrality, is the principle journalists must keep in focus. While editorialists and commentators are not neutral, the source of their credibility is still their accuracy, intellectual fairness and ability to inform – not their devotion to a certain group or outcome. In our independence, however, we must avoid any tendency to stray into arrogance, elitism, isolation or nihilism.

#### **5. It must serve as an independent monitor of power.**

Journalism has an unusual capacity to serve as watchdog over those whose power and position most affect citizens. The Founders (of the United States) recognized this to be a rampart against despotism when they ensured an independent press; courts have affirmed it; citizens rely on it. As journalists, we have an obligation to protect this watchdog freedom by not demeaning it in frivolous use or exploiting it for commercial gain.

#### **6. It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.**

The news media are the common carriers of public discussion, and this responsibility forms a basis for our special privileges. This discussion serves society best when it is informed by facts rather than prejudice and supposition. It also should strive to fairly represent the varied viewpoints and interests in society,

and to place them in context rather than highlight only the conflicting fringes of debate. Accuracy and truthfulness require that as framers of the public discussion we not neglect the points of common ground where problem solving occurs.

**7. It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.**

Journalism is storytelling with a purpose. It should do more than gather an audience or catalogue the important. For its own survival, it must balance what readers know they want with what they cannot anticipate but need. In short, it must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant. Quality is measured both by how much a work engages its audience and enlightens it. This means journalists must continually ask what information has most value to citizens and in what form. While journalism should reach beyond such topics as government and public safety, a journalism overwhelmed by trivia and false significance ultimately engenders a trivial society.

**8. It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.**

Keeping news in proportion and not leaving important things out are also cornerstones of truthfulness. Journalism is a form of cartography: it creates a map for citizens to navigate society. Inflating events for sensation, neglecting others, stereotyping or being disproportionately negative all make a less reliable map. The map also should include news of all our communities, not just those with attractive demographics. This is best achieved by newsrooms with a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. The map is only an analogy; proportion and comprehensiveness are subjective, yet their elusiveness does not lessen their significance.

**9. Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience.**

Every journalist must have a personal sense of ethics and responsibility – a moral compass. Each of us must be willing, if fairness and accuracy require, to voice differences with our

colleagues, whether in the newsroom or the executive suite. News organizations do well to nurture this independence by encouraging individuals to speak their minds. This stimulates the intellectual diversity necessary to understand and accurately cover an increasingly diverse society. It is this diversity of minds and voices, not just numbers, that matters.

### iii. Conventions of reporting on conflict.

Reporters with experience in conflict situations have developed guidelines for reporting and ethical behaviour that have been adopted by the International Federation of Journalists. Some of the major points are summarized here:<sup>3</sup>

“It is our job, through our reporting and through revealing the issues, to help people understand each other’s differences – cultural, religious, ethnic and otherwise. This means reporting with an understanding of their complexity. It means looking beyond the official news for the deeper, fuller story. It means looking for new sources, new ideas and new opportunities to build tolerance. Through providing an understanding of conflict, its impact on ordinary people and by exploring possible solutions, there is a better chance of ending tensions.”

#### **1. Factual accuracy:**

Ensure accuracy and speed by building a bank of diverse and reliable sources of information that will allow journalists to quickly gather and verify information .... Statements should not be accepted at face value from any source, as even “official” sources can be incorrect. Distinguish clearly between first and

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<sup>3</sup> Accessed on Sept. 30, 2005, at [www.ifj-asia.org/page/conflict\\_reporting\\_guidelines.html](http://www.ifj-asia.org/page/conflict_reporting_guidelines.html).

second hand information. Diversity in the newsroom, with reporters from a range of language backgrounds, will break down language barriers and give access to a wider range of sources. Should an error be made, acknowledge it as quickly as possible and correct it.

## **2. Balance:**

Conflict situations are never black and white. Examine and include the views of all parties involved. Go beyond the official line and the empirical data. Reporting the human side of a story will not only hold people's attention, it will also motivate them to become involved in an issue rather than sit back and watch it unfold.

## **3. Sensitivity:**

Unnecessarily mentioning race, religion or ethnicity can offend some people and can either fuel existing stereotypes or encourage others to make assumptions. There are several ways to prevent this outcome. Firstly, try to understand any biases you might have. Secondly, bear in mind how people will react to what is being said and bear this in mind when you write. Thirdly, where possible, use images to communicate details that are difficult to explain in words without causing confusion or offence.

## **4. Context:**

Situating events in their historical context gives readers a better understanding of the current developments. Without context, it is easy to lose sight of the broader picture and the possibility for change or reform. Contextualizing an issue also involves examining the experiences of the people involved. However,

rather than asking a third party or assuming how other groups have been affected, ask them directly. Context represents a vital component of conflict journalism, as it ensures audiences understand the issues involved and prevents them from becoming confused or, worse still, indifferent.

#### **5. Responsibility:**

Without care and responsibility, conflict reporting can amplify existing tensions, opening the way for political manipulation by governments. It is therefore necessary to carefully consider the way certain statements, headlines, images or news content will affect people, particularly minority groups.

#### **iv. Common ways journalists “frame” stories.**

The aforementioned Augie Fleras has written extensively about how the media “problematize” minorities, particularly Aboriginal people. He describes four broad ways they do this:<sup>4</sup>

**Minorities as invisible and irrelevant:** Minorities are underrepresented, apparently unworthy of coverage unless caught up in situations of conflict or crisis. The exclusion of people of colour perpetuates the “white face” of Canada, leaving others marginalized and appearing to be outside the mainstream.

**Minorities as stereotypes:** Images and depictions of minorities are steeped in unfounded generalizations. For example, media stereotypes of Aboriginal people dwell on themes like “the noble savage” or the “drunken, lazy Indian” or the “violent criminal.” The net effect of this stereotyping is that minorities are labeled as unusual, or “the Other,” and this “foreignness” precludes their

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<sup>4</sup> Fleras, op cit.

full acceptance as normal and fully contributing members of society.

**Minorities as social problem:** They are portrayed as having problems in need of solutions that expend an inordinate amount of political attention or a disproportionate slice of national resources. They “create problems” for society by making demands upsetting to the social, political or moral order. Time and again, Aboriginal people are “troublesome constituents” whose claims for self-determination are seen to be at odds with Canada’s liberal-democratic traditions.

**Minorities as tokens:** They are frequently cast as tokens that provide quaint multiculturalism in the form of song and dance, or as stereotypical symbols, instead of ordinary human beings. This narrowcasting of Aboriginals and minorities not only distorts their image, but desensitizes the audience by making it more indifferent to their concerns. Aboriginal people in conflict with each other are portrayed by news media as examples of bloodthirsty, unruly savages, and there is little attempt to put the conflict into some kind of historical or contemporary context.

Frances Henry and Carol Tator have studied the way the news media depict racial minorities from their perspective as cultural anthropologists. In a paper published by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation in 2000, they used discourse analysis to show how media images and narratives carry powerful but coded meanings and messages. These “frames” that such stories fit into “reveal a hard core of resentment held by the Canadian press to minorities engaging in what is after all the most legitimate of all democratic activities, protest and dissent to injustice and inequality.” They identified some of the most common ways journalists frame commentary about the struggle of people of colour and Aboriginal people to achieve their collective rights

and freedoms. They call them the “racist discourses,” many of them unconscious but all of them problematic. They include:<sup>5</sup>

**The discourse of denial:** The principal assumption is that racism simply does not exist in a democratic society. There is a refusal to accept the reality of racism, despite the evidence of racial prejudice and discrimination in the lives and on the life chances of people of colour. The assumption is that because Canada is a society that upholds the ideals of a liberal democracy, it cannot possibly be racist. When racism is shown to exist, it tends to be identified as an isolated phenomenon relating to a limited number of social deviants, economic instability, or the consequence of “undemocratic” traditions that are disappearing from the Canadian scene. This discourse resists the notion that racism is systemic and inherently embedded in our cultural values and our democratic institutions.

**The discourse of equal opportunity:** All we have to do is treat everyone the same and fairness will be insured. Everyone begins from the same starting point and has an equal opportunity to succeed. This paradigm demands no form of pro-active institutional or state intervention, or any dismantling of white institutional power.

**The discourse of blame the victim:** If racial equality is assumed to exist, then the lack of success on the part of a minority group must be due to some other set of conditions. One explanation used by the media is that certain minority communities themselves are culturally deficient. They are more prone to deviant behaviour. This will persist until the

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<sup>5</sup> Henry, Frances and Carol Tator, *Racist Discourse in Canada's English Print Media*, The Canadian Race Relations Foundation, March 2000.

recalcitrants of that group agree to assimilate into mainstream Canadian society.

**The discourse of white victimization:** Demands by minority groups to redress historic injustices are seen to be an unfair burden on established society. This discourse is coded in references to “reverse discrimination” and “preferential treatment.” Anti-racism policies are seen as undemocratic and aligned with creeping totalitarianism.

**The discourse of moral panic:** This presents the mainstream population as experiencing a profound threat or loss of control. The country is described as in crisis, under siege. An isolated case of violence by a member of a racial or cultural minority is seen as an indication of a profound or wider threat to the law-abiding majority. The racialization of crime by the media becomes a signal, a wake-up call to all Canadians.

These academic analyses are important analytical tools to understand the underlying messages contained in commentary articles about Ipperwash, particularly the 153 editorials, opinion columns and letters to the editor that were published during the period under review.

### 3. Who covered the story.

#### i. Which media were at Ipperwash before, during and after the shootings?

The brunt of the ongoing news coverage at Ipperwash for the month before the shooting was done by local reporters for the Sarnia Observer and Julie Carl, Sarnia bureau chief for the London Free Press. Their newspapers filed copies of their stories to the national news co-operative, The Canadian Press, which rewrote the information and distributed it to other papers across

Canada. Although it is hard to generalize, there was a tendency on the part of CP to boil down information for the wider audience, so its rewritten stories missed some of the historical context and on-the-spot description contained in the stories that were published in the Observer and Free Press. Later, when CP sent staff reporters to Ipperwash, the agency provided better detail.

Only three reporters from the national or international media visited Camp Ipperwash in August for what are called “situational” stories. This usually involved staying a day or two, filing one longer story, and leaving.

On the day of the shooting, only three reporters – Paul Morden from the Sarnia Observer, Don Lajoie of the Windsor Star and Julie Carl of the Free Press – were present at Ipperwash. They had done their reporting earlier in the day and went home before the confrontation happened. When news of the shooting flashed out around midnight, they were summoned by their editors back to the park, and were joined over the next 24 hours by a small army of outside media, many of whom had not written a word about Ipperwash since the Stony Pointers seized control of Camp Ipperwash. They were new to the whole story.

This influx included Peter Edwards and Jack Lakey of the Toronto Star, Murray Campbell of the Globe and Mail, Deborah McDougall of Canadian Press (who was joined by Wendy McCann), Ian Timberlake and Joe Warmington of the Toronto Sun, and reinforcements from the Sarnia Observer (Dan McCaffery, Terry Easterby, Nancy McKinnon, Neil Bowen and Scott Stephenson) and the London Free Press (Norm DeBono and Morris Dalla Costa).

#### 4. How the stories were covered.

i. Which general story “frames” were used to tell this story. Did these change after the shootings?

Ipperwash was clearly a news story capable of being “framed” several ways. It was a dispute over land that the federal government promised to return to First Nation people. It was a falling-out between bands. It was a police incident, and a dispute about who fired the first shots. How reporters chose to “frame” the news had the result, over time, of shaping public opinion in the period leading up to the shooting, and the period immediately afterwards. Discerning these “frames” by reading their stories 10 years later is a subjective exercise, so the criteria used here need explanation.

**Frame One: First Nation people as troublemakers.** These stories fit Fleras’ model of minorities being framed as social problems. They tended to treat the occupation as a police incident, with the occupiers cast as those who were doing something illegal or who needed to be controlled. Some of these types of stories did not mention that the occupation stemmed from frustration caused by a 53-year-old land claim. They generally quoted the police and local residents as commenting on the motives and actions of the occupiers in the base or park. When stories took a wider perspective, First Nation people tended to be portrayed as creating problems for society by making demands upsetting to the social, political or economic order. They fit Henry and Tator’s discourses of white victimization and moral panic.

**Frame Two: First Nation people with a legitimate dispute.** These stories always made reference, even if briefly, to the land claim issue, and the fact that it had been either unresolved for 53 years (in the case of the military base) or in dispute (in the case of the burial grounds in the park). First Nation people were usually described as interested in a peaceful resolution of the dispute. In other words, they were treated as citizens protesting

an injustice, rather than being stereotyped into any of the frames identified by Fleras or Henry and Tator.

**Frame Three: First Nation people in dispute among themselves.** These stories mentioned that the Stoney Pointers were a “splinter group” or “rebels” because they openly disagreed with the recognized band at Kettle and Stony Point. As such, their actions were seen to be illegal, illegitimate, or at least questionable. In some cases, these stories talked about how younger people on reserves across Canada were becoming more militant and rebelling against the teachings of their elders, and this was linked to Ipperwash. These stories implied that First Nation people were culturally deficient, unruly “Others,” and generally fit Fleras’ frame of them as stereotypes operating outside the mainstream of Canadian society. This frame also draws from Henry and Tator’s discourses of equal opportunity and blaming the victim. First Nation people are somehow seen as not worthy of receiving any perceived “special treatment.”

The table that follows shows how the stories written before and after the shooting fit into these general frames:

<b>Frames</b>	<b>Before shooting</b>	<b>After shooting</b>
Troublemakers	36 (41%)	93 (48%)

Dispute with government (legal)	22 (25%)	60 (31%)
Dispute among themselves (illegal)	29 (33%)	40 (21%)

Numbers in parenthesis represent percentage of total stories  
See examples of different “frames” of news stories in Appendix A

This table indicates that, as the story continued, the Stoney Pointers were increasingly portrayed as aggressors, obstructionists, or criminals; in other words: troublemakers. The story was covered as a police incident more than a land dispute. These “frames” grew to nearly half the stories written after the shooting.

The percentage of stories that talked about First Nation people engaged in a peaceful resolution of the dispute also increased after the shooting, mainly because many focused on the negotiations among the federal government, police and outside leaders including Ovide Mercredi..

The percentage of stories that focused on the internal dispute between the Stoney Pointers and the Kettle Point band declined after the shooting, mainly because Chief Tom Bressette changed his hard-line stance and tried to embrace the cause of the occupiers after the shooting of Dudley George.

These changing patterns have significance because more than two-thirds of the stories written about Ipperwash in the study period fit frames that suggested the occupiers were engaged in activities that were questionable, rather than being caused by frustration over broken government promises to return the Stony Point lands. The position of the Harris government, which said it would not negotiate with the occupiers until they halted their

“illegal” actions, was consistent with the way the press was framing the story.

Longer, more reflective articles written in newspapers after the shooting tended to link Ipperwash to larger, intractable issues, implying that First Nation people were making undue impositions on the social order. One of the most egregious appeared on Sept. 17 in the Toronto Sun, headlined: “Indian industry: A money pit.” The writer, Robert Benzie, used Reform critic John Duncan as his “lead source,” saying that it’s scandalous how much Canada spends supporting First Nation people – a figure that Duncan put at \$20,000 per capita per year. Benzie began his story this way: “It would be cheaper for taxpayers to buy every Indian living on a reserve a brand new Honda Accord each year than to continue the current funding for natives.” That reinforced a stereotype of First Nation people as lazy recipients of unwarranted handouts from the federal government. Benzie went on: “In this discontented summer of violent standoffs at Gustafsen Lake and Camp Ipperwash, what exactly are Canadians getting for their money?” He answered his own question: “At places like Oka, Ipperwash and Gustafsen Lake, it has seemed to many Canadians as if there were two types of laws – one for natives and one for everyone else.”

Clear message: How much do *we* have to take of this?

Strong messages were also being sent out in the media by articles we can categorize as commentary – that is, editorials, opinion columns and letters to the editor. All were examined to determine if they were “framed” as supportive of First Nation people, unsupportive or more even-handed (calling for an inquiry, or criticizing government for delays in settling land claims, or calling for restraint on both sides). The following table shows how the commentary broke down before and after the shooting.

<b>Tone of opinion</b>	<b>Before shooting</b>	<b>After shooting</b>
Anti-First Nation	14	39
Pro-First Nation	5	40
Even handed	3	22

See examples of different “frames” of opinion in Appendix B

On the surface, it looks like the unsupportive tone of the opinion written before the shooting became more even-handed afterwards, but that would be an over-simplification. Of the 26 supportive expressions of opinion in one key period – from Sept. 19 to Oct. 16 – all but three were letters to the editor written by members of the public, not the longer editorials or columns that carried the weight of the paper’s considered opinion. In fact, First Nation people enjoyed far greater support or sympathy among members of the public than among the people paid by the newspaper to shape public opinion.

It gets worse. Of the three supportive opinion columns that appeared in that period, two were written by “guest” columnists – one an expert in race relations and the other by the chief of the Caldwell First Nation near Windsor. Only one of these columns was written by a journalist. That was by Julie Carl, the London Free Press reporter who was in the forefront of the paper’s news coverage at Ipperwash. Normally, newspapers frown on reporters expressing any opinion on a topic they are supposed to be giving objective coverage to, but in this case her paper allowed her to write a “viewpoint” piece. It was a remarkable piece of

journalism, because it responded to the unsupportive and even racist views expressed by many other commentators and some members of the public. It was labelled “The view from Sarnia” and carried the headline “Ipperwash more than a native issue: Non-natives should strive to learn more about their culture and values.” It began like this:

You have to wonder how the repossession of Camp Ipperwash would have been characterized if natives hadn't been involved. Just imagine if the media had simply not mentioned the culture of the group that had waited 50 years for the return of its land appropriated under the War Measures Act. It's not too far-fetched to suppose a group not identified as native would have received more public support in its struggle to have the land returned.

One can imagine that church groups would have taken a stand, saying families had been torn apart and must have their homes returned. Veterans' associations might have risen to support those group members who were fighting overseas when the land was taken and came back to find their homes gone. Every property owner in the country could have been horrified that the right to ownership was so easily cast aside by the government.

Carl's commentary said the reason Canadians did not react this way to Ipperwash was because of “what you didn't learn in Grade 5.... Those history text books, which portrayed natives as savages in need of civilization by European explorers, were wrong.” It urged readers to fill their gaps in knowledge by consulting local First Nation resources.

As we shall see below, her article differed from most of the other editorials and columns written by journalists because it tried to dispel stereotypes, as opposed to wrapping itself comfortably in them.

## ii. How was the background/context of the dispute described?

In the month after First Nation people seized the Ipperwash military base, media coverage usually put it in the context of a legitimate land dispute. Several articles explored a well-documented history of broken promises by the federal government to return the land it seized from Stony Pointers in 1942 under the War Measures Act. One particularly good one appeared in the London Free Press on Aug. 9, quoting a Stony Point woman who remembered what her family received for giving up its 39 acres. It was enough money for her father to buy a radio and an ornamental deer. In 1981, when the government paid \$2.5 million in extra compensation to the band, the woman received just \$1,000.

This context – as a legitimate grievance about broken promises and meagre compensation – found its way into news stories, lending a certain legitimacy to the occupation of the base.

That all changed when the Stony Pointers moved into the provincial park. At first, reporters seemed frustrated that no one was stepping forward to act as a spokesperson for the group. When they did manage to talk to the occupiers, they said they were frustrated by the slow pace of negotiation for their land, and there was a sacred burial ground in the park. But the Ministry of Natural Resources came out with what seemed like a definitive statement that those claims were not true. It applied for an injunction and said: “The ministry’s stance is we have legal entitlement to the park, there is no land claim and this is an

illegal occupation. We would like them to leave. The rest is a policing issue.”

After that, if news stories mentioned any reason for the occupation (and many times they did not) it was something like this: “Protesters said the park is the site of a sacred burial ground. But a spokesperson for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources said a study in 1972 found no signs that such grounds existed within Ipperwash park.”

Instead of independently trying to verify who was right, reporters looked elsewhere for context. One example was a Montreal Gazette takeout on Sept. 16 that focused on the young, militant Indians who it said were rising up against their own elders. It said Ipperwash and Gustafsen Lake were examples, and they were “inspired by the 1990 Oka crisis, when heavily armed Kanesatake warriors blockaded the Mercier bridge for most of the summer. The lengthy standoff ended with the intervention of the Canadian Armed Forces and cost taxpayers more than \$200 million.” This framed the dispute as part of a history of expensive demands by First Nation people on Canadian society (white victimization).

### **iii. How many stories referred to other disputes like Oka or Gustafsen Lake?**

There was a significant tendency to do this. Before the shooting, 31 percent of the published articles made that connection (32 of the 102 stories). Only 4 percent (6) said there was no connection.

This tendency increased after the shooting. Forty-two percent of the news, commentary and letters to the editor made direct connections between Ipperwash and Oka or Gustafsen Lake (165 of the 394 stories). Less than 1 percent (3) said there was no connection.

To be fair to reporters, many of these references may have been written in by editors who had access to wire services, in an attempt to “round up” coverage of First Nation issues. But this practice had a damaging effect on public opinion and likely encouraged commentators to think that a rising tide of First Nation violence, perhaps co-ordinated or linked in some way, was about to sweep across Canada. That certainly never happened. Linking Ipperwash to Oka and Gustafsen Lake may be relevant and justified, if the reference is to rising frustration with land claims, but it is quite inaccurate to compare the gun-toting warriors at Oka and Gustafsen Lake with the unarmed Stoney Pointers. Most of the stories that mentioned a connection did that.

#### **iv. How many stories said or suggested that the occupiers had guns?**

A distinct minority of news and opinion articles both before and after the shooting reported correctly that there was no actual evidence the occupiers had guns. By far the majority of articles that mentioned firearms said either that the Stoney Pointers had them, or that the police claimed they did and the occupiers denied it. In the latter case, the OPP claims that they were responding to gunfire from the occupiers almost always came first in the story, giving it more credence. Only once before the shooting and seven times after it did the occupiers’ claim – that they weren’t armed – come before the OPP reports.

	<b>Before shooting</b>	<b>After shooting</b>
Had guns	9	42
In dispute, with OPP side first	2	62
In dispute, with Native side first	1	7
No guns	5	16

These are the number of stories that mentioned guns

The result of this reporting meant that the police version was given prominence over the occupiers' version in 62 percent of the stories written before the shooting, and 81 percent after it. Is it any wonder the commentators tended to have a field day discussing Ipperwash in the context of what they felt was increasing First Nation violence and lawlessness across Canada?

#### **v. What words were used to describe the occupiers of the park and base?**

How people are described can have a significant impact on how legitimate their situation seems to be in the minds of readers. The occupiers of the park were almost always described as “rebels” or “dissidents” or members of a “splinter group” – all words that implied they may not be engaged in legal activity. Those descriptions tended to discredit the Stoney Pointers and make their claims somehow less important.

Much of this characterization came initially from Tom Bressette, chief of the Kettle and Stony Point band, who saw the occupation as a roadblock to his band's negotiations with the federal government. He said the occupiers were “wild and lawless,” and

said outside agitators among them were stirring things up. The Globe and Mail quoted unnamed sources saying that police “had identified several radical aboriginal activists among the people visiting the camp. They included members of the Mohawk Warrior Society and more strident members of the American Indian Movement.”

This was not verified by any reporter, yet it took on a life of its own. Several news stories picked up the term “warrior” to describe the Stoney Pointers, and a CP story on July 31 said a “warrior flag” was raised high on a flagpole in occupied Camp Ipperwash. It is not clear what that was, since there is no description, but the flag of the warrior society is only subtly different from the “unity flag” that stands for unity, justice and peace.

The issue of whether the occupiers had guns was also undocumented. The only sources were Bressette and the unnamed police sources in the Globe and Mail. Yet United Press International said the occupiers in the park “exchanged fire” with police the night Dudley George was killed.

The idea that angry young men, spurred on by outside militants, were on the warpath, and this was happening elsewhere across Canada, took root early in the media. Reporters were likely to seize on the most extreme comment by outsiders in the days following the shooting, instead of the many voices that urged negotiation and moderation. A story that ran in the Toronto Star on Sept. 8 began with the statement that Ipperwash “brought calls for blood and revolution from Indian leaders across the land.” But when you examine the sourcing, only a university professor and one of six First Nation leaders the reporter interviewed expressed any fear of violence or revolution. Everyone else spoke of moderation. The story was picked up by CP and used across the country.

This sort of “framing” produced some patronizing and scare-mongering editorials, like one in the Globe and Mail the next day that said: “There is no question that the rebels in Ontario and British Columbia have stepped beyond the law, that Canadian authorities must respond in some way. But we must try to avoid participating in a Balkanization of the First Nations, in a contrapuntal crescendo of defiance, violence, confrontation and division.”

As usual, it was a letter to the editor that tried to bring editors back to the facts. A reader wrote the Windsor Star on Sept. 21 asking why “the incident in which Anthony George was killed has been characterized as a gun battle .... I do not recall evidence coming to light which would cast a large enough shadow of doubt as to completely obliterate the Stoney Point natives’ version of the incident.”

#### **vi. Was the occupation described as legal or illegal?**

It must have been difficult for reporters to treat the occupation of Ipperwash Provincial Park as legal when all their main sources were insisting it was illegal – the provincial solicitor-general’s department, which applied for and was granted an *ex-parte* injunction to evict the Stoney Pointers the day after the shooting; the ministry of natural resources, which repeatedly said there were no sacred burial grounds in the park; the OPP, which issued several arrest warrants for Stoney Pointers for minor offences; and even the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation band itself, which described them as “rebels” or a “splinter group.”

As a result, when Indian Affairs Minister Ron Irwin announced on Sept. 13 that federal documents had just been uncovered that supported the existence of burial grounds at Ipperwash, almost everyone missed the story. Most led off their stories with details

of Irwin's announcement that a tentative agreement had been reached between First Nation leaders and the government to end the standoff. Only Peter Edwards of the Toronto Star seemed to recognize the significance. His story began: "Indian protesters may have been right all along when they claimed that Ipperwash Provincial Park was built on a sacred Chippewa burial ground, the federal Indian affairs minister says."

But by then, the "framing" of the story as an unwarranted seizure of a provincial park by renegade First Nation people was so well established, it made little difference to the ongoing coverage.

### **vii. When did the call for an inquiry begin, and how was it pursued by the media?**

First Nation leaders, including Ovide Mercredi, began calling for an inquiry the first day after the shooting. It got very little coverage, usually as a secondary point somewhere down in the story. No one explored in detail, in either news coverage or commentary, why such a call might be justified, or what such an inquiry might look at. It was treated as a knee-jerk reaction by First Nation leaders who may have had their own reasons for making the provincial government look bad.

Even when the independent Law Union of Ontario supported the calls for an inquiry, it received only perfunctory coverage. No reporters indicated in any of the stories written in the month after the shooting that they had questioned Premier Mike Harris or his Solicitor-General, Robert Runciman, about the need for an inquiry. It was a story line that nobody seemed interested in picking up at that time, and may be one reason why it took 10 years for an inquiry to be held.

**viii. When there was commentary on the occupation/shooting (editorials, opinion columns, letters to the editor) was it pro or anti-First Nation?**

Before and after the shooting, newspapers published a total of 92 opinion columns and editorials, and 61 letters to the editor. While the letters to the editor were more balanced – although certainly strongly stated, both pro and con – the commentary written by columnists and editorial writers was decidedly anti-First Nation. Indeed, the strongest finding of this research is the extent to which opinion-makers in the press ignored or manipulated the facts and resorted to crude stereotypes of First Nation people.

Here is columnist Catherine Ford, writing in the Calgary Herald on Sept. 22: “Canada’s first nations would like us to see them as the strong and spiritual inheritors of a brave nation. That’s tough when, as a visible minority, many of the natives we see are face down in flower beds or holding up the corners of seedy hotels.”

Here is Peter Worthington, in the Toronto Sun on Sept. 28: “It’s wrong to have a double standard towards Indians when they commit unlawful acts, and it’s a form of reverse racism to tolerate from them what we wouldn’t tolerate from other citizens – blocking roads, claiming as ‘sacred’ land owned by others, sit-ins, firing guns.” His column argued that native people should be assimilated so they have the same rights and responsibilities as other “full citizens.”

Here is Diane Francis in the Toronto Sun on Aug. 5: “Last week’s cowardly evacuation of Camp Ipperwash by Canada’s military after a few native rowdies broke the law is simply the latest example of Ottawa’s cowardice when it comes to dealing with aboriginal problems.... But the question is why abandon Ipperwash when the taxpayers paid for it twice? Even worse,

why abandon it because thugs, not representative of the native community there, are causing trouble? Why not arrest wrongdoers?"

Here is William Johnson, whose column for the Montreal Gazette also appeared in the Edmonton Journal, Hamilton Spectator, Calgary Herald and Kitchener Record: "The real problem isn't marijuana. The real problem is the threat of fascism growing in some native communities. That is a much more dangerous plant and should be a real concern for everyone, native and non-native alike. ...A flagrant case of fascist thuggery occurred on the weekend at Camp Ipperwash, in Ontario ... A self-appointed group of Chippewas has made a power grab of its own."

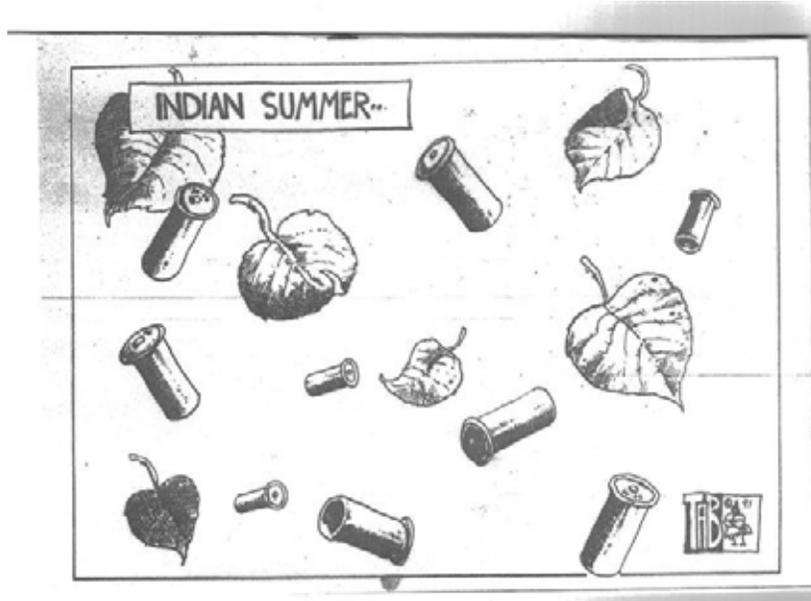
Here is Rory Leishman in the London Free Press on Aug. 10: "Canada is supposed to be a democracy in which the rules of law apply equally to every citizen, regardless of race, creed, colour or any other extraneous consideration. However, in recent years ... (government) routinely allows law-breaking Indians to get away with crimes that would land the rest of us in the slammer."

Here is Claire Hoy in the Vancouver Province on Sept. 12: "A thug by any other name is still a thug." Although he acknowledged the facts of what happened at Ipperwash were still in dispute, "there is no doubt who I believe, and it isn't the militant warriors who think they have the right to take up arms against the state."

And here is Matthew Fisher, writing in the Toronto Sun on Sept. 17 from Singapore, of all places: "One of the best things about being 12 time zones away from Canada is that I no longer have to cover obscure and occasionally bloody Indian standoffs such as those at Camp Ipperwash and Gustafsen Lake. No longer do I have to travel hundreds of miles down bad roads with scores of other journalists to dusty, mosquito-infested villages for a 'media

opportunity' with a bunch of unkempt and menacing thugs who are eager for their moment of fame. Here's the drill: The thugs always swear a lot. When not swearing or threatening mayhem, they invoke the name of the Great Spirit to justify their cause .... As regards the current protests ... it is an ugly truth that violence can sometimes only be stopped with greater violence. The federal and provincial governments are slowly learning that it is pointless, as well as humiliating, to respectfully negotiate with citizens who threaten public order by taking up arms."

Is it any wonder the Calgary Herald published this cartoon, picking up on the theme of a violent "Indian Summer" of native warriors:



A reader quickly wrote in: "I reacted with shock to the callous insensitivity behind the Herald's editorial cartoon of Sept. 12, which portrayed Indian summer as a mixture of falling leaves and falling shell casings. It belittled the seriousness with which

aboriginal people and their supporters view the issues underlying the confrontations at Ipperwash and Gustafsen Lake.”

It wasn't the last time readers would rise in defence of the facts. A London Free Press reader wrote on Sept. 16: “I am disturbed that people have found in the banner of ‘Canadian law and order’ a refuge for their anti-native racism. But I guess I'm not surprised. After all, the law reflects the fundamentally racist conditions under which crown land was acquired in the first place.”

But, of course, all the anti-First Nation rhetoric being rolled out by editorials and opinion columns struck a chord in the darkest souls of Canadians, and there were many letter writers who took a hard line. The Windsor Star asked its readers on Sept. 16 if they felt First Nation people had been treated fairly by governments on land claims. All but 13 of the 77 callers said governments had been fair. One said: “One hundred years ago, natives thought they were making out like bandits selling land that they didn't really believe they owned in the first place ... Today, natives are crying at the stupidity of their forefathers, but that's tough, isn't it. That's business.”

A letter in the Toronto Sun the same day said: “I believe anyone who participates in terrorist-type activities should be punished to the greatest extent of the law. You can call me racist, a bigot, a redneck or anything else you want, but you better call me Canadian and a person who believes in equality to the letter of the law for all.”

The editorial page of a newspaper is supposed to be a place of considered opinion, where editorial writers sort out fact from fiction and hand out the paper's prescriptions for the world's larger problems. In the case of Ipperwash, however, many papers made their minds up so quickly they seemed to almost fall over themselves. An example is the London Free Press, which

ran two editorials on Ipperwash a few days before the shooting, taking opposite positions. The first, on Aug. 29, appealed for peaceful negotiation to end the occupation of the military camp and said, rather prophetically: “Canada should not see another life lost over a native land dispute.” The second, published on the day Dudley George was shot by police, called the occupation of the provincial park a “hooligan act” and said “a small group of natives ... just crossed the line separating civil protest from terrorism.”

As we point out below, 10 newspapers ran editorials within two days of George’s death, almost all of them critical of the occupation. Yet no one knew for certain what had happened at Ipperwash the night of Sept. 6.

Commentators would have served their readers better by following the journalistic principles of verification, remembering they have a responsibility to act as independent monitors of power, and basing their opinions on the facts and keeping them in context. One of the few columnists who exercised this role was Tom Walkom of the Toronto Star, who on Sept. 9 examined the unanswered questions: “What isn’t yet clear is why the OPP responded in such force ... What is clear, however, is that a fairly manageable case of vandalism connected to a political occupation of a park (which was closed for the season anyway) turned into a three-hour, white-hot confrontation that left one dead and two seriously injured.” Walkom called for an inquiry – one of the few columnists to do so – and pointed a finger at the government of Mike Harris.

Editors, who are responsible for making sure everything that is published follows the highest journalistic principles, seemingly failed to apply those principles scrupulously to columnists and editorial writers.

## **5. Sources: Whose story was told.**

## i. Who was used as the “lead source” in the stories?

A “lead source” is the first person quoted in any news story. Such a person often makes comments that relate to the angle or “frame” of the story. Their version of events is given prominence owing to the fact that they generally appear in the first few paragraphs and are often placed there to corroborate or explain the reporter’s interpretation of events (the angle).

In the month before the shooting, the most frequently used lead sources were “outside natives,” usually First Nation leaders who did not directly represent those occupying the camp and provincial park. Tom Bressette, chief of the Kettle and Stony Point band, and Ovide Mercredi, grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations, were most often mentioned (14 times in the 68 news stories). Various Stoney Pointers appeared as lead sources 13 times, giving them almost equal prominence to the outside native spokespeople. They were followed by military officials and politicians. In all those stories, Stoney Pointers – those really in the know about what was going on – were outnumbered as lead sources by outsiders 47-13. Very often, claims by outsiders were published without any reaction or corroboration from the occupiers. For example, there were reports that the occupiers of the military base had guns and were being directed by outside agitators, but no reporters ever verified this from inside Camp Ipperwash. This was a period when the press had relatively free access to the base.

The following chart compares who the lead sources were before and after the shooting. The first number is the original news stories (68 before and 275 after), and the number in parenthesis is the total published versions of those stories (128 before and 405 after).

<b>Lead Source</b>	<b>Before shooting</b>	<b>After shooting</b>
Outside natives	14 (32)*	111 (187)
Stoney Pointers	13 (27)	30 (60)
OPP	4 (9)	25 (25)
Military	11 (20)	0 (0)
Political/gov't	8 (20)	31 (42)
Campers/locals	4 (6)	16 (21)
Others	6 (7)	18 (23)

\* Number in parenthesis is from the total number of stories published. The same story (usually from Canadian Press) was sometimes published in more than one paper. This figure has been used to show the total number of exposures for the source's point of view.

As we can see from the chart, Stoney Pointers became much rarer sources for their own story after the shooting of Dudley George. They are outnumbered as lead sources by the total number of outsiders, 201-30. More than half of the sources were “outside natives.” There appear to be several reasons for this. The government of Mike Harris made it clear that it would not negotiate with the occupiers until they left the park. That thrust Mercredi and Bressette into the media spotlight. Several reporters also found it difficult to find spokespeople for those occupying the park, either because they had not developed sources among them or because the occupiers were not interested in talking to the media for reasons of suspicion (media had not been particularly interested in telling the story from the Stoney Pointers’ perspective up until that time, and there is evidence that undercover police posed as reporters to gather information). On the other hand, few reporters seemed to be motivated to report the story from inside the barricades. Certainly, none were near Ipperwash when the shooting happened, and no media reported from inside the park in the month following. At Oka in 1990, reporters behind the barricades probably were a factor in the

peaceful resolution of the standoff, because they were there as independent witnesses to the behaviour of both sides.

Politicians also appeared more often than Stoney Pointers as lead sources, even though Ipperwash was hardly a partisan political story yet. Only once was an opposition politician cited as a lead source; invariably it was a Conservative provincial politician (Premier Harris, a member of his cabinet, or the local MPP) or federal Indian Affairs Minister Ron Irwin, calling the occupation illegal and urging the Stoney Pointers to vacate the park. There was almost no critical questioning of those holding political power. Nor was the question of an inquiry into the shooting pursued, even though that was called for within two weeks of the shooting by Mercredi, the Chiefs of Ontario, and the Law Union of Ontario.

Although the Stoney Pointers seldom appeared as lead sources, the stories that did feature their point of view were distributed widely, mainly by Canadian Press, which enjoyed better access to First Nation sources than many newspapers, both because it initially assigned staff reporter Deborah McDougall, who happens to be of that heritage herself, and because the well-connected local Sarnia Observer and London Free Press were filing copy to CP. It was Canadian Press that first reported that the Stoney Pointers had a different version of the shooting than the OPP.

As the analysis of sourcing makes clear, reporters did not give much prominence in their stories to what the Stoney Pointers had to say about the shooting of one of their band members. For one reason or other, the reporters and their editors failed to exercise the discipline of verification. They also failed to follow a story line that may have made them question the actions of the Harris government.

**ii. To what extent did reporters take the OPP version of events as fact; to what extent did they indicate there was another, conflicting version of events?**

On the morning after the shooting of Dudley George, the OPP issued a press release saying “a disturbance” just outside the park had left one First Nation person dead and two others seriously injured. It gave this version of what happened:

At 7.55 p.m., a private citizen’s vehicle was damaged by a number of First Nations people armed with baseball bats. As a result of this, the OPP Crowd Management Team was deployed to disperse the crowd of First Nations people which had gathered at that location, which is township property adjacent to Ipperwash Provincial Park and local cottages.

As the crowd was dispersing into Ipperwash Provincial Park, officials were confronted by First Nations persons hurling rocks at the officers. As the Crowd Management Unit was leaving the area, a school bus and a full sized vehicle drove through the provincial park fence striking a dumpster, then pushing the dumpster and the vehicles into the Crowd Management Team.

Occupants of those two vehicles fired upon Police officers and subsequently Police officers returned fire.

At 6.23 p.m. on Sept. 7, still in time for newspaper reporters to include it in their next-day stories but probably too late for them to try to corroborate it by attempting to reach First Nation sources who had been there, the OPP released a more detailed “chronology of events.” Curiously, there was no mention of what had previously been called a “Crowd Management Team.”

Approximately 40 Emergency Response Team members approached the parking lot where the individuals were gathered. As the ERT team approached, the persons retreated into the provincial park. The ERT team began to back off. As they did this, individuals attacked the officers with rocks and sticks, striking the officers. One person was arrested. The team was ordered to back out. As they were forming up, a school bus and a full-size vehicle accelerated through a fence from the park. The bus and vehicle were side by side, they pushed away a dumpster and plowed into the officers. Numerous officers were struck, causing officers to withdraw. As the car drove, a handgun was produced out the window and an occupant in the vehicle began firing into the crowd of officers. Then a rifle was seen from the bus, also shooting. Four ERT members and three TRU members returned gun fire. The vehicles sped away. No casualties were observed at this time.

A short time later, 911 calls were received of persons needing an ambulance at the army camp entrance. Subsequently, three male individuals were transported to Strathroy Hospital by ambulance and private vehicle.

Another press release was issued that day, Sept. 7, from the Chiefs of Ontario in Toronto. Signed by Grand Chief Gordon Peters, it strongly condemned the shootings by the OPP, which it said had used “heavy-handed tactics.” The sudden escalation of the

incident “came as a surprise to many chiefs since the First Nations at the park were unarmored and peaceful,” the press release said. It blamed the provincial government for heightening the climate of confrontation, and said the Chiefs of Ontario would be demanding a full-scale inquiry into this “deplorable incident.”

So when the press went to bed with its Sept. 8 editions, it had available to it two sides of the dispute, even though the First Nation version came from an organization and not those actually involved in the occupation.

An analysis of the stories that reporters wrote in the two days after the shooting shows that most relied on the most available sources – Bressette, Mercredi and the OPP. Of the stories that mentioned details of the shooting, five relied solely on what the OPP said in its press release, and another 18 put the OPP version first, followed by a denial from a First Nation source. Eleven other articles gave prominence to the Stony Pointers' contention that they had no guns. This occurred either because the source was Mercredi, who broke the first news of the shooting before the OPP said anything, or in a story – quite often a sidebar story that was given less prominence than the main news story of the day – that quoted a Stony Pointer who had been at the scene. Only a handful of stories contained a mention of the press release put out by the Chiefs of Ontario. So for the first two days of news coverage after the shooting, the main thrust of the news stories gave prominence to the OPP point of view. The Sarnia Observer ran a chronology of the shooting pieced together entirely from the OPP press release, and also ran a “historical background” to the land claim dispute that was credited to the provincial solicitor-general’s ministry.

Even so, some coverage stood out from the rest for its cautious fairness. One story filed by Canadian Press on Sept. 7 began this way: “Police and aboriginals involved in a standoff blamed each other for the death of a protester after a wild clash involving a charging school bus ended in a bloody gun battle.” It quoted the OPP first, but then quoted Roderick George, a Stony Pointer, as saying “there were absolutely no weapons used by us.”

The London Free Press, on Sept. 8, found a responsible way to convey to its readers that there were conflicting claims. It ran two separate stories on page 3 under a common headline: “Two versions of same event: Who fired the first shot?” The First Nation denial appeared on the left, or first, and the official OPP press release on the right.

Sarnia Observer reporters at the scene wrote a number of stories quoting Stoney Pointers who had been at the scene of the shooting. They included Rod (Judas) George, father of the 16-year-old Chippewa boy who had been shot by police while driving the bus, and the wife of Bernard George, the band councillor and would-be peacemaker who had been beaten to within an inch of his life by police in riot gear, touching off the melee. Both made strong statements challenging the police version of events, but neither were picked up by Canadian Press and given wider coverage.

One of the very few columnists who managed to do his own reporting from Ipperwash in this period was Morris Dalla Costa of the Free Press. On Sept. 9, he wrote that “the image of all the natives being strident, confrontational warriors is incorrect. The majority are proud natives who have waited years for their due.”

While news reporters were at least trying to reflect the two sides of the story, editorial writers and most opinion columnists were throwing caution to the winds. Ten newspapers ran editorials on Ipperwash in the first two days after the shooting, most of them critical of the occupiers. The Edmonton Journal admitted that the details of what happened are openly being disputed, but added that one thing was clear – “Dudley George and his two wounded compatriots are not martyrs to any cause. They were at best misguided, believing that native land claims could be settled by simple force.” The Vancouver Province editorialized that authorities should not “cave in” to native demands, and that it was up to the natives now to show they were able to act responsibly. The Hamilton Spectator asserted that “there is a big difference

between native protest and confrontation, between civil disobedience and armed rebellion which seriously endanger public safety.. Those boundaries were crossed at Ipperwash this week and the resort to violence cannot be condoned.”

Even worse were several “analysis” articles that ran in papers on Sept. 8 and 9. These articles tried to set the violence at Ipperwash in some wider perspective – and invariably that perspective was one of increasingly militant First Nation people taking the law into their own hands. Significantly, all were written by reporters who had not been to Ipperwash. The most apocalyptic version was by Jack Aubry of the Ottawa Citizen, whose story began: “The much-predicted Indian revolution in Canada has begun.” It went on to add, without citing any evidence or source, that “the shock waves from an Indian man being killed by police will be felt from coast to coast. It appears likely that highways will be blocked and government offices will be occupied in the next weeks. Maybe even some rail lines will be shut down and the odd hydro transmission tower taken down by explosives.”

Very early after the death of Dudley George, the press was “framing” its commentary to fit well-documented discourses of “moral panic” and “white victimization.” What got missed was an independent investigation by the press into some of the claims the OPP and the government were making. Who would order 40 police in riot gear to storm a park in the dark of night to confront natives who were suspected of harbouring arms? Had any guns been seized from First Nation people in the park? What was the OPP’s most heavily armed unit doing at the scene of a peaceful occupation anyway? No one was asking these and other key questions.

### iii. Total sources: Whose story was it?

Using the four time periods mentioned above, we counted all sources quoted in the 343 original news stories published. We excluded opinion articles and letters to the editor because, although some cited sources, they were primarily expressions of opinion by the writer. Using the four time periods allowed us to track the use of sourcing as the story changed.

Sources	July 29 to Sept. 6	Sept. 7 to Sept. 11	Sept. 12 to Sept. 18	Sept. 19 to Oct. 16	All
Outside natives	59	109	87	26	281
Stoney Pointers	32	42	6	12	92
OPP	16	35	27	12	90
Military	23	0	0	0	23
Political/gov't	20	43	53	18	134
Campers/local	11	24	7	28	70
Others	9	16	14	4	43

This chart shows the increasing extent to which the Stoney Pointers became bystanders to their own story as it was spun out in the press after the shooting. Before Sept. 6, Stoney Pointers constituted 19 percent of all sources quoted, but after Dudley George was shot that percentage dropped to 10.6. Increasingly, Ipperwash became a story told through the eyes of outside First Nation leaders, politicians and police. If we isolate the period after the shooting from the data above, even cottagers and local residents got as much coverage as the people still occupying it.

This imbalance in sourcing had the result of marginalizing the people at the centre of the dispute. With their story not being told, opinion writers far from the scene were free to speculate on the meaning of the occupation and the violence that occurred. Motives were imputed to the Stoney Pointers without any opportunity for them to respond or correct the public record. For example, Ipperwash was used as one more sign that young people on reserves across the country were becoming increasingly militant. In actual fact, the

Stoney Pointers occupying Ipperwash were not particularly young. Dudley George was 38, and there were several elders among the occupiers.

The discipline of verification that is supposed to be at the core of good journalism was relaxed to a worrisome degree.

A letter in the Globe and Mail on Sept. 18 asked the kinds of questions that editors should have been asking all along: “I cannot understand why the police shooting at Ipperwash isn’t more of a story. Every picture of the protest before the shooting showed people without guns ... Why would police assault the place if there was any chance protesters had guns? At night? Why would police assault the place at all?”

## **6. Access: Who was where.**

### **i. How many stories were written from the perspective of the First Nation people who were occupying the park?**

The short answer is, not many. Yet the aims, tactics and motivation of the Stoney Point natives, both before and after the shooting, should have been a central part of the story. It is interesting to examine the stories that did attempt to explore that, and how few newspapers chose to run them.

A “viewpoint” story that Morris Dalla Costa wrote for the London Free Press on Aug. 15 featured an interview with Clifford George, 75, one of the occupiers of the military base. He told how his mother’s 40 acres were seized by the government in 1942, while he was away serving in the army. George expressed frustration with the government’s broken promise to give the land back. Although he said he favoured a peaceful resolution to the dispute, he said “the only way I’m leaving this land is feet first.” He took Dalla Costa on a two-hour tour of the base. He also chuckled at rumours that Stoney Pointers had brought in “warriors.” The only people there, he said, were members of the displaced families.

Dalla Costa’s story provided important information. As an opinion piece, it is possible it was not offered by his paper to the Canadian Press or other Sun Media papers, although several other Free Press columns did appear elsewhere. In any event, Dalla Costa’s piece

ran only in the Free Press. Two other similar articles, however, were distributed widely among the papers chosen for this study.

Clyde Farnsworth, a correspondent for the New York Times, wrote a story that his paper ran on Aug. 27, and presumably was available to the several Canadian dailies that subscribe to the New York Times wire service. In it, he talked with Rose Manning, a 65-year-old Stoney Pointer who was evicted with her family when the government seized their land. She described the occupation as a “homecoming.” Farnsworth’s story put it in context as a land claims issue, and said “it is taking place at a time when the Canadian government and the country’s 1.2 million aboriginal people ... are trying to seek new approaches to an often-troubled relationship.” Despite the prestige of the New York Times, no Canadian newspaper ran his story.

(The same day, however, several papers ran a column by Rory Leishman of the Free Press in which he argued that First Nation groups, like those at Ipperwash, routinely break the law and would perhaps best be assimilated into Canadian society without any special rights.)

Two weeks after the shooting, after a spate of stories and columns speculated that the First Nation people still occupying the park may be armed and, just like Gustafsen Lake, the situation could erupt in violence, Wendy McCann of Canadian Press wrote a story that appeared to dispel some of the myths. It quoted Ovide Mercredi as saying “this is not Gustafsen Lake.” The occupiers, he said, had no guns, and McCann observed that there were no visible signs of weapons. She also gave details of the amount of firepower the OPP still had in the area, even though it said there hadn’t been an incident for more than two weeks. McCann’s story was sent out to every newspaper in our study, but it ran only in the Sarnia Observer – labelled as “opinion” instead of the good reporting that it was.

The evidence is very clear: When it came to telling the story from the perspective of the people at the centre of the Ipperwash dispute, who were increasingly under attack from the provincial

government, the police and editorial writers for their supposedly violent tendencies, most reporters and editors looked the other way. They failed to follow many of the guidelines for conflict reporting, including using first-hand sources, seeking out all sides of the dispute, reporting the human side of the story, and situating events in their historical context.

## ii. What did the reporters who covered the story learn from it?

I interviewed three journalists who covered various stages of the Ipperwash confrontation. They are Julie Carl, who was then with the London Free Press; Peter Edwards, who covered it for the Toronto Star; and Marsha Barber, who was a producer for CBC's The National. According to them, the following "best practices" would help to cover such stories better in future:

1. **Get context in every story.** Find out what these events are connected to. The frustration of the Stoney Pointers at 53 years of broken promises to return their land was the main context for the events at Ipperwash in 1995.
2. **Know the history.** It helps explain context, and "frames" the story as part of a continuum of events rather than a spontaneous outburst of unrest. Knowing the history of displacement of the Stoney Pointers, and their troubled relationship with the Kettle Point reserve, might have caused journalists to be wary of quoting Chief Tom Bressette as the sole spokesman of the protesters.
3. **Cover the human dimension.** Tell what the impact of events is on people's lives (both sides).
4. **"Why?" is the most important question to answer.** Why did the Stoney Pointers seize the provincial park? Were there or weren't there actual burial grounds there that might have given them a legal right to be there?
5. **Be skeptical of all sources in a conflict, including the official ones.** Always ask "How can I prove that's right?" or "How do you know that?"

6. **Trust what you can see and what you can prove.** First-hand observation can be the most reliable evidence, so use it in your stories.
7. **Avoid labels and adjectives.** Words like “rebels” or “splinter group” are partisan labels that may serve to marginalize one side. Terming something an “illegal occupation” before a court rules on the matter is risky. Describing people as “warriors” invokes images of the fatigue-clad and masked Mohawks who were armed at Oka. There were none of them at Ipperwash.
8. **Resist the short-cut of stereotypes.** Some may prove to be true, but many are just assumptions, and derogatory ones at that. Avoid generalizing about First Nation people or any other group. Treat those people as what they are – individuals.
9. **Gatekeepers should give commentary articles extra scrutiny.** They carry extra sting. Make sure all opinions are rooted in verified facts. If facts are in doubt, indicate this clearly or hold off until things become clearer.

Julie Carl thought she was just doing her job. But the criticism of the stories she wrote for the London Free Press by white residents of the Ipperwash area surprised her. “People would say, ‘You’re native, aren’t you?’ as if that were to blame for what they thought was my pro-native bias.” When she attended a meeting of On Fire, a local residents’ group, “they told me they couldn’t guarantee my safety. Someone pushed me once at one of their meetings.”

As Sarnia bureau reporter for the Free Press, she began covering Ipperwash in 1993, as the Stoney Pointers began their peaceful occupation of Camp Ipperwash. She had more sources among the occupiers than many reporters. And she found out early that she needed to be skeptical of OPP statements.

“I asked if the police were wearing riot gear the night of the shooting,” she said. “The answer was no. I asked the OPP again. The answer still was no. Then the next morning, when the Stoney Pointers showed us the parking lot, I got my foot caught in something. It turned out to be part of a riot shield.”

She was certain that she put that fact in her story, but there is no mention of it in what the Free Press published.

As for the credibility of First Nation sources at Ipperwash, she said: “So far, every single thing they told me, even the insane things, turned out to be true.”

Carl said her editors insisted that she get both sides of the story, but that she wishes she had fought harder to convince them to staff the story around the clock. Having the resources to do that, she fears, is a “losing battle” in today’s newsrooms. “I said to my editor, if those were the days when we staffed everything, if media were present in Ipperwash that night, Dudley George wouldn’t have been shot.”

It took her until the February after the shooting to convince her editors to let her spend some time with the occupiers of the park, and even then they wouldn’t assign her a photographer, so the story of the resolute Stoney Pointers was not told fully.

Asked to rate media coverage of Ipperwash over-all, she said: “I wouldn’t have given it a grade. I would have sent a note home to its parents. Some days it would be fair, say a B, but many other days it would drop down.”

Two blind spots, she said, were the attention reporters gave Chief Tom Bressette – “we’re used to going after the people in charge” – and the pressure she and others were under to tell how the unrest was affecting local cottagers. “Someone in the newsroom must have had a cottage in the area,” she said. “I thought we overcovered that part.”

From the reaction of white residents she interviewed in Forest, and the ones she heard on radio call-in shows, “it started to dawn on me how deep racism is in this country.”

\* \* \*

Peter Edwards, a general assignment reporter and photographer with the Toronto Star, was one of the first reporters to arrive at Ipperwash after the shooting,

arriving about 2 a.m. on Sept. 7. He found First Nation people blockading Highway 21. He got out of his car with cameras around his neck, and there was a heated discussion about what to do with him. “ ‘Stick him out in front,’ someone said, ‘because the police won’t attack a big white guy from the Toronto Star’.” Now, Edwards thinks back at that as his first sign that things were not as the OPP portrayed them. “If they were armed and dangerous, why would they want me there with a camera?”

His second clue was when he saw the parking lot where the OPP and the Stoney Pointers clashed. “It was about half the size of a high school gymnasium. If there were more than 30 people there with automatic weapons, how come all the native people with guns could miss everybody for 10 minutes? They’re a lot better shots than that.”

Despite this, Edwards says now, the reporters covering the story “were too afraid to question authority. If a police officer is saying it and a Stoney Pointer is saying it, go with the police.” Asked to assess whether the media did a good job in covering Ipperwash, he says “not even close.”

It was a story without images, he says, because the media wasn’t there when the shooting happened. Even afterwards, photographers chose to take stereotypical shots of angry First Nation people. “What if we had a really strong picture of a native person grieving, would that have changed the frame of the story?” he asks.

“I think a lot of reporters were flat out afraid of native people. It was an us and them situation. If Ken Deane was the guy who’d been killed, there would have been more aggressive coverage.”

“There was a reluctance to get to the ‘why’ of the story,” Edwards said. “Why were the natives there? Why did the police march in at night?”

Stoney Pointers were often described as a “splinter group” or a “breakaway group.” Edwards says: “It made them sound like they were a bunch of wackos and not people trying to get back to where they belonged.” It took him a long time to understand that the “43” the Stoney Pointers had inscribed on trees and doors

referred to Treaty 43, which the occupiers claimed established a separate, legal Stoney Point band.

When Edwards did understand the history of the George family better, the idea of calling Dudley George a “rebel” was ludicrous. “We’re treating this guy as a rebel when he got his nickname after a Mountie he saw on TV, Dudley Do-Right, and his last name is supposed to derive from King George.” Many of Dudley’s cousins served in either the military or police.

When he did understand the history of the dispute better, doors opened for Edwards. Glenn George initially gave Edwards a hard time, because he was dismayed by press coverage of Ipperwash. “Then I said, ‘I didn’t realize your family was descended from Tecumseh, and that he died a few miles from here.’ As soon as I started talking about history, his whole face changed. Everything changed with him.”

Edwards told George, “I’m sorry you’re unhappy with the coverage. I’ll just try my best. I can’t promise anything, but I need to have your help on this story.”

The media’s gratuitous linking of Ipperwash with Oka and Gustafsen Lake bothered Edwards. Gustafsen Lake, B.C., is more than twice as far from Ipperwash as Leningrad and London, England. “If we had something going on in Leningrad and something going on in London, we wouldn’t link the two. If I wrote about something happening in two different parts of the country that makes it look like whites are getting violent, people would look at me like I was crazy.” Yet the media routinely do that with First Nation issues, and Edwards says that should stop.

\* \* \*

Marsha Barber was sent to Ipperwash the day after the shooting of Dudley George. Her job as current affairs producer for The National, the CBC’s flagship television news broadcast, was to see what access she could get to the Stoney Point occupiers. If she got in, the CBC would send a camera crew to work on a news documentary. Another CBC crew was there to handle the daily news.

She did her job well. Freed of the pressure to file daily stories, Barber began to establish trust with the women who were shopping for the Stoney Pointers occupying the park. “Obviously, I’m a white woman ... (but) that became less and less of an obstacle as time went on. I understood that there had to be a good level of consensus for anyone to talk to us. I knew that the elders had to weigh in.”

Barber said: “People in the community wanted to tell their stories ... if they thought they were going to get a fair shake.”

A few days later, Barber and her crew got in and did a powerful interview with Marcia Simon, who had been there when Dudley George was shot and who fled with her aged mother to try to phone for an ambulance. “We asked her the question that had to be asked, because the police said they’d been armed,” said Barber, who is now a journalism professor at Ryerson University. “She said our men are hunters, they’re extraordinary shots ... If they’d wanted to, they could have shot the police quite easily. But she said there were no guns in the park until the police came at them.”

At the time, Barber was reading the local newspapers and seeing some of the television news footage. Her impression was that “the issue of whether the natives were armed became a very big issue. They just seem to have taken it for granted that the natives were armed. Nobody had the information to draw the conclusions they did.

“The natives were portrayed as troublemakers. They had guns. The local cottagers felt threatened. The media probably paid too much attention to that,” Barber said. “It’s not easy to make connections and get in. It’s easy to walk up to someone in Forest and ask what they think.”

Even though Barber and her crew got some of the first footage of eyewitnesses to the shooting, their documentary did not appear on The National until mid-1996. When asked if the interview with Marcia Simon should have appeared on the news, Barber says the mission of the news crew, led by reporter Havard Gould, was different. “Our focus was trying to understand the why. I don’t think there was ever a point where he said, ‘Oh, you have an interview with Marcia Simon, can I have it?’ ... I don’t think it was relevant to what he was doing.”

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THERE WAS AN OBVIOUS KEY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE  
CRISIS AT OKA AND THE INCIDENT AT IPPERWASH. AT OKA, IT  
WAS A WHITE POLICE OFFICER WHO WAS SHOT DEAD, WHILE AT  
IPPERWASH THE VICTIM WAS AN ABORIGINAL PROTESTER.  
WHILE NO ONE LIKED TO POSE THE QUESTION, JUST HOW MUCH  
DID THE PUBLIC CARE ABOUT ONE DEAD INDIAN?’

- PETER EDWARDS, PAGE 123

## Appendix A

*Stories to illustrate the three ways Ipperwash was “framed”*

Frame One:

### Troublemakers

*Published by Sarnia Observer, Sept.13, 1995:*

By George Mathewson  
Of The Observer  
FOREST – The cops are everywhere.

They dot the downtown, zip along highways, peer over sunglasses at barricades. The largest single law enforcement operation in Lambton County history has transformed parts of this tree-lined town of 2,200 into an armed camp.

In the wake of an altercation with natives that killed one and injured three people at nearby Ipperwash Provincial Park last week, provincial police pulled back to set up a heavily fortified command post at the OPP detachment here.

Dozens of cruisers, van and trailers sit behind barricades. An OPP helicopter waits in an adjacent soybean field. Like bees in a hive, vehicles leave and return in a steady buzz as residents go about their daily lives.

Residents are ambivalent about their presence. While calm is secured, the police are evidence that the peaceful co-existence which has bound natives and non-natives together here for more than a century has unraveled.

“A lot of people are frightened right now. There are police in fatigues out there and nobody knows what the natives will do next,” said resident Pat Boyd, a former mayor of Forest. “I’m sure the police provide a sense of security. The general population is happy to have the protection.”

Community goodwill for a native occupation of ancestral Camp Ipperwash seemed to crumble when it spread to the provincial park. The shooting of Anthony “Dudley” George and the disputed versions of how it happened have hardened attitudes on racial lines.

“Now both sides are isolated,” said Mrs. Boyd, whose husband owns the Forest Standard newspaper.

“I’m not giving my name,” said a Port Franks man who berated a reporter for the media’s “pro-native” coverage. “I don’t want my house burned down.”

Frame Two:

## Rebels, dissidents

*Published by Kitchener Record on Aug. 3, 1995:*

IPPERWASH (CP) – Dozens of aboriginals who have traveled to an occupied army base. CFB Ipperwash, to support a group of local dissidents embroiled in a land feud are refusing to leave.

A spokesman for the dissident group, which calls its members Stoney Pointers, said Wednesday the supporters are staying on the base, signaling more trouble ahead for this tourist hot-spot on the shores of Lake Huron, southeast of Sarnia.

“After coming here and weathering the storm, we’re not about to leave,” said Glen (sic) George, wearing a T-shirt printed with the newspaper headline “Mercredi Urges Indian Uprising.”

Ovide Mercredi, the grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations, announced last month he was in favor of aggressive confrontation.

The outsiders are on the base in a sign of support for a group of disaffected natives who broke away from the Kettle and Stony Point band to occupy the military base last weekend.

Chief Tom Bressette and elders from the Kettle and Stony Point reserve were planning to descend on the camp today to ask the dozens of aboriginals from reserves in the U.S. and points across Ontario to leave.

All sides in the dispute say they hope for a peaceful settlement.

But Bressette is concerned the outside supporters are agitating the occupiers to ignore his authority.

Bressette, who represents about 1,600 band members, says the occupiers have no right to the land.

Some members say they fear weapons are being brought onto the military base by Mohawks involved in the 1990 armed standoff with the military in Oka, Quebec, a claim the occupiers and police dispute.

“We don’t have weapons. We barely have what you’d call the necessities of life,” says George, whose cohorts have electricity in makeshift homes on the base but no telephones.

Provincial police say they’ll continue to patrol the area in cruisers but will wait for signs of unrest to send in any extra officers.

Frame Three:

## Legal land claim dispute

*This was published by the New York Times on Aug. 27, 1995:*

By Clyde Farnsworth  
The New York Times

IPPERWASH MILITARY RESERVE, Ont. – To Rose Manning, it is a return to the “promised land,” where she was born and where her navel cord lies in sacred Chippewa ground.

“I don’t remember, of course, but there was a little ceremony to show my roots are here because a part of my body is already here,” she said outside one of the barracks at the Ipperwash Military Reserve, on the shores of Lake Huron, 25 miles northeast of Sarnia.

Her family was one of 22 displaced when, under the War Measures Act in 1942, the army seized 2,200 acres, ceded by treaty to the Chippewas in 1825, to establish an advanced infantry training center.

“I was 12 when the army came in and remember clearly,” she said. “My grandfather died building this army base. He was all soaking wet and got pneumonia because of inadequate clothing, and you know they were pushing him because of the war. He was the last man to be buried here.”

The army promised to return the land immediately after the war. Half a century later, Ms Manning, a Chippewa elder and at least 100 other Indians – mainly militants from the local Kettle and Stony Point First Nation tribe and their sympathizers – occupy the base, most recently used for summer cadet training and as an army recreational area.

“We’re here to take up residence, to get what is rightfully ours for our people and our children,” she said.

The move by the militants at Ipperwash is among the most assertive of several recent incidents related to Indian claims, and it is taking place at a time when the Canadian government and the country's 1.2 million aboriginal people, about 4 percent of the population, are trying to seek new approaches to an often troubled relationship.

Billions of dollars are involved in the land claims, and billions more in the royalties that the Indians are now seeking as a result of the extraction of oil and gas and minerals on the former tribal lands.

Although the government agreed in 1994 to return the Ipperwash land, the Kettle and Stony Point tribe, representing 1,600 Chippewas, sued the government in May, seeking \$725 million for its failure to return the base as promised after the war.

The seizure, the suit contends, led to forced overcrowding and other hardships. Today, the land lacks roads, adequate sewage and water systems, all of which will require millions of dollars to install, not including the cost of clearing toxic waste, hydrocarbons and munitions left after years of military use.

"While our people were giving their lives in Europe, the government here in Canada was taking their land away from them and putting us on postage-stamp reserves," Thomas M. Bressette, the tribe's chief, said in an interview.

"We're asking for a share in the resources. We don't want to appear always as beggars, dependent on the government handouts, but we are now being denied the resources that we so willingly gave up to support this nation."

The government has asked the court to reject the lawsuit on the ground that the War Measures Act, under which the property was seized, disallows any right of recourse. The government also argues that because \$50,000 was paid in 1942 to cover moving costs and \$2.4

million in compensation was provided in 1981, it is liable for no further financial responsibility except for the cleanup of the base.

## Appendix B

*Stories that illustrate the different types of opinion articles*

### Anti-First Nation

*This analysis article was published by the Ottawa Citizen and Calgary Herald on Sept. 8, 1995:*

By Jack Aubry

OTTAWA – The fatal shooting of a 38-year-old Chippewa Indian, Anthony (Dudley) George, at Ipperwash Provincial Park in southwestern Ontario makes it official.

The much-predicted Indian revolution in Canada has begun.

The slow-burning fuse to the country's native powder-keg was running short earlier this summer with a number of dangerous uprisings at such places as Eel Ground, N.B., and Adams Lake and Gustafsen Lake in British Columbia. Wednesday night's shooting sets it off.

The shock waves from an Indian man being killed by police will be felt from coast to coast.

It appears likely that highways will be blocked and government offices will be occupied in the next weeks. Maybe even some rail lines will be shut down and the odd hydro transmission tower taken down by explosives. At the least, there will be coast-to-coast native civil disobedience in support of their fallen brother.

Get used to it.

That's what Brian Maracle, a Mohawk writer on Indian issues, says. He says government documents show that the RCMP identified native rebels as the No. 1 threat to national security in the early 1970s.

"I guess we're No. 1 again. This shooting will have a lot of repercussions. It will likely be our Wounded Knee," said Maracle. The 71-day siege at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973 was the last Indian protest in North America which produced a native fatality.

There is one main reason for the unrest this summer. Frustrated dissident Indians are fed up with the political process and politicians – native and non-native – and are no longer willing to wait for results.

Expectations have been raised among Canada's one million aboriginal people during the past five years since the 1990 Oka crisis in Quebec, and some are reaching the conclusion that the governments will not deliver.

With the majority of the aboriginal population being under 20 years old, the situation is particularly volatile. With high unemployment and social problems running rampant on reserves, some of the unrest is simply due to teen restlessness.

The Oka dispute promoted a wave of pro-Indian sentiment among the non-Quebec population in Canada.

This time it is different. These are meaner, harsher days and recent polls have shown the population is taking a more hard-line approach to Indians and land claims.

While the rebels are a minority group from peaceful communities, they are attracting lots of attention by picking up firearms to make their point. National Chief Ovide Mercredi complained this week that the dissidents

at Ipperwash and Gustafsen Lake are hurting the credibility of the Indian movement in the eyes of Canadians.

## Even-handed

*This editorial was published by the Calgary Herald on Sept. 9, 1995:*

The notion that natives are poised to rise as one in rebellion is an insult to aboriginal peoples and borders on racism.

What next – Indians on the warpath? Whites circling the wagons?

The death of a 38-year-old Chippewa man at Ipperwash Provincial Park in Ontario this week has prompted predictions of an imminent uprising.

But focusing attention on a minority of extremists hell-bent on becoming martyrs – implying that aboriginal peoples are of one mind – underscores all that's wrong with Canada's understanding of native issues.

Talk of revolution simply fuels the idea that Canadians should fear their native communities.

Canadians should be concerned. A man is dead. At Oka, it was an officer of the Quebec provincial police, gunning down in a confrontation with Kanesatake Mohawks. There may well be more bloodshed.

But don't dream for a moment that most natives aren't equally fearful of what would come of a real insurgence. Don't imagine that responsible native leaders want their sons and daughters to take up arms, knowing full well which side has the greater firepower.

Anthony George's death is a reminder that those who toy with armed confrontation are as likely to suffer an ignoble death as bask in a hero's welcome.

But to go further and suggest that natives have brought death upon themselves is to ignore Canada's shameful treatment of natives, the outright violation of treaties and the protracted indifference to their poverty.

Natives have legitimate grievances and many have resorted to civil disobedience to draw attention to their cause. While there is never any justification for taking up arms in aid of that cause, no non-native would blindly endure injustice, nor should any native.

In the wake of this week's shootings there will inevitably be demonstrations and protests, perhaps even more violence.

The risk now is that Canadians will hear only the extremists, witness only the barricades and the firearms, assume only the worst, and ignore the softer pleas for negotiation and conciliation.

## Pro-First Nation

*This column was published by the London Free Press on Sept. 25, 1995:*

By Julie Carl

SARNIA – You have to wonder how the repossession of Camp Ipperwash would have been characterized if natives hadn't been involved.

Just imagine if the media had simply not mentioned the culture of the group that had waited 50 years for the return of its land appropriated under the War Measures Act.

It's not too far fetched to suppose a group not identified as native would have received more public support in its struggle to have the land returned.

One can imagine that church groups would have taken a stand, saying families had been torn apart and must have their homes returned.

Veterans' associations might have risen to support those group members who were fighting overseas when the land was taken and came back to find their homes gone.

Every property owner in the country could have been horrified that the right to ownership was so easily cast aside by the government.

One can imagine the letter writing campaigns and the rallies and the outcry for the government to correct the injustice. It's not a stretch to imagine a non-native group wouldn't have had to wait 50 years for its land.

But why is that? Why did seeing this as a native issue make Canadians reaction differently than they might have otherwise.

In part, you can blame it on what you didn't learn in Grade 5. Those history text books, which portrayed natives as savages in need of civilization by European explorers, were wrong. And starting the clock on the history of this land from the time of the Europeans' arrival instead of acknowledging the thousands of years natives lived here before that is also wrong.

Many Canadians fill the gap in their knowledge with the myth that natives are a conquered people who lost their land to us. Not true. Simply put, natives, as a sovereign nation, signed treaties with the Canadian government that let Canadians use the land in return for certain native rights. Too often, treaties have not been respected. For the most part, Canadians have been lousy tenants, enjoying the space while not paying the rent.

Contributing to the problem is many Canadians' fear of natives. So says Jean Koning, a non-native Londoner who describes herself as someone who has stood in solidarity with native people for 30 years.

“We cannot trust what we have learned about native people. We must really learn about them by going to native people and listening to them,” says Koning, who has visited the natives of Camp Ipperwash. “We must listen because they have some very important things to tell us.”

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