

## THE 1942 APPROPRIATION

### 4.1 Introduction

The federal government, pursuant to the *War Measures Act*, passed an Order-in-Council authorizing the appropriation of the land at the Stoney Point Reserve. As is discussed in Chapter 2, the federal government took the position that it was necessary for the Stoney Point people to leave their reserve as the Department of National Defence required the land for a military training camp for soldiers who would be sent overseas to fight in World War II. Despite opposition by the Kettle and Stony Point Band and a vote by them that clearly indicated the Aboriginal people did not want to leave their homes and land, the federal government compelled the Stoney Point people to relocate in the spring of 1942. The Canadian government promised the Aboriginal people that the land would be returned and that the relocation would only be temporary.

This section discusses the impact of the 1942 appropriation as described by Aboriginal witnesses who testified at the Inquiry. It describes the emotional turmoil of the forced relocation of the Stoney Point people, the loss of their livelihood and self-sufficiency, and the friction that resulted between the Aboriginal people in Kettle Point and Stoney Point.

Many people from Stoney Point were firmly convinced that it was not necessary for the Department of National Defence to use their particular land as a training camp. There were other properties in the area that were equally suitable for the military's needs.

### 4.2 Were There Alternative Suitable Sites for the Military Camp?

Aboriginal witnesses maintained that the Canadian government had several options available in the area for the establishment of a military camp, other than the land at the Stoney Point Reserve. They were of the firm conviction that the dislocation of their people, who had lived on that land for many generations and who had a deep connection to this land, was unnecessary.

According to a document from the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation, the Department of National Defence had previously established the Pinehill Camp training facility in 1938 on land near Thedford, a few kilometres from the Stoney Point Reserve. Local merchants supplied the needs of Pinehill

Camp. Despite the intense local lobbying to keep the base open as a permanent facility, the military training facility was closed in 1940.

According to Clifford George, a resolution was passed by the Council at Thedford that offered Pinehill Camp to the military without charge for the duration of the war. The Department of National Defence declined, mainly because it would be too costly to provide an adequate water supply system to Pinehill Camp. Mr. George said, “[W]e were quite aware of the huge piece of land there that was offered to them.” He maintained that to save the expense of installing pipeline to Pinehill Camp, the federal government decided to move people from the Stoney Point Reserve to the Kettle Point Reserve in violation of the Treaty of 1827. Clifford George said:

The *War Measures Act* should never have been implemented ... on a reservation — on us. There was no need for it.

Elizabeth Stevens, Band Councillor and Administrator at the Kettle and Stony Point Reserve, also believed it was completely unnecessary for the federal government to seize the Stoney Point Reserve in 1942. There were neighbouring properties that were a “perfect choice for the army to take in 1942 and they chose not to.” Cottage properties and other land not protected by a treaty, she argued, could have been appropriated by the Department of National Defence rather than the Stoney Point Reserve. Ms. Stevens agreed that the seizure of a complete reserve is one of the most egregious acts committed against First Nations people in the twentieth century.

Stoney Point residents clearly voiced their opposition to the removal of their people from the reserve land. As discussed in Chapter 2, Mrs. Greenbird and others wrote letters of protest to the federal government, lawyers were contacted, and significantly, the people on the reserve unequivocally voted against the federal appropriation.

First Nations people claim that the federal government either did not understand the connection of the Stoney Point people to their land or were indifferent or insensitive to their deep attachment. They believe that the Creator gave the land to their people. In the words of Clifford George, “the Creator put us there” with all the resources necessary for [our] subsistence:

... everything was there for our livelihood ... everything was in there. Even to the weaving of baskets, the making of chairs, the timber and everything, the fish, because we used it all. Everything.

Stoney Point people “have a very strong conviction” that the land on the reserve was “spiritually given” to them. Clifford George agreed that the Canadian government had several land options in the area on which to establish a military training base, including large farm lots near the reserve owned primarily by retired people:

As far as I’m concerned, they had ample lands right across from us there, which was only three farms in that mile and a quarter and it was open land. And these people that owned that land would have — because they [were] retired anyway.

Former Chief Bonnie Bressette, who, like Clifford George, grew up on the Stoney Point Reserve, believes the federal government paid little attention to the spiritual attachment and economic dependency of the First Nations people to this land:

... the attachment that my aunts and my uncles and my grandparents had for the land, and all the other people that moved from there ... it was their life, their life was on that land.

In her view, it was precisely because the land belonged to Aboriginal people that the federal government thought it could more easily and with less resistance set up a military training camp on that property. As she said at the hearings:

A: [I]t was home and they didn’t consider it our home; it was just Anishnaabe people on there.

Q: It was easy to take?

A: Yes.

### **4.3 The Forced Relocation in Spring 1942**

Residents of Stoney Point described the forced relocation by the federal government as devastating and “traumatic.” Rose Manning remembers that even before they were evicted, the military began to construct buildings in preparation for the army camp. Government officials also moved machinery onto the reserve to extract stone from the quarry:

... they brought in some big machinery and they started chopping in the ground and they got the finest of stone out of that stone quarry ...

And we were still living there. They were starting to build an army camp at that time.

Daniel George and other residents of Stoney Point felt powerless to confront the federal government. As he explained to his grandson Kevin Simon, “it was something that should not have been done but ... they had no course of action to basically fight it.”

Aboriginal people who lived on the reserve at the time of the 1942 appropriation recalled the emotional and physical upheaval of that spring day when they were evicted from their land. Some homes were bulldozed and others were placed on blocks and moved. The move took place during the day. People returned from work to find their reserve abandoned, their homes destroyed, and their belongings broken. As Rose Manning said:

... they jacked up their house and took them without even wrapping their dishes up, and they [came] home with broken dishes on the floor and no handles on their cups. And there w[ere] a lot of stories like that.

Bonnie Bressette remembers the day her house was lifted onto blocks and moved to a field at Kettle Point:

It was kind of like out in the hayfield, because I know the weeds [were] about that high ...

Then they put our house out in the field ... [I]t was up on these big blocks for a long time until he [her father] was able to get enough money for a foundation to put the house back down again because we had to climb up on these big blocks that he had put there for steps.

Her father received a paltry sum, approximately \$70, for the relocation. The land at Kettle Point to which people were transplanted was much smaller in size and lacked the resources necessary to sustain families. As former Chief Bressette explained, “[M]y dad relied an awful lot on the bush, but ... at Kettle Point at that time, he didn’t have [any] bush.” At the Stoney Point Reserve, her family had been completely self-sufficient. The government did not give her father money to buy land at Kettle Point.

Liz McKinnon, Clifford George’s aunt and schoolteacher, had forty acres of land next to Clifford’s grandparents’ property. Liz McKinnon was another Stoney Point resident who adamantly did not want to leave the reserve. Clifford George

described her forcible removal as Ms. McKinnon sat on her porch with a shotgun across her lap:

... she sat on her porch, daring people to come over ... [B]ulldozers were right behind her house, ready to bulldoze it down, and she sat in her chair outside with a shotgun across her knees, just daring people to come.

And that's why they had to pick her up; I don't [know if] the gun was even loaded. But she was just trying to scare them. But that didn't stop them ... they just picked her up with her gun and all, and put her in her truck, and they bulldozed her place down.

They d[id] that to most of the houses there, and, as you know, nobody's able to keep up fixtures on the houses and stuff like that ... [A] lot of the houses ... [weren't] moveable at all ... so there was a very few ... that [were] moved to Kettle Point at the time.

Clifford George's grandparents' two-story home was bulldozed, as were their two large barns and chicken coops. As Mr. George sadly said, "[T]hey were all just destroyed." His grandparents lost their farm and their bush lots. People were inadequately compensated for the loss of their land and their resources, which included plants from which their medicines were made.

Mr. George estimated that twenty-one families at the Stoney Point Reserve were compelled to leave in 1942. He acknowledged that the federal government figures are lower but explained that sometimes as many as four families lived in one house.

Rose Manning's family home was placed on blocks and transported to swamp land at Kettle Point. She recounted her childhood memory of the spring 1942 relocation: "[W]hen I woke up, I woke up in this big swamp with our house just on boulders, and when you tried to go outside, there was just nothing but reeds and weeds and everything else." Mrs. Manning continues to live at this site. She explained that it was extremely difficult for Stoney Point residents to leave behind deceased family members buried in graves on the reserve, such as her grandfather and sister: "[I]t is a sad situation when you have to leave your grandfather and your sister behind." She remembers the deep sorrow of her parents as they left Stoney Point.

Gordon Cloud (Elizabeth Stevens' father), was about ten years old that spring day in 1942 when his family was forced to leave their land. His mother, Lucy, did not want to leave her home and her reserve, and in desperation tried to chase

away military officials with a broom. Gordon Cloud was so frightened he hid under the porch: “[H]e was very afraid that day”; it was a “very traumatic experience for him.”

Daniel George was just “coming of age” at the time of the 1942 appropriation and did not receive his forty-acre allotment. Instead, he had a small piece of land at Kettle Point surrounded by gravel pits on which to raise his family. Mr. George tried to fill the pits with garbage collected from nearby cottages. His attempts to farm the land and raise chickens and pigs did not meet with much success, according to his daughter, Marcia Simon.

Several other Aboriginal witnesses recalled the trauma experienced by the Stoney Point people as they left their land, their burial grounds, and their means of economic self-sufficiency. Roderick and Stewart George described the small one-half-acre property on which their parents, Abraham (“Hamster”) and Muriel George, raised their eleven children. Bonnie Bressette, who became the Kettle and Stony Point Economic Development Officer and was also Chief and a Councillor of the Band, spent time in her testimony discussing the importance of economic self-sufficiency to the confidence, happiness, and well-being of her people. She believes that economic development on the reserve is fundamental to building a positive Aboriginal self-image. As she said at the hearings:

... economy is important for people to have a satisfactory, enjoyable life. They [must] have jobs, good homes, be able to provide for their families ...

... without an economic base, people become dependent on the social system, and the social system creates no happy life for anybody whether they’re on the reserve or off the reserve.

#### **4.4 First Nation People Serve in the Canadian Military**

Several First Nation people from the Stoney Point and Kettle Point Reserves enlisted in the army to assist the Canadian government in its military efforts against the Germans in World War II. They joined the military both before and after the 1942 appropriation.

Clifford George was twenty-one years old when he enlisted at the 62nd Battery Anti-Aircraft Regiment in London, Ontario. Most of his training was overseas. His regiment was active in England, defending the country from bombers, and earned a number of medals from the Battle of Britain. He was also involved in re-taking Dieppe in France. Mr. George was captured in Italy and became a

prisoner of war, where he experienced extreme hunger and cold, and witnessed the horrors of war.

Clifford George's two older brothers, Clarence and Kenneth, also served in the Canadian military during World War II. Clarence was wounded in Holland. Other people from the Stoney Point Reserve, including several members of Bonnie Bressette's family, also became Canadian soldiers. One man from each reserve died overseas—Lloyd Bressette from the Stoney Point Reserve,<sup>1</sup> and Herman Henry from the Kettle Point Reserve.

Dudley George's father, Reginald Ransford George Sr., served in World War II, as did his mother. Carolyn George, Dudley's sister, said her father told her he "joined up the Army so that he could help get the war over, so he'd be able to move home.... [H]e was told that they would be able to go home after the war." To his disappointment, after Reginald George's military service, the Department of National Defence did not return the reserve to the Stoney Point people. Carolyn George remembers her father talking longingly about the Stoney Point Reserve when she was about thirteen years old. He was "really sad, like he had no hope of ever getting the land back even though they had promised to give it back ... it wasn't looking hopeful at all." Reginald George Sr. died in 1985. He was buried at Kettle Point. His aspiration of returning to his homeland was never realized.

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<sup>1</sup> Stacey George's uncle, brother of his mother, Genevieu George.

