

Submission to the Anishinabek News – July/August 2010
By Greg Plain

Pipes, drums honour Sam's passing

KETTLE & STONY POINT FN – Pipe carriers and drums convened on June 5th to commemorate the passing of the first year since Sam George's death.

"It has been a very difficult year for the family as Sam's loss has left a large hole in the family," said wife Veronica, extending a welcome to the Sam George memorial Feast. "Today we all come together again to remember Sam. Sam loved his community and the drum that you hear here today. He sang with this drum and would like to see the members of it singing more in the community.

Veronica was referring to Animakii-Sasawin (Where the Thunderbird Nests), a Kettle Point drum that was one of three on hand at the feast, along with Crazy Spirit and Weengush from nearby Aamjiwnaang First Nation.

Pipe carriers from across Turtle Island also came to ensure the feast and ceremony were appropriate to honour Sam George, who spent 12 of his 56 years trying to ensure that justice was served after brother Dudley was shot and killed by Ontario Provincial Police on the night of Sept. 6, 1995 at Ipperwash Provincial Park.

The subsequent judicial inquiry chaired by Justice Sidney Linden vindicated the actions of the unarmed Stoney Point protesters who were seeking the return of land that had been expropriated during World War II by the federal government to be used as a military training base.

Sam George sat in the front row at the Ipperwash Inquiry, just a few feet away from witnesses, including former Premier Mike Harris, whose impatience to "get the (expletive) Indians out of the park" was determined to have created an environment that made the tragedy more likely to happen.

Before Sam's death on June 3, 2009 he received the Order of Ontario – the province's highest civil honour – learned that the resource library in the newly-created Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs would be named after him, and saw the provincial government take the first steps toward handing the disputed park lands back to the First Nation.

At the feast, family and friends shared memories and watched video clips of Sam's interviews.

Emcees for the event were Sam's brother Irvin George and family lawyer and friend Murray Klippenstein. "It was an honour to work with a man like Sam," Klippenstein said. "He is looking down on us today and smiling. His family and friends should be proud."

The Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry was released May 31, 2007. The Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) advocated since that time for the federal and provincial governments to partner with Ontario First Nations to implement the Report's recommendations.

Through this effort, a joint implementation process with Ontario was formalized in September 2008, and the UOI continues to be involved in the ongoing process.

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