

Submission to the Anishinabek News – July/August 2011

Ipperwash Report and First Nations policing

This is the second article in a series on First Nation policing that will appear in the Anishinabek News. Strengthening First Nation police services is a key recommendation made in the Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry, a public inquiry into events surrounding the 1995 shooting death of Dudley George by an OPP officer during a land claim occupation at Ipperwash Provincial Park. The Union of Ontario Indians has been involved in the process to implement the Report's recommendations since 2008. Read the third article in the series, Ipperwash Inquiry Report and First Nation Policing, in the next edition of Anishinabek News.

By Jim Ransom

By 1995, the Stoney Point people had been on an almost 60-year quest to get their lands back after their entire reserve was expropriated by the federal government in 1942 and they were forcibly removed. The federal government had claimed they needed the land temporarily as a military training base during the Second World War but that it would be returned. It never was.

In 1995, Dudley George was helping the Stony Point people bring attention to their plight through a peaceful protest that tragically turned violent. He was shot during a land claim occupation of Ipperwash Provincial Park and died of his wounds. A public inquiry into and report on events surrounding his death was launched on November 12, 2003, funded by the Government of Ontario under the Public Inquiries Act and conducted by a neutral third party, Sidney B. Linden. Justice Linden's final report and findings of the inquiry were released on May 31, 2007.

Chapter 10 of the Ipperwash Inquiry Report provided a review of First Nation policing in the province and identified recommendations to strengthen and improve First Nations Police Services. It called upon the federal and provincial governments to recognize that self-administered First Nation police services in the province are the primary police service providers in their communities.

It called upon the provincial government, Ontario Provincial Police, and First Nation police services to work together in identifying how the provincial government can support First Nation police services to be effective as possible when policing Aboriginal occupations and protests.

It recommended long-range planning and securing a legislative basis for First Nation police services in Ontario. The lack of a legislative basis creates the perception that First Nation police services are a "second-class" program.

It called for the province to work with First Nations to create a legislative or regulatory framework for First Nation policing in Ontario and also recommended that First Nation police services or boards should appoint their own officers instead of the Ontario Police Commissioner.

It recommended the creation of a First Nation Chiefs of Police Association as a professional forum for discussing policing with First Nations and to create policing standards, the legislative framework, officer recruitment, training, development and other matters of shared concern.

Finally, it called upon the federal and provincial governments to increase capital and operational funding for First Nation police services in Ontario.