

Submission to the Anishinabek News- May 2009 Issue  
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Intergovernmental Affairs

Interview with Sam George (March 16, 2009)

“Ipperwash sure was a tragedy, we all agree on that part of it. Reconciliation? I don’t know if we are back and reached that point yet. It’s something we can work towards but there’s a lot of work to be done to get there.”

It has been nearly two years since Commissioner Linden handed down his recommendations at an arena near Ipperwash Provincial Park. The window of opportunity to have these recommendations implemented is still present as the same Premier and party who originally called the Inquiry remain in power.

As I sat down to speak with the man who was a driving force in having the Inquiry called, I’m feeling nervous and excited. I had been working on the Ipperwash file for the Union for about 3 months and it was my first time meeting Sam.

“We wanted an Inquiry to know what happened that night. If he (Dudley) really needed to die that night...By getting this information out to the public as to why it was important to us, that’s one of the important parts that will get into the history books.”

One theme runs through my entire discussion with Sam: the importance of education. He feels that one of the most significant recommendations is the establishment of the Treaty Commission. It is this independent, regulatory body which will facilitate and oversee the settling of land and treaty claims in Ontario. Also, it will have the role of increasing education and awareness of treaties and land claims in schools and the general public.

There were many key lessons that can and should be learned from Ipperwash, not all of them coming from a book or the classroom. First Nations people learned that we can learn to work together and that there are people out there who care about the rights of First Nations. The government learned that they must take First Nations seriously and begin to provide answers to the many questions being asked of them. Finally, the people of Ontario learned that there is truth in what First Nations people are saying.

These lessons are important if these groups are going to learn to live harmoniously. Lessons that need to be continued through education because, as Sam said, “If people don’t understand the situation, they can’t respond to it properly. I’ll continue to push education very strongly.”

I asked Sam about his work in schools; when he goes to talk to children about Ipperwash, how does he gain their interest and help them understand such a complex situation?

“The easiest way is to introduce them to who my brother was and understand that Dudley was a real person, he belonged to people. He did have brothers, he did have sisters and he had a Mom and a Dad. He was a member of the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. He was very much

interested in his people, the land and the treaties... just as they did he liked to learn and read.”

The Inquiry is finished but the hard work isn't as everyone works to make the recommendations more than just a suggestion, but hopefully an answer to prevent future tragedies like that of the loss of Anthony 'Dudley' George.

Chi-meegwich to Sam George for his time, knowledge and insight.