

7.2 Concrete Plans to Occupy the Army Barracks

On July 29, 1995, about twenty-five to thirty First Nations people gathered at “The Pass,” a spot on the beach where they traditionally congregated, to discuss their plans to occupy the army camp. Men, women, Elders, and teenagers were at this meeting, as well as people from other reserves. People such as Glenn George, Marcia Simon, Marlin Simon, Rose Manning, and Bert Manning were involved in the plans to take over the built-up area. Marlin Simon and others had previously spoken to First Nations people from Oneida, Walpole Island, and Sarnia, as well as Moraviantown, Muncey, and the Chippewas of the Thames, urging Aboriginals from other reserves to support the takeover of the barracks. Isaac Doxtator from Oneida was asked to bring men to Ipperwash in advance of the army camp occupation. As he said, they “showed up at the camp from everywhere,” including the United States.

First Nations people decided to enter the military camp from different locations. Harley George, a fifteen-year-old boy, was instructed to drive the yellow school bus into the barracks with children as passengers. The bus belonged to Warren George, Harley’s father. Marlin Simon explained that the bus was a “diversion”; according to the plan, while the bus with First Nations children entered an area patrolled by the military (the beach side, the northern part of the built-up area), Aboriginal men, women, and Elders would drive into the built-up area from other locations of the military camp.

Harley George was told to drive the bus on the dirt road inside the military camp that was parallel to Army Camp Road. Only “young guys” were to be passengers on the bus. As Tina George said, “I specifically remember that because I was trying to board that bus and catch a ride up there myself, but I was told I couldn’t because I wasn’t a young guy.”

Harley George, not old enough to have a driver’s license, was given the responsibility of driving about ten other children in the school bus. The fifteen-year-old had previously operated the bus about six times, but had never received driving lessons from an adult. As he said at the hearings, “I had taught myself.”

7.3 The July 29 Occupation

Without notice to the military or the police, the school bus driven by Harley George entered the north gate of Camp Ipperwash at approximately 1:30 p.m. on July 29, 1995. About ten boys were on the bus, including Nicholas Cottrelle, Leland White, and several of Rose Manning’s grandchildren. They ranged in age from eleven to sixteen years, with the exception of one person who was in his twenties. As instructed, Harley George drove along the road parallel to Army

Camp Road. Harley knew that when the bus entered the built-up area, other First Nations people were accessing Camp Ipperwash from other locations.

As the school bus approached the north side of the built-up area, a gate obstructed their way. Harley turned the bus around, "backed it through the gate," breaking the chain lock. The children heard glass from the rear window of the emergency exit door smash and fall to the floor of the bus. Harley promptly turned the bus around and proceeded to the Parade Square where he navigated the vehicle in a figure eight around several transport trailers stationed in the square. Military personnel in a jeep began to follow the bus as it approached the door of the Drill Hall. Harley George "pulled up to the door slowly and began to push it in with the bus." The military jeep parked behind the bus at a ninety-degree angle. Harley immediately reversed the gears and backed the bus into the jeep pushing it for about forty to forty-five feet. The bus hit the military vehicle with a fair amount of force. Harley pushed the jeep because he "didn't want to be contained by that vehicle" and "didn't want to talk" to the military officers.

A military police officer (MP) tried to board the bus. Harley George attempted to close the bus door, but the MP was able to push part of his body through the doorway. He stood on the first step of the bus, and an altercation ensued. The officer sprayed the fifteen-year-old in the face with pepper spray. Harley jumped out of his seat. As he passed the MP in the doorway, Harley tried to kick the officer:

... as I was walking away from him, he kicked my foot and I fell down on the pavement ... [A]fter that I went after him ... I tried to fight him ... [W]hen I was walking towards him, kind of fast, he was spraying pepper spray at me. I had my hand in front of my face to block the stream of the pepper spray ...

Nicholas Cottrelle and the other children exited the bus through the rear emergency door.

As Harley George struggled with the officer, Cleve Lincoln Jackson drove a forklift that belonged to the military through the doors of the Drill Hall. Military officers ran alongside the forklift, trying to pepper spray Mr. Jackson as he drove around the Parade Square. Rose Manning explained that the forklift was brought out to "scare the [military] guys away from the kids ... [I]nstead of going after the little kids, then they would have somebody else to chase around."¹ During

¹ Rose Manning died in August 2006 prior to the Final Submissions at the Inquiry. Cleve Lincoln Jackson was subsequently arrested for this act.

this confrontation with the military, vehicles with First Nations passengers entered the Parade Square.

Harley George's eyes and skin burned from the pepper spray. One of the occupiers washed out Harley's eyes with a bottle of water from his car. Harley later went to the beach and submerged himself into Lake Huron to seek relief from the burning. Two or three hours passed before the burning sensation subsided.

First Nations people accessed the camp from different locations. Marlin Simon, his brother Kevin, Wesley George, and Dale Plain (George) travelled on a road parallel to Highway 21 inside the army camp before entering the Parade Square. Tina George was a passenger in Rose Manning's car, as was Rose's son Bruce, Maynard T. George, and some older members of the community. They travelled on Matheson Drive and along Army Camp Road before entering the main gate of the built-up area. About thirty First Nations people accessed the built-up area in cars, including Glenn George, Clifford George, and people from other reserves such as Oneida and Walpole Island.

As Marcia Simon entered the built-up area and encountered military personnel, she instructed the officers to evacuate the barracks:

... I went over there and every one of them that I saw I told them that I – [want] you boys out of here. And to the female officers ... I told them, I want you girls out of here as well. This is our territory. Just said it calmly and told them what I wanted.

Other Aboriginal people who entered the built-up area also told the military they were taking over the barracks. Bruce Manning and Maynard T. George went to the guard shack to serve an eviction notice.

First Nations people, such as Marlin Simon, insisted they did not carry guns or firearms, nor did they see others carry weapons into the built-up area on July 29.

By the time the vehicles with First Nations people entered the Parade Square, the bus had already rammed the doors of the Drill Hall and had backed into the military jeep.

Captain Doug Smith had watched the school bus crash through the back gate off Army Camp Road as he stepped out his door at the base that Saturday afternoon to go jogging. The gate had been chained and blocked with large garbage bins. The decision of the Aboriginal people to plough through the gates and occupy the army barracks certainly caught him by surprise.

Captain Smith had no advance notice that First Nations people would try to assume control of Camp Ipperwash. In fact, he thought relations between the