

to 'progress' in Canada? Are attitudes of distrust and fear underlying our decisions to dispatch a crew to the latest Aboriginal blockade? Is there no iconic photo of reconciliation, because no one from the newsrooms believes harmony between Aboriginal peoples and settlers is 'newsworthy'?²⁵³

Historian J. R. Miller has observed that when conflicts between Aboriginal peoples and the state have occurred in places like Oka or Ipperwash Park, for example, "politicians, journalists and ordinary citizens understood neither how nor why the crisis of the moment had arisen, much less how its deep historical roots made it resistant to solutions.... [This] does not bode well for effective public debate or sensible policy-making."²⁵⁴

In the Commission's view, the media's role and responsibility in the reconciliation process require journalists to be well informed about the history of Aboriginal peoples and the issues that affect their lives. As we have seen, this is not necessarily the case. Studies of media coverage of conflicts involving Aboriginal peoples have borne this out. In the conflict between some of the descendants of members of the Stony Point Reserve and their supporters and the Ontario Provincial Police in Ipperwash Provincial Park in 1995, which resulted in the death of Dudley George, journalism professor John Miller concluded,

Much of the opinion—and there was a lot of it—was based not on the facts of the Ipperwash occupation, but on crude generalizations about First Nations people that fit many of the racist stereotypes that ... have [been] identified.... Accurate, comprehensive coverage can promote understanding and resolution, just as inaccurate, incomplete and myopic coverage can exacerbate stereotypes and prolong confrontations.... Reporters are professionally trained to engage in a discipline of verification, a process that is often mistakenly referred to as "objectivity." But ... research shows that news is not selected randomly or objectively.²⁵⁵

Miller identified nine principles of journalism that journalists themselves have identified as essential to their work. Of those, he said,

Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.... Journalism does not pursue truth in an absolute or philosophical sense, but it can—and must—pursue it in a practical sense.... Even in a world of expanding voices, accuracy is the foundation upon which everything else is built—context, interpretation, comment, criticism, analysis and debate. The truth, over time, emerges from this forum....

Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience. Every journalist must have a personal sense of ethics and responsibility—a moral compass. Each of us must be willing, if fairness and accuracy require, to voice differences with our colleagues.... This stimulates the intellectual diversity necessary to understand and accurately cover an increasingly diverse society. It is this diversity of minds and voices, not just numbers, that matters.²⁵⁶

With respect to the history and legacy of residential schools, all the major radio and television networks and newspapers covered the events and activities of the Commission.