

Literary licence — it works both ways

OHSWEKEN — After viewing *Divided Loyalties*, a film about Joseph Brant, some questions sprang up. In order to straighten out confusing elements in the TV drama, I contacted world-renowned authority-on-everything Wright Dingleberry.

"It turns out that Pontiac's murder actually happened as depicted in the film," said Mr. D. "You see, the Odawas were fearful that the British would assassinate him because his rebellion stood in their way. In order to prevent his death, they planted doubles of him throughout North America. Apparently one impersonator met his just reward while visiting the Mohawks."

Pontiac died in Cahokia, Ill., at the hand of an alcoholic Indian who had been bribed into the killing with a barrel of whiskey offered by a trader in April, 1769. Cahokia is across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, Mo.

There are at least 60 qualified native actors across Canada, with 35 considered to be seasoned professionals. What was the determining factor in casting a non-native in the starring role of a film about history's most famous Mohawk?

"Head size," said Mr. D. "We considered natives for the role but upon close examination they weren't quite right. Their heads were kind of lopsided and

Feb. 17/90

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lumpy. The anthropologist on the set supplied Brant's cranium measurement and our choice matched up perfectly. How's that for historical accuracy?"

"What about the death of Brant's son, Isaac?" I asked. "Didn't he get killed near Brantford instead of in Ohio?"

"Ohio, Ontario, they both start with O. That's close enough. Little canoe trip across Lake Erie and there you are."

I asked, "What about Indian oratory?"

At Buffalo Creek, in April, 1794, at a council in an Onondaga village Brant said: "Brother" We are of the same opinion with the people of the United States; you consider yourselves as independent people; we, as the original inhabitants of this country, and sovereigns of the soil, look upon ourselves as equally independent, and free as any other nation or nations. This country was given to us by the Great Spirit above; we wish to enjoy it

and have our passage along the lake, within the line we have pointed out."

Mr. D. scratched his head. "They did want to use something to add some native flavor to the thing, but there just wasn't time. At chiefs' councils you have these wise old diplomats making speeches back and forth over the fire until one mind is reached. They stand therein a very dignified, deadpan manner trusting eloquence alone to win their argument."

"What's wrong with that?"

"It isn't drama. In fact, we had to send most of the cast to John Madden's school of arm waving so we could condense the council scenes. Sometimes those councils would last for months. This is difficult to capture in a two-hour movie."

I reminded him that fraud is defined as an "act of deceiving or misrepresenting, an intentional perversion of truth . . ."

"Wait a minute," he said. "Didn't you read the disclaimer at the end of the credits? Naturally some liberties were taken with historical fact. It's called artistic licence."

And that, dear reader, is what today's column is.