

Natives' revolution in Canada begins

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The fatal shooting of a 38-year-old Chippewa Indian at Ipperwash Provincial Park in southwestern Ontario makes it official.

The much-predicted Indian revolution in Canada has begun.

The slow-burning fuse to the country's native powder-keg was running short earlier this summer with a number of dangerous uprisings at such places as Eel Ground, N.B., and Adams Lake and Gustafsen Lake in British Columbia. The death of Anthony (Dudley) George on Wednesday night sets it off.

The shock waves from an Indian man being killed by police will be felt from coast to coast. There are two things which native leaders can guarantee in the next weeks. One is the expected domino effect across the country.

It appears likely that highways will be blocked and government offices will be occupied in the next weeks. Maybe even some rail-lines will be shut down and the odd hydro transmission tower taken down by explosives. In the least, there will be coast-to-coast native civil disobedience in support of their fallen brother.

Get used to it. That's what Brian Maracle, a Mohawk writer on Indian issues, says when asked about it. He says government documents show that



Tina George and her two-year-old daughter confront an armed OPP emergency response officer at Ipperwash.

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the RCMP identified native rebels as the No. 1 threat to national security in the early 1970s.

"I guess we're No. 1 again. This shooting will have a lot of repercussions. It will likely be our Wounded Knee," said Maracle. The 71-day siege at Wounded Knee, S.D., in 1973 was the last Indian protest in North America which produced a fatality on the native side.

There is one main reason for the unrest this summer. Frustrated dissident Indians are fed up with the political process and politicians — native and non-native — and are no longer willing to wait for results.

Expectations have been raised among Canada's one million aboriginal people during the past five years since the 1990 Oka crisis in Quebec, and some are reaching the conclusion that

the governments will not deliver.

With the majority of the aboriginal population under 20 years old, the situation is particularly volatile. With high unemployment and social problems running rampant on reserves, some of the unrest is simply due to teen restlessness.

There have been rumors of bands of dissidents roaming the country creating disturbances in aboriginal communities. It is more likely that a main cause of the violence is that the kids just don't have anything better to do.

The last time there was unrest of this magnitude was Oka in 1990. Surprisingly, it prompted a wave of pro-Indian sentiment among the non-Quebec population in Canada.

This time it is different. These are meaner, harsher days and recent polls have shown the population is taking a more hard-line approach to Indians and land claims. For instance, Ontario Premier Mike Harris believes Indians should receive no special favors, such as special hunting and fishing rights, and third-party interests should be represented at the negotiation table for land claims.

While the rebels are a minority group from peaceful communities, they are attracting a lot of attention by picking up firearms to make their point. National Chief Ovide Mercredi complained this week that the dissidents at Ipperwash and Gustafsen Lake are hurting the credibility of the Indian movement in the eyes of Canadians.