

fighting overseas in World War II. Johnson had died in the 1919 influenza epidemic, so he wasn't there to defend the home he had built. When federal agents came to the solid house of his widow on Thanksgiving weekend 1942, they quickly decided that the brick structure was too heavy and difficult to move, so instead they bulldozed it flat. Mrs. Johnson was given a smaller wood frame house at Kettle Point, which cost \$175. Also levelled was the small frame church at Stoney Point. Anyone visiting the community for the first time after that Thanksgiving weekend would have found little trace of the people who had lived there, apart from the grave markers in a little area nested back under the tall pines — and soon many of the headstones in that cemetery would also be levelled.

The Stoney Pointers were relocated onto small sites at Kettle Point, where they lost their rights to graze cattle, hunt, or gather wood without the permission of the Kettle Point people. One of their houses was placed on four large stones, directly over a swamp. Pearl George would have eight children at Kettle Point, three of whom died from illness. She couldn't help but feel they might have survived if the family had been allowed to stay at Stoney Point. "Some of the children couldn't stand the water, and got diarrhea and they passed on."

One of Pearl George's sons, Maynard, grew up at Kettle Point feeling like a refugee. "It was sort of like in Bosnia where they put two different ethnic groups together. They did not allocate us good wood or housing. We could not become members of the band council or get any work on the reserve."

LEVI JOHNSON'S GRANDSON, Ken George, a distant elder cousin of Dudley George, was overseas fighting when he read the news in a letter that his home and the rest of Stoney Point had been taken by the military. He was reassured that the move was only temporary. "I received a letter from my father telling me that our home was destroyed, and our land was confiscated by the government for war purposes," he later recalled. "He also wrote that the officials told him it was for only till the war was over. When finally the war was ended in Europe, I began to wonder, 'Where will I go home to?'"

He had enlisted with his younger brothers Clifford and Clarence, and three other young men from the reserve's dozen families. Clifford George didn't know much about Nazis when, as a twenty-one-year-old, he volunteered for action. However, he did know that army life meant free room and board for as long as the fighting continued and as long as he stayed alive. He was proud that, when he was growing up, Stoney Pointers hunted, fished, worked on area farms, sold firewood, and "got through the deepest depression without any government assistance. We knew what hunger was, but so did everyone else in the 1930s. White people were no better off. We were self-sufficient."

Clifford soon found himself in the thick of the action, stationed as an anti-aircraft gunner on the southern coast of England and helping shoot down a Luftwaffe bomber in England in 1943. When the Allies invaded Europe, Clifford survived the carnage of a major tank battle in France in 1944. There wasn't even a tree left standing when the firing stopped. During the last winter of the war, he was a prisoner of war in northern Italy, fearing he might starve to death. Sometimes, he was able to cope with the gnawing hunger by thinking about Stoney Point and his plans to settle there with his British war bride, Agnes. The two had met when Agnes was visiting her aunt and uncle in Brighton, and they had stayed in communication through letters as Clifford marched into Europe.

Clifford George considered himself a fortunate man when he returned to Canada after the war, with Agnes on his arm and a half-dozen medals on his chest. Fellow volunteers, Lloyd Bressette of Stoney Point and Herman Thomas of Kettle Point, didn't return, killed on battlefields in France. Clifford's brother Clarence was shot in the back but recovered. His other brother Ken suffered severely from what was called "battle fatigue." Ken arrived back at Stoney Point, expecting to surprise his family, but instead saw that the entire old community was levelled and the land was off limits because it was now the property of the Crown and managed by the Department of National Defence. His family and their home were gone, and he didn't know what to do or where to go, feeling confused and alone. He spent that night sleeping in a ditch. The next morning, he was able to collect his thoughts and he recalled the letter from his father, in which he'd

been told that the family home was taken, although it was to be returned immediately after the war. Then he walked two and a half miles up the road to Kettle Point, to stay with his grandmother until he could get his life back on track.

"I came home to nothing," Clifford George later recalled. "I'll never forget the feeling I had when I first went there [to Stoney Point] and couldn't find my mother's grave. They had removed the headstones and there were bullet holes and trenches dug. They could only do that to an Indian. That would never happen to white people." While overseas, Clifford George had become convinced of the rightness of the Allied effort to stop the Nazis. "We all became proud Canadians and proud soldiers," he later said. But, at the same time his parents' homeland was being bulldozed by the Canadian government he was defending.

Clifford had told his war bride, Agnes, that they would be able to farm on the reserve, but when they told their plans to the Indian agent, he said, "You're not bringing that white woman on this Godforsaken reserve which will never see hydro or water or working toilets like she's used to." Clifford recalled, "In town, that's where you belong." The Indian agent said he would help Clifford come up with the down payment on a small house in the largely white community of Forest. Clifford had heard that returning veterans were generally getting \$5,500 in resettlement money from Veterans' Affairs, while Native people were supposed to deal with Indian Affairs and were getting just \$2,200 each. "We're only half as good, I guess," Clifford later said. Clifford received \$400 for the down payment, and that was the last soldier resettlement money he ever saw.

A couple of months later, he got what was called his "blue card" in the mail, entitling him to vote and buy alcohol but stripping him of his Indian status. It was called an "enfranchisement card," but Clifford couldn't help feeling he was losing something precious. "That was the first time I was told that I wasn't an Indian any more. That I had sold my rights for \$400."

Aboriginal people still didn't have the right to vote in Canada, and when Clifford George went for a drink at the Legion Hall in the nearby town of Forest, he felt he was still seen as an Indian and an outsider, not as a victorious Canadian soldier. The George brothers had been written up in

the Goderich newspaper as heroes, and they were among the troops that had held the last Canadian line in northern Italy against a Nazi onslaught, but such heroics didn't seem to count for much anymore at the Legion, so Clifford soon stopped going. Perhaps worse, he had to ask permission from the Department of National Defence — for whom he had fought overseas — when he wanted to visit family graves inside the new military base. "I came back to find the real enemy was here," Clifford George said years later.

IN OTTAWA, THE *Transitional Powers Act* was passed to allow for an orderly transition to conditions of peace and to replace the *War Measures Act*. On May 31, 1946, things looked hopeful for the Stoney Pointers when the advanced infantry training centre at Ipperwash was closed and the Departments of National Affairs and Indian Affairs began corresponding on returning lands to the Natives. But what happened next was . . . nothing. The *Transitional Powers Act* expired on December 31, 1946, never having been used to return the old Stoney Point lands at Camp Ipperwash. At the same time, however, the act was not used to give the Department of National Defence authority to extend its hold on Stoney Point. Yet despite its shaky legal ground, the Department of National Defence went ahead and established a permanent military base at Ipperwash, ignoring its own promises and the wishes of decorated veterans like Clifford George. Instead they promised a few of them jobs as groundskeepers on the new base.

"I had no place to go. I couldn't find a job," Clifford George said. "That's why I went back in the army in 1950 for Korea. There was discrimination against us [Natives]. Sure, some of us hit the drink pretty bad when we got back, but we were all classified just the same as a bunch of drunks."

At the time, there were no welfare or social assistance programs on reserves, only charity. Native people who had lost their farms drifted to outlying white communities. Clifford's brother Ken could peek through the fence around the military base and see the married officer's quarters where his family home had once stood. Then he would wonder exactly why he had risked his life fighting overseas. "The government had taken everything, and suddenly I knew what it was to belong nowhere."