

**2020-18 Beatty v Northern View**

*March 4, 2020*

The NNC has reviewed and found that corrective action was taken to address a complaint about a headline in a March 1, 2020 news article in the Northern View.

Marvin Beatty was concerned that the article, “Massive fire destroys CN roundhouse in Prince Rupert,” included a sub-headline, “No word whether its associated with blockade protests,” without any factual basis.

The complainant argued that, in this context, it was inappropriate to refer to the Wet’suwet’en hereditary chiefs dispute and associated blockades without any supporting evidence, and that it amounted to speculation without basis. The complainant also said he was concerned that the article contained only one source, which was unnamed. He noted that the news story also appeared in other Black Press publications.

The news media organization updated the sub-headline of the online article shortly after its initial publication to read, “Cause unknown.”

The news media organization subsequently updated the headline to read, “UPDATE: RCMP arrest youth for suspected arson in CN Rail roundhouse blaze,” and the sub-headline to read, “No link to Wet’suwet’en support protests: RCMP.”

The article also contained more information about the incident, including comments from the RCMP that indicated the incident was “definitely not related to the Wet’suwet’en,” and that, while they had received an influx of queries about whether the events were related, such speculation was unfounded.

The NNC recognizes the challenges faced by newsrooms when reporting important information to the community in a timely manner, and that the details of this story were still emerging at the time of the complaint.

That said, ethical journalism takes care to avoid exposing groups to discrimination, particularly when such groups may be targets in a highly polarized political and social context.

In reviewing the updated version of the article, the NNC finds that the updated sub-headline is supported by the new information provided in the story. As well, the updated story addressed the speculation raised by the initial sub-headline and was definitive in stating facts and addressing the insinuation.

The NNC also notes that the news media organization followed best practice by noting in the headline that the story had been updated, and that it took steps to close comments on a story where facts are still emerging and potential for inflammatory conjecture is high.

For the above reasons, the NNC considers this matter resolved due to corrective action.