



2019-52 Miller vs Leader Post

June 5 2019

The National NewsMedia Council has mediated and finds corrective action was taken on a complaint about a headline in a May 13 2019 article in the Regina Leader Post, "Man claims to have taken, burned Nazi and Confederate flags seen in Kelliher."

The previous headline of the article read "Man claims to have taken, burned controversial flags seen in Kelliher." The news organization also tweeted the story with the text, "RCMP investigating after controversial flags allegedly stolen, burned."

The complainant, Lukas Miller, took issue with the use of the word "controversial" to describe a Nazi flag. The complainant argued that given the history of Nazi genocide, characterizing a Nazi flag as controversial was "disturbing and insulting" and normalized "the acceptance of racism and bigotry."

The news organization responded by stating that "the reporter's intention in using the word was to convey the dubious nature of the flag-raising." However, after some feedback, the news organization noted that some readers were offended "by applying the word 'controversial' to a Nazi flag, and saw it as implying that belief system is acceptable."

The news organization stated that this meaning was not the intention of the reporter or the news organization. It also stated that staff "understand the outlet has an important role to play in exposing hate and would never intentionally take action that 'normalizes acceptance of racism and bigotry.'"

To address this issue, the news organization subsequently amended the headline and removed the tweet. It also noted that the feedback it received on the issue led to discussion and training with staff.

The NNC acknowledged the complex role that news publications have in covering incidents of hate and racism in a responsible way.

The NNC noted that in this case the news organization responded to reader concerns by holding a discussion with staff and by making changes to the article's headline and its social media. The NNC considers this to be appropriate corrective action taken on an unintended error in wording.