

# Healing Two Communities: - What Now?

By Doug Fleming, Merlyn Kinrade, Gary McHale and Mark Vandermaas.

*Ed.note: Between June 24 - 30, 2009, the Tekawennake published several stories in our on-going coverage of the Caledonia conflict which might lead some readers to believe that members of the CANACE (Canadian Advocates for Charter Equality) organization, which has advocated on behalf of the residents of Caledonia, includes members or associates with Neo-Nazi, KKK or other white supremacist ties. The Tekawennake wishes to clarify that we have no evidence that Doug Fleming, Merlyn Kinrade, Gary McHale or Mark Vandermaas are associated with or sympathizers of such groups, and offer the following Op-Ed as the second of a two-part series giving them the opportunity to communicate their purpose and agenda in their own words.*

From the very beginning we have never believed that those that committed acts of lawlessness in Caledonia represented Six Nations or aboriginal people as a whole. That belief was reinforced by Councillor Helen Miller's letter of July 14/09 in which she stated that "the majority of Six Nations people who I've spoken to are fed up with these groups of people and individuals claiming to speak for them and fed up with the protests, fed up with these groups of people and individuals claiming to speak for them and fed up with smoke shops on Highway 6. So people who fear another Caledonia can put their fears to rest." This was confirmed when Council voted to revoke the negotiations lead from the Confederacy to go in a 'new direction.'

So, what now? What will it take to heal the rift between the two communities? Here are some suggestions for the OPP, Ontario government and Six Nations:

1. Accept that talking about non-native victims does not diminish aboriginal grievances or aspirations, nor is it 'racist' or 'anti-native' to do so.

2. Acknowledge that native people themselves have also been victims of the racist policing policies that allow illegal occupations to escalate and the sites to become lawless 'home-free zones' - as residents in both Caledonia and Ipperwash refer to them. Occupation sites have seen rapes, assaults, arson, drug use and gun violence. In both Ipperwash and Caledonia - ironically - original occupiers have expressed fear over the lawlessness that developed in the aftermath of their own lawless takeovers. A Six Nations paper confirmed that the shooter of a Six Nations man at a nearby smokeshack had been on the occupation site near the homes of residents threatening another man over a drug debt with an AK-147 assault rifle just prior to the shooting. In August 2007 another paper cited former Six Nations Chief David General's opinion that "he does not consider [the occupation site] sacred land, citing two reported rapes and several other unseemly acts which have been reported from the reclamation site."

3. Acknowledge that violence begets more violence, and that solutions can only be found within the rule of law. In his presentation at Mount Royal University - The face of Aboriginal Sovereignty Versus the Rule of Law in Caledonia - Gary McHale pointed out several important realities:

- a. Those who support the lawlessness against Haldimand County argue that, based

on treaties, Six Nations people are not subject to Canadian law. If this were true, then the opposite must be true. After all, treaty rights are a two way street. If the Haldimand Tract is not Canadian soil - and therefore not subject to the Criminal Code of Canada - then neither natives or non-natives can be prosecuted by the Canadian government. Based on this logic any non-native or group of non-natives from Caledonia who decides they have had enough would be free to pick up weapons and attack native people without persecution by the Canadian government.

The rule of law exists not just to protect non-natives but also native people. God forbid the day ever comes when a group of non-natives believes they have the right to systematically attack native People. If this does happen then what will native people cry out: that people are not subject to the law, or will they demand that the rule of law be enforced to protect them and their children?

- b. The systematic killing and abuses of Jewish people of Germany did not produce a group of people who see all Germans as evil or see Germany as a nation that needs to be attacked. Jewish people there have respected the rule of law in seeking justice through the courts, and not the persecution of Germans. There are no groups of Jewish men roaming the streets blocking the roads, carrying baseball bats and beating people because their ancestors were victimized during WWII.

In the U.S. generations of abuse by both the state and the white public came to a head in the 1950s - 60s and two views emerged as to how blacks could establish their human rights within a racist society. Malcolm X called for armed revolution against the evil white man, but Dr. King was committed to achieving equality through peaceful means. The only people in his era that wore masks and committed violence against innocents were members of the KKK, and Dr. King was not going to follow in their footsteps. His approach not only changed a nation it also changed the hearts of millions.

Dr. King had great respect for the rule of law which is why he demanded protection from the law. The fruits of his approach to historical injustices lifted black people in America up to the point that one is now president.

1. True healing will begin when those responsible for traumatizing Haldimand County - OPP, Ontario, and Six Nations - issue apologies to the people of Haldimand. There are no shortcuts, no alternatives. If the government of Canada can - rightly - apologize for Residential Schools then these groups can apologize for Caledonia.

The events in Haldimand County are a matter of historical record, and the reality that some Six Nations residents, with the support of their leaders, victimized and traumatized their innocent neighbours cannot be denied, diminished or 'justified.' It does neither community any good to pretend that the last four years did not happen any more than we should pretend that Residential Schools never existed.

Despite the terrible things done to them, the hearts of the people of Caledonia remain open, and they are eager to restore the longstanding and deeply-valued relationship with their Six Nations neighbours. We seek help in reaching out to the good people of Six Nations so we may find true partners for peace who recognize the inherent wisdom of a path to healing and reconciliation based on truth, justice and apologies.