

# Nine years since the reclamation: an interview with Janie Jamieson

By Tom Keefer

This interview was conducted on Friday March 6th. The transcript has been edited for clarity and length.



**Could you introduce yourself?**

My name is Janie Jamieson Cook and I'm from Six Nations, where I was born and raised. I'm the mother of three, married, with a lot of responsibility.

**You were one of the women that began the reclamation known as Kanonhstaton some nine years ago near Caledonia. What are your feelings nine years on?**

Well there's so much that's changed but there's still so much that's still the same. As far as the land issues, the Federal government still won't deal with that. They are still trying to pass the buck to the province and to the municipality. If my home was sitting on top of gold right now they would be here in a heartbeat to claim that underlying title, but when it comes down to being responsible and correcting past injustices, they haven't made an honest effort to do that.

**Why did you and others stop construction at was then called the "Douglas Creek Estates?"**

It was illegal land

dealings, it was the effect the development was having on our environment, our children, and the social, mental and physical risks from it. And the fact that despite having so many treaties and so much documentation, Canada won't acknowledge our existence as Onkwehon:we people.

They've made a constant push for society to deny that we exist or that there is any kind of alliance or relationship that's already been established with them. But at the same time we're still here. Just because they refuse to acknowledge our existence, doesn't mean that we've changed our understanding. We are well aware of our shared history, we're well aware of things like the Haldimand deed, we're well aware that our language, customs and traditions are still as they were prior to contact.

**Was it a major victory to have the feds sit down with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy after the reclamation?**

It was in a sense. But on the other hand they had so many "fact finders" to try and pick our brains and find out what we have in terms of any kind of documentation or proof of our so-called "land claim."

They sat with our chiefs, they sat with our clan mothers, and our faith keepers, they sat with our people to see that we are still real, and yes we're still functioning as a government, the original government in North America. To me, that was major, but on the other hand they didn't go there with good intentions or any kind of mandate to settle outstanding land issues. I believe they went there to take what they can get, as far as brain

picking or any kind of traditional or historical knowledge that we have as Haudenosaunee people.

**How does it make you feel when you hear about the proposed McClung road development that would add some 3500 residential homes on the other side of the river in Caledonia?**

As far as I know, the developers are jumping through the hoops at OMB and as far as I know it's still the same illegal land dealings that they've continued to use. As far as the proposed McClung road development, they're still following that same illegal process that has been setup via the OMB.

As far as development goes I don't support that, and I plan to do whatever action I am capable of to put a stop to that.

It just floors me still, after all this time, to know that these people still aren't putting the environment first. It's the same players, the same companies and again they're after money. The province and the feds are after tax payers and that's all it boils down to. It's still all about taking what you can get while you can get it without any kind of concern regarding the high rates of cancer for our community and theirs.

And in the past few years if there's one thing I've realized, it's that what's been bringing our families together has been our people having cancer in both of our communities. Those rates are getting greater and the ages are getting younger. And I cannot understand how the government can't see an issue with that or think they have no responsibility toward that sickness that's affecting all of us.

**How are people coming together?**

I've been made aware of a few fund raising efforts for a couple women who were diagnosed with cancer - one has passed away. Fund raising efforts for the families are happening while the women are in treatment or going through treatment. The church and different cross sections of each of our communities is involved. It was an effort just to help out each other and to bring humanity back to our relationships.

**Are the children that you know growing up differently because of the experiences at the site or the way that changed the relations of power in the area?**

I've been told by a lot of different people that what happened at Kanonhstaton opened their eyes. There was a lot of self-awareness that happened, not just within our own community but throughout North America. One of the most important things to me was that our people were able

to walk with their heads held high again and to take pride in self-identifying as Onkwehonwe or Anishinaabe.

I think that throughout these different direct actions that have happened that our people are becoming more empowered both at the grassroots level, as well as in mainstream, and I think that ultimately that's having an impact.