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## **Illegal Smokeshops and Landclaim Lawlessness**

by Brian Hagan, resident of Caledonia

My outrage today is directed toward the government of the Province of Ontario and specifically the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, (the ministry that looks after policing).

We are now very near the end of the second year of the native occupation in Caledonia. Since the beginning, the residents of Caledonia and surrounding area have endured a month long blockade of Argyle Street (our main street), due to hydro towers being dragged across the highway, a five day power outage to most of Haldimand & Norfolk counties, (other Canadians can only try to imagine the inconveniences and damages to industry, business, agriculture and residents caused by the lack of power for five days), and a huge tire fire in the middle of our main street.

More recently we have been witness to the serious beating of Sam Gaultieri, an innocent man, in the home he was building for his daughter.

We watched the natives install their warrior flags on hydro poles and highway signs along the west side of Argyle Street, and when we attempted to show our own community and national pride by raising Canadian flags on the opposite side of the street, we were physically thwarted by dozens of OPP officers claiming that our actions would be offensive to the natives. We watched as the OPP arrested a resident for helping us put up a Canadian Flag.

These flags were subsequently stolen that night as 24 hour police surveillance of the area was on duty

Dozens of non-native people reside on what is known as the Sixth Line which forms the southern boundary of the occupied land and leads directly to the Six Nations Reserve. As a part of Oneida Township (or non-native lands) it was rightfully policed by the OPP.

Mysteriously, policing of the Sixth Line was given over to the Six Nations Police resulting in virtually no policing at all. OPP cannot enter this area.

Take a minute to put yourself in the shoes of these people that own these properties. No one, it seems, would like to take responsibility for this policing decision.

Many residents backyards abut the occupied land. Time at this venue would never permit a listing of all the incidents of harassment to these people over the last two years. Words cannot express the anxiety, humiliation and outright terror that these people have experienced as they were subjected to verbal name-calling, rocks thrown at their houses in the middle of the night and blatant physical threats to life and limb.

My niece and her husband happen to have the distinction of owning a house and lot that doesn't just abut the occupied land but is actually part of it. Some months ago, while out, their home was broken into and totally ransacked, spray-painted with obscenities, family china and pictures smashed and urinated on, and the family collie beaten up. The perpetrators are yet to be discovered.

Large businesses are trying to ride out 40 – 65 percent reductions in business, but small business just simply cannot sustain the economic decline. Shoppers that used to patronize Caledonia are not doing so because of fear.

This whole situation has created a fractious community with opinions on how a solution might be attained, from sweeping the facts under the carpet and pretending nothing is amiss in Caledonia, to those of us who see the need to protest in what seems like a vain attempt to get government to solve the problem – a problem that the business people and residents of our community did not create, but sadly, are the very people at the bottom of the pecking order that are losing business they spent their lifetime creating.

The government must understand – we don't have time to be patient!

No one with any semblance of a rational mind will deny that the native society of Canada has some legitimate land claims. However, to hold the community of Caledonia and area hostage to promote native land claims is at the least very unfair and at the most totally illegal. Truthfully and with sincerity, natives and non-natives, as a united whole, should be lobbying the government to resolve these issues as a peaceful unit. Instead matters, through government inaction and particularly police unwillingness to enforce the law, have been allowed to deteriorate into an ugly, racial issue that could follow most of us to our graves.

At a time when the hands of our municipal government seem to be tied, the OPP, under the guidance of Commissioner Fantino seem to only enforce the law against non-natives – (because they can!), and our elected government officials, if indeed they are accomplishing anything through months of negotiations, do not see the need to pass on any progress to the peons that pay their handsome salaries and pensions.

I beg you to consider these questions:

- to what body of mortals do the people of Caledonia turn for control of a situation totally out of hand?
- and secondly – Is it any wonder we are driven to protest?

We will now hear from Merlyn Kinrade.