

## **Caledonia's National Voice**

by Gary McHale

Published April 7, 2010 in Regional News This Week (circulation 22,500)

On May 5, 2010 there is a New Directions in Aboriginal Policy Forum at Mount Royal University in Calgary Alberta hosted by Frances Widdowson co-author of "*Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry: The Deception Behind Indigenous Cultural Preservation*."

*Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry* has created quite a bit of debate in Canada over the past two years and has received national media coverage as well as being on the short list for the *Donner Book Prize* which rewards the best public policy thinking, writing and research in Canada.

Ms. Widdowson invited Mark Vandermaas, who is now heading up the Caledonia Victims Project, and myself, of CANACE (Canadian Advocates for Charter Equality) to be guest speakers at this Forum in Alberta.

The forum is an attempt to gather together critical thinkers throughout Canada to review current policies and to form new directions for future governments. Most of the speakers are University Professors or well-known speakers on Aboriginal issues. One of the speakers is a Six Nation's Professor who teaches at Trent University in Ontario.

Tom Flanagan, professor of Political Science at the University of Calgary and author of "*Harper's Team: Behind the Scenes in the Conservative Rise to Power*" and "*First Nations? Second Thoughts*", is also a guest speaker at this forum.

The topics covered during this Forum are divided into three parts: 1) Private property and native economic development; 2) Aboriginal sovereignty, indigenous nationalism, and the rule of law; 3) Indigenous "ways of knowing", critical thinking and education.

Mr. Vandermaas and I are to speak on the issue of the Rule of Law and Aboriginal Sovereignty.

The OPP, McGuinty Government and various Native Protesters and their supporters have repeatedly attempted to paint anyone who speaks out in Caledonia as some sort of racist. These repeated attempts to divide Haldimand County and to silence people's voices have failed miserably.

Nationally, the founding members of CANACE have been seen as a key source of critical thinking on the issue of the Rule of Law. We have been featured nationally in the CBC and credited as a reliable and instrumental news source by the Ryerson Review of Journalism. The Globe and Mail and the National Post have done numerous stories regarding the victims in Caledonia and have given credit to CANACE for keeping the story alive.

Even those who radically oppose our view of Equality before the law have described us thusly: "McHale and CANACE are the most sophisticated grassroots anti-native political force currently active... because they mix activism with research and ongoing lobbying efforts aimed at all levels of government, they are able to push governments from below and get them to take action that they might not otherwise see as politically feasible. Indeed, CANACE has managed to shift the public political debate around native land rights to the right."

The success of CANACE is built completely on the fact that we have been a voice of the true victims who cannot speak out for themselves out of fear of additional harassment by Native Protesters or by the OPP. Mark Vandermaas' Caledonia Victims Project is a new venture to ensure

that the victims of Caledonia gain the right to be heard. Unlike Ipperwash where not one single non-Native resident was permitted to speak at the Ipperwash Inquiry, Caledonia's victims will have their stories documented and preserved so that history will record the truth.

Equality and the Rule of Law are serious issues that politicians at all levels have refused to truly deal with because it involves Native Protesters. You can be assured that if non-Natives were entering Six Nations and hospitalizing native people the government, the police and the media would crucify them.

The Calgary forum is the first time in Canadian history that innocent victims of flawed aboriginal policies will have a seat at the policy discussion table. The people of Caledonia and Haldimand County have a real opportunity to change Ontario and Canada to ensure this lawlessness never happens to another town, and to restore prosperity to Haldimand.

To that end Meryn Kinrade was hoping to host a town hall meeting at the Caledonia Lion's Hall to give residents of Haldimand an opportunity to express their views in order that we can carry your message across Canada on May 5th. However, over the past four years the Lion's Hall has repeatedly increased their rental rates to Mr. Kinrade - from \$70 to \$140, then finally \$350. This week we were told that the Lion's Hall has now passed a resolution that effectively means no resident could hold any Town Hall meeting on any issue that may be considered controversial. Just another step towards controlling or stopping free speech in Caledonia.

We were told by the Lion's Hall in Cayuga that the OPP had approached them over a year ago in the attempt to get them to stop us from renting the hall there.

Perhaps one day the people in Caledonia will be permitted to voice their views at town hall meetings but don't hold your breath because there is a lot of political pressure on people to control free speech. In the end it is average people, like you and I who stand and say "Enough is enough" that will bring about real change.