



HEALING TWO COMMUNITIES

**Tekawennake News
Opinion Editorial Series
July 14-21, 2010**

*Gary McHale
Mark Vandermaas
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NOTE: Several errors were made in the as-published versions, copies of which are included immediately following the 'as-submitted' copy below.

Tekawennake
Wednesday, July 14, 2010
OPINION EDITORIAL

Healing Two Communities: White Supremacists – Truth or Fiction?

by Doug Fleming, Merlyn Kinrade, Gary McHale and Mark Vandermaas

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Some supporters of the occupations in Haldimand County have tried to portray Caledonia residents and non-native activists – especially Gary McHale and his supporters - as being racist, anti-native, white supremacists.

In the beginning, it was an effective tactic. After all, which journalist, politician or community leader wants to take the chance of being associated with people who hold racist views?

While this tactic was effective it also had the effect of causing Six Nations protesters to lose sight of their own message and instead focus on attacking the character of other people. The mainstream media and the public are now beginning to understand that they have been lied to. This is because – and what is never mentioned by our critics - we have completely rejected the ideology of racism, hate and supremacy, and even our harshest critics have been forced to admit that they have no evidence that we are members, supporters or associates of white supremacist groups.

When Gary McHale and Mark Vandermaas were invited to speak at the recent 'New Directions in Aboriginal Policy' forum at Mount Royal University in Calgary they had an opportunity to listen to Wes Elliott present his message of Six Nation Sovereignty and his plan for peace, respect and love. Both McHale and Vandermaas interacted with Mr. Elliott in a respectful way.

Prior to the forum Mr. Vandermaas' told the organizer: "I am the son of parents who suffered under Nazi-occupation in Holland and so, have a deep and long-held revulsion to doctrines of racial superiority. Mr. McHale is a devout Christian who has repeatedly told me that racism is against the word of God. Mr. McHale and I are not now, nor have we ever been members of white supremacist groups nor have we associated with such groups nor have we ever expressed any support or sympathy for their ideologies because we believe in equality and justice for all people irrespective of race, religion or grievance."

After McHale and Vandermaas finished their presentations at Mount Royal University a visiting native professor from Ontario told them, "I discovered that you're not the monsters I had been led to believe you were."

Mr. McHale, on his website, has condemned any groups that hold to any form of white supremacy doctrine. In fact, the white supremacy group our critics attempt to link us to have actually posted they reject us because McHale "compares all movements like this [white supremacist] one to the Muslim terrorists."

Kinrade, McHale and Vandermaas are founding members of CANACE (Canadian Advocates for Charter Equality www.CANACE.ca) whose principles state, in part, *“Every person in Ontario has the right to a life free from racial discrimination and prejudice. All doctrines and practices of racial superiority are scientifically false, morally reprehensible, and socially destructive.”*

As reported in the Dunnville Chronicle - but not by the Teka - Mr. Fleming's opening statement at his public townhall meeting was, “I’m going to be very blunt here. My grandfather’s generation fought a war against Nazi Germany to combat that type of thinking. If any of you here have bought into this racist doctrine, I just want you to know this: I despise your beliefs. I couldn’t disagree with you more, and this is not the group for you.”

Not only have we completely rejected the ideology of racism, hate and supremacy, but neo-nazis have not been seen in Caledonia for more than three years. Our accusers conveniently ignore the fact that neo-nazis appeared in Caledonia *before* Gary McHale ever became involved. It was *not* Gary McHale and CANACE who attracted white supremacists to Caledonia, it was the lawlessness of certain native protesters and the lack of police response that attracted them – perhaps thinking they would find fertile ground for spreading their hate. We believe they stopped coming to Caledonia not only because we and the community rejected their repugnant ideology, but also because they rejected ours - our commitment to achieving equality, not superiority.

What white supremacist would want to associate with people like us who quote and follow the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr.? Who reject supremacy in favour of equality and respect for all human beings irrespective of race, religion or grievance? Would you want to be part of a movement that ridiculed the KKK and compared them to masked native protesters? Would you follow people who held signs pointing out that native people are also victims of two tier justice – as CANACE founders Mark Vandermaas and Merlyn Kinrade have done?

It has been especially hurtful to Merlyn Kinrade to be accused of being a racist. In his younger days, when he owned the Riverview Dairy, he coached hockey and baseball teams, and made a special effort to include needy children from Six Nations by providing transportation to and from practices and games, purchasing skates and other equipment for them and ensuring they were well fed during their time with the team. As with the now-deceased Judge Marshall – himself an honorary chief of Six Nations – Kinrade’s kindness towards the community was conveniently forgotten in favour of vilification.

We have tried to reach out to Six Nations for help in the past, but the ‘white supremacist’ label made that goal an impossible task. For example, where was the media coverage when Vandermaas publicly spoke out about natives being victims, or when McHale condemned the media for their failure to report the problems of Residential Schools? Both these speeches were given on Oct. 8, 2007 outside the Lion's Hall in Caledonia, but not one media outlet chose to report their messages.

Hopefully, as more people discover the truth, it will become possible for us to work with people of good will from Six Nations in order to help find a realistic path to healing the two communities. Our next article will offer some suggestions to make this possible.

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Healing two Communities: White Supremacists — Truth or Fiction?

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Healing Two Communities: Part 2 – What Now?

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From the very beginning we have never believed that those who 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 the protests, fed up with these groups of people and individuals claiming to speak for them and fed up with the 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 AK47 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 prosecution 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 it 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 by 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 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 by 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 who 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 its president.

4. 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.



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