



Joint Press Release by CANACE and Caledonia Victims Project - Jan 28, 2011

Truth and Reconciliation Rally in Caledonia on Sunday Feb. 27 at 1 p.m.

CANACE, founded by Gary McHale, and the Caledonia Victims Project, founded by Mark Vandermaas, are holding a Truth and Reconciliation Rally in Caledonia as part of their on-going efforts to bring about lasting peace, mutual respect and the restoration of the Rule of Law.

All who have read Christie Blatchford's book [Helpless](#) are aware of the victimization of Haldimand residents by a small minority of Native extremists and by the OPP who used systemic racial policing practices to target law abiding citizens instead of upholding the law against those who chose criminal behaviour instead of peaceful protest and courts.

It has now been three months since *Helpless* was published, yet the OPP, the Ontario government and Six Nations steadfastly refuse to acknowledge or discuss – let alone apologize for – their responsibility in victimizing innocents who included Native people as well as non-Native. It is truly sadening that while the residents of Haldimand County desire to move forward and put the past behind them those responsible for tearing their community apart refuse to aid in that process.

It has always been our goal to help bring about healing through a realistic process based on honesty, justice and respect for all human beings. As early as September 29, 2008, Mark Vandermaas and Merlyn Kinrade (representing CANACE) appeared before Brantford Council to explain the vision we called '[Reconciliation: the CANACE Path.](#)' Council was provided a visual representation in the form of a simple but illustrative step diagram by the same name [[LINK](#)] which was also included in Vandermaas' 2010 presentation at Mount Royal University entitled '*Listening to Victims: A Fresh Approach to Healing and Reconciliation.*' [[LINK](#)]

Gary McHale's 2010 Christmas message for Caledonia's Regional News expressed the need to keep the Christmas spirit alive throughout the year via a Truth and Reconciliation process. [[LINK](#)]

"It would be unreasonable to suggest Natives should simply move on or that Governments have no obligation to deal with the true experiences of Native people. In the same way, anyone claiming we should simply overlook the abuses committed by the McGuinty Government, the OPP and the violence caused by Native protesters are, in fact, acting in a way counterproductive to Truth and Reconciliation."

One cannot have lasting peace or heal the deep psychological damage from the past 5 years under the banner of a lie. We would all agree that a family torn apart by an alcoholic parent cannot start healing while the family continues to deny there is a problem.

Similarly, the people of Haldimand County cannot be bullied into accepting the distasteful propaganda by the guilty parties that they should just get over the injustices done to them, or that the crimes were somehow justified in a 'land claims context.' There is no escaping the truth: true healing, whether the victims are aboriginal or non-aboriginal, begins with a sincere apology, *not* with denials of irrefutable truths and fundamental justice.

The Canadian government has set the standard in healing relationships with Aboriginal people with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission whereby it admitted Canada's wrongs vis-à-vis the Residential School system. Accordingly, Premier McGuinty and OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis have been invited to Caledonia on Feb. 27, 2011 and asked to deliver a statement that will acknowledge the injustices that occurred under their leadership and apologize for them with a pledge NEVER AGAIN to allow Race Based Policing to victimize any people, group or community in Ontario.

Since Six Nations Council provided moral and financial support, even at the height of the violence in Caledonia, they have also been asked to attend in order that they, too, may help in the healing by admitting their wrongs and pledging NEVER AGAIN to use the people of Haldimand as pawns in their dispute with the Government of Canada.

Lest the lessons of Caledonia be forgotten, we call upon the Government of Ontario to aid in the healing process by erecting a monument on DCE that will affirm for Ontarians that Race Based Policing and violence against innocent people are not legitimate tools in a free and democratic society, and never again will any police force be allowed to discriminate on behalf of or against any person or group because of their race, colour, sex, etc.

We will gather in Caledonia on Sunday Feb. 27, 2011 at 1 p.m. outside the Lion's Hall in Caledonia. We will begin with speeches which, hopefully, will include courageous words of contrition from McGuinty, Lewis and Six Nations should they choose to participate. We will then march down Argyle St. in Caledonia and place a temporary 'apology' monument on the road allowance at the entrance to the Douglas Creek Estates occupation site upon which will be 'inscribed' the apologies from the OPP, Ontario Government and Six Nations.

Our purpose is to reach out to those responsible for what happened in Haldimand County with a message of hope – that healing and reconciliation will begin once they have acknowledged their role in victimizing innocents (which included native victims as well as non-natives) and have promised that it will not be allowed to happen again.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in his 1963 'Letter From Birmingham Jail,' spoke of the importance of confronting uncomfortable truths in bringing about the healing of the deep wounds of racism:

"Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured."

We call upon the people of Ontario and especially those who have read Christie Blatchford's *Helpless* to join the residents of Haldimand and march with them in the best traditions of Dr. King to bring an end to racism within the OPP and the McGuinty Government so there will be no more Caledonias. It is the 'ordinary' citizen that is the last line of defence against legalized injustices; if we fail to unite against them, then who will stand when injustice comes to you?

More information will be released in the coming days.

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