

Truth and Reconciliation Rally
Gary McHale, Executive Director
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Will the OPP and McGuinty Government aid in the Healing?

Caledonia is not a story about how minor crimes were committed while OPP used their discretion in order to serve a greater purpose of public safety. Caledonia is where serious criminal behaviour occurred directly in plain view of OPP officers who were clearly directed NOT to protect people who were not native protesters.

Four people were kidnapped in Caledonia; two rapes occurred on DCE; the hydro station was set on fire; a bridge was burnt down; an OPP officer was almost murdered; Sam Gaultieri now has permanent brain damage; guns were used to threaten the fire department; a native man was shot with an AK-47 in a shooting incident that began on DCE; and I personally spoke with the US ATF agent who had a native protester place a knife to his throat. Countless acts of intimidation, threats and assaults occurred under the so-called banner of peacekeeping.

Sorry Premier McGuinty but you failed to keep the peace, you failed to uphold law and order, you failed to exercise your duty to ensure that the rights of all people, regardless of their skin colour or their race were upheld in Ontario.

You made your political career on the back of the Harris government and Ipperwash while you, yourself, are guilty of allowing innocent citizens to suffer serious harm. Ex-Commissioner Fantino was your appointee as is the present Commissioner Chris Lewis – thereby demonstrating your full support for the racist policies used in Caledonia. You didn't care about the average person whom Charter Rights and Freedoms were being violated for days, weeks, months and years.

You sat safe in your Toronto home while families lived in fear - you should be ashamed of yourself. Mr. McGuinty, I am here to tell you that the public will not forget your involvement and your failures in Caledonia.

The media and the people of Toronto may well be upset for the two days of police abuse during the G8/G20 but the people of Caledonia have experienced it for 5 long years.

As a Liberal Government one would think you valued the Charter of Rights and Freedoms but your actions demonstrates an absolute disrespect for that document.

No one can change the past and perhaps you can look yourself in the mirror and justify your abuse of the laws of this country by wrapping it all up as a so-called peacekeeping mission, but both you and I know, you played politics with the lives of thousands of innocent people. You are not fooling the public - they know you sold Caledonia out in the name of political correctness.

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Everything I just said could also be said about the Ontario Political Police who have lost their way and forgotten their duty to Serve and Protect. This province and this country do not need political police who change their policing based on which government is in power.

We need a police department that separates itself from the political B.S., one which will uphold the Law and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I call upon the senior brass within the OPP to decide once and for all whether they are police officers or political thugs who carry out the orders of whoever is in office.

If you cannot decide then may I suggest you step down and allow others to truly Serve and Protect the people of Ontario.

If Commissioner Chris Lewis and Dalton McGuinty truly care about average people, the ones they claim to serve, then they have an opportunity to step up and start the healing in Caledonia.

I call upon Commissioner Lewis to apologize to the people of Haldimand County and to the people of Ontario for the racist policies of the OPP that inflicted so much harm upon OPP officers and the public.

I call upon Premier McGuinty to take responsibility for his failures over the past five years and issue an apology to the people of Haldimand County and to the people of Ontario for the racist policies of the OPP and for allowing the OPP to violate the rights of a whole community.

I also call upon Six Nations' Band Council to do what a responsible government should do and that is admit when their decisions injure people. Six Nations' has a duty to apology to Caledonia for using the town as a pawn in their struggle with the government - no community deserves to be disrespected so much as to be used for political gain.

This Sunday at 1 pm we will gather outside the Lion's Hall in Caledonia where we will have various guest speakers, including the Vice President of the Canadian chapter of the International Free Press Society. Then we will March to DCE and place a temporary monument on the road allowance to symbolize our hope that a permanent one will one day be inscribed with apologies issued by the OPP, the Ontario Government and Six Nations Band Council.

It has now been four months since Christie Blatchford's book *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 innocent people who included Native people as well as non-Native. It is truly saddening 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.

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.

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Likewise, 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 denying truth and fundamental justice.

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 to bring an end to racism within the OPP and the McGuinty Government so there will be no more Caledonias.

Mr. McGuinty, Commissioner Chris Lewis and Six Nations Band Council all received letters at the beginning of January inviting them to attend the rally this Sunday and to present their apologies to the community.

We wait to see whether any of these parties have the integrity to take responsibility for their decisions and their failures.

Thank you.

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