



# Ontario residents eye 'militia' as aboriginal dispute drags on

## Caledonia resident feel forsaken

BY JORGE BARRERA, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE JUNE 15, 2009



A group from a southern Ontario town is trying to organize an unarmed citizens' 'militia' to enforce laws they say the Ontario Provincial Police have failed to uphold since their community turned into ground zero of a land-claim battle between an Iroquois community, pictured, and the federal government.

**Photograph by:** Jim Ross, Reuters

A group from a southern Ontario town is trying to organize an unarmed citizens' "militia" to enforce laws they say the Ontario Provincial Police have failed to uphold since their community turned into ground zero of a land-claim battle between an Iroquois community and the federal government.

Some residents from Caledonia, Ont., about 75 kilometres southwest of Toronto, have long complained they feel forsaken by the OPP since Six Nations' 200-year-old land-claim battle with the federal government burst to national attention in 2006 with images of burning tires and blockades. Now, some locals are planning to take matters into their own hands, beginning with a citizens' group that would intervene when called in situations where it appears the OPP have no plans to act.

"Enough is enough," said Doug Fleming, a local entrepreneur, who's organizing the Caledonia Militia. "(The OPP) have failed miserably to protect law-abiding citizens."

In the winter of 2006, a small group from Six Nations staked their claim to Douglas Creek Estates, a Caledonia residential development, in an attempt to kick-start negotiations on a land claim that dates back to Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. A botched OPP raid to clear the protesters triggered blockades, tire fires and clashes with non-native residents. The provincial government eventually bought out the land's developer, and negotiations continue to this day, while tensions remain.

The idea of the Caledonia Militia is not new, but the recent erection of a cigarette shack on the property of a local resident gave it life, said Fleming.

Fleming said an information meeting on the fledgling organization is planned for next Tuesday. He said he could think of no other term besides "militia" to dub the group, but he plans to screen out troublemakers.

"There are times when diplomacy and appeasement don't work, and we have a situation right now in Caledonia where appeasement doesn't work," said Fleming, in a telephone interview from the house of Dave Brown and Dana Chatwell, who live next to the reclaimed land.

Brown said he plans to join after living through three years of what he calls lawless harassment from the Douglas Creek site.

"It gets to the point where you don't even bother calling the police," said Brown, adding he's received a dozen phone calls from locals interested in the militia.

Claudine VanEvery-Albert, a member of the Six Nations elected council, said harassment complaints are overblown and the militia idea is a bad one.

"You shouldn't have militia people. I think it's called anarchy," said VanEvery-Albert.

OPP spokeswoman Const. Paula Wright said the force "does not support the formation of a local militia."

Not everyone in Caledonia, which sits about 26 kilometres south of Hamilton, thinks it's a good idea, but they blame authorities for making locals believe they have no other option.

"People here are starting to hate. They hate the OPP, they hate the natives, they hate anyone who isn't speaking out against it," said David Hartless, a Hamilton police officer who lives next to the occupied site. "It is just a vicious circle, and it is being watered and nurtured and fertilized by the government and the OPP standing back and saying, 'We are doing the best we can.' "

© Copyright (c) Canwest News Service