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Caledonia: Part 1 of a 3-part series

Little trust, no patience

Both sides of the Caledonia-Six Nations dispute fear melting snow will bring an escalation of violence

Red Mohawk warrior and purple Six Nations confederacy flags snap in the wind above the entrance to Douglas Creek Estates.

No one can enter the site without permission. Log speed bumps have been placed across the road leading into Douglas Creek and guards check ill who arrive.

Six Nations and warrior flags hang from fancy lamp

Posts that line the unfinished roads. Cars are parked in the driveways of half built houses, many lacking siding. Roads that lead into Douglas Creek from other subdivisions have been barricaded. One is blocked by a fence of heavy wooden beams. A sign made of plywood nailed to a piece of two-by-four reads in painted letters, "Welcome to Mohawk Territory." A metal "No Trespassing Sign" is nailed to a beam just below it.

When asked why reporters are forbidden from entering the area, a spokesman for Six Nations said "because we can't guarantee your safety."

A few dozen feet from the entrance to this occupied or reclaimed territory — depending on who you ask — is a Baptist church. An OPP cruiser is parked nearby. Up the road is a Tim Hortons.

OPP cruisers are everywhere in Caledonia, a small bedroom community of about 10,000 people a few kilometres from Hamilton.

Caledonia and Six Nations, two communities that have coexisted for two centuries, settled into an uneasy stalemate over the winter after a heated summer and spring of violent clashes.

'Blessings'

But many on both sides of the log speed bumps believe the melting snow will bring with it an escalation of violence that will eclipse the tire burning, barricades and stone throwing of the past year.

Yet, to hear authorities and politicians talk it would be easy to believe the crisis had passed.

"We can count our blessings this has progressed as peacefully as it has," said Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice.

Immigration Minister

Diane Finley, a local MP, has also been around the community, visiting people individually and asking them what they would like to see built on the site "after the occupation."



Jorge Barrera
IN CALEDONIA

OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino said \$20 million plans are moving ahead to establish an increased and permanent police presence in the area. Yet, he

believes things have taken a turn for the better.

"It's stabilized. We find that things are much more peaceful," said Fantino. "As far as the whole business of law and order and peaceful coexistence, that has been stabilized."

'Cause trouble'

He said problems only surge when outsiders come in to stir things on both sides.

"We have people in the community that don't live there and their whole interest is to cause trouble," he said.

Despite repeated requests, the provincial government refused to provide anybody to speak on the matter. It seems they couldn't free up anybody over three days to discuss an issue that hangs over the daily lives of everyone who lives in the Caledonia and Six Nations area.

But provincial Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory says it's too early to relax. He met a Caledonia woman during a recent event who told him things were not right at home.

"She said just the feeling in the town is bad, people are not feeling good about each other or the town. They don't see the end of things," said Tory, who spent the night at the home of a local resident last December to get a feeling for the situation. "There has been a general hope that if you keep saying there is nothing going on here that somehow we can all pretend it has all gone away. But you can see with your own eyes how many police are there."

Tory said there should have been no negotiations until Douglas Creek was cleared.

But things have moved beyond that now and people in Caledonia and Six Nations



JORGE BARRERA/SUN MEDIA

Hazel Hill, spokesman for Six Nations, standing inside the Douglas Creek reclamation site, says patience with the federal and provincial government is wearing thin in her community.

have little trust left in government.

"There's an uneasy calm," said Haldimand County Ward 3 Coun. Craig Grice, who lives in Caledonia a stone's throw from Douglas Creek. "You try to live a peaceful life and you have to deal with a situation completely beyond your control where you have a federal government that has decided that they don't know where Caledonia is yet."

No faith

On the Six Nations side, there is little trust or patience left. While the leadership has agreed to negotiations, there is no stomach for long, drawn out discussions. There is talk

of plans to throw up barricades outside the site if government negotiators use an ongoing internal leadership rift to stall negotiations.

"The patience of the people is getting very thin. There is no faith at all with the Crown. There is no trust. We saw what went on for a whole year," said Six Nations spokesman Hazel Hill. "You are going to have people that if they feel that the government of Canada is not willing to co-operate fully then people are going to have to do things to bring attention."

Prentice said Six Nations needs to settle the power struggle between the band council and the traditional confederacy government lead

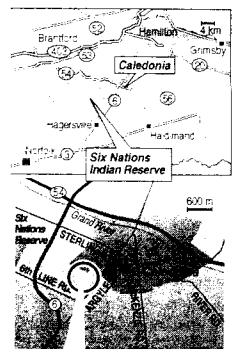
by the clan mothers for talks to go smoothly.

"They need to get these issues resolve so they can come to the table with one voice," said Prentice.

In context

The Douglas Creek dispute was caused by a broken land claims system, he said. There are over 800 outstanding land claims and the government is looking to retool the process. Six Nations and Caledonia residents need patience, said Prentice.

"I think you need to put things in context," he said. "This dispute goes back a long long time, 250 years. They are not easy claims to resolve."



The land at stake:
• Douglas Creek Estates, a 40-hectare tract of land west of Argyle Street and south of the town of Caledonia, owned by developer Henco Industries Ltd.
• Construction of ten houses had begun, six of which had been sold.

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But at the main negotiating table, the federal government has taken the position Six Nations had ceded their claim over Douglas Creek.

Six Nations, however, say they never gave up the site which is part of a land grant given to them by the British Crown for helping fight the Americans during Revolution. They say the pre-Confederation colonial government sold off the land a month before the December 1844 date that the federal government claims Six Nations surrendered the land.

The 40 hectare Douglas Creek site is part of the 385,000 hectare 1784 Haldimand Land Grant given to Six Nations to "take possession and settle." The 20 kilometre wide strip runs along the Grand River from its source to Lake Erie. The grant was reduced to 111,000 hectares in 1792.

In 1995, Six Nations began their court action to reclaim their Haldimand Grant lands.

Ten years later in July, Henco Industries, which bought a company that owned Douglas Creek, registered their 650 subdivision plan with the province. But in October of that year, band Chief David General warned Henco about developing the disputed territory.

On Feb. 28, 2006, a small group of Six Nations members moved into Douglas Creek to stop the development.

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