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## Aboriginal protesters remove Caledonia blockade

CBC News Viewpoint | May 2006

Aboriginal protesters removed a barricade Tuesday at the scene of a violent weekend confrontation in the southern Ontario town of Caledonia.

Ontario Provincial Police cleared demonstrators, reporters and onlookers off of Highway 6, the site of aboriginal and non-native blockades, around 2 p.m. EDT.

Backhoes quickly pulled away an electrical transmission tower that had been placed across the road as native demonstrators filled in a trench dug across the road a day earlier.

Tuesday dawned a much calmer day than Monday, when a standoff between aboriginal protesters and non-native residents exploded in violence and ended with a vandalism-induced power outage.

Earlier, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty appealed for "cooler heads" and a peaceful resolution. "It's not the kind of thing that's going to be resolved overnight," McGuinty said.

### Your letters:

**It's time for everyone in this situation to step back and take a breath.** It's obvious now that extremists on both sides led to Monday's violence.

However, the rights of BOTH sides need to be addressed as this progresses.

We need to recognize the land rights of the Natives, but the Natives must realize that they are bound to the laws of this land, regardless of what some of them may think. They cannot expect to have access to social services, schooling and health care and then turn around and say that they're not a part of this country.

They have to take the good with the bad, and work through dialogue and diplomacy to make a place for themselves. You've got our attention, now let's all put pressure on all levels of government to settle these claims once and for all.



*Clashes between aboriginal protesters and non-native residents of Caledonia dashed hopes that a longstanding land-claim dispute was near a resolution. (CBC)*

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[Aboriginal protesters remove Caledonia blockade](#)

The financial cost is nothing compared to the harm that events like this do to a community, and the country as a whole.

—Jay Feth | *Hamilton, Ont.*

**The natives have no choice when it comes to setting up blockades and protesting.** These actions are the only way to get the attention of Canada and the world. Talking doesn't always work because of the lying and back stabbing from the government.

These white residents who say they don't like the way the natives are dictating how things go just hate to see the indians coming out ahead.

—Gordon Morris | *Lethbridge, Alta.*

**The people in the town are outraged,** and upset that this is going on, yet nothing is being done by the government. Yes, the government is talking, and negotiating with this Native group. But these acts of terrorism continue, and are being accepted as negotiating leverage by the government.

I understand the government does not want to have another incident like Ipperwash - where during a native protest, a man was killed. And neither do the residents of Caledonia. However, this has gone too far. We have rights too, don't we?

I guess we are just a small town, and our votes don't matter. So I'm hoping that the rest of Ontario will see what is going on and call/email/write to your MP's for help. This is not about a small town feud over land. It's about the rights of all Canadians to live free and safely and be protected by our laws and government. This has not been happening in Caledonia.

—Danielle Dubniczky | *Caledonia, Ontario*

**Enough already!** ... when will this weak appeasement Liberal Government stand up to the lawbreakers holding a community hostage?

This is not a native or land claim issue anymore. The "protesters" have ample legal avenues to pressure their grievances. But instead they choose to break the law of the land, bully and terrify.

Time for the sitting government to grow a spine and stand up to our own home-grown terrorists.

—Omar Welke | *Kitchener, Ont.*

**Power to my Native brothers and sisters in Caledonia.** We will recover the land that was stolen by the lying thieving Whiteman and their corrupt governments. It is the Whiteman that are the terrorists and are the ones that should be imprisoned. —David Munroe | *Thompson, Man.*

**Why are the OPP protecting the natives** any other person who has done what they have done would of had there asses arrested and put in jail. I think the Ontario Government is afraid.

Who will end up paying for all this. The Canadian tax payers. Put an end to this now before someone really gets hurt or killed.

—Jeff Barbour | *Hamilton, Ont.*

**I find it appalling** that the media, the government and the police tend to look upon the natives as the underdog. It was the natives who began this whole situation and it reprehensible the government has allowed it to escalate to the point it is today.

Siva Swaminath

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Had the positions been reversed and it was non native people who set up a blockade, held a community hostage and finally vandalized a hydro one tower - they would have been arrested without a 2nd thought.

It would be nice to seem some equalization of the blame as well as equalization of how the situation is reported by the media.

—Joanne Davis | Brantford, Ont.

**I am sad to see that this situation has escalated to the point it has.**

The Native people were ready to settle. They had taken down their barricade. I understand that the non-Native people were stressed out about the inconvenience that they have been through over the last 5 weeks. Unfortunately our Native Peoples have had STRESS over unresolved land claims for a long time.

Perhaps education of the townspeople about Native issues and how they have been betrayed over the years would help them to understand why they did what they did- putting up the barricades to let all Canadians know that we have not been working with them in good faith.

It is too bad that the "hot headed" had to stir up the pot just when the situation seemed to be resolving. I do hope and pray that no further violence occurs. It did seem that the Native People were keeping their protest non-violent. What happened?

—Rosemary Merkley | Toronto

**Why is it, that because they are Native Canadians they are**

**"allowed" to continue** these protest, whether its in Ontario or Saskatchewan. If it were any other group, clearly we would have been arrested already.

The fact that they may or may not have a claim to this land needs to be settled once and for all in a court of law, and until that day when it is settled, any such protesting should be punishable by arrest.

In effect they have decided to take the law into their own hands, and by allowing them to do so and standing idly by, we are letting them do so.

In this day and age, it is totally ridiculous. —Joyce Clements | Saskatoon, Sask.

**The whole "First Nations" thing is getting out of control.** If so called First Nations want the benefits of modern civilization (shingled roofs, electricity and indoor plumbing) they had better be prepared to adhere to the laws of a civilized society.

Instead of living in the past, they need to start living in the present, and pay the same dues as everyone else in this modern society - taxes, respect for laws, education (paid for by the modern society) and work.

It's time we stopped playing politically correct, and started enforcing our laws. If we have to put more of them in jail, so be it. Someday, they'll figure it out.

—Doug Watspm | Calgary, Alta.

**I am thoroughly disgusted with the "White" attitude** that I have been seeing on the news and am ashamed of that "whiteness". Even as a young person I was aware of what the 'Original' peoples had been through and could never understand the reason behind it.

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Before it goes too far those who are so angry at the Caledonian Native Stand-off should stop and realize just how hard it is for the native community even now. We supposedly live in a race tolerant society but I don't see it. It is hard to be native in Canada and improve your life.

—D. Hayward | Britt, Ont.

**It is time our Federal and Provincial Governments set the standard** that there is but one law in the land of Canada, that all of us whether we be white, black, brown or aboriginal must recognize and be subject to that law.

No one has the right to take the law into their own hands for any reason, including land claims, and put others at risk in any way. If law authorities can't guarantee compliance and security then the military must be used!

—Robert Thompson | Brantford, Ont.

**This has to stop, someone is going to get very seriously hurt** or worse the longer the government ignores its people that voted them into office the more frustrated the people are going to get.

Why did the Natives wait to protest their land until houses went up on "their land", why not protest when the signs went up that the land was being developed for housing. The Natives knew what was happening on their land long ago.

Now they say nothing will ever be done with that land, but watch how fast the Natives will move into those houses? They are already building their own roads now.

I have family in Caledonia and now they have no power. I am ashamed to be a Canadian with all the Government is NOT doing and proving once again they do not care about who voted them in only about what is good for them.

—Sandie Kelly | Hamilton, Ont.

**The Blockade in Caledonia only serves to illustrate** the double standard in our legal system. The Aboriginal's are allowed to break the law for weeks and months, while a non aboriginal protest immediately attracts the attention of the police. I can well understand the utter frustration of the people of Caledonia.

I am also infuriated with the reporters who insist on perpetuating the sub status of non aboriginal's in this country. You call the aboriginal's "Natives" and the rest of us "Non Natives". This is an insult to me, my parents, grandparents and great grandparents who were all born in this country.

I may not be aboriginal but make no mistake I AM A NATIVE OF CANADA. My heritage may be British but I certainly do not consider myself a native of Great Britain. Stop insulting the majority of Canadians.

—Ian McKenzie | Thunder Bay, Ont.

**These "people" have illegally blocked public roads**, protested using tactics of intimidation and have clearly broken our laws and stated directly to Canadians that our laws do not apply to them. In so doing, these "people" have created the division between native and non-native.

They have damaged the vitality of this town and have affected and infringed on the rights and freedoms of this hard-working tax-paying community for 3 months.

The native protesters, up until today, have been allowed to move back and

forth across their own blockade, into and out of town, while they make demands to our government for land, money and absolution of accountability for any wrongdoing. They say they want more land, because their population is growing, meanwhile they claim to the United Nations that they are subjected to genocide. It's ridiculous.

The frustration of the residents of this town reflect the wrongdoing of the people who are holding this country ransom. It is the rights and freedoms of the tax-paying people of Caledonia that have been violated and Canadians across this country will continue to pay for them to co-exist on their terms. Caledonians are standing up for Canada today.

—*J. Savelli | Caledonia, Ont.*

**The situation in Caledonia is an embarrassment to Canada**, not only has the Federal government failed in their duty to hold native land in trust, when it was transferred to them from the Crown, they have failed to resolve this situation in a timely manner.

This is another example of the government pushing Native issues to the back burner. The non-native population in Caledonia should be ashamed to call themselves Canadian, the display of "say no to Natives signs" displays individuals returning to the discriminatory practices of the past.

For a country that prides itself on multiculturalism and equality it is saddening to observe clear and legal rights being withheld.

—*Kyla Corkery | Waterloo, Ont.*

**It's getting to the point where the rule of law should be applied to both native and non-native protestors.** If you want to protest, fine, that is your right. But when and if the courts says enough, you either leave, or face the consequences.

And our politicians need to show some spine and actually say enough is enough. When negotiation does not produce results, it's time to use the rule of law to end these continuing disputes.

Otherwise this will continue to spiral further out of control. No group, native or non-native, should have the right to thumb their noses and hold communities hostage.

—*Chris Summers | Vancouver*

**Removal of the native's blockade is long overdue.** Construction of such a blockade by any other group would not be tolerated for such a length of time and there is no good reason to give aboriginal groups special consideration.

—*David Baer | Calgary*

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