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First Words

This Thanksgiving Address is the basis for understanding the Haudenosaunee (Longhouse People/Iroquois) worldview. It is the first words given to open and close all gatherings, meetings, and ceremonies.

And so, to begin we extend our thanks, greetings and love for the people, that everyone is at peace.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to our Mother, the Earth.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the waters on the Earth.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the fish, in the waters he placed them.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the plant life, the vegetables and fruit.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the medicines.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the free, wild animals.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the trees.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the birds.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the winds.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to our Grandfathers, the thunders.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to our Elder Brother, the Sun.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the stars.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the Four Beings who watch over us from above.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the Peacemaker and Handsome Lake for all they have done for us.

Finally, we give our thanks, greetings and love to Shonkwaya tihson, the one who made you.

This is all I can do and now it is done

-Thank you to Michael from Six Nations for reciting the opening.

LOVE

Love is real, real is love
Love is feeling, feeling love
Love is wanting to be loved

Love is touch, touch is love
Love is reaching, reaching love
Love is asking to be loved

Love is you
You and me
Love is knowing
we can be

Love is free, free is love
Love is living, living love
Love is needed to be loved
-John Lennon

Thank you to Nadine from Caledonia for reading this piece.

Community Document

May this document “travel like the wind” touching everyone, everywhere!

INTRODUCTION:

A team of community helpers were called upon from both the Six Nations and Caledonia communities to participate in the Neighbouring Communities Project. Forming the team we had representatives from Haldimand-Norfolk R.E.A.C.H., Ganohkwasra F.A.S.S., Grand River Post Secondary Education Office, The Hincks-Dellcrest Centre, The University of Western Ontario, and Dulwich Centre. We are very thankful to all these individuals as well as the agencies they represent, who said “Yes” to the call to come together in love and understanding for one common goal: To promote respect, unity and connectedness with the people from Caledonia and Six Nations.

The narrative approach was utilized as the basis for this project. It is an approach that has been used widely around the world with communities facing various concerns and conflicts. While some of the team members were trained in the narrative approach, others were not. Our team members were inhabitants of Six Nations, Caledonia, as well as other communities.

As a team, we were challenged to focus on our “sameness” rather than our differences. We each brought in our own beliefs, values and teachings, leaving room for that of others as well. How could we ask our communities to come together if we could not come together from a place of respect? The result of this process was a very spiritual experience for our team members. We each were honoured to have met and interviewed each individual who courageously took a risk to share his or her stories. As a team, our souls were touched very deeply by the outcome.

BACK-STORY:

We all know of the violence, conflict and hardships faced by the community members of Caledonia and Six Nations due to the Douglas Creek Estate land dispute. Members of both communities have endured hardship financially, emotionally, physically, and personally. It has been difficult for the community members to know how to respond, and how to cope with such circumstances. Within the narrative approach, this story of conflict is what is called the “First Story.” It involves the tension, hurt, hatred, violence, fear, mistrust, misunderstanding, and prejudice that resulted in the conflicts that ensued. Indeed, the first story serves to separate, segregate and discriminate community against community,

neighbour against neighbour, friend against friend, and family member against family member. However, within this story there is also a second or alternate story about how people are responding to difficulties, conflict and various predicaments.

CONSULTATIONS:

Utilizing the process of the narrative approach a series of approximately 36 consultations with members of both the Six Nations and Caledonia communities occurred over a period of three days. Two team members, one of each culture, met with a community member. We wanted to learn the “Second Story” from our community members. This is the real story that often wasn’t being told by the media - the values, strengths, skills and heart of each community. It was meant to move beyond the “reaction” out of anger, to look deeper to a place that exists within us all – a place of common values, purposes, family, togetherness, and hope.

“Our futures are tied up in our homes and property. It’s for our retirement”

From these conversations and the words of the community members, common themes *relevant to both communities* were developed. These themes are shared themes between both communities and served as the points of discussion for the wider community gatherings.

ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF THE GATHERINGS (MEETINGS)

Two locations were chosen for two gatherings. The first gathering was held in Caledonia and the second at Six Nations, one in the late afternoon and one in the evening. This arrangement was meant to allow people to participate on their schedule and in a way that they would feel the most comfort. Approximately 110 people from Six Nations and Caledonia attended the gatherings!

The gatherings were structured to be a “telling” and “re-telling” of people’s stories in an attempt to move away from processes such as “point and counter-point” debates. This structure of telling and re-telling¹, facilitated by a team member, has proven useful in communities around the world. It allows for listening and for the further acknowledgement of community skills, knowledge, and values.

“We are tied to the land, it is who we are, our identity, our culture”

¹ White, M., *Narrative practice and community assignments*, The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work, Dulwich Centre Publications, 2003, no. 2.

An “opening ceremony” was held using two languages. It should be noted that the team had conversations about how to balance the gathering with the understanding that it would primarily be held in one language. Please feel welcome to translate the document into the language that fits best for you.

After the completion of the opening, team members gave an overview of the process. Various community members then introduced the “common themes”. Associated with these common themes were questions oriented towards further drawing forward the second story of community skills, knowledge, and values.

A FEW WORDS FROM THE TEAM

We believe the communities of Caledonia and Six Nations have been called to a very special challenge. The challenge is to be leaders in a society today faced with chaos, injustice and hardship. It's a call to be leaders in the world, to listen, process within ourselves, understand, and speak from the place of our good mind. Can people put aside the 'hurt, hatred, violence, fear, mistrust, misunderstanding, and prejudice, and replace it with a passion for unity, understanding, justice and respect'? The choice is ours to make. Will we love or will we hate? Will we listen or will we condemn? Will we pray or will we curse?

Both communities are very unique and spiritual communities. It's time to walk our talk, while remembering that conflict and misunderstandings are in our world today. Our children will be faced with conflicts and misunderstandings on many levels. Our children are watching and learning from the adults of today. As a team, we wholeheartedly believe in the power of the good mind – we were challenged, we persevered, we experienced the power of the good mind and most of all, we witnessed it within the lives of those we met.

This document contains the true stories or second stories of those we interviewed; the true stories of the communities of Six Nations and Caledonia. May the heart and soul of these communities be true and provide a solid foundation to re-building an even stronger relationship with our neighbours.

The next section presents the overview that was read to begin the gatherings.

OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Six Nations/Caledonia community gathering.

In this gathering community members will be invited to talk about and to explore various themes or topics that have come from consultations with community members. The gathering today provides an opportunity to come together to look at important community concerns and hopes for the lives of the women, men and children of the Caledonia/Six Nations communities. This gathering is for community members, and everyone is invited to play a part in the further development of important initiatives. Everyone has a part to play, everyone will have the opportunity to speak, and everyone's contribution will be valued.

The gathering has several parts to it.

1. There will be a welcome.
2. This will be followed by some community members speaking about the significant themes that came from consultations held within the community over the past few days. These community members will also share stories from their own lives that relate to these themes.
3. After the community members have spoken about these themes, people will be invited to form small groups to respond to some questions. These will be questions about these themes. A member of the consulting team will be present at each small group discussion to listen and to help facilitate the discussion.
4. The team members will then speak to the gathering about some of the stories that were told in the small groups, and about the ways in which these stories touched them.
5. Community members will then be invited to respond to the comments of the team members.
6. There will be a formal close to the meeting.

We ask that all community members accept the format of this community gathering. This format has been found to be highly effective in community meetings held in other parts of the world. This format provides a strong foundation for communities to address serious concerns and problems within their communities. It is not the aim of the gathering to resolve concerns and problems, but to build a foundation that makes it more possible to resolve such concerns and problems.

During the gathering team members will take notes so that the story of the gathering can be written up in a document that will include many of the stories told at this meeting. This document will also include the stories told in the consultations of community members in preparation for this event. A copy of this story will be made available to all community members. The stories of community members will only be included in the retelling of the team members, and in this document, with their permission.

COMMON THEMES RELEVANT TO BOTH COMMUNITIES

1. The safety and security of our children

Over the past year and a half we have all had concerns for the safety of our families, of our relatives, and of our friends and neighbours. These concerns have been even more intense over the safety of our children, and over the security of their futures. Our children are our hope – our kids equal hope. We all want our children to have a safe place to grow up in and to become the people they were born to be.

*“What are your hopes even though perhaps unrealistic?”
“I would like to see everyone wake up one day and see the person as a person, as equal humans, valuing colour and culture and appreciating it in its fullness. “ This is in response to the racism my family has heard and seen. I am concerned about the stereotypes, the injustice my daughter has witnessed at a young age. I see my daughter in her acts of kindness, which remind me of my father. There is a need to take into consideration the circumstances of other people. I hope people will keep the faith and do the right thing – there will be a ripple effect to this. I wish for the leaders to ‘walk the talk’ and not to be ‘self-centred’*

-Jan Watson, Caledonia

At times we have worried that our children’s futures could be easily swept into the current of the river that has at times been raging in our community. We know that we have to act on our concerns. And we know that the actions that we take now will have a big effect on the safety and security of our children and grandchildren. We also know that our own children’s futures will be secure only if the future of all children in both the Six Nations community and the Caledonia community are secure.

Over the months there have been many steps taken to secure the future of children in both the Six Nations community and the Caledonia community. These steps have also been taken on behalf of our grandchildren and great grandchildren. In taking these steps, we have been committed to ‘lighting the smallest candle rather than to curse the darkness’.

- Do you know of steps that have been taken to ensure the safety of our children?

- Do you know of actions that have been taken to secure the future of children in our communities?
- What effect will these steps and actions have on the lives of our grandchildren and great grandchildren?
- Which of these steps and actions would our own parents and grandparents be pleased to see?
- Why would our parents and grandparents be so pleased to see these steps and actions?

We have an obligation to mutual respect, friendly relations and an obligation to relate to the town and Canada. The Creator has given a plan showing us how to conduct ourselves, and as a people we need to uphold these values in our daily living. With our "Good Mind" we can have justice and mutual respect.

Our ceremonies connect us to the Creator and to nature. Ceremonies boost you; they renew, carry you and give you strength. Traditional ceremonies connect us to the elements the Creator has given. All things are connected; the earth and water, our morals and decisions. The law of the Creator calls us to be a people of peace.

When the government pushes assimilation and we lose our medicines, our language and our community, it is then that people develop a sense of desperation. We are saddened to see this, to see no connection and people doing things to harm themselves and others. People need connections in order to live a peaceful life.

We value understanding and education, the importance of speaking with the young people. When young people hear native stories and history it changes them, it changes their attitudes. The media is not telling the heart of the story. Some come seeking a genuine understanding but what we see and hear in the media is based on sensationalism. It is so important to keep talking with our children, to show them how rich they are. We need to give them the tools to see who they are, to help them think. While they are here they can find balance and be grounded, then they can go out into the world and keep who they are. Our hope is for the children, for our little guys.

-A couple from Six Nations

Team Members Re-telling What They Heard From The Small Group Discussion

"In this discussion I was drawn to the image of an adult leading a child by the hand and the child looking to that adult for guidance. The youth look to and learn from the adults in their life. In the discussion I heard many ideas about teaching and modeling for our children how to handle difficult times respectfully and competently. It was noted that by taking care of our well-being helps us to take better care of our children's well-being. Ideas about talking with our children, sharing knowledge, information about other cultures they don't know about, modeling how to handle difficult situations, de-escalating the fears, emerged as important. This gives them a great head start in life. A story was shared about taking children to the reclamation site to get the answers from those who could provide them. A wish to be careful to explain to children not to fall into the trap of what others might be saying was expressed.

I was captured by the image of “sports being like a bridge” during this discussion. It has been sad how the youth sports have been affected especially given the rich history of sporting within the communities. If you are with people it helps to “take down the barriers”. An idea emerged to hold tournaments with the communities, mixing the players, promoting knowledge and understanding. It’s an exciting idea.”

2. Extending our efforts

The conflict between the Six Nations community and the Caledonia community has resulted in many people feeling threatened and vulnerable. This has had the effect of splitting people from each other - of isolating people from each other between the two communities, and of isolating people from each other within these communities. This vulnerability and isolation is dangerous. It encourages people to become fearful, and passengers in the situation, waiting for others to empower them, waiting for others to break down the isolation.

Despite this, many people have extended an effort to get free of this sense of vulnerability and to break this isolation. These efforts have been in the spirit of: “If I take one step forward and you take one step forward, we are two steps closer than we were before”. These steps are taken on the understanding that we don’t have to agree in order to live in peace with each other.

These steps are also taken in recognition of the fact that we have to go beyond what we understand in order to find other ways of dealing with the situation. All of Canada is watching not just the conflict, but also watching

I have a passion for this town. I’ve lived here for most of my life and refuse to just let it go. There is a strong history of friendship between our two communities. I went to school with the Native kids. I played sports with the Native kids. My son plays sports with the Native kids. They are his good friends.

I am very concerned about the conflict regarding the land issue (DCE) with our neighbours. This conflict has had a devastating effect for Caledonia and Six Nations relationships. Businesses have suffered. Violence was very upsetting for all. I see that the Government is part of this problem. They don’t care about Six Nations or Caledonia people. We are in the international spotlight. Media has sensationalized the negative aspects of this dispute. Our differences have been highlighted and sensationalized. I am willing to extend an effort to be friendly and open to the people of Six Nations who do come to Caledonia. I try to make Native people feel as welcome as possible.

Let’s stop pointing at each other. When we point at someone, there are three fingers pointing back at you. Let’s stop pointing at each other! We need continued signs of cooperation from both sides. If I take one step, and you take one step, we are 2 steps closer than we were before. I am willing to make that step. Let’s make the move to start the gesture.

-Person From Caledonia

the efforts we are extending to stand together, to get along with mutual respect, and to achieve lasting peace and harmony.

- What stories can you tell about people extending efforts to get free of feelings of vulnerability?
- What stores can you tell about people breaking free of this isolation and fear?
- Can you think of examples of steps that have been taken in the spirit of: “If I take one step forward and you take one step forward, we are two steps closer than we were before”?
- Which of these stories and examples would it be good for people in the wider community to know about?
- What are some of the learnings that can be taken from these efforts and passed on to other communities in Canada?

My wife and I came to Caledonia to set down roots. I came from a small community where I saw my parents give back to the community. They coached sports, became involved in community events. We chose Caledonia because it is such a nice, growing community. This community gathers together. We support each other. We celebrate with parades, festivals and community events. This is a caring community.

After the police raid, there was this sense of “us” and “them”. I saw my neighbours cry. I saw fear in my wife’s eyes. Twice we sent the kids out of town. There were so many pulls towards discouragement, and fear. There were many rumours. I felt like people were being swept in the current of the river. I decided to take a stand against the voices of discouragement and to stand in hope and possibility. I wanted to take a stand for safety because I believe it is so important for everyone. The saying, “It’s better to light the smallest candle, than curse the darkness” has stayed with me for a long time. So I have been trying to bring people together, people from both communities. I hope this makes it harder to paint with a wide brush as people meet each other and learn from each other. It makes it harder to generalize about a culture.

-Person From Caledonia

Team Members Re-telling What They Heard From The Small Group Discussion

“This discussion left me with the feeling that I can make a difference, and I don’t have to do it alone. Together we can work on upholding values of dignity and respect for all people. I may have found more questions than answers, but I will keep asking the questions and seeking the truth.”

3. Healing Knowledges

Many people have felt wounded by the conflict in the Caledonia/Six Nations communities. This has been very painful and has left many people with feelings of hopelessness and sadness. Many people have been left wondering whether it is possible to recover from this.

However, there are many healing knowledges in the two communities. For example, there are knowledges about how to:

1. Appreciate small steps and teachable moments
2. Bring about positive developments in negative situations
3. Think in ways that challenge negativity
4. Focus on what needs to be done today
5. Help people to be people when they have lost their way
6. Treat people like how we would want to be treated ourselves
7. Keep faith with what is important to us
8. Get other people thinking instead of reacting
9. Use faith and prayer to breathe life into what is important.

Many of us also know about ceremonies that lift us, that boost us and that give us strength.

People in the Six Nations and Caledonia communities are taking up these healing knowledges in many ways. This is helping people to recover from pain, and from feelings of hopelessness and sadness.

This matter is larger than the Caledonia lands... we are entrusted by the Creator to take care of the land and river and air... these will be life- giving and sustaining us and we must maintain them for the future generations. The land forms us, provided we give back to it. We are like the Tree; if we lose the earth within which we are rooted, our core becomes hollow. ...Everyone has a gift to give to the community and to the earth and air, good energy from and to the entities of Nature. In ceremony we celebrate this relationship. When we take from the tree, we celebrate that tree. We need to do the same with each other- to share, care, and respect each other.

-Norma General: Six Nations

- Which healing knowledges have been helping you to recover from these wounds?
- What other healing knowledges do you know of that would be helpful at this time?
- What is the history of these healing knowledges?
- Do you know about ceremonies that would contribute to further healing in the communities?
- What ideas do you have about getting together with others to perform these healing ceremonies?

We are part of the land. This is who we are and what we live off. We respect the Story of Creation and how we were all formed from the earth, the land. We know that there is good and bad in all of us. We need to focus on the good and walk with the good mind.

There is so much we need to teach our youth. As adults we have been taught by our elders to keep it spiritual and we need to teach by example to our youth. Our teachings promote non-violence. Fighting does not diffuse situations. Fighting creates greater misunderstanding. It's all about walking with the good mind and mutual respect. There are so many teachers that can guide us and bring us back to our ways. One of my greatest teachers was Jake Thomas, a Cayuga Chief who taught at Trent University. I want to keep his message alive. He told our stories in such powerful ways; he reminded me of who I am. Jake taught me everything I know, but not everything he knows. Jake helped straighten out my heart and my mind. Jake started sharing our history and the more I heard, the prouder I got. I know how important it is to keep Jake's message alive.

I believe that the walls are beginning to come down. I believe that only good is going to come. There is change all around us. People are more aware of the environment, the land and how important it is to respect the land. I have faith for our future.

-Person from Six Nations

It was hard to see the community in distress. A group of us wanted to hold a town meeting to send a message to the government that the people were being affected. Much of what we tried to do got lost, changed in the media. There is little control.

We try to focus on what needs to be done today, to get to the people and make some changes. These actions come from a value system that honours respect and an understanding that everyone has access to rights, liberties, and nobody should be treated differently.

I know there is a way through this. I learned the value of perseverance from my father. He didn't let up when faced with hard times. Progress is understanding. I look to the leaders to stand on traditional values of trust and respect. Be involved.

-Ken Hewitt, Caledonia

Team Members Re-telling What They Heard From The Small Group Discussion

In the Caledonia Meeting I heard about the power of prayer. One of the members said that she knew that the only reason no one has been killed so far is because of prayer. This really resonated with my soul because my son was in a really bad car accident last year. I truly believe he was saved only through the power of prayers to the Creator. My Grandmother used to pray for all of her kids, grandchildren and great grandchildren. My mother prayed for her kids, grand children and great grandchildren. Now I pray for my kids. Even though my grandmother and mother are no longer with us and haven't been for awhile, I believe their prayers are still here keeping us all safe."

4. Restoring friendships and relationships

The conflict in the Caledonia/Six Nations communities has impaired friendships and relationships between these communities. These are friendships and relationships that have evolved across many decades. These are friendships and relationships that have brought richness to the lives of people from both communities. Many people have been mourning the loss of these friendships and relationships. Many people have been finding that the loss of these friendships and relationships has had a negative effect on their happiness.

It's 2007! People are welcome here! We've been neighbours forever. In order to sustain a culture, three things are essential: a land base, a language base, and a social structure. It is our responsibility to protect these. We cannot lose anyone of these- one keeps and preserves the other. I love to learn and I teach. It is said, "Once you become aware, you can never become unaware." People speak of the importance of acting with a "good mind". The good mind requires all the ingredients of a "good mind"...so I help people to bring the ingredients together...the value of sharing our knowledge inspires me. The task is to "walk the talk"...We have what it takes. It is already here. Nothing is lost. We just need to practice it.

-Jan Longboat: Six Nations

These friendships and relationships have a history, and this history has not changed. Because of this, these friendships and relationships are still there to be recovered and restored. People are now taking steps to recover and to restore these friendships and relationships.

- What stories can you share about the history of strong friendships between the people of Six Nations and Caledonia communities?
- How have these friendships added richness to the lives of the people of our communities?
- What stories can you share about connections between people of Six Nations and Caledonia?
- Can you think of examples of people taking steps to recover and to restore these friendships and relationships?
- In what ways could these steps contribute to a reduction of the conflict between the Caledonia and Six Nation communities?

I grew up in a country and city where I didn't see colour or race. I just saw people. I moved to Caledonia to give my children a good lifestyle close to nature that I love, and yet also close enough to the city that my wife enjoys. I was drawn to the Native culture because of shared interests in hunting and fishing and being outdoors.

When the conflicts first began here my neighbours started to talk to me and ask for my help. I got drawn in to trying to mediate and help. I strongly believe in equality and justice for all. But when I started to hear of court orders that the police weren't following, I became angry that they weren't following orders. I see things pretty black and white in those cases. Things started to escalate on both sides. I received death threats. I think due to confusing me with someone else at first, but my wife and children were in a car accident because our car was tampered with. Ten years ago I would have gone looking for revenge, but now I'm in control and value control and justice. But, I've been very nervous and jumpy, and all kinds of memories keep coming back to me.

I've been very vocal because I am so concerned about justice, but I've ended up experiencing more and more negative outcomes from this. I still do not regret my decisions and if I were to do things over again, I would follow the same path.

What is really most important to me right now is the safety of my wife and children. I think that focus on them comes from my background and my connection with my own family.

David Hartless -Caledonia

Team Members Re-telling What They Heard From The Small Group Discussion

In the afternoon gathering I was drawn to two particular examples that were shared of organizing events that brought the two communities together. One of these involved a non-denominational gathering that brought together 200 – 300 Native and Non-native people at the Pauline Johnson site. Another event involved over 1000 people in a potluck picnic. When asked how they had managed to bring these people together I was told that their faith had helped them overcome their fear.

It appeared quite clear that while the media prefers to focus on stories that build fear, that there are stories of initiatives that are re-building relationships despite fear.

In the evening gathering I was particularly drawn to a story of how a Caledonia resident and a Native man who spends much of his time at the reclamation site have begun to meet for coffee and dinner now and again. Although the large initiatives to bring people together are tremendous, I was touched by these smaller events, since I too, would be more comfortable in 1 to 1 meetings.

Whatever our preference for meeting size, we also have opportunities to reach out and sustain relationships.

5. Developing understanding

Much of the conflict and discomfort between the Caledonia and Six Nations communities has to do with misunderstandings. These misunderstandings have come to dominate the headlines, newspaper articles, and television news. These misunderstandings have also had a negative effect on the lives of many people in these communities, contributing to many different feelings, including fear, anger, insecurity and powerlessness.

There has been a range of efforts to counter these misunderstandings. Many of these steps have to do with efforts to listen and to understand – to listen to stories about the past and to get a deeper understanding of where people are coming from in this conflict. These steps are based on the knowledge that when we understand we become involved in positive ways. They are based on the knowledge that it is deep understanding that provides the foundation for solving problems. They are based on the knowledge that is the sharing of stories about the past that gets people to think, that makes it possible for them to find a way forward together. They are based on the knowledge that it is the sharing of these stories that breaks down the walls.

- What stories could you share about efforts to counter these misunderstandings?
- How have these efforts opened the way for the development of deeper understandings?

The biggest concern I have is in relation to the underlying justice issue and the government's treatment of Six Nations people, but a very closely related concern is how that then spills over into the relationships between the local communities.

I try to respond to the local relationships, but that doesn't deal with the justice issue. The developers have been compensated, then the businesses were compensated, then the Non-Native homeowners, but not us yet.

As a Native man with a background of being raised in the Longhouse but now a Christian Minister, I believe that God, our Creator, has made every nation and that Creator can bring together every nation in one blood. God is in the border issues. God is involved in people's encounters.

I'm doing what I'm doing because I'm thinking of the future of my five children. I took a group of international visitors to the site recently, and I took my daughter too, so that they could all understand. I travel and I teach about these issues. I've developed a pamphlet I give when I travel that provides ideas of things people can do to help. I was involved in a joint service with ministers from Caledonia and here at Six Nations. People from the site came too. Natives and Non-natives were dancing together and we had three hundred people in a greeting circle. That was a good day. A security guy from the site said that there aren't many good days, but that was one of them.

We need to educate ourselves, build relationships and continue to meet regularly and we need to pray.

-Person from Six Nations

- In what ways have these deeper understandings helped people to deal with their feelings of anger, insecurity and powerlessness?
- How do you think these deeper understandings will provide a foundation for healing to begin between the Caledonia/Six Nation communities?

My father encouraged me to think about “why am I here?” and “what am I supposed to do in life?” My mom and dad expected us to live life with respect for God the creator, have respect for other people, to respect creation and to respect self.

I hope for coexistence between the two communities even though there are cultural differences. I hope for a better understanding of truth, ‘not fiction’; and clarity about the history. There is much confusion about the history and therefore I am eager to see unbiased historical presentations that are open to all people. People should not have to fear reprisal or intimidation tactics when they come to learn.

-Person From Caledonia

When I saw all the stuff in the media and how they were not telling the story, I knew I had to get involved and take a stand. I knew I had to get involved for the sake of my people. There is so much misunderstanding out there. It’s not about money; it never was. The land is where we belong. The land forms us. It’s such a big part of our identity. It’s all about sharing what the land gives to us. We grow our own food. There is such a rich history of hunting and fishing and how we learn to share with one another.

I grew up in a family that had very little money. All of us kids worked on my dad’s farm. There was always so much work to be done. Every Sunday supper at our house was filled with all of us kids and the neighbours. I remember those times. We never had a lot of money, but we were never poor. My parents taught all of us to share and that people are good to each other because we need one another. It’s all about walking with a good mind. My parents taught all of us the importance of family. As adults my brothers and sisters and I still get together as a family. Those relationships are so important.

I learned to listen to the stories I heard from the older people around me. Everyone needs to listen to the older people in the community, then they would hear their stories about respect and how walking together with a good mind and standing together can help fight the injustices around us. The people in Caledonia and Six Nations used to be good neighbours. That makes me sad. I see so much disrespect in the youth today; not just Native kids, but kids all over. They’ve drifted away from the stories, their identity. If you don’t know who and what we are, you become disrespectful. We need to get back to listening to the stories.

-Person From Six Nations

Team Members Re-telling What They Heard From The Small Group Discussion

“Two themes came up in this discussion; fear and faith. One person spoke of personal fears and how his spiritual journey enabled him to break his fears. Another spoke of coming together as Pastors weekly and that through sharing stories empathy is created. It is necessary to get in there and to take a step past our fears. Someone spoke of how someone from

the other community stopped and helped when her car was stuck in the ditch. Just people helping one another.

We also heard painful stories, stories from long ago and not so long ago. How people have been hurt and can be hurtful. Here too fear and faith were evident. I was touched by their stories and how they reached out to comfort each other and to try to see people for who they are, and to honestly show one's self for who you are. "In spite of fear we need to have faith in people, to see the goodness, to develop understanding, to work together". "Our communities need not be enemies."

Everyone agreed that when we handle things poorly, we are teaching our children poor values, instilling fear and anger in them. "Today is a day to be thankful as we exchange words of love, gentleness, caring and honour the words that are shared. Today is a day we can tell our children of with pride."

This session connected with my hopes and dreams for my children, my need to teach them good things. I want to demonstrate the faith to overcome fears and a willingness to open my mind to gain a deeper and fuller understanding of my community and others. These stories have encouraged me too.

Memories Of The Communities' Words

"I have heard about this community gathering and everyone was so excited for this and I never believed this could have happened so peacefully."

"Singularly we are nothing...together we are somebody."

"Stop arguing - stop being racist - stand up together."

"It gives me hope...it tells me it's possible."

"It is just people being people."

"Our part - our responsibility – it's something that we had to do."

"I couldn't believe the spirit that was around us...that spirit I trust."

"I trust and have faith in our culture and our traditions.... it guides me."

"This was the most productive meeting that I've gone to since this whole thing started."

"I would like to invite everyone to learn about our Mohawk history, our story is told through the stain glassed windows of The Mohawk Chapel"

"I'm not angry anymore, my bitterness is gone."

"You should all come to the hockey game tomorrow night."

Within the community's re-telling, one of our group members stood up and re-told his experience with greeting a Six Nations Woman. He talked and talked and talked. I went up to him and asked him (I am from Six Nations) what would he do if I saw him in Caledonia and asked him for a hug? He hugged me and said he would give me two hugs

"Stop arguing - stop fighting - STOP"

"This meeting was very powerful, not only in attempting to heal the community, it healed my family."

"Understanding a higher being and that there is energy with that and to get back to the love."

"This is your spirit - follow your own truth."

"My belief in the great law and it will get me through."

"Focus on the light - avoid being judgmental...fear is unhealthy we have free will and choice."

When a young girl heard about the meeting happening she was in awe and then she said, "it gives me hope and tells me understanding is both our jobs. You adults just complicate things - don't criticize what I'm doing...help me."

Ways To Go Forward

The communities own this document! It stands as a resource and testament to the skills, knowledges and community values that have sustained the community members through a difficult period. Many hopes and ideas about how to proceed were expressed through the many conversations in this project. Ideas about ways to go forward need not be large or heavily funded, as like a rain drop in a puddle a small gesture will have positive reverberations throughout the communities. We invite you to think about what you can do with this document in a positive way to help it to “be like the wind”. Below are some of the ideas that have been expressed throughout this process.

The safety and security of our children

- ◆ A “Pen-Pal” initiative between Six Nations and Caledonia students has been happening. The students are learning about each other’s culture and will eventually meet each other. How can we expand and formalize that project?
- ◆ Can the youth render the document and stories into art for an art show at the community centres or to be entered into the fair under the category of “diversity art”?
- ◆ How do we bring the youth sports back together? A suggestion about hosting “Unity Tournaments” was made where the teams play for the weekend, mixing the players with culture exchange opportunities and speakers for youth and parents.
- ◆ How do we talk with our children about what is happening and answer their questions? Could information be distributed about how to talk with the children?
- ◆ How do we handle their fears? Could there be joint community patrols in the buffer zone- like a Neighbourhood Watch Program?
- ◆ Can there be reclamation site visits to dissolve the fears?

Extending our efforts

- ◆ Can we say “hello” to each other when we see each other in town?
- ◆ Can we get together for a “potluck”?
- ◆ How can we work together to keep the area clean?
- ◆ How can we invite people to shop in Caledonia again?
- ◆ Can we shop in Caledonia again?

Healing Knowledges

- ◆ Is it possible to have another round of consultations and another gathering?
- ◆ How do we secure funding for other healing initiatives?
- ◆ Can we support and participate in future healing initiatives?

- ◆ How can we use “ceremonies” to continue to support each other and heal?

Restoring friendships and relationships

- ◆ Can you call your friends and/or meet?
- ◆ Can we share a warm memory or story of friendship?
- ◆ Can you meet at a potluck, for dinner, etc.?

Developing Understanding

- ◆ Could there be greater information sharing using the local media-weekly heritage and cultural information pieces, effects of media information?
- ◆ How do we establish a “media advisory” committee?
- ◆ Can we invite guest speakers to the schools?
- ◆ Where can people have their questions answered?
- ◆ How can radio stations host conversations and information sharing about the situation and cultural awareness?
- ◆ Can the residents and people on the reclamation site Pen pal?

Other ideas

- ◆ Transcribe the document into song and theatre by local schools, musical artists.
- ◆ Translate the document into imagery through art.
- ◆ Have the community document painted by a group of local artists.
- ◆ Have the community document translated and put on CD, video

Reverberations Of The Neighbouring Communities

*At the community gathering the picture that stood out for me was of people coming together in their smaller groups. Within about 5 minutes people from both communities were pulling their chairs closer, to form a closer **circle**. I saw the two communities coming together and sharing in those circles. The larger circle in the end and the power of the circle **connecting** through holding hands was another picture to cherish.*

I heard a story of an elderly woman who lives right next to the site. Just that day she took a couple garbage bags and started cleaning the ditches as she always does in the spring. One of the residents of the site came out and greeted her as a neighbour. The next thing she knew, he started helping her and they picked up six bags of garbage together. She offered to take it home and put out two bags at a time but he said he would get rid of it...and he did. I thanked her for sharing that story and I reinforced the power and importance of sharing these stories.

As I listened to the elders of both communities I was grateful. I was struck by their patience, their faith, their hope, their kindness. Often I was reminded of others in my own life who had displayed those same qualities towards me. I have been very fortunate. I've had the benefit of good parents and good teachers and good mentors. That means a lot to a person. I hope that I have shared it well with others along the way. It's like the river. I grew up next to the Grand River, - that river stays in your heart, no matter where you may go. It will be there for my son as well.

At Six Nations, my community re-telling was about how significant people taught me values of how to be with each other - how to accept. "I was reminded of my own teachers I've been lucky enough to have in my life- my mother, Anne Thomas. These two women with different faiths, were both so spiritual and both so accepting of others. I used to go to church as a child. When I grew up, I started to go to Longhouse (our traditional way of life). My mother didn't understand that at first and it was difficult on our relationship. But eventually, she saw that I was happy and this was working for me. She accepted this, even though she did not agree with it. And some Longhouse people could judge me because I did go to church. But I'm glad I did. I find that I am very open-minded today. I know that there is only one Creator, no matter what we call the Creator...and there's many ways to get to our Creator...not just one."

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Closing

As we begin, we must end. In all our gatherings and ceremonies we offer thanks once again to end our doings and to send people off in a good way.

And so, to end we extend our thanks, greetings and love for the people, that everyone is at peace.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to our Mother, the Earth.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the waters on the earth.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the fish, in the waters he placed them.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the plant life, the vegetables and fruit.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the medicines.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the free, wild animals.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the trees.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the birds.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the winds.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to our Grandfathers, the thunders.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to our Elder Brother, the Sun.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the stars.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the Four Beings who watch over us from above.

We extend our thanks, greetings and love to the Peacemaker and Handsome Lake for all they have done for us.

Finally, we give our thanks, greetings and love to Shonkwaya tihson, the one who made you.

For now, this is all we can do. And now it is done. Tahnon onen etho

From The Caledonia community a local Pastor offered a closing prayer to Creator God, sustainer and redeemer, asking for thoughts of respect for each other and a peaceful resolution that would lead to reconciliation.

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