



## **Environment Hamilton statement in solidarity with Six Nations land defenders September 1, 2020**

Environment Hamilton stands in solidarity with the Six Nations land defenders in so-called McKenzie Meadows, Caledonia, renamed 1492 Land Back Lane.

As an environmental justice organization, we support struggles by Indigenous people for land reclamation and stand against development companies who perpetuate colonial settler expansion and climate catastrophe through sprawl.

Since mid-July, land defenders have peacefully [occupied the site](#) to protest the parcelling and sale of their land by the state to private developers. They have blockaded Highway 6 and set up camp on the construction site, where they have hosted community meetings, potluck meals, lacrosse games, drumming circles, and dances.

This is the latest in a centuries-long struggle by the Haudenosaunee people to protect their land from settler expansion. The Haldimand Treaty was signed between the British Crown and the Haudenosaunee people in 1784, promising the Haudenosaunee six miles (ten kilometres) of land on either side of the Grand River. This treaty [has been violated many times](#) and the original tract has been reduced from 950,000 acres to 48,000 acres.

In this case, Foxgate Development, co-owned by Losani Homes and Ballantry Homes, purchased the 25-acre site from the Crown in 2015 with plans to build 218 houses. (Hamilton-based developer Losani has a history of profiting from settlement expansion into Haldimand Treaty territory, with housing developments in Brantford, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Paris.) This site is part of the parcel of land purchased by the state following the 2006 struggle over another proposed housing development at nearby Kanonhstaton. Land claim legal battles are ongoing and the sale of the land by the state to developers is unlawful as it breaks existing treaties.

While critics of the land defenders cite an agreement between the developer and the Six Nations Band Council, we must remember that band councils are a colonial artifact of

the Indian Act. By their very nature, band councils serve the agenda of the federal government. In this case, court documents [reveal](#) the “elected chief and council of Six Nations of the Grand River agreed to publicly support the proposed McKenzie Meadows housing development, not interfere with it, help quell any protests, and support property development company Foxgate in any legal actions brought by or against it.” By contrast, Six Nations hereditary chiefs [oppose the development](#) and support land defenders’ actions. In a recent interview, Six Nations member Skyler Williams [described](#) the level of support for the band council amongst community members: “The band council had in their last election 4% of our community turn out of its possible 27,000 voters. So 4% of our community feels that the band council is their voice within Canadian government. The other 96%, well, we don’t.”

The entire legal apparatus is set up to disenfranchise Indigenous self-determination. When there are no avenues to pursue justice within the law, seekers of justice have no choice but to go outside the law.

In response to the peaceful occupation, Six Nations land defenders have faced harassment from some Caledonia residents and violence at the hands of the Ontario Provincial Police.

We encourage the Environment Hamilton membership and the broader Hamilton community to:

- donate to the legal defense fund, if you have the means, via the [GoFundMe page](#) or via direct e-transfer to [landback6nations@gmail.com](mailto:landback6nations@gmail.com)
- follow independent media for updates from the front lines, including pages like the [1492 Land Back Lane](#) Facebook group, [1492 Land Back Lane](#) Twitter page, [Real People’s Media](#), and [One Dish One Mic](#) podcast
- drop off supplies requested by land defenders, including lumber, shovels, tarps, folding tables, folding chairs, tents, tarps, sleeping bags, blankets, ice, firewood, solar panels, solar batteries (follow 1492 Land Back Lane on Facebook for updated supply lists)
- show up for rallies, marches, court support, and other solidarity actions

In solidarity,  
Environment Hamilton board and staff