

Tyendinaga: Pow Wow and Politics

August 11, 2009

Shawn Brant has been locked up since June 10 when the OPP invaded Tyendinaga in yet another attack against Mohawk people. The agents of the Canadian state claimed to be there to open the Skyway Bridge which had allegedly been blocked by Tyendinaga Mohawks in support of our sister community, Akwesasne. Akwesasne Mohawks had taken over the Canadian Border Security Agency (CBSA) building on June 1 to stop the CBSA from carrying weapons in Akwesasne community. The CBSA agents left and have not returned.

One regular visitor to Tyendinaga relayed to us that the bridge was not actually blocked. Mohawk people there were slowing traffic and handing out leaflets. Traffic was moving through.

An August 9 Toronto Sun Media article, "The end of an activist?" reported on an interview with Brant. There are a few things wrong with this article. First of all, it is suspiciously unusual for Indigenous to be interviewed in jail. You can be sure that it would not have been reported if Brant were calling for resistance. Something has happened with him. We are surprised and concerned. Is this just more disinformation to slander his name and divide people at Tyendinaga?

We are reminded of the alleged 100-day incarceration of Robert Lovelace of Ardoch Algonquins which occurred to prop up his ailing credibility. He was interviewed by the media and subsequently referred to as a "political prisoner". As if!

Lovelace was a lead player in a phoney protest against uranium mining near Sharbot Lake. The police-run experimental protest took place to support a fraudulent Algonquin land claim. This conspiracy has since been exposed. To date there is still no uranium mining near Sharbot Lake.

The title of the article on Shawn Brant is discouraging and likely meant to be so. It is also disturbing and unusual to find Brant quoted as criticizing the Longhouse at Tyendinaga. We don't usually air our dirty laundry in public if this is what really happened. Mainstream media are notorious for misquoting people.

It is important to be analytical and to carefully read between the lines. The mischievous media whores are getting more tricky every day. If we are not closely acquainted with Shawn, how are we to know what is really going on with him? He will be in jail at Lindsay until the end of October.

Five months is an outrageous sentence for mischief charges. Who is really committing the mischief? More likely, Julian Fantino, head of the OPP who never tires of stirring up trouble for us Mohawks.

Tyendinaga just hosted their 22nd annual pow wow on August 8 and 9. It was well attended and a very relaxing event. We decided to go and do some dancing. The drumming, singing and dancing are for the healing of the nations.

The drive from Sharbot Lake to Tyendinaga is a pleasant 2-hour country drive. We took a pit stop off Hwy41 north of Napanee. We turned down a side road and parked under the shade of a big tree. As we were leaving, we noticed the name "Nibourg" on a mailbox. Could this be the same Nibourg who tried to build some housing for the military close to Tyendinaga in 2008? Mohawk people put the run on them during a situation that involved hundreds of OPP and SWAT. Mohawks including Shawn Brant were beaten and arrested.

We are always acutely aware of the politics behind the scenes but sometimes you just have to relax and enjoy life a bit. The brochure for the pow wow didn't let us forget the politics, though, for one minute. The inside cover was a letter from the band council chief, R. Don Maracle.

We will always remember him as the guy who wanted to bring a porta prison into Tyendinaga against the wishes of most of the people there. Tyendinaga needs a community water system because most wells there are polluted, likely from Thurlow Aggregates excavation activities and toxic waste dumping. Shawn Brant never tires of speaking out about this matter. A new school and more housing is needed for the growing community. The people rejected the porta prison last November.

The band council helped to finance the pow wow. The comments coming out from the arbour were quite subdued, no sovereigntist rhetoric could be heard. Lynn Brant sang and spoke the Ohenton Karihwatekhwa (Words before all else) in Mohawk. The dancers taking part in the Grand Entry were impressive in their regalia. There could have been more of them.

Everyone was quite friendly. The crowd was an interesting mix of people of all races. There was a good sprinkling of Asian and African people and many of European ancestry. This might disturb some people. Many brought their entire families. Little children were running about. One woman was honoured for reaching her 100th birthday. She didn't look a day over 80! There were disabled people and many elderly enjoying themselves. Isn't this a good thing?

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