

Choices for our future

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Leaders of two Northern Ontario communities brought their message of respect and co-operation to Brantford on Thursday. It's a message that Brantford and Six Nations communities needed to hear.

The communities of Elliot Lake and Serpent River First Nation are working together so each will thrive. The key is a joint relations committee that meets four times a year and makes decisions by consensus.

Natives and non-natives are motivated for everyone to succeed. What's the alternative, Scott Reinhart, an Elliot Lake municipal councillor asked at one of Thursday's sessions in Brantford.

The alternative is what Brantford and Six Nations have been suffering. Confrontation. Legal threats. Harm to the economy.

Thank you to Haldimand Tract Good Neighbours Coalition for arranging the visit by folks from Serpent River and Elliot Lake. Principles are more important than the details of the Northern Ontario experience.

Some people around Elliot Lake were skeptical that a city and First Nations could work together, Reinhart said. But the skeptics came around to support an agreement.

Elliot Lake and Serpent River First Nation show it can be done. Although issues along the Grand River are complicated by more than 200 years of history, persons of good will can resolve them, just as in Northern Ontario.

By coincidence, Haldimand-Norfolk MPP Toby Barrett released a statement Thursday about efforts to intimidate him on native issues over the last 2 1/2 years.

He received a native eviction notice on his house. He received a critical letter from OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino. He received a subpoena to appear in court last Christmas Eve from Gary McHale. And Barrett has been named in a \$250 billion native lawsuit.

Despite these efforts, Barrett said he has not been intimidated. But what a contrast between Barrett's experience and the politicians from Northern Ontario.

In the north, mutual benefit. In the south, intimidation tactics. The choice for the future is ours to make.

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