First Nations veteran arrested at Remembrance Day ceremony

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An aboriginal veteran and two other men carrying First Nations flags were arrested at Toronto’s [Remembrance Day ceremony](http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/11/11/remembrance_day_live_updates.html) at Old City Hall on Monday.

Davyn Calfchild said he brought the three flags to the ceremony to honour the First Nations soldiers who fought for Canada. This was the third year he has gone to the ceremony with his flags, and the first time he was arrested, he said.

First Nations soldiers were not represented in the city’s Remembrance Day ceremony this year.

“I don’t go down there to protest,” said Calfchild, who says he served as a peacekeeper for five years in the former Yugoslavia. “I go down there to show solidarity with our native brothers and sisters.”

A police officer confronted Calfchild and his two friends in the crowd right after they got to Old City Hall on Monday, he said.

“He started telling me that our flags were illegal, that we weren’t welcome to stand there and let them fly,” he said.

Toronto Police say the men were arrested for breaching the peace, shortly before the ceremony started.

“It was disturbing to the others that were attending the event,” said police spokeswoman Const. Wendy Drummond.

“It had nothing to do with the type of flag or who the three people were. It had to do with the disruption of the Remembrance Day service itself.”

A [video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ef_fdkU7Fpw) taken by one of the men, activist Miguel Avila-Velarde, shows Calfchild face-to-face with a police officer. The officer warns Calfchild that he will be removed if he continues to breach the peace; Calfchild repeatedly interrupts him, swearing.

He then yells at the crowd, “This guy says that our flags aren’t welcomed here on Iroquois land.”

That’s when the officer tells Calfchild he’s under arrest, and he and his friends are marched to a police wagon.

Drummond said they were released without charge after the ceremony. Police returned the flags to Calfchild’s wife, Cathy Walker, late Tuesday afternoon following a rally that drew about 50 supporters in front of 52 Division.

Last year, Calfchild, Walker and five others went to the Remembrance Day ceremony with flags. Walker said she was given a warning by police.

“We’ve even had support from other soldiers because there is no representation for native soldiers,” she said. “There’s no flags . . . there’s no cedar wreath, there’s no tobacco ties, there’s no eagle feathers, there’s nothing.”

A City of Toronto spokeswoman said that any organization or individual who wants to be involved in the Remembrance Day ceremonies or lay a wreath after the ceremony can apply to the city’s protocol services office in writing or by email.

Calfchild said he didn’t apply to take part in the ceremony.

“I find that very insulting,” he said. “I don’t feel that I should have to ask someone else whether my flag is welcome there.”

He and Walker say they plan to return next Remembrance Day, and they’re calling for more supporters with First Nations flags to join them.