

e Expositor

ST) BRANTFORD, ONTARIO

OUR 142nd YEAR

TONIGHT ~ 6-8 p.m.
Rob Butler
 FREE AUTOGRAPHS



LYNDEN PARK MALL

JAC-64

'It's our island'

Natives occupy sewer trunk construction site

Supporters of the Six Nations Confederacy spent the night on an icebound island in the Grand River and vow to remain until the city relents on plans to run a sewer through the island.

Huddling around a small campfire, five people defied Wednesday night's -12C weather to occupy the small island claimed by the Six Nations.

"They can't show us a bill of sale," said Alex Jamieson, one of the protesters.

The island is located on the city border just upriver from the Brant Conservation Area.

The Grand River's islands and bed are the subject of a land claim against the federal government.

The city is running a trunk sewer line across the river to service the new northwest industrial site. The sewer is crucial to the development. Preliminary work has already started.

But the protesters said the plans should have been cleared with the Confederacy, which they insist has authority over the football-field-sized island.

The protesters arrived on the island about 9 p.m. They said the occupation would be peaceful but would continue until they are dragged from the island by police.

The action is supported by Confederacy chiefs who called for the

occupation Wednesday after learning the island was being prepared for construction work.

"If the Confederacy chiefs were to say to us to leave, we'd leave, but they'd be the only ones. We'd be following the chiefs and not the band council," said one protester named Horse.

The protesters also fear that the construction project will destroy many rare and endangered species of plants.

Local environmentalist John Hanselman said the island is home to such species as rare cottonwood.

Already, the project has turned portions of the island into a frozen wasteland, strewn with

fallen trees and scarred with the frozen treadmarks of heavy equipment.

"Look at this mess — you can

see who trespassed," said Horse, gesturing with an axe at the debris around him.

"This is not

just a piece of wetland. It's our island. It's our Grand River."

The protesters also maintain that the project was poorly studied and is unsound because

it runs a sewer line across the river, which is a source of drinking water for communities downstream — including Brantford.

"We're not doing this to be a thorn in Brantford's foot. We're doing this for the benefit of everybody," said Mr. Hanselman. "This has got to stop sometime.

"They can't show us a bill of sale."

Alex Jamieson

"Look at this mess — you can see who trespassed."

Horse

People have to be real. You have to wake up and see what's happening to this world — it's dying from underneath your feet."

The protest adds to a week of controversy over the project.

On Tuesday, traditional chief Arnie General released documents he said proved the city and elected Six Nations Band Council negotiated in secret about the sewer line.

"Somebody has been doing something in secret," he said.

The city proposed putting \$1,000 in trust for Six Nations in exchange for approval of the project from band council.

Both Mayor Bob Taylor and Six Nations Chief Coun. Steve Williams denied there had been any

talks.

Chief Coun. Williams said he had seen the city's plan but hasn't signed any agreements.

See photo on Page A3.