

Cold and snowy protest closes Cockshutt Bridge

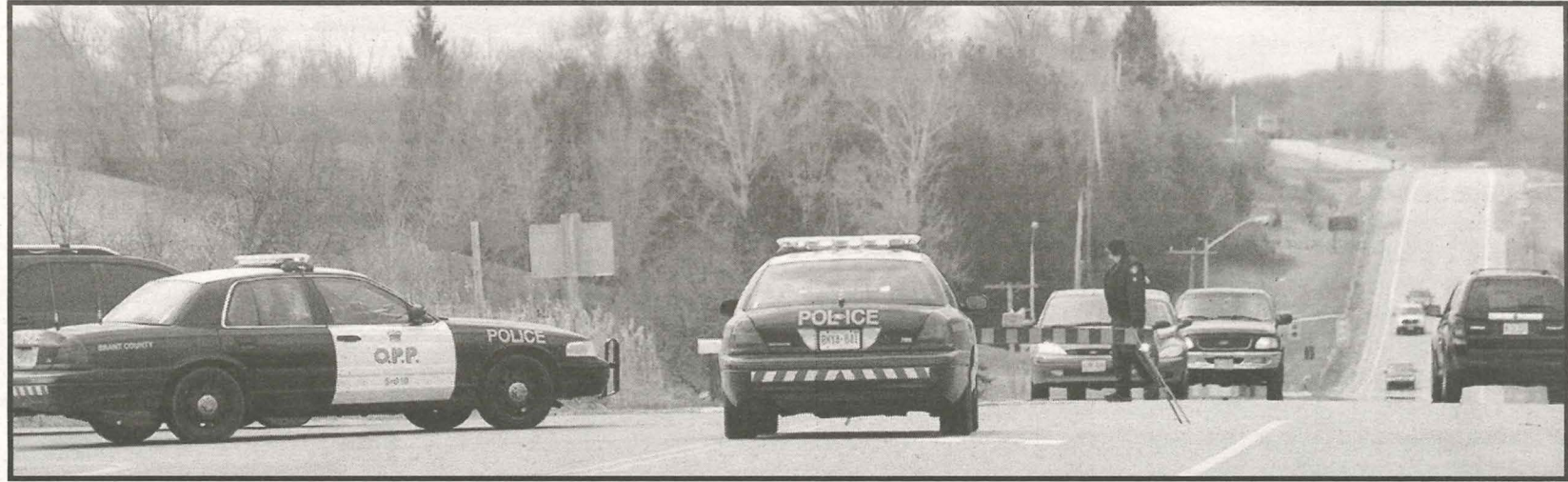
By Jim Windle
BRANTFORD

It was a gentle, peaceful and respectful reminder to the City of Brantford and County of Brant, as well as to the federal and provincial governments when a small number of Six Nations residents and non-Native allies gathered on the Cockshutt Bridge, Saturday, stopping traffic both ways for most of the day.

It was in commemoration of the 7th anniversary of the botched OPP raid on the former Douglas Creak Estates, near Caledonia now known by Six Nations land protectors as Kanonhstaton — the protected place.

The demonstration was also to bring attention to their objection to a proposed housing development on Tutela Heights land which Six Nations and settlers groups have linked arms together to protect.

Cars began to arrive at around 10:30 a.m. The OPP fully cooperated by blocking the road at either end of



Cold and snow could not stop Six Nations land protectors and a few non-Native allies from closing down the Cockshutt Bridge Saturday in commemoration of the botched OPP raid of April 20, 2006 which escalated a peaceful protest over a land claim into a stand-off which made news around the world. It was also an opportunity to remind the city, and county of their objection to a proposed housing development on Tutela Heights. (Photo by Jim Windle)

the bridge, redirecting traffic around the area. Although there was some inconvenience, there were no incidents to report.

Mary Lou Knechtel is a resident of the Oxbow and she told Tekawennake that the OPP had paid a courtesy call to she and her Oxbow neighbours to inform them that there may be some inconvenience but not to be concerned.

“I think it was a show of good faith for both the OPP and the participants,” she said. “It was peaceful and respectful.”

Knechtel knows very well and understands the Six Nations perspectives, having worked and allied with members of the Six Nations community on several environmental issues over the years.

The temporary bridge clo-

sure was also a chance to exercise Six Nations fishing and hunting rights. Organizers asked people to bring their fishing poles and fish off the bridge as a demonstration of that right through the Nanfan Treaty of 1701 which is still in place, even though fishing is out of season for Ontarians.

Land protector Ruby Montour was sick and could not be there physically, but certainly was standing on the bridge

beside her husband and fellow land protector Floyd in spirit.

About the Caledonia situation of 7 years ago, Ruby said by telephone, “We’ve been fighting for that for a long time. We’ve had a lot of nasty things said about us while they still go ahead and build on our land.

“I don’t understand how intelligent people can’t understand how we feel about the

loss of our land without any kind of compensation. The fight to protect the environment as well is not only for our people by for their future generations too.”

Food was brought in as the day went on and although it turned out to be a cold and snowy day, the gathering stayed long enough to make their point, and at around 3:30 p.m. the bridge was reopened to traffic.