

# Reclamation commemorated 8 years later

By Jim Windle

**KANONHSTATON** - The early morning of February 28th, was bitterly cold, similar to Friday, February 28th, 2006, when the planned development site was taken over and eventually stopped by the people of Six Nations.

Many of the same faces that were there that cold morning eight years ago were back again for the 8th anniversary march and potluck at the former Douglas Creek Estates, now rebranded as Kanonhstaton, a Mohawk word meaning "the protected place."

The day started, like every February 28th - since the "conflict in Caledonia" became news across all of Turtle Island and even into Europe - with a sunrise ceremony at Kanonhstaton, followed by a breakfast before the march from Sixth Line Road to Highway #6 and onto the reclamation site, and a potluck lunch.

Now, eight years later, the site looks much different. The Six Nations' and Caledonia town-folk's barricades have been down for several years. All but one of the partially completed houses have been torn down, and life has re-



A reunion of sorts took place Feb. 28th at the main gate of what was once a battleground during the 2006-2007 Conflict in Caledonia when Six Nations reclaimed land earmarked for a housing development. From left are Kanonhstaton veterans, Carol Bomberry, Jan Longboat, Bebbie Jamieson, Janie Jamieson, Mindi Maracle, Doreen Silversmith and Donna Powless. PHOTO BY JIM WINDLE

turned to a form of peaceful co-existence, albeit a volatile one.

There are a few tell-tale signs of those turbulent months of riot police and stare-downs across manned barricades blocking Highway #6. A burned out tractor-trailer, set ablaze by Caledonia resident late one night still stands as a stark reminder of the standoff between neighbouring communities. A section of hydro tower, adorned with a Mohawk Unity Flag and a Hiawatha Flag, still sits in

two pieces at the edge of the entrance to the property, ready to be used again as an instant barricade should it be needed.

There is also the noticeable emotional scars of those who faced-off against angry Haldimand citizens and an army of heavily armed OPP, in riot gear, 24/7 for weeks and months on end.

Among those in attendance this year was Janie Jamieson, one of two Mohawk women who, along with Dawn Smith, became the face and the voice of

the reclamation in its early days.

'So why not just let the situation die and forget about it,' some would say.

But Jamieson believes

it is important not to forget what happened, and more importantly, why it happened.

"A big part of our history is overlooked in the mainstream," she said. "One of the biggest issues is the lack of awareness and education about the true, shared history we have. We are still here. This is our land, it was never sold, never surrendered and this should be a constant reminder."

Jamieson wants to see an end to the colonial mentality of the federal, provincial and municipal governments.

"I would like to see an acknowledgement from the mainstream education system to start educating, so our children can be taught to walk shoulder to shoulder with non-Natives and for our children to know their history," she says.

"They will always criminalize us. It's the only way to silence us. Now they are making the move to starve us out through that Bill C-10. That tactic has been around for thousands of years, but we always find ways and means to survive."

Ultimately, that's why I come here (every anniversary) because who we are is tied to this land."

Jan Longboat was also at ground zero eight years ago and she too believes it is important that her people never forget.

"It's to celebrate that we are still here as a people and we are not going anywhere," said Longboat. "We're going to be here forever and it's important that we protect our land, because it's part of our culture for the coming faces of future generations."

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

Carol Bomberry was there that cold morning in 2006 as well.

"It is good to remember that we did something really important here, and we won't forget how important this is," she said.

Hazel Hill drove her late husband, Dick Hill's familiar black GMC Yukon SUV to lead this year's march. Dick Hill, who died only a few weeks ago, was a very important part of the reclamation of Kanonhstaton, as was Hazel.

"I think the women, especially these women, demonstrated the strength of the Haudenosaunee," she said.

"That's why Bill C-10, and whatever other bills

they try and impose upon our people, will never be accepted and continue to be rejected. The ethnic cleansing that they are attempting by all of these things will never succeed because the spirit lies in each and every one of us. It's something that is generational and they can't put it out. That spirit lives in all of us, and even when you pass on, that spirit remains and it lingers here with the rest of us. And I know that."

Doreen Silversmith took the message of the Haudenosaunee all the way to the United Nations while the conflict was happening, and she returns to Kanonhstaton every anni-

versary.

"I think it's great that we are still doing this every year. What has changed over the last few years is that young people are going back to their roots and learning more. There were a lot of people that didn't know who they were or the issues. I think it was a big education for our people as well. There are still people out there totally ignorant about what's going on. I'm glad we are still coming out, no matter how cold it is."

There was no interference from either police or Caledonia residents at any point throughout the day.