

Natives demonstrate in Brantford

'We just won't stand for it any more'

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By Anne Jarvis
Expositor Staff

Parents and children from the Six Nations Indian Reserve crowded both sides of Dalhousie Street in front of the Federal Building on Friday demanding better schools.

About 150 people marched from the Woodland Indian Cultural Educational Centre on Mohawk Street to the Federal Building, which houses the Indian Affairs district office. The demonstration coincided with a meeting in Ottawa between Six Nations Chief Coun. William Montour and Indian Affairs Minister Pierre Cadieux.

The meeting was to try to resolve the boycott that has kept 1,200 native children from starting school this year. Parents are keeping their children home to protest health and safety problems in the 12 elementary schools on the reserve.

The demonstration was to "show the people support what (Chief) Montour went to Ottawa to talk about," said parent Dawn Hill.

The community couldn't go to Ottawa so it went to the nearest Indian Affairs office, she said.

The demonstration started at the Woodland Centre with drumming and dancing and Six Nations elder Bob Jamieson addressed the crowd in the Mohawk language.

People wore red arm bands to show their determination to improve their schools.

Some also wore white cloths over their mouths symbolizing the government's "gag order" preventing teachers from talking to media.

Student counsellor Steve Hill defied the order, urging people in front of the Federal

Building to fight together.

"There's no excuse for this," Ruby Jacobs, head of the committee planning three new schools on the reserve, told the crowd. "We just won't stand for it any more."

Ray Martin, Indian Affairs district manager, said only, "Hopefully there will be some form of agreement reached."

A community meeting is planned for Monday at 7 p.m. at J.C. Hill School. Chief Montour will report on his meeting with Mr. Cadieux and, if an agreement was proposed, the community will be asked to accept or reject it.

Support from groups outside the reserve is growing.

"We're here to express our moral support because we are concerned that all children attend school," Dr. John Flynn, director of the Brant County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, told the crowd.

Resolution

"I am personally and professionally affronted that children have been out of school because somebody somewhere has not done what should have been done."

The board has written a letter to the government saying "it is intolerable to have this happen in this place this year," Dr. Flynn said.

"The steelworkers will maintain their support until this is resolved to the

satisfaction of the community," said Ron Beaver of the human rights committee of the United Steelworkers of America Local 8782 in Nanticoke.

The local plans to introduce a resolution supporting Six Nations at the Ontario Federation

of Labor conference in Toronto in November.

"Hopefully all the unionized workers will pull together in a block to pressure the government," said member Bill Ferguson. "When they (politicians) have that many voters telling them what they're doing is wrong, maybe we can get some action."

Mr. Ferguson said he works with Six Nations people and "they do the same work as us. They work the same shifts. They do the same jobs. We share the same lunchroom. We pay the same taxes. Why should a guy who works with me have to put his children in schools like that?"