

# Project brought sense of accomplishment

(This is the second of two articles on the Six Nations relief caravan to Oka last summer).

OHSWEKEN — Just inside the Quebec border our lead van, which carried reporters, SNORF (Six Nations Oka Relief Fund) volunteers and observers, pulled into an information centre. This stop was pre-arranged so as to meet with Six Nations Chief Coun. Bill Montour, Kevin Deer and an interpreter-guide from the Salvation Army organization in Montreal.

Five miles beyond the information centre we were directed to enter a weigh station. This was our first face-to-face encounter with the Surete Quebec. It was at this point that we first noticed spotter planes circling above us. We immediately provided the SQ with a load manifest and the names of all members of our party. It was not enough. Each of us had to submit some type of identification. The SQ gave us permission to proceed after a two-hour check of our identification and the contents of our vehicles.

While still a mile away from the barricades we decided to pull into a gas station to call the people inside Kanasatake but we were sternly refused access to the telephone by the attendant.

Upon arrival at the barricade we were met by a line of SQ officers wearing bullet proof vests and carrying rifles. They signalled our caravan to pull over onto the shoulder. Guns were pointed at the rear doors of the cargo vans as officers

## Our Town

Jan 10/91  
Gowangeni



demanding entrance. We were told to exit from the vans and were directed to an open field. We waited for another two hours while a major search of our vehicles and possessions took place. The johnny-on-the-spot and our own vehicles were off limits to us during this time.

We stared in disbelief at the number of police cars and officers surrounding the four-corner entrance to Kanasatake. I counted at least 75 police vehicles sitting along the road and in the nearby monastery parking lot. Later I was told that this was only one of many SQ barricades surrounding Kanasatake.

Finally, an official from the SQ approached us with an ultimatum. Only the two Salvation Army vans, two drivers, and Chief Coun. Bill Montour would be permitted to enter with the food and clothing. We quickly huddled for a brief meeting and, of course, agreed to their terms.

As we watched the vans making their way through the barricade those of us who

were left behind shared feelings of joy, relief and a sense of accomplishment.

More than an hour passed before our vans returned. We cheered and ran to them as they approached. Bill Montour's eyes moistened as he began to describe the situation behind the barricade. He spoke of seeing the mothers weep as they noticed the baby food being unloaded and of how they began to feed their babies right on the spot. Expositor reporter Vicki White was obviously having a difficult time remaining objective right about then.

Our first load having been successfully delivered, we headed home.

Six more loads, with at least 60 tons of foodstuffs were to follow, with each trip generating its own "horror stories." Those who were permitted past the barricades had a chance to see the many bullet holes caused by the SQ "blank" ammunition.

The success of the SNORF operation could never have happened without the generous aid of all the donors and volunteers. In mind and in spirit, we thank you.

The question of whether or not the Canadian government will live up to the promises it made while under pressure still remains. Only time will tell.

*Our Town is an Expositor feature which provides a forum for news and views from some of the smaller centres in the region. Gowangeni is a social worker, currently rehabilitation counselor with New Directions, the alcohol and drug centre at Ohsweken.*