

Feb 93



MIKE MILNE OREGONER PHOTO

cillor Eric Johnston, who had participated in the peaceful occupation, the "government-to-government" style of negotiation was a breakthrough.

There were also spiritual gains for the community, which is also in the middle of a battle for fishing rights that is still dragging through the Ontario courts. "This is sacred land and it's very powerful," said Sheena Smith, a young woman who stayed at the site for the entire week. The site was also visited by young people, elders and families from the band.

While Natives, upset at what had gone on at the site over the years, drummed and sang late into the night, non-Native neighbors on the neat suburban street complained about the noise, portable toilets and traffic. Local politicians, expressing sympathy for the Natives' cause if not their tactics, visited the site. Local United Church clergy came by to offer support as well, as did members of the Canadian Auto Workers union. In a letter urging Siddon to meet with the band, United Church human rights and justice staff person John Siebert noted the situation was "certainly tragic by anyone's measure."

Chippewas of Nawash at new homes near Owen Sound, Ont.

Natives occupy burial sites

In a week of camping out, drumming late into the night, media attention, and direct negotiation with the Department of Indian Affairs, the Chippewas of Nawash accomplished what had failed to come about in the previous year.

The Chippewas had been fighting to have burial sites in and near Owen Sound, Ont.— allotted to the band in a 1857 treaty — returned, and the new homes built on one of the sites five years ago demolished (*Cover story*, November).

Frustrated in dealings with the Department of Indian Affairs, and left out of the negotiation process, the Natives finally occupied the two sites last December. Band members wanted to show respect for the sacred grounds, which have been badly disrupted by development, but also wanted a place at the negotiation table.

Direct negotiation was handled by Indian Affairs parliamentary secretary Ross Reid, a member of Parliament from Newfoundland who came to Owen Sound in the sixth day of the occupation to represent the federal government. The Natives were promised, in writing, that any decision on the burial ground would need their consent, that payment for the two properties (estimated in the \$500,000 range) would not come out of funds already earmarked for settling Native claims, and that an independent facilitator would be appointed to assist in settling the issues.

Soon after the demands were met a deal was struck with the homeowner; they were to vacate the properties in January.

The department has never disputed that the land, unceded reserve property,

was illegally sold and that the department needed to pay off the homeowners and return the land to the band.

For Natives, who camped out behind the two houses (the occupants were allowed to enter and leave their homes at will) through bitter cold and snow, keeping one sacred fire and another for warmth and heat burning for a week, the decision was a victory.

For some, such as Cape Croker coun-