

# 'It's our island'

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## Natives occupy sewer trunk construction site

Supporters of the Six Nations Confederacy spent the night on an icebound island in the Grand River and vow to remain until the city relents on plans to run a sewer through the island.

Huddling around a small campfire, five people defied Wednesday night's -12C weather to occupy the small island claimed by the Six Nations.

"They can't show us a bill of sale," said Alex Jamieson, one of the protesters.

The island is located on the city border just upriver from the Brant Conservation Area

The Grand River's islands and bed are the subject of a land claim against the federal government.

The city is running a trunk sewer line across the river to service the new northwest industrial site. The sewer is crucial to the development. Preliminary work has already started.

But the protesters said the plans should have been cleared with the Confederacy, which they insist has authority over the football-field-sized island.

The protesters arrived on the island about 9 p.m. They said the occupation would be peaceful but would continue until they are dragged from the island by police.

The action is supported by Confederacy chiefs who called for the occupation Wednesday after learning the island was being prepared for construction work.

"If the Confederacy chiefs were to say to us to leave, we'd leave, but they'd be the only ones. We'd be following the chiefs and not the band council," said one protester named Horse.

The protesters also fear that the construction project will destroy many rare and endangered species of plants.

Local environmentalist John Hanselman said the island is home to such species as rare cottonwood.

Already, the project has turned portions of the island into a frozen wasteland, strewn with

fallen trees and scarred with the frozen treadmarks of heavy equipment.

"Look at this mess — you can see who trespassed," said Horse, gesturing with an axe at the debris around him. "This is not just a piece of wetland. It's our island. It's our Grand River."

The protesters also maintain that the project was poorly studied and is unsound because it runs a sewer line across the river, which is a source of drinking water for communities downstream — including Brantford.

"We're not doing this to be a thorn in Brantford's foot, We're doing this for the benefit of everybody," said Mr. Hanselman. "This has got to stop sometime."

People have to be real. You have to wake up and see what's happening to this world — it's dying from underneath your feet."

*"They can't show us a bill of sale."*

**Alex Jamieson**

*"Look at it — you can see who trespassed."*