

Highway #6 demonstration ends peacefully

By Jim Windle

HALDIMAND - Traffic on Highway #6 at Fourth Line Road was shut down over the weekend by the Six Nations Men's Fire. The idea was to draw attention to an estimated 1,200 missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada over the past 30 years.

The demonstration was part of a weekend of action, which spread across Canada, taking many different forms, designed to apply more pressure on Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper to call for a national inquiry into the cold case files of missing or murdered Indigenous women. To date, Harper has ignored all diplomatic attempts to speak to the issue, organizers say, leaving direct action the only alternative.

At 9 am Saturday morning, the Men's Fire of Six Nations and supporters began to muster at the busy

intersection with flags and banners unfurled. OPP had been informed two weeks beforehand that the two-day demonstration would take place so there would be no misunderstandings or surprises.

Messages were also sent through the media to Caledonia and area residents asking for patience and understanding, explaining the action was not directed towards them in any way, but was necessary since all other avenues have been ignored by the federal Conservative government.

Haldimand Mayor Ken Hewitt was certainly not pleased with the action, suggesting in the media other means of getting their point across. But at around 9:30am Saturday morning the highway was closed.

There was some tension initially when OPP Sgt. Belynda Rose read a



A two day demonstration started on Saturday morning to draw attention to an estimated 1,200 Onkwehon:we women who have been murdered or have gone missing over the past 30 years across Canada. PHOTO BY JIM WINDLE

traffic law to Men's Fire member Bill Monture in the middle of the closed highway, informing him that he and others could be charged should they not remove themselves from the road.

"We are here in support of the issue of the missing and murdered Indigenous women," Monture told Sgt. Rose. "It's been months and years and still nobody is dealing with it."

He then turned to what he believes is his authority and duty to protect his people.

"My Great Law, the Gayanashagowa, says I am entitled to do what I need to do to bring this awareness to what is going on in this country against our Aboriginal women. That is why we are here," he told her. "If you have an issue (with this blockade) take it to your government and tell them. This is only for today and tomorrow. The next time it might be indefinitely."

Sgt. Rose continued to try and persuade Monture and the 60 or more people with him to stand down, but to no avail.

"Be patient with us, and remind yourselves, of who you are and who we are," Monture respectfully but firmly responded. "Because this road you are standing on is called Plank Road and it is owned by us, not by your local, pro-

vincial or federal governments. It is our land."

Rose told Monture, "I am asking you politely to move off the highway. We are here for your safety. You can find a better way of making your point that blocking Highway #6." Monture responded, "I'm a big boy. I can take care of myself. If your government and if your cops can prove to me that there is a better way of doing this, show me. Then I wouldn't need to be here away from my family. What about the families of the women who are missing and murdered, how do they feel? Nobody seems to give a shit about them. But you're worried about a highway that don't mean nothing. We are talking about the lives of our women."

Monture then turned the tables on the police, inviting them to join them, rather than oppose the