

Brantford leaves Idle No More round dance out in the cold

By Chase Jarrett
Writer

A would-be Idle No More demonstration was left in the cold Monday evening when security guards at Brantford City Hall locked the doors.

Protesters planned to hold a peaceful demonstration for Idle No More's latest global day of action during Brantford City Council, by organizing a round dancing through council chambers.

But activists arrived to discover they had been locked out in the cold.

Protestors began to chant "Idle no more! Open the door!" as security guards and City Hall personnel watched from behind the glass. Protestors waved signs and flags in the air.

Everyone - including the city media and Turtle Island News were also locked out. Two security guards shrugged at both Six Nations activists and Brantford supporters who were demanding doors be opened and asking why they were locked.

Cameron Staats, a Six Nations man that was holding up a sign that read "We are all treaty people" said Brantford listens to Six Na-

tionals. "Sometimes they're our friends and sometimes they're not our friends." Sherry Sackney, a Swampy Cree woman living in Brantford who came to show support, wasn't surprised either. "It was kind of to be expected," she said of the locked doors. "I kind of figured that right from the start but what can you do."

The night began with

"This was selfish," Friel said of Monday's demonstration. "Not in noble interests like Idle No More." "It was more about getting water turned on than anything to do with Idle No More." Brantford Mayor Chris Friel

about 25 activists but numbers grew as word spread and the rally attracted students of nearby Wilfred-Laurier campus, doubling to nearly 45 participants and ending with a round dance.



Activist and non-native supporter Jason Bowman lives at Kanata Village, the former tourism site. He held up his sign demanding water be turned back on while city security guards watch. (Photo by Chase Jarrett)

More but was specifically about the Haldimand Tract, Kanata Village, and Mayor Chris Friel.

"Brantford has no proof they own any of this land," she said. "This particular event was for Chris Friel. He's trying to make us leave Kanata."

Tensions between Brantford and the Mohawk Workers have been simmering since fall when Brantford council cut Kanata Village utilities. In response Mohawk Workers told Brantford council they owed billions in unpaid leases.

Jason Bowman, self-proclaimed special assistant to Mohawk Worker representative Bill Squire, wore a sign that read: "Turn the water on at Kanata Village." Bowman said water has been off since mid-December.

"These people are occupying our lands. They call us terrorists but the real terrorists and occupiers are them," said Cheryl Squire. "We're fighting for our lands too like everybody else is across Canada," she said. Other issues included high percentages of Aboriginals in jail and foster care, and murders of Aboriginal women. "There's countless things," she said.

Squire said the locked doors show an old issue: "He (Friel) tries to pretend the Mohawk Workers don't

exist."

Eventually protestors began a round dance led with drums songs led by Val King. King said more rallies help educate "the

controlled access to the building."

He said he had been following tweets from a Mohawk Workers group and Mayor Friel doesn't believe



Activists locked out of Brantford city hall held a round dance outside Monday night. (Photo by Chase Jarrett)

people that aren't aware of what's going on."

The round dance ended a little after 7 p.m. and the crowd dispersed. "We're doing this not just for us but for all races of people," King said.

King said Brantford is scared of what natives have to say. "Free speech is not free speech when they lock the door on you."

Mayor Chris Friel takes full responsibility for having the doors locked saying in his eyes the actions were appropriate. "We acted as any legislature would in a situation with a credible threat," he said. "We con-

Monday night's demonstration was a "noble" Idle No More protest.

"It's pretty clear what it's about. It's part of the Jason Bowman show," said Friel. He said the protest was about "those occupying Kanata village" and their desire for free water.

Friel said Brantford City Council has dealings on the table with the Mohawk Workers regarding water to Kanata Village but that nothing has been signed. "They seem to want to live in that building and have everything taken care of for them," he said. Friel did not say when this deal was of-

fered.

Friel said the antics - which included protestors attending different entrances and tying red ribbons around the door handles labeled 'Mohawk territory' - disregard steps taken by Brantford and Six Nations to solve land claim issues.

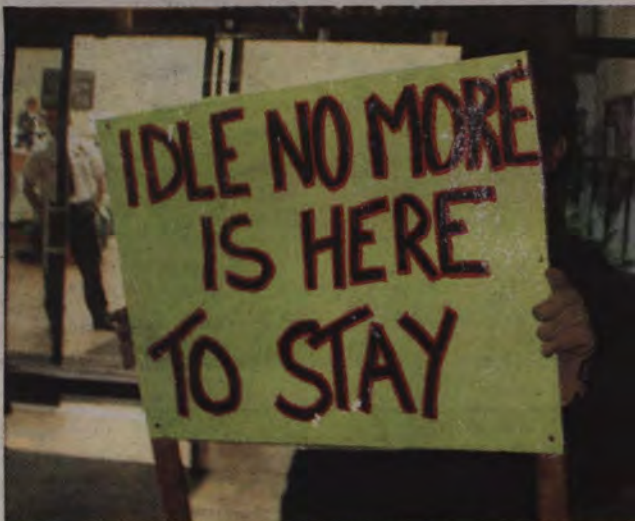
"We went to Ottawa with Elected Council before Christmas as two municipalities," he said. "We did exactly what's being requested (of Idle No More) and we did it without pressure and we did it because it was the right thing to do."

Friel said locking the doors was more in response to Jason Bowman and that

Brantford is "absolutely not" turning a deaf ear to Six Nations. "We're trying hard to build this relationship."

He said 'the Jason Bowman show' has to be separated from actual Idle No More causes. "It would be nice if there's a recognition this is really about one individual and one group who are leading this."

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Protester holds up a sign outside city hall. (Photo by Chase Jarrett)

tions at their convenience. "They kind of play both sides of the fence," Staats said of Brantford City offi-

Mohawk Workers co-organizer of the protest Cheryl Squire said the demonstration was indeed Idle No