

Solidarity march raises awareness of Bill C-45

By Chase Jarrett
Writer

NEW CREDIT - A traffic-halting round dance at the First Line Road and Highway 6 intersection was the final stroke of a solidarity march through Hagersville Thursday afternoon.

Almost 200 people of all ages from New Credit and Six Nations took to the streets and then the highway in frigid temperatures armed with signs, flags, and drums to raise awareness and protest Prime Minister Stephen Harper's controversial Bill C-45.

The march was organized by the New Credit Council in December and was not directly connected to Idle No More.

"Some of the people out there in mainstream society seem to think that it's only about us and it's not," said Bryan LaForme, New Credit Elected Chief, in an opening

at Hagersville Farmer's Market at noon, ended at about 1:15 p.m. Marchers, followed by a busload of supporters who opted out of walking, received honks and thumbs up from passing cars while OPP and New



Credit councillors kept protestors in the northbound Highway 6 lane.

Chief LaForme said the march was bigger than just native rights. "One of the reasons we decided to have a solidarity march is because what the government is trying to impose on First

huge responsibility to save the planet, and mankind."

"We must educate ourselves and our non-native brothers and sisters to the dangers of Bill C-45, which is greed," wrote Beardy.

Also showing support was Gordon Peters, Grand Chief of AIAI (Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, of which New Credit is a member).

Peters praised New Credit for the rally and said standing up for rights is necessary in turbulent times. "We get to the end of the road and there doesn't seem to be any other things that could happen other than to take to the streets and get our voice heard in some way," he told those gathered at the First Line Road complex.

"Bill C-45 was a document that had three elements that impacted us," he said, explaining new accountability measures for band councils, changes in voting that require only a majority of voter turnout instead of a majority of population, and changes to protected waterways.

"We've never been hammered like this," he said.

In a speech to the crowd before the march, New Credit youth activist Jai King-Green shared a recent encounter with Brantford racism she thinks was inflamed by Idle No More activity. "It was really empowering to go through something like that." But, she said, it hurt to know her ancestors endured it too.

She said she was at the march so coming generations don't have to suffer from racism. "And I realized I'm not fighting for myself or just for the fight. I'm fighting for my nieces and my nephews, and my other family members, and the youth who aren't even born yet, or who can't speak for themselves."

She said it is her duty as a



Round dance across Highway 6 at New Credit Plaza. (Photo by Chase Jarrett)

youth to educate herself and participate. "We're taking over next." When asked what youth can do to find out about Bill C-45, she responded "Google it."

The march ended peacefully when marchers reached the edge of First Line Road after 1:00 p.m.

Larry Sault, New Credit community member, said the turnout was absolutely astounding. "This can't stop here for sure," he said. "The government's been very clear that they're not repealing legislation (like Bill C-45)."

Chief LaForme said it was a

success and that New Credit will be heard from again. "I know in the future we'll be calling on our community again to come out and support us; to let the government know how we feel about this legislation that they're trying to impose on us."



Although the march was not an Idle No More event, signs of the movement were evident

speech.

"In a few years time when all is said and done we can all say that we played a part in hopefully letting the government know that we stood up for our rights. And that's what we're doing here today."

The march, which started

Nations, and not only on First Nations but across the country. It effects all of us."

AFN Regional Chief Stan Beardy was there in spirit when LaForme read a letter of support. "He says my message to your members and supporters would be that this generation has a