

National Day of Resistance hits Ottawa, "no to Bill C-33, C-10"

By Donna Duric
Writer

A number of aboriginal leaders told a crowd of around 1,500 people on Parliament Hill Wednesday that the time for diplomacy is over when it comes to dealing with the federal government.

One chief even made calls for confrontation during an indigenous National Day of Resistance that took place across the country May 14 to voice opposition to Bill C-33 and Bill C-10, while issuing repeated calls for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

"The time of confrontation is here," said Kitigan Zibi Chief Gilbert Whiteduck. "The laws that are coming forward - Bill C-33 in particular - the refusal of the Harper government to have an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women...is a direct attack on our sovereignty and our



identity. Kill Bill C-33, here and now."

Aboriginal leaders across the country have denounced Bill C-33, also known as the First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act, saying it gives the federal government too much control over First Nations education.

Mainly Iroquois communities are also denouncing the federal government's

impending Tackling Contraband Tobacco Act (a revision of the 2012 omnibus crime Bill C-10) that aims to criminalizing trafficking in unlicensed, unstamped tobacco products.

"The people want change," said Whiteduck. "Our voices need to be loud. Let's not be silent, or careful, or sometimes, a little too diplomatic. The time of diplomacy is over."

Close to 200 Six Nations people joined the Ottawa rally, marching through the streets of the city while brandishing signs reading, "No to Bill C-10", "Won't someone please think of the children", and "What if it was your daughter".

People carried pictures of their missing and murdered loved ones, pleading for justice for missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Others chanted throughout the streets: "Hey, hey, hey-ho, Stephen Harper's gotta go."

Ghislain Picard, Quebec regional chief and current spokesperson for the Assembly of First Nations, said the AFN is currently working to develop a united position on Bill C-33 in the wake of former national chief Shawn Atleo's resignation May 2.

"The chiefs have committed to remain here (in Ottawa) until we have a clear



position on C-33 and a clear position on how this government needs to respond in terms of the satisfaction



About 1,500 people came by bus, car and on foot to join the National Day of Resistance protest on Parliament Hill last Wednesday. They carried signs denouncing Bill C-33, an education bill, Bill-C-10 the Tackling Contraband Tobacco Bill and brought attention to the issue of missing and murdered women just days before an RCMP report cited the numbers of aboriginal women and girls missing was over 1,000. (Photos by Donna Duric)

of our peoples," said Picard.

Manitoba Grand Chief Derek Nepinak said the fight against Bill C-33 is the "fight of our lives. Let's recognize the genocide that's happening here. Let's stand up for our little ones and let's fight this bill. Kill the bill!"

Six Nations Elected Chief Ava Hill denounced the Tackling Contraband Tobacco Act. "To me, there is no such thing as contraband tobacco," she shouted to the crowd on Parliament Hill. "Tobacco is very sacred to us and we use it in our ceremonies. We have the inherent right to trade with our brothers and sisters all across this land and no government is going to stop us from doing that. They are

not going to make criminals out of our people. They are not going to get tax dollars from our people. They're not

going to tell us that we can't make our own money and give people jobs. They can't keep doing this. We are not a commodity. They have not consulted with us on anything and the days of no consultation are over. As they say in the international community, 'nothing about us without us.' The tobacco industry on Six Nations is very big business."

She also denounced Bill C-33. "We have to kill Bill C-33. We know how to teach our kids. We know how to educate our kids. The federal government doesn't need to tell us. The days of the 'great white father' are over."

Dozens of people employed by the Six Nations tobacco industry listened as

Chris Green, a tobacco manufacturer, said the industry has created a lot of jobs and boosted the economy of

Onkwehonwe communities. "The Onkwehonwe tobacco industry has followed a pure and simple model of supply and demand," said Green.



Six Nations Elected Chief Ava Hill says there is no such thing as "contraband tobacco."

"Our customers are demanding and we are supplying. As a result of that, the tobacco trade has become an economic cornerstone to most of our communities. We are developing strong and independent communities and economies that encourages and supports all aspects of our communities and yes, we even provide economic to our non-native neighbours."

She said tobacco is not illegal. "Bill C-10 is an attempt by the federal government to use legislation to criminalize and jail our Onkwehonwe business

people in the tobacco trade," said Green. "We do not belong to gangs, we do not sell our product to underage people or children.

There are real criminals out there, yet the government is investing a significant amount of money trying to arrest our peoples selling a legal product. Let's not kid ourselves - cigarettes are legal. Tobacco is legal and it is one of our most cherished, sacred gifts. We share that gift with the people that came over in that canoe. The tobacco business people are working hard to support our families, to offer employment to our community members and support community initiatives that involve activities and sports for our youth."