

Flash Mob takes over Lynden Park Mall

By Jim Windle
BRANTFORD

Christmas shoppers at Lynden Park Mall in Brantford were surprised Sunday afternoon when hundreds of Six Nations and New Credit citizens and non-Native allies participated in a perfectly executed "Flash Mob - Round Dance".

A "flash mob" is when an organization or group plan out in great detail what would appear to the casual observer, to be a spontaneous act or event in a public place.

It is all part of the "Idle No More" Indigenous movement across Canada which has escalated with the support of Attiwapiskat Chief Teresa Spence's in her hunger strike which began two weeks ago. She has vowed not to eat until Harper will meet in meaningful consultation with Indigenous leaders about his omnibus bills.

"I am prepared to die for our people," she stated with a clear voice Friday from her teepee on Victoria Island within walking distance of Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

Despite the clear message of the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People — which Harper was the last to sign and only then under extreme international pressure — and Supreme Court rulings that meaningful consultation with the effected First Nations is necessary when their treaty rights, land rights or underlying Indigenous rights will be impacted. Harper continues to push a series of such bills through parliament without any form of meaningful consultation with Natives or the Canadian people.

"This is not just a Native thing," said John Henhawk, one of the young organizers of the event. "This is something all Canadians should

be concerned about as well."

At around 11:30 am, participants began to arrive one by one and in bunches, some gathering in small, inconspicuous groups in the food court while others simply milled about the mall, many taking the opportunity for some last minute shopping.

Then, at 12:15, right on schedule, drummers pulled out concealed hand drums and placards denouncing Prime Minister Stephen Harper's bundled bills designed to weaken Native treaty rights, relax Canada's protection of its fresh waterways, and attack organized labour with what is known as it's "omnibus" bills.

The drummers made their way to the central mall atrium and began drumming. Soon, traditional singers joined in, calling participants to the "flash mob" and attracting the attention of curious shoppers and store keepers.

Young and old, from a wide cross section of the Six Nations and New Credit communities, seemed to come out of the woodwork and within minutes, filled the atrium and spread down all four wings of the mall as the sound of drums and call-and-repeat traditional singing filled the entire building.

At around 12:30 p.m., a huge round-dance broke out which wound its way through the Mall.

Although the mood was peaceful, friendly and engaging, but the message was not.

Carrying signs saying, "Standing up for our Indigenous Rights" and other references to Bill C-45 and seven other heavy handed bills.

After 45 minutes of singing, dancing and placard waving, and a few short speeches, participants were thanked for their turnout and for the peaceful mood of the

event, the flash mob disbursed, once again blending in with the holiday shoppers.

Monday afternoon, a flash mob occurred at the Limeridge Mall in Hamilton which attracted large numbers as well.

Similar "flash mob - round dances" have happened in Regina and Saskatoon Saskatchewan; Calgary, Lethbridge and Edmonton Alberta; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Vancouver, Victoria and Burnaby BC; Halifax, Nova Scotia; as well as Toronto, Hamilton, Thunder Bay and Cornwall, Ontario. Many more are planned which will add several other locations to the list.

It is all part of a nationwide call to action by Indigenous leaders and grass roots Onkwehon:we people across Canada. Demonstrations of all kinds have been taking place in most every major city in Canada. But also solidarity demonstrations in support of Indigenous Rights in Canada, have also been organized in London, England; Kiev, Ukraine; Portland Oregon; Seattle Washington; Shiprock, New Mexico; San Francisco and Los Angeles, California, among other places. Although, to date, mainstream media coverage has been light, if at all, this movement has reach a critical mass that can no longer be ignored.

"I am very proud of our people for coming out in peace and showing Harper and the Canadian people that this is not just a "Native" thing. It's about Harper's attack on democracy." said another young organizer not wishing to be identified. "What a great turnout!"

Harper has been dismissive about the demonstrations, across Canada, including Friday's massive rally in Ottawa which brought 77 busloads



Natives and non-Native allies across Canada, the United States and around the world are demanding Prime Minister Stephen Harper immediately open meaningful consultation with Canada's Indigenous people over the omnibus suit of bills. These eight bills the Harper government is pushing through with its majority government relaxes environmental standards for corporations like the Enron oil-sands projects and controversial pipelines, outlaws strike action and undermines organized labour, and encourages the selling off of Canada's natural resources to off-shore entities. Many of these resources are extracted, without consultation or compensation, from traditional Indigenous territories. (Photos by Jim Windle)



Hundreds of Six Nations and New Credit residents observe a moments silence to pray for Attiwapiskat Chief Teresa Spence who began a hunger strike two weeks ago to demand Prime Minister open meaningful consultation with Canada's Indigenous people. (Photo by Jim Windle)

and hundreds of car loads of Indigenous people from across Canada to the steps of Parliament Hill.

"Idle No More" movement organizers and supporters promise these peaceful "flash mobs" and demonstrations are only the first wave of di-

rect action, and that unless Harper relents on his omnibus program and engages Native people in meaningful consultations, they could easily ratchet it up to more militant activities from coast to coast, especially as Chief Spence's health deteriorates

as she continued her hunger strike. In Sarnia Native protesters have closes down a railway line which remains closed after several days. Police say, there will be no attempt made to remove them, as long as the protest remains peaceful.