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Aboriginal protesters in Brantford vow 'one hell of a fight' after arrest

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BRANTFORD — Six Nations protesters promised a full-fledged land occupation in Brantford after city police arrested a protester Monday morning.

"They're going to have one hell of a fight now," said Steve Powless, speaking for the protesters. "This is going to be Caledonia Part 2. They don't understand what they're in for."

He said police were "making an enemy" and accused officers of breaking the peace.

"They just have a little rinky-dink force," Powless said. "I don't know how they're going to stop us."

Police made the arrest near a construction site in a northwest business park, where protesters have been railing against Kingspan Insulation building new headquarters and a warehouse facility.

They said the Kingspan site is under claim, and construction should not be taking place.

The arrest of the Six Nations protester was the first by Brantford police since the city was granted a court injunction in early June barring protests at development sites.

On Monday morning, protesters blocked two trucks carrying loads of concrete to the site. When the trucks returned several hours later in a second attempt to enter, a protester who blocked a truck was confronted by police.

A struggle ensued and police arrested the man, charging him with assaulting police with intent to resist arrest and obstructing a police officer.

Police said in a statement that officers were trying to get the trucks into the site when a protester disobeyed officers' directions and stood in front of a truck. When police tried to arrest the protester, he allegedly punched an officer in the face.

Following the arrest, other protesters converged on police, and another officer was struck in the face, police said. The second assailant fled though an adjacent forested area and is being sought for assaulting a police officer.

"We are extremely disappointed that the peace was not kept during the protest today," Brantford police Chief Derek McElveny said in a statement. "The actions of a few protesters resulted in two of our officers being assaulted and other persons being threatened."

The arrest took place as about a dozen workers continued construction on the site.

Powless said aboriginal protesters and those in charge of the Kingspan site agreed last Friday that construction equipment would be removed.

"They lied," Powless said. "They were dishonest, so we stopped the trucks."

Following the arrest, police negotiated with protesters to get workers off the site in exchange for reopening a road to the site, which officers had blocked earlier in the morning.

Shortly after the workers left, more aboriginals began to arrive.

Tents and a teepee were erected and protesters said they were there to stay.

Police said they would continue to monitor the situation but called on politicians to resolve the dispute.

"Community, provincial and federal leaders are encouraged to exert their influence over their respective members to ensure the safety of our community is preserved and these land claim issues are resolved peacefully and expeditiously," McElveny said.

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