



## Blatchford, protesters clash at book signing

Danrei Nolan

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Author Christie Blatchford has lashed out at protesters who came to an event for her book on the OPP handling of the Caledonia land claims dispute, calling them "idiots" for labelling her racist for her take on the affair.

About a dozen protesters from a group called Six Nations Solidarity stood outside her appearance Tuesday night at Chedoke Presbyterian Church. They handed out bookmarks which claimed Blatchford's book *Helpless! Caledonia's Nightmare of Fear and Anarchy and How the Law Failed All of Us* did not present a true picture of the dispute because it did not provide context for the land claim and only focused on "violence and lawlessness" that grew out the dispute.



**BLATCHFORD PROTEST.** A SMALL GROUP OF PROTESTERS GREETED A TALK BY AUTHOR CHRISTIE BLATCHFORD TUESDAY. BARRY GRAY/THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR SOURCE: THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Two carried a sign calling the Globe and Mail reporter "Bad News" and all wore white lapel pins that said "Bad News." Devon Ridge, a spokesperson for the protesters, said the views Blatchford is presented encourage racism "and are racist."

"I'm not a racist," said Blatchford, who also called the protest crazy. "My book is not racist and they are idiots."

She also said if their intention is to intimidate her into halting speaking engagements to promote her book, "they are not going to do that. I am mystified a bit ... I am not a writer of inflammatory screeds. I am a newspaper reporter."

Natives occupied a Caledonia housing project in February 2006, claiming it was being built on unsundered Six Nations land. The OPP failed to dislodge protesters in a botched raid in April 2006, and Blatchford's book details instances where, after the raid, the OPP pulled back on enforcing the law against natives breaking the law, but arrested non-natives caught up in the hysteria of the dispute. She presents instances of assaults, threats and acts of vandalism.

Blatchford said she accepts that natives have historic land claims "and beefs" with the government, but her book is not about that. It's about the failure of government and police to do their jobs.

"I went to Afghanistan four times and I didn't attempt to write the story of that country," she said. "I wrote a story about Canadian soldiers ... This isn't about native issues. This is about the breakdown of the rule of law in a little town."

This is the second time she has encountered protesters. An appearance last Friday at the University of Waterloo was cancelled because of protesters who argued the book does not explore native issues central to the dispute.

*cinquaria@thespec.com*

905-526-3351

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