

# Another award added to the list

By JACK POIRIER

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Aamjiwnaang's environmental committee has another award to add to a growing list of honours.

The band committee will be presented with the first annual Cancer Prevention Award this weekend at an awards ceremony in Ottawa. The event is hosted by Prevent Cancer Now, a national organization that aims to eradicate the preventable causes of the disease.

It will mark the fourth award the committee has won in as many years.

"This is an honour," said Ada Lockridge, who sits on the seven-member group.

"We've done a lot of hard

work the past few years."

The committee has been instrumental in building the First Nation's profile and educating the public about industrial pollutants. Their work began as a way to oppose a Suncor ethanol plant proposed for land adjacent the reserve and snowballed from there, Lockridge said.

"Once we began to learn, we had to know more."

Lockridge, together with Naomi Oliver, were instrumental in the creation of a community health survey that found skewed birth rates on the reserve. The 2004 study of 428 Aamjiwnaang residents found female births outnumbered males by a two-to-one ratio between 1998 and 2003.

Lockridge and Oliver body-mapped the information following face-to-face interviews with local residents.

The study also detailed abnormally high rates of miscarriages, infertility, still births, birth defects and childhood learning disabilities. Health experts have suggested the results are linked to gender-bending chemicals in the environment.

Their work lead to an international study, which concluded the Aamjiwnaang First Nation has the most skewed girl-to-boy ratio in the world.

"What we're learning is not only helping us, it helps everyone who could be affected (by industrial pollutants)," Lockridge said.

Prevent Cancer Now co-chair

Liz Armstrong called Lockridge a crusader for environmental health.

"Ada is the Erin Brockovich of the Canadian scene," she said. "It shows how a person who cares a great deal about the health of her community can make a difference."

The environmental committee recently began taking their own air samples using air monitoring equipment made popular in the movie Erin Brockovich.

The awards conference is Sunday at the University of Ottawa.

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As first reported by The Observer at [www.theobserver.ca](http://www.theobserver.ca). To contact the writer: [jpoirier@theobserver.ca](mailto:jpoirier@theobserver.ca)