

Thurs, May 10, 2007.

Band to monitor industry

VOLUNTEERS TO TAKE AIR SAMPLES

By JACK POIRIER
The Observer

Aamjiwnaang First Nation residents are about to become their own environmental police.

Band councillors have been lobbying for more stringent air monitoring of local industry in the wake of studies showing skewed birth ratios on the reserve.

As a result, trained volunteers will soon begin conducting their own community air monitoring, measuring contaminants by tapping into the expertise of an international pollution team known as the Global Community Monitor.

Ada Lockridge, chairperson of the Aamjiwnaang First Nation health and environment committee, said the committee has long contended pollution from local industry is affecting residents' health.

"We know what level (of pollution) the industries in the area are allowed to emit," she said. "We can compare our data and go to environmental agencies with this information."

Committee members and volunteers will meet Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., for field training exercise and begin testing the next day.

They'll use a "bucket brigade" — a device made popular in the movie *Erin Brockovich* — which was developed by a California environmental engineering firm as a way for ordinary citizens to document air pollution.

The device is housed inside a five-gallon plastic bucket and

is capable of detecting up to 88 toxic gases. It's been approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"This system is the environmental equivalent of a crime watch program. People can take a sample of a (pollution) release as it occurs, to prove their exposure," said Global Community Monitor's Denny Larson, who is conducting the Aamjiwnaang workshop.

He said the technology can be used to hold companies accountable for chemicals that escape beyond the boundary of their plants.

"It's important to learn how to document (pollution) incidents."

Vicki Ware

"There's no requirement that they install monitoring systems at the fence line or in nearby neighbourhoods," Larson said.

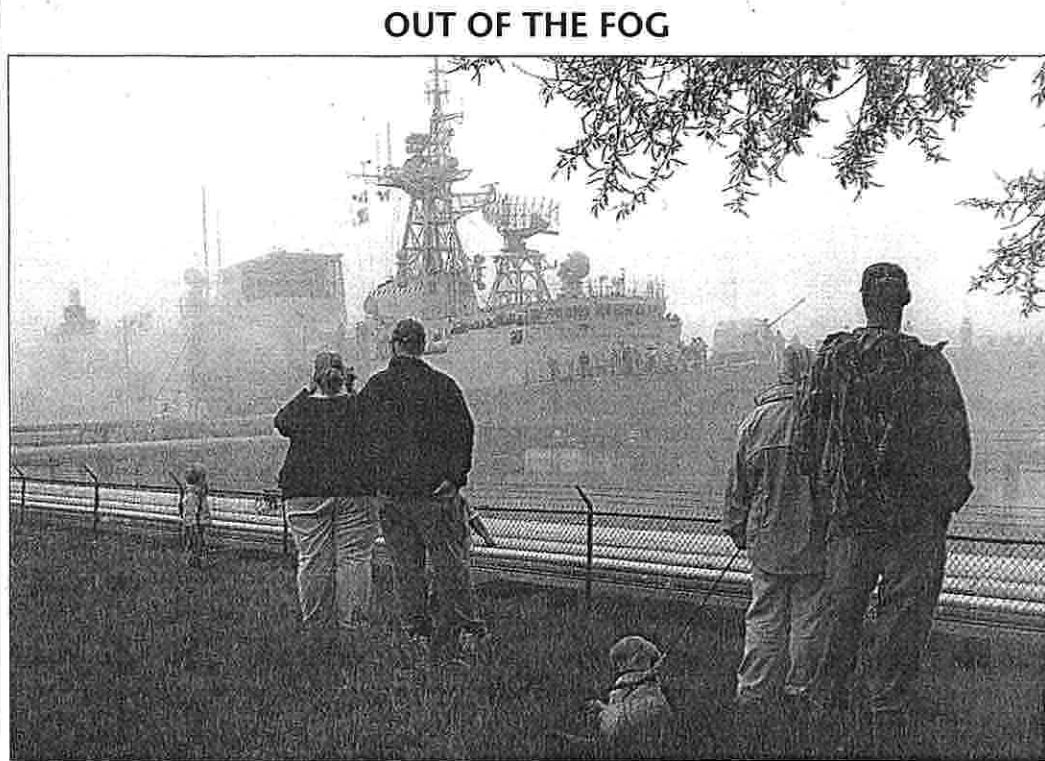
Vicki Ware, a band councillor and member of the health and environment committee, said council has purchased seven monitoring buckets.

"It's important to learn how to document (pollution) incidents," she said. "By the time you can get someone to come out to the community to test the air, you're not going to get an accurate sample."

Aamjiwnaang drew international attention in 2004 after a health survey of 428 Aamjiwnaang residents between 1998 and 2003 found female births outnumbered males by a two-to-one ratio.

Abnormally high rates of miscarriages, infertility, still births, birth defects and childhood learning disabilities were also detected. Some health experts suspect the sex ratio is linked to gender-bending chemicals.

An international study conducted earlier this year concluded the Aamjiwnaang First Nation has the most skewed girl-to-boy ratio in the world.



GLENN OGILVIE The Observer

In a shroud of fog, and a downpour of rain, the HMCS Halifax berthed at the Shell Refinery Dock near Corunna to offload more than 100 passengers who had earlier boarded in Windsor. The naval frigate made a brief stop at the Shell dock while en route to Thunder Bay. Despite the weather, several local residents lined the shore to catch a glimpse of the vessel.

Parents urged to be aware

TOO MANY CHILDREN ARE LIVING WITH TREATABLE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

By CATHY DOBSON
The Observer

A local children's mental health expert is urging adults to watch for signs that the kids in their lives may need professional help.

A startling one in five Ontario youths lives with a treatable mental health problem, says Rick Shields of St. Clair Child and Youth Services.

But only about a quarter of them seek treatment.

"Families are often reluctant to get help because of the stigma," Shields said during an interview to mark Children's Mental Health Week. "Or they feel they are to blame."

So when a child is finally referred for counselling, the family is often tapped out.

"It usually means they've tried everything they could

think of themselves and tried everything their friends and family suggested," Shields said.

Trouble is, like many physical ailments, early intervention for mental health problems will often mean a faster and more successful recovery.

The most prevalent mental illnesses in Canadian children between ages four and 17 are anxiety disorder, depression, conduct disorders (bullying and vandalism), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), eating disorders, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder (manic depression).

Many kids show defiance as they grow up but they do not have a mental illness. It's a clinical problem when it is persistent and occurs in all settings.

"One in five is an epidemic," Shields said. "The cost is high to the child, the family and the

community."

St. Clair Child and Youth Services treats 1,300 children and teens every year. Many receive one-on-one counselling while others get group counselling or their parents receive training.

"Families are often reluctant to get help because of the stigma. Or they feel they are to blame."

Rick Shields

While St. Clair Child and Youth Services is the focus for children's mental health treatment in Sarnia-Lambton, many other organizations contribute to children's emotional well-being, Shields said.

"Any sport, organized activity and school provides social

support," he said. Mental health workers agree that kids who participate in activities are better able to cope.

"Having at least one significant parent or adult in their lives also makes a huge difference for kids," Shields said. "Being a loner is almost a recipe for mental health issues later on."

Society, with climbing divorce rates and unprecedented pressure on the family, is less stable than it once was, he said.

"Most people involved in this business say that incident of youth violence may not be up, but the severity seems to worsen than a generation ago."

"We're becoming less civil problem-solving and in how we interact with others."

Shields encourages any adult who fears a child or youth they know may need professional assistance to call a family physician and seek a referral, possibly to St. Clair Child and Youth Services (519-337-3701).

"Help is available and treatment works," he said.

Warning system to be tested locally

SYSTEM COULD GO ACROSS CANADA

By DAN McCAFFERY
The Observer

Local residents are being invited to help test a new emergency warning system that could soon be used across the

NetAlerts Inc., an Internet technology company based in Sarnia, has developed a service that uses the Internet to deliver alerts to computers, cell phones, blackberry/PDAs and web pages.

It will let people know about approaching storms, smog, floods, highway closures, school bus delays, border delays, winter road conditions, Amber alerts, marine warnings, earthquakes and other disasters.

"You can get it by e-mail, cell phone, or on your com-

"This is the new direction for national alerting systems in Canada and the United States."

Jacob Westfall

puter pops up on your desktop," said NetAlerts project manager

direction for national alerting systems in Canada and the United States."

It can even break into radio and TV broadcasts and activate sirens.

The system is based on a new emergency message format which will be used in the next generation of national warning systems across the continent.

NetAlerts has been conducting small scale trials for users in Canada and the U.S., at local and national levels, including a small Lambton County trial.

operating for eight months processing over 1,000 local messages.

As part of the testing a development of the system, a trial is now being opened to residents of Sarnia-Lambton.

NetAlerts is asking for public assistance in testing the system on a larger scale in preparation for national deployment.

There is no cost to join the trial, and sign-up takes place through a website.

Visit <http://sarnia-lambton.netalerts.com>

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Friday's forecast
High 21 Low 3
Mainly sunny



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