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of the second extra session, spilling MIKKA Kiprusoff's 53-save performance. See page C1.

SEE PEACE, A2

Birth ratio big worry for First Nation

Two girls born for every boy

By MICHAEL OLIVEIRA
THE CANADIAN PRESS
AAMJIWNAANG FIRST NATION

The people of the Aamjiwnaang First Nation are painfully aware they make up a startling statistic that has raised eyebrows around the world, but the bigger concern for residents are the chemicals they fear are overwhelming their community and killing off their legacy.

The birthrate ratio of boys to girls normally observed in communities falls close to an even split.

In Aamjiwnaang, records show two girls are being born for every boy — a scientific anomaly that has stunned researchers and that residents admit is clearly not normal.

"Our sense of normal is not normal," said Ada Lockridge, chairwoman of the Aamjiwnaang environment committee, and a mother of two girls.

Visitors to this reserve just outside the border community of Sarnia are struck by the sight of dozens of massive in-



NEIGHBOURS: A sign for the Aamjiwnaang First Nation Resource Centre is located across the road from NOVA Chemicals in Sarnia.

CP photo: Craig Glover

dustrial facilities spewing smoke and their close proximity to the First Nations community of about 850.

SEE RESERVE, A2

Reserve

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Residents live in an area known as chemical valley — Canada's largest cluster of chemical, allied manufacturing and research and development facilities — and co-exist with smoke stacks and nauseating smells that carry with the wind.

The girl-boy ratio anomaly has been the subject of international study, most recently in an article published in Environmental Health Perspectives this month based on the work of researchers from the U.S. and Japan.

"To our knowledge, this is a more significantly reduced sex ratio and greater rate of change than has been reported previously anywhere," the study reads.

While many residents are reluctant to talk openly about the lack of boys being born and the worldwide attention that's been focused on them, it's something that just about everyone thinks about, said 67-year-old Wilson Plain, a father of four and grandfather of five.

Men are worried they will never have sons to carry on their family name and worse, that the lives of the entire community may be at risk.

"There's not a lot of conversation about it, most people are uncomfortable about talking about those results," he said.

"We got blue skies and there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with where I'm sitting. But when I zero in on (the skewed birthrate and the nearby chemical plants) I ask myself: How long is my life going to last? Will I be hit with cancer?"

The phenomenon of an increasing female reserve snuck up on everyone a few years ago.

They were surprised to learn there were enough girls in the community to field three baseball teams while there would be only one boys' squad.

Lockridge thought of her own family — her two sisters have nine kids between them, of which there's only one boy — and started to get worried about what was happening in the community and the possible impacts of the surrounding industrial plants.

"Sometimes I wonder why we're still alive," she said.

"We always said, 'Ew, the air stinks,' but we never thought about what it could be doing to our health.

"We just thought somebody was



FEW BOYS: Breanne Maness-Henry, 10, left, Mariah Maness-Henry, 7, middle, and Kaylie Nahmabin-Shaw, 13, of the Aamjiwnaang First Nation, play basketball behind the Band Office. The birth ratio of girls to boys is 2-to-1 there, a scientific anomaly that has stunned researchers and that residents admit is clearly not normal.

CP photo: Craig Glover

watching out for us."

Local environmental consultant Ron Plain said all levels of government have done little to police the industry.

"We know absolutely that the technology is in place right now for an almost zero emission ... but industry gets away with using the excuse that it's not economically viable," Plain said.

Jurisdictional battle

Environmental Commissioner of Ontario Gord Miller helped facilitate a meeting with local residents and various municipal, provincial and federal government officials and said it's clear the people of Aamjiwnaang have reason for concern.

"People are living immediately adjacent to these industrial facilities. Literally, it's on the other side of the street," Miller said, adding that in other communities there would likely be a 300-metre zone between residential and industrial areas.

He said one of the problems in getting help for the community has been a jurisdictional battle between the provincial and federal governments.



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