

# On the front line

## AAMJIWNAANG EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNER

By GEORGE MATHEWSON  
The Observer

The confusion that followed a recent oil spill underscores the risks of living on the Aamjiwnaang First Nation, its new emergency management plan says.

Natalie Nahmabin was hired March 1 by the band to prepare residents for the toxic releases that have become a fact of life on the Sarnia reserve.

"I've been through a couple of evacuations myself and I find every incident is different," Nahmabin said.

"When Sunco had its leak, part of the community was told to shelter in place but the day care was evacuated. There was a mix up there."

The spill of 44,000 litres of crude on Feb. 26 unleashed a strong sulphurous odour on the community. In the confusion, some parents were delayed by police blockades and couldn't reach their children at the evacuating day care, she added.

In her job, Nahmabin will work closely with Sarnia emergency co-ordinator Cal Gaudner and members of the Chemical Valley Emergency Co-ordinating Organization (CVELO).

Many residents aren't aware Aamjiwnaang has an emergency plan or what to do in a



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Aamjiwnaang First Nation emergency management planner Natalie Nahmabin views an aerial map of the reserve and the neighbouring industries.

case, Nahmabin said. So she's launched an education campaign that includes a series of articles in the band's bi-weekly newsletter, the Tribe-Unc.

When issued an order to "shelter in place," for example, the proper response is to close all windows and doors, turn radios to a local station, turn off air conditioning or furnaces, and moisten towels to seal doorways and cover your nose while breathing.

Do not attempt to go outside and do not assemble in the basement. Many toxic gases are heavier than air and settle in low places.

If ordered to evacuate, residents should head to an arranged reception area and register, taking only essential items, medications and things to feed and care for young children.

Aamjiwnaang residents, who are sandwiched between petro-

chemical plants, have experienced three "shelter in place" orders in the past year.

"We are pretty well on the front line here," Nahmabin said. "We're like a big sitting duck."

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