

# Spills anger First Nation

## RESIDENTS DEMANDING SAFEGUARDS

By JACK POIRIER  
The Observer

Stephanie Stone is literally sick of industrial mishaps in her back yard.

The Aamjiwnaang First Nation resident has been sickened in the past by releases by the Chemical Valley giants that surround her community.

Following Suncor's spill of 44,000 litres (nearly 9,700 gallons) of crude oil at its Sarnia refinery yesterday morning — sending a waft of fumes into neighbouring residents' homes — Stone said it's time the community fights back.

"I'm frustrated. I feel powerless," said Stone, a librarian at the Aamjiwnaang community centre.

"Nobody is listening, not industry anyway."

She said perhaps valley firms would get the message if residents began filing class action

lawsuits, to suing plant CEOs where it hurts most — their wallets.

Despite the fact none of the crude left the refinery, a decision was made to close the First Nation day care centre and a shelter in place order was issued for Aamjiwnaang residents. These public schools in Coruna and Mooreton decided to follow the order although it was not extended into St. Clair Township.

The refinery was alerted to the spill due to odour complaints in the area.

For many First Nation residents, the spill created a chaotic mess as parents tried frantically to find alternative care for their children.

Others, like Allan Joseph, were kept busy answering a stream of phone calls from concerned parents and neighbours looking for information.

"The phone never stopped," he said.

All five of his children stayed home. Desperate for any information, he waited for notification to come across the community's emergency telephone notification system.

"It took at least an hour."

He then contacted as many neighbours as he could, running door-to-door.

Minutes later he decided, for the sake of his asthmatic children, to high-tail it out of the area.

"We all packed up in the van and left. I had no idea what was in the air."

While he isn't as critical of industry as some of his neighbours, he said every incident adds another black mark against their safety records.

"I know some of the neighbours up the road, they just packed up and left because they couldn't take it anymore."

Police were called in to provide traffic control, closing roads off in the area.

That created havoc for nutritionist Laura West, who commutes from Sarnia to the Aamjiwnaang health centre.

"It took me about an hour and a half to get to work," she said.

The health centre closed some of its day programs.

But by mid-afternoon it was business as usual.