

THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

TRANSCRIPT

JEAN SIMPSON VO When I think back, I wish we'd never come to Sarnia. My dad had a choice at the time, but they thought Sarnia was Imperial Oil, they thought wow, this is a big oil city—and it was, there was a lot of work here. When we got off the train down at the station, and they took us down to where we lived in Bluewater, my mother couldn't get over it, she said it was just so beautiful, it was like a Fairyland. Then when you woke up the next morning the stink from the plants was enough to knock you over. It was terrible. But she always thought with the lights at night it looked like a Fairyland.

[title]

The Beloved Community

a film by Pamela Calvert/Plain Speech

DARREN HENRY VO Aamjiwnaang has been located here at least for 6000 years. The carbon dating takes us back 6000 years. The name Aamjiwnaang, "where the spirit of the water lives," we're responsible for that. Lake Huron drains into the St. Clair River at the border between Ontario and Michigan, Canada and the United States, and that's where the city of Sarnia is. Directly south of the city of Sarnia is what we know as "Chemical Valley," and that's made up of a number of huge chemical corporations. And then there's Aamjiwnaang, which is sandwiched in between the main Chemical Valley complex and three or four industries after that. So, we are bounded in three directions by industry, and our western boundary is the St. Clair River, but on the other side of the St. Clair River is a big hydro plant. It's not an actual valley, it's just that everything kind of flows into Chemical Valley, and that's kind of how the community was built.

JIM BROPHY These plants here were rubber facilities, were solvent producers, so these workers had lots of benzene exposure, perchloroethylene,

JEAN SIMPSON VO There was formaldehyde, urea.

SHARREN FISHER VO There's mercury, there's arsenic, PCBs.

ADA LOCKRIDGE VO The lead, PCBs, polychloride

DARREN HENRY VO Nickel hydroxide, material they use for cell phone batteries.

ADA LOCKRIDGE VO There was a leak down the road here, it smelled like propane.

SANDY KINART VO He said to me, "I'm having a hard time breathing today."

KIM HENRY VO Since I had children, we've had three major evacuations.

DARREN HENRY VO She said it was hydrogen sulfite. You might smell it once, maybe your second time you don't smell no more.

MIKE BRADLEY In a perfect world we would not have located plants so close to the native reserve, so close to the community, and on the river.

JIM BROPHY The concern of course is that you don't have all this exposure and no effect. One of the first things that became a big concern was that the birth ratio of boys to girls had really changed. We found almost twice as many girls being born as boys. Certainly, in wildlife studies and in fish studies, this is one of the markers of endocrine disruption. So, something is going on.

MIKE GILBERTSON There are a whole series of chemicals which act as though they were hormones. Now the particular concern around endocrine disruptors is that the development of the fetus is under the control of hormones, and if you start getting these kinds of chemicals into the environment and into a woman and into a fetus, it will go and

interfere with all these development processes, particularly having effects on neurological development, on the immune system, and on the differentiation of the sexes between males and females.

DARREN HENRY The normal trend is that there may be a slightly higher amount of males being born than females, but we're seeing 2 to 1 ratio of females to males being born here.

ADA LOCKRIDGE I went to our band registry, from 1984, let's take 20 years, let's go back 20 years. So, I went and got a list between the male and female for each year, and there was a big difference. Because it was around '93 though, something started to change, the girls were this much. So, in 2003, the girls are this high to the boys.

MIKE GILBERTSON A large part of the whole endocrine disruptor hypothesis—the whole idea that hormones could be interfering with developmental processes—to a very large extent started here in the Great Lakes, with the effects of chemicals on birds and bird reproduction. These kinds of chemicals which were getting into the environment, were actually causing abnormalities, causing deformities in normal embryonic development.

JIM BROPHY So if this is occurring in the fish and in the wildlife in this area, of course we're sharing the exact same environment, why wouldn't it be occurring for us as well? And that's something that's still well below the medical and public health radar, so these things could well be going on and nobody's talking about them.

ADA LOCKRIDGE Come on in. Hello.

ADA LOCKRIDGE OK, you gonna answer for...

MARY JOSEPH I ain't got nothing to hide.

ADA LOCKRIDGE All right. Ever diagnosed with cancer by a doctor?

MARY JOSEPH OK, who are we going with?

ADA LOCKRIDGE We'll go with Norm first.

MARY JOSEPH No

ADA LOCKRIDGE You?

MARY JOSEPH Yes

ADA LOCKRIDGE If yes, what type of cancer?

MARY JOSEPH Breast cancer. I was told last July it's bone cancer.

ADA LOCKRIDGE You have bone cancer?

MARY JOSEPH Yeah. And liver.

ADA LOCKRIDGE Ever diagnosed with infertility or had difficulty conceiving children?

MARY JOSEPH Yeah, I did.

ADA LOCKRIDGE OK, how often do you eat locally caught fish?

MARY JOSEPH We don't eat it anymore. Not anywhere around here, we don't eat it. Not now.

ADA LOCKRIDGE Not now. But you used to, right?

MARY JOSEPH We used to. We used to eat it a lot. Catch it in the river, bring it home and eat it.

ADA LOCKRIDGE So when did you quit?

MARY JOSEPH Probably about five years ago.

ADA LOCKRIDGE OK, body mapping, some of the questions are, "have you been diagnosed with cancer," "have you been diagnosed with learning disabilities," "have you had miscarriages or stillborns." But what we'll do is go through the records of how they answered, and if you had any illnesses or anything, you'd be a dot. So, if you had maybe breathing problems or something, it would be one color of a dot, if it is arthritis, there'll be different dots. And they don't just answer yes or no, they tell you a little story behind it too, and you've got to sit there and listen to it, and you feel for them. And then when you get doing this again, it's like, there it goes again. Well, just be strong, keep doing it.

ADA LOCKRIDGE The yellow is for miscarriages or infertility. Some have had 4 miscarriages, some have 3. We look at this sometimes at the end, me and Naomi just sit and stare at it before we leave. But different ones have come in and they're looking and they go "Ada, what do you think will happen if it's all female?" Well then, you'll see a bunch of angry females coming after you. You're doing to the women, our kids -- the kids are mostly breathing problems right now, but how are they going to grow up?

MARGARET KEITH That's a combination of miscarriages, and people with fertility problems, endometriosis. One of the things I've been wondering about too with this skewed birth ratio that we have, I wonder how many of those miscarriages are boys.

ADA LOCKRIDGE Don't know.

MARGARET KEITH Yeah, in most cases we're not going to know. I mean, if these miscarriages are happening early, there'll be no way of knowing.

JIM BROPHY VO There's about 500 chemicals that mimic the hormonal system, and hormonal disruption, if it happens at certain moments in the life cycle, for instance if it happens while the fetus is developing, it can have a profound effect on health problems that will show up later in the child or as an adult, or so on.

DARREN HENRY We've been seeing deformed animals, we've seen fish with unexplained tumors on them, quite recently we've seen a few birth defects in our community. So, all the signs are there.

SHARREN FISHER Come on, Picky Nicky. We've got all kinds of wildlife here. We have brush wolves, rabbits. I used to be down here all the time with the dogs. Just sit there and let the dogs play. And all these animals are drinking this water, because they don't know any better. And there haven't been hardly any rabbits, the dogs always like to get out and chase rabbits but there haven't been hardly any all winter. Quite possibly dying from drinking this water, because like I said, there's no other water source around here.

SHARREN FISHER And I think that's where Stella went down and got a drink of water one day. She was in labor for 14 hours. I finally took her to the veterinarian here in Sarnia and they induced her, she had three puppies the first time and all three of them died, they had breathing problems. They died after we brought her home. I've had the puppies since October, and this is April. So, they've been in here about six months. I'm sorry, they've been frozen. Someone was supposed to come along and pick them up and take them in to have them analyzed. This is a normal size puppy, when they look normal. But it had breathing problems, they gave it oxygen at the vet's office 3 or 4 times, she died at home here. You can't tell but the ears were pointed like little horns. This puppy she had at home. There's no muzzle, no eyes, no fur, no ears. You can't see very well but both the little feet in the back are like flippers. And like I said, I'm waiting for someone from possibly Guelph University to come and pick up the puppies and take them in to have them analyzed to see what kind of chemicals caused this. Terrible. My grandson burst out crying when he saw. And like I said, how are our grandchildren going to be from him playing in the water? Terrible, it's terrible. I don't know how much longer we're going to have to put up with this before they tell us what's going on.

ADA LOCKRIDGE When I was younger too, I remember people coming up and taking samples, and I'd say, "Who are you?" and stuff. "Oh, we're just taking samples of the water." OK, you know, what am I supposed to do?

MIKE BRADLEY There's been tremendous pressure to stop spills in the river. And all these plants have the ability to separate from the river. And by doing that they would take away the fear that people are concerned about their water quality.

CATHERINE CREBER VO I've been working on remediation issues in Sarnia, they're called, for about 17 years now.

CATHERINE CREBER The sediment in the St. Clair River had contained chemicals that we'd made in the '50s, '60s and '70s. The chemicals that were made were chlorinated organics. And those were solvents, so you would use those chemicals in the dry-cleaning industry or as degreasers in a mechanical plant, very common chemicals in the industry. And the remainder of the sediment was contaminated with mercury. Now we never made mercury on the site, mercury was used on the site, much as you would use steel in your pipes. But mercury had been released as part of the process and had become bound up in the sediment.

CATHERINE CREBER What we're looking at here is the pond where water and sediment was placed during the project to remove the sediment from the river. Now, what we've done is we've taken a load of straw and many loads of manure and mixed it in with the sediment that we removed from the river. Now, what that does is it provides a food for bugs, for bacteria, just like you would in a sewage treatment plant. And the bugs will chew up the straw and the manure, and as they're doing that they'll chew up the chemicals that were in the sediment, and then over time the whole thing will sink because the straw and the manure will go away, it will become carbon dioxide basically, and go into the air. And over time that whole thing will sink and we'll cover this over and we'll end up with a really good soil to use again in the future. This is called a biocell and it uses bioremediation to manage chemicals.

CATHERINE CREBER If you look at what the St. Clair River remedial action plan needs to do now, there's some minor things that we still want to be doing like more habitat for ducks, some things need to be done with the municipal treatment plant, we still need to have a long history of having no spills, but this is a very clean river.

CATHERINE CREBER For me, the word "toxic" has a specific scientific meaning. And whenever we use it as an adjective, in a layman point of view, it connotes a lot of emotion. And for me, the problem is it labels something immediately without really understanding it. It creates fear, it creates emotion, it creates negativity, and it doesn't really tell the story. It prevents people from really understanding the story. And personally, I've seen it cause a lot of stress, people thinking there was a concern when there really wasn't. To label everything "toxic" precludes conversation on the subject.

ADA LOCKRIDGE Me and Felicia were riding down Lasalle Road last night and she goes, "Oh there's a flarestack, all right, let's play a game, let's see who can count the most flarestacks." Oh my god. My other daughter, we used to play the game as we were riding by, "let's count the horses that we see." That hurt.

ADA LOCKRIDGE Hey is that an air monitor? Is that an inter-provincial thing, that sign? Oh, let's go be nosy. Oh, it says Dow. Private property, no trespassing. Oh, I didn't know that they had this here. Sarnia Lambton Environmental Association, oh I should write that down, now we can call them up and ask them for some results. I wonder what kind of air they're looking at around here, eh? You'd think they'd be close to the plants or something.

SCOTT MUNRO Where we are right now is, we're at the location of one of the SLEA air monitoring stations, which looks at about a dozen volatile organic compounds such as benzene, toluene, xylene, on an hourly basis. The idea of industries getting together and pooling their resources to better understand their environment is pretty unique to this area.

RICK VAN HEMMEN What you'll find in this community is that we collaborate significantly in those areas and share incredible detail where companies typically wouldn't. Specifically in the SLEA board meetings as an example, we get together in a very safe environment—they are closed door sessions—but we can very openly discuss everything that's happened at our sites, we can challenge each other for improvements, we can agree to bring our resources together and work on a problem that we may be collectively having, and didn't necessarily realize until then.

SCOTT MUNRO Site leaders often come, as you would probably guess, from the US, and their initial reaction is, "You can't have an organization like this." There would be collusion, you can't do it. And they come to their first couple of board meetings a little apprehensive about what they're getting into, and very quickly they realize that we stay very strictly on environmental issues, and yes you can share a lot of things, and then the comment will be, "You guys actually do things."

RICK VAN HEMMEN It's really important to me that I'm living in a community where industry takes it very seriously, because I've lived here for almost 20 years, we've raised our kids here. If I really felt personally that things weren't being handled in an appropriate manner, then I've said to a lot of people that I would have left a long time ago. For me it's a good marriage, and industry is constantly seeking that balance, to make sure you've got a thriving business that can support the community financially while also making sure that it's a healthy environment, because you're living there too, along with everyone else, and it's very easy for people outside to forget that, we are definitely members of the community too, and feel often the same way they do when there's issues that come up. Questions like the birth ratio in the Aamjiwnaang community probably raise more questions than they answer right now, and I think as a member of the community I'm as concerned as anyone to understand how that fits, are there associations, and what does that look like in the broader scope of Sarnia, Corunna, and the other surrounding communities?

SCOTT MUNRO From someone who's been involved with the air quality and the water quality data for a long time, I'd like to believe that that data's going to be an important part of getting to that understanding.

ADA LOCKRIDGE My job is not done. I have to keep going. There's more to it.

JIM BROPHY I just want to thank you and your community on behalf of all the thinking people of Sarnia and the rest of Ontario that might know about this, for the work you've done to expose what I think has been a gross and tragic injustice that's been perpetrated on many members of the community here, from these environmental releases that were tolerated for decades. You're giving hope to a lot of people that aren't sitting in this room tonight because of what you're doing. We have the highest rate of pollution related deaths in Ontario, in this community.

MARGARET KEITH Generally what we're seeing is that miscarriages are possibly elevated, that asthma is possibly elevated, especially in the children, learning problems in children and behavioral problems may be elevated, we know the birth ratio is skewed and that is actually backed up by the survey, and skin rashes and skin problems, especially in children. 51 of 132 women over the age of 18 have had at least one miscarriage or stillbirth. That's 39% of the women, and that is higher than what you would expect. 25% is generally considered to be the number of women who would ever have a miscarriage or stillbirth. What we don't know is why. You always look for the reasons why these things are going on, could it be something in the lifestyle, or is it to do with genetics, or is it something in the environment?

WOMAN Is there an idea, when are we actually going to get a yes, it's because of where we live, or no, it isn't because of where we live? Is there an estimate, is it going to be a year, 10 years? And how much data do we actually have to collect before we finally get a yes or no answer, it's because of where we live?

WILSON PLAIN One of my suggestions is that we need to do a comprehensive study of what's going on here, and we need to get federal and provincial governments involved, we need to get all of industry involved, we need to get their financial resources in order to do that.

CHRIS PLAIN I'm looking forward to some solutions and some remediation. How we go about doing that, boy I don't really know. If there's other communities out there in North America that have faced some of what we've faced, I'd definitely like to get together with some of them to see how they've addressed some of the concerns that we have here as well.

MAN We need to keep this going. But there's also another thing that we need to do, go out to the community of Sarnia, look for those workers that worked in those refineries, ask them how do they live now to this day? We need to talk with them, make a coalition with them to be able to stand up with us. To show that the industries cannot do this to us anymore.

BARB MILLITT When I go to my father's grave, there's all his co-workers buried around beside him. The graveyard shift is all buried here, and the daytime shift is buried here. And that's what it's getting to be. The father would work there, maybe his brother, the uncle, the sons, so some families in this city you're seeing whole generations wiped out.

DARREN HENRY I've been there for 26 years, and I've worked in different processes. I've been exposed to many different chemicals. My father died from workplace disease, mesothelioma. I accept the fact that I may not get my threescore and ten in, but that's the job that I took.

ACE CONCORDIA Nobody usually talks about it, you don't hear too much. You only hear after the fact where somebody went to a doctor, or somebody now can't go play golf with you anymore because they can't walk, they can't breathe properly and they're going for tests. And you never hear when it started, or how it started, it's all put together after the fact. That yes, he did work at the foundries, or yes, he did work at the chemical plant. Nobody ever complains because it doesn't hit you. It just doesn't hit you in a minute or two and say you have it, it just accumulates overtime—so my friends, there was nothing wrong to the end. They just didn't feel good, they went and got it checked up, and then it got worse.

JIM BROPHY People literally think they trade their livelihoods for their health. Probably the force that really broke with what had been accepted as the way of life were these women who didn't accept that their husbands should die so young.

SANDY KINART Blayne got his diagnosis in late September of that year. Of course, your family comes around you, and my brother-in-law took Blayne aside to reassure him that I would be taken care of, not to worry. That was very sweet of him to do that, and he didn't have to take him aside to do that. My girlfriend's husband came by to say not to worry, to try to comfort him and make sure that he knows that somebody's going to be around for me. That December, my sister's husband was diagnosed with stomach and bowel cancer, and my girlfriend's husband had a multi-organ shutdown and was diagnosed with bladder cancer. They died in July, a week apart, the next year, and then Blayne died a year from them.

LISA WALLER Where do we know papa is?

JARED WALLER In heaven

LISA WALLER Yeah

JARED WALLER In heaven

LISA WALLER That's right.

SANDY KINART You going to sit?

SHANE KINART The gentleman across the road from you?

LISA WALLER I know he has cancer in his lungs, I think he has pleural plaques, and they're so private they haven't talked to anyone about it, and his wife's kind of scared because she's never worked and doesn't know what to do. He's going to be gone and she's going to have no income. I've encouraged them to register, but I think it's a big step for them, to step outside their house and do that.

SHANE KINART How old are they?

LISA WALLER I think he's the same age as dad, I don't know what dad was.

SANDY KINART 56

LISA WALLER Yeah, and works in the plants.

SANDY KINART Is he still working?

LISA WALLER Right now he is.

SANDY KINART I felt I was always behind the man who fought for his rights and for the rights of his co-workers. I always supported him in that, just there for that support. We would always talk about stuff, if something happened at work, but to be outspoken? Oh no. Never.

WOMAN Just before we get going here, I'd just like you to bow your heads in a moment of silence for our good brothers and sisters who have gone before us.

MAN Who's died who shouldn't be dead, and who's suffered who shouldn't have suffered? And believe me, I've seen that with people I've cared very much for.

SANDY KINART My name is Sandra Kinart, I was born in this city, I was raised in this city, I married in this city, and I lost my husband in this city. And I'm mad as hell. Why? Because of what I see going on in our community today. And I don't hear the voices of the people. A handful of people in a room, I appreciate you so much. The rest of the community, I cannot believe they're not standing in the streets screaming and yelling at what they're seeing going on here. I appreciate a doctor who has the guts to stand up and say our people are dying. And they are. Do you read the obits? Have you seen what's going on in our community? Every day, if you look, you can see. People in their 70s, 60s, 50s, 40s and 30s should not be dying in this community. And I hear nobody asking why. I hear them asking quietly to their neighbors, "I wonder why that is." "I wonder why that is." This community is living a legacy of its past and we cannot change it. But we need to fight for our future.

JIM BROPHY We have no way of knowing about the health problems of the children of these workers. And we know from endocrine disrupting chemicals that often the diseases will appear in the next generation.

BARB MILLITT When is he due?

WOMAN He's due in another couple of weeks.

BARB MILLITT In our business, because we're a children's specialty shop, we've had women come in that can't have children. And when they go through the process, we've had some of them that end up in Toronto, and they've told me, "You know, when I get to Toronto, they just say, 'Well, you live in Sarnia.'" And they say "Yes," and the doctors are saying, "Well, we have a lot of problems from Sarnia." So, it really makes you think well, what's going on?

DARREN HENRY My three children are all female. The two oldest ones have had abnormal pap smears, they've had pre-cancerous growth in their pap smears. I've been after them to ask their friends, I mean it's kind of a personal question to be asking how many have. And I think each of them said they have at least five other friends that have the same thing. And that's something that's one of my concerns. Because these girls are the ones who are, they're having kids now.

MARGARET KEITH The people on the reserve feel a real responsibility to generations to come, and a number of them have talked about how fearful they are about what they're finding out.

DARREN HENRY We talk about water in an animate way, as living, that there's a spirit. Like I said, Aamjiwnaang is where the spirit of the water lives. The water has a spirit, it feeds our mother earth, that's her blood. How do we talk about that water when it's dead? It's not animate then, it's just dead and can we even imagine water dead?

CONGREGANTS Lift our voices to you Lord, Jesus, bless your name, praise you, hallelujah, Jesus, hallelujah.

MARY JOSEPH They say that when there's a gathering of people praying that it's stronger than anything.

PASTOR "All things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore," he says, "awake you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you life. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:13-16) Sister Mary, as she stands before us this morning, is battling with physical ailments. And at this point we don't know the outcome physically, but we are guaranteed in our hearts of the final destiny. Lord, we lift sister Mary before you, we thank you for what you've done for her, we thank you that she has established through her experience that God is a healer, that God steps into the lives of those who are desperately ill, that are beyond the capabilities of medical science, Lord, and Father we pray for a special grace of healing upon sister Mary today. We ask, Lord, that the Spirit of God that is within her will rise up, spring up a well and renew her again, and as she goes into the waters of baptism, Lord, and in obedience to your Word, we pray a special blessing upon her, that the grace of God will flood her heart with the assurance that she belongs to you and she'll be able to say like the apostle Paul, "Whether we live or die we are Christ's and we belong to him," (Romans 14:8) and we embrace that truth, and we celebrate that the life we have through Christ Jesus cannot be snuffed out by the physical deterioration of our bodies. Thank you, Lord,

there's a resurrection day coming in which the body itself will be transformed and will be fashioned into a form like unto his glorious body.

SINGER I will follow, I'll go with thee, with thee always, Hallelujah!

WALKIE We are sending a crew in to make a determination on the leaking on the hopper car.

WALKIE Set up a monitor, we're also going.

FIREMAN We just brought a male patient out of the tractor trailer unit, found unconscious, just handed over to paramedics at this time. We also have a manifest from Suncor.

WALKIE The sirens have been set off in Corunna, and we have a "shelter in place" at this time.

FIREMAN Roger

NORMAN YELLOWMAN When I was growing up, it was hard when something did happen, you hear the sirens go off, your parents tell you get ready, you've only got 10 minutes, call people as soon as possible, the phones are ringing and people are packing up, don't know how long we'll be here. Don't even know what the spill or the cause is.

ADA LOCKRIDGE 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, somebody was pounding at my door, "Come on, we gotta go." So, I grabbed my kid, away we went, we gotta go get ma. So, I went knocking at her door, she's not answering. So I went back to her bedroom, and I started pounding on her window, she still wasn't getting up. Then my mouth started getting all numb, I still remember it, it was wow, then I just started pounding, "Get out of bed!"

DARREN HENRY I have nightmares regularly. I have nightmares, I have to go onto a part of the reserve to pull dead people out.

MARGARET KEITH There is a sort of a trauma to all of this that doesn't come out in the body mapping and doesn't come out in the toxicology studies.

KIM HENRY We called the ambulance, well they couldn't even get through because the road was blocked off. And my daughter was panicking because she was about 7 or 8 at the time.

MEGAN WILLIAMS When I was younger, there was a storm, and one of the plants, the tanks got hit by lightning, huge flames, you just get scared. Now whenever there's a storm, like a few days ago there was a storm, all you can think of, is lightning going to hit the tanks? What's going to happen?

KIM HENRY But there was another one too, I think it was the benzene one, there was a benzene spill somewhere, was it on LaSalle Rd or somewhere,

DARREN HENRY Was it the one on LaSalle or the one on Churchill? It's not funny but there's so many to recall. Just one-time benzene spills, there's at least 3 or 4 of them that were major.

MEGAN WILLIAMS I think I'd like living up north because it's so clean up there, I just want to get out of Aamjiwnaang because all these things are happening, warnings, it just kind of scares me.

ADA LOCKRIDGE Some people want to just pack up and leave, some don't, and if that was the case that we had to pack up, well I think Chemical Valley would just take right over, and then the people down the road are going to be worse off.

RANDI ROGERS I got an interview at Sunoco. You know what, it's a job, and everybody needs a job.

IAN SAVILL I've been in the industry all my life, I grew up in the oil industry, my dad was in the oil industry, and in my professional life about 18 years. I think there's no doubt that the fossil fuel industry has a finite life, it's a finite resource. But at Suncor we're in the enviable position that our oil reserves out west are the second largest in the

world. And we really have a 50-100 year plan for the company. As it's become clear to us that the marketplace is going to continue to demand ethanol fuels into the foreseeable future, we've elected to build a state-of-the-art ethanol facility.

DARREN HENRY We had a conflict, or even a confrontation, if you want to call it that, with Suncor. And it wasn't so much the alternative fuel, it was that they were going to locate it within 100 meters of our main residential area. And we just couldn't support that.

JIM BROPHY They actually were involved in a blockade to stop an ethanol plant, and successfully did that, because they just didn't want any more of this going on. Which is the first time really anybody in the community here has really said no to the petrochemical industry.

IAN SAVILL We had open dialogue with the community, and after listening to their concerns and issues, the best fit for the company, for the government and for the community was to actually put it in St. Clair County.

ADA LOCKRIDGE I went and I listened, I didn't like their comments. We showed them where we planned to build our future residential, it would be coming through the bush and almost to Sunoco, and they asked us, "Did you ask if you could build that close to us?" Wow, isn't that the pot calling the kettle black, Oooh, who was here first?

IAN SAVILL We take every opportunity we can to share our sustainability platform, to let people see us in a transparent way so they can trust what we're doing here.

ADA LOCKRIDGE They said different things, but everybody says don't believe it. I say true, but I don't know. Who do you trust?

DARREN HENRY There was just a call for people to come, let's blockade this road for this weekend.

ADA LOCKRIDGE They sat there for a month, over a month, every night. Different people would come out, some people were against that too, "Oh look at those guys, look what they're doing," but we didn't listen to them, we kept hanging in there. Everybody shared, we brought food and played games, sitting out there with the smell.

DARREN HENRY People at the time thought we'll do what we can, and it turned out to be economically disruptive for Suncor. And we didn't really know that at the start, but that's what they claimed after awhile, "You're costing us x amount of dollars here," and we said well, so what? We worked, and they did announce that they were moving the ethanol plant, and I think that the people who were there did have something to do with that. We certainly were negotiating and talking in the boardrooms, but that didn't really seem to have any effect until there was a little bit of action by the community—and that's the important thing, by the community.

JIM BROPHY I was also struck when the First Nations barricaded the road and stopped the ethanol plant, because of all the plants that are in the community it seemed like the least hazardous one. I'm not saying it wasn't hazardous, But there was a certain irony that it wasn't the refineries that are putting out sulfur and benzene and volatile organic chemicals that they stopped, it was this one.

ADA LOCKRIDGE We're tired of it, and we don't want to be dumped on anymore.

[Ojibwe lyrics]

ADA LOCKRIDGE We were never taught this in school, because I start talking to people, "Did you know about this?" "Well, no," and we didn't know about the chemicals. I don't know when it should be taught, public school? Stay out of that creek —I mean down even where Talfourd Creek runs into the river, they're still down there fishing. Why?

So how do you fix it? Put a big barricade over the water so you have to go over it instead of through it or around it? It should be immediate clean-up. OK, so who's supposed to be doing the clean-up then? I don't know who's supposed to be doing it. So, clean-up, to me, it's like, dig it up and fix it? I just wish we had some professionals or somebody down here to actually guide us and show us. Because what I keep saying is that everything that I learn, just brings more questions.

MARGARET KEITH I think that there's a sense that the government or some agency would step in if there were any real health problems or environmental problems. I know that that's not true. I know that there isn't some huge safety net that's going to make sure that all of us are safe and all of us are protected. Most of these environmental success stories, where a community has managed to take on an environmental problem and remedy it, it's happened from a grassroots level, it's happened because the community decided to take some action. But it's not easy to turn on its head an attitude that has been held for decades.

CAROLINE DI COCCO I can't answer the question about why isn't there this huge groundswell. I think there's a huge silent majority that understands that good government will play a role in incrementally moving things forward in a better way. And sometimes it's in a quiet way that things get changed. To do it more quietly and to do it in incremental steps. It isn't because there's some kind of an uprising.

MIKE BRADLEY There's people that don't want to address the black side of the community. One of the clichés you'll hear is that we're one of Ontario's best kept secrets. I wouldn't disagree that there are many great things in the community. But I also know there are still many things that need to be addressed. And I think that's where a community can show that it's willing to confront the past, willing to confront some of the issues that are ugly. That's what I think we should be known for. It's not a case of the environment vs. the economy, which is the old school of thought, it's a case of saying these two things work together.

BARB MILLITT And you're probably going to say, why don't we move? Why would we stay? I'd rather be in a community where we're speaking out and we're trying to force change and we start to see change, not as quickly as we'd like it, but there's change.

JIM BROPHY In a way this is a problem about Sarnia, but Sarnia's problem is about every other industrial community in the country. In the 60s and 70s Sarnia had the highest standard of living in the country. This is a very beautiful area of Ontario, of Canada, we have Lake Huron on one side, the St. Clair River on the other, people are very rooted here, their families are here, they love this community, it's very attractive. On the other hand, certainly in the next 40 or 50 years gasoline can't be consumed the way it is today, there isn't enough of it around to do it. We have to be thinking way out of the box but when you're actually there, on the ground, paying a mortgage and putting your kids through school and trying to make a living, it's not so easy.

PAMELA CALVERT I came to Sarnia in November of 2004. For me, this was a really, really important story. I came for the birth ratio story, but I found a much more complicated and a richer story. I want to thank all of you for coming, *migwech (Ojibwe for Thank You)* thank you.

[film excerpt]

DARREN HENRY Lake Huron drains into the St. Clair River at the border between Ontario and Michigan, Canada and the United States, and that's where the city of Sarnia is.

MAN The way to end the film is to have a roundtable discussion, with the people that are here. So that we can dispel the myths. So that we can answer the questions, so that we can collectively go after this organization of chemical companies, and I think that that's a fitting end.

BARB MILLITT There's only a small handful, when you really see the part of the community that's out there trying to fight, and we need more volunteers, we need more people.

WOMAN I myself have just returned to the community after having been away for twenty-five years. The reason I came back is because my little sister died of a brain tumor. And she used to swim in the St. Clair River. And the nurses, when I was up in palliative care with her in the last 20 days of her life, told me that there's a very large number of young people dying of brain tumors.

ACE CONCORDIA I think everybody's just ignoring us, and from what I've seen in the documentary today it's very, very important, and it's just not going to go away. A couple of questions in the documentary were, when are we going to find out about this—one year, ten years, or when we're dead? Sarnia's not getting any younger, and some of the big plants are starting to pull out and are just going to forget about everybody.

DARREN HENRY One of the special words that they say is “no offsite impact.” We’re here because of that. We’re here because the offsite impact is fear. We’re here because the offsite impact is, we’re scared because our kids are standing out there in the morning waiting for the bus. We’re scared because we hear the alarms go off at night when we’re resting with our windows open on a nice summer night. No offsite impact—that’s why we’re here. We’re all impacted.

MAN They know from their own lab technicians, they know from their own toxicology people, they know what their product is doing, and they know the effects that it has on the community. They can’t have a conscience, because they’re exposing their own children to this. To me, that’s a person that doesn’t have a conscience. If they don’t care about their own kids, they sure as hell don’t care about anybody else.

WOMAN You’re not going to create dialogue by pointing fingers, because it is a global problem. We can’t put our heads in the sand, it’s arrogant of us to believe that we can exist the way we are and not cause serious ramifications to our environment, or our children.

WOMAN Sarnia’s a microcosm of the world. Sarnia’s just another industrialized city where people come because there’s work for them. You certainly don’t want industry not to hire people, you don’t want to have places where you’re out of work.

MAN I wish there was a way to get our government to step in and do some real studies and give us some real answers.

WOMAN Industry has said on the video, yes, we want to understand what the issues are so that we can deal with them too. Well, we all have the same questions, so the next question that needs to be answered is, what are the roadblocks to having a comprehensive health study done, so that we can all get the answers that we need? Thank you.

In Memory of Mary Joseph

[lyrics]

*I left my hometown some time ago
I’ve drifted from one town to another
I still think of the friends I left behind
Way back on that Indian reservation
My hometown in Sarnia, Ontario
My hometown in Sarnia, Ontario
My hometown in Sarnia, Ontario
My hometown in Sarnia, Ontario*

ACE CONCORDIA (SANTA) Merry Christmas!

ACE CONCORDIA VO I’m proud to say I am the Santa Claus of Sarnia.

PAMELA CALVERT What’s your favorite part about living in Sarnia?

ACE CONCORDIA I enjoy it, it’s small. You can commute in 4 or 5 minutes from the south end to the north end. Unless you want to go out of town or over the bridge, I’m a minute and a half from the bridge, if I want to go across to the States. I love it immensely.

[lyrics]

*I’ll tell everyone I sing this song
About my hometown in Sarnia, Ontario*

END