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Sustainability in Proximity to Industry: The Case of Critical Events in Walpole Island

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The Walpole Island First Nations Reserve (#46), or Bkejwanong (the place where water divides), in Ontario is the southernmost reserve in Canada. Approximately 740 square kilometers in size, Walpole is home to 2,300 permanent residents—out of a band membership of 3,100—from the Ottawa, Ojibwa, and Potawatomi nations. This community is situated in the extreme northeastern corner of the mouth of the St. Clair River. The river flows south from the outflow of Lake Huron, one of the Great Lakes, sixty-four kilometers to Lake St. Clair (see Figure 1). Walpole Island is a bird-foot-shaped land mass that is surrounded by water on all three sides: the St. Clair River on the northwest, the Chenail Ecarte or Snye River on the northeast, and Lake St. Clair on the south. These waters and their tributaries are primarily responsible for having fashioned the six islands (from east to west: St. Anne, Walpole, Squirrel, Potawatomi, Bassett, and Seaway) that compose Walpole Island as well as three other American islands: Harsens, Russell, and Dickinson, which complete this delta system. Walpole Island circumscribes the Canadian portion of a larger Lake St. Clair wetland delta. It is connected to the Canadian mainland by a swing bridge and to the United States by boat or ferry.

Walpole Island's being poised on the Canada-United States boundary at Canada's southernmost border informs a collective identity, one that is also fortified by the community's status as unceded. This status is the result of the fact that Walpole Island was left to Native people as their home by default, although no treaty was ever signed that designated the current land mass as theirs. Partly as a result of this history and also due to its proximity to the

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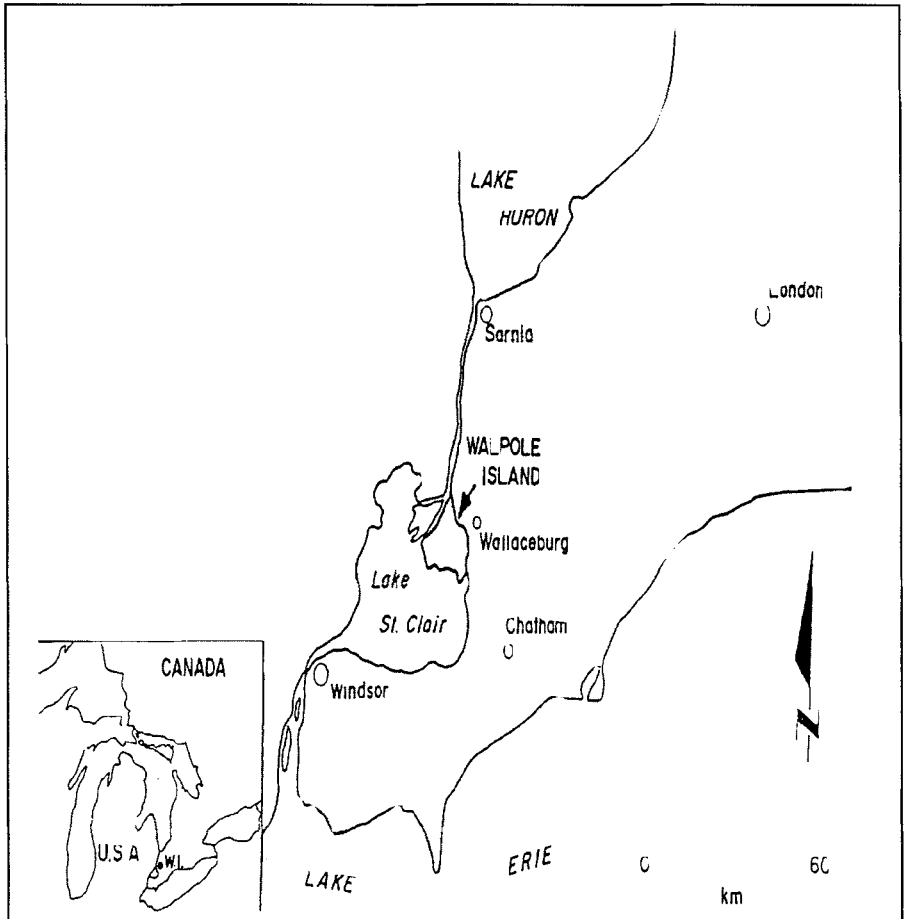
Figure 1

Walpole Island First Nation Location Map



Source: NIN.DA.WAAB.JIG News 1: 13.

major urban centers of Detroit, Windsor, and Sarnia, Walpole Island has had to struggle to maintain itself as a distinct cultural area.

In general, the approach taken in these struggles has been to use the past to challenge recent efforts to exploit this community. A variety of social and historical forces are drawn upon and reconfigured and this is important because it is a testament to both resiliency and a recent history of sociopolitical upheaval. Put another way, the ancestors who were pushed onto Walpole Island "reserve" insprire Walpolers because it motivates current efforts to maintain social, political, and ecological autonomy. An example of this solidarity is seen in the presence of Ojibway, Ottawa, and Potawatomi nations,

said to represent the culmination of an historical fellowship known as the Three Fires Confederacy, on Walpole Island. This designation follows historical accounts suggesting that the relationship between these three nations is very old and that "they were once a single people," known as the Anishinaabe.[1] Their single origin stems from the fact that all three nations descended from populations that lived in northeastern North America, had similar cultures including an Algonkian linguistic tradition, traded with each other, and formed military alliances.[2] In fact, the duties and responsibilities of each nation are outlined according to their name. The word *Potawatomi* comes from the Algonkian Boodwenini, translated as a man who tends the fire; *Ojibway* comes from Ojibede, a word refering to the small puckers around the front edge from the style of moccasins. The Ojibede were the firekeepers and spiritual guardians; *Ottawa* from Odahwe or O-daw-wahg, which refers to he who buys or sells and explains that the people were traders for the confederacy.[3]

Whether the foregoing narrative reflects historically authentic practices is not the issue. What matters here is that reconstruction makes possible creation. The fact that certain ideas, such as "Walpole Island: Unceded Territory," are on road signs and placards reflects the importance of such symbols to understanding Walpole identity.

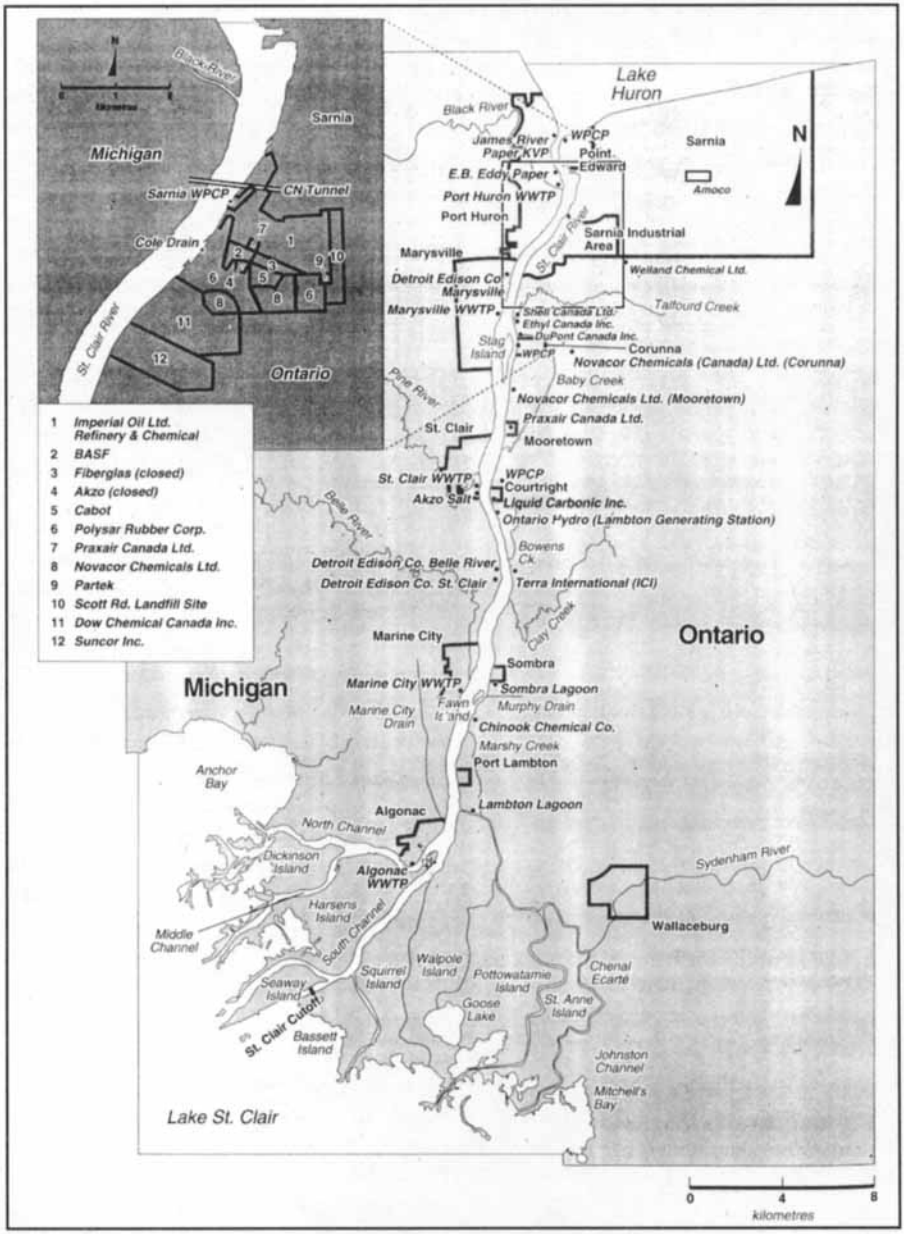
Although it is a largely unknown problem, the Walpole Island community has recently confronted chemical spills and discharges into the waters that surround it. The majority of the effluents that are discharged into the St. Clair River originate from four electric thermal generating stations, thirty-four industries, and fourteen municipal waste-water treatment plants that dot the St. Clair shoreline. These industrial facilities include petroleum refineries, organic and inorganic chemical manufacturers, paper companies, salt producers, and thermal electric generating facilities. The list of prominent and powerful companies includes Exxon, Shell, and Dow. Most of these companies rely on the St. Clair River for water needed in refining processes (see Figure 2). From 1986 to 1992 these facilities, as well as others, produced 550 chemical spills, seventeen of which were severe enough to force Walpole Island's water treatment plant to shut down.[4] On average, one hundred spills per year occurred between 1986 and 1992.[5]

THE HERITAGE CENTRE[6]

For the last fifteen years, the Heritage Centre has detailed the harmful health effects of toxic discharge in the nearby St. Clair River and the concerns of the Walpole Island community regarding the destruction of their land-base. The emergence of a national Native movement in Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s established a political climate that led to the creation of the prototype for the Heritage Centre. The major grievance that guided the Native movement was the lack of control that Native peoples have experienced as a consequence of colonialism and racism in general and the reserve system in particular. On Walpole Island, expressions of Native autonomy led to the Walpole Island Band Council's 1973 decision to create a research body. The

Figure 2

Location of Major Point Source Dischargers to the St. Clair River



Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Surface Water Quality Division and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Energy, "St. Clair River Area of Concern: Water Use Goals, Remedial Measures and Implementation Strategy," 1995, 36.

Research Group, as this precursor to the Heritage Centre was known, studied and prepared community initiatives designed to exert political pressure to insure full implementation of treaties.

In addition to the previously mentioned responsibilities, the current modus operandi of the Heritage Centre plays an important political and social role in the community. In producing, for example, twenty-four research papers and a number of videos detailing different facets of life on Walpole Island, the Heritage Centre has established a presence as a homegrown governmental organizing body. In addition, conferences have been held, resulting in the production of an environmental waste management manual and an environmental audit model. These accomplishments have not gone unnoticed by other First Nations; representatives often come to the Heritage Centre for several days to gain insight into ways of building their own programs and facilities. The Heritage Centre and by extension the community are seen as positive by outsiders; they represent a progressive First Nation willing to be a player in the volatile debate over rights to such things as natural resources.

The Heritage Centre's permanent employees usually number four or five, evenly divided among men and women. Employees are fairly representative of population cohorts in the community. The size of the work force is hard to measure as there are a number of employees who move in and out of Heritage Centre jobs based upon available funding, employment programs, and personal factors. There is no guaranteed annual funding from the island's band council, although the Heritage Centre does have certain employment positions that are financially supported. Other funding for employees and research are provided by government programs, initiatives for which the Heritage Centre applies, and private agencies that are courted on a project-by-project basis. Interim but often multi-year provincial and federal funding is available for projects designed to educate young students or employ residents. For example, each summer there is a jointly funded band and province Environmental Youth Corp program that has young residents clear trails, assess the size of local animal populations, and the like.

In sum, the major duty of the Heritage Centre is to intervene in environmentally unsound practices, mainly related to the dumping of toxins into the St. Clair River. Connected to this duty are assortments of other responsibilities that generally claim Walpole as a stakeholder in a variety of government decisions and educate and convince a demanding citizenry that the center is working in the best interests of the community.

This paper will identify critical events in the last fifteen years of Walpole Island's efforts to control the emission of industrial waste and toxic chemicals. Specifically, I develop the text according to four critical events: the toxic blob, the water pipeline and water tower issue, the wetlands management plan, and the International Chemical Industries discharge permit. I consider how these events act as focal nodes that show how the community and the Heritage Centre have worked toward a consensus on the meaning of sustainability. During events one, two, and three (the toxic blob, the water pipeline and water tower issue, and the wetlands management plan, respectively) there is a discourse of contention over appropriate meanings rooted in strategies or

actions; event four, the International Chemical Industries discharge permit, reveals agreement.

Critical events have a profound impact on social movements such as the one on Walpole Island. Suzanne Staggenborg develops such events as predictive tools for outlining effectiveness and success of social movements.[7] Accordingly, critical events are different in scope and magnitude from everyday incidents. Critical events promote collective action; they do so because of their culturally meaningful attributes, which open people's minds to the possibility of different circumstances.[8] In short, critical events, as part of their outcome, call attention to specific grievances.

What Staggenborg adds to her predecessors' work is a more strategic manner of thinking about critical events. By this I am claiming that there is a tenuous balance between products and culture and that this equilibrium tends to be achieved not in equal gradations over time but through critical events. As Staggenborg notes:

> Analyses of social movements and collective action have considered a variety of phenomena to be critical events in the development of a social movement. These phenomena differ greatly in their effects on movement mobilization, and movements *differ in their ability to frame issues and generate resources following different types of critical events,* but the general significance of critical events lies in their impact on public and elite attention and receptivity to movement issues.[9]

Staggenborg suggests that critical events both feed and are fed by the social movement, locating the *critical* value of events in the systematic response they elicit. What matters in this case is how a common understanding of sustainability developed in the context of four critical events, each demanding the recruitment and mobilization of support.

THEORY

The Heritage Centre has astutely recognized the emerging cache connected to the idea of sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development was advanced to discuss concerns related to economy maintenance in the 1970s, when the pace of consumption appeared to be outstripping natural resources. Later, sustainable development distinguished between the economic, ecological, and social domains of natural and cultural resources.[10] In a provocative discussion, one theorist has explained that sustainable development now has two souls reflecting the attempt by the forces of modernization to absorb a growing consciousness of global solidarity into mainstream culture. The first emphasizes rationality, technology, and cost-benefit analysis. The second soul of sustainable development is perhaps more prudently termed *sustainability;* it stresses individual values and preferences vis-a-vis local economic, social, and ecological considerations.[11] The result has been that sustainable development contains an environmentally friendly message that very softly markets the need for the human species to subsist at the intersection between exploitation and renewal.

Threats to the sustainable development of Native communities have deep cultural and political implications. Sustainable development in a Native context makes it necessary to speak of maintaining cultural diversity. Native struggles for cultural survival and ecological preservation are inextricably linked because indigenous cultures are crucial to biological and cultural diversity and are therefore an important source of genetic diversity. The specific motives at work on Walpole deem white corporate forces, such as those responsible for the pollution problem, as insatiable, desensitizing, and dislocating. Capital impels a cultural logic that foists homogeneity on diverse populations. This leveling process is experienced as a steady infusion of discursive and practical formations that are at war with local organizing metaphors.

Among the detritus that capital leaves in its wake are the traditional cultural responses to the non-human world. The forces of capitalism and modernity have unceasingly disrupted Native ties to their traditions and the natural world. This relentless push to modernize is a form of domination, placing Native people into the past and denying them a contemporary presence. In response to these forces, the community calls upon tradition, or what one person interviewed referred to as the "things that were given to us"—gifts whose mention is designed to mobilize a deep connection to place. To put things another way, the phantasmagoric thunderbird that cultivated the deep but narrow channels constituting the delta upon which Walpole Island is situated with a violent flap of its wings is real.

This paper employs sustainable development as an exogenous theoretical construct or a shorthand descriptor that stands for two things: (1) autonomous, community-based development and (2) the desires of Walpole Islanders to exercise their rights in relationship to dominant society. This definition is invoked when it is argued, as it is in this paper, that the concept of sustainability thoroughly informs the programs, events, and discussion papers that the Heritage Centre utilizes in order to mobilize the community into maintaining its natural and cultural resources.[12]

For example, in 1990 the Heritage Centre drafted a discussion paper with the assistance of Chreod International, an environmental consulting and planning firm.[13] Entitled "A Future of Sustainable Development: Walpole Island First Nation," it was included in a larger publication entitled *Sustainable Development from an Aboriginal Community Perspective—An Information Package.* It was introduced when the community was negotiating the implications of a framework agreement with the federal and Ontario governments concerning the verification of lands and jurisdictions for Walpole. Written in 1990 and projecting the state of things sustainable in the year 2005, it is not the final word on sustainability Walpole Island-style; rather it represents one point along a trajectory.

> The latter part of the 20th century witnessed the emergence of a sustainable development strategy and its successful implementation by the Walpole Island First Nation. The process was not an easy one and required significant institutional changes and innovative approaches, which would foster sustainable social, cultural, economic, technological and political development in Walpole Island's unique ecosystem....

> Community commitment to the ideal of "sustainable development" was galvanized to a large degree by Walpole Island's efforts to pursue First Nation governance. Walpole Island set an important precedent for other aboriginal communities across Canada engaged in a similar struggle. It also demonstrated the merits of uniting environmental and economic interests when addressing human needs and deeply held community aspirations through sustainable, holistic development in the context of finely-balanced ecosystems.[14]

My understanding of sustainability here is as a focal node for making sense of the changing nature of the community as it is embedded in the larger society. Sustainability, then, suggests that the community conceives of its environmental protection activities in a context of the debate over Native people's rights to define and create tradition.

More recently the director of the Heritage Centre and the chief of Walpole Island have collaborated with two others on an article examining Walpole's view of sustainability.[15] It contains, as one would expect, a goal of equitable social, economic, cultural, and technological betterment in a way that does not pollute ecosystems and irrevocably deplete natural resources. What is more telling is the authors' assertion that outside efforts to hero-icize Walpole as innately sustainable presents a threat to the cultural, economic, and spiritual basis of the First Nation. The authors are not only eschewing the idea of a First Nation as a "stakeholder" or "interest group," but they are also expressing a fear of being stereotyped. The authors draw attention to the fact that sustainability is undergoing reformulation to resonate with a steadily changing world.

Because the local redefinition of sustainability is set in the context of the larger debate over what is "traditional," this paper is developed using the analytic terms of social movement, mobilization, meaning, and Native environmental justice. In part, the lesson is a conceptual framework that unites community action, local Native identity, and sustainable development. The utility of this framework is both concrete and academic: I am interpreting theory in a context that has enormous potential for teaching other communities about the process of community-based organizing.

Social movements are a form of collective local advocacy promoting changes in power relations. Social movements always develop in a particular period and therefore reflect a particular historical and cultural context. Organizers hope to mobilize or gain committed members by relating their causes to existing social conditions. In other words, whether or not community members will "try on" the movement has much to do with organizers' ability to frame or represent—in their ideas and strategies—issues and meanings that have relevance to the community. Meanings, or inner ideas and sentiments, relevant to Native environmental justice movements favor cultural links with the non-human world. For example, Walpole residents invoke aboriginal relations with land and natural resources as integral to their activism. Prevalent themes are the experience of colonialism, "the imminent endangerment of their culture,"[16] and increasingly the prevalence of minority and other Native communities serving as dumpsites for capital.[17] This is what

Robert D. Bullard refers to as "garbage imperialism" in the context of black communities in the southern United States.[18]

This story also concerns the mobilization of support for the Heritage Centre based on negotiating the cultural meanings of sustainability. Part of the process of advocating on behalf of the community involves the Heritage Centre being asked to expand its activities from mainstream scientific research featuring some cultural sensitivity to more environmentally focused and activist-oriented efforts that highlight the historical importance of local cultural autonomy and control.

METHOD

The material used in this paper was gathered during three years of research. My initial stay on Walpole Island lasted eight months, from January to August of 1995. In September of 1996 I returned to Walpole Island for three months. The informed target sample list came from a roster of potential interviewees that was put together on the advise of Heritage Centre employees. The list includes movement leaders, cultural experts, artists, researchers, and movement participants. Having these positions or occupations does not mean that formal education was a prerequisite for inclusion; those interviewed were chosen based on their participation only. The result was fifteen taped interviews and twelve informal interviews.[19] Three public meetings, numerous organizational meetings, a presentation to industry, a community circle, two conferences, and two protest actions reinforced interview findings. The informal and formal interview schedule involved semi-structured questions (see Figure 3).

Observational strategies included gaining permission to work out of the Heritage Centre during my second period of fieldwork. A number of documents, newsletters, and occasional papers were utilized to address the environmental risk among the Great Lakes populations. Documentaries and back-issues of local newspapers from Walpole (*Jibkenyan*) as well as the neighboring cities of Chatham, Sarnia, London, and Wallaceburg, Canada also provided a history of environmental issues affecting Walpole Island. Photographs, legends, and artwork augmented interview findings.

EVENT ONE: THE TOXIC BLOB

In September 1985, a fifty-four-ton Dow Chemical spill became public. The now infamous "toxic blob" was created when 11,000 liters of toxic dry-cleaning fluid containing a cancer-causing chemical called perchlorethylene was spilled into the St. Clair River during a four-day leak in August 1985. Due to a faulty valve in the pipeline assembly, the fluid drew towards it other chemicals such as dioxin to create a "black ooze" that was about the size of a basketball court.[20] Walpole Island residents detailed the spill's effects by describing such things as "oily film" on their skin or "floating beads" in their coffee.[21]

An early result of the spill was that the residents of Wallaceburg and Walpole Island were advised by a genetics professor at a nearby university to

Figure 3

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

(1) Is Walpole Island a special community? Why or Why not and how?
(2) How do you define the word environment?
(3) What makes you aware of the environment?
(4) Should the environment be protected? Why or Why not and how?
(5) What can a community do to protect the environment if it is threatened?
(6) Do you have an interest in protecting the Walpole Island environment? Why or Why not?
(7) What has your interest in the environment meant to you?
(8) Do you think there is an organized group of people working to save the environment on Walpole Island? Why or Why not?
(9) Could the efforts to protect the environment be improved? Why or Why not and How?
(10) Why does or doesn't the ICI discharge and other pollutants represent a problem on Walpole Island?
(11) Are huge corporations upriver, such as ICI, responsible for environmental problems on Walpole Island?
(12) What does zero discharge mean to you?
(13) Do you feel a special bond with the non-human part of your community?
(14) Would you be willing to serve as an example or model for non-Native people for how to respect nature?
(15) Is the community at risk because of pollution?
(16) Is part of being Native having a special responsibility to protect the natural world?
(17) Does discharge into the river threaten the health of future generations?
(18) Is zero discharge the only way to remove the threat of pollution?
(19) What has the community done to ensure that the environment is respected/protected?
(20) Is there an organized community-based movement to maintain the environment?
(21) If yes, can you tell me about what drives this movement?
(22) Can you offer any examples of community responses to actions that did not respect the environment of Walpole Island? When did this occur? Why?
(23) Did these activities involve the whole community?
(24) Is history important to the organization of a community movement?

drink bottled water.[22] The Walpole Island Band Council decided to truck in water for drinking and cooking purposes and provided a temporary filtration system installed at the water-treatment plant to remove "chemical and organic matter."[23] Exacerbating the people's fears was the aforementioned geneticist

explaining that two recent government reports had found trace amounts of thirteen dangerous chemicals in the waters of the St. Clair River adjacent to Walpole Island and Wallaceburg.[24] In November of that same year, Greenpeace also became involved, suggesting that the Ontario Ministry of the Environment knew that "the St. Clair River bed contained 'globs' of chemicals."[25]

The toxic blob led to the immediate creation of a citizens' action group—the Wallaceburg Citizens' Coalition for Clean Water (WCCCW)—in neighboring Wallaceburg. WCCCW was primarily organized around the single issue of having a water pipeline extend directly from Lake Huron to Wallaceburg, bypassing the St. Clair River.[26] At the organizational meeting, Deidre, a recently hired environmental researcher at the Heritage Centre, reminded those in attendance that the residents of Walpole Island "will still be swimming, fishing and boating in the St. Clair" whether there was a pipeline or not. Her point was that the Walpole Island community was concerned about cleaning up the river—not just obtaining safe drinking water imported by a pipeline.[27] Activism focused on the continued enjoyment of water resources. As adult educator Brent explains,

> [A] sense of urgency and the need to network was evoked at that time of the blob. A sense of terror was also evoked with the realization that there were direct health impacts on kids that were being born during that time. The blob was an after-the-fact response, but the community learned that there was the possibility of diverting the decisions that lead to spills.

Community Response: Capital's Assault on Culture

The community's call for more activism on the part of the Heritage Centre is seen in two brief examples. One is an excerpt from Chief Dan George's *My Heart Soars*, which was a contribution to the *Jibkenyan* at the time: "It is hard for me to understand a culture that not only hates and fights his brothers but even attacks nature and abuses her.... I see him throw poison in the waters, indifferent to the life he kills there; and he chokes the air with deadly fumes."[28] The other example is a poem contributed by a community member.

> Island residents, please beware
> toxic chemicals are in the St. Clair
> Poisoned water is a threat to your health
>
> But water is a very precious resource
> And it's very vital to sustain our life-force
> So is the situation totally under control?
> I guess it is, or at least that's what we've been told.
>
> Is there a set of facts and figures to back this claim
> Does the Ministry of Environment fully explain
> Or are we being told just what we want to hear
> So that we believe there's really nothing to fear

I just believe there's room for debate
And a cause for concern from which we can't escape
Those yet unborn will have to live on this land
And that's one problem facing the Walpole Island Band

Will our children have to deal with it, too
That just depends on me and you
For our conscience' sake, let's deal with it now
And make sure this type of tragedy isn't allowed[29]

These passages are included to illustrate the cultural basis for the community's opposition to environmental degradation—the perception that outsiders are abusing the residents by harming the non-human world. These quotations also indicate the community's perception that corporate forces are insatiable. It is with regard to this insatiability that the Heritage Centre's notion of sustainability is inadequate. The community is skeptical of Western science and by extension of the Heritage Centre, which is immersed in this world. The toxic blob brought attention to the Heritage Centre's version of sustainability, which was completely immersed in mainstream scientific research. For this reason it was not in a position to make those polluting the St. Clair River respond to traditional local values. Because of the meanings that the community holds in regard to mainstream science, the Heritage Centre targeted manufacturing facilities in general and linked corporations to white culture.

For Walpole Island residents, sustainability was not a pristine state only achievable within a community that eschews technology; rather, sustainability is about making autonomous decisions concerning the future. Accordingly, the fight for freedom from corporate polluters can be placed into a broader community narrative of exploitation and betrayal. In this narrative, *autonomy* means placing significance on what is locally meaningful.

How the Heritage Centre Reformulates Sustainability

By the time of the toxic blob, the Heritage Centre staff had undertaken studies that entailed sampling the drinking water and agricultural run-off for potentially harmful chemicals and organic contaminants. They had monitored the air for contaminants, the land for erosion, and the trees for growth. They had started to report on the number and type of chemical spills that were occurring, explaining to residents the level of threat to waterfowl and fish.[30] In addition, researchers investigated the history and impact of economic activities associated with the environment. These mainstream scientific ventures were complemented by such organized community outings as hikes to identify flora and fauna, traditional medicines, and wildlife.

The fear and uncertainty that the blob created led to the community's demands that the Heritage Centre's work extend beyond scientific research to include the environmental and cultural impacts of the spill. For example, Heritage Centre employee Deidre's earlier comments on the community's desire for a clean river suggests that community residents support a balanced definition of sustainability, one that includes community advocacy and politi-

cal activism. I would assert that the Heritage Centre's reformulation of sustainability was the product of three major facts: (1) the blob and its contents were unknown; (2) water had to be hauled in from an outside source; and (3) corporations were hiding their activities.

The Heritage Centre becoming involved in legal and political efforts to forestall projects that potentially threatened the Walpole Island closely followed the toxic blob event. This involvement can be seen in the center's actions in late 1989, when it sought a federal injunction to stop the dumping of dredged materials from the St. Clair River into Lake St. Clair. The concern was related to the release of contaminated sediments that were sitting on the lake's bottom. For example, an article at that time cited the acknowledged existence of two substances on the lakebed that were known "to cause mutations, birth defects and behavioral problems in fish, birds and other wildlife."[31] Walpole Island's position was that the testing of toxins on this sediment "was grossly inadequate."[32] In addition, the Walpole Island contingent that went to seek the injunction held that it was "their environment, as it had been for centuries and will be forever."[33] Despite the presiding judge's recognition of potential risk, Walpole Island lost this case, although it did receive compensation.

EVENT TWO: THE WATER TOWER AND PIPELINE QUESTION

The meaning of sustainability accumulated further particularities when in January of 1992 the community rejected a proposal to build the previously mentioned water pipeline. The pipeline would have brought water directly form Lake Huron to Walpole Island, bypassing the corporations situated and discharging upriver from Walpole on the St. Clair River. While the cost of this pipeline was cited as one of the major reasons for the community pullout, the mayor of Wallaceburg best explained the real reason for Walpole's reluctance: "'They've always been against the pipeline philosophy. It doesn't surprise me.... I give them credit for standing up for their beliefs.'"[34] This critical event—the rejection of the pipeline—is important in showing that the Heritage Centre's message of sustainability was out of step with the aggrieved population's belief that the pipeline issue was more than just a matter of clean-water distribution.

In general, the community was skeptical of constructing a pipeline because the Heritage Centre had facilitated a broad-based understanding of the pipeline as a solution that would allow spills to continue while removing some of the community's ability to protest. More fundamentally, community opposition was mobilized through emotional ties to elders and future generations that brought home the abstract scientific information disseminated by the Heritage Centre that emphasized, of course, how it affected elders and youth. In short, a water tower was constructed for two major reasons. First was what island politician Joseph called "the endless discussions and little real progress in the construction of a fresh water pipeline from Lake Huron to Walpole Island," which would have circumvented the St. Clair River as a water source. Second, there was what one public works employee called the "fears

and anxieties associated with water intake closures" that necessitated the trucking in of water.

There had been an ongoing discussion concerning the construction of a water tower as an alternative to the pipeline. In May of 1991 Walpole Island Chief Bob Williams used a meeting to express the community's frustration over a large number of recent spills and to garner support for a water tower that would halt the use of outside water sources.[35] Water is brought in when the community's water-treatment plant is forced to close; closure is due to the immanent danger of toxic contamination due to chemical discharges into the water that flows past the intake valves for the treatment plant. This anger I mentioned was made evident in a letter that the chief wrote to the chairperson of Bayer AG of Germany. Bayer AG is the parent company of Polysar, one of the major sources of St. Clair River spills. This letter asserted "that Walpole Island is not some Third World dumping ground for multi-national corporations":

> Your industries are the ones who are poisoning our waters. Last winter it was DOW. Last week it was POLYSAR. Your system is not working. It is your system. Your laws are not working. Your institutions are not working. Your enforcement measures are weak.[36]

A water tower, eventually opened in the Spring of 1995, was financed by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, the Ontario government, and the community and holds enough fresh water to supply the community with drinking water for three days. The large blue water tank at the top of the tower is adorned with the community logo and the words "Walpole Island: Unceded Territory." The tower is located near the storage silos for a large community-owned and -maintained agricultural cooperative and is easily viewed from the main highway that cuts through the community. Both the tower and the message on it are powerful local symbols. Reverence for community elders and the optimism for youth might be said to infuse these symbols with their meanings.

The Community's Response: Youth and Elders

Interviewee comments suggest that one of the principle beliefs of the Walpole Island community concerns the need to protect past and future generations. This stems from a perceived spiritual link to the Creator. As Health Centre employee Perry understands it: "The elders and the children are special because they are the closest to the Creator. One has just been born and one is about to meet him or her again." Community elders provide a context for the considerable social changes that have occurred on the island. For example, telephones did not arrive until the 1950s and the bridge to the mainland was not erected until 1970.

At one level, the presence of elders in the community constitutes an ongoing critique of contemporary Walpole Island. For example, one interview with a community elder named Gladys produced several acknowledgments of the rapid pace of social change. This elder, one of two who died sud-

denly during this research, considered change to be a mixed blessing: "You know the mall and the nursery school is nice, but it is changing and when you go off the main road you see the real Walpole. It's just that people want more and more and they bring that home from outside."

At another level, senior members of the community are a link to the past, and this link is the source of their educational role. Older community members are responsible for showing younger members the correct path. Part of this monitoring includes education about the environment and its significance to the community. For example, elders offer insights into the past that may in turn be used to gauge the degree of change in water quality. In an interview with a dynamic and vital elder named Reneta, I was provided with an anecdote concerning how the local climate had been altered up to that point.

> The environmental changes that come to mind are physical changes that we can see during the wintertime. We used to be able to cross the ice in the winter and the ice would be frozen. It has definitely been warming up and there aren't those winters any more. That is physical evidence of what is going on in the water.

Elders attempt to maintain the local culture by collecting and transmitting a storehouse of traditional knowledge. This knowledge supplies the ammunition for resistance to mainstream ideas about legally allowable discharges and the need for proof before pollution is stopped. Indeed, there are signs on Walpole Island that residents are looking more and more to their elders. Stuart, a middle-aged non-traditionalist, reinforces this point despite his lack of involvement in efforts at cultural revival:

> It has always been our heritage to maintain our old traditions because once we lose that we have nothing. When I was a youngster, elders educated people in the community about the traditional ways in order to keep them. This is important because traditions are like the environment, once it's gone it's gone—it'll be no more.

Invariably, the notion of maintaining the community for future generations was communicated by elders to other community members as the primary reason for environmental activism. It is noteworthy that residents felt no desire to elaborate upon statements that expressed concern for their children or grandchildren. This belief was stated without hesitation, its integrity indicated in its being accompanied with none of the noticeable deliberation that preceded other answers.

The Heritage Centre's Reformulation of Sustainability

The Heritage Centre closed the discrepancies between itself and the community by reforming its practices to include the organization of protests. Specifically, the Heritage Centre purposefully amplified the community's history of cultural autonomy by making a commitment to honoring the previously described traditional links to elders and youth. I asked the director of

the Heritage Centre to comment on how the inclusion of protest rallies in its repertoire of activities reflected this strategy. He said that, "the community was really getting angry around this time" and that he had received phone calls suggesting the center "organize something that would get the attention of corporations." One of the results was that the "war on chemical valley," officially called for by the chief, was initiated by the Heritage Centre. This event culminated in a 500-person protest march to the Sarnia headquarters of Polysar, a facility responsible for a recent spill into the St. Clair River. The community wanted Polysar and other companies to rectify and accept responsibility for the problem they had created. The marchers left no doubts regarding their concerns over the need for both a community health study and clean water. The resulting media television coverage, in two major southern Ontario markets, London and Kitchener-Waterloo, was sympathetic and extensive.

The Heritage Centre also stepped up its involvement in community programs focused on exploring environmental issues from the science of risk. For example, a University of Western Ontario geneticist's view that toxins posed a particular risk for pregnant women was interpreted during a 1989 spill that involved thirteen tons of polyethylene glycol dimethyl ether as potentially fatal for embryos. In response, the Heritage Centre kick-started an initiative that culminated in the *Jibkenyan* publishing letters from the elementary school. In the letters, students complained that they could not swim and that they had skin irritations, headaches, and sore eyes.[37] In April 1994, Walpole Island youth celebrated Earth Day by walking and jogging the sixty kilometers to Sarnia in order to draw attention to the hazards caused by chemical spills.[38] The Heritage Centre also sponsored an environmental youth corps that monitored the well-being of wildlife, cleaned the nature trails, destroyed purple loosestrife, and created a "green directory" that offers tips on recycling, alternatives to hazardous wastes, and information about water usage. In addition, a global action plan for the earth, an environmental week, a waste reduction week, and a household hazardous waste depot have all attempted to create awareness and mobilize favorable sentiment towards the Heritage Centre. Furthermore, the Heritage Centre and the University of Michigan collaborated to create a pilot program for Walpole based the Global Rivers Environmental Education Network (GREEN) model. This project involved elementary and high school students in water monitoring and water quality data projects.

The water pipeline and water tower issue provides a backdrop against which the Heritage Centre's rendition of sustainability through complex explanations of toxic contamination was able to concretize the fears connected to unsafe water supplies. Interestingly, it seems to have been during this second critical event that the Heritage Centre's research-oriented sustainability frame, which was found to be wanting during the first critical event—Dow Chemical's toxic blob—was refashioned to serve a more educated Walpole Island public. In the period between critical events one and two, programs for youth, interest in older residents, and blocks of time devoted to community projects were able to more thoroughly ground the Heritage Centre's notion of sustainability in everyday practices such as determining the safety of drinking water.

As was seen in the Ontario government's subsequent offer to pay for the Walpole portion of the pipeline, the Heritage Centre was not only recruiting community members, but it was also leveraging the provincial government for financial support. By drawing the province into the debate over clean water, the Heritage Centre became the recipient of state support. This positioned Walpole Island as an expert regarding local water issues by media and governments just when the scientific notion of sustainability was receiving lots of coverage. This positioning was recognized and incorporated into the Heritage Centre as is evidenced by its forays into the larger environmental movement, something the third critical event addresses.

EVENT THREE: THE WETLANDS MANAGEMENT PLAN

A public meeting regarding a wetlands management plan that had originally been proposed in 1988 was held in April 1991. This plan was part of a Heritage Centre initiative to have Walpole Island designated as a Ramsar site. Ramsar is a 1971 fifty-two-nation (including Canada and the United States) inter-governmental treaty that was formed to "stem the loss of wetlands and to ensure their conservation."[39] Having Walpole Island marsh designated a Ramsar site would have meant international recognition of 17,000 acres of wetlands at the southern tip of the reserve. This endeavor is an example of how the Heritage Centre attempted to stimulate support for the community's grievances through positing the need for protection at the international level.

The plan would offer recommendations for the collection of baseline data on the area, land reclamation, the flooding of cornfields, the management of muskrat populations, the rehabilitation of marsh areas, the monitoring of wildlife habitats and populations, and the burning of the marshes in the spring. The Heritage Centre, perhaps anticipating the backlash that would follow, cleverly framed the management initiative as community-based and culturally sensitive:

> The wetlands area of Walpole island will be managed for the conservation and maintenance of the unique habitats of this area's plant, insect, fish, wildfowl and wildlife species. By maintaining and managing our wetlands in a more formalized way through the auspices of this Plan, we continue to reinforce the unique heritage that is the "Anishnaabe" and continue our legacy as a hunting-based society. This Strategy needs to come from you, the Community. The Heritage Centre can provide facts and information, but the ultimate decision on goals, objectives and policies for sustainable development must come from council, Elders, our children and Youth, their parents and all other community members of the Walpole Island First Nation.[40]

The management plan was attached to the sustainability mantra:

> Sustainable development involves the process of equitable social, economic, cultural, and technological betterment in a way that does not

> pollute ecosystems and irrevocably deplete natural resources. It also means the enhancement of human resources, improving the capabilities of communities to work towards social, cultural, economic and technological betterment.[41]

The center's plan was sharply rebuffed by the community. A petition against it was signed by 400 community members. Those signing the petition felt that this plan was being imposed on them, that land would be manipulated, and that community control would be lost. Similarly, there were sentiments expressed about the need to reconcile outstanding land claims before becoming a Ramsar-designated site. Heritage Centre employee, Mike, notably co-mingling some pronouns, explains the event and opposition to it:

> We tried a wetlands management plan and there was a petition brought out against us. It was interpreted as us telling them what to do and we weren't hunters or fishers and they balked at it. They were telling us that "the community is the teacher...our views and attitudes are conducive to a more balanced lives than other people." So the Heritage Centre was reminded about what the community beliefs and philosophies are and which ones are okay to tell other people.

In relation to sustainability, Mike's comments are noteworthy as a piece of self-reflexive evidence acknowledging the tension over this concept. The tension noted can be understood as encompassing a substantial shift in meanings connected to sustainable development. In short, sustainability—defined in terms of leading a balanced life—is contested as to whether it is for public—read: non-Native—consumption. As the section to follow asserts, there is pervasive sentiment in the community that is entirely consistent with sharing expertise. The points of tension revealed here involve the desire to offer this knowledge as a gift—not a commodity.

The Community's Response: Native Responsibility for Mother Earth

Interviews suggested that Walpole Island residents embody a set of values that support inter-relatedness, interdependence, and collectivism. These values are a combination of holism and individualism, whereby one's own path is pursued with an eye on the broader community. Different from the Western liberal tradition of individualism, residents seem to strive for a harmonic and healthy social relationship with other humans, animals, and the broader environment. As a result, residents respond to all of creation as though completely dependent upon it. This type of individualism supports a community view that eschews interfering with the rights, privileges, and activities of another person; perhaps explaining some of the difficulties associated with trying to interest community members in the Heritage Centre's programs. Collective activity, like all social interactions, has to be tempered with respect for each individual. This respect ensures harmony and balance. As Blaine, a community educator and traditionalist, explains:

> We have to take care of the land as we know it. Not necessarily as a shepherd-sheep servant-master relationship. It is seeing ourselves as a part of nature and a particularly powerful part of nature that must be more conscious of what we do in the present and how that is going to move us in the future.

Consistent with this quotation, resident notions of sustainability touch on individual responsibility that is rooted in a pantheistic worldview. In the following quote, the term *mother* is used to impart the belief that Native people have a caretaker status vis-a-vis their relationship to the non-human world. For Walpole Island citizens, this caretaker status carries with it many responsibilities. A young university student from Walpole explains how this sense of responsibility helps her forge her own identity and relationship to environmental issues:

> I think for a lot of Natives the environment is just part of who they are. On Walpole Island we understand that the water sustains life and it runs through Mother Earth. That's what gives Mother Earth and everything on it life. So that's a major part of who we are as a community. We live on an island and we have marshes. The water affects us so much. It is more than just the fact that we drink it.

Accepting this caretaker status is part of the honor of being responsible for all creation, a non-human world as a fundamental element of Native identity. These sentiments described water as the lifeblood of both the community and Mother Earth, showing that the maintenance of the natural environment is a personal priority. Aaron, a former member of the Heritage Centre's Environmental Youth Corps, describes a particular worldview that sees nature as immanent and deserving of protection. A connection between the health of the environment and the type of values that construct the Walpole Island identity form the basis of this belief:

> I think it has to be tied in all together: your identity comes from your heritage, and your heritage comes from your land and your relationship with the Creator who put you on this land. When you take care of yourself you learn the traditional ways. You thank the Creator for what you have when you take something, whether it's a fish or a muskrat or a medicinal plant, it's balancing out. If you take something then you have to give something back—like tobacco. Composting is a way of giving back to the soil—or even a prayer—so that you maintain that balance. Once you learn how the ecosystem runs, and it really runs quite well without us, you learn how much you could take without hurting anything else.

Again, these statements are self-evident, clearly revealing that opposition to the prospect of outside management of the marsh is ingrained in the community's belief that the notion of sustainability must balance respect for the individual and a collective obligation to the natural world. The community is slowly coming to terms with the potential for traditional cultural activities and contemporary ideas about society and the environment to be commodified.

Residents have likely become aware of these possibilities by the previously mentioned success of the Heritage Centre to have the ear and wallet of provincial and federal governments. It is therefore possible that sustainability linked to economic well-being represents a further unfolding of the meanings of sustainability.

Before turning to the Heritage Centre and its reaction, it is useful to discuss the cultural backdrop for the rejection of the wetlands management plan while bearing in mind the following definition of sustainability:

> For Anishnabe sustainable development is an imperative. For Anishnabe cultural sustainability is also an imperative. At Walpole Island we believe sustainable development must be defined in practical terms. The people of Walpole Island Unceded Territory and Anishnabe Nation view life in a spiritual, holistic, and dynamic way. As our ecosystem knows no political boundaries, neither should sustainable development and cultural sustainability know no boundaries [sic]. We know we cannot do it alone. Only an integrated approach between society and multinational corporations will be able to reconcile the environment with economic development and cultural sustainability to complete the circle.[42]

The aforementioned definition of sustainability, which accompanied the proposal for managing the marsh, includes a reference to cultural betterment. The alternative definition quoted above, coming from of all places the local economic development office, asserts that "cultural sustainability is an imperative." As proof, I would point out the reference to corporations, the suggestion that the pervasive role of multinationals must be recognized and incorporated. At one level, the tension could be seen simply as a matter of degree; however, I would posit that the specific difference is the greater emphasis placed on Anishinaabe cultural meanings.

The Heritage Centre's Response to Community Opposition to the Wetlands Management Plan

The Heritage Centre responded to motivations for the community's opposition to the wetlands management plan by, for example, organizing the Mother's Day Environmental Rally and the Crimes Against Mother Earth Tribunal. As a response to the desire to control the outflow of knowledge, these events should be read as attempts by the Heritage Centre to substantiate the role of the community as environmental role model and educator. The latter event was conducted on 25 April 1991. It was part of a conference that the Heritage Centre hosted for the Urban Rural Mission (URM) of Canada. URM is an organization funded by the World Council of Churches and it brings awareness to struggles for justice, empowering victims of oppression through the training of organizers, information exchange, and analysis. The hearing, again reflecting the Heritage Centre's desire to make use of publicizing the injustice of Walpole environmental plight, was intended to serve as a community information session that interrogated local industry, farmers,

and residents about possible crimes perpetrated against the environment. It was in the form of a community gathering and it featured outside arbitrators who would consider the views of various witnesses in analyzing local industry, farming, and resident practices.[43] Environmental experts, local residents, and representatives from industry, farming, and government presented evidence to a panel made up of labor and social activists. The representative's spoke for fifteen to twenty minutes each. Walpole Islanders were in attendance, including band councilors, conservation by-law officers, hunters, guides, and other concerned citizens. About forty people turned out for this tribunal. At an ensuing roundtable, decisions were made according to consensus, and a list of recommendations was drawn up and published as a Heritage Centre document.[44]

The Heritage Centre also used the community's respect for the individual and its identification with the non-human world to gain support for the Effects on Aboriginals from the Great Lakes Environment (EAGLE) project. This project studied the health impacts of environmental change on First Nation societies within the Great Lakes basin. The EAGLE initiative started with the assumption that Native populations are in a high-risk and -exposure category. EAGLE selected Walpole Island for a number of reasons. First, the community had applied tremendous pressure to receive a health study since being left out of a 1986 birth defects study that focused on the Great Lakes. Second, the community, especially the Heritage Centre, had an outstanding reputation for researching environmental issues. Third, the Heritage Centre had conducted an eating pattern survey in 1986 that would provide an excellent baseline for the EAGLE project. The Heritage Centre supported EAGLE by writing about it in the local newspaper[45] and by offering information sessions to the community.[46] One of the more interesting attempts to create enthusiasm and support for EAGLE involved the publication (in the *Jibkenyan*) of a story, part of which reads as follows:

> In our community, there was a beautiful beach from which our people during countless ages have watched the sun rise and set. Our community has always cherished this beach, but one day, Young Person noticed that the beautiful beach was no longer beautiful.... As the sun set that evening, however, she realized she was someone and she could do something.... Children on the beach saw Young Person pick up one piece of glass or debris and asked what she was doing.... The children loved the beach and asked if they could help. As Young Person left the beach that evening a thousand pieces of glass and debris also left the beach and the happy sounds of future generations rang in the Young Person's ears.[47]

While one cannot suggest that this story led directly to the recruitment of people into the Heritage Centre fold, it does reveal that it recognizes the impact of culture on community mobilization.

In summary, the management plan, the response it received, and the subsequent change in the Heritage Centre are significant because the center attempted to initiate a project that would have brought international recog-

nition to Walpole Island wetlands. A message to outsiders premised on sustainability was advanced by the Heritage Centre as a way of seeking alliances with mainstream environmental initiatives—and therein lies the problem.

The community's rejection of the wetlands management plan was promoted by the infusion of community values and beliefs. This would have necessitated a reconfiguration, for broader public consumption, of the meanings that Walpole Island residents attach to the natural world. As interviewee Mike noted in discussing the fact that some ideas may not be "okay" to disseminate, residents perceived the management plan as a disrespectful peddling of their knowledge and place. The community articulated its displeasure by rejecting the project.

This explains why the Heritage Centre's attempt to expand the application of sustainable development beyond the cultural boundaries of the Walpole Island community was stopped. Moreover, the assertion seemed to be that tenets of this local identity, specifically the sacredness of Mother Earth and the right to an ethical, balanced, and responsible use of the land, needed to be employed in decision-making processes. As it was, the Walpole Island community questioned whether sustainability was being packaged for public, non-Native consumption. The pervasive sentiment in the community seemed to be that knowledge should be offered as a gift rather than as a commodity. Again, sustainability is a product of social negotiation and is therefore a cultural production.

EVENT FOUR: THE ICI DISCHARGE

Although Imperial Chemical Industries of Canada (ICI) officials shut down its St. Clair River operations in 1986, the company applied for permission to dump untreated waste water from its phosphate fertilizer facility into that same river in the summer of 1987. Initially, the provincial government granted permission. This permission was based upon the fact that the wastewater stored in holding ponds was threatening to overflow and leak into the river. A huge outcry from Wallaceburg residents led to this permission being revoked in October of 1987. The outcry was based upon fear of the existence of a suspected carcinogen, dinitrotoluene (DNT), in the wastewater. In addition, the residents of Walpole and other neighboring communities saw ICI's application as an effort to blow wide open the constraints placed on industry with regard to discharge.[48] This event marks a hopeful turn in the history of the sustainability discourse.

The wastewater had still not been removed in 1993, when the ICI plant was sold to Terra International Canada. One of the conditions of the sale was that the responsibility for the wastewater remains in the hands of ICI. By this time the holding ponds covered a 250 acre area and there was also an eighteen-meter (sixty-foot) gypsum byproduct stack that covered an additional one-hundred acres. On 2 February 1995, ICI again applied for a permit from the Ministry of Environment and Energy that would allow it to discharge 3.5 billion liters of treated wastewater. This permit proposed that the pond water

be released over a four- to five-year period from a drain located fourteen kilometers (nine miles) upriver from Walpole Island.

This application was ICI's response to an unsuccessful attempt to get rid of the wastewater using a filtration system. According to Roger Cotton, ICI's lawyer, the cost of implementing and running this filtration system was $11 million to that point. Although it worked satisfactorily at first, this system eventually experienced problems that could not be solved—at least according to the recommendations of an environmental consulting firm hired by ICI—without an additional expenditure of $25 million.[49]

ICI approached the Walpole Island Band Council with a deal for the withdrawal of its opposition to discharge. The offer was a $750,000 donation towards the creation of an environmental monitoring system and database at Walpole Island. Following a public meeting on November 21, an overwhelming majority of the community members in attendance rejected the offer because it was contingent upon accepting discharge. An illustrative quote, located at the bottom of the press release that followed the rejection of the offer, read:

> The protection of Mother Earth is utmost in the hearts and minds of First Nations Peoples. Someone must speak for Mother Earth. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.[50]

The Community's Response: The Seventh Fire

The most important aspect of this critical event is its explanation of how the Heritage Centre included local values. The community's connection to Mother Earth became increasingly prominent in the subsequent struggle to prevent the discharge. Both male and female spiritual leaders held sunrise ceremonies at the location where the discharge would enter the St. Clair. Ceremonies were undertaken to strengthen the resolve of the community and its lawyers as well as to cleanse the water. These involved prayers, tobacco or sweetgrass offerings, river-water consumption, and smudging (the creation of a cleansing smoke through the burning of tobacco and sage).

The Heritage Centre organized a community circle in order to allow every interested resident who attended the meeting an opportunity to address an environmental assessment panel from the Ministry of the Environment and Energy. This body ultimately was to determine whether or not the dumping permit would be allowed. Using a talking stick that moved around from the center of the circle to the outside, everyone in attendance was given an opportunity to speak. Many community residents explained their attendance by saying that it was incumbent upon them, as Native people, to talk "on behalf of the water."

One particularly moving example of this stewardship claim involved the public reading of a five-page position paper that had been written by a community women's group called the Women of Bjekwanong. More commonly referred to as SPLASH, these women are linked to one another by an interest in cultivating traditional beliefs and practices. Native responsibility for stewardship is outlined in the following excerpt from this group's position paper:

> Among all Native Cultures, no force is considered more sacred, or more powerful than the ability to create life. All females are the human manifestation of the Earth Mother, who is the first and ultimate giver of life. In our instructions—Minobimaatisiiwin—we are to care for her.

The fact that SPLASH had a central role in the continuing concern over discharge exemplifies the inclusion of traditional culture as a fortifying aspect of the Heritage Centre's work. For example, the ICI lawyers tried to prevent the community circle testimony from being used as evidence against granting the permit. In response, the director of the Heritage Centre and a lawyer representing Walpole Island quickly went on the attack and chastised the ICI legal team, implying that the Walpole Island contingent would leave the negotiating table if this evidence were not considered. The point was that traditional culture and its forms of communicating should be honored.

On 27 September 1996 the hearing board ruled in favor of the discharge permit and construction of the sewage pipeline began that fall. Concerned citizens from Walpole Island met to form People United for River Ecosystems (PURE) on 1 October 1995. At this organizational meeting, PURE members decided to work for a period of six weeks. It was also decided that a concerted effort would be made to form alliances with other groups and to gather scientific ammunition to support a subsequent appeal of the hearing board's decision.

On 6 November 1996 PURE work culminated in a protest rally in Windsor, Ontario to coincide with a planned meeting of the International Joint Commission, Environment Canada, and the Environmental Protection Agency officials. Three busloads of people arrived at a park that was located across the road and down a hill from the conference. There were members from PURE, SPLASH, and the Heritage Centre, as well as elders, high-school students, mothers, fathers, grandfathers, and grandmothers. High-school students carried signs containing a crossed-out ICI symbol up to the road and solicited honks of support from passersby. Singing, drumming, and eating accompanied the speeches. At the end of the action, everyone joined hands in prayer and then followed the drum up the hill to the bus, momentarily stopping the traffic on the busy road.

The struggle over this discharge continued. On 28 November 1996 the Walpole Island First Nation applied for the right to appeal the provincial decision to allow the permit. In anticipation of and clearly in response to this appeal, the Ministry of the Environment and Energy ordered ICI Canada to conduct a controlled discharge of some of the water, as its imminent overflow was posing an immediate threat. Walpole lost the appeal, and the discharge will take place over five years.

What needs to be drawn from this episode is the fact that the Heritage Centre's legal efforts to prevent the discharge of treated wastewater were buttressed by a host of community-initiated and -organized efforts. The community resistance to ICI was made up of a fusion of traditional cultural practices, legal maneuvering, and political coalition-building initiatives. Consequently, the Heritage Centre's views of sustainability are now thoroughly infused with local cultural representations concerning the impor-

tance of sustainability. The director of the Heritage Centre comments on the changing role of the Heritage Centre while also noting the place of initiatives as moments for organizing and becoming more skilled:

> Community is the foundation but they have needed the data and the contacts of the Heritage Centre. Instead of the Heritage Center doing everything, other groups are going to continue to emerge and that is capacity-building. Instead of government always doing it, and the Heritage Centre is government, these are initiatives that are driven by members of the community.

The Heritage Centre recognizes its changed position within a network of groups and individuals seeking environmental protection. Therefore, it is remaining flexible, providing educational resources and incorporating information from alternative sources into its environmental protection campaigns. Among other activities, PURE contacted scientists including some from the Centre for Disease Control and several Native-rights groups specializing in environmental justice issues. This likely signals the community's acceptance of alliances more generally and the need for the Heritage Centre to build coalitions. An undercurrent of meanings reinforces the significance of the natural world, extending its value far beyond that of mere economic resource and fostering an ethic of care that seeks to open the definition of sustainability so that it includes the human and nonhuman in an interdependent relationship. This point is a place at which elaboration will portend future directions in the meaning of sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Walpole Island's desire to control outside influences is evident in these four critical events. It is clear that the center responds by increasing the level of congruence between itself and its constituency by staking out a middle ground between traditional Walpole Island culture and political exigencies. As a result, the Heritage Centre has been able to politicize Anishinaabe tradition by making it a source of power in the contemporary fight for the cultural integrity of the community and its achievement of environmental justice.

Tradition's new place in this struggle is seen in the Heritage Centre's ability to situate the Walpole Island community as a useful source of knowledge on the sociocultural impacts of environmental degradation. The Heritage Centre's goal is to forge outside alliances that will provide resources and encourage further activism in the interest of environmental justice. However, as the proposal for the management of the wetlands indicates, this is not a simple matter. The truly difficult part of mobilizing support from outside the reserve proper is ensuring that such a move dovetails with, for example, residents' belief in an environmental leadership legacy. In other words, the critical element to the community's response to any future event will likely be its resonance with Anishinaabe culture. The reason for this emphasis—as the four events assert—is that social negotiation both initiates and responds to the cultural production of an identity that supports collective action.

The framing of identity is important here because of the fact that cultural traditions are not fixed. This instability makes it possible for a community's collective identity to be conditioned by an historical moment—a moment that this paper identifies by reference to specific snapshots in the area of environmental protection. These snapshots take as their premise the hope that one day environmental degradation will end. The relationship between collective identity and tradition is explained as, "that in which the experiences of all past struggles are incorporated and kept alive. It remains accessible as a source of inspiration for collective social action under appropriate conditions and through contextualized reinterpretations."[51]

Another way to think about the interplay between collective identity and tradition is to heed warnings about the opposite tendency. Joane Nagel, for example, cautions against "making secular the sacred—in demonstrating change and adaptation. Here the purity and authenticity of cultures can be undermined, again often with identifiable social, political, economic, and legal consequences."[52] Her point is that honoring local traditions and not their origins introduces diversity, a positive step in that it contains an inherent critique of oppressive social practices and ideologies that abhor difference.

The thrust of the argument revolves around the formation of a local Native identity done in the context of collective action seeking sustainable development. The inevitable result of individual actors being embedded in a particular cultural tradition is that it shapes personal histories and experiences and, therefore, the way in which meanings, norms, and values are constructed and then viewed as both natural and universal. One of the ways in which collective identity is formed and strengthened here concerns a shared sense that extant social conditions are unsustainable. This injustice has resulted in the context of community action on Walpole Island: transforming an *I* into a *we* and fostering a deep belief in the wisdom of nature as an integral part of social relations and sustainable life.

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NOTES

1. *NIN.DA.WAAB.JIG News, Walpole Island: The Soul of Indian Territory* (Windsor, Ontario: Commercial Associates/Roy Ross, 1989), 7.

2. Sheila VanWyck, *Harvests Yet to Reap: History, Identity, and Agriculture in a Canadian Indian Community* (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1992).

3. Eddie Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway* (Madison: Little Red Schoolhouse Press, 1988).

4. Ben Lilliston, "Island of Poison," *Multinational Monitor* (September, 1992): 8.

5. Ibid., 9.

6. In a forthcoming article, I focus on the Heritage Centre of the Walpole Island First Nation and show how its responses, strategies, and ideology are determined through its relationship with the community of which it is a part. Consequently, the history of the Heritage Centre, along with its mandate, structure, principles, and place in the community is discussed in depth.

7. Suzanne Staggenborg,"Critical Events and the Mobilization of the Pro-Choice Movement," *Research in Political Sociology* 6 (1993): 319–345.

8. Suzanne Staggenborg, "The Survival of the Women's Movement: Turnover and Continuity in Bloomington, Indiana," *Mobilization: An International Journal of Collective Behaviour and Social Movements* 1:2 (1996): 143–158.

9. Staggenborg, "Critical Events," 321 (emphasis added).

10. Michele Piccolomini, "Sustainable Development, Collective Action and New Social Movments," *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change* 19 (1996): 183–208.

11. Ibid., 186–188.

12. Discussion papers are pieces of in-house research that, while not the views of the community necessarily, are designed to foster community discussion and educate potential outside stakeholders.

13. Walpole Island Heritage Centre, "Sustainable Development from an Aboriginal Community Perspective—An Information Package," unpublished discussion paper, 1990.

14. Ibid., 12.

15. Jerry Fontaine, et al., "Resource and Environmental Issues," in *Aboriginal Issues Today: A Legal and Business Guide,* eds. Stephen B. Smart and Michael Coyle (North Vancouver, British Columbia: Self-Counsel Press, 1997), 168–191.

16. Celene Krauss, "Women of Color on the Front Line," in *Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice and Communities of Color,* ed. Robert D. Bullard (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994), 267.

17. Aaron Sachs, *Eco-Justice: Linking Human Rights and the Environment* (Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute, 1995).

18. Bullard, *Unequal Protection,* 7.

19. Unless otherwise noted, quotations throughout this article come from the author's interviews compiled largely on Walpole Island between January of 1995 and Decmber of 1996. To protect their anonymity, subjects are referred to by their first names only.

20. "The 'blob' One Year Later: Tip of a pollution iceberg," *Jibkenyan,* 17 September 1986.

21. "Society Demands Stricter Controls," *Chatham Daily News,* 9 September 1985, 4.

22. "Prof. Advises Bottled Water," *Chatham Daily News,* 4 September 1985.

23. "How Much is One Part per Billion?" *Jibkenyan,* 5 November 1986, 1

24. "Care Needed in Water Situation," *Wallaceburg News,* 16 October 1985.

25. "The 'blob' One Year Later: Tip of a pollution iceberg," *Jibkenyan,* 17 September 1986.

26. The toxic blob resulted in the International Joint Commission listing the St. Clair River as an "area of concern." Another byproduct was an agreement between the premier of Ontario and the governor of Michigan to create a binational remedial action plan (RAP). RAP combines federal, provincial, and state authorities in information gathering and assessment activities concerning the St. Clair River. Part of RAP's mandate was to initiate public participation. This led to the emergence of a Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC). BPAC was comprised of volunteers who worked towards the improvement of the river's quality. It was an extension of the aforementioned RAP team and its role was advisory, consisting primarily of providing input and recommendations to RAP. BPAC does not engage in any lobbying strategies. Rather, it focuses on the single issue of St. Clair River pollution. In the past, Walpole Island officials and residents have been members of BPAC. A discussion with one of these individuals revealed that dissension within BPAC and the perception that it was not "active enough" has limited the community's current involvement.

27. For more on this, see "Animal Analysis," *Jibkenyan,* 8 August 1983, 7.

28. "Billions of Gallons of Toxic Waste May Be Leaking into River: Official," *Jibkenyan,* 10 November 1984, 16.

29. "Why Limit Your Fish Dinner?" *Jibkenyan,* 22 May 1987, 3.

30. "Environmental Research and Protection: Vitally Important for Future Generations," *Jibkenyan,* 16 December 1983, 6.

31. "Our Environment Is #1 Issue," *Jibkenyan,* 13 October 1989, 1.

32. Ibid., 1.

33. Ibid., 5.

34. "Walpole Decides to Pull Out of Huron Pipeline Project," *Chatham Daily News,* 23 January 1992, 5.

35. "Zero Discharge," *Jibkenyan,* 29 May 1992, 1.

36. "Walpole Chief Lashes Out at Polluters," *Wallaceburg News,* 19 June 1991, 9.

37. "Environmental Concerns," *Jibkenyan,* 26 May 1989, 1.

38. "They Jogged to Sarnia," *Wallaceburg News,* 27 April 1994, 9.

39. "Mother's Day Environmental Rally Being Planned," *Jibkenyan,* 3 May 1991, 3.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. This direct quote is selected from an Economic Development Office document that was circulated throughout the community in protest of a recently proposed discharge into the St. Clair River. The author(s) are unknown.

43. "Mother's Day Environmental Rally Being Planned," *Jibkenyan,* 3 May 1991, 4.

44. Nahdee, Toni, *Final Report of Crimes Against Mother Earth: An Environmental Hearing* (unpublished document from Walpole Island Heritage Centre, 1991).

45. cf. *Jibkenyan,* 5 March 1993, 5–6; 19 March 1993, 3; and 25 June 1993, 7–8.

46. "Health Effects Information Session," *Jibkenyan,* 3 September 1993, 2.

47. "Eating Patterns Survey," *Jibkenyan,* 15 October 1993, 5.

48. Since 1995, the conservative party forming the Ontario government has cut almost half-a-billion dollars out of the province's environmental management and monitoring budget, retrenched 40 percent of the ministry's staff, and emasculated or removed from the books dozens of long-standing environmental laws—all in the name of fiscal responsibility and economic competition.

49. The problem was later explained as being the product of having either poured the toxin into concrete cement that almost immediately broke down or algae plugging up the pipes.

50. "ICI Seeks Permission to Dump," *Chatham Daily News*, 17 May 1995, 12.

51. Jayant Lele, *Hindutva: The Emergence of the Right* (Madras, India: Earthworm Books, 1995), 52.

52. Joane Nagle, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 69.