

Indians try to preserve the environment

OHSWEKEN — Most of Southern Ontario is in the Carolinian Canada zone.

It is a zone which supports plants and other wildlife similar to that of the Carolinas in the U.S. I have seen so many opossums that have been hit by cars in the last two years, that I'm tempted to put up 'Possum Crossing' signs on some of the roads. There are also certain species of trees that are unique to this part of Canada. It goes without saying that we should preserve this unusual habitat for future generations.

Stephen Price, speaking recently at Walpole Island Reserve on behalf of the World Wildlife Fund, said that the Carolinian zone is threatened with extinction. In a satellite photo of Ontario, there were only two patches of green that showed up as significant forest area. The two areas were the Walpole Island Reserve and the Six Nations Reserve. As Indian people, we can be proud of preserving this much of our Mother Earth.

Mr. Price stated the obvious. The Carolinian forests are threatened by the extensive clearing of land for farming and other kinds of development. Once the woodlots are gone, the environment is destroyed for the other Carolinian plants, animals and birds.

If it were not for the forests which have

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been preserved on these two Indian Reserves, most Carolinian-type plants and animals would already be gone. And Ontario would be the poorer for it.

For years, I have heard surrounding farmers and others saying what a pity it was that the lands of the reserve were not exploited more. The white European way would be to cut down all the trees and plow up every available acre. This approach certainly brings quick, short-term results but in the long-run, it changes the environment and probably the weather.

Kansas, out on the plains where there are few trees, has long been noted for its terrifying tornadoes. As more and more trees disappear in this area, the incidence of tornadoes has become more frequent

Some traditional people believe the reserve is protected from tornadoes by powers the white man does not understand. Long ago, the Ojibways who inhabited this area believed that every living thing had a spirit, even the trees. Whether they have a spirit or not, trees in large numbers certainly have the power to change the environment.

Scientists have estimated that a large maple tree can evaporate 12 barrels of water into the air in a single day. Each tree is a marvelous factory, silently taking water from the ground and putting it into the air. This water later falls as life-giving rain. Trees work ceaselessly to keep Ontario from becoming a desert. We should be allies, not enemies, of the trees. They need all the help we can give them.

Joni Mitchell, a Canadian singer, once said in a song: "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

Unfortunately, this is what a lot of modern development amounts to.