

## ***The Nature of David Suzuki***

**TARA CULLIS-SUZUKI:** David has many careers simultaneously. He has a television programme which for most people would be a full time job, and he writes about a book a year, which is a huge undertaking. He gives speeches constantly. He's constantly in demand to go and rescue some place or thing that's under threat. Usually such groups don't have any funds to pay or anything, so all of that is voluntary. His knowledge of the seriousness of the environmental problems we are facing is so acute that I think that drives him more than anything.

He works all the time, even on holiday he has his computer, and he's constantly receiving faxes. We have always tried to slow him down a little bit because we worry about the sustainability of activism, right? But he has found it very difficult to slow down, and when he thinks of slowing down he, he tends to think of it as going cold turkey, and then not doing anything. Whereas most of us who love him feel that we never get enough of him, you know? We, we all feel that he neglects us because he works so hard all the time.

**NARRATOR:** David Suzuki takes some rare time off to relax - by working. He attacks the task with the passion that is his hallmark.

Suzuki is a man who challenges who we are, how we live, how we are governed. He questions our very fate as a species.

In Canada many people have an opinion about David Suzuki. But most don't know him. Who he is and what drives him.

**SUZUKI:** My memories of Vancouver before the war are all very, very happy.

The notion that I was Japanese never entered into the, into my life at all. For me I was a Canadian.

**WW II Newsreel:** (voice over) War. It moved on to a new climax at Pearl Harbor in 1941. Within a few hours of the event, Canada was at war with Japan. Fear of attack became suddenly real.

**NARR:** Canada struck back - against its own people.

In British Columbia, the Suzuki family along with 23,000 other people of Japanese descent were rounded up. Their homes were seized. Businesses carefully built up over decades were confiscated. The proud Japanese-Canadian fishing fleet, the Japanese names painted over, became part

of the Canadian navy. Cars purchased with years of savings were taken away.

But it wasn't just property that was confiscated. Japanese-Canadians had to surrender their Canadian identity.

**SUZUKI:** Pearl Harbor led to a total shift then in the way that I perceived myself. Although I was a third generation Canadian, my country had said that I was an enemy and not to be trusted. That I had no rights, along with my parents.

My father suddenly disappeared, he had voluntarily gone to a camp in the interior, thinking that by agreeing to go we might be left. But he was dead wrong.

**NARRATOR:** Working for the government for miserable wages, Suzuki's father would not be able to join his family for several months.

**SUZUKI:** We got moved out along with everybody else. My mother, having at that time three children, I mean I can't imagine what she must have been emotionally. Her husband was gone, she had to do it on her own. She buffered us from any anxiety or fear. And for a child of 5 or 6, I mean it was all very turbulent and exciting. I remember vividly the train trip, and it was just fun. And we were going to a concentration camp, basically.

**NARR:** Canada's camps held none of the horrors of concentration camps in Europe or Asia. But on a carefree young Canadian boy, the experience would leave an indelible mark.

**SUZUKI:** We ended up in a room that couldn't have been more than 12 feet by 10 feet, tiny room, for four of us. In the morning we would be covered in welts from bedbugs. To Japanese, cleanliness is almost like a religion. The idea of going to bed in a room in which there were bedbugs must have been absolutely disgusting to my parents.

**NARR:** In the same camp as young David was future author Joy Kogawa.

**JOY KOGAWA:** Our whole class wrote poems one time, and his poem was "Mr. Brewster had a rooster" those were the first two lines. It got published, mine did not.

He'd be chosen out of the class to be the kid that was the emcee for concerts and things like that and he was so articulate, I admired that.

**NARR:** Suzuki's skill in English only made him more of an outsider, even among the Japanese.

The war outside did not stop at the camp's boundaries. Prisoners divided into two factions. One was strongly pro-Japanese.

**SUZUKI:** Kids reflected their parents' feelings. The parents were very angry and bitter at the government, and so there was a great deal of, "I hope that Japan whips the Allies and teaches them a lesson." Whereas I was only saying, you know, "I hope Canada wins the war" 'cause Canada was my country. Of course, I'd get beat up for that all the time.

**AIKO SUZUKI (sister):** There was racism against him from both sides. The uh, the Canadian side as well as the Japanese side. He was pretty sensitive. This hurt him tremendously.

**WW II NEWSREEL:** " This is how Hiroshima looked after the blast, 4½ square miles almost completely burned out."

**SUZUKI:** And suddenly the bells started going and people started yelling, and we heard fire crackers going off. And this old man said, "Ah, TAME MAKATA!" Which means, "Ah, it's bad, we lost!" And I, I had no idea what he was talking about. But he knew that the war was over. So I jumped out and, and got all dressed and ran out. And of course, kids were lighting off fire crackers and fireworks, and I just saw it as a celebration, so I went up to this kid and said, "Hey, can I get some firecrackers?" And the kid, well he was a teenager, he kicked me in the back and said, "Get away, Jap! We beat you!" And that's what I remember of uh, VJ day, the victory over Japan.

**OF JAPANESE DESCENT (documentary):** " These are Canada's 23,000 people of Japanese racial origin. The problem they represent has been solved only temporarily by the war. The ultimate solution will depend on the measure of careful understanding by all Canadians."

**SUZUKI:** As the war was coming to an end, people in British Columbia saw a way of getting rid of the Yellow Peril problem they had. And so they faced the people in the camps with a choice. You can renounce your citizenship and go to Japan, which to many of us was a foreign country. Or you can stay in Canada, but then get out of the province by going east of the Rocky Mountains. And for us, for my parents, there was no choice, they were Canadians, they were Canadian-born, had never been to Japan. They wanted to stay in their country.

I think that the most terrible aspect of the war was that I came out of that driven by a need to prove to fellow Canadians that I was worthy. That I was a Canadian like them. And, not the kind of guy you'd throw in jail because you don't trust him. So I've been driven by the constant need to succeed, not because it brought money or because it brought me fame, but I just wanted to do it to say, "See I, you know, I'm OK." And the question, I mean, it becomes a sickness when you're 61 and you still feel that, that need, to, to verify, to other people that you're OK. That you're a worthwhile person. Uh, that I attribute to, to the war years, and that very, uh, vulnerable period of growing up. And being brutalized by being called an Enemy Alien of the country, the only country that I knew.

#### **LEAMINGTON, ONTARIO**

**SUZUKI:** So here we are, Leamington. 15,000. Well, I think it must be a lot bigger than when I was here.

When we left the camps and moved to Ontario I was 9 at the time. We were absolutely impoverished, we had nothing. We arrived in Leamington, it must have been about 1946.

Now I'm not really sure where we are. The town has changed so much.

Holy Cow!... ha, that's amazing,...

**SUZUKI:** So this was all farm field when I was here. We worked on a farm that was out here called Wilkinson's.

We would work 12 hours a day. Well, it was hard work, but I don't remember it as being oppressive.

So, we see the problem here that we see everywhere, I guess, there's more money to be made growing houses and development than growing vegetables on the land.

One of the great things about my teen years is that my father, of course, was my hero. And he was a giant.

And all through my school years when I came home from school and he came home, he would always say, "Well, what did you learn today?" And I really looked forward to going home because I would get to mouth off and he always acted as if I was - "Oh boy, are you ever learning a lot." But it encouraged me to talk. In having to remember and then explain to my father what I'd learned, he was teaching me how to teach.

He always said, you know, "The trouble with the Japanese is when they're asked to speak in public, they're so shy, they

do a terrible job. So you gotta be able to get up on your feet and speak extemporaneously."

Leamington high school had this wonderful activity. They had oratorical contests. And my dad made me enter. He would make me write out my entire speech and then when he came home from work at night, he'd say, "OK, down in the basement." And down we'd go, and then I would have to give the speech. So if at, at any point, I stumbled over a word, I had to start at the beginning again. And I might be going through the speech, and then he might say, "Stop. Now, you've gotta emphasize this word here. And you should move your hand so that you add the emphasis." And then I'd have to start over again. And of course, every night I'd end up crying in frustration and rage at just having to go over and over and over this thing. But it got so that by the end of the time I was doing this, he could have woken me up at 3 in the morning and I could have given the speech perfectly. Of course, I won a lot of these contests.

I always felt that my father gave me the greatest gift he could ever have given, which is that he taught me how to be an orator.

**SUZUKI ORATING:** We think the trees that are in our watershed there have too much value, we can't afford not to cut them down.

**SUZUKI:** Being able to speak in public, in a way that is passionate, powerful, and credible, gives you enormous power.

**NARRATOR:** This power Suzuki would later use to protect what he came to love - nature itself.

**ID: POINT PELEE NATIONAL PARK**

**SUZUKI:** If you just look along there you can see the key to the life here is just the diversity, it's a very diverse ecosystem, from the cattails right through to the, the lily pads, and all of the water weeds. It of course is teeming with insects which are the basis for the bigger things like birds and fish.

There's a carp over there you see. That's a nice big fish. There it is.

When I was kid we used to just come down and it was basically a swamp. And for a boy, it was a delight, it was a world that you could spend literally a lifetime in just grubbing around.

Fishing for me is, has been a major part of my life. It's where I really experienced and learned a lot of my lessons about nature through getting ready to go fishing, gathering grasshoppers in the morning. And of course, fishing isn't an activity where you have to catch something all the time. Fishing is an activity where you're just constantly immersed in that environment. Or you might be just sitting on a bank, taking it easy and thinking. A great deal of my biology came about through fishing.

**NARR:** In 1950, David moved from small town Leamington to the prosperous city of London, Ontario.

**SUZUKI:** You know how when you're in high school, you just think you're such a hot shot, and so insensitive. My mother was doing the laundry and I was chatting with her, and we got to talking about when I get older and leave home, and she said, "Well, you know, when you leave home Dad and I will be getting older, we hope you'll help us out." And I did this thing about, "I never asked to be born! You had me because you wanted me...you know, I've worked in the family, contributed... I don't see that I've got this obligation." And then, then I looked over and my mother was just working and she was just crying. And I just felt, "What a stupid jerk you are, you know, that I would do this to my mother, just to be a smart-ass." But that was my mother, you know, like, she taught me about selflessness.

**SUZUKI:** So, this is London Central High School, and it is very centrally located. You can see from the size of the houses around here, this was a very, very chic upper middle class neighbourhood. I guess there were about 5 or 6 hundred students, 99.5% white. I think about the only Asians there were the Suzuki family. Cousins and sisters.

**SUZUKI:** High school was a very tough time, because of course puberty hits as well, and when puberty hits of course, you're brain damaged by all this testosterone, sloshing through your bodies. And at the same time, I was just terribly, terribly shy and terrified of ever asking a white girl out.

**SUZUKI:** There was just a profound sense of humiliation at being the enemy, every time I looked in the mirror, that was the enemy. That's what all the propaganda said, "Those sneaky Japs are not to be trusted and you gotta kill 'em." So, the result for me, especially with my eyes, was that I was absolutely ashamed of the way I looked.

**MISS WYATT:** (former high school teacher): Do you remember feeling like this picture? Do you remember feeling like this?

**SUZUKI:** Yeah, that was me. Very Japanese.

**MISS WYATT:** That's not what I see, all I see is handsome. Look at that. But, I remember a face, a happy face, and then it clouded over, almost while I saw it. Watched.

**SUZUKI:** Well, I didn't go through any kind of depression. I just felt very much the outsider at Central.

**MISS WYATT:** I feel sorry as I look back and I think, "Look what you should have given David and you didn't."

**SUZUKI:** No, I think you're wrong on that, you're wrong on that. You were a very powerful influence in my life, I mean, the fact that you expected me to do, to give more, was a tremendous...

**MISS WYATT:** I did that?

**SUZUKI:** Yes, and for me that was a very important thing, that I knew that you had the confidence in me, to know there was something more to come out of me. So stop being so lazy and give me more. I remember you just pulling it out of us.

**MISS WYATT:** You do?

**SUZUKI:** You bet, you bet.

**MISS WYATT:** Did it show?

**SUZUKI:** Of course, why do we remember you and come back to you?

**MISS WYATT:** Well, I've often wondered.

Do you remember details of becoming class president?

**SUZUKI:** In Grade 13, one of the, one of the guys that I hung around with said, "You know, you oughta run for student president."

Well, I was never socially adept, in high school, and the idea of running for student president was just, I mean, it would never have occurred to me to do that. My father was the guy that when I told him about this, said, "Well, of course, go for it. If you think you might have a chance." And I said, "But dad, I'll never make it!" He said, "Look, you're not going to do anything if you're afraid of losing. How can you go through life constantly saying, "No, I don't

want to do that 'cause I don't have a chance." You've got to try.

**MARCIA AOKI** (sister): My dad had this old uh, Model T Ford where David made a big sign. "Vote for David Suzuki for president."

**AIKO SUZUKI** (sister): I did do a lot of graphics for him in those days saying, "Vote for Suzuki." And doing wonderful designs and cheering him on that way.

**SUZUKI**: I got more votes than all of the other candidates put together. But it really wasn't because I was so well known, or so popular, I think it's just because there are far more outies in a school than there are innies.

**AIKO SUZUKI**: I mean, that, that was probably an incredible achievement for, you know, a Japanese Canadian in the 'Fifties to be elected as a president of a very middle class school in southwestern Ontario. Um, it was quite remarkable.

**NARR**: Fellow student John Thompson graduated from Central High a year ahead of Suzuki and went to the prestigious Amherst College in Massachusetts - a college that actively sought students who would offer a different perspective.

**JOHN THOMPSON**: I went to the Dean of Admissions and said, "Hey, there's this kid back in London, Ontario, and he's pretty bright, and he's Japanese." I was aware at the time that David had been one of the Japanese that had been interned during the war. Anyway, I remember the dean saying after I told him about David, he said, "Well, how can we get him?"

**NARR**: Amherst offered Suzuki a scholarship and he received what is considered to be one of the best educations in North America. When he graduated, in the eyes of his parents it was time for him to marry.

**SUZUKI**: My father said to me, "The only acceptable mate for you is Japanese." I said, "Dad, there are only ten Japanese girls that are eligible in London, and three of them are my sisters!" He said, "OK, OK, OK." He said, "If you find a Chinese girl, that's acceptable." I said, "Dad, there are three Chinese girls in all of London." So he said, "OK, if you find a native American, Indian girl, that's acceptable because they're related to us genetically." I said, "There isn't a reserve in London, I don't know any native girls." He said, "OK, if you have, if you have a black girl, that's OK, 'cause they're a visible minority and they know what



prejudice is about." And there was only one black girl in all of my high school that I knew, and she wasn't interested in me. And so, he said, he said, "OK, well if you find a Jewish girl, that's OK, 'cause they're a minority, they know about prejudice."

The absolute rock bottom of course, was English.

**NARR:** In the end, Suzuki married Joane -- a Japanese-Canadian.+

**SUZUKI:** I picked the queen of the crop in London, Ontario, which was Joane. We were high-school sweethearts.

**SUZUKI:** And Joane worked for three years while putting me through graduate school.

**NARR:** Suzuki earned his Ph. D. in Zoology at the University of Chicago.

**SUZUKI:** Tamiko was born in 1960, and that I must say was the most unexpected joy of my life. When Tam arrived, I had no idea what children were about. It was just this wonderful experience for me.

**NARR:** By the early 'Sixties, Suzuki had gained a reputation in America as a brilliant researcher in the field of genetics. Despite better offers in the U.S., Suzuki decided to come home - and to the province that 20 years earlier had thrown his family out.

**SUZUKI:** We came to UBC then in '63. I was working on the genetics of fruit flies. I really had the bug, that I wanted to be a big, hotshot, geneticist. And I've always felt that in science you can't just do it from 8 to 5, 5 days a week. It has to be total involvement. And of course, that was the great excitement of the lab.

**TAMIKO SUZUKI (daughter):** He was just away all the time and when I was actually at his lab once and the phone rang and I answered it and said, "Suzuki residence" and all the students and everybody were just howling with laughter that, you know, maybe I knew something then, right?

**SUZUKI:** Go to the lab in the morning. Come home for dinner. Play with the kids. Wash, bathe them, put 'em to bed. And then come home 1,2,3 in the morning. And, and often say, "Joane, can you get up and make me something to eat? I haven't eaten dinner." And she'd get up and make me dinner. Well, it was a pretty crummy way of living, I think. At one point she finally said, "Look, you've been a professor now. You've got a lab. You've got a job. Uh,

you've got to start spending more time with, with me and the family." And at that point I just couldn't, the idea of, of spending less time in the lab was like ripping my right arm off. And so I moved out.

**NARR:** While Suzuki's home life was crumbling, his genetics laboratory at the University of British Columbia was fast building an international reputation. Students recognized Suzuki as a great teacher and flocked to his classes.

**SUZUKI:** I talked in my classes about the social impact of genetics. I talked about the ethical implications, and the fact that geneticists had an obligation to discuss this in public. And I found the students loved this kind of discussion, and they would come to me and say, "Well what's this thing eugenics? What's that all about? And uh, you know, what about in Nazi Germany, what was going on?" And I didn't know any of this.

**NARR:** A branch of Eugenics advocates that through genetic selection humankind can be "improved." In the hands of the Nazis, eugenics meant "racial purification" - which led to the murder of people whose genes were labeled "inferior".

**SUZUKI:** I had never heard of eugenics. I had never heard that there was anything to do with genetics in the Nazi race purification.

**SUZUKI:** I discovered that the kind of reasoning that had been used to lock up the Japs when the war broke out was being fueled by geneticists.

There were two great passions in my life at the time, one was genetics and the other had been civil rights.

**NARR:** While working in the United States, Suzuki had fought against racism directed at black Americans.

**SUZUKI:** The civil rights had come through my own experience being incarcerated as a Japanese Canadian during the Second World War. That my concern about human rights and my love of genetics came together in this incredibly grotesque way.

I realized that this great activity that I loved, genetics, was filled with enormous implications, horrific implications for the rest of society. And for many, many months I was absolutely paralyzed. I just couldn't bring myself to continue to do any research, because I felt I was contributing to a body of knowledge that had potential applications that were enormous.

**NARR:** Suzuki realized that science was not neutral - it could be used for good or for evil.

I came out of that period of paralysis by saying, one of the responsibilities was to speak out as openly and as honestly, and as informed, in as an informed a manner about the implications. And then I realized, my god, here is this powerful medium of television and through television then I could begin to try to educate people about science and how it affected their lives.

**THE NATURE OF THINGS:** Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be of a different race? Just imagine changing the colour of your skin, or the contours of your face, whatever you liked. It would truly be a colour-blind world. Then again, without visible traits, how would we make quick judgments about each other? Like where someone is from, how smart they are, whether or not they're good in sports. The way we look says a lot about who we are...or does it?

**JIM MURRAY:** That aspect of David's concern, of course, fitted into him coming into television and speaking to a much wider audience about issues in science. Trying to demystify science. Trying to explain what scientists are doing.

**NARR:** Jim Murray hired Suzuki as host of The Nature of Things in 1972. The Murray-Suzuki team made The Nature of Things one of the most popular series on the CBC. It turned Suzuki into a national personality - and a into passionate environmentalist.

**JIM MURRAY:** We were doing environmental programs back in the 'Sixties, so when David came in we started to talk to him about, about these kinds of issues. He wasn't into that space, and it, it certainly was the unit that, that brought him around to thinking about these issues.

It's not just an intellectual issue, it's an issue that goes to the heart of the relationship between human beings and Nature, the sad fact is that, that we are devouring the earth and life support systems. And if that isn't something that one can occasionally get emotional about, then I don't know what is.

**30 YEARS OF NATURE OF THINGS:** "...about how technologies affect and now threaten life. Every year we destroy thousands of species. We behave as if all this life existed just for us, for our consumption."

**STEPHEN STRAUSS:** Of the things that strike me about his life, the thing that strikes me as most interesting is that he got out of genetics at exactly the point where genetics was turning into the absolutely most interesting science in the world.

**NARR:** Suzuki had made his choice, now a nationally respected figure he began to speak out against what he considered the wanton destruction of Canada's natural resources -- especially forest clear-cutting in British Columbia. This put him in direct confrontation with British Columbia's biggest industry.

**ADAM ZIMMERMAN:** I consider him an enormous force for good in the community and the environmental movement, but he has this enormous passion, and it's almost uncontrollable.

**CBC reporter:** "David Suzuki says the forestry industry won't be hurt if the Stein Valley isn't logged."

**SUZUKI:** "And if you think you can cut down a virgin forest and pay a bunch of kids to stick seedlings in the ground, and somehow that's reforestation, they've got rocks in their heads."

**STEPHEN STRAUSS:** I think his great strength is as a politician and the kind of politician that you can be when you actually have a place in the media.

**SUZUKI (speech):** "Today something very weird has gone on. The economy now is there and we're supposed to serve it. You know, you're gonna sacrifice for the sake of the economy. Your community has to give up social services for the sake of the economy. Wait a minute, the economy is not some monster or thing. We made it and if it is not doing what we want, we damn well want a different one, is what I feel!" (applause, standing ovation)

**STEPHEN STRAUSS:** The thing about being a political person is that it's very hard to be both a political person and a very nuanced thinker. He has a tendency not to want to include in the political world the kind of nuances that he knows exists in genetics, let's say.

**ADAM ZIMMERMAN:** Young people all know him and all hero worship him.

He's undoubtedly one of the Pied Pipers of the Canadian environmental movement.

**TARA CULLIS-SUZUKI:** There's a downside to celebrity, to being quite a well-known person, we do get a lot of anonymous letters, for example, that are filled with hatred. We have had a bullet through the window and David's computer files at UBC were entered.

**CBC Reporter:** Inside the Zoology building at the University of British Columbia David Suzuki has an office. He says his computer in his office has been tampered with.

**SUZUKI:** At the very time that our office was broken into, we got a call from the RCMP that our cottage had been vandalized.

**CBC Reporter:** Suzuki says both incidents occurred after he appeared in a controversial German documentary in which he decried BC logging practices. IWA President Jack Munro blasted Suzuki, Munro saying his actions were treasonable.

**SUZUKI:** To call people traitors I find very, very shocking, because the word 'traitor' or 'treason' is a reason in many countries to execute people.

**JIM MURRAY:** So, he has to take the flack uh, personally. And I must say that uh, he's been very courageous about that. He's fortunately a tough guy.

#### **QUADRA ISLAND, B.C.**

**TARA CULLIS-SUZUKI:** Well, this isn't so bad.

**SUZUKI:** I was giving a lecture at Carleton University in Ottawa and there was a room, there must have been 400 people in it, this was December 10, 1971, and I noticed this woman, sitting near the front, and she was very striking,

**TARA CULLIS-SUZUKI:** He talked for an hour and a half and that gave me a lot of time to observe a lot of things about him and hear a lot of things he believed in, and by the end of it, I decided "Well, that's the first person I've ever seen that I would really consider marrying."

**SUZUKI:** And I, when finished my talk, then at the end people come up and they gather around and discuss things and she came up. So I said in a very loud voice at the end of this kind of discussion with all these people, "I hope

everybody's going to the party tonight." And I kind of took off at that point.

**TARA CULLIS-SUZUKI:** But, I did think as he left, and said, "Does everyone know about the party tonight?" that that was for my benefit. I got there and uh, there was such a crowd around David that I couldn't talk to him but I thought, "Well, here I am, so..." He suddenly popped up in front of me and said, "Would you like to dance?" And then we really couldn't talk that evening, our hearts were pounding too hard I think.

**SUZUKI:** She was from Vancouver, and so set up a date to meet her in Vancouver. We went up to a cabin up on one of the mountains here. And I asked her to marry me. And married her exactly a year to the day, December 10, 1972. So, it was the greatest thing that ever happened to me.

**SUZUKI:** When I met Tara and found that she responded to me, I felt I'd really gone to heaven. I never in my wildest dreams could have ever imagined having a partner like Tara ever spending the rest of her life with me. And I just feel it's been an incredible privilege and, and having her grow so much together with me uh, has just been wonderful.

**TARA CULLIS-SUZUKI:** When David asked me to marry him I remember thinking, "If I marry him, it's going to be like riding on a roller coaster, if I hang on I'll have the ride of my life. But it, there are going to be a lot of forces acting on me," and I've managed to hang on, and it's been fantastic. A real adventure. But it's been tough.

He's doing something which I consider extremely important. I am very deeply involved in that out of choice and so I choose to work alongside him, but it doesn't make it easy to have a separate, strong, personal identity apart from David.

**SUZUKI:** I am a Japanese male, only son in a traditional Japanese family, and of course, in our family when you ate your rice and when the bowl was empty, if you were a male you just held it up like this, and if I was having a conversation, I would continue talking and then I would just go on eating because it would be taken away, filled with rice, and put back in my hand.

**MARCIA AOKI:** He didn't say, "May I have some more rice." It was just, we just automatically filled up his rice bowl.

**SUZUKI:** I mean that's the kind of background that I had, so when I first encountered people like Tara, it was quite a shock because uh there was no way that role was going to be filled by a strong feminist.

**TARA CULLIS-SUZUKI:** But he did at one point um, sound quite sorry for himself being Japanese in a white society and I remember, for some reason, it made me burst out laughing um, and I told him, well, he would never understand what it was to be female in a sexist society either, so he's gonna have to get over it, and I think he was quite surprised.

**MARCIA AOKI:** Yes, I know, he's really changed.

**AIKO SUZUKI:** Well I think Tara's done a remarkable job, the transformation is unbelievable. I mean if you asked us uh, 20 years ago, we would never have envisioned David sort of, tackling the dishes, and making the fruit salad, and scrubbing the floor. And this he does seemingly really enjoying it. And maybe he's doing it in a frenzy to make up for all the years that he was catered to. So Tara's enjoying the benefits of his guilt, maybe!

**SUZUKI:** For me having a very committed feminist as a wife, and having two children who, because of Tara's uh feelings are, are mimicking her attitudes, I'm constantly brought up very sharply when I express my own male chauvinism.

**NARR:** David Suzuki admits that he was an absentee father with his first family, now grown up. He still maintains a work and travel schedule as punishing as ever. But now he is fiercely protective of the time he spends with his second family.

**SEVERN CULLIS-SUZUKI:** We got to go to a lot of the places that he went, so I wouldn't say he was so absent as you might think.

Because we've been able to travel all over the world, we've seen all kinds of things that most kids our age haven't been able to see. And it makes us realize, first of all, how lucky we are as Canadians, and also I feel a sense of responsibility as someone who knows how privileged we are, I find myself feeling responsible to take action, to do something about it.

**BLACK SEA SYMPOSIUM, 1997**

**SEVERN CULLIS-SUZUKI (speaking):** But I will live with all the consequences of the decisions made today. I am inheriting what you leave me. The vast bulk of ecological change that has occurred over the last 10,000 years has happened within my parent's lifetime. I think a massive value change has to take place. We have to face up to all the bad news, but most

importantly, we must look to what we must do in our own backyards.

**NARR:** Severn and Sarika are determined environmentalists. Suzuki agonizes over the world his generation is leaving for them.

**SUZUKI:** This is my father's favourite spot. He loved this place on Quadra.

**SUZUKI:** When he was dying and I would wheel him out to this spot here and he would sit for hours and hours just looking out. When he died my sister brought his ashes up and, and spread them here because that's what he wanted. He said, "If you look out after you spread my ashes and see that eagle flying or look at the great trees on the island, I'll be there, I'll be part of them." And I always feel that my father's, my father's still very much here a part of this island.

**SUZUKI:** In his older years, my father became very intrigued by the whole idea of Shinto, which is a Japanese ancient form of nature worship. And he would always talk about reincarnation, that you can't ever destroy the atoms that make up what your bodies are and that when you die you put the atoms back into Nature and you become revived through all of the things that absorb those atoms. And the older I get the more I think, "He's absolutely right." I mean, I'm made up of atoms that are identical to the atoms in the grass, to the birds, to the, to the insects. What is it about the arrangement of those atoms that is so special in a human being? And I just don't think there's anything special. And I would prefer to think that it's matter itself, the elements, the atoms that make up our minds, that make up the grass and the trees and the air, that are imbued with something very, very special.

**NARR:** Suzuki has long felt himself an outsider. So it's not surprising he feels an affinity with First Nations people and their causes.

He has been honoured by Aboriginal peoples from British Columbia to the Brazilian rainforest. These are honours Suzuki values as much as the many degrees and awards he has received.

The Kaiapo of the Amazon and the Musqueam of Vancouver have both received support from the David Suzuki Foundation -- an influential environmental think-tank to which Suzuki now devotes most of his energy.



**NARR:** Set up in 1990, The Foundation has 15,000 supporters. Its goal is to influence public opinion on environmental issues through research reports, project funding and the media.

**SUZUKI:** (at Foundation meeting): The reason why we're nickel-and-diming our way into destroying our surroundings is that everybody's looking through these tiny vested interest windows and nobody's looking at the big picture.

**SUZUKI:** I don't believe for a minute that I or any group are going to save the world - we aren't. But if we have a few hundred million people saying, "I can make a difference," we will.

There's no question that the driving force in my life has been to show that even though I'm Japanese, I'm a Canadian and I love this place and I want to make a contribution. Now by all the criteria of public accolades, and honorary degrees, I've achieved all of that, and it's clear that those aren't the things that matter.

**SUZUKI (on beach with family):** This is a different kind of cucumber, eh Tara?

**SARIKA:** Is that the kind that flowers?

**SUZUKI:** Oops! It spit at me! Except that is came from the wrong end! These are related to our ancestors...

**SUZUKI:** If I have to make a decision, should I or should I not do this, I ask, "Will my parents still be proud of me? Will my wife still respect me? And will my children still love me?" If I do or do not do this. And the answer to that is what determines whether or not I do this thing. So obviously I'm not impelled with any notion that I'm going to go out and save the planet. I'm going to go out and try because if I didn't I wouldn't be able to look my children in the eye.

**END**