

*Private Members' Business*

bottle? Is it the inevitable fate of a huge territory of scattered communities?

Whatever the explanation—and it might be a hellish alchemy compounded from all of the above—it is clear that the native northerner can count substantially fewer of the blessings of life than other Canadians. Fewer in almost any category you care to mention.

The unemployment rate among native northerners, reports the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, is among the highest in Canada, reaching 50 per cent in some communities—

I might add that in some areas it is as high as 85 per cent. It continues:

The Northwest Territories has the highest per capita incidence of alcohol offences in Canada, and probably a very high rate of substance abuse.

Although the article refers to the north, I do not think it is very much different in other parts of Canada. In fact at home the suicide rate is even higher. Where the article mentions rates four to five times the national average, ours have been as high as ten to twelve times.

I think over time, with self-fulfilling prophecies, much of this has happened because we as native people have become to believe that we are no good or lazy or that you have to drink to be an Indian or that we should die before a certain age.

Much can happen to change the world for aboriginal youth. Much has been done in the past. Allow me to thank all of those concerned for their efforts to date, but much more needs to be done. This motion, when passed, would begin that process. When the motion was first introduced I wanted to refer to a couple of noteworthy events related to the issue. I think they are still relevant.

First, after 10 years of negotiations, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the first convention on the rights of the child. I applaud the members involved whole-heartedly. Then during the same week the Leader of the NDP in his final speech to this House spoke very eloquently on the plight of the poor and in particular of children in our affluent society of Canada. Yet, for the children who are referred to throughout those speeches and documents, many of those are aboriginal children.

In 1990, in Canada, we still have aboriginal youth who go to school every morning hungry or too hungry to concentrate or to study or to do their homework. Until the employment, education and health needs are addressed and met, we will have this cycle of desperation.

What can be done? I do not want to appear totally negative because there are many success stories. Aboriginal youth want to contribute. In fact I believe aboriginal peoples want to contribute. We want to contribute to the development of our own youth. We know they will then become strong segments of Canadian society and, in that way, we will then have a stronger Canada.

A basic minimum to accomplish this is for full, meaningful consultation to occur with aboriginal peoples. If I may mention a personal bias, I believe that personal, physical, mental and spiritual development must first happen as a foundation. Sir, when you were the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, you contributed to that positive development. I thank you for that, but I think you will also agree that it was because you consulted aboriginal people yourself that made those sport programs successful. I was grateful, therefore, for the announcement by our colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, that he too, would consult with natives on post-secondary education.

As I go out speaking in Indian country, I speak about an Indian winners' club. I started out a few years ago by calling it a 5 per cent club, those we never hear about because they succeed. Good stories don't always make the news, but we always hear about the 95 per cent who dropped out of school. This past year alone I spoke to over 200 post-secondary graduates in Alberta. I have changed the name of that club to the 10 per cent club. We are improving, but it will be a great day when someone, hopefully I, can get up and say I want to congratulate those graduates because we now have a 95 per cent or 100 per cent success rate.

When that happens I know those aboriginal youth will then be employed and will also be in a position to contribute ever better to our nation. It is only then, also, that economic self-reliance as an aboriginal dream can become a reality. We need more success stories, but we must also change our focus to highlight positive stories whenever they occur.