

Support to Traditional Economy

Mr. Speaker, in a modern world filled with laptop computers, cell phones and iPods, traditional life skills such as trapping and boat building that have served our people so well in the past are in danger of being lost.

But the Government of the Northwest Territories is taking action to ensure this doesn't happen, and that is why I want to take a few moments to talk about the success of our Take a Kid Trapping Program.

The program began in 2002, and from the beginning, it's been built on one simple premise, learning by doing.

The program is a cooperative effort between the Departments of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Municipal and Community Affairs and Environment and Natural Resources.

It is often delivered through Aboriginal organizations and schools, and our elders are an integral part of the program. They teach our young people the skills and knowledge that was passed down to them. In turn, these young people gain something you can't put a price on. They gain a greater sense of pride in who they are, and they learn how traditional life skills can be a useful part of their lives.

The program has clearly struck a chord with our people. Since 2002, almost 6,000 school-age youth have participated in a variety of Take a Kid Trapping projects. Demand for these types of activities grows every year. In fact, we have now developed a sister program, the Take a Kid Harvesting Program, to help us meet the demand.

An example of some of the successful traditional life skills projects that took place in 2009-2010 include the traditional moosehide boat project in Tulita and the birch syrup collection projects held in the North and South Slave regions.

Mr. Speaker, the work we are doing is also being recognized at the national level. In June, the Fur Institute of Canada announced the recipient of its Jim Bourque Award, Industry, Tourism and Investments very own Guy Erasmus. This is the most prestigious national award given in the Canadian trapping industry, and Mr. Erasmus was specifically recognized for his work in the design, development and implementation of the Take a Kid Trapping program.

I'm pleased Mr. Erasmus was able to join us in the Visitors Gallery today. Guy, you've done a great job with this program, and so has everyone else who has been involved with it. On behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, I want to thank you for the excellent service you have provided the Canadian trapping industry and the people of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the Take a Kid Trapping program is an example of steps this government is taking in Building Our Future, one of the five strategic initiatives of the 16th Legislative Assembly.

Our work in this area is leading to greater sense of pride among our young people in their culture and their heritage. It is assisting us in achieving our goals of developing healthy, educated people and sustainable, vibrant communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.