

Creating Brighter Futures: A Journey of Understanding

April 21, 2008 - Regina, Saskatchewan



Calvin Helin urges attendees to “start talking about things.”

The Aboriginal Employment Development Program (AEDP) presented *Creating Brighter Futures: A Journey of Understanding* featuring keynote speaker Calvin Helin.

The AEDP is a partnership between the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and the Ministries of Education and First Nations and Métis Relations. Representative Workforce Coordinator, Elodie Jordens, is responsible for program planning, policy development and coordinating representative workforce initiatives. The long-term goal for the AEDP is to create a more representative workforce among the approximately 12,000 teachers and 8,000 support staff in Saskatchewan’s school divisions.

The event began in the morning with Helin speaking to school board members, government officials and educational partners. A member of the Tsimshian Nation and a respected lawyer, businessman and author, Helin declared that everyone is a part of the solution to the current economic trends and the decreasing engagement of Aboriginal people in the workforce. Explaining that the Aboriginal population is the fastest growing ethnic population in the country, Helin also shared his thoughts and criticisms on the conventional approach to Aboriginal policy. An approach he feels has never worked.

“We have to start talking about things,” urged Helin to the attendees. “We have to start talking straight to each other. My purpose here is not to be sensational, but to make a difference.”

Helin acknowledged that education is a powerful factor in this solution and one that is important not just for everyone’s survival, but for the Canadian economy.

“If we are going to move forward, education is one of the key pillars,” revealed Helin. “We have to have our young people educated to the highest level.”

Many attendees left the presentation inspired and remarking that they only wished more people could have heard Helin’s messages.



Left to right: Elodie Jordens and Calvin Helin.

“Calvin’s presentation was both inspiring and informative,” said Roy Challis, President of the Association. “By sharing his expertise on Aboriginal history and providing us with some solid solutions, we are one step closer to enhancing the involvement of the Aboriginal community in the province’s educational system and creating a more representative workforce.”

For the afternoon, Helin spoke with students from Vibank, SIIT, FNUC, Miller Comprehensive High School and Scott Collegiate.

Helin reiterated the value of education by telling the students that by 2017 there could be an increase of \$62 billion to Canada’s GDP if the entire educational gap is erased. Helin then went through some motivating tips for achieving personal success:

- Use sports/hobby as a tool
- Aim high
- Practise discipline
- Learn to focus
- Expect to work hard
- Have manners and respect
- Warriors have “strong minds”
- Return = Effort

Helin finished his presentation by having the students shout “Wai Wah” (which means “Just do it!”) loudly. Students then had the opportunity to ask Helin any questions they had. This question period proved most rewarding and emotionally moving as the students took the opportunity to ask Helin serious and personal questions including:

- How would you change the current government policy?
- What can I do as a non-Aboriginal person to help?
- How can I encourage my family to get off welfare?



Calvin Helin poses with some of the students in his afternoon presentation.



Attendees for Calvin Helin’s morning presentation included school board members, educational partners and government officials.



Calvin Helin signs copies of his book, *Dances with Dependency*.