

Author left hoarse

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Author Calvin Helin signs books and speaks to audience members following a presentation at the Della Herman Theatre last Friday. Helin was in town promoting his book, *Dances with Dependency*.
Smithers/Interior News Katie Cushing/The Interior News

By the time Calvin Helin arrived at his 3:30 speaking engagement, he had lost his voice.

Nonetheless, the Tsimshian author and lawyer managed, in a voice that squeaked and often gave out entirely, to keep his audience's attention for over an hour.

The speech, held to a full house in the Della Herman Theatre, was Helin's third of the day. He spent the morning and early afternoon speaking with students in Moricetown and at Smithers Secondary.

Helin was in the area promoting his best-selling book, *Dances with Dependency*, which addresses the cycle of abuse and desperation plaguing many First Nations communities— a problem, he said, largely caused by the Canadian welfare system and corrupt chiefs.

"The system is literally killing our women and kids," Helin said, making reference to the recent Pickton trial and the local Highway of Tears.

"Were are our ancestors as we're lying on the couch, eating potato chips and expecting a welfare cheque?" he asked.

Helin said traditionally the government had tried to make First Nations dependent, as a way to control them.

"Even if we want to follow the same stupid path we've been on, Canada can't afford it," the author said, pointing out that the native population was growing in leaps and bounds compared to what he called the 'mainstream' population.

The key to change, he said, is education.

"Canada needs these young aboriginal people in the workforce," he said.

Helin closed his speech by asking the audience to repeat some words from the Tsimshian language with him: Wai Wah.

"That means, just do it," he said.