

Richard Popko - Jim Bourque Award

Hon. Michael McLeod

Wednesday, August 15, 2007

Statement to the Legislative Assembly

Speaker, I would like to take a moment to offer congratulations to a member of our public service, Mr. Richard Popko, who was recently honoured by the Fur Institute of Canada with the Jim Bourque Award in recognition of his support of the sustainable development of Canada's modern fur trade.

Richard is known for his commitment to the principles of sustainable use of wildlife. These principles include humane trapping practices and furthering indigenous peoples' cultures. He is a good example of the vital stewardship role that trappers play in the conservation of wildlife resources.

Born in the English city of Nottingham, Richard's family immigrated to southern Ontario when he was very young. As a boy, he spent his time hunting, trapping and fishing. His passion for outdoor life and learning about animals led him to enrol in the University of Guelph for a degree in biology.

He began his career with the Government of the Northwest Territories soon after his graduation and was first assigned to posts in the Eastern Arctic. It was here he met his wife, Napatchee. They now have two sons, David and Michael.

After working in the Eastern Arctic, Richard and his family moved to northern Ontario to live out his long-time dream. For five years, they lived on and maintained their own trapline. However, the lure of the North was too much for them and they returned north of 60 in the mid-1980s. They moved to Norman Wells, where Richard took on the position of conservation education and resource development officer. During this time he was heavily involved with local fur harvesters in trapping programs and workshops.

In 1995, Richard jumped at the opportunity to become the region's wildlife technician and get back into research, fieldwork and away from the office and a desk. He has become known for his contagious enthusiasm for the trapping industry and the natural beauty of the Sahtu. His enthusiasm and support is appreciated by his colleagues in the GNWT, the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board and other government departments and agencies. He has worked on many field studies and scientific papers that contribute to our collective knowledge about wildlife resources.

We should all be proud to have a man of such integrity, dedication and ability in public service. His enthusiasm and passion for the conservation and sustainable use of our wildlife resources should be recognized by all of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mahsi cho.

