



The Honourable Edna Ekhivalak Elias
Commissioner of Nunavut

Motivational Speech- Graduation
RCMP Youth Academy
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First let me thank the RCMP for this wonderful opportunity to participate in your joyous event. I would so have loved to spend some time with you during your cultural training and exercises. You witnessed how this type of work can be unpredictable; you can be called to duty at the least expected time and for the least expected reason.

You have not experienced the planned “on the land training” but look forward to a day when it happens. That is where the inner soul can be at peace and harmony with the land. It is a vital part of cultural training and it applies to all parts of life.

I want to open this speech by quoting a very famous former United States President, the Late JF Kennedy; “It’s not what your country can do for you, it’s what you can do for your country.” This

is one of my favourite quotes.

This quote lies very true for each and every one of you. As you consider your life careers and the many opportunities that may open for you, keep this famous line in mind. How can you serve your community? Your people? Nunavut? And our country in general. You look around at many who have chosen to serve our country in many varied careers, ie: RCMP, nurses, teachers and Wildlife officers to name a few.

Let's begin at the community level where youth can achieve great changes; changes for the better, be it fighting against alcohol and drugs, family violence, school attendance, activities for youth. Maybe you are wondering and asking yourself, "How can I do this? How can I trigger changes in my community?"

Youth have very strong voices; Voices that can get noticed and heard; Voices with emotions; Voices with impact; Voices with power when united. Unite as youth to lobby for changes to better things; healthier lifestyle choices and communities. With determination it is amazing what can happen.

As an example, the youth of my home community, Kugluktuk were fed up with the flow and consumption of alcohol when the liquor restrictions were not in effect. They saw the impact it was having on the children, their school attendance and behaviour and the unhappiness of children and parents alike. So when it came time for another plebiscite/vote on whether to have restrictions again or leave it wide open, the youth united and organized activities to lobby their parents and community for a 'Yes' vote. To the amazement and pride of social agencies and the families who lead alcohol-free lives, all the lobbying worked. The community voted 'Yes' to reinstating alcohol restrictions. Thanks to their proactive efforts, the community is happier and healthier for it.

In my eyes, organized community action has greater capacity to bring change. We must take action within our means to do that, within the laws and action, within reason. Relying on programs and agencies is not always sufficient to bring improvement. Community action by its residents, you, the youth can be more effective and produce immediate results leading to greater success. By being idle and not taking action, thinking someone

else will do something about it, well that someone else may never come along and that something may never happen with that mentality.

In closing, let me go back to the quote; “It’s not what your country can do for you, it’s what you can do for your country.” What can I do for my fellow Inuit? What can I do for my community? What can I do for Nunavut?

The answers lie within each and everyone one of you. You have it within you to unite, to plan things, to carry out your plans and to be actively involved for the betterment of our people, our communities, Nunavut and our country.

Thanks once again for inviting me today for this special occasion. I wish each of you success in whatever career path you may choose. I would also encourage you to very seriously consider the RCMP as a career option. Be safe, play safe and make healthy lifestyle choices. You all seem to be on that good path, keep it up.

Quana