

Opening Remarks, 2nd Annual NACCA Youth Entrepreneurship Symposium

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Calgary, Alberta

January 22, 2005

Good evening ladies and gentlemen! It feels *very* good to be here, standing in front of such a bright group of people, in this fair, fine city of Calgary.

You see, it seems that we at NACCA have been waiting for this moment for quite some time. Perhaps ‘waiting’ isn’t really the right word – more like scurrying, rushing, worrying, organising, trouble-shooting, and generally running around – for a long time. But now that you’re here, from all corners of the country, seated in this grand room in this grand hotel, with enthusiasm and excitement all over your faces, I know that it has all been worthwhile.

It is truly an honour for me to be here today, to be welcoming you all to NACCA’s second-annual Youth Entrepreneurship Symposium. Not only do we have an excellent line-up of speakers and facilitators tonight and throughout the conference – which we *do* – but we also have a large group of bright, dynamic participants, who truly make this symposium what it is. You have come from every region of the country, from incredibly diverse backgrounds, with different skill sets, ways of thinking, attitudes, beliefs, and approaches to life. Yet you also have much in common, which is why you are here: your energy, dynamism, and ambition, at the very least. I am consistently surprised and impressed after speaking to any of you that the future of our community is in such good hands. I’m looking forward to observing and learning from your interactions with each other, and with our workshops facilitators and speakers who have much to offer.

I must say, last year’s youth conference was one of the highlights of my year, and you all have a lot to live up to! For those who have been here before, you’ll note that the flow of this year’s symposium is similar. We have chosen different themed days in which you will be exposed to sessions based around “Opportunities, Marketing and Finance,” with opportunities to participate in interactive activities and learn about these vital areas of entrepreneurship from expert practitioners and policy makers and each other. Our experts this year range in experience and background from executives at leading financial institutions to accomplished publishers and editors to successful businesspeople big and small. In addition to a packed daily schedule full of informative speeches and interactive panels, you will be divided into teams who will compete through set challenges throughout the conference for a prize at the end for the most innovative and successful group.

This year, however, there is another element of competition – individuals will also be competing for some lucrative internships with high-profile organisations and companies to follow the conference. We hope you all find the individual challenges as interesting and entertaining as we did when we were deviously devising them.

Optional: Before I start introducing our honourable first speaker, I’d like to take just a second to acknowledge the work and effort that the NACCA team has put into making this symposium even happen in the first place. Steve Saddleback, in particular, has spent countless nights and weekends with a one-track mind on the conference, and I’d like for him to know how much we all appreciate it. Also, since this is a leadership symposium, I’d like to highlight one of the first rules of being a leader by saying, if something goes wrong, it’s his fault; but you can credit the success to me!

And of course, we need to thank our wonderful sponsors for allowing this all to happen, particularly Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for their support of our youth business program, and ... (Dan: I visited the sponsors page on the web, but wasn't sure which were 'gold' and should be mentioned – let me know!)

Without any further adieu, I would like to welcome to the podium...