



## Get the work habit, says Indian chief

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INDIGENOUS people must become more entrepreneurial to overcome entrenched social problems, says a visiting Indian tribal chief from Canada.

Chief Clarence Louie was speaking at the Indigenous Economic Development Conference in Melbourne.

Chief Louie attacked welfare and the culture of dependence among native people in Canada and Australia. He cited statistics from Canada that show that of the \$C9 billion (\$A9.6 billion) Indian Affairs budget, 96 per cent was spent on social areas but only 4 per cent on economic development.

"What's needed is for aboriginal people to get involved in the economy," he said. "More of this program spending should be spent on economic development, and entrepreneurship and employment and training. Not on social programs.

"Our people are moving from a mind-set of spending underfunded federal grants to making our own money. And there's a whole different mind-set: from spending money to making money.

"Aboriginal people have to start making their own money, because there's an illusion to think that a great white mother or a great white father is going to supply your needs. They never have and never will."

Chief Louie heads the Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation, a body committed to helping native businesses in Osoyoos, 400 kilometres from Vancouver on Canada's west coast. The 450-strong community is home to a bustling tourism sector and has low unemployment.

Chief Louie stressed the importance of aboriginal people developing business acumen.

"Business is business. Business isn't about race. Business isn't about colour, business principles apply whether you live in Australia or Canada. It's a hard-working, self-supporting lifestyle, it's having a work habit."

He said economic participation was crucial to overcoming social problems. "The biggest issue is alcohol and drug abuse," he said. "I don't care if you are native or non-native, everyone needs the dignity and opportunity of employment. I think half the white people would be drunks and alcoholics if they . . . existed on welfare." Also at the conference, Aboriginal certified practising accountant Jodie Ryan condemned

the abolition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.