

Drug dealers have a devastating impact

To the mayor and fellow members of the Wales Council:

This letter is being written to bring attention to a problem which has long existed and which has had a devastating effect on our community.

There are those who will deny such a problem exists, even getting angry at the person bringing it up, saying he/she is nothing but a troublemaker. Let me tell you that the trouble was brought in by the dealers, and it has now gotten to the point where too many victims are readily visible for us to deny it.

I have had crew members who took as their share 25-30 head at the end of the season. This ivory, prudently used, would have been sufficient to purchase a second-hand snowmachine, warm clothes, good quality firearms and ammo for the individual hunter.

Instead, this raw ivory has gone to the dealer whose greed knows no bounds, as we shall see, leaving the poor, hapless victim nothing to look forward to but a winter of idleness!

This idleness, just like work, becomes a habit and in time we have a worthless individual who shuns all productive type activity. If he does work, it contributes zilch toward the well-being of his family because he prefers instead to spend his money on dope. This statement cannot be repudiated; we all know people who fit this role.

There is not one family in our village which has not been affected by the prevalence of drugs. Saddest of all may be the case of our elders. They

neither understand the extent nor the reason for this malaise.

They only know that it has had a highly negative and injurious effect. To a people who have gotten along by sheer effort and perseverance, witnessing their sons or grandsons becoming so idle has to have a disturbing effect.

Then, too, they are forced to take up the slack economically that their offspring would normally fill.

We all have paid lip service, at one time or another, professing our respect and concern for the well-being of our elders, and yet in actual practice have conducted ourselves in a manner diametrically opposed to their teachings and wishes.

The absence of elders from our various meetings starkly illustrates how little we listen to them. But then they usually have advice pertaining to parameters of conduct that make us ill at ease. And yes, we have to have our own way.

It is sad and maddening that they have been given this burden to bear through no fault of their own, while the dealers, those purveyors of misery, have blithely carried on their trade, immune to shame, guilt and even the reaches of the law. In a perverse irony we, the victims, are made to shoulder a near unbearable load while these parasites continue their business.

To those who would deny the existence of these dealers, I can only say: Please, do not insult our intelligence. The dealers are readily identifiable. The time for denial of their reality and for fooling ourselves is long past.

Let me also add that fear of a slander suit is the least of my worries. To label a dealer unscrupulous, greedy, uncaring for his victims is to describe him perfectly. I would love to get these people into a court of law.

To those who would call the dealers their friends, let me say: A friend does not rip off your ivory, consigning you to a winter of unproductivity, a friend does not lessen your chances of becoming a viably independent entity, nor does he ignore the plight of your parents or grandparents as they are forced to shoulder the additional burden of supporting you.

A friend encourages you to carve, hunt and endeavor to be productive. A friend has the guts to incur your wrath, misplaced as it may be, to try and help you become a more useful member of society.

A ludicrous and wretched set of values has taken root here. Advising a young crewman to make prudent use of his ivory is to invite a reply of something along the lines of, "Nobody can tell me what to do!"

Then, 20 minutes later it is not uncommon to observe the same person lugging a honey-bucket for one of our dealers!

It is these same individuals who further worry me as they should all of our community. In a few short years, they will be reaching the age of 40, ill prepared to cope with the responsibility that that age demands. A history of endeavor, so essential to basic survival, will be missing from their character. Such is the legacy of the dealer.

Has anyone ever observed and wondered about the relationship between dealer and victim? This symbiotic interaction merits a closer examination. We realize that one without the other would create complete chaos for both! Each is completely dependent upon the other for survival. The result is a sick but powerful bond between the victim and dealer!

Understanding this bond gives an indication of just how difficult it will be to bring circumstances back to normal — freeing the victim of the clutches of the dealer, rehabilitating him and helping him become a useful member of society provided he's even willing. After all, no one can tell him what to do!

Violence manifests itself in many ways. The dealing of drugs is a form of violence, and yet we continue to deny this ogre which has visited us.

Most vocal in his denials is the victim. This sad, pathetic creature has grown comfortable with merely existing and, as stated before, assists the dealer in every way. For him to endeavor, to practice initiative is alien.

How much more of this can we take? How much longer can tolerate this?

Asking the guilty parties to make amends is out of the question. They can never repay our young for the lost unproductive years. It is up to us, the victims to pick up the pieces. A strong mandate to begin somewhere exists here.

Sincerely,
Vincent S. Okpealuk
Wales