

The secrets to happiness

PUBLICATION: CTV (CTV News)

DATE: 2005.06.20

TIME: 23:00:00 ET

END: 23:30:00 ET

SECTION: CTV News

COLUMN: CTV News

LLOYD ROBERTSON: And finally for us tonight, what does happiness mean to you? A good question. One as old as humankind. Of course finding personal contentment can mean different things to different people and to different societies. But suppose the best ingredients can be summed up in a single happiness index? That idea has drawn people from all over the world to a Canadian maritime city. CTV's John Venavally–Rao joins us.

JOHN VENNAVALLY–RAO (Reporter): When we measure the progress of a nation, we often focus on how much stuff it produces.

RICHARD REOCH (Conference Co–Chair): Essentially it's about money, it's about buildings, it's about commerce.

VENNAVALLY–RAO: But when it comes right down to it, is that really the best gauge of success?

REOCH: It's evident from countless studies that more wealth does not make people happier.

VENNAVALLY–RAO: And making happiness the priority is what they've come here to talk about. Folks from all over the world converging on Nova Scotia, hoping to change the way we measure well–being.

ELA BHATT (Conference Delegate): Everyone who has a soul, you know, living wants to be happy.

VENNAVALLY–RAO: This entourage from the tiny Himalayan country of Butan of particular interest because their country started a kind of happiness index 30 years ago. People there are relatively poor, but...

JIM TIMSIT (Conference Delegate): I was in Butan last year, and I've seen more people happy in Butan than anywhere else in the world. And when you think about it in our terms, towards our standards, they have nothing.

VENNAVALLY–RAO: The country has preserved its pristine environment and its indigenous culture and has declared gross national happiness to be more important than it's gross domestic product. We asked the folks from Butan if Canadians looked happy.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: Certainly they look busier, certainly they look busier.

VENNAVALLY–RAO: The conference to examine things like work hours, use of pesticides and automobiles and how they impact our quality of life. What's striking is that compared to 50 years ago, western countries are producing twice as much.

ANDERS HAYDEN (Conference Delegate): But the number of people who say they're happy is almost exactly the same as it was in the 1950s. VENNAVALLY–RAO: Over the next four days, these delegates will try to figure out what truly matters to people, and along the way they may even enlighten themselves.

TIMSIT: Am I happy? I'm working on it.

VENNAVALLY–RAO: John Venavally–Rao, CTV News, Antigonish.

ROBERTSON: And here's something to be happy about. Tomorrow is the first day of summer. That's the kind of day it's been this Monday, June 20th. I'm Lloyd Robertson. For all of us here in the national news room, good night. Your local CTV News is coming right up.