

Overview of Meeting with Their Excellencies – Governor General
June 17-18, 2007
Whitehorse, YT

Kait Dinunzio, Carol Oberg and Nancy Debrececi were pleased to have been invited to represent the PSAC Regional Women's Committee at a gala dinner on June 17 and for informal discussion meeting with Her Excellency, entitled "Living Together" on June 18.

The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean has chosen the motto "breaking down solitudes". Yukon is the last stop in her cross country tour where Their Excellencies invited organizations and groups working within the community to meet to discuss the social issues facing people in Whitehorse and the efforts made to solve problems and to share success stories. She expressed her sincere interest and passion in listening and working together towards the common good.

Between 20-30 representatives from NGOs, Service Providers, First Nation women's groups, Anti-Poverty, Senior, Disabilities, the RWC and Coalition groups as well as representatives from YTG and First Nation Governments shared the many issues and problems facing Yukon communities –and in particular those impacted the greatest – women, children, seniors, First Nation citizens suffering from the ill effects of Residential Schools, and disabled. Her Excellency was given a glimpse into the side of the Yukon not immediately evident; 3rd highest rate of violence in Canada, poverty, homelessness, housing shortage, widening gap in income and struggles with current cuts and bureaucracy -- in making insufficient resources try to meet the needs. Candid discussions identifying the great needs left very little time to focus on solutions and successes.

The RWC explained that while they were sometimes seen as not having a legitimate seat at these discussions, (after all they represent and are seen as the privileged that have good jobs and working conditions) the union deals with same issues and effects in the workplace and their community and strives to improve standards for all. The RWC provides a forum and voice and is not in danger of being stifled due to fear of funding. Through direct and indirect funding and support the RWC has worked most organizations as well as taking lead in campaigns or political action which was acknowledged around the room.

The Governor General thanked the participants for sharing and giving a better understanding of unique hardships and issues facing Yukoners. She vowed to carry these issues forward in her discussions with political leaders. As well, she invited all to participate in her on-line forum, chats and blogs as another tool to further break down the barriers and separation and carry on supporting and working towards communities living in harmony. She also noted the importance for the group to stay in contact and encouraged regular meetings to better support each other. Check out www.citizenvoices.gg.ca