ADVISORY COMMITTEE BRINGS TOGETHER STAKEHOLDERS

Article by **Linda Rapp**, City of Whitehorse, YT

The City of Whitehorse has a long history. From the rich traditions of our local First Nations to the thousands of people who traveled here during the Gold Rush, our City has many faces. With the construction of a rail line between Alaska and the Yukon and the construction of paddle wheelers to use between Whitehorse and Dawson City, Whitehorse became a transportation hub. From its humble beginnings as an outpost Whitehorse has become northern Canada's most cosmopolitan city.

The City of Whitehorse joined CCMARD in March 2012 and the topic was scheduled for follow up in the 2013 round of the City's Strategic Planning. During the Spring 2013 Strategic Planning process, CCMARD was identified as a point of action and as a result, a group of interested community members and staff developed a draft "Terms of Reference" for the Mayor and Council's review. In the Fall of 2013, the CCMARD Advisory Committee's "Terms of Reference" document was approved by Council and a recruitment process for committee members was undertaken. The response from community members was very positive and we filled a 10 member committee with good community representation.

The CCMARD Advisory Committee has been working towards creating an Action Plan to guide Whitehorse's work. The "Terms of Reference" identifies the role of the Committee as:

- Advising the City Council on best practices for developing and implementing policies, plans, services and facilities that eliminates racism and discrimination;
- Monitoring and reporting to City Council racist and discriminatory practices in the City of Whitehorse; and
- Acting as a liaison between community members and City Council on issues of racism and discrimination in the City of Whitehorse.

The CCMARD Advisory Committee has participated in a number of activities. As part of celebrations marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21, 2014) the Committee, along with City Council, engaged all Yukon Communities, to produce the first Proclamation to promote social inclusion. Members participated in a "Diversity Speaks" event, an occasion for the community to come together to talk about racism, hosted by Cultures Connect as an opportunity to be introduced to the community and to gather feedback on future priorities for the Advisory Committee. With respect to the treatment of aboriginal women, the Committee also brought forward a draft resolution regarding the RCMP Report on murdered and missing Aboriginal women and supported the call for

a national inquiry. The initiative is in line with CCMARD's call to work increasing with aboriginal peoples and youth. The following resolution was passed unanimously by City Council (2014):

> • WHEREAS it has been clearly demonstrated that aboriginal women in Canada are disproportionately represented in statistics of murdered and missing persons, and Whitehorse as a community has been directly affected by this tragedy;
>
> • BE IT RESOLVED THAT Whitehorse City Council hereby endorses a call for an independent national enquiry into the case of missing and murdered aboriginal women; and
>
> • THAT Whitehorse City Council supports the efforts of aboriginal women's groups and the R.C.M.P. to develop a plan of action to address the root causes of this epidemic of violence against aboriginal women and put a stop to it.

We believe that it is important to base our planning and initiatives on rigorous data. For this reason, the Advisory Committee is reviewing internal policies, procedures, and practices, as well as data from various organizations and sources to assist in identifying key issues and priorities. Support for anti-discrimination has been so strong that some subcommittees are starting to form in an effort to look at specific topics and actions that will require volunteer resources. In all its work, the Advisory Committee uses CCMARD's 10 Commitments to guide its work to develop an Action Plan. The action plan process has brought together a range of stakeholders in our communities under a vision and has created an opening for dialogue around the priorities in our work. It has also motivated individuals to contribute in their own way to enhancing the inclusiveness of Whitehorse.