

Yellowknife Women's Society & The Centre for Northern Families

Report for GROOTS Intl and the Huairou Commission

Introduction and Organizational Overview

The Yellowknife Women's Society (YWS) was formed in 1990 as an independent grassroots body to represent women's voices in negotiating the predominant issues at that time. Originally focused on women's right to choose, YWS has since expanded into an overseeing body facilitating various programs, including the Centre for Northern Families. The YWS statement of principles explains, "the Yellowknife Women's Society recognizes the diversity of women and the validity of their views and goals. The Society will serve as an umbrella for many types of charitable activities without trying to rationalize them in terms of any single philosophy." YWS is governed by a minimum of five women, operating under a consensus model for decision making. The Centre for Northern Families was created within three months of the formation of the YWS and serves 450 individuals and families each year. The Centre was created as a drop-in space for women to network and share ideas, as well as a shelter for women in need.

Organizational Structure and Programs

The Yellowknife Women's Center operates the Centre for Northern Families. Within the Centre, the shelter is officially entitled the Yellowknife Women's Centre. The Yellowknife Women's Centre is unique from the other shelters in Yellowknife in its willingness to accept all women in need of shelter, regardless of substance use or abuse. The Centre for Northern Families, apart from sharing house with the Yellowknife Women's Centre, operates a variety of programs for immigrants, mothers, children and youth. They also participate in activities ranging from advocacy to health care provision. The following programs operate within the Centre:

- Centre for Northern Families Drop-In
- Emergency Shelter
- Advocacy and Social Development
 - Medical Clinic
 - Consultation and Committee Participation
- Healthy Baby Club
- Family Support Program
- Women's Wellness Program
- Youth Programs (Girls Night Out, HIV/AIDS retreat)
- Real Eyes Website Project
- Staff Training

Principles of the YWS:

- 1 Tolerance
- 2 Non-interference
- 3 Peaceful co-existence
- 4 The individual is valued

Objects of the YWS:

- To establish and maintain a women's centre.
- To promote women's rights and strengths.
- To provide information and support to women.
- To develop healthy families and provide opportunities for healing.
- To enhance cultural activities and traditions.
- To work with other groups to support families.

Funding

In Canada, foundations are unable to offer funding to women's centers as they are not given charitable status, rather they are registered as non-profit organizations. This means that funding generally comes in the form of donations from individuals or small businesses or from the government as program funding. Currently, the programs are funded as follows:

Federal Government

The Northern Secretariat funds the Healthy Baby Club

The Homelessness Initiative funds the Residential Tenancy Program

Territorial Government

Education, Culture and Employment funds the Emergency Shelter for Women; Income Support Orientation; Under the Healthy Children Initiative fund the Family Support and Children's Programs.

Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority funds the Drop-In Centre; programs for Inuit; and programs for the ethno-cultural community;

Local Governments

The City of Yellowknife has funded the School Break Programs

Donors

BHP Billiton

Bank of Montreal

AB Engineering

Bumper to Bumper

The Centre for Northern Families is in financial distress at most times, finding it difficult to pay rent or stock the kitchen with food. The food in the kitchen is largely determined by whatever is donated at that time.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Centre for Northern Families has had an independent evaluation of their work almost every year. Those evaluations, however, have proved to vary in their value to the organization. Arlene Hache, director of the Centre for Northern Families believes that monitoring and evaluation practices need improvement.