

Report  
on  
Watson Lake Community Meeting

August 22, 2003

## **Watson Lake Community Meeting Executive Summary**

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On August 22, 2003 a meeting was held at the Watson Lake Recreation Centre to hear issues of importance concerning the community by concerned citizens. The meeting convened at 9:00 a.m. and continued into the evening to allow business people an opportunity to participate. Throughout the day an estimated 75 people attended the meeting.

In attendance from Whitehorse were Premier Dennis Fentie; The Honourable Elaine Taylor, Minister of Justice; The Honourable Peter Jenkins, Minister of Health and Social Services; Inspector John Grant, and S/Sgt. Al Hubley, RCMP; as well as employees from the departments of Justice, Health & Social Services and Education. A listing of government representatives who attended this forum is attached as Appendix A.

Facilitators were Sandy Bryce and Norma Davignon.

This was an informal meeting where community members were asked to voice their individual concerns regarding issues within the community. A separate form was also made available to people if they did not want to present issues themselves or if they preferred to send their comments to Whitehorse (attached as Appendix B).

During the morning session, community members presented their concerns. The facilitators summarized the comments heard during this period into the following areas: RCMP, economic problems, the Criminal Justice system and by-law enforcement.

In the afternoon session the participants broke into smaller groups to review and discuss the various topics which emerged throughout the morning.

Four groups were initiated to look at and discuss the following topics: domestic and family violence, court process, alcohol and drug issues, vandalism, social services, RCMP response, youth and *Yukon Criminal Justice Act* and economic issues. A spokesperson for each group presented those results. Not all groups discussed or reported on each topic.

It is apparent that most citizens share many of the same concerns. They are concerned about the high incidents of domestic and family violence. There are children who are afraid to go home and who have no where else to go so they remain on the streets late at night. Children show up for school hungry and are therefore unable to learn. Many felt the community needs additional counselling services and a greater capacity for health workers to visit homes.

The community feels that alcohol and drug abuse is on the rise in both youth and adults. This results in abusive behaviour and dysfunctional families. Concern was also expressed about the drinking, driving and inappropriate behaviour exhibited at closing time at the local hotels. It was felt that the local RCMP did not have enough members to control this situation. People are spending money on alcohol and drugs instead of supporting their families.

Vandalism and “break-ins” into local businesses as well as property crimes have increased. This is costing store owners and private citizens additional money for security measures and higher insurance premiums. There is also concern about the negative effect this is having on tourism and on the community as a whole.

Community members felt that Watson Lake does not have adequate policing resources assigned to the area. Incidents in Lower Post require the attention of the RCMP, leaving Watson Lake open. There was interest in a greater police presence at all times. A request that systems needed to be changed to ensure effective coverage to the town.

The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* was felt to be inadequate. At times, they feel that there is a perception that youth can do anything they want and that the *Act* protects them; that the RCMP could not charge the youth and therefore criminal activities continued. People want more punishment for those youth committing crimes and want them to be held responsible.

Along with the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, people said the court process was too long. Court was only convened once a month, if not cancelled, and wanted it to happen more often.

The economy of Watson Lake is at an all time low. There are no new jobs and no new prospects of any. Community members said they would like to see some economic progress in this area. People need to work. Once people are earning money respect returns which helps the symptoms of community malaise disappear. Right now, parents can't afford to give their children money for entertainment so they hang out in the streets.

There are not enough family support workers. Family support workers make a difference. The ones they do have are exhausted from their heavy workload and are stressed. More workers are needed.

While there are some good programs in the schools, funding is not always available to ensure that programs continue. Different programs are required for those students who are not good at academics. The community would like to see youth counselors. It was also noted that it is expensive for youth to go to the Rec Centre. There needs to be more extra-curricular programming for teens to get them off the street.

Volunteers in the community are “volunteered” out.

On the positive side the community spoke about the need to see things change. They talked about how they are pulling together to find the solutions that are required to address the challenges facing them. They want to build a safe and healthy community and are prepared to, both individually and collectively, invest in their town.

The community observed that they must stop turning a blind eye to the all the problems they see and report them to the RCMP, stand up to youth and provide better support to people who need it. They asked for more and different training opportunities in their community to help them effectively deal with issues. Examples are family violence training and auxiliary police training.

It was agreed that this initial meeting would not to cure the problems facing Watson Lake but was an opportunity to bring people together to voice their opinions. It was acknowledged that there is no easy answer. The Yukon government departments involved were there to listen and review options that may assist the community.

The meeting ended with a commitment to complete a written report of the meeting which would be provided to the community and to arrange a follow-up meeting to further develop a strategy to address the needs in the community.

## GROUP SESSIONS

During the afternoon, community members broke into individual groups. Each group was asked to discuss the following topics and be prepared to report on those discussions.

The topics were selected by a consensus of the participants following the morning session. They were:

Domestic and Family Violence  
Court process  
Alcohol and Drug Issues  
Vandalism  
Social Services  
RCMP response  
Youth and YCJA  
Economic Issues

Each group had a spokesperson . Not all groups reported on each issue.

The following pages summarize the written reports each group made on flip chart paper and the verbal explanations.

The group reports were a combination of observations and suggestions.

## **GROUP 1**

- hot lunches and breakfasts needed. Too many kids coming to school hungry
- LFN has helped but need support
- JES hot lunch – need \$11,500 to run for a school year. 90 of 170 kids take advantage of program.
- relationship between nutrition and learning school
- DARE - need for two more years
  - o excellent program – national program taught across Canada to Grade 5 students
- Healing Centre
  - o after care (use example of LAWS)
- youth appreciation tickets
  - o no celebrations in WL of the accomplishments of youth
- White Water Rafting program
  - o RCMP supported
- Francis Lake culture camp
- Choices and Changes – public health prevents this with schools
  - o excellent program developed by Dept. of Education – doing 4 – 9 this year good addition
- large number of people with poor reading/writing skills.
  - o Parents not able to help their children.
- skill development for youth – who may not do well in school system.
  - o Need practical skills. Trades are very important.
- Healthy Families - \$ for program - was a decision made that Watson Lake did not need this (who said that and why)
- one to one home support – parenting

- Family Support Worker – Maggie
  - o want more of that – key is going into the homes
- Pilot Project – Leadership Program? Peer programs-mentoring programs – have had several success stories
- store front education
  - o alternative school setting
- need Youth counsellor
  - o (guaranteed funding) to move around and meet teens

## **GROUP 2**

- Domestic & Family Violence
  - o FCPU – training session in Whitehorse in October for individuals (20-30 people) interested in learning how to facilitate sessions on domestic violence
  - o Group sessions in Watson Lake
- need to discover the root cause
  - o Issues behind alcohol/drug use, domestic violence (e.g. residential school, suppressed emotions, lack of self-worth)
- need to assess what people's needs are
- need to become involved with the police
  - o Block parents
  - o auxiliary police members
  - o neighbourhood watch
  - o other community based initiatives.
- Youth
  - o Youth centre with pool table
  - o Training/workshop opportunities needed for youth
  - o Anger management
  - o healthy relationships conflict resolution need to be taught in school



### **GROUP 3**

- all these areas are interrelated – hard to separate
- Youth criminal/justice- how is it being resourced?
  - o Seems more for larger population
- needs to be more community policing itself
- kids at night – need alternative if home not safe
- community needs to start small ie no littering, no swearing and be willing to enforce (taking pride)
  - o When trying to enforce need to judge situations individually
- have two groups
  - o adults who need help for whatever reason; and
  - o their kids live with them
- need to have mentoring program
- need life skills in our schools and for adults – not just “balance a cheque book” but also self esteem, communications, anger management, etc.
- need art, music, theatre classes/programs for those who can’t do the academics
- drugs on the street – we have become too accepting
  - o allowing users/sellers to be very brazen
- need to build up our volunteers.
  - o Now a few people doing it all
- need to take responsibility
  - o We have become too lenient
- economics - tourism in summer, logging/mining – not sustaining at present
- need other economic possibilities

## **GROUP 4**

### Safety

- Community needs to work on safety
- Safety Circles
  - o community creates circle
  - o set up safety circles around the person or business
  - o women chooses who makes her feel safe
  - o ask who isn't safe? Why?
  - o Training needed
  - o Cultural sensitivity
  - o Mandatory training
  - o RCMP training (interview techniques)
  - o Full support from victim

### When Someone Doesn't Feel Safe

- when hurt – starts feeling shame
- because we see so much violence we see it as normal – think it happens everywhere
- people are still living in fear
- are public places in Watson Lake that are not safe.

### Challenges Of Feeling Safe

- not listening
- people in power not listening
- in first Nations communities – very close knit families
  - o Delicate balance
  - o Abuse affects everyone
  - o Youth silenced/not believed
  - o Feel like outcasts – worst thing that can happen to a FN person

### What Can We Do To Feel Safe?

- do community safety circles
- make those around us and ourselves more accountable
  - o individual (role model)
  - o family
  - o community
- long term will take a long time
- look at root causes (R.C.)
- systematic racism is a reality
- community awareness
  - o not being silenced

- community support/services
  - o safe circles
  - o immediate
  - o long term healing

#### Accountability

- voicing concerns
- collective
  - o Sisterhood/brotherhood
  - o Belonging/supportive
  - o courage

#### Successes And Opportunities

- individual courage
- safety circles
- breaking the silence
- street youth worker needed
- creating sisterhood
- support boys and girls
- belonging
- healing
- support(ive) for men, Women and families
- 
- need all levels of government to be involved
  
- need to hear the grassroots
  
- victim services should be based in Watson Lake
  
- drug and alcohol councillor

## **GROUP 5 – YOUTH**

Although youth from the community did not attend some comments were received and present on their behalf by Sandy Bryce.

- no where for them to go
- no work this summer
- would like training
- place where pool table is available
- need anger management, conflict resolution
- healthy relationships

**Comments from Community Meeting  
Watson Lake  
August 22, 2003**

**Premier Dennis Fentie** – opening remarks

- opening dialogue about how to move forward
- improvement in economy is essential
- lets work on what to do to solve

**Minister Peter Jenkins** – opening remarks

- knows there are problems
- doesn't have all the answers
- not responsibility of one agency but of one community

**Minister Taylor** - opening remarks

- very informal session today
- outlined of a number of things she has heard about vandalism against visitors & businesses; stories of drug and alcohol abuse etc.
- lots of positive things going on in the community; we must focus on these
- will be a gathering on Sunday, KTC and CPAWS
- look for ways to better coordinate and deliver services
- the challenges we face are faced by many communities
- These are Yukon challenges

**A/Commanding Officer John Grant** – opening remarks

- forum very timely
- RCMP like to communicate
- national strategy goal is safe homes -- safe communities
- whether unsafe situation is real or perceived – it is still a matter of concern
- communication is key and we need to do just that today
- are expecting come criticism
- explained role of Al Hubley
- Larry McDonald reports to Al Hubley
- he lived in Watson Lake 22 years ago – it is a very different community now.

**Introduction of Facilitators**

- Sandy Bryce, Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit; and
- Norma Davignon, Community Justice Coordinator

**Prayer by Elder – Maggie Dick**

Gift to Elder

**Community Member (CM):**

- system must change
- RCMP are understaffed
- if the RCMP get a call-out to Lower Post; no one is left in Watson Lake
- big issue of RCMP providing services in Lower Post
- justice system puts kids on probation. no monitoring of youth on probation
- problem with Gateway Hotel with illegal purchases of alcohol
- big problem with justice system re: young offenders
- RCMP can't stop kids because justice system won't allow it
- justice system is not working; tribal council is not working
- RCMP cannot stop a kid and ask "what are you up to"

**CM**

- has operated a manufacturing plant in Watson Lake for six years. Premier won't talk to him or help him out
- town won't support his business
- businesses in town won't support it
- can employ 200 people but cannot get support.
- was told to go to Alberta
- kids need help and jobs
- he has talked to Social Services and Family Services.

**John Grant comments to CM**

- appreciated Man #1 comments
- Yukon has a high police ratio to citizen population. This is because of geography
- Watson Lake has a high police population and long distances to travel. Resourcing levels are limited.
- Lower Post has one member paid for by British Columbia government (arrangement for years)
- to increase resources needs analysis is required
- dialogue to be initiated by local RCMP and the community
- suggests that we should look at more officers and more OT for PO's.

**CM**

- if RCMP is called away, call another RCMP officer in to work overtime.
- recalls a scene of an accident were there was no RCMP to attend.
- local policing will not be able to stop violent actions.
- should be less tolerant of public drinking
- the public intoxication is too public
- need to sober up
- there are too many situations where RCMP cannot respond and local groups cannot respond to violent incidents

**Larry McDonald, RCMP** from audience.

- there were 1420 calls for service to the RCMP this year in Watson Lake

**CM**

- there is lots of drinking late at night
- they cause trouble
- out kids see them
- they harass visitors

**Peter Chisholm**

- two ways to deal with public intoxication.
- *Yukon Liquor Act* – offence if a danger to self or others
- case before supreme Court right now dealing with this
- solution might be to look at Yukon Liquor Act
- the RCMP can enforce the Liquor Act. This is a criminal code if they are a danger to themselves or others.
- Territorial legislation to be righted up.

**CM**

- town needs new rules.
- RCMP need to walk around and pull drunks off the streets.
- need patrol officers walking around to control the drinking

**CM**

- RCMP is not the problem. It's the Justice system.
- postponed of court circuit is an issue 90% of the time.
- RCMP can't be there
- Justice system is not working through and through
- is a revolving door out of the courts.

**CM**

- represents courts and kids in court
- yes there are alcoholics
- told Man #1 that she is doing her job

**CM**

- not just native kids but also white kids
- all across the board

**CM**

- let's not just point fingers and say one system is at fault
- there are no jobs out there
- let's find some solutions
- protective
- educational assistance needed
- need to have a job or idleness creates boredom

### **Sandy Bryce summarizing this segment.**

- RCMP not enough staff
- economic problems in Watson Lake
- Criminal Justice system not responding
- By-law ideas around

### **BREAK**

### **Dwayne Esler – Adult Probation – Watson Lake**

- has been here 8-9 years
- works with Youth/Adults
- there is still public drinking but less
- lets not forget the good things that are going on LAWS summer camp
- in bad economic time his case load goes up
- good times – caseloads go down
- lot of contributing factors
- admires this community because it keeps trying
- cycle
- involved in different kid things.

### **CM**

- issues of rural women were studied. Is violence against women a norm?
- in Canada statistics show that Watson Lake has highest rate of this incident.
- counselling services case loads are at an overload in this town. This is a serious issue. There is burn out and the professional “good heart” is lost. We need to take care of all professionals.
- advocating for safety for women
- women from SOW here to do a study on violence – fears violence is the norm in the community
- Watson Lake highest in Yukon for domestic violence
- was impressed with attendance at vigil shows progress in this area
- there is need for preventative teachings in all schools.
- need for community watch and a curfew
- need a “stop the violence” counsellor
- current resources are overloaded
- need support for professionals in the community
- support for intervention in the schools
- look at things like curfew and neighbourhood watch
- comment the word of LAWS in the community
- also works with LBT Force
- safety of young girls in the community (do have Friday night pizza night)
- challenges community to help get the young girls there
- takes everyone to address the problem
- alcohol is a problem. People are becoming frustrated



- this is an awesome opportunity and we should not let this pass

### Solutions

- counselling services in Watson Lake are overloaded
- how do we address this problem
- possibilities in schools – prevention
- needs – curfews
- community watch
- holistic view
- task force – Shirley (working with Moms)
- picking up bottles off back yard – vomit off of front
- shelter is high risk contact CMP
- RCMP response has been really good

### CM

- Help and Hope have been a tremendous benefit to a lot of students. It needs to be supported and funded. It helps to bring security to families
- at the beginning of school students are happy for several weeks.
- have some students that are quite aggressive
- Kelly helped many students
- amount of support is great from social workers
- not enough of them/need to double them
- are facing diminishing resources at the school
- have very needy students for both skills and emotional support
- economy diminishing resources
- loss of teachers
- students are needy – need emotional support \pleased with the level of service with RCMP
- RCMP are welcome and are often in the school
- have the DARE program in schools/Officer Hoodlam – very positive (grade 5)
- ratio 60/40 First Nation/non First Nation
- would like to see Leaders to practice more formal consultation/structures on how to tackle the problems between town and First Nations
- individually do but should meet regularly
- need more social workers/family counsellors

### CM

- vandalism
- Court JP courts or circuit court
- never sees any business people come to court to hear what goes on
- would like to have them come and voice their concerns
- have asked and been told they are too busy
- communication is essential/welcomes all business people to attend
- JP court – twice a month.
- need to come up with a solution
- if people come to circles maybe can make suggestions

**CM**

- Court system – remanded forever. Needs to be timelines set, victims wait too long for closure
- like to see change
- here was a gentleman who was paid by businesses to patrol on his bicycle and reported suspicious activity to RCMP

**CM**

- businesses should be patrolled all night long
- curfew for young – especially school age
- would like to see Citizen on patrol
- problem with RCMP at night – if you call you are forwarded to Whitehorse (RCMP in Watson Lake should be there all night).

**Janet Rushant, Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit - Whitehorse**

- worked six years in Watson Lake
- there is not a victim services worker in Watson Lake. A worker (Cynthia Onions) comes from Whitehorse. She is on the Court Circuit.
- what can Victim Services offer Watson Lake.

**CM**

- alcohol/drug addiction
- these people are unable of handling money
- Social Services should dole it out every two weeks or each week so people can buy groceries

**CM**

- services in Watson Lake are limited
- police are too far away
- can all work together to make a difference
- spoke highly of youth and how to win respect instead of always being against them. Give kids the benefit of doubt.
- there are a handful of youth having trouble with their life – don't paint all with same brush
- remember that we were all youth once.

## **CM**

- could the RCMP not patrol at the Gateway from 10-2:00
- kids hang out at Archies
- have a high dropout rate in high school
- needs program with mentors to help to allow kids to stay in school to share goals and encourage/recognize students –listen to youth
- bad students are known/good students never are (more emphasis on negative then positive)
- need to look at family violence
- 80% of youth are effected by drugs
- 3 drug ODs
- state of emergency

## **Dwayne Esler**

- did have a person working with high risk youth
- program ran for about 1 year
- maybe look at this again

## **CM**

- déjà vu (have been to similar meeting before)
- dealing with the very same issues
- solution 20 years ago was a curfew (didn't work and won't work now)
- have a major drug and alcohol problem
- very dysfunctional families
- drug problem is destroying the youth and adults
- ask teachers what they have to deal with
- RCMP cannot deal with it.
- vandalism and violence are systems of alcohol and drug problems
- need to embark on a community-wide dealing program
- municipal governments do not have the \$\$, Territorial government does not have it; Feds are not living up to their end.
- will need money by the bucketful to deal with this
- Watson Lake is a community of 1500—need \$\$\$ and creative energy
- need to get to the guts of the problem in their families
- knows community has Ann Bayne LAWS who knows the healing journey – lets lean on her
- stop burying head in the sand.

## **CM**

- create corporation that will be resourceful and sustainable to create furniture written in 1998
- town needs an sustainable business
- was to be a joint venture between KFN, WLTC and YTG
- support me and we can do it – build a community based business
- will continue fighting for community-based business.

## **CM**

- former teacher
- active in LAWS
- believe in healing for FN people and for community
- are from LP – are struggling there as well
- need to look at early intervention
- have to come together and attack the problem
- the problem not the colour of people's skin
- the key is spirituality and value system
- need to make stand against family viability and sexual abuse of children
- has had a lot of anger and has worked on self – need to stand together
- keep eyes open and call the RCMP

## **CM**

- not an expert – don't know anything
- thank you to Dennis Fentie and Minister of Justice and everyone
- came because you are and want to see a different community
- the community moves from crisis to crisis.
- need to look at the bigger problem of alcohol and drugs
- went to retreat this summer – was told 80% of youth have a drug problem
- kids use cocaine, heroin, alcohol, Tylenol 3 –
- we are in a crisis.
- if you do nothing will be burying people
- not an easy job – so much pain
- not an expert just trying to be a good person
- needed healing and is still working on that
- form a task force or committee
- need economic development but also need social development
- need to build our community or outside resources will come in and take the jobs.

## **CM**

- past resident of Watson Lake and Executive Director of Kaushees
- works with Shona
- tries to keep connected with Watson Lake
- why do we drink and do drugs – most people have a story – everyone has trauma
- we work with trauma we get traumatized and start victim blending
- has had to more deeply understand trauma
- reason for drugs and alcohol – trauma
- stress = drugs and alcohol
- traumatic home life = drugs and alcohol

- a number of reasons for youth entering the justice system is violence in the home
- prevention and awareness of violence starts with ourselves
- have to challenge ourselves in how we treat and respond to victims
- more resources behind FVPU – up to 2 years ago had a coordinator – Act not being used
- long term – should have a “Stop the Violence” counsellor to spearhead a comprehensive plan
- here to help do safety planning this community
- training in vicarious trauma for RCMP/Drs./Counsellors
- thanks to Dennis Fentie and government

### **FVPA**

- offered assistance to schools

### **Elaine Taylor**

- where do we go from here.
- plans for better communication
- Victim Services – why not in Lower Post
- delivery of services to all our communities
- working in Lower Post – will try to negotiate with British Columbia

### **Dennis Fentie**

- lost Drug and Alcohol counsellor loss – will look into that
- need to uplift our communications
- jail – Government will not build a 25 – 30 million jail
- 80% recidivism – lead initiative is not corrections but to make a difference
- warehousing people will never work
- YTG will not do it alone – no one will
- must all work on these issues
- will look at all resources not just alcohol and drugs.
- deal with corrections reform not to jail
- testimony of gravity of situation not only in Watson Lake but in Yukon
- we need to come together.

## **AFTERNOON SESSION**

### **Anne Westcott speaks on YCJA**

- came into effect April 1, 2003
- contains many of the same features of the old Act
- main change – encourages early formal intervention by police – gives more detail about these early interventions and greater authority for them to happen
- a lot more attention to a meaningful response to all crimes – is a range of responses to ensure that minor crime is dealt with appropriately and quickly
- more focused attention and treatment for offenders who commit more serious crimes

Three aspects to this:

1. encourage information RCMP activity; and provides greater flexibility
2. attention to meaningful response to detail in all criminal activity (less serious crimes)
3. target seriousness of law to offenders treatment to violent offenders

### **Peter Chisholm**

- focus on new resolution in community to resolve
- using incarceration as last resort
- Justice system comes in at last stage – focus in Yukon has been on other than custody as a solution
- new act suggests getting early instead of putting people in jail
- try to rehabilitate
- Justice system is the clean-up – new YCJA is trying to get the justice system involved early
- problems are social problems that become justice problems

Comments following the workshop sessions:

### **Elaine Taylor**

- thank you
- won't drop the ball
- are next steps

### **Dennis Fentie**

- see his community is rock solid
- very positive
- will return to the community and report to talk about next steps
- will take all of us.

## **EVENING SESSION**

### **CM**

- ploy to boost economy
- lot of problems in the economy
- see 3 to 5 counselling per day instead of workers compensation
- economy so low and is a significant contributor to the problems
- biggest boost would be to get mining and forestry going
- problems of youth due to poverty

### **CM**

- Mother of 4 (13 & 14 years)
- in last month every day come home telling about a drunk passed out downtown
- not sure how to fix it
- kids need to be held accountable for what they do
- commit a crime and nothing happens
- 14 years ago best community ever – has changed in last 3 years
- see high school kids rolling drunks

### **CM**

- recently broken into
- RCMP are saying that under YCJA can't do anything
- since April/no kids charged because nothing happens
- 11 year olds out at 3:00 am
- have curfews in some places

### **Peter Chisholm**

- reiterated option of YCJA
- kids can be charged depending on crime
- Watson Lake is one of the busiest RCMP detachments per capita
- can pick up the 11 year olds and do but take them home but no one cares

### **CM**

- appalled when advised by JP at a Chamber of Commerce Meeting on the YCJA that YCJA had “sold out” the Justice system
  - o Feds the RCMP's hands are tied
  - o Sees young offenders back on the street right away
- real sense of insecurity in the community
- the number of crimes are driving up the cost of insurance
- YCJA Act has to be rethought
- maybe bring some pain back into the Justice system – needs to be consequences
- we are all paying for the crimes

- there needs to be some consequences to youth crime
- being a victim, is very hard to go through the court system
- want to be nice, tolerant and civilized – need to get tougher

### **Peter Chisholm**

- are some community panels being formed to try to deal with kids in the community
- could have colleague do a workshop in Watson Lake on how to set up panels to deal with kids under YCJA

### **CM**

- confused about what community is doing right now with young offenders

### **CM**

- broken into twice in one weekend
- need action and need action now

### **CM**

- Dene Keh has agreed to handle non-First Nation youth

Duane Esler

- in past was a Watson Lake youth diversion committee

### **CM**

- it is our community – if we want to watch the drunks on the street – do that
- if don't then call the cops or challenge kids talking things off the shelf
- we watch drug dealers – do something
- if you want to be safe must work at it

### **Dwayne Esler**

- saw a man talking to three kids about getting a bottle
- said that he would report him for bootlegging
- did stop that action that time
- speak up – take action

### **Peter Chisholm**

- women talked to him about being very afraid to go to the RCMP
- the first step is tell the RCMP what is happening – becomes the first info they have to work with to get a warrant

### **CM**

- when he was a kid, his reason for not doing something was fear of being known
- doesn't understand why young offenders can't be identified
- Courts for minors are closed – goes to court and is hushed up
- knows what it is like to earn back trust
- has been an addict



- is picking up heroin needles around town
- has worked for 7 years to get over being a thief, liar and drunk
- need to take pride in the town
- we have to take responsibility for ourselves
- open to any ideas

### **Sandy Bryce**

- need to both clean-up committee and the early intervention
- talked to youth – were scared to come in

### **CM**

- her son was going to come – asked him what we could do
- have big rec centre – but if you don't have money you can't go
- pay \$5.00 to play pool – get it back but if don't have \$5.00 – out of luck – if parents have no money or don't care
- 10 years ago almost every weekend was something at the park for kids
- don't know if it is lack of volunteers
- same people volunteer over and over and then want more
- were lots of fun events that WL used to have
- may be no more minor ball
- any time has volunteered has had to pay her own babysitter – part of why are losing volunteers
- ball season 6 weeks – while there kids are busy
- no ball after grade 8 – no sports for 14-17 year olds
- need activities for all ages year round

### **CM**

- in 20 years have seen changes – good and bad
- are putting a lot of money into rec centre
- could restructure
- could have outdoor basketball hoops

### **CM**

- have had some meetings of Chamber of Commerce and RCMP
- are looking at more auxiliary officers next year
- plan to commit to have regular meetings with Chamber, Town of Watson Lake and RCMP

### **Duane Esler**

- has been involved with Halloween patrol – did it for a number of years
- didn't have to have one and nothing happened
- why not every night?

### **John Grant**

- very impressed with the temper of the discussions
- will be 4 auxiliary positions in Watson Lake
- do have strict recruiting guidelines – but beat a path to our door and we will get you trained and up
- COPS is also a simple and cost friendly program
- won't impose any of these programs – What does the community see the RCMP as doing. How can they address these
- if want RCMP Youth Strategy Inspector to come down and talk to you they will be sent.
- youth representative in Yukon is now for all of Yukon
- Communications Strategist – hired to tell/listen to people

### **CM**

- works at the Gateway or Watson lake Hotel? – 12:30 – 1:00 am – there was schizophrenic at the bar – when called response from RCMP was handle it yourself
- same thing happened two nights later
- is the only summer has ever concerned her
- can't RCMP do patrols past at closing to just warn people
- needs to just be a presence at 2:00 am to prevent the drinking and driving – 15 – 20 minutes patrol @ 2:00 pm

### **CM**

- works at Liquor Store and volunteers
- have had some very positive experiences with RCMP
- hear people complain about police but then won't tell the police or PO etc.
- pass the info on to the police – be accountable and stand up and be counted
- we can do a lot to make their job easier

### **Dennis Fentie**

- beginning of getting something started. Watson Lake will not lie down.
- we are not lost. If we continue to work on problems we will turn things around.
- a collection of ideas to address these problems
- you are not being left
- well rounded discussions today and tonight
- will be back to talk about next steps.

## Summary of Written Comments Received

- Explain how the new Youth Act can help our young people in trouble.
- Establish a Task force to ensure ongoing dialogue, communication and action. We have to ensure this process does not die after this evening. All partners/stakeholders should be involved.
- Community has to see progress or they will stop believing.
- Young offenders need to see something of substance will happen.
- Help community members take back their community.
- Comments about a community workshop meeting that was held in October of 2002. The focus of this meeting was to “discover” Watson Lake’s assets. The recommendations that came from the workshop was to promote a strong vision, promoting a healthy, safe and integral community.
- There is a lack of police presence in the community. They do not patrol enough or show up when called. Break-ins and vandalism has increased. Does there have to be serious incidents before something is done.
- The police used to patrol outside the bars every night at 2:00 pm. This was a huge deterrent for people who were considering driving home. There are late night bush parties and the police are never there. Can’t rely on the police if called.
- Alcohol and drugs are entrenched in all levels of this community.
- Addictions counselling/support needs to be in this community on a full-time basis.

- Citizens on Patrol is a good idea but need money to pay for people's fuel – economically people can't give their time, vehicle and fuel too – many people who would volunteer their time but they are in conflict with their work.
- Police need to be more present in the community. 24/7 not at their convenience.
- Social Services needs to take a much more active role in the community. Needs more staff/training etc.
- Need equality of programs for all – more money and funding needed.
- Mayor and Council and First Nation government need to work together to make the goal of a healthy community.
- People need to feel safe and supported in reporting activity/crime. Need response by RCMP and follow through. Personal threats to people who snitch/report things are endangering our community.
- The abuse of prescription drugs is huge.
- Our youth are our future and we need to focus and support them.
- Court cases get remanded forever and sometimes take months to resolve. The process needs to speed up.
- Lack an education vision. Parents show little interest in their children's progress at school. Education does not matter to people as they can also receive their social assistance.
- There needs to be a curfew for young children under 14 years but who would be in charge of this. Maybe co-work with the Liard First nation.
- In the past we had a person who patrolled the businesses on a bicycle and reported to the RCMP.
- Many crimes happen after 2:30 am when the RCMP are off-duty.
- Would like to see camps where the young people can get new skills and repay society by doing various jobs such as cutting wood, clearing driveways, manual labour.
- We need an undercover team to get the drug dealers who are supplying drugs to the community members.

**APPENDIX A****Watson Lake Community Meeting  
August 22, 2003****List of Government Attendees  
(identified to attend)**

Name	Branch	Department	Community
Noreen McGowan	ADM/Community Justice and Public Safety	<b>Justice</b>	Whitehorse
Sandy Sewell	Community Justice & Public Safety	Justice	Whitehorse
Norma Davignon	Community Justice & Public Safety	Justice	Whitehorse
Michelle Hearty	Community Justice & Public Safety	Justice	Whitehorse
Sandy Bryce	Manager/Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit	Justice	Whitehorse
Karen Goldsmith	Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit	Justice	Whitehorse
Janet Constable Rushant	Adult Probation	Justice	Whitehorse
Duane Esler	Adult Probation	Justice	Watson Lake
Thomas Uilyett	ADM – Legal Services	Justice	Whitehorse
Anne Westcott	Director, Family & Children's Services	<b>H&amp;SS</b>	Whitehorse
Gerry Drechsler	Manager, Regional Services	H&SS	Whitehorse
Marianne Watson	Social Worker	H&SS	Watson Lake
Sue Rudd	Watson Lake Hospital	H&SS	Watson Lake
Colin Kelly	Superintendent of Schools	<b>Education</b>	Whitehorse
Chris Knight	Principal, Johnson Elementary School	Education	Watson Lake
Carson Atkinson	Principal, Watson Lake Secondary School	Education	Watson Lake
Jennifer England	Director	<b>Women's Directorate</b>	Whitehorse
Robin Hamilton		Women's Directorate	Whitehorse
John Grant	A/Commanding Officer	<b>RCMP</b>	Whitehorse
Al Hubley	S/Sgt., NCO	RCMP	Whitehorse
Larry McDonald	Sgt. Larry MacDonald	RCMP	Watson Lake
Peter Chisholm	Criminal Prosecutions	<b>Federal Gov't</b>	Whitehorse
Liz Hanson	A/Regional Director General	<b>DIAND</b>	Whitehorse

**COMMUNITY FORUM**

**Crime Prevention and Public Safety  
Watson Lake, Yukon  
August 22, 2003**

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Please use this **'open space'** to provide us with your comments, suggestions or feedback related to this Community Forum.

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**Please feel free to either leave this form here with us today  
Or mail to  
Community Justice and Public Safety  
PO Box 2703  
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6  
Or fax to  
(867) 393-6326**

**You are invited to a**

# **Watson Lake Community Forum**

Friday August 22, 2003

9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

in the

Watson Lake Recreation Centre

Premier Dennis Fentie and Justice Minister Elaine Taylor will be in attendance, as well as senior officials from the RCMP, the Department of Justice and other departments.

They want to hear your concerns about public safety issues, property crime, vandalism and crime prevention.

The morning will be dedicated to hearing community issues, fears and concerns and the afternoon will focus on possible solutions, recommendations and on developing a plan for the future.

Coffee, tea and lunch will be provided for those in attendance.