

## **Justice Minister Responds to Call for Action**

WHITEHORSE - Justice Minister Mike Nixon responded to the call from disability rights advocates today in Whitehorse by promising to meet with them to discuss the need for an independent monitoring mechanism so that persons with disabilities can monitor their own rights.

His commitment came at the end of a week-long workshop training people with disabilities from all over the Yukon on how to monitor their own rights. Marcia Rioux, Distinguished Research Professor at York University and co-Director of Disability Rights Promotion International which conducts training on rights monitoring projects around the world, called the Yukon initiative “historic, groundbreaking and the first of its kind in the country.”

Speaking at the summit plenary, well known Yukoner Ramesh Ferris said, “We have a monumental opportunity here in the Yukon Territory to demonstrate once again how we all can be agents of change by working together to create an independent monitoring mechanism in order to ensure that human rights for people of all abilities are not only recognized but upheld.” An independent monitoring mechanism is required under the UN *Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* that both Canada and the Yukon have ratified.

Heather MacFadgen, Director of Human Rights, says, “We are optimistic that we can work with Minister Nixon because he understands from his own family life the barriers faced by people with disabilities. This training project has broken down barriers in the Yukon between different groups of people with various disabilities and has culminated in a common cause -- a group of people across disabilities from all over the Yukon trained, ready and willing to monitor their own rights. This is exactly what the UN Convention calls for and it is what can happen now in the Yukon.”

The week-long project, “Keeping Track of Our Rights”, involved people from Old Crow, Dawson, Burwash, Ross River and other Yukon communities and was co-sponsored by the Yukon Human Rights Commission and the Yukon Council on Disabilities, with a grant from the Community Development Fund.

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