

# SKEENA DIVERSITY SOCIETY'S COMMUNITY REPORT

May 2007 – March 2008



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## 1. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**People** behind the scenes of the Skeena Diversity Society's work are:

Board Members of the Skeena Diversity Society 2007/08:

- Saša Loggin, Chair
- Jane Dickson, Vice-Chair
- Nirmal Parmar, Treasurer
- Audrey Bennett
- Gary Snider
- Jenny Poulin
- Jose Coosemans
- Colleen Austin
- Rosemary Craig
- David Harrison

Liaisons:

- Marilyn Davies, City of Terrace
- Cst. Cindy Nunes, Terrace RCMP Detachment

Coordinator

- Ruby Ware

The Society strives for diverse representation of community organizations and individuals. Board members currently represent Terrace & District Multicultural Association, Make Children First Network, Kalum Community School Society, Kitsumkalum 'Na Aksa Gila Kyew Learning Centre, Kitselas First Nations, Terrace Anti-Poverty Society, Terrace Community Justice Program. City of Terrace and Terrace RCMP Detachment assign liaisons that work closely with the Society.

### **Funding**

This work wouldn't be sustainable without the financial resources. Majority of the funds is provided by the Settlement and Multiculturalism Branch, Ministry of Attorney General.

Safe Harbour and Youth Ambassador Programs are funded by AMSSA.

City of Terrace contributed funds towards the work of Skeena Diversity Society, particularly anti-racism workshops and the development of the Anti-Racism Handbook.

Community Dialogue and My Story Contest sponsors: Kitsumkalum Education Department, Terrace Standard, Body by Lori, Skeena MLA Office, Terrace Public Library, Northwest Community College, Coast Mountains School District.

The generous contribution and support of our funders is greatly appreciated and respected.

**Thank you!**

## 2. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Skeena Diversity Society hosted Grade 7 Forum where students from Terrace/Thornhill schools attended a day of activities, dialogue and entertainment at Skeena Junior Secondary School. The purpose of the event was to bring grade 7 students who will be leaving their elementary schools at Skeena Jr. to learn about each other, learn about diversity and dialogue and break through some of the preconceptions that students may have grown up with.

- Get to know students from other elementary schools in Terrace/Thornhill through participating in collaborative activities and dialogue.
- Learn about dialogue and diversity.
- Share his/her points of view about being a young person living in our community.
- Hear from other students about their experiences and dreams.

### Preparation:

Students were encouraged to work on a collage that represents themselves, their interests & hobbies, their favourites, etc. At the beginning of the Forum, students displayed their collage and examine the others.

### Participants:

#### Grade 7 students:

Cassie Hall Elementary School: 9 students  
Suwilaawks Community School: 12 students  
Thornhill Elementary School: 5 students

#### Table Hosts:

Skeena Junior Secondary School – Leadership Club: 12 students  
Northwest Community College – Social Work Community Development: 7 students

Community Members: 4

### Program

Welcome and Icebreaker

Presentation of Collages

#### Activity #1: Diversity and Inclusion

Students divided into four groups ensuring that each group is mixed. They not only described what they believe diversity is but they got to experience diversity and inclusion through playdough: each student created a playdough character that needed to play a part in a story that each team wrote.

#### Entertainment

Line Dancing – spontaneous while waiting for lunch, led by Skeena Jr. Leadership Club students

Break Dancing – Moses Watts & Rob Kelly



## Activity #2: What Makes an Ideal Community?

Students were divided into different groups again. This time they discussed what they liked the most and least about their community. They drew their vision on an ideal community.



## Highlights: Similarities across All Groups

### What do you like best about Terrace?

- People are friendly
- Outdoors – Shames Mountain, trails, lake
- Good place to grow up
- Small town
- School
- Library
- Mall



### What do you like least about Terrace?

- Not enough to do for young people – we need a real sportsplex, youth centre & activities
- Not enough shopping
- Need more colour & art
- Hospital – concerned about the hospital being too old, not enough doctors
- Weather – it rains too much

### What makes a good community?

- Good people
- Good government
- Good laws & law enforcement
- Festivals
- Activities
- Recycling
- Clean water
- Schools
- Diversity
- Eliminate poverty
- No discrimination, stereotype and racism



## Conclusion

Building relationships between students of various ages and community members has proven an excellent start to helping all participants to understand diversity in a playful and safe environment. For most parts of the day, all students were engaged in the activities and suggested new ones.

This was a good format that we would like to build on – have more activities on hand, make sure that students are divided into different groups.

We will follow up with grade 10 students to assist in the Grade 10 forum as well as connect them to Youth Ambassador training program also offered by Skeena Diversity Society.

In preparation for this event next year, we will encourage other schools (3 more) to participate. We will interview both participating and non-participating schools to see what can be improved.

### 3. COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

The Skeena Diversity Society invited citizens of Terrace to join with others of diverse cultural backgrounds, leaders from business, government, First Nations, education, youth, media, health, the arts, law enforcement and faith based organizations to explore a number of questions together:



- a. Is Terrace a truly welcoming community?
- b. Do we know and respect one another?
- c. Do we appreciate and involve the many talented and skilled people in our community?
- d. How do we work together for a better sustainable future?

### Planning and Preparation

*Writing Contest: "My Story"*

In anticipation of the dialogue in February, launched a writing contest "My Story" with the local newspaper, the Terrace Standard. The call was made for writers of all ages to submit a story about what living in Terrace means to them. Over 50 entries were received and a selection of finalists was made in each of the four categories children, youth, young adults and over 55 years old. Many of the finalists attended the dialogue and were recognized with a certificate, a small honorarium and much applause.

### Planning Committee

There were many people and organizations involved in the planning and convening of the dialogue and they include: Nirmal Parmar, Jane Dickson, Audrey Bennett, Gary Snider, Marilyn Davies, Colleen Austin, Rosemary Craig, Jose Coosemans, Jenny Poulin, Cindy Nunes, Arlene Roberts, Denis Gagne, Karen Chrysler, Ginny Hawkshaw, Shylo Gerritsen, Susie Guno, Lora Hilbach, Tanya Johnson, Melanie Monds, Nadia Ouellet, and Saša Loggin (Society's Chair) and Ruby Ware (Coordinator).

### Program



The February 9 dialogue opened with more than 80 people present – all eager to get to know one another and that they did with a highly engaging opening exercise where each table grouping of 7-9 people formed into teams and introduced themselves, searched for their shared interests and then presented to the whole group both a team name and a demonstration of what they shared in common. This exercise was a great icebreaker. Following this exercise

the whole group explored the meaning of dialogue and created a list of guidelines for themselves.

The whole group also brainstormed their understanding of diversity.

Then it was time for small group work: **Table Topic #1: What's Your Story?**

*Share your story with your group. Why are you here? Add your story to the "Family Tree"*

The Agenda called for the next small group work: **Table Topic #2: Community from Your Point of View.** How do you see the community from your point of view?

*Is this community accepting/welcoming? What is your experience? Do we appreciate and involve the many talented and skilled people in our community?*

But participants decided that they were ready for an open mike session that explore questions about the community and its capacity to welcome and include all people and participants shared their varied views and experiences.

Finally, the small groups resumed to explore what they were committed to doing as a result of their reflections and what they had learned along the way. **Table Topic #3: Where do we go from here?** *What have we learned during the day? Personal commitment – immediate and long-term - towards a vibrant creative community that lives in diversity and strives for inclusion.* These comments were posted on banner number three and are summarized later in this report.

### **Main Issues:**

- There is still a divide between the aboriginal and no-aboriginal communities although many commented that they as aboriginal people mostly have felt welcomed and were able to pursue their goals of work and learning, but much more can be done
- Many spoke about the physical layout and feel of Terrace and expressed a desire to have the build environment be more inclusive (sidewalks) and more colourful and inviting aesthetically (from beige to bright!)
- Others encouraged their fellow citizens to take charge of their destiny and not be overly reliant on government to make change in their community. There was a sense that much more can be done in Terrace if citizens were more proactive and involved.
- Change is possible and racism and discrimination of any kind (sexual orientation, ability, visible minority) should not be tolerated and people need to be supported by others in the community to communicate this message.

## 4. COMMUNITY EVENTS

### Taste of Terrace

(Culinary Tour of Terrace)

August 11, 2007: Skeena Diversity Society organized a flavorsome event called Tastes of Terrace that had over 140 smiling people out and about on a sunny Saturday afternoon as a part of Terrace's Riverboat Days, a community event designed to get people out and about town on a tasting tour of local restaurants. The event was a great success and offered many a chance to experience new foods and culture. From French fondue to East Indian butter chicken and Mexican ceviche, the sold-out event had visitors and residents alike experiencing something new as they strolled from one downtown eatery to another.

Exceeding Skeena Diversity Society's best expectations, participants had a chance to try Terrace's rich culture, one bite at a time. Individual \$5 maps were sold prior to the event, and allowed map holders to visit the seven participating restaurants where each had prepared samples of their cuisine. Made possible by funding from the Ministry of Attorney General under the B.C. Anti-racism and Multiculturalism Program, Skeena Diversity is now looking at how to expand the event for the future. The feedback received was very positive with both restaurant owners and participants already thinking about next year's Taste of Terrace.



### Participating Restaurants

- Gordo's Cafe (Mexican)
- Hot House (East Indian)
- Gourmet House (Chinese)
- L'Ambiance Bistro (French)
- Cafenara (Korean)
- Starfish Bistro (variety)
- Checkers Pizza (Italian)

### Summary

- Participation by 7 downtown restaurants, 150 maps printed: 125 sold (\$5/map), 25 maps given away to media, volunteers and restaurants.
- The event was very well received by restaurant owners and participants – great balance of people, time and weather



- Most people walked between places
- Report of only one impatient map-holder having to wait when restaurant was busy
- Very good exposure for the Society

### **Recommendations for next year**

- Do it again but hold it only once a year during Riverboat Days to keep it special
- Downtown location is great, possibly split the event to two days with “driving restaurants” on one day and walking on another
- Work on cultural component of the event for next year – poster, info about ethnic restaurants, include recipes, etc.

## **Faces of Terrace**

(Stories by Terrace residents)

In anticipation of the community dialogue in February, launched a writing contest “My Story” with the local newspaper, the Terrace Standard. The call was made for writers of all ages to submit a story about what living in Terrace means to them. Over 50 entries were received and a selection of finalists was made in each of the four categories children, youth, young adults and over 55 years old.

### **Recommendations:**

Expanding this project to gather more stories and publish a book: Faces of Terrace.

## **5. TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS**

### **Anti-Racism Response Handbook**

Revision 2008 includes updated versions of Part I: Understanding of Racism and Part II: Responding to Racism as well as an addition of Part IV: Community Dialogue.

Condensed version of the Handbook is also available.

### **Safe Harbour Program**

Skeena Diversity staff hosted several workshops this year. They started by bringing together past participant to learn from their experience, how they used their training, and listen to their suggestions for improvement.

New businesses and organizations were trained, partnership with Terrace Chamber of Commerce have been established for free promotion of all upcoming training.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Continue the training
- Work with AMSSA o connect with large employers (ie. Safeway, Canadian Tire, etc.) via their headquarter office.
- Develop a follow up mechanism to ensure that Safe Harbour locations continue to train their staff (concern of staff turnover).

### **Leadership BC Program**

(Program of Terrace Chamber of Commerce)

Skeena Diversity facilitated the Diversity Unit for the 15 participants of the program.

#### **Program:**

- What's Diversity?
- Consultation/Dialogue as a tool for leaders
- Introduction to the History of Residential Schools

#### **Summary:**

This half-day workshop was very well received and enriching for all of us. Participants in the program shared their stories and learned something new about each other.

Dialogue/Consultation was introduced as a tool to running effective and creative meetings or any kind of conversations that leaders will have. We worked with Arlene Roberts who presented facts about the history of residential schools in Canada and BC. Her presentation left behind some tears but also brought all of us closer together. We ended on a very positive note, each of us learning something new.

## **6. IDEAS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS & PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Summary:**

2007/08 was a breakthrough year for Skeena Diversity Society. We have established ourselves as a source of training and information around multiculturalism, diversity and anti-racism.

We reached the 'general public' mainly through the creative events such as Tastes of Terrace and "My Story" Writing Contest.

The Community Dialogue and Grade 7 Forum provided an opportunity for citizens to come together, get to know each other better in a safe and inclusive environment. It was surprising to see how eager people are to participate in events like these.

Working with Coast Mountains School District was very useful even though it was a bit slower than anticipated as everyone is very busy. We are planning to work closer with the Social Responsibility Leadership Committee of the school district as well as local schools. Connecting directly with students, particularly Skeena Jr. Secondary Leadership Club was very helpful. They are looking to organize a similar forum for students in grades 10-12 after participating in the Grade 7 Forum.

We would like to thank Northwest Community College. We were able to work with a wonderful group of students from the Community Development class. The NWCC also donated the meeting space for the Community Dialogue.

Another strong partnership was developed with the Terrace Chamber of Commerce. We plan to build on that and make it mutually beneficial.

### **Future Ideas**

Community events are very important – organize Tastes of Terrace again during the Riverboat Days Festival and expand "My Story" writing contest.

Work with Coast Mountains School District on all levels. Develop partnerships with Terrace's private schools to engage them in the Grade 7 Forum which we would like to see become an annual event.

Youth Engagement through arts and dialogue. We are hoping to engage local youth in dance workshops, photography and storytelling where they will get a chance to learn about one another, explore the world around them and learn to appreciate and understand diversity in an inclusive community.

Distribute and promote newly revised Anti-Racism Handbook to all workplaces. Provide the Handbook as a manual that participants of the Safe Harbour workshops can take with them.

Have fun and practice the principles of dialogue in the work and meetings of Skeena Diversity Society – stay fresh, open-minded, welcoming, creative and inclusive.