

A Community Stands Together

By Steven Horth, Parole Officer, East-West Quebec District Office

Following my trip to Yellowknife, I would like to share with you my feelings and experience and tell you about the atmosphere surrounding the events of October 14, 2004.

It was with mixed feelings that I agreed to go to Yellowknife. I felt both the honour of representing the Quebec Region and the exciting prospect of visiting an area that was unknown to me. And I felt a deep sadness connected with the memorial service.

The temperature was about minus 15 degrees Celsius and the ground was covered with snow when I arrived in Yellowknife on the afternoon of October 14. It certainly contrasted with the 15-degree temperature we were having in Quebec City when I left. Yellowknife, a small city on the shore of Great Slave Lake, is surrounded by endless mountains, lakes and rivers. It is a wonderful part of the country, especially for fishing and hunting enthusiasts.

The service took place in the gym of St. Patrick School in Yellowknife. The room was filled with people and the atmosphere became thick with emotion as various participants spoke fondly about their great friend Louise Pargeter. This mother of a little girl called Niav was admired for her zest for life, her helpfulness, her compassion and her ability to motivate people to excel. Louise was a person who worked closely with the community and her sudden death leaves a gaping hole in everyone's heart. This emptiness was readily apparent even to those who came from afar.

However, along with the sadness, there was a spirit of human kindness that was much appreciated. Seeing this community help itself and share grief with others was heartwarming. Outsiders experienced an exceptional welcome. Despite distance and various differences, the residents of Yellowknife were happy to accept support from all across Canada. I realized that "correctional family" is not just words; it really is a family.

I cannot finish without quoting these few words from a document that was handed out to us, recalling the life of Louise Pargeter:

*Death leaves a heartache no one can heal,
Love leaves a memory no one can steal.*

These words reflect the overall spirit of the evening. As I was leaving Yellowknife the next day, despite the lingering cold, a strange warmth crept over me. ■