

Marchers take back the night

More than 100 turn out for annual event calling for an end to violence against women

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In the words of one Yellowknife politician, participants in the city's Take Back the Night march not only talk the talk - they walk the walk.

Kam Lake MLA Kieron Testart made that statement just minutes before joining more than 100 people who braved a light rain Friday night for the annual march through the city's downtown streets. He was joined by more than 100 people - male and female, young and old - marching to protest violence against women.

They carried signs, blew whistles and chanted slogans as they made their way through the downtown streets. The march began at city hall, led by a municipal enforcement vehicle and followed by an RCMP pick-up truck. Several members of the Mounties also gathered in front of the Yellowknife detachment to show their support prior to the march getting underway.

"Violence in the NWT is a huge problem and it takes leadership to really make a difference," Testart said before the march. "Our assembly has recognized that and made it one of our key priorities to take a strong stance against



Yellowknife Centre MLA Julie Green holds up her signs before joining more than 100 other people in the city's annual Take Back the Night March on Friday night. - John McFadden/NNSL photo

violence against women. We're fighting it through our work and our policies and by being here tonight."

Caroline Cochrane, the minister responsible for the status of women, was among those who took part in the walk. She pointed out to the crowd that violence against women is bigger than simply a gender-based issue.

"This is not a women's issue. It's not even a men's issue. This is a societal issue. This is big ... and I honour the men who are here," Cochrane said. "We need to work in collaboration across the country and around the world to actually address this issue."

Cochrane added there is room for a made-in-the-NWT solution but it should be done in partnership with the federal government as well.

"Two of the things (MLAs) talked about is addressing family violence ... and women in leadership," Cochrane said. "People say it's just about people getting power. It is not. We need to recognize that women are more than just mothers, we're more than just cooks. We're more than just cleaners. The more women that we can get into leadership positions, the more than people will recognize as having value to provide for society."

Cochrane said overcoming gender-based stereotypes and having more women as mentors and role models will go a long way towards changing the perceptions young people have about females.

Laurinda Cheng was among those who came out to march. She said the event will not bring an end to gender-based violence but it will put the issue under the public microscope.

"I mostly just want to support the community in terms of gender equality and violence against women," Cheng said. "I want to help make sure that we are seen - we are heard and making people realize that this is an issue that needs our support."

According to a Statistics Canada report released in 2013, women in the NWT are victimized at a rate eight times higher than females living in the provinces. The NWT consistently has the second highest rate of domestic violence in Canada - behind only Nunavut.

The Take Back the Night March was one of the main events in the NWT Coalition Against Family Violence's Family Violence Awareness Week.

