

# Chapter Activist Profile

Lois Little, Yellowknife, NWT



**Lois Little is a member of the Northwest Territories Chapter, which is located in Yellowknife. The chapter was established only a couple of years ago, but has been very active in many campaigns.**

## **When did you join the Council?**

I have been a supporter of the Council of Canadians for well over 20 years, perhaps even 25 years. I don't remember when I joined, but I do know that Maude Barlow has always been on my radar and I recall fondly Mel Hurtig and the activism in the 80s that led to the establishment of the Council of Canadians.

## **How and when did the Northwest Territories (NWT) chapter get started?**

The NWT Chapter of the Council of Canadians had five founding members and was formally established in early March of 2013. The chapter held its first formal organizational meeting on April 4 of that year in Yellowknife. The NWT chapter grew out of an ad hoc group called the Raging Boomers, who were railing against the assault of the Harper Conservatives on Canadian values, rights, democratic institutions and the environment.

## **What are the most important local issues the chapter is working on?**

The NWT chapter is involved in a host of territorial issues, but water and democratic rights and freedoms are likely at the heart of them all. Along with our labour allies we just staged a very successful evening with James Gordon who performed "Stephen Harper the Musical: How to Survive and Thrive in the Dying Days of the Empire of Oil."

We recently intervened in Husky Oil's plan to explore for silica/fracking sand and were successful in having this application referred to an environmental assessment. It's the first fracking-related assessment in the NWT. We are part of the Fracking Action North Coalition that has a petition out at the moment pushing for a comprehensive public review of horizontal hydraulic fracturing. We will also be critiquing the NWT government's imminent fracking regulations.

We are working with Ecology North to screen Maude's *Water on the Table* film as part of Canada's Water Week events. We are monitoring transboundary water agreements between the NWT and Alberta and British Columbia and plan to have a public forum in the spring to talk about how these agreements will be enforced.

We are also planning a Giant Mine Healing Walk as a way of keeping the spotlight on the 237,000 tonnes of arsenic trioxide that is stored underground and poses a threat forever to our water and life.

## **What challenges does the chapter face?**

It is difficult to expand our core group of warriors as so many people are afraid to speak out or show dissent for fear of punitive consequences. This will undoubtedly get worse. As such, the risk of burn-out is always there.

## **What has been your favourite moment with the Council?**

The Council of Canadians is an inspiring and tremendously supportive organization. We had visits from Maude Barlow and Brigitte DePape, which were fun

and incredibly helpful. The engagement of territorial Indigenous, labour and environmental leaders with our chapter is also very inspiring.

## **What advice would you give to people interested in starting a new chapter?**

Do it! You won't regret it! We found that after a year or so of being Raging Boomers we were raging in the wilderness with no one hearing our voices. Being part of a national network with the Council of Canadians is so helpful and supportive. After we formed the NWT chapter we found that all of a sudden people started hearing our voices because they recognized the Council as a powerful and influential organization. We found that government was coming to us seeking our opinion, and labour and other organizations were happy to join with us in staging events because we do have influence. We also found that media were coming to us seeking our opinion.

*For more information about how to join a chapter in your area, visit our website at [www.canadians.org/chapters](http://www.canadians.org/chapters) or call us toll-free at 1-800-387-7177.*

