

MHR *Connections*

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The Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba looks to the Arts Community

The 2010 Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba will be given to an individual or a group who has advanced human rights through the arts, announced Dianna Scarth, Executive Director of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

“We are looking to those people who through their music, visual arts, theatre, writing, dancing or other art forms have promoted human rights,” says Ms Scarth, adding, “This year the focus of the award has changed from the area or type of discrimination to the method of communicating a human rights message.”

Every year, for International Human Rights Day, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties acknowledge human rights work that has advanced the rights of Manitobans.



The 2009 Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba recipient Ali Saeed, a former Amnesty International Prisoner of Conscience (left) with the 2009 Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award recipient Anna-Celestrya Carr who worked to raise awareness of violence against Aboriginal women.

The nomination forms, which include the criteria for each award, will be posted on the Manitoba Human Rights Commission’s website in early October. You also can request a form by emailing the Commission at hrc@gov.mb.ca. Please put “award nomination form” in the subject line. For more information please contact Patricia Knipe at 204-945-5112 or Patricia.knipe@gov.mb.ca

Deadline for nominations is November 12, 2010.

The award recipients will be honoured on December 8, 2010.

The Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award, which is also given out each year to an individual or a group of young persons under twenty-five years of age, recognizes those who have promoted respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms within Manitoba. The criteria for this award are more broadly based. The Awards Committee encourages schools, organizations, employers and universities to nominate young people who have contributed to human rights awareness.

The nomination forms, which include the criteria for each award, will be posted on the Manitoba Human Rights Commission’s website in early October. You also can request

The Rights Connection by Jerry Woods - Chairperson

It is a busy time for the Commission. As we enter the fall season, plans are underway for youth conferences, new websites, human rights awards and education programs.

Some people do not realize that the Manitoba Human Rights Commission has more than one mandate. We not only enforce the *Human Rights Code*, we also educate and promote human rights in Manitoba.

Take our Youth Conferences for example. This will be the 10th year we have put together workshops, guest speakers and extraordinary activities for high school students. They have produced videos, such as the widely acclaimed “Respect” from the students of Oscar Blackburn School in South Indian Lake. Last year, students from over thirty schools wrote and performed public service announcements about human rights.

Another conference project resulted in the gigantic “Peace by Piece” human rights banner.

Most importantly, students have taken what they have learned about human rights back to their schools and communities.

At this year’s 10th Anniversary Youth Conference in November, students will be inspired by guest speakers from “Me to We,” the group cofounded by Craig & Marc Kielburger.

The Manitoba Class Action website (manitobaaction.com) will be launched before Christmas. This website is a tool for teachers who want to bring human rights events into the classroom and is based on a book by Human Rights Consultant Stephen Hammond called *Steps in the Rights Direction*.

Many students have been involved in putting the Manitoba Class Action website together. There are videos of students reading about a human rights event that happened on a specific date in the past. The videos are followed by additional information and questions. Students can also go on social networking sites to discuss the topic further.

We also offer education seminars to adults. These are designed for employers, supervisors, human resource professionals and lawyers. Information about these classes is on our website.

Nominations for the 2010 Commitment and Sybil Shack Youth Awards are now open. These awards give prominence to human rights work done by groups or individuals that often goes unnoticed.

Yes, this is always a busy time, but a good and satisfying one.



You are invited to attend
**The Treaty Relations Commission
of Manitoba
Open House**
Friday, October 1, 2010
Time: 11:30 am – 2:00 pm
Place: 400 – 175 Hargrave Street
Winnipeg

**Tour the Learning Centre and meet Treaty Commissioner
James Wilson and the TRCM staff**
400-175 Hargrave Street, Winnipeg, MB R3C 3R8
Phone: 204-777-1871, Fax: 204-777-1874,
Toll free: 1-866-296-3228
www.trcm.ca
We Are All Treaty People

Decision supports Canadians to be parents without discrimination

In a recent decision, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that employers cannot discriminate against their employees when they become parents. Fiona Johnstone, a Canadian Border Services Officer and a member of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, convinced the Tribunal that she was a victim of discrimination based on family status.

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) refused to accommodate her request for more regular hours so she could arrange for proper child care. The CBSA told her that the only way that she could care for her kids was to work part time. Fiona Johnstone was unable to obtain childcare because she and her husband both worked rotating shift schedules at Pearson International Airport.

The Tribunal found that the conduct of the CBSA was wilful and reckless in depriving Mrs. Johnstone of her employment opportunities. The Tribunal ordered the CBSA to pay Mrs. Johnstone for lost wages and pension benefits, as well as damages totaling \$35,000.

The Tribunal criticized the CBSA for maintaining systemic policies and practices that deprived Mrs. Johnstone and other similar individuals of employment opportunities due to their family status. As a result, the Tribunal ordered the CBSA to develop a plan to prevent further incidents of discrimination based on family status and develop policies to address family status accommodation requests.

"I am happy and relieved by the decision of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal," said Fiona Johnstone. "I can now move on with my career and with raising my family."

In 2004, Fiona Johnstone filed a complaint against the CBSA arguing that its policy violates the Canadian Human Rights Act by discriminating against her based on her family status. While not every childcare need gives rise to an employer's obligation to accommodate, Johnstone argued that her complicated and unpredictable schedule made it impossible to care for her children. She said that the employer had not proven that accommodating her with a more suitable shift would amount to undue hardship.

Canada's human rights agencies choose new association president

Barbara Hall, Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission is the new President of the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA). She takes over the post from Mary Pat Short, Chair of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission. The President of CASHRA has a two year term and is selected from Commissions across the country.

"I am delighted to take on this new role," Barbara Hall said. "CASHRA members share a common goal – to protect, advance and promote human rights. Each jurisdiction has different statutes and procedures but we learn from the experiences and best practices of our colleagues within their communities".

CASHRA, founded in 1972, is a network that brings together Canada's territorial, provincial and federal human rights agencies. Members share information on their work to help other agencies protect, promote and advance human rights across the country.

Since its inception, CASHRA continues to provide opportunities for members to exchange information about human rights laws in Canada. CASHRA also undertakes public education projects that promote and advocate for human rights in Canada and abroad.

For more information on CASHRA and its work, and for links to all members of the Association, visit www.cashra.ca.

“Me to We” headlines 10th Anniversary Youth Conference

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission is pleased to announce that the 10th Annual Human Rights Youth Conferences will feature guest speakers from “Me to We,” the amazing group cofounded by Craig and Marc Kielburger. These speakers have travelled around the world enthusiastically encouraging their young audiences on how to be part of change.

“We wanted to bring something new and exciting to our already successful youth conferences,” says Pam Roberts, one of the Commission’s Youth Conference team leaders.

According to Ms Roberts, the Me to We leaders will be working with the students and teachers to discover personal leadership styles and to learn the power of an awareness campaign.

“We are hoping the school representatives will develop an engaging human rights awareness action plan that they can implement at their school,” says Ms Roberts.

The *Learn 2 Lead* Conference takes place on Wednesday, November 17, 2010 in Winnipeg at the Louis Riel School Division Arts & Technology Centre and Thursday, November 18, 2010 in Brandon at the Manitoba Agricultural Centre.

More information about the 10th Anniversary *Learn 2 Lead* Human Rights Youth Conferences and registration forms will be available on the Commission’s website early in October.