



Commission visits Kelsey School Division in the Pas

The Commission began its tour of school divisions across the province with a visit to the Pas.

Last June, the Commission reached out to all school divisions with the offer to visit them to discuss human rights issues that may arise in a school environment. Meetings have been scheduled with a further 13 divisions over the next two months.

The Commission is responsible for presenting the information about the fundamental rights and responsibilities in *The Human Rights Code* and for working through scenarios that might be of relevance to school administrators. Each school division suggests who and how many will attend the session.

Kelsey School Division arranged for the Commission to attend a meeting of its senior administration team consisting of the Superintendent and staff and the principals and vice-principals of all schools in the division.

Opportunities like this allow the Commission to gauge awareness of *The Human Rights Code* and the



Commission but also assist the Commission to best meet its mandate to promote and educate about human rights. The Commission will take the information

from the sessions and consider further resources for educators and the public.

The Teacher's Toolkit previously available on the Commission's website is currently being revised and should be available for download on the Commission's new website by the end of the year.

The Rights Connection

By Isha Khan, Executive Director

Various examples of discriminatory, anti-semitic, anti-Islamic and hateful behaviour surfaced in the local media this past month.

There isn't always a clear answer to what has prompted these types of displays, but there is a clear answer to the question of what we need to do about it.

Section 18 of *The Human Rights Code* prohibits the public display of discriminatory signs and statements. These are statements that incite, advocate or counsel discrimination in the areas covered by *The Code*: employment, services, and housing.

Some suggest that section 18 doesn't go far enough to protect us from racist or hateful rhetoric in favour of free speech, and that the Commission is limited in what it can do.

Although it is clear that some of the recent incidents may not be covered by section 18, there is no question that they offend the principle that underlies *The Code*; recognition of the rights and dignity of every member of the human family.

The Commission spent time emphasizing in the media that individuals concerned should contact the police as the Criminal Code has hate speech protections, and that everyone must stand up and signal that racist, discriminatory or hateful behaviour is not acceptable.

Calling out discrimination in all its forms is integral to promoting human rights but also assures vulnerable groups that they have allies and are not alone.



New “x” option on Canadian Passports

The federal government recently announced that starting August 31, Canadians have the option of identifying their sex as “x” or unspecified.

This is the latest step in the government-wide initiative to make all government-issued documents gender neutral.



Photo credit: Sean Kilpatrick/ The Canadian Press

Providing a similar option on birth certificates is being considered in various provinces. The Newfoundland Supreme Court is expected to issue a decision on this shortly and there is already talk that Ontario is taking steps to offer a gender-neutral option by 2018, given that it already has this option for drivers’ licenses and health cards.

Call to Manitoba artists

Earlier this month, the Commission joined again with the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties to put a call out for design proposals for this year’s Human Rights Commitment Award.



Since 2000, the Commission has partnered with these groups to host The Manitoba Human Rights Awards event to celebrate December 10, International Human Rights Day.

The Human Rights Commitment Award is given to an individual or group who has worked tirelessly to advance human rights and fundamental freedoms in Manitoba.



For the last several years, the award has been a unique piece designed by a Manitoba artist.

The call for design proposals closes September 22.

See www.manitobahumanrights.ca for more information.



Check out our new site!
www.manitobahumanrights.ca

