



Manitoba Human Rights Awards Recognize Changemakers

The Manitoba Human Rights Awards were held on December 7, 2017 at the RBC Convention Centre. In many ways, the recipients fit the bill- they are all committed to social justice; they have all put in energy and time to advance the rights of others in this province; and they are all undoubtedly passionate.

Alaya McIvor, a 35 year old trans Indigenous woman was the recipient of the Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba and selected by the independent Selection Committee for her work with many community organizations



in developing new initiatives about the exploitation and human trafficking of vulnerable peoples. Amina and Nusaybah Mohamed were awarded the Sybil Shack Youth Award for championing a sports-hijab for young Muslim female athletes as was Alexa Potashnik for her work creating safe space for people of colour. This year the Reconciliation award was also awarded to the Red Rising Collective, a group of Indigenous youth who put out a monthly magazine. Finally, former Commissioner Dr. Donn Short was awarded the inaugural Aaron Berg Award for his work on discrimination against trans youth in schools.

The 2017 recipients join a list of trailblazers, community activists and visionaries in this province. For more info, see; <http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/v1/news-events/latest-news-pages/hr-awards-recipients.html>

The Rights Connection

By Isha Khan, Executive Director

We have had a year of progress and change.

The Commission worked hard in 2017 to meet the goals set out in our Strategic Plan, furthering the reach of our education initiatives across the province and creating efficiencies within our internal processes to better serve the public.

We welcomed our new Chairperson as well as new staff late this year, the latter of which will assist us significantly in reducing wait times in investigation. We have also found new and innovative ways to utilize technology and media both in the complaint process and in delivering our education mandate. This has furthered our efforts to be the primary resource in Manitoba on human rights issues.

The last year or more has been focused on strengthening and stabilizing our agency so that we can better enforce human rights in this province. Throughout this process our commitment to serving Manitobans has not wavered.

We recognize that there are individuals who rely on the Commission to listen, to investigate, to reason, and to advocate for equality. We are also aware that businesses and organizations rely on us to assist in navigating their responsibilities under *The Code*.

We are committed to expanding the reach of this work in 2018.



NRHA Requests Leave to Appeal from Supreme Court of Canada

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission is hopeful that the Supreme Court of Canada will grant leave to appeal in this case.

Since the original decision of the Manitoba Human Rights Adjudication Panel finding that Linda Horrocks was discriminated against by the Northern Regional Health Authority was reviewed by the Court of Queens Bench, there has been growing confusion around the purpose and intent of our provincial Human Rights Code and the jurisdiction of the human rights commission and tribunal and labour arbitrators appointed under the Labour Relations Act.

The Commission will be filing a response to the leave application in the next few weeks agreeing that clarification on the jurisdictional questions is needed to reassure Canadians of the fundamental importance of human rights law and how it protects all workers, unionized or not, from discrimination in the workplace.

The Commission remains of the view that the human rights scheme in Manitoba is designed to work alongside the Labour arbitration scheme and that that all workers in Manitoba have the right to choose to pursue their complaints discrimination under *The Human Rights Code* via their union or directly through the Commission.



Greetings from the Chairperson

To help you to understand the journey to my current role as Chairperson, permit me to share a few facts with you here.

As the Law Society of Manitoba's first and only Equity Ombudsperson, I left that role this past summer after having led innovative human rights initiatives for Manitoba's legal profession since 2001.

My background in human rights law encompasses my personal life. As the first lawyer in Manitoba to have completed her articling part-time, it is very rewarding to have opened that door so that others can now do so.

For 9 years as a Sessional Instructor for Legal Methods students at the University of Manitoba Faculty of Law, it was very gratifying to share with lawyers of the future my view of the law as a powerful instrument for positive change.

As a former broadcaster and journalist, during my youth, it was my good fortune to have interviewed human rights trailblazers such as Mother Teresa, Elie Wiesel, Muhammad Ali, Jehan Sadat, Toller Cranston and Gloria Steinem.

Looking ahead to 2018, as a team we continue to strive to improve customer service and to fulfill our mandate as Manitoba's leading human rights resource.

As a lawyer writing and publishing numerous articles on human rights over the last two decades, this quotation from one of my articles published years ago in both the Winnipeg Free Press and the Law Society of Manitoba's Communique newsletter helps to explain my strong commitment to leading the MHRC towards the continued realization of its strategic vision and objectives: "Those individuals willing to travel in uncharted territory should be lauded for their willingness to challenge the status quo and to bring a human rights challenge. It's through their tenacity and vision that new laws are made and equality is advanced by the creation of legal precedents."

Here's wishing each of you a very happy and healthy holiday season and sharing with you this Amnesty International saying which my late mother used to quote so often: "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." Meegwetch, merci beaucoup and thank you.

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