

MHR Connections

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THE MANITOBA
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LA COMMISSION DES
DROITS DE LA PERSONNE
DU MANITOBA

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www.gov.mb.ca/hrc



Special Events Mark International Women's Day and Elimination of Racism Week

During the month of March, one week is dedicated to recognizing women and another to the elimination of racial discrimination.

Canadians celebrated International Women's Week from March 3 to 9. The theme for 2002 was "Working in Solidarity: Women, Human Rights and Peace."

Women Warned not to be Complacent

One of the many Manitoba events was held at the University of Winnipeg. There was a symposium, a rally at the Legislature and a dinner at the University of Winnipeg's Duckworth Centre Lounge, which was followed by an evening of women's entertainment.

Beatrice Watson a member of the IWAM Board of Directors spoke at the dinner. She encouraged women not to be complacent.

"I think that many of us operate as if we are already enjoying equality with men, that there is no need for a women's movement because we have arrived. Well I've got news for you", she said, "we are far from arriving."

Ms. Watson said that the movement needed new blood and new energy. She suggested every woman teach someone younger about the history of the woman's story. This all day event was a combined effort of the University of Winnipeg Women's Centre and the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba.

women continued on page 2

Manitoba Human Rights Chat Room Project a Great Success

Manitoba students had the opportunity last week to discuss bullying with three special guests who met them in the Manitoba Human Rights chat room.

Justice Minister Gord Mackintosh, two times Olympic medallist Clara Hughes and Labour and Immigration Minister Becky Barrett met the students online. Although none of the guests had been in a chat room before, each one was enthusiastic and afterwards, all agreed it was a tremendous experience.

"This is a great way for the government to get feedback," Mackintosh said and added that there was a barrage of interest and contributions from the students.

chat room continued on page 2

Cartoon or Discrimination?

By Janet Baldwin
Chairperson

Recently the Manitoba Human Rights Commission had to deal with several complaints about an editorial cartoon, published last July in a local newspaper, which depicted a person of apparently visible minority ancestry submitting his employment application to the Mayor and saying, 'I'm uneducated, I'm illiterate, I have no experience but I'm a visible minority', and the Mayor responding, 'Welcome Aboard!' The Board found that the cartoon in that context did not contravene the Code, though it did find it objectionable.

Human rights legislation is informed, among other things, by Charter values. One of the fundamental freedoms protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, is freedom of expression, including freedom of the press. To fall within the limitation of section 18 of The Human Rights Code, the cartoon would have had to "incite, advocate or counsel discrimination" in relation to employment, rather than merely commenting critically on employment equity. Even if the cartoon were construed as perpetuating discriminatory views, the courts have allowed great latitude to editorial cartoons as political commentary, not intended to be taken literally but rather understood as rhetorically making a point by symbolism, allegory, satire and exaggeration.

The Board did, however, find the cartoon objectionable. The scope of free expression extended to the press should carry with it a corresponding responsibility to engage in debate with respect and civility, rather than catering to the prejudices of some of its readers. Politicians may take the risk of caricature, but the marginalized in our society should not be targeted. As we approach National Holocaust Awareness Week, from 7-12 April, we might remember that Nazi anti-Semitic cartoons were a precursor to Krystalnacht. We can at least speak out.

women continued from page 1

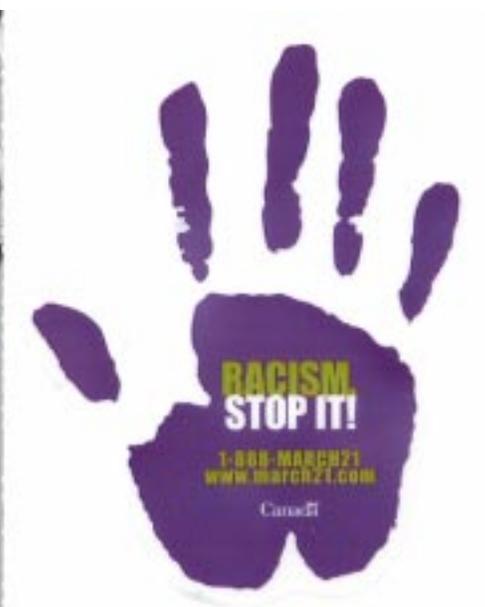
At the Manitoba Legislature, The Honourable Diane McGifford Minister Responsible for the Status of Women hosted a Government reception celebrating the day. Two hundred women came to view displays set up by a number of community based agencies. Many of the displays focused on issues relating to women and work and included information on education and training, unemployment, day care, workplace injuries and stress. The Manitoba Human Rights Commission was there with pamphlets on its seminars, human rights posters, and fact sheets.

Similar events took place across the province.

International Women's Week has its roots in the early 20th Century with a movement to improve the lives of girls and women through improved working conditions and the right to vote. Marked annually since 1977, March 8th is recognized as a day to celebrate the rights of women and international peace.

Racism. Stop It! A Continuing Campaign

The Elimination of Racial Discrimination Day has its tragic beginnings in Sharpsville, South Africa when, in 1960, seventy anti-apartheid demonstrators were shot and killed by police. In 1966 the United Nations marked the event by declaring March 21st International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.



Every year the Canadian Campaign "Racism. Stop It!" becomes more popular and powerful. Thompson, Manitoba is perhaps one of the most active and progressive communities in the province and hosts various programs during the week of March 16th to March 22nd.

This year's annual event began with Mayor Bill Comaskey proclaiming March 16 to 22, 2002 as "Elimination of Racism Week" in the City of Thompson. Included in the events was an art contest for students. It was sponsored by the Race Relations Committee and allotted a total of \$1,000 for prize money.

chat room continued from page 1

Clara Hughes was a big hit in the chat room. Students asked her why the issue of bullying was important to her and what advice she would give to kids being bullied. She responded that bullying was a serious issue and suggested that anyone experiencing bullying "hold your head high and most importantly, talk to someone you trust."

When asked if it is right to bully someone back, Becky Barrett offered this advice, "I don't think bullying back is the answer. You have the right to stand up for yourself but I believe it is important to treat people the way you would like to be treated."

More special guests are being scheduled to join chat room discussions. They include playwright Ian Ross, also known as Joe from Winnipeg and John Samson of the popular Winnipeg band The Weakerthans.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission encourages schools to use the chat room as part of a learning tool for Manitoba human rights. A human rights officer is available to join students in the chat room if requested.

To view a transcript of the chat room discussions go the Manitoba Human Rights Website at www.gov.mb.ca/hrc and follow the links to the bullying chat room and click on archives.



**Manitoba Human Rights
Informal Drop-In Clinic**

**Place: Aboriginal Centre Law Office
409-181 Higgins Avenue, Winnipeg**

**Time: Every third Thursday of each
month 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Contact: 985-5230

Award for Creating Accessible Environments

The Mayor's Access Advisory Committee along with several community groups have embarked on a new Winnipeg Business Accessibility Award initiative. The award is intended to raise awareness about the importance of accessibility in the City of Winnipeg and its role in making life more equitable, safe, comfortable and affordable for everyone with disabilities.

The projects considered for this award include any property that has found ways to accommodate the diverse range of people, who come to visit, work, live or play. The award will be given to a business and /or the designer involved with an existing project, which creates an accessible environment.

The awarded projects will be presented with the Winnipeg Business Accessibility Award at an official ceremony hosted by the City of Winnipeg and the Canadian Paraplegic Association in June 2002. The deadline is April 29, 2002.

For more information please contact The Mayor's Access Advisory Committee 510 Main Street, Council Building Winnipeg, MB R3B 1B9
Email jredmond@city.winnipeg.mb.ca
Phone (204) 986-8345
TTY: (204) 261-7424
Fax: (204) 275-2720

Holocaust Awareness Week April 7 - 12, 2002

The 2002 Program will include:

- Annual Memorial Service and Street Name Change at the B'nai Abraham Synagogue (Sun., April 7th at 11:00 a.m.)
- B'nai Brith Canada's "Unto every Person There is a Name" inside the legislature on Yom Hashoah (Tue. April 9th at 9:00 a.m.);
- Proclamation of Holocaust Memorial Day and Annual Memorial Service at the Holocaust Monument on the Grounds of the legislature on Yom Hashoah (Tue. April 9th at noon);
- RJCC "Kallah" program with Dr. Ruth Gruber (tele-broadcast), Tue. April 9th (evening)

For more information call 477-7423

COMING UP NEXT MONTH
Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
Former Employee Compensated