

# 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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## Outreach Office Opens in St. Boniface



*Human Rights Officer Lorraine Lambert is at the Bilingual Service Centre in St. Boniface every Wednesday.*

The Manitoba government in partnership with the Government of Canada and the City of Winnipeg has opened a new Bilingual Service Centre in St. Boniface. The Centre is located at 614 Des Meurons Street and is unique in that it offers municipal, provincial and federal services. The Manitoba Human Rights Commission is there with a bilingual human rights officer available every Wednesday.

This is the second satellite office in the Winnipeg area. Last March the Commission, in cooperation with the Aboriginal Centre Law office, began providing informal drop in clinics every third Thursday of each month. An Aboriginal human rights officer is available to discuss concerns and provide information.

Holding regular office days in different locations is not a new concept for the Commission. In the north, the regional human rights officer in The Pas began extending outreach activity by travelling extensively throughout the region. Regular office days are held in Thompson and Flin Flon and most recently office hours have been set up in Swan River and Dauphin. For more information regarding the office hours in these northern locations please call the Manitoba Human Rights Office in The Pas.

## It's My Party, and I'll Take Who I Want To

By Janet Baldwin  
Chairperson

Prom season is upon us, and while parental concerns around grad night focus on their children's safety, the graduate is primarily concerned about who to ask and what to wear. If the graduate is gay, as Marc Hall, a youth from Ontario can attest to, the question of who to ask could take on an enormous significance.

Mr. Hall was recently in the news for challenging his Roman Catholic high school's decision that forbade him from taking his boyfriend to prom. He launched a lawsuit and, as grad was fast approaching, sought and won an injunction that allowed him to attend his graduation prom with his boyfriend.

Suddenly thrust into the centre of a media whirlwind, Mr. Hall, from a 17-year-old's standpoint, appeared a little baffled as to what all the fuss was about. He himself seems to have little difficulty reconciling his religious identity and his sexual orientation – no small feat in a world that continues to discriminate against gay men and lesbians.

In his reasons on the injunction, the judge distinguished between "holding a discriminatory view and actively discriminating against someone". The main case has yet to be heard. It will determine what the human rights gains achieved by homosexuals over the last 15 years mean in the context of organized religion. The uneasy balance between equality rights and freedom of religion will be re-examined.

Our own Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination on the bases of religion and sexual orientation. The preamble to our Code recognizes the worth and dignity of every person - and that much discrimination is rooted in ignorance. Let us hope that the balance struck between equality rights and freedom of religion does not demean the worth and dignity of gays and lesbians, and makes it clear that freedom of religion is a right held by all – including homosexuals.

## Introducing Jerry Woods Fighting for the Under Dog

Over the following months the Manitoba Human Rights Commission will be profiling its Commissioners in the Connections Bulletin. This month we would like to introduce Jerry Woods the vice-chairperson of the Board of Commissioners.

Jerry has been a labour and social activist all of his working life, which began when he was only fifteen years old. His first job was in the small town of Sapawe, Ontario where he was hired at the local sawmill. Over the following twenty-five years he worked as a papermaker at the Boise Cascade papermill in Fort Frances, Ontario. For twenty of those years he served as an Officer with the Local Union.

In 1989 he became a full time National Representative for the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. After a job transfer, Jerry landed in Winnipeg in 1992.

Jerry is a Status Indian from the Couchiching First Nation. He spent half his childhood on the reserve, living with his grandfather. Louis Bruyere had a great influence on his grandson.

“My grandfather instilled in me to always fight for the underdog,” says Jerry. “He believed that this was needed for balance in the world.”

Jerry was appointed to the Ontario Human Rights Commission just one year before his transfer to Winnipeg. In 2001 he was appointed to the Manitoba Human Rights Board of Commissioners and at that time named vice chairperson.

Among his hobbies, Jerry enjoys his grandchildren, golfing, fishing and most spectator sports. He is married with six children.



### Coming Events

#### Gay Pride Day June 9, 2002

12:00 p.m. Rally at the Legislature  
12:30 p.m. March through Downtown  
1:00 p.m. Pride Festival Fair  
Memorial Park  
Featuring Carole Pope

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#### National Aboriginal Day at The Forks

June 21, 2002

Sunrise Ceremony  
All Day Children's Events  
Free Entertainment

### Upcoming Workshops

Harassment in the Workplace  
Norwood Hotel  
June 20, 2002

9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
\$25 lunch & coffee break included

Human Rights Issues for  
Rental Agencies, Property  
Owners and Apartment Managers  
Norwood Hotel  
June 27, 2002

9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
\$25 lunch & coffee break included

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## More Entertainers Join Chat Room Discussion on Bullying

Manitoba students had the opportunity to discuss the issue of bullying with playwright and TV/Radio personality Ian Ross (a.k.a. Joe from Winnipeg) and Andrea Henry of the popular group Sugar Jones.

Each guest spent one hour in the chat room. Students from Winnipeg, Snow Lake and Norway House discussed bullying from their perspective. Both guests encouraged bullied students to talk to someone in authority about the problem.

Transcripts of the discussion are available on the Manitoba Human Rights website [www.gov.mb.ca/hrc](http://www.gov.mb.ca/hrc).

Executive Director Dianna Scarth is continuing to encourage teachers to contact the Manitoba Human Rights Commission to arrange for on-line classroom discussions on bullying and harassment. A human rights officer can be in the chat room to answer questions and offer advice.