

# MHR *Connections*

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THE MANITOBA  
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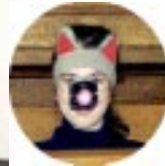
## Law Day Celebrates the Twentieth Anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The Law Courts Complex in Winnipeg is usually a busy place, but on Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup> it was even more crowded than usual. Hundreds of people showed up to take part in the celebration of Law Day. They came to view exhibits, take part in legal informational sessions, tour the law courts complex, attend a special sitting of citizenship court and watch mock trials conducted by students.

The crown attorneys are confident.



The defense is surprised by the guilty verdict.



Mr. Wolf sits quietly in the prisoner's box.



The judge looks on as Miss Pig testifies during the law day mock trial put on by the students of Grosvenor School. The trial was based on the story of the Wolf and the Three Little Pigs.

Law Day is celebrated each year around the anniversary of the proclamation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. By going to the open house, people had the opportunity to learn about the legal system and ask questions of the more than 20 law-related organizations at the event, including the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

This year marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Attorney General Gord Mackintosh attended law day saying "for two decades the charter has provided a framework for the protection of our democratic rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion, expression and association."

Law Day is an initiative of the Canadian Bar Association and is presented in this province by both the Manitoba Bar Association and Manitoba Justice.

### The Rights Connection By Janet Baldwin - Chairperson The Rights of Marriage

Public hearings on marriage and the legal recognition of same-sex unions brought the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to Steinbach, Manitoba, on April 4.

Elliot Leven, Commissioner, and I appeared on behalf of the Human Rights Commission. We urged the Committee to recommend that the Government of Canada remove the opposite-sex requirement for parties to a marriage, thus permitting same-sex couples to marry. The exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage is discriminatory and a violation of the equity rights of gays and lesbians.

Another option set out in the Department of Justice discussion paper would leave marriage as an "opposite-sex institution" but establish a system of civil union or domestic partnership for "other conjugal relationships". Our position is that this is not sufficient to eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation in the marriage law, and does not adequately address equality concerns under the Charter.

As Chief Justice Beverly McLachlin of the Supreme Court of Canada, said at this year's LaFontaine-Baldwin lecture: "Formal declarations of equality are not enough to remove discrimination and exclusion. Indeed, they may perpetuate them. Formal equality is the equality of "separate but equal". The group is hived off, labeled "different", and told that they are equal with one important qualification – equal within their designated sphere."

We also rejected any approach that would create a neutral registration system for all conjugal relationships and leave marriage to individuals and their religious institutions. This would continue to exclude many same-sex couples from marrying, as well as opposite-sex couples who are not participants in a religious congregation.

The Manitoba Human Rights Code states that "it is the right of all individuals to be accorded equality of opportunity with all other individuals". The exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage undermines this principle.

## Commissioner Profile

### Roberta Frederickson

As a child, Roberta always felt like the underdog. In her case, it made her stronger and more determined to stand up for herself. It was the bullying of her own daughter, however, that made her take notice of how harassment affected others, especially women.



Today Roberta is not only a Human Rights Commissioner, but also facilitates Human Rights and Respectful Workplace discussions for the Canadian

Auto Workers union. "Every participant brings something new to a classroom. They all have a story or an experience, and some bring new ways of dealing with discrimination," she says.

Yet after years of facilitating discussions on human rights issues, Roberta is still surprised that "even in this day and age, we still have people out there who think discrimination doesn't exist anymore."

Besides being a human rights commissioner, a facilitator, and a single mother, Roberta also works full time. She is employed by the Fort Garry Hotel, where over the years she became very involved in union activities. Roberta took union classes and was elected the local vice president and later, the local shop steward.

Two people significantly influenced Roberta as she pursued her interest in unions. First was her father, the other a fellow union worker. "My Dad has been a long time unionized member so I've listened to him for years. My National Union Rep, Karen Naylor has also been a huge influence."

Most recently, Roberta has been asked to sit on the Steering Committee for the Manitoba Childcare Coalition and is a

member of a new group formed under the partnership of The Canadian Auto Workers and the Manitoba Nurses Union. It will be raising awareness of the continuing problem of domestic violence. The group is called the Nights of the Round Table, a name coined because of their round table discussions late at night.

And Roberta just keeps on going. She may soon add "student" to her biography. She has applied to the Canadian Labour College and hopes to study labour history, economics, political science and labour sociology.

### Mary Robinson to Speak at Fundraiser

On Saturday, May 31, 2003 Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and past United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will speak at a reception, held in her honour at the Fort Garry Hotel Concert Hall Ballroom. This reception will welcome Mrs. Robinson to Manitoba and raise awareness and financial support for the Manitoba Chair of United Nations Studies.

Tickets for the reception are \$50 with a charitable tax Receipt of \$35. For more information or to purchase tickets, please call Darcy Duggan at 786-9174

## Workshop Teaches How to Investigate Complaints

If you have taken the Manitoba Human Rights half-day Harassment Workshop in the past, you may want to consider enrolling again. According to Donna Seale, the Commission's Manager of Investigation and Mediation, some significant changes have been made. "Although this is one of our most popular workshops, for years we have been asked to teach people how to investigate harassment complaints in their workplace. This re-vamped workshop is designed to do just that."

Did you know that the three most important words when investigating complaints are: document, document, and document? Who should conduct an investigation? What steps should be taken before beginning an investigation? What questions should you be asking both the complainant and the alleged harasser?

This three and a half hour workshop will answer these questions, and many more while continuing to focus on what constitutes harassment under The Code, who is liable and how to minimize liability by developing anti harassment policies. New handouts have been developed and of particular interest is the step by step "Harassment Complaint Investigation Guide."

The Harassment Workshop is designed to be participatory so that those attending can expect hands on exercises. The goal is for participants to take these new skills back to their workplace.

The next scheduled Harassment Workshop is June 11, 2003. Those interested are encouraged to enroll early. The cost is \$50 and includes lunch. For further information or to enroll in the class call 945-3007.

### "Unto Every Person There Is A Name Program"

On April 29, 2003, in Winnipeg and throughout the world, victims of Nazism will be remembered and their names read aloud by Holocaust survivors, family members of victims of the Holocaust and prominent and private citizens.

This year, "Unto Every Person There Is A Name" will take place on Tuesday April 29, 2003, in Committee Room 254 of the Manitoba Legislature. The reading of names will begin at 9:30 a.m. and continue until 11:45 a.m. All participants will then proceed to the Holocaust Monument for the Annual Memorial Service.

To participate in the program, or for more information, call Dr. Maria Fernanda Medina at the B'nai Brith office, 487-9623.