

MHR Connections

Published by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission

Volume 3

Number 3

March 2003

THE MANITOBA
HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION



LA COMMISSION DES
DROITS DE LA PERSONNE
DU MANITOBA

Visit our Website www.gov.mb.ca/hrc



Mike Pinball Clemons to Speak at Gordon Bell High School

Michael "Pinball" Clemons will speak at Gordon Bell High School on March 21, 2003 as part of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Pinball Clemons was named the 38th head coach of the Toronto Argonauts in August 2000 following a 12-year, record-setting playing career with the Argonauts. He is also an inspirational and dynamic speaker who has an anti-racism message for young people.

The event begins with an official proclamation of March 21 as International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This and several other March 21st events are the joint effort of the Tri-Level Government and Community Partners Committee and the Coalition for Human Equality. Since 1966, the United Nations has recognized the 21st of March as International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Canada was one of the first countries to support the UN declaration. In 1989, the Department of Canadian Heritage launched its annual March 21 Campaign.

The March 21 Campaign was initiated in response to the need to heighten awareness of the harmful effects of racism. For more than ten years, the March 21 Campaign has mobilized youth across Canada to rise up and to take a stand against racism.

Racism. Stop It! National Video Competition

The March 21 Racism. Stop It! National Video Competition is a major component of the March 21 Campaign. Across the

Continued on page 2

The Rights Connection

By Janet Baldwin - Chairperson

Am I my family member's keeper?

The Supreme Court of Canada's recent decision in *B v. Ontario* (Human Rights Commission) dealt with the interpretation of "marital or family status" under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, which is similar in this wording to the *Manitoba Human Rights Code*. The issue was whether those grounds included discrimination based on the particular identity of a complainant's spouse or family member, or only discrimination based on a certain type of marital or family status.

This question seems to arise most frequently in the context of sports for youth. Sometimes the behaviour of argumentative dads and moms may – at the least – have led to sports organizations barring the athletes themselves.

The facts in the "Mr. B" case, however, involved employment. Mr. A was fired from D Ltd., a firm owned by two brothers, Mr. C and Mr. B. B and C were brothers to Mrs. A and uncles to the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. At the time of his dismissal, Mr. A was 56, had worked for 26 years with D Ltd. and was four years away from retiring on full pension. Mr. B terminated Mr. A's employment solely because Mr. A's daughter and Mrs. A had confronted Mr. B with accusations that he had sexually abused the daughter when she was young.

The Supreme Court of Canada concluded that marital or family status could include a relationship with a particular person, and that Mr. A had been discriminated against on this basis. The Court stated that, "...it is a misconception to require the complainant to demonstrate membership in an identifiable group made up of only those suffering the particular manifestation of the discrimination. It is sufficient that the individual experience differential treatment on the basis of an irrelevant personal characteristic that is enumerated in the grounds provided in the Code."

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission has recently amended its Policy Defining Marital and Family Status in accordance with this decision.

continued from page 1

country, youth write scripts, create scenarios, shoot and edit a one-minute video story that expresses their feelings about racism. Shaughnessy Park School in Winnipeg is one of the 10 national winners of the 2003 video contest.

Mary Robinson Recognized by the University of Winnipeg

At this year's spring convocation, the University of Winnipeg is recognizing the exceptional work of Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland and past United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. She is now the Director of the Ethical Globalization Initiative. The University will honour Mary Robinson with an Honorary Doctor of Laws at the university's spring convocation.

Mary Robinson will be travelling to Winnipeg to receive her honorary doctorate and to address the graduating class of 2003 on June 1, 2003.

Conference Invitation

If you are a human rights practitioner or human resource professional, you should attend the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA) Annual Conference.

This year's conference is being held in Winnipeg and is called "Meeting at the Forks." Topics include, Human Rights and the Metis Experience, Living with the Many Faces of Discrimination, Human Rights Education and Promotion and Healing Circles: Are they applicable to resolving human rights disputes?

For more information call 204-257-5205 or visit www.cashra.ca and register online.

Congratulations

Elizabeth Bennett, the Commission's longest serving employee, retired on February 21, 2003. Liz worked in the Commission's northern office in The Pas.

Human Rights Officer **Sharon Wickman** celebrated 25 years with the Government in February, 2003.

Women's Rights Quiz Available on Website www.gov.mb.ca/hrc

When did amendments to the Canadian Labour Code eliminate pregnancy as a basis for lay-off or dismissal? Find the answer to this and other questions regarding women and their rights on the Manitoba Human Rights Commission's Website.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission added the Women's Rights Quiz to its website in recognition of this year's International Women's Week. The quiz covers such topics as women's firsts, providing a harassment free workplace, the right to purchase property, and when it became legal to disseminate birth control. Do you know what happened to women who married non-Canadians prior to 1947? When did the Supreme Court of Canada rule that employers were liable for the harassing behaviour of their employees? The quiz and the answers will be available beginning March 3, 2003.

Hundreds Attend International Women's Day Reception

More than three hundred people, mostly women, visited the Manitoba Legislative Building on March 7th to celebrate International Women's Day. A number of organizations took this opportunity to set up displays, providing women with information on such topics as health, education, violence against women and women's rights. The Manitoba Human Rights Commission was there with information on harassment, the rights of pregnant and nursing mothers, workshops and the Commission's website. It also offered women a chance to play a shortened version of their women's rights quiz.

The Honourable Diane McGifford hosted the reception and the emcee was Kim Clare of the Women's Advisory Council. Other guest speakers included Leslie Spillet, speaker for Mother of Red Nations Women's Council, Mona Audet, Executive Director of Plui-elles Women's Resource Centre, Edda Pangilinan, Founder and President of Samahang Pilipina 92 Inc., and Betty Hopkins, Chair of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund of Manitoba. Musician and activist Heather Bishop ended the celebration with a rousing rendition of "Warrior". The song, as well as the applause, must have echoed through the building for hours afterwards.

Harassment in the Workplace Workshop

What conduct constitutes harassment under the Human Rights Code?

How can employers minimize their liability?

April 9, 2003 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

\$50.00 (lunch provided)

Call 945-3007 for more information

Human Rights Seminar for Non-Profit Organizations

What questions can be asked when screening volunteers?

How to develop anti harassment policies?

April 16, 2003 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

\$50.00 (lunch provided)

Call 945-3007 for more information