

“Women’s History Month” Celebrated in Honour of Famous Five



In 1927, Emily Murphy undertook to open the Senate to women. She and four other prairie women - Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby and Nellie McClung petitioned the government asking the Supreme Court to examine the meaning of the word “persons” in Section 24 of the British North American Act to determine whether or not it included women.

To their dismay, the Supreme Court ruled against them. They then took their case to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England, which was Canada’s highest court of appeal at that time. On October 18, 1929, after four days of deliberations, the Privy Council overturned the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada and declared Canadian women to be “persons” and therefore qualified for appointment to the Senate. This historic decision created a new precedent for women in gaining access to sectors of society previously reserved only for men.

One year later, Cairine Reay Wilson became the first woman to take her place in the Senate of Canada. The Famous Five achieved not only the right for women to serve in the Senate, but they paved the way for women to participate in other aspects of public life.

Persons Day is celebrated every October 18th and commemorates the date the Persons’ Case decision was rendered in 1929. Person’s Day is the highlight of Women’s History Month.



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

The Rights Connection By Janet Baldwin - Chairperson Human Rights Museum Cornerstone of Dr. Asper’s Legacy

Many memories have been shared since the recent passing of Dr. Israel Asper, and much has been said of his contributions to our province and our country. His most outstanding legacy, however, may be one that is not yet a physical reality: The Canadian Museum for Human Rights. It is planned to open July 1, 2006, at The Forks, a National Historic Site in Winnipeg.

In May of this year, Dr. Asper described his vision for the Museum to myself and other Chairpersons and officials of statutory human rights agencies. We were meeting in Winnipeg at the annual Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies Conference, and Dr. Asper had been invited to join us for dinner and speak about his Human Rights Museum project.

He was celebrating his anniversary that day and unable to accept our dinner invitation, but nonetheless took the time to speak to us. His enthusiasm for, and commitment to, this project was evident. We were glad of the opportunity to express our support, and we looked forward to working together to achieve our common goals.



Dr. Asper’s vision was best described by The Asper Foundation when plans for \$270 million Canadian Human Rights Museum were announced. It was “to create a distinctive, architecturally exceptional museum that will inspire and project the Canadian commitment to human rights, freedom, democracy and diversity to the world.” It was rooted in the belief that “with the knowledge of the past, comes the hope for the future”. The Asper Foundation, with its partners, Canada, Manitoba, Winnipeg, and The Forks North Portage Partnership, and the support of all of us committed to human rights, will now carry Dr. Asper’s vision forward.

Women Still Facing Challenges in the Workplace

By Beatrice Watson

Addressing childcare needs, access to job sharing and racism rank among the top challenges women face in the workplace today, according to the more than 100 participants in the panel discussion on October 15 at the Legislative Building. The event, which was open to the public, was organized by the Minister responsible for the status of Women Diane McGifford in recognition of Women's History Month 2003.

Julie Guard, a professor and coordinator of the Labour and Workplace Studies Program, in the Economics Department at the University of Manitoba, noted that "women's different priorities are often treated as outside the norm while men's priorities seemed to be the normal pattern". She said we have to start thinking of women as typical workers and see working women as the norm.

Access to job sharing, especially in private companies, remains an important issue for women. According to Susan Hart-Kulbaba, while job-sharing in the public service is not that difficult, it is different in private industry. "Employers are selectively embarking on it – for those who they like, they are willing to accommodate, but if they do not like you and want to get rid of you, this is seen as a way they could do it," she said.

Ms. Hart-Kulbaba, who is the Past President of Manitoba Federation of labour and current Manitoba Government Employees' Union staff representative, also stated that employers who are considering job sharing, generally do not like to hire a job share partner from outside. They prefer to find someone within the company to make the transition smoother.

Author, business owner and past president of the Human Resource Management Association, Barbara Bowes said that times are changing and women are much more accepted in the workforce today. She recalled that in 1969, when she was a social worker, she had to quit because of the lack of a babysitter.

Two Aboriginal women spoke out during the discussion and said that racism is still endemic in the workforce. One said her 10 years of work in the mainstream system have left her too hurt to return. She now works within her own community teaching Aboriginal children. She called on the women present to work together to rid racism from society.

Minister McGifford in closing the discussion said that her government has spent \$22 million on childcare and this remains a priority of the government. She said research has shown that the more dollars you spent on a child under 6 the better outcome is predicted for that child's life. Another issue the government is trying to address is the impact of Employment Insurance claims on women who work part time. With a minimum of 600 hours per year to claim EI, it is difficult for part-time workers to qualify, the Minister said.

Seniors Also Lay Claim to Month of October

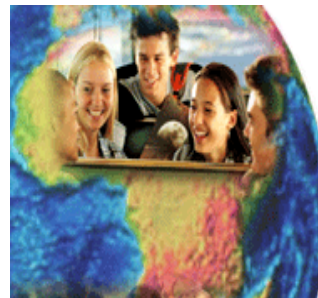
Women, who are also seniors, had two reasons to celebrate in October. Not only was it Women's History Month, Premier Gary Doer also proclaimed October as Seniors' and Elders' Month in Manitoba. The theme was "Celebrating the Diversity of Older Manitobans."

"This occasion gives us the opportunity to recognize the significant contributions that older Manitobans make to our families, communities and the province," said Premier Doer at the kickoff to the seniors' celebrations at the Forks on October 1st. The premier also said that the collective wisdom of seniors "provides a link to the past and a better understanding of our present day culture."

Many celebrations took place across the province during October. These events ranged from art expositions, writing festivals and activities promoting health and fitness to just having fun at masquerade balls, fairs and bingo tournaments.

The Manitoba Council on Aging Recognition Awards will be presented on October 28, 2003. These awards formally recognize organizations, businesses and individuals for their outstanding work with seniors.

Universal Children's Day Up Next



On November 20, communities around the world will celebrate Universal Children's Day, known as National Child Day in Canada. Its theme

is "A Community Fit for Children", inspired by the United Nations document, "A World Fit for Children", inviting all of us to reflect on steps that we can take at the community level to ensure the well-being and healthy development of children.

Information on International Children's Day celebrations is posted on the Health Canada website, which includes activities for children and youth, community leaders, families, and educators. The website is updated as information on other activities becomes available.