



*Back row: George Sarides, Nancy Flintoft, Jackie Gruber, Simon Gillingham, Cheryl Smith, Victor Schwartzman.  
Front row: Lora Wachtendorf, Patricia Knipe, Tracy Lloyd, Beatrice Watson, Pam Roberts, and Donna Seale.  
Not Present: Derek Legge, Pat Daniels, and Lorraine Lambert*

## Congratulations to the Manitoba Human Rights Youth Conference Team

For the third year in a row, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission was nominated for a Manitoba Service Excellence Award. The Youth Conference team was recognized because, "the team successfully communicated to the students that equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination is their right and is non-negotiable."

The Youth Conference is one of the Commission's most popular public education activities. In November 2003 it was held in Winnipeg and a new workshop called "Mia Momma," which dealt with the rights of pregnant teens and teen moms, was introduced. Other workshops offered were: Taking Care of Business (about human rights in the workplace), Diversity Without Division (dealing with bullying and harassment) and Not So Trivial Pursuit (the human rights quiz show). The conference included a video booth where students could make their views known on issues such as bullying, harassment and discrimination.

Staff volunteered to develop and present workshops to raise awareness of The Human Rights Code among high school students. A subsequent Youth Conference was held in Thompson Manitoba in March 2004.

### The Rights Connection By Janet Baldwin - Chairperson Promoting Human Rights

As Past-President of the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies, I was recently at its annual conference. (See article in this bulletin.) One theme was the measurement of human rights progress in Canada. While quantitative and especially qualitative progress can be a challenge to assess, we can nevertheless observe progress in many areas of human rights protection, including women's rights, and rights of gays and lesbians.

Seeing these positive gains, it is crucial that we not allow them to be eroded. Issues have arisen in this federal election campaign, which suggest that the equality rights of gays and lesbians, and of women, may be threatened. For example, Canada's highest court has found that "sexual orientation" is an analogous ground to those listed in s.15 of our Charter and that all persons are entitled to protection from discrimination regardless of their sexual orientation. Despite this finding, the fact that "sexual orientation" wasn't specified by the drafters of the Charter has been relied on by some to suggest that this protection is not really a right and that the Supreme Court of Canada should not "read in" grounds. It has also been suggested that the same-sex marriage reference be removed from the Supreme Court of Canada, that Parliament legislate to reaffirm the traditional definition of marriage, and that the Charter's notwithstanding clause be used should the Court subsequently overturn any such legislation. Further, it has been suggested that the recent expansion of hate crimes to protect gays and lesbians would be "amended".

About 70 years ago, in the famous "person's" case, women were declared "persons" under our Constitution Act and so able to sit in the Senate. Lord Stankey wrote: "The British North America Act planted in Canada a living tree capable of growth and expansion within its natural limits." Far from embracing the "Living Tree Doctrine" of interpreting our Charter equality rights, some would rather trim the branches and starve the roots. Let us be among those who speak up to ensure that all of our human rights not only endure, but flourish.

## Translation Project Continues

The Manitoba Human Rights translation project has now added Tagalog to its general guidelines document. To date, the guidelines are available in English, French, Spanish, Cree and Tagalog. The document includes such topics as discrimination, harassment, and differential treatment. It is available at the Commission offices and eventually, will be on its website.

The Commission is hoping to translate this one page document into other languages including Punjabi, Italian, German and Cantonese.

For more information, please call Patricia Knipe at 945-5112.

## Human Rights Conference Held in Ottawa

Executive Director Dianna Scarth and Chairperson Janet Baldwin recently returned from the annual conference of The Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies ("CASHRA"). It was hosted in Ottawa this year by the Canadian Human Rights Commission, with the theme "The Everyday Work of Promoting and Protecting Human Rights in Canada."

The first day was open to the public, and featured presentations and seminars on recent developments in human rights law, racism and racial profiling, discrimination and disability, the independence and impartiality of human rights commissions in Canada and discrimination prevention. There was also a discussion with members of the Canadian Human Rights Commission's Judges' Advisory Council.

The second day was reserved for CASHRA personnel and focused on best practices in human rights case management, discrimination prevention, the use of special inquiries and reports, information technology for internal work and public education, cross-jurisdictional legal issues and challenges in measuring human rights progress in Canada.

## Local Activist Remembered

### Theresa Ducharme (1945-2004)

Theresa Ducharme often referred to herself as a loud mouthed political activist, passionate crusader for the rights of disabled people, wife and human being.

Theresa was born in 1945 into a large loving family. In 1953 she, along with 2300 other Manitobans, contracted polio. This devastating disease left her a quadriplegic and dependant on a respirator for the rest of her life.

In the preface to Theresa's self published book, *Life and Breath A love Story*, Lloyd Axworthy writes that most of us don't know much about living with disabilities. "We are not aware of the struggle, frustration, feelings and ambitions of trying to achieve a sense of normalcy in an environment that is neither helpful nor responsive."

Theresa met more challenges and overcame more barriers than most of us will ever confront. Much of her life was spent in and out of hospitals, in an iron lung, suffering from pneumonia and chest infections. Yet her life is celebrated by accomplishments. By 1976 she was using a portable respirator and had met Clifford Ducharme, a driver for a wheelchair taxi service. Their friendship and subsequent romance resulted in a loving marriage, which lasted twenty five years. Over those years she fought for the equality of disabled people by promoting better transit service, building accessibility, air travel. She believed in equal justice for all individuals without regard for race, religion, disability or ability.

*"I would like to be the example of what, when given a chance, a differently-abled person can accomplish. I do this in memory of all those who were not given a chance at life and love while here on earth."*

*Theresa Ducharme  
Life and Breath  
A Love Story*



*Theresa met Clifford Ducharme in 1969 when he was a driver for a wheelchair taxi service. In 1978 they were married.  
(Photograph courtesy of Health Sciences Centre "Centrescope")*



## Coming up in the summer edition of the MHR Connections Bulletin

A Guide to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission Web Site

[www.gov.mb.ca/hrc](http://www.gov.mb.ca/hrc)