

## 2006 Manitoba Human Rights Awards Celebrated



*Keynote speaker Kevin Chief (centre) is flanked by the 2006 recipients of the Manitoba Human Rights Awards, Chuck Duboff (left) and Tasha Spillett (right).*

Over 100 people celebrated with the two recipients of this year's Manitoba Human Rights Awards. Chuck Duboff and Tasha Spillett were honoured at a lunch on December 8, 2006 for their work promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Chuck Duboff was the recipient for the Manitoba Human Rights Commitment Award, which this year focused on activities that have encouraged youth awareness and involvement in human rights. Mr. Duboff is an English teacher at Maples Collegiate and founder of the collegiate's Unity Group, and continues to be the force behind it. As one student said, "students change over the years, but the one constant is Chuck Duboff. He is the driving force."

During his acceptance speech, Mr. Duboff thanked the students for their hard work and the many others who supported the unity group. He explained how it began, referring to an incident twelve years ago when some students were distressed by a racist remark made by a politician and were not sure how to show their disapproval. As the story goes, when asked what to do, Mr. Duboff told them that in the

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### The Rights Connection by Janet Baldwin - Chairperson Mind the Gap this Holiday Season

The holiday season can be a time when the distinction between formal and substantive equality is quite literally brought home for many people. They are confronted, often painfully, by the gulf that remains between the official recognition of their equal status in the human family and real inclusion, appreciation and acceptance.

Individuals who are gay, poor, disabled, recent immigrants, in mixed race or religion tradition partnerships, transgendered, or living with an active addiction know that this distance can loom particularly large at the time of Christmas, Hanukkah, or other occasions marked by gatherings of family and friends.

The good news is that each of us is presented with many opportunities each day, in ways both big and small, to narrow these gaps in the true recognition of the worth and dignity of every person. Genuine interest, openness, friendliness and invitations are gifts that each of us can choose to give those who might otherwise remain on the margins of our family, friendship, work, neighbourhood or community.

The generosity of spirit shown by all those who organized and hosted the recent All My Relations Welcome Ceremony, including volunteers from The Manitoba Human Rights Commission, is a good example. This was a multi-cultural feast and evening of entertainment where Aboriginal Peoples welcomed new immigrants to Winnipeg with an Aboriginal ceremony.

There are some among us, Stephen Lewis for example, who champion the recognition of the worth and dignity of every person on the national and world stage. This is very important work, but in our circles of family, friends, neighbourhoods and communities, it is the dropped stitches that each of us picks up that knit us strongly together.

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sixties students marched and carried placards to voice their disapproval. In 1994, five hundred students organized their first peace march to the legislature, carrying banners reflecting their anti-racism stance. The Unity Group was born that day, and still marches to the legislative building every year. Today it also organizes such events as the Rock against Racism Concert, Unity Day, and a food drive for Winnipeg Harvest, to name just a few.



*Vincent Harper prepares for the honour song.*

The recipient of the Sybil Shack Memorial Manitoba Human Rights Youth Award was seventeen year old Tasha Spillet.

She is a founding member of the United Against Racism Aboriginal Youth Circle. This remarkable young woman is a trained anti-racism facilitator/trainer with over 40 hours of public speaking and facilitation on anti-racism education and action. When she accepted her human rights award, she said that whatever she had accomplished was due to the support of her family, community, young people and elders who have guided her. She concluded saying, "I still have a lot more work to do."

Another highlight of the event was keynote speaker Kevin Chief, the Executive Director of the Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre (WASAC). Kevin is a keen advocate of the Aboriginal community in Winnipeg, and his conviction and energy have made a difference, especially for children and youth. In his address, he acknowledged and thanked the two award recipients, both of whom he said, have inspired young people. Kevin believes strongly in the impact of role models and spoke about the importance of talking and learning from each other. "As peers and role models, it is our young people who can influence each other in a positive way," he said, adding that they are more likely to hear and understand what others of their age are saying and doing.



*Regional Director of the CHRC, Nicole Ritchot receives a gift for her many years as host of the Manitoba Human Rights Awards lunch.*

Prior to the awards being given out, Vincent Harper a youth mentor in Restoring the Sacred sang an honour song in recognition of this year's award recipients.

The day was also an opportunity to thank Nicole Ritchot, the Regional Director of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Ms Ritchot has hosted the International Human Rights Day Lunch for many years, but 2006 was her last time. She is retiring in March 2007.

The Manitoba Human Rights Awards are sponsored by the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, and are awarded every year in recognition of International Human Rights Day, which is on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

## **Stephen Lewis**

**The Silent Struggle - Gender and Race Beyond the Canadian Border**

**January 17, 2007 @ 7:30 p.m.**

**University of Manitoba Room 210 University Centre**

**Ticket \$10.00 – General Admission**

**Students with valid student ID - Free**

**For tickets call - 477-7510 or 474-8211**

## **Promoting human rights-a good investment**

**By Elliot Leven - Commissioner**

In recent years, governments have looked for ways to cut spending in order to reduce deficits without raising taxes. Some provinces have limited their funding for human rights commissions.

In Manitoba, our commission receives just enough funding to carry on its core functions. Because of the dedication of our staff, who go above and beyond the call of duty, human rights complaints are processed in a timely fashion and are properly investigated and mediated as required.

Our commission however, needs additional funding for educational programming. We are able to prepare some materials, hold workshops and a few youth conferences because the staff is very flexible and takes on these successful projects. However, if we had proper funding, we could be doing so much more.

"All right," the cynics will reply, "human rights education may be nice, but isn't it a frill? Doesn't government have a million higher priorities?"

The answer is that spending on human rights education is a good investment for any government. Though preventing discrimination is good for individuals who might personally face discrimination, it is also good for the economy as a whole. I realize that human rights are not usually promoted for economic reasons, but they could be.

Some employers, and other service providers, just don't realize how human rights laws work. If complaints are filed against them, they may get an unpleasant and expensive education. Wouldn't it be better (and cheaper) if they could get that education before any complaints were filed? Furthermore, over the very long term, generous funding for human rights education should reduce the total number of human rights complaints, thus saving money for commissions and society as a whole.

**The Manitoba Human Rights Commission would like to thank the following**

**contributors and sponsors of this year's Mission Possible Youth Conferences.**

**~ Nancy Allan - Minister Responsible for the Status of Women**

**~ Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union of Canada**

**~ Air Services Branch, Manitoba Department of Infrastructure and Transportation**