

MHR Connections

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Winnipeg band Steeplechaser sets the tone for the three hour Rock Against Racism concert presented by the Maples Unity Group.

Unity Group Sends Message

What do you get when you put rock bands, students, guest speakers, and a Winnipeg Blue Bomber place kicker together in Winnipeg's Burton Cummings Theatre on a very cold February night? For over 1500 people, the answer is Rock Against Racism, an energetic concert organized and presented by the Maples Collegiate Unity Group on February 16.

The evening started with Steeplechaser, a favourite Winnipeg band. Vocalist Jeff Driedger set the tone by saying the band was honoured to take part in the event. More music followed, interspersed with members of the Unity Group and guest speakers addressing the issues of racism and human rights. Bands included Maple Sugar, Mindbomb, Last Man Standing, Brat Attack, Hoist, Traffic and Cheap Escape.

One highlight was the Juno Award winning Eagle and Hawk, whose music combines modern rock with Aboriginal elements, complete with dancers. Host Troy Westwood of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers also performed and the ever popular John K. Samson of the Weakerthans sang "One Great City." Two of the guest speakers brought silence to the theatre. Senait Yohannes, who was born in Asmara, Eritrea, spoke passionately about human rights abuses inflicted on the people of Eritrea and Louise Simbandumwe, who fled Burundi as a child, talked about escaping widespread massacres in that country.



Dancers perform with Juno award winning band Eagle and Hawk.

Concert continued on page 2

The Rights Connection

by Janet Baldwin - Chairperson
Breaking Through the Defence

The recent triumphs of Canadian (particularly Manitoban) women at the Olympics, including the women's gold medal hockey team, demonstrate the obstacles women have overcome in sport. Female hockey players of exceptional ability, including members of our women's team, have often had to join the ranks of boys and men's hockey teams in order to play at their level of skill.

Back in 1955, an eight year old star defenceman in the Toronto boys' Junior A hockey league, Abby Hoffman, caused a media stir when coaches learned that she was a girl. Players had been required to submit their birth certificates prior to an all-star game. Abby, who had cut her hair very short, posed as a boy in order to play at her level of skill. She later became a middle-distance runner, competed in four Olympics, and after retiring from competition, worked to break down barriers in women's participation in sports.

We continue to have a number of human rights complaints involving the participation of girls on boys' sports teams. The issues generally involve a refusal to allow a girl to participate in a league or competition, or issues with respect to the provision of changing rooms and access to ongoing coaching or team-building opportunities.

One important decision with respect to the right of girls to equal opportunity in sports is the 1986 judgment of the Ontario Court of Appeal in the Blainey case. A gifted twelve-year-old hockey player, Justine Blainey, was prevented from playing on a boys' hockey team. Interestingly, Abigail Hoffman, by then Director General of Sport Canada and a member of the Order of Canada, gave evidence in the case. The Court determined that the provision of the Ontario Human Rights Code which allowed for sexual discrimination in sport was unconstitutional and of no force or effect.

While almost 70% of Canada's medals at the Turin Olympics were won by women, only 15% of the coaches are women, happily including Melody Davidson, head coach of the women's hockey team. Let's hope that this particular defence to the participation of women in sport is also soon broken.



Curator of the exhibit Francis Jeffers would like all people to recognize the contribution of African inventors.

Black History Month Presents the African Inventors' Exhibition

From egg beaters, rolling pins and shoe horns to gas masks, helicopter rotary blades and software development, the International African Inventors' Museum revealed the many contributions that Africans throughout the world have given society.

The traveling pictorial museum was on display at the Winnipeg Millennium Museum during the 25th Annual Black History Month Celebration.

At the official opening, Francis Jeffers, the curator of the Museum said that when most students are asked to name famous Canadian inventors, the typical answers are Banting, Best and Bell. He would like them to know more names, especially the contributions by African Canadian inventors. "In this country there is no limit to what you can achieve," he said, adding that "the picture of Canadians must be inclusive in an inclusive society."

Jeffers, who came to Canada from the island of Dominica when he was 16, explained that "the idea of the museum is to show that all people have been involved in science, technology and inventions."

The display not only reveals the men behind such inventions as modern day ice cream, automatic dishwashing detergent and the super soaker pump water gun, it also celebrates the women whose contributions include the ironing board, digital toasters, and the suitcase with wheels.

One of the most well known female medical inventors highlighted in the display is ophthalmologist Dr. Patricia Bath, who is known world wide for inventing a laser tool used to remove cataracts. Dr. Bath has often said that enabling the blind to see is her greatest joy.

And did you ever wonder where the expression "The Real McCoy" came from? There are many theories ranging from an American boxer who had many imitators to the famous Hatfield McCoy family feud. According to the International African Inventors Museum, the mystery is solved.

In 1872, Canadian born inventor Elijah McCoy patented a self regulating lubricator for steam engine cylinders. Within ten years, the buyers of steam trains and steam engines used in mines and factories would ask if the lubrication systems were the "Real McCoy."

To this day, when we want the real thing and not a substitute, we ask for "Real McCoy."



Poet Ruth Smith reads her poem "This message is clear" at the opening of the exhibit.

concert continued from page 1

Another speaker, Kim Jasper of the Asper Foundation asked the students if they had heard of Rosa Parks. The response was thunderous applause. She then asked if they had heard of Viola Desmond, and the response was much more muted. Ms Jasper told Viola Desmond's story and encouraged the audience to learn about the people behind the human and civil rights movement in Canada. She concluded by saying that Viola

Desmond's story, and others like it, would be told by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

The Maples Unity group thanked the dedication of teacher and unity group supervisor Chuck Duboff, while Duboff congratulated the group on

planning and organizing an amazing evening. The proceeds from the Rock Against Racism Concert are being donated to Amnesty International, Welcome Place, Unity Group Scholarships and Lost Boys and Girls of the Sudan.



Blue Bomber place kicker Troy Westwood hosts Rock Against Racism and performs as Little Hawk.

The Viola Desmond Story

Viola Desmond was a young beautician and teacher whose car broke down in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia in 1946. After having found a place for the night, Viola went to the movies where she was not allowed to sit in the house seats as they were for "whites only." She was told to go to the balcony, which was designated for black people. She refused. The police were called and she was arrested, dragged bodily from the theatre and thrown in jail overnight, where she stoically sat all night on a hard jail bench, still wearing her white gloves. The next day she was charged with "attempting to defraud the federal government" based on her refusal to pay the one cent amusement tax. She was sentenced to a fine of \$20 and 30 days in prison.

Viola Desmond's action took place 10 years before Rosa Parks boarded a bus and remained seated after being ordered to give it up to a white passenger.

March 8, 2006 is International Women's Day



Come Celebrate the 90 anniversary of women getting the vote in Manitoba. Room 200 Legislative Building 11:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.