

Students return to their schools with a message



After forty five minutes of power thinking, designing and cutting and pasting, students from Split Lake display their banner at the Respect Reloaded Youth Conference in Thompson, Manitoba. The conference took place on March 21, 2006, which was International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The E-Race Discrimination Challenge began in a flurry of activity at the 2006 Northern "Respect Reloaded" Youth Conference. Jerry Woods, Vice Chairperson of the Manitoba Human Rights Board of Commissioners and Host of the conference, encouraged the students to put a message on a banner and take it take back to their schools.

The continuing challenge is to build a project around that message.

Immediately following Jerry's words, special guests, Pino Pisano and James Zebrasky of the Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre (WASAC) got to work, energizing the

students and giving them forty five minutes to finish their art work. The students were given a 3 by 8 foot piece felt banner, a stack of multi coloured felt material, scissors, a glue gun and some rock music to encourage them. And they were off.



During the first few minutes of the E-Race Discrimination Challenge, students from Chief Sam Cooke Mahmuwee Education Centre decide on the message of "Join Hands to Stop Racism."

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The Rights Connection By Janet Baldwin - Chairperson Safety and Human Rights

Last summer, a Neighbourhood Safety Committee in Winnipeg told a member of our Board that they believed Aboriginal residents were being discriminated against in the provision of police services. They believed bias was evident in the treatment of Aboriginal residents who had contact with police in the course of police investigations, the lack of crime prevention services in the neighbourhood and the manner of police response to calls for service from area Aboriginal residents. Similar concerns have recently arisen in the context of "Operation Clean Sweep" in the West Broadway area of Winnipeg.

We considered how to best to assess the accuracy of their concerns, and decided that it would be beneficial to obtain data as to the extent to which the practice of racial profiling might be occurring. Racial profiling is an approach to matters involving security or safety, which relies on stereotypes concerning a person's ancestry, national or ethnic origin or religion. We partnered with some faculty members of the University of Winnipeg interested in carrying out an independent research project examining racial profiling by the Winnipeg Police Service and met with representatives of the Service to discuss issues with respect to bias-free policing. While we had hoped to partner with the Winnipeg Police Service in the project, our invitation was declined.

We have, however, continued to explore possible research projects with the University of Winnipeg. We have submitted grant applications for the first two of these projects, to explore the question of whether there are discriminatory interactions and enforcements of policies by police and other security personnel against certain identifiable minority communities.

We are all concerned about the safety of our neighbourhoods, but this cannot justify discrimination. We plan to hold a community consultation this spring on the balance between safety and human rights.

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The results were amazing. From West Lynn Heights' message *Colour Is Only Skin Deep* and Mel Johnson School's *United We Stand* to Helen Betty Osborne Education Centre's *Stop Racism* and R.D. Parker's *Unite Against Racism*.



In a reversal of roles, a female teacher portrays a harasser and a male student takes on the role of a female waitress in a skit about sexual harassment.

students and asked them to improvise the situation. The scenarios dealt with such employment issues as sexual harassment, dress codes and job interviews.

The other workshop, "Something to Cheer About" featured two motivational speakers. James Zebrasky returned for the second year to talk about overcoming barriers and becoming an aboriginal role model. John Wyndels, of the Manitoba

Disability Office, joined the Commission's youth conference for the first time. When John was eighteen, he became a paraplegic after a car accident. He spoke of not letting anything or anyone stop you from doing what you want to do. John worked for many years at the CBC as a journalist and radio producer, travelled extensively around the world and built his own home. He is now a policy analyst for the Government of Manitoba and continues to play sports.

The Commission wishes to thank the students and teachers for their enthusiastic participation, WASAC for its energetic leaders and generosity, INCO Manitoba for providing lunch for the students and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada for sponsoring the E-Race Discrimination Challenge prize.



Guest speaker John Wyndels re-enforced the theme of the workshop "Something to Cheer About," saying to the students, "It's not where you are, it's where you are going."

....and in Winnipeg

Throughout the week of March 21, Winnipeg schools acknowledged International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by holding assemblies, workshops and discussion groups.

Daniel McIntyre Collegiate suspended regular class work during the afternoon of March 21 as teachers encouraged all students to take part in anti-racism workshops instead. The students were given a scenario and asked to improvise a situation. According to teacher Natalie Strecker, "the response was tremendous and the kids are now talking and planning other events."

The afternoon began with opening remarks by Manitoba Human Rights Commissioner Robin Dwarka. She encouraged the students to respect one another and to do more than talk about discrimination. "Be aware that racism exists in our country and be prepared to take action against it. It's time for you to raise your hand against racism. Look around you and respect one another," she said.

Other schools, such as Miles Macdonell and Gordon Bell, also commemorated the day with guest speakers and workshops. Tech Voc students viewed "For Angela," a powerful NFB film based on a true story about an Aboriginal woman who was determined to change attitudes and shatter stereotypes after being confronted by students at a bus stop. Rupert Persad said "the film had 500 students completely silent."

The Commission would also like to congratulate the Manitoba winners of the 2006 Racism. Stop It! national video competition. Winning videos from Shaughnessy Park, Archwood School and Collège Jeanne-Sauvé can be viewed on the Canadian Heritage web site.

Student allowed to wear kirpan

On March 2, 2006 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that an orthodox Sikh student had the right to wear a kirpan in school as long as he sealed it in a cloth bag and wore it under his clothes. A kirpan is a religious object that resembles a dagger. The boy who brought this case forward sincerely believed that his religion required him to wear a metal kirpan at all times. His parents agreed to have him wear it sealed in a cloth bag under his clothes. The school refused to let him wear it in this way because of the school's ban on weapons.

The Supreme Court of Canada found that the ban was not a reasonable limit on the student's right to religious freedom under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court found that a school can potentially interfere with a student's religious freedoms in order to keep students safe. However, the school cannot do so if it can accommodate the religious need in question while assuring a reasonable level of safety in the school. The arrangement the parents had agreed to would achieve this result. This boy had never used the kirpan for violence and sealing it made it less accessible to others than many other potentially dangerous objects in the school.

"UNTO EVERY PERSON THERE IS A NAME"

**ON APRIL 25, 2006, NAMES OF HOLOCAUST VICTIMS WILL BE READ
FROM 9:30 - 11:45 AT THE MANITOBA LEGISLATURE
FOLLOWED BY THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL SERVICE AT 12:00**