



Two schools succeed at making a difference

Two schools have been awarded the Manitoba Human Rights Certificate of Achievement for accepting the Commission's "Making a Difference Challenge" and promoting equality and human rights in their schools and communities.



Students from both schools participate in wrestling, dancing and bannock making.

At the Manitoba human rights youth conferences, Chairperson Jerry Woods encourages students to take back to their schools and communities what they have learned during the work-

shops. He believes that the key to a successful conference is the action that follows it, saying "we hope to give students some tools so they can take the message of respect, equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination back with them and act on it."

At least two schools listened to Jerry's message and did just that. St. Laurent School in St. Laurent and Margaret Barbour Collegiate in The Pas rose to the challenge.

In their project proposal the students at St. Laurent School wrote, "In today's society, there is always talk of "tolerance" or "acceptance" of other cultures, but rarely are the words "appreciation" and "enjoyment" used. They believe that one way to eliminate discrimination is to understand other cultures and histories.

The students at St. Laurent are proud of their Métis heritage and decided to invite another school from the Prairie Rose School Division, Elm Creek, to experience, for a day, Métis customs and traditions. Over 400 students participated. There were fiddlers, dancing, bead art, arm wrestling and bannock making, to name just a few activities. St. Laurent students put a storybook of pictures and music together and it can be seen on the Commission's website www.gov.mb.ca/hrc. To view the presentation just click on MHRC TV.

In the Pas, a different project, which is also on the website, was emerging. After attending The Pas Youth Conference, students at Margaret Barbour Collegiate put together a presentation for younger students who were asked to respond to such questions as: "What are your rights and responsibilities?" and "If racial discrimination could be eliminated, how would the world be different?"

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The Rights Connection by Jerry Woods - Chairperson

The Complex World of Apologies

Apologies, when delivered sincerely, with a sense of remorse, can help set the tone for countless dispute resolutions. For many people, inherent in a formal, written apology is the acceptance of responsibility and it serves to right a wrong. In some cases this is true. Formal apologies from the Government of Canada, although rare, have happened. The 1988 apology to surviving Japanese Canadians interned during World War II included an acknowledgment of wrongdoing. In other cases the Government has given formal expressions of regret.

Many people do not realize that apologies are also requested during human rights settlement negotiations. These apologies are sincere in the admission that a person has been hurt and express regret of any negative experience. They do not necessarily however, clearly admit wrongdoing. For those people who have been offended, an apology is often helpful in regaining their self esteem. For others, they can be meaningless gestures.

From a complainant's perspective, it seems reasonable that if an apology is to be authentic and contains an admission of wrongdoing, the person or company responsible should be willing to accept all the consequences, legal and otherwise. For this very reason people are often reluctant to make an apology as part of a human rights settlement because they, or their lawyers, worry that it can be used against them later to establish legal liability. Most human rights mediators suggest however, that with some form of apology on the table, negotiations can move the discussion along and begin to bring closure to both parties.

The world of apologies is a complex one. Perhaps that is why two provincial governments in Canada have passed legislation allowing parties to express honest regret or remorse as part of dispute resolution without fear of legal liability. In British Columbia and Saskatchewan, an apology or expression of regret is no longer an admission of fault and is not admissible in court as evidence. Time will tell what effect this new legislation will have, but it is certainly worth watching.

Recognizing Human Rights Work

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Nominations are open for the Annual Manitoba Human Rights Commitment Award and the Dr. Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award.

"Every year, on International Human Rights Day, we acknowledge work done in various communities that has had an impact on the advancement of human rights," says Dianna Scarth, Executive Director of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

"We are asking Manitobans to consider submitting a nomination for either the Commitment or Youth Award," she says, adding, "the work and effort of many often goes unnoticed by those outside their community. This event is a celebration and gives individuals or groups the recognition they deserve."

This year the Commitment Award will recognize work, which has advanced human rights by overcoming discrimination based on mental disability. The youth award will recognize a youth group or young person who has promoted respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms within Manitoba.

Past human rights award recipients include Chuck Duboff, Winnipeg Harvest, Marcelline Ndayumvire, Kathy Mallet, Sherri Walsh, Phil Fontaine, Chris Vogel and Richard North. The Dr. Sybil Shack Youth Award, which began in 2005, has been awarded to the Maples Collegiate Unity Group and Tasha Spillett.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commitment Awards Committee consists of representatives from the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties and the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

The deadline for nominations is November 9, 2007. For more information on the award criteria, you can contact the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, The Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties or the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Criteria information can also be found on the Manitoba Human Rights Commission website www.gov.mb.ca/hrc

Women's History Month highlights the success of immigrant women in Manitoba



Ms Ang'er Ruay, winner of the YMCA-YWCA's Young Women of Distinction Award was one of the featured speakers at the Women's History Month reception on October 4, 2007. As a child, Ang'er survived the atrocities of civil war in southern Sudan and was orphaned at the age of five. Until the age of nineteen her life included wandering through jungles and

taking shelter in refugee camps. Currently, Ang'er is enrolled in the faculty of nursing at the University of Manitoba.

Robert Gott was one of the students involved. In his presentation he says, "Today, racism affects and hurts a lot of people who are white, native and black. It doesn't matter what your race, colour or creed is, what matters, I think, is mostly based on what's inside you, who you are and what your dreams are." He goes on to say that he wants to prevent racial discrimination for future children, grandchildren and great grandchildren so that a safer, stronger future will lie ahead for our cultures."



Robert Gott from the Sapotaweyak Cree Nation says racism hurts everyone.

In her presentation, Yvette Arnault asks students if they had experienced racism and how it makes them feel. Then she



Yvette Arnault tells younger students to believe in themselves.

says, "Now take a moment to think about how other people feel when you tease them or fight them based on their skin colour or religion." She also compared racism to judging a book by its cover saying, "...the book contains pages, and the pages want to be read and understood."

Congratulations to all the students at St. Laurent School and Margaret Barbour Collegiate. The schools will receive a Human Rights Certificate of Achievement for their work, and \$500 towards continuing projects.

Conference heightens awareness of struggle against hunger

World Food Day was acknowledged earlier this month in Winnipeg with a conference on the human right to food. The conference was organized by a committee with representatives from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the Manitoba Food Charter and Winnipeg Harvest.

Last year Winnipeg Harvest reported that over 39,000 people received food each month from the non-profit, community-based organization.

Participants at the conference included the Commission's Past-Chairperson Janet Baldwin and Executive Director Dianna Scarth. The plenary session presented information about the need to respect, protect and fulfill the human right to food. Participants then broke into small groups to discuss viable action plans to reduce hunger and poverty.

In Thompson, discussions on growing food for northerners took place at the Northern Harvest Forum.

The Manitoba Food Security Network has more information about Manitobans working towards greater food security.