

MHR *Connections*

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New citizens welcomed to Canada

Joanne Gan and Haitao Deng arrived in Winnipeg over four years ago. Today the couple from China owns and operates a small restaurant and store in the Point Douglas area of Winnipeg.

As with many new immigrants, the transition to a new country and a new life is at times exciting and at other times, simply exhausting.



After receiving their certificates, Joanne Gan and Haitao Deng sign their citizenship documents.

Having experienced both, on October 17, at a ceremony, at Red River College Joanne and Haitao became Canadian citizens.

This particular ceremony was very different from others held throughout the year. It began with group discussions. Ten tables were set up and at each, a group of people talked about their experiences, aspirations and obstacles. Some of them were about to become Canadians, others became citizens years ago.

Manitoba Human Rights Board of Commissioners Chairperson Jerry Woods led one of the discussion groups. It was at this time that he met Joanne and Haitao.

When asked about their experiences over the last four years, both said that they found the neighbourhood to be very friendly and inviting, and had an appreciation for the support of the community. They also spoke about the assistance and encouragement of teachers and staff at the school of their ten year old son.

Looking to the future, Joanne expressed her desire to improve her English. "It is hard," she said. "With a child and just the two of us in the restaurant, I haven't had the time to take lessons. I have learned English by talking to our customers."

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The Rights Connection by Jerry Woods - Chairperson

It was a pleasure this month to welcome 38 new citizens to Canada at a special citizenship ceremony. I was reminded that people, who come to this country, are searching for a better life for themselves and their families. Most find equality and fairness here and appreciate keeping their culture while embracing a new one. Their aspirations are the same as those of us born here. They want a safe home, a good job, education for their children, and medical care if needed. The journey, however, is not an easy one.

Many work long hours, struggle with a new language and discover that things we take for granted, like getting a reference, is extremely difficult. Then there is the loneliness. Some are homesick and would like to find a faster, less expensive and less complicated way of having family join them. They admit that speaking and understanding a new language are challenges, and since younger ones pick it up more easily, not learning fast enough can divide parents and their children. In many cases there are financial burdens. Most cultural differences are understood; some are not.

As a First Nations person it is important to me to acknowledge that even when we share the same neighbourhoods, work places, schools, colleges and universities, too often we don't get to know each other very well. We have to consider not only what we can teach, but also what we can learn.

As Chairperson of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, I am proud of this province's strong tradition of protecting human rights. I believe in the goals of equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination for all people who live and work here.

We are fortunate to live in a multi-cultural country with friends and neighbours from every corner of the world. Cultures and traditions are very important to me and I believe in maintaining and cherishing them - particularly languages. There is no greater gift to give the next generation than the gift of language.

First Nations People have a history of welcoming newcomers to the land. It was an honour to be part of the citizenship ceremony and to personally meet some of Canada's newest citizens.

Multicultural organization recognizes Beatrice Watson



Beatrice Watson, the Manitoba Human Rights Outreach and Liaison Officer was recognized as a leader in Winnipeg's Black Community by the Dinamba Intercultural Association of Manitoba. Each year the

Dinamba Intercultural Association awards community members who have demonstrated voluntarism and promoted multiculturalism ideals. Also receiving an award was Rev. Father Ronald Léger (sitting). The special acknowledgement was part of the 9th Annual New-Yam Festival and Appreciation Night, a thanksgiving festival celebrated in Nigeria. The New Yam Festival known as 'Iwa-Ji' or 'Iri-Ji' is a celebration depicting the prominence of yam in the social-cultural life of Nigerians. Yam is the main agricultural crop and the staple food of the Igbo people.

Dinamba Intercultural Association of Manitoba is a multi-racial, community based, non-profit and non-partisan cultural association. It is dedicated to the promotion of Canadian multiculturalism through initiatives in public education, community outreach, family support, social equality and social justice.

Three days of celebrating human rights

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission will celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights over three days in December.

"Celebrate Your Rights" Youth Conference will take place on December 9, and will begin at the Woodsworth Building where the students will be attending human rights workshops. The keynote speaker will be lawyer, author and workplace consultant Stephen Hammond. Hammond is the author of the recently released book, "Steps in the Rights Direction – 365 human rights celebrations and tragedies that inspired Canada and the World."

After lunch, the participants will move over to the Legislative Building where the "Peace by Piece" banner will be unveiled. Students across the province worked together to make "peace pieces" that have since been assembled into one huge banner.

The following day the Commission, along with its

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She also explained that Haitao has had a more difficult time with the language as he is the cook and spends most of his time in the kitchen and does not get the opportunity to talk with others.

She admitted to some tough times and expressed a desire to have other family members join her and Haitao. Like many young couples, they would love to have their parents here, not only so that they could share the experience of living in Canada, but also to help them out.

"People ask why we don't have more children," she said, laughing. "When you have one child and work until almost midnight every night, it is something we can't even think about."

The group discussions were followed by the official citizenship ceremony. Red River College's Elder in Residence, Jules Lavallee, and President Jeff Zabudsky welcomed the 38 new citizens. Citizenship Judge Harold Gilleshammer also spoke, and then led them through the oath of citizenship. John Ralston Saul, co-Chair of the new Institute for Canadian Citizenship and husband of former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson spoke to the new Canadians. "You will be changed by Canada, and you will change Canada," he said.

The final speaker was Commission Chairperson Jerry Woods, who explained that First Nations people have a history of welcoming newcomers. He spoke about the seven Aboriginal teaching of respect, love, honesty, courage, humility, wisdom and truth and the importance of the legacy of Louis Riel saying, that he "helped to lay the framework for minority rights and as a result, for cultural cooperation in Canada."

The 38 new Canadians, from Asia, Europe and Africa, became Canadian Citizens at this special ceremony, which was part of Citizenship Week in Canada. Organized in partnership with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, October 17 was part of the Community Citizenship Ceremonies Initiative developed by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship and coordinated locally by members of a volunteer committee.

partners, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties will host a one day human rights conference, "Into the Future." Although the conference celebrates the accomplishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the main theme of the keynote speakers and the workshops is the next generation of human rights protections. Workshop topics include social and economic rights, the impact of technology and the changing environment on people with disabilities, and indigenous perspectives. Updates on this conference are available on the Commission's website. Online registration will be available on October 31, 2008. For those who register early, the conference fee is \$125.00 which includes the Commitment and Youth Awards dinner that evening.

The third day of celebration will take place at Government House. The Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, the Honourable John Harvard, who has a strong commitment and ongoing interest in human rights, will host a reception.