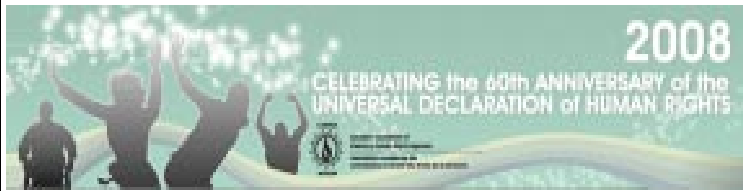


MHR *Connections*

Published by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission

Volume 8 Number 9

September 2008



New website engages young Canadians in human rights issues

Young people, students and teachers have a new, interactive tool to facilitate learning, and to engage in discussions about human rights issues affecting Canadians.

The interactive youth website was developed in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The website, targeted to Canadians between the ages of 18 – 35, was developed by the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA), in collaboration with TakingITGlobal and the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission is a member of CASHRA and its Chairperson Jerry Woods encourages both students and teachers to check out the website.

“Now, more than ever, there are new ways and mediums for young people to become involved in positive social change. Young people can make an impact,” he says adding, “the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a time to learn about accomplishments and recognize future challenges.”

In addition to information about human rights issues and legislative frameworks enforcing human rights, the website includes tips for young people about how to get involved in promoting and protecting human rights. Interactive features can also be accessed on the website including: discussion boards, an online art gallery and calls to action.

CASHRA is the national association of Canada’s government agencies charged with administering federal, provincial and territorial human rights legislation.

To access the website visit: <http://www.takingitglobal.org/themes/udhr60>. A link to TakingITGlobal is also available on the Manitoba Human Rights Commission’s website www.manitoba.ca/hrc.

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The Rights Connection

By Jerry Woods Chairperson

According to a recent report initiated jointly by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, both disabled Aboriginal adults and children face multiple obstacles when attempting to get assistance. They are marginalized both in and out of their own communities because of physical, systemic and attitudinal barriers. Children face the additional quagmire of jurisdictional disputes.

These very complex jurisdictional issues between provincial and federal governments are in desperate need of a solution. A 1996 Federal Task Force, found that a “morass of jurisdictional forces have led to fragmented policies and a patchwork of supports and services.” Not much has changed since that report was written.

It is time for new ideas, new solutions and new participants.

Earlier this month, on September 5th, the Province of Manitoba announced it had reached an agreement with the federal government so that First Nations children with multiple disabilities will receive care without delays or disruptions resulting from jurisdictional disputes. This agreement is based on Jordan’s Principle, which states that where a jurisdictional dispute arises between two levels of government, or between two government departments regarding the payment of services for a status Indian child, the payment is made by the first one contacted. Disputes will be dealt with later.

The September 5th agreement does have its limitations, but at least the jurisdictional puzzle is being acknowledged and hopefully opens the door to more comprehensive solutions. The government news release however, speaks specifically to children with multiple disabilities. What will be provided to the greater number of Aboriginal children who have single versus multiple disabilities?

It is time to listen and learn from various human rights commissions, educational organizations, different levels of government, and Aboriginal Elders and Leaders, and work together to come up with solutions that benefit Aboriginal children with disabilities across this country. If all Canadians truly have the right to education, health care and other services then those services should not be denied or delayed because someone says “sorry not our jurisdiction.”

Conference looks to the future

Into the Future – A Conference Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will take place in Winnipeg on December 10th, 2008, International Human Rights Day.

The hosts of the conference, The Manitoba Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties are pleased to announce that the two keynote speakers will be Maude Barlow and Dr. Lloyd Axworthy.

Dr. Axworthy, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Winnipeg, will give the opening keynote address. With his extensive knowledge of human rights and background in international affairs, it is expected that he will provide a valuable and unique perspective concerning the impact of the Universal Declaration.

Maude Barlow, the National Chairperson of The Council of Canadians and the co-founder of the Blue Planet Project, will be the second keynote speaker. She will look into the future of human rights and deal with emerging environmental and rights issues, such as the right to water.

“We are hoping that both human rights proponents and environmentalists will find these topics intriguing,” says Sherri Helgason, Canadian Human Rights Commission Director in Winnipeg. “As the future unfolds, these two movements may have more and more in common,” she adds.

Workshops will be designed to focus the discussions on the evolution of human rights, once again with an eye to the future, particularly in regards to women’s rights, the rights of Aboriginal people and of persons with disabilities.

Early registration for this conference is \$125.00, which is based on cost recovery. Registration includes lunch and an invitation to the Human Rights Awards Dinner later in the day.

Information about registering for this conference and updates on workshop panelists will be available on the Commission’s website in the coming days and weeks.

LEAF Annual Persons Day Breakfast

The 2008 LEAF (Women's Legal Education and Action Fund) Persons Day Breakfast will be held on Friday, October 17 at the Winnipeg Convention Centre from 7:15 to 9:00 am.

This year's fundraiser features guest speakers Sally Armstrong, human rights activist, documentary filmmaker and author, and Charles Coffey, community leader and former executive VP, RBC Financial Group on the theme: "Equality - Media - Men - Money." Tickets are \$25 and available at McNally Robinson, Manitoba Status of Women, 409-401 York Avenue (945-6281) or by calling LEAF at 453-1379 or e-mail: leafmb@mts.net.



Human Rights Officer Victor Schwartzman has retired from the Commission. Victor started at the Commission twenty-one years ago as one of its education officers, and later became an investigator. He designed and wrote the Commission's original newsletter, "Human Rights from Manitoba"

and at his retirement, he said that he would continue to write, as this is one of his passions. Commission staff and Board members wish him the best in his retirement.

2008 Commitment Award focuses on the rights of children

Protecting and promoting the rights of children is one way to invest in the future. With that in mind, the 2008 Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba will be given to an individual or group who has championed the rights of the child. Nominations for this annual award will open on October 3, 2008.

The Commitment Award and the Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award will be presented at a dinner on December 10. This year celebrates the 60th anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights and the Manitoba Human Rights Commission and its partners in this awards event, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties will also be hosting the conference, *Into the Future* - Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“With the future of human rights front and centre at this conference, it seemed appropriate that the Conference and Awards Committee chose the rights of the child as its theme for the 2008 Commitment Award”, says Dianna Scarth, Executive Director of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

“Children are the future,” she says, adding, “Although the United Nations recognized children’s rights in the 1980 Convention on the Rights of the Child, this is still a relatively new concept for many countries.”

Ms Scarth says that here in Manitoba there are people and groups who have been championing children’s rights without the recognition they deserve.

The Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award will be presented to a young person or a group of young people who has promoted respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms within Manitoba.

Information and the criteria for these awards will be available on the Commission’s website on October 3, 2008. Information is also available by contacting the Commission at 204-945-3007 or toll free 1-888-884-8681. The Commission’s email address is hrc@gov.mb.ca