

MHR *Connections*

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Singing Strong Turtle Women's Drum Group performs at a lunch event in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racism. See more on page 2.

The Commission recommends a statement of human rights principles in *The Provincial Police Act*

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission has recommended that amendments to *The Provincial Police Act* include a preamble reflecting human rights principles.

Executive Director of the Commission Dianna Scarth explained that the current legislation does not have a statement of principles.

"The Commission urges the Government of Manitoba to consider an amendment that would clearly state that human rights values are central to the carrying out of powers of *The Act*," she said, adding that this "would emphasize the goal of equitable and bias-free policing services."

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission made its submission to former deputy minister Ron Perozzo, who is chairing the community and stakeholder consultations, regarding proposed amendments to *The Provincial Police Act*. Minister of Justice Dave Chomiak earlier had invited the Commission to participate in the "stakeholder consultations."

Vice Chairperson of the Manitoba Human Rights Board of Commissioners Yvonne Peters began the consultation with a brief overview of the Commission's mandate and introduced the presenters, including Ms Scarth, Sarah Lugtig Legal Counsel for the Commission and Dr. Sandra Kirby of the University of Winnipeg, who presented recommendations based on the Racialized Communities and Police Services (RCAPS) Project. RCAPS is a joint research project by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission and the University of Winnipeg. The Commission further recommended that consideration be given to require police forces in Manitoba to have ongoing data collection designed to help assess

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The Rights Connection by Jerry Woods - Chairperson Data collecting by police has advantages

The Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation have joined forces in urging policing and security agencies to systematically collect human rights-based data as a tool to help prevent discrimination.

A similar recommendation was made to those who are considering changes to The Provincial Police Act (Manitoba). The recommendation was that data collection be part of the new legislation. It was made by Dr. Sandra Kirby of the University of Winnipeg, a spokesperson for the Racialized Communities and Police Services (RCAPS) Project Group. The RCAPS working group is made up of staff from the Manitoba Human Rights Commission and faculty members from the University of Winnipeg. The ongoing research project is examining bias-free policing.

Gathering data is not unheard of in North America. In fact over 6,000 police forces in the United States have embarked on data collection systems.

In Canada, one of the first pilot programs to collect information was in Kingston, Ontario. As documented in many reviews, this initiative was not without flaws, and the Kingston Police entered into it knowing that there would be criticism by other police forces, police associations and academics. Better methods have been developed since, but it was the Kingston Police Chief, front-line officers, staff and the Kingston Police Services Board that took an important first step.

At present Canadian police forces do not gather such human rights data even though it could move the discussion beyond anecdotal stories from concerned communities. A United States Department of Justice Report from 2000 looks to the advantages of gaining knowledge by data collection. One advantage it identifies is that data collected on police stops sends a clear message that bias free policing is consistent with effective and equal protection. The report also says that the knowledge gained would help determine how to make the best use of enforcement resources. And finally the report says that with police officers involved in the collection of this information, their legitimacy is enhanced in the eyes of the communities they serve.

It's time to consider the potential of data collection.

Personal stories highlight Elimination of Racial Discrimination Day

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Steps to Hope was the theme at a lunch event in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

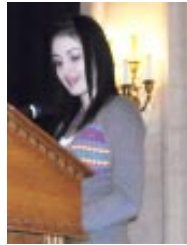
This day is recognized on March 21. On that date in 1960, in Sharpeville, South Africa, a peaceful protest against Apartheid came to a tragic end when police opened fire, killing 69 people and wounding many others.

In 1966, to commemorate this tragedy and to encourage and promote the elimination of racism, the United Nations declared this date as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

At the Winnipeg event, a young Ojibway high school student, Sandra Sveinson shared some of her school experiences and reflections on racism and discrimination. She spoke of one class exercise where a teacher was talking about racism as he stereotyped Aboriginal people.

She concluded her presentation with a story from her Irish Métis grandfather. She recalled when he said to her, “When you look at the forest you see pine trees and poplar trees standing side by side. The pine does not convince the poplar to grow cones, nor does the poplar convince the pine tree to grow leaves.”

The second speaker was Zully Trujillo who was a lawyer in Peru and came to Winnipeg at the age of 33 with her children. She recounted the difficulty she had in receiving English language training because, as a woman with children, she was not considered ready for the labour force. She persevered and eventually obtained a degree in economics. She found that she could not get employment in her field of study, but with her love of children, she is grateful and happy to work in child and family services. Her message was simple and direct, “Don’t let anyone stop you.”



Sandra Sveinson shared what she has learned about herself, her family, and her people.



Zully Trujillo shared her compelling personal story and unique perspective on discrimination.

compliance with bias free policing goals. “This would send a clear message that bias in policing is contrary to effective policing and to equality in the provision of police services,” Ms Scarth said.

Many police services in North American jurisdictions have this as a legislated requirement. The collection of data requires that it be ongoing and mandatory. Days after the Commission made its presentation regarding amendments to The Manitoba Police Act, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation urged that all policing and security agencies collect human rights-based data as a tool to help prevent discrimination.

In a joint news release, issued by the CHRC and the CRRF, it was stated that this position flows from the study, *The Effectiveness of Profiling from a National Security Perspective*, commissioned by the two organizations with researchers from the University of Moncton. The research concluded there is insufficient evidence to legitimize the practice of profiling and recommended more rigorous data collection would demonstrate whether or not it occurs.

Dr. Ayman Al-Yassini, Executive Director of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation said that, “the collection of human rights related data is the first step towards effective policing and better serving our communities.”

The Commission and the University of Winnipeg also recommended that all Manitoba police forces conduct regular cultural diversity and anti-bias training.

“We think that in order to address the concerns raised during the community consultations of the Racialized Communities and Police Services Project, it is important that all police services are required to both collect data to assess compliance with bias free goals, and to conduct regular anti-bias training,” said Dr. Sandra Kirby Associate VP (Research) and Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Winnipeg.

The Commission’s Legal Counsel, Sarah Lugtig, also presented other Commission recommendations, including that the new oversight mechanism continue to have jurisdiction to address violations of the Human Rights Code by police. Presently the Law Enforcement Agency (LERA) has concurrent jurisdiction with the Commission.

Ms Lugtig also said that it is important that policing oversight bodies receive ongoing human rights training for its members.

“The Commission has considerable expertise in providing training. We have provided assistance and ongoing consultation to the Workplace Safety and Health Division and the Workers Compensation Board,” she said.

Another consideration presented by Ms Lugtig was that the Commission recommends a requirement in the New *Provincial Police Act* that the police oversight body be representative of the diversity of Manitoba’s communities.

“This recommendation is rooted in the Commission’s own experience. The diverse makeup of our Board has enhanced both its legitimacy in serving Manitoba’s diverse population, as well as its ability to understand and respond to the issues that come before it,” she said.

The stakeholder consultation presentations by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission will be available on its website: www.manitoba.ca/hrc

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Where: Winnipeg Law Courts Complex
408 York Avenue, Winnipeg

When: Sunday April 19, 2009

12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m.

Law Day Activities include mock trials, tours,
debates and refreshments