

# MHR *Connections*

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## Class Action

- a student's guide to Human Rights

### Wanted: Students to help build Human Rights Website

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission is looking for the help of students in building its latest student centre website.

The site is based on a book by Stephen Hammond called *Steps in the Rights Direction*. This book chronicles past human rights events, one for every day of the year.

"We have many students involved already," says Pam Roberts, one of the website coordinators. "If you go to the site now, you can see the videos of students who have contributed to the site by reading about specific human rights events."

This great new site, Manitoba Class Action, at [www.manitobaaction.com](http://www.manitobaaction.com) is interactive and designed for "those students who have an interest in human rights as well as teachers who are looking for a catalyst for class discussions and a tool for human rights education," says Ms Roberts, adding, "we are still inviting students to videotape and read the events of a specific day." Ms Roberts explains that the instructions on how to participate are on the website and all those interested should contact her.

"It is important to get in touch with me soon. If you decide on a specific date or event, we can reserve that date and story for you," she says.

For example, Winnipeg student Naomi picked August 4, 2005 for personal reasons. On that date Michaelle Jean, who was born in Haiti, became Canada's first Black Governor General. On her video, she explains that she feels a connection to this story as her father was born in Haiti and fled the country when he was only ten years old.

Participants also have passed on their thoughts after completing their video. For example one young woman expressed to human rights investigator Nancy Flintoft that she was astounded to learn that women in the eighties had to fight so hard to convince others that sexual harassment was unacceptable and discriminatory behaviour. It was not until May 4, 1989 that the Supreme Court of Canada, ruling on a Manitoba human rights case, declared that sexual harassment was a form of sex discrimination.

The website is still a work in progress, but the proposed launch date is the beginning of March. Students and teachers

*continued on page 2*

THE MANITOBA  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMISSION



LA COMMISSION DES  
DROITS DE LA PERSONNE  
DU MANITOBA

[www.manitoba.ca/hrc](http://www.manitoba.ca/hrc)

#### The Rights Connection by Patricia Knipe - Editor

#### Nothing can be done about discrimination - yet

Many Canadians are eagerly anticipating and supporting the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver. And why not? Competition at this level is exciting and athletes, whose sports often do not draw international attention, suddenly find themselves and their performance in the spotlight. We should be proud of our Olympic athletes and the long road they have travelled to get to the top of their sport.

Unfortunately, one group of athletes will not get the recognition they deserve and ski jumping will remain the only Winter Olympic sport that does not allow female competitors. Last month an international group of female ski jumpers saw their dream come to an end. On December 22, 2009 the Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear an appeal of a British Columbia Supreme Court decision, which dismissed their request to compete in the 2010 Olympics. In that decision, Madam Justice Lauri Ann Fenlon of the B.C. Supreme Court agreed that the athletes had been discriminated against, but found that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is out of the reach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Whatever legal roadblocks exist, or whatever reasons the IOC gives for its decision, this remains a human rights issue. The very words of the Olympic Charter suggest that discrimination will not be tolerated. Article 4 of its fundamental principles reads, "The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind..." This thought is further reinforced by another principle, which states, "Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement."

Organizations, the public, Olympic sponsors and those groups representing athletes, have voiced their support for these determined female athletes, and question why there remains a Winter Olympic sport restricted to men-only.

In 2008 over 17% of the complaints received by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission were based on sex, an unacceptable number today.

We are adding our voice to others who have stated that discrimination based on sex has no place at the Olympic level and certainly not in Canada.

*continued from page 1*

are encouraged to contact Ms Roberts who will explain how to participate on the site. Her email address is [pam.roberts@gov.mb.ca](mailto:pam.roberts@gov.mb.ca).

Teachers will find this site an easy and comprehensive way to make human rights interesting. Every week a specific event will be highlighted. An example would be looking at the week of December 13-17 and then discovering what human rights event took place that week. Chelsea, a student from The Pas and on the Manitoba Class Action website, describes the events of December 17, 1985. The Supreme Court ruling of that date and year should help students understand the concepts of reasonable accommodation, undue hardship and when is it a right not to work on Saturday. The site also offers follow up points for discussion.

Those teachers, who are interested in encouraging some of their students to get involved in the Manitoba Class Action site, should also contact Pam Roberts.

All participating students under 18, and their parents or guardian will be asked to sign a consent form.

Many students and teachers remember author and human rights workplace consultant Stephen Hammond as the dynamic guest speaker at the 2008 Winnipeg Youth Conference. Since then The Manitoba Human Rights Commission and Mr. Hammond have forged a partnership to create this on-line project.

## Youth Conference heads to Thompson

The last Manitoba Human Rights Youth Conference of the school year will take place in Thompson on April 7 and 8 2010. The Class Action: Rights Here, Rights Now Conference has been successful in both Winnipeg and Brandon, with the highlight being the student-made public service human rights video announcements.

Students from the North will also be making video announcements during the "Rights, Camera Action" afternoon session.

The conference will begin on the evening of April 7 for the traditional "meet and greet" at which time travelling students have the opportunity to meet local students.

More information about this youth conference will be available on the Commission's website at [www.manitoba.ca/hrc](http://www.manitoba.ca/hrc) in early February. Registration forms will also be available at that time.

### Spaces available for 2010 February Seminars

February is a great time to register for Human Rights Seminars. There are spaces available for the following educational programs in Winnipeg :

#### **Human Rights in the Workplace**

February 10, 9:00am-12:00pm Cost: \$95.00

#### **Harassment in the Workplace**

February 16, 9:00am-12:00pm Cost \$95.00

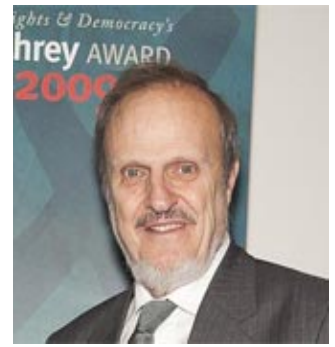
#### **Reasonable Accommodation**

February 24, 2010 8:30am-12:30pm Cost \$95.00

For more information on these workshops, please go to our website [www.manitoba.ca/hrc](http://www.manitoba.ca/hrc) or call 945-3009

## Tireless defender of human rights dies

Remy Beauregard, president of the government funded human rights group Rights and Democracy, died on Friday January 8, 2010. On the organization's website, the staff expressed their sadness by describing his sudden death as "a terrible loss for Rights and Democracy and its international partners in whose work he took a keen and active interest." Staff has also referred to him as a tireless defender of human rights.



**Remy Beauregard  
1943-2010**

Condolences can also be found on the website, including one from the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, which reads "We are grateful to have known Remy. We admire all that he accomplished, and the way in which he did it, always with humour and grace." Mr. Beauregard is described by others as "an important champion of human rights", "a new hope for Rights and Democracy", and "the work of Rights and Democracy and the commitment and professionalism... will be a testament to his life's work."

Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote, "Canada and the world have lost a remarkable Canadian whose accomplishments in the protection and promotion of human rights spanned the globe."

Mr. Beauregard led a distinguished career in the promotion and protection of human rights in Canada and internationally. Among his many accomplishments, he served as the Executive Director of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and worked with United Nations agencies and civil society organizations for the establishment of national human rights institutions in numerous developing countries. He also assisted with the creation of the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA) and served as its first Executive Secretary.

Mr. Beauregard's dedication to human rights extended beyond Canada's borders, and much of his work centred on the development and strengthening of legal institutions in Africa to protect civilians from violence. His contributions included advice on Rwanda's post-genocide constitution, development of national human rights legislation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the implementation of War Child Canada's Northern Uganda Legal Defence Project for children affected by conflict. He also developed the Policies and Procedures Manual for Trinidad and Tobago's Integrity Commission and provided public ethics training to officials of the Chinese provinces of Beijing and Hebei.

Remy Beauregard was appointed to the position of President of Rights and Democracy in June 2008.

Last May, Mr. Beauregard visited Winnipeg and hosted a public meeting on international investment and Canada's commitment to human rights. He also spent a few hours with the Commission staff talking about his international work and his vision for Rights and Democracy.