

# MHR *Connections*

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## **John Burchill moves from fighting hate crimes to tackling human rights**

Newly appointed to the Manitoba Human Rights Board of Commissioners, John Burchill was a member of the Winnipeg Police Service for 25 years. Six of those years were spent as the coordinator of the Hate Crimes Team. However many of the calls he received were not criminal in nature, but rather were acts of discrimination.

“This was my first real exposure to human rights issues. While a matter may not have been criminal, I still wanted to provide a service. I wanted to understand the issues and make the right referral so the caller didn’t feel I was trivializing their complaint; that they did have other possible avenues to explore and how to get there.”

To create awareness and understanding in the difference between hate crimes and discrimination he developed two hate crimes and human rights courses for members of the Winnipeg Police. As a part his own understanding of the issues and where people could go to deal with their complaints, John also took a number of specific human and civil rights courses himself including hate crimes and human rights through Dalhousie University, the University of Manitoba, the California State University (Santa Barbara) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. Eventually he went to law school while still working full time for the Police Service. He was called to the Manitoba Bar in 2011.

In 2012 John left the Winnipeg Police to join the staff at the University of Manitoba, where his father had taught for 30 years. He also operates as a sole practitioner in Winnipeg but most of his non-work time revolves around helping to raise his two young children.

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### **The Rights Connection by Joan Braun, Executive Director**

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission provides services throughout Manitoba, and persons experiencing discrimination in any part of the province can contact us by phone to inquire about our services or to make a complaint. We have offices in Winnipeg, Brandon and The Pas. However, the province is very large and these centres are a geographical distance for many, especially in the North. This raises the question of how to make our services more accessible. With that question in mind I headed to The Pas to meet with Commission staff Marjorie Nabess and with members of the community in The Pas. The trip was very interesting and thought provoking.

One of the highlights was meeting with members of the Chamber of Commerce and having the chance to give a presentation about human rights at a lunch time meeting. During the questions, after my presentation, we discussed the courses that the Manitoba Human Rights Commission offers in Winnipeg on human rights for employers and employees. The message I came away with was that the business community in the North is very interested in human rights issues and would attend courses delivered in northern communities.

Another highlight for me was a visit with Jack McPherson at the Aboriginal Friendship Centre and with Opaskwayak Cree Nation Chief Michael G. Constant. I had the opportunity to hear about occasions in which Marjorie’s knowledge and expertise on human rights issues enabled her to be a helpful resource to the aboriginal community. As well, Marjorie values being a resource to her community, but because she is the only staff person in The Pas, human rights issues sometimes emerge when she is not available.

I would like to thank everyone I met. In addition to those mentioned above I also spoke with a representative of the municipality, of the university, of three local schools and with a faith-based social service agency. It is clear to me, that there is a commitment to human rights issues among the community in The Pas.

# Brandon celebrates Pride



The MHRC staff spent part of the day at Princess Park, in Brandon celebrating Pride! Thanks to everyone who came by to say “hello” and to take our quiz.

The Brandon Pride Committee celebrated the City’s diversity all weekend long in mid June, with a flag raising ceremony at Princess Park, a

lunch and learn session, a free barbeque lunch, information booths and the Pride Rally. This was the fourth annual Brandon Pride, in partnership with the Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC) and Knox United Church.

## International Day of the Girl October 11, 2013

Manitoba Status of Women will once again be holding a special event, hosted by the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, to celebrate this important occasion.

This will be an opportunity for girls from across the province to gather together to support one another and raise awareness about girls’ rights. When girls have a greater awareness of their rights, this increases the likelihood of girls exercising their rights, becoming leaders, and reaching their full potential.

### Nominations open

Do you know a special girl who is making a difference in your community? The Manitoba Status of Women is seeking nominations for girls ages 13 to 17 from across the province to attend the event at the Manitoba Legislative Building.

Twenty girls will be selected to join other girls for a fun and interactive day that will focus on global movements and inspiring change. The day will feature interactive activities, local entertainment, and the opportunity for the girls to interact with members of the Legislative Assembly.

The United Nations declared October 11, 2012 to be the First “International Day of the Girl” to provide an opportunity to recognize young women around the world as important citizens and powerful voices of change.

For more information about the event or to nominate someone please contact the Manitoba Status of Women at: (204) 945-6281 or toll free at: 1-800-263-0234.



## Consumer racial profiling studied

Aboriginal people and African Nova Scotians say that when they shop they are treated poorly. This is the finding of a new study just released by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. The report is the first one in Canada to look at consumer racial profiling, a form of racism in which staff treat customers poorly because of their race.

People from all racialized groups, including Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern people, reported being treated poorly by staff far more than Caucasian people. Racialized groups include people who are treated unequally because of their race, particularly in ways that matter to economic, political and social life.

Participants from all racialized groups talked about going to great lengths to avoid being racially profiled. For example they dressed up to go shopping, did not carry bags from others stores and greeted security staff. Many emptied their pockets.

In the report 1,219 people from around the province relayed their experiences on how they were treated by staff in retail and service establishments in Nova Scotia. The study consists of information gathered through surveys and focus groups, which were conducted between March 28 and August 21, 2012.

The report can be found on the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission’s website at <http://humanrights.gov.ns.ca/>.

## Speaking to women about human rights and pregnancy

*Executive Director Joan Braun spoke at a Manitoba Women’s Advisory Council’s Lunch and Learn in June. She explained that discrimination can be in the form of being treated differently, lack of accommodation and harassment. Everyone can expect to hear more from Joan on discriminatory issues in the coming months.*

