

THE MANITOBA
HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION



LA COMMISSION DES
DROITS DE LA PERSONNE
DU MANITOBA

News Release: The Manitoba Human Rights Commission

For Immediate Release

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The Manitoba Human Rights Commission is pleased that that a settlement has been reached between The Rainbow Harmony Project and Camp Arnes. The settlement reflects a resolution of a complaint filed by the Rainbow Harmony Project, a community choir group that is made up largely of members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community and an individual choir member, Joe Stephanson. The complaint alleged that the group was denied access to Camp Arnes, a Christian summer camp that also rents out its facilities throughout the year to the general public.

Camp Arnes denied access believing that the goals of The Rainbow Harmony Project were contrary to the guidelines set out in their Code of Conduct and Statement of Faith.

The parties have requested that The Manitoba Human Rights Commission release the following statement.

For more information, please contact:

The Rainbow Harmony Project

Joe Stephanson, Rainbow Harmony Project Member
453- 0865

Brenda Froese, Rainbow Harmony Project Member
782-8239

Camp Arnes

Irene Loewen, Chair of the Board
988-5472 office
770-9677 cell

Garry Roehr, Vice Chair
654-5593 office
782-6272 cell

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission

Patricia Knipe, Communications Director
204-945-5112

Public Statements of the Parties Upon the Resolution of the Human Rights Complaint of the Rainbow Harmony Project against Camp Arnes

The Rainbow Harmony Project and Camp Arnes are pleased to announce that, as a result of recent and helpful dialogue between the parties, they have been able to resolve the differences that had given rise to a human rights complaint. They wish to make the following statements relating to this dialogue and the resulting settlement.

The Rainbow Harmony Project recognizes that at the heart of the dispute was uncertainty by all concerned about the nature of Camp Arnes' operations or the restrictions to be applied to potential campers and other guests, or both. Rainbow Harmony Project accepts that Camp Arnes is, and is intended to be, a religious organization. Although it rents out its facilities to various individuals or groups that are not associated with its religion, Camp Arnes has always intended this service to be part of its broader religious mission and outreach and not primarily a commercial activity. As such it is entitled to apply reasonable religious restrictions to such outreach activities.

With the assistance of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, Camp Arnes has adopted adjustments to its policies and practices that address the Rainbow Harmony Project's concerns and reflect Camp Arnes' respect for the inherent worth of all individuals. The Rainbow Harmony Project is pleased with the changes made by Camp Arnes and has decided not to proceed further with its complaint. Rainbow Harmony Project is also very appreciative of the recent invitation by Camp Arnes to perform at the camp. However, due to a solidly booked performance schedule, it cannot likely do so in the foreseeable future. It has also extended an invitation to Camp Arnes representatives to attend its concerts on May 6 and 7 at the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

Camp Arnes recognizes that its previous materials and practices may have given rise to uncertainty about the nature of its operations and the restrictions to be applied to potential campers and other guests. It appreciated the opportunity to work with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission and the Rainbow Harmony Project to refine its policies and practices for vetting prospective campers and other guests, which, generally speaking, will focus more directly on the activities that are planned or practiced on site as opposed to assumptions flowing from the identity of a particular individual or group. This approach accords with its fundamental belief in the inherent worth of every individual. Camp Arnes will be distributing revised policies and implementing improved practices as a result of this dialogue and disclosing the camp's religious mandate and related policies to potential guests and campers at the front end of the application process. Camp Arnes will further have a process for dealing proactively with uncertainties or confusion that may arise in the future. The Board of Camp Arnes has invited Rainbow Harmony Project to perform at the camp and extends its best wishes to the choir as it pursues its goal of musical excellence.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission expresses its appreciation to the parties and counsel for the purposive approach they have taken to resolving the human rights issues that arose between them.