

B. C. HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION

ANNUAL REPORT

1995 - 1996

**Produced for the Annual General Meeting
Held at The People's Law School
June 20, 1996
5:30 p.m.**

The B. C. Human Rights Coalition gratefully acknowledges the Law Foundation of British Columbia for our core funding, as well as the Ministry Responsible for Human Rights and the City of Vancouver.

Board of Directors 1995-1996

Table Officers:

President: Joshua Sohn
Vice President: Deborah Strulow
Treasurer: Leila Harding
Secretary: Silke Kraemer

Members at Large:

Doronn Dalzell
Alicia Mercurio
Phillip Mo
Deborah Ray
Irene Schmidt
Susan Stout
Allan Warner*

*** Left the Board during the year**

The Coalition says goodbye and thank you to Claire Culhane who passed away on April 28th of this year. Claire worked as a member of our Board for ten years.

Staff 1995-6

Peter Beaudin (Advocate)
Marilyn Minkler (Office Manager)
Susan O'Donnell (Executive Director)

Bookkeeping and Accounting:

Administration: Cat L'Hirondelle, (L'Hirondelle Financial Services)
Auditor: Marilyn DeRooy, C.A.

Legal Supervision:

Barb Cornish, Robertson, Downe
Rob Horricks

1995-6 Recipient of the Renate Shearer Memorial Award

Alicia Mercurio

REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Following substantial changes to our Constitution and By-laws last year, this year saw the first election of table officers of the Coalition. Our monthly meetings have become much more streamlined and efficient, and our table officers much more knowledgeable about the day to day running of the Society.

Our first activity as a Board and staff was August 4, 1995, when we met with the Honourable Ujjal Dosanjh and his Executive Assistant to discuss newly proposed human rights legislation. We all agreed that human rights should be in the jurisdiction of the Attorney General, and a few short days after our meeting the Honourable Minister was made Attorney General, and took the Ministry Responsible for Human Rights with him.

On August 26, 1995, we held our annual full day meeting to determine our goals and strategies for the upcoming year. We elected our table officers and set our meetings for the rest of the year. We decided that the most important areas to work on in the upcoming year were to develop a better financial situation for the Coalition by attempting to gain charitable tax status, and setting up a fundraising committee. In addition to deciding that the staff liaison committee would continue, we set up the following new committees to do the Coalition's work for the upcoming year: Charitable Tax Committee, Fundraising Committee, Finance Committee, Government Liaison Committee, International Human Rights Day Committee and the Public Relations Committee.

In September, the Government Liaison Committee consisting of Joshua Sohn, Deborah Strulow and staff members met with Mary Clare Zack of Multiculturalism, B. C. to attempt to have their financial contribution to the Coalition increased, as the Minister had told us this was possible. After some considerable negotiations on this matter, our funding from Multiculturalism B. C. has been increased from \$10,000.00 to \$25,000.00.

In October, Joshua Sohn, our President, submitted application to Revenue Canada for our Charitable Status. Also in October, Joshua Sohn, Deborah Strulow, Leila Harding and Susan O'Donnell met with Pat Pitsula from the Law Foundation to report how the new "Board was doing". As well, in October, the International Human Rights Day

Committee started planning for December. 10, 1995. This Committee comprised of Silke Kraemer, Phillip Mo, Susan Stout, and Leila Harding, did all of the work for our annual Open House, and the Renate Shearer Award, Also in October, the Staff Liaison Committee, consisting of Joshua Sohn, Deborah Strulow and Susan O'Donnell representing the Coalition as employer, and Peter Beaudin and C.U.P.E., commenced bargaining our new collective agreement. This matter has now been settled except for the signatures.

In November, 1995, the Government Liaison Committee went to Victoria, to meet with the B. C. Council of Human Rights. We met with the Chair of the Council, the Executive Director, the Manager of Investigations, the Manager of Mediation, and the Manager of Finance for the Council. It was a most productive information sharing meeting, and we had a good opportunity to express the Coalition's views. Also in November our Treasurer, Leila Harding reported that she has been working with Marilyn Minkler, our Office Manager, and our books are in excellent order. She also expressed the need for the Coalition to develop a policy on contracting out, and we agreed to refer this issue to the staff liaison committee.

In December, 1995, we held the most successful Open House ever on International Human Rights Day, and gave the Renate Shearer award to longstanding Board Member, Alicia Mercurio.

In January, 1996, we starting thinking about potential new Board Members, and invited Clay McLeod, and later Susanna Tam to attend meetings as our guests. Several Board Members and Susan O'Donnell met with the Social Planning Department of the City of Vancouver to discuss our funding application. Leila Harding was instrumental in giving us a professional financial image. Also in January, Joshua Sohn and Susan O'Donnell attended a C.L.E. course on technical matters for Charities and Not For Profit Organizations. We found out we were doing everything right. On January 4 - 7, 1996, Silke Kraemer, Deborah Strulow and Susan O'Donnell took a four day Instructional Skills Training Course through the Labour Studies Programme at Capilano College. We hope this will lead up to Board Members providing some of our educational services.

In March, 1996, our Treasurer recommended our audit/auditor, and we agreed next year to change our fiscal year to December 1 - November 30, from April 1 - March 31. This is because the large part of our funding comes from the Law Foundation, and our

reporting requirements require the change. Also in March, 1996, the Law Foundation gave us a Capital and Infrastructure grant, which enabled us to update and network our computer system, and buy new chairs for our boardroom. Also, in March we struck our A.G.M. committee, consisting of Joshua Sohn, Deborah Strulow, Silke Kraemer and Leila Harding.

In April, 1996, we were notified of the upcoming C.A.S.H.R.A. conference and that Susan O'Donnell would be presenting a paper. We made arrangement for all the staff, and Joshua Sohn, Susan Stout and Deborah Strulow to represent the Coalition at this Conference.

April and May were months of closure and tying up loose ends. We concluded bargaining the collective agreement, and made arrangements for the Annual General Meeting. All in all, it was a busy, productive year!

Now that we have the Coalition "house" in excellent working order, we hope that a new Board will be able to focus on some important human rights issues next year, especially since our new legislation comes into force October 1, 1996.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
B.C. HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION

Education and Consultation: 1995 - 1996

This year, our education program concentrated on three basic areas: New Canadian Communities, groups or communities who influence or teach others, and “compliance education”, where education of a department or workplace forms part of a Complainant’s remedy.

With regards to new Canadians, often through working with the People’s Law School, we have developed educational relationships with the Vietnamese, Chinese, Spanish speaking and Iranian communities. We provide a two-hour basic programme about what we mean by discrimination in Canada and legal protection from discrimination.

In addition we assisted the following advocates and teachers build in a human rights component to the work they already do.

We work on an ongoing basis with C.I.E.A., which is the provincial organization of faculty members from colleges and institutes. Each institution appoints a human rights delegate to C.I.E.A., and we provide them with training in the law and policy twice a year. We also go to the individual institutions and provide education to the faculty and students on a regular basis. In addition we provided a harassment workshop to 60 faculty members at the C.I.E.A. Convention in June, 1996

We have also been working in human rights education with the Safer Campuses Initiative which involves human resources people from all colleges, institutes and universities across the province. As well we regularly assist in the revamping and in the process of human rights/harassment policies in the post secondary education system.

As well, we provided an intensive course on accommodation to administrators, principals and vice-principals of the Vancouver School Board. We also assisted the B. C. Teachers’ Federation with its resource manual in human rights for teachers.

In February, 1996, we helped train the advocates at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre in human rights law and policy. We provided this same training to the employment equity committee at I.C.B.C., and to 60 stewards province wide of the Pulp and Paperworkers’ Union of Canada. In March we provided training to the Human Resources Department of Cantree Plywood Corporation as well as all employees of General Motors Place.

In addition to this, we also do keynote speeches, panel presentations, papers and conference workshops in the issue of human rights. In this capacity, we have presented to the following: the Kelowna Anti-Racist Conference, in February, 1996, the Employment Equity Practitioners Conference, in February, 1996, and the Minister's Conference on Anti-Racism, in March, 1996.

Issues: 1995 - 1996

Human Rights Amendment Act

Following Bill Black's Report on Human Rights in British Columbia, The Human Rights Amendment Act was proclaimed in April, 1996, to come into force October, 1996. The Coalition made an initial submission to the Report, and lobbied for the proclamation of the new legislation.

Roundtable to monitor and fight hate:

The Coalition with C.A.E.R.S. and the Canadian Jewish Congress was successful in forcing the cancellation of a conference to be held in March, 1996, featuring white supremacist speakers. Following this issue, we invited other groups who deal with the promotion of hatred in one way or another to form a roundtable for the purposes of networking, sharing our skills, coordinating our work, and hopefully, advising the government.

The Community Consultation Committee of Legal Services Society, and the Policy and Planning Committee.

In August, 1995, The Legal Services Society told the community that it would have to make major cuts in legal services due to a reduction in its budget. The community asked the society to hold off those cuts pending an effort to convince the Attorney General that they would cause great harm to our clients in the community. We formed the Community Consultation Committee, and eventually invited the private bar and the B. C. Association of Community Law Offices and the B. C. Association of Native Community Law offices to form a roundtable to work with the Ministry on budget alternatives to cuts to legal aid. The larger table, The Policy and Planning Committee meets on Monday evenings, and will complete its recommendations by October, 1996.

Advocacy, 1995 - 1996

As of April 15, 1996, the Coalition is carrying the following files:

Sexual Harassment	50	
Sex Discrimination	33	
Race Discrimination	22	
Physical Disability	24	
Mental Disability	6	
Marital Status	1	
Place of Origin	20	
Age Discrimination	6	
Political Belief	3	
Criminal Record	2	
Family Status	1	
Religious Belief	5	
Sexual Orientation	10	
Section 20	12	
Employment Equity	2	
Hate	2	199 Open Files

In addition to these, the following files were closed between June 1, 1995 and May 31, 1996:

Sexual Harassment	31:	13 settlements, 2 dismissals, 10 abandoned, 2 won at hearing, 2 opinion provided, 1 referred	
Sex Discrimination	24:	6 settlements, 3 dismissals, 12 abandoned, 1 won at hearing, 1 opinion provided, 1 referred	
Race Discrimination	6:	1 settlement, 3 abandoned, 1 opinion provided, 1 referred	
Disability	17:	4 settlements, 7 dismissals, 2 abandoned, 3 opinion provided, 1 referred	
Family Status	8:	3 settlements, 4 dismissals, 1 abandoned	
Marital Status	3:	3 settlements	
Religious Belief	3:	1 dismissal, 2 abandoned	
Age Discrimination	4:	1 settlement, 1 dismissal, 1 opinion provided, 1 abandoned	
Sexual Orientation	5:	1 settlement, 2 abandoned, 2 referred	
Section 20 (Retaliation)	2:	abandoned	
Criminal Record	1:	abandoned	
Adjudication	1:	written decision submitted	
Policy Analysis	2:	opinions provided	107 Files Closed

In conclusion, the Coalition carried 306 human rights complaints over the past year. Each of our files is reviewed approximately every two months by our supervising lawyers. These are Barbara Cornish who is with Robertson Downe, and Rob Horricks.