

B. C. HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION

ANNUAL REPORT

1996 - 1997

**Produced for the Annual General Meeting
Held at Gordon Neighbourhood House
May 27, 1997
6:00 p.m.**

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

Board of Directors 1996-1997

Table Officers:

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

Members at Large:

Gerard Bremault
Serena Chandi
Doronn Dalzell
Mandeep Gill
John Horner
Clay McLeod
Alicia Mercurio
Irene Schmidt
Susan Stout

Staff 1996-1997

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

1996-97 Recipient of the Renate Shearer Memorial Award

Dr. Mel Dilli

REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our last Annual General Meeting was held June 20, 1996, where we elected a whole new Board of Directors. We had our traditional one day meeting with Board and Staff on August 10, 1996, where we set our priorities for the upcoming year. Although in 1995, we had said our major priority would be to gain Charitable Tax Status, we had been unsuccessful, and so this priority continued for another year. We maintained the following committees to accomplish our work; Charitable Tax Committee, Fundraising Committee, Finance Committee, Government Liaison Committee, International Human Rights Day Committee and the Public Relations Committee. In addition to these, we struck a Services Committee to look at caseload overload, and to try and set some criteria for incoming new clients. This committee also took a look at developing a fee for service structure with regards to education and consultation. We also struck an Intervention Committee, as we had been asked to intervene in the Doug Collins, North Shore News application to have Section 2 of the *Human Rights Code* struck as a violation of the rights to freedom of speech and expression contained in the Charter. This Committee set up criteria for appropriate intervention by the Coalition, with regards to importance of the issue, as well as time and financial restraints.

Our Board meets once a month, with committee meetings in between.

In June, 1996, our Coalition got together with C.A.E.R.S., the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Association of Chinese Canadians and the December 9th Coalition to develop a symposium for community groups across the province whose work involved fight the dissemination of hate propaganda and hate activities. We worked with the Office of the Attorney General to look at tools available to fight hate, including the new hate crimes team and the human rights legislation. This symposium brought about 150 community representatives from throughout the province, and was a great success.

Throughout the year, Board Members have met with funders of our organization, including the Law Foundation, the City of Vancouver, and Multiculturalism B. C. In December, 1996, we approached Katherine Hardie, and Judy Parrack of B. C. P.I.A.C. to ask them to represent our Coalition as counsel for intervention in the Doug Collins/North Shore News matter. They agreed. Also on December 10, 1996, we held our annual open house on International Human Rights Day. This year's recipient of the Renate Shearer Human Rights Award was Dr. Mel Dilli. The Award went to Dr. Dilli in recognition of his involvement in the Bosnia peace process.

January, 1997, saw the proclamation of the new *B. C. Human Rights Code*, and along with it the new B. C. Human Rights Commission. Members of your Board have met with Harinder Mahill, who is the new Deputy Chief Commissioner, and has the authority to become a party to a human rights complaint, in the public interest. We also met with Kelly-Ann Speck, who is the Commissioner of Mediation and Investigation. We have not formally met Mary-Woo Sims yet, who is the Chief Commissioner, but our Director has worked with her, and we expect to meet her soon. Ms. Sims did not actually start in her position until March, 1977. We are not yet able to see how the new legislation and Commission will work, but we will continue to monitor the situation. The Review provisions have not yet been proclaimed, and so we have concerns about complaints being inappropriately dismissed. We made a submission to the new Commission on the way we believe complainants should be represented in this new process.

Last year, in order to bring our fiscal year in line with our major funder, we changed our fiscal year from April 1 - March 31 to December 1 - November 30.

On April 1, 1997, we achieved our Charitable Tax Status, thanks mainly to our President Joshua Sohn.

Unfortunately this year has been a difficult one financially. The Coalition will receive a 15% cut to its budget at the end of December. Also, our lease expires at the end of October, and we are not able to pay the required increase. This means we will have to move our offices by November 1, 1997.

Despite financial difficulties the work of our Coalition continues to grow, and we believe we are in fine shape with regards to everything but money. During the year this year, our Board welcomed the appointments of Clay McLeod, Mandeep Gill, John Horner and Serena Chandi. We hope we can continue into the 1997-8 year with the commitment the Coalition has been able to build.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
B.C. HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION
Education and Consultation: 1996 - 1997

On July 3, 6, 18, 23 & 24, 1996 we taught human rights to 95 members of U.N.I.T.E., which is the new consolidated union for garment workers in British Columbia. These

students were all women, and were from Hong Kong, Korea, China and India. We taught half of the classes in the union hall, and half in the garment factory. We are very proud to have contributed to this unique education program.

We continue to teach the Vietnamese Incentive Program on a regular basis, we have also started to work with Healing Our Spirit in the same way.

We were able to reach the Principals and Vice-Principals of the Vancouver School Board with a workshop on Human Rights in the Law on October 11, 1996, and a workshop on Eliminating Workplace Harassment on November 26, 1996. We also did a workshop on Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace for 40 lower mainland teachers in the Career Education Society, on November 7, 1997. We did a human rights workshop for the Creston Human Rights Coalition and the College of the Rockies on March 21, 1997 to celebrate the International Day to Eliminate Racism.

On October 10, 1996, we did a paper and panel presentation at the Hate Crime Symposium on using the human rights legislation as a tool to combat hate.

We have started this year to do a two day human rights course for the Justice Institute of British Columbia, and did this course on October 21 and 22, 1996, and March 10 and 11, 1997. We also did a presentation and a paper on the defence of the hate propaganda provisions in the human rights legislation to the Canadian Council of Press Councils on May 16, 1997.

We continue to do workshops in basic rights for young people in employment opportunity programs at Kiwassa Neighbourhood House and Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, and for the women's program at Vancouver Community College.

We have increased as well the number of employers for whom we do general harassment and discrimination education. In July and October, 1996, we provided education to 260 employees of the Cowichan Regional District in Duncan, B. C. We also provided education for the employees of the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Hostelling International, Seaboard Life and the Gay and Lesbian Business Association. All in all, we provided education for over 1,000 people this past year.

With regards to consultation, this can take a variety of forms. We meet with

individuals and groups who wish to know more about us, or who wish some assistance in accessing our library and resources. We also assist groups and employers and unions who wish some assistance in developing policies on human rights issues. We also consult on a regular basis with the B. C. Human Rights Commission. We do about 50 of these consultations in a year.

Advocacy: 1996 - 1997

As you can see, we carried 295 human rights complaints this year, that is down from 306 last year. Please note the reporting period is slightly shorter this year. We closed 72 files this year, compared to 107 last year.

As of April 28, 1997, the Coalition is carrying the following files:

Sexual Harassment	48	
Sex Discrimination		30
Race Discrimination	25	
Physical Disability	38	
Mental Disability	6	
Ancestry	6	
Marital Status	1	
Place of Origin	17	
Age Discrimination	6	
Political Belief	3	
Criminal Record	3	
Family Status	3	
Religious Belief	4	
Sexual Orientation	12	
Section 20	15	
Employment Equity	1	
Hate	2	
Other	3	223 Open Files

In addition to these, the following files were closed between June 1, 1996 and April 28, 1997:

Sex Harassment	21:	2 upheld, 8 settled, 3 abandoned, 7 opinions provided, 1 referred
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Sex Discrimination	13:	2 upheld, 3 settled, 3 dismissed, 1 settled, 4 opinions provided
Race	10;	1 settled, 2 dismissed, 7 opinions provided
Disability	13:	3 settled, 2 dismissed, 6 opinions provided, 1 abandoned, 1 referred
Religion	1:	opinion provided
Place of Origin	1:	opinion provided
Sexual Orientation	3:	1 opinion provided, 1 dismissed, 1 abandoned
Age	2:	1 dismissed, 1 abandoned
Family Status	1:	abandoned (grievance successful)
Criminal Record	1:	dismissed
Employment Equity	1:	opinion provided
Adjudication	1:	written decision provided
Other	4:	assistance and opinions provided

72 Closed Files

In conclusion, the Coalition carried 295 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.