

B. C. HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION

ANNUAL REPORT

1997 - 1998

**Produced for the Annual General Meeting
Held at Kiwassa Neighbourhood House
May 20, 1998
6:30 p.m.**

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

Board of Directors 1997-1998

Table Officers:

President: Leila Harding
Treasurer: Mandeep Gill
Secretary: Judy Lynne

Members at Large:

Gerard Bremault
Serena Chandi
Doronn Dalzell
Fif Fernandes
Alicia Mercurio
Ken Smith
Matthew Yun

Staff 1997-1998

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

1997-98 Recipient of the Renate Shearer Memorial Award

Shelagh Day

REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our last Annual General Meeting was held May 27, 1997, where we elected a new Board of Directors. We had our traditional one day meeting with Board and Staff on September 6th, 1997, and set our priorities for the upcoming year. Our dissatisfaction with the decision in *Canadian Jewish Congress vs. North Shore News*, led us to make a priority of education around the anti-hate provisions of the *Code*. We placed an ad in the Vancouver Sun in January, 1998 linking the decision with the 50th Birthday of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the reason for its existence. Over the year we have presented many submissions and articles on this issue. These included a submission to Mayor Loucks and Councillors of the Corporation of the City of North Vancouver, on September 22, 1997. The Council had adopted a resolution on July 28, 1997 condemning the restrictions of free speech contained in the *Human Rights Code*. As well we wrote an article for AMSSA's special magazine celebrating the 50th Birthday of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This magazine came out in March, 1998.

As we started off our year with an impending deficit, due to proposed cuts by the Law Foundation of B.C., we decided to move our offices on November 1, 1997 to help offset this financial loss.

We streamlined our committee structure this year, merging the staff liaison committee with the services committee. We kept the government liaison committee and the finance/fundraising committee, and struck a new website committee. All of our committees were very active last year.

The Government Liaison Committee presented a submission to the Human Rights Commission's proposals for changes to the *Code* in September, in response to the Commission's paper, *Human Rights for the Next Millenium*. In addition to supporting the Commission's recommendations for changes to the *Code*, we recommended a change to the definition of physical disability to include protection for those who have applied for or received W.C.B. benefits. We also recommended the inclusion of protection on the grounds of "social status", which is more expansive than "source of income". And finally, we recommended that the pay equity and employment equity provisions that we have waited so long for would be included in the *Code*. The Government Liaison Committee has continue to meet with all Commissioners whenever possible throughout the year. At present, we are working with members of the private bar to place all our concerns before the entire Commission.

Our Finance/Funding committee planned and executed a bigger, brighter International Human Rights Day on December 10, 1997. This event was held at the Coast Plaza Stanley Park, and co-sponsored by Canadian Heritage. Leon Bibb provided the entertainment. This year's Renate Shearer Award went to Shelagh Day, for her outstanding contribution to human rights. The Award was presented by Carl Shearer, Renate's son. As well, the artist Shelagh Norgate, donated a special acrylic painting, and an autographed copy of her book, *Stormclouds over Party Shoes (Etiquette Problems For the Ill Bred Woman)*, which we raffled off as a fundraiser. The winning ticket for this painting was drawn at our open house, held on January 6, which was mainly an invitation to our members and friends to come and see our new premises.

Our Services/Staff Liaison Committee continued to tackle the problem of case load and balance of work, as well as consistently help the staff to stay out of conflict of interest situations. We now have criteria to determine priorities in our caseload, and to help us maintain a balance between advocacy and education/consultation.

Our Website Committee has only been recently struck, and has met a couple of times. However, we are in the process of designing a human rights website for the Coalition, and we can be found at [http://www.multinova.com/human rights/bchrcoal/](http://www.multinova.com/human%20rights/bchrcoal/).

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

In February, 1998, we were contracted by Multiculturalism, B. C. to research and develop a package on systemic racism, to be offered to delegates at their annual conference to mark the International Day to Eliminate All Forms of Racism (March 21, 1998). This package was well received, and we have also been contracted to produce the proceedings of this conference. This is presently underway.

In April, 1998, we were fortunate to be invited to participate in the Western Canadian Conference on Vienna +5, one of many conferences held all over the world to assess the commitment of the international community to implement the recommendations of the International Human Rights Conference in Vienna, held five years ago. We have also been invited to participate in the national conference and the international conference, to be held in Ottawa, in June, 1998.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

B.C. HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION

Education and Consultation: 1997 - 1998

We provided education to over 900 students last year. We made in roads with employers, such as the Clarion Hotel, and Northern City Savings Credit Union, where we did a Video Conference course from Vancouver to Managers throughout northern British Columbia. We were privileged to be the speaker at the womens' caucus of Canadian Auto Workers at their annual conference at the Trade and Convention Centre in August, and to be the key note speaker for the CAW Canada Regional Conference in Human Rights. As well, we were asked to be part of the education team of I.W.A. Canada, in their development of education on the duty to accommodate. We did a panel presentation for CASHE (Canadian Association of Sexual Harassment Advisors) on the contradictions between Human Rights Law and Labour Law. We felt privileged to be asked to make a three hour human rights presentation on sexual orientation and the law for representatives of a combination of all Surrey Parents Advisory Committees. We were asked to provide several human rights workshops at the C.L.C. (Canadian Labour Congress) Winter School at Harrison this year, held from January 26 - 30, 1998. We did a workshop for the Colleges Symposium on Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism in January, 1998, and in February, a workshop for 190 members of the National Institute of Disability Management and Research on the Duty to Accommodate. Participants in this workshop included people representing unions and employers, people with disabilities, and as well Workers Compensation experts from all over Canada. In February, as well, we did a panel presentation for CLE - Sexual Harassment Update.

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. As well, we continue to provide a two day human rights course each semester at the Justice Institute of B. C.

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 did over 90 of these consultations since our last AGM.

Advocacy: 1997 - 1998

As you can see, we carried 205 human rights complaints this year, that is down from 295 last year. Please note the reporting period is shorter this year. We closed 51 files this year, compared to 72 last year.

As of February 10, 1998, the Coalition is carrying the following files:

Sexual Harassment	35	
Sex Discrimination		21
Race Discrimination	17	
Physical Disability	31	
Mental Disability	8	
Marital Status	1	
Place of Origin	10	
Age Discrimination	5	
Political Belief	-	
Criminal Record	2	
Family Status	3	
Religious Belief	2	
Sexual Orientation	9	
Section 20	7	
Employment Equity	1	
Hate	1	
Other	1	154 Open Files

In addition to these, the following files were closed between April 29, 1997 and February 10, 1998:

Sex Harassment	12	7 settled, 1 dismissed, 1 opinion provided, 3 abandoned
Sex Discrimination	7	2 settled, 1 dismissed, 2 opinions provided, 2 abandoned
Race	11	2 settled, 1 dismissed, 4 opinions & advice provided, 4 abandoned
Disability	10	2 settled, 4 opinions & advice provided, 4 abandoned

Religion	1	settled
Place of Origin	2	1 dismissed, 1 abandoned
Sexual Orientation	2	1 dismissed, 1 abandoned
Age	1	advice provided
Hate	2	1 dismissed; 1 abandoned
Other	3	2 report analysis and referrals made, 1 opinion provided

51 Closed Files

In conclusion, the Coalition carried 205 human rights complaints over the past year. Each of our files is reviewed approximately every three months by our supervising lawyers. These are Barbara Cornish who is with Robertson Downe, and Rob Horricks.