

**B. C. HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**1999 - 2000**

**Produced for the Annual General Meeting  
Held at Kiwassa Neighbourhood House  
May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2000  
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 1999-2000**

### **Table Officers:**

President: Leila Harding  
Vice-President: Kenneth Smith  
Secretary: Judy Lynne  
Treasurer: Gerard Bremault

### **Members at Large:**

Doronn Dalzell  
Fif Fernandes  
Kristen Gagnon  
Evelyn Hortobagyi  
Terri Kennedy  
Wendy Liew  
Alicia Mercurio  
Matthew Yun

### **Staff 1999-2000:**

Peter Beaudin (Advocate)  
Fif Fernandes (Administrative Assistant - January - April, 2000)  
Susan Jardine (Administrative Assistant - present)  
Nafysa Lalani (Administrative Assistant - until November, 1999)  
Marilyn Minkler (Office Manager)  
Susan O'Donnell (Executive Director)

### **Bookkeeping and Accounting:**

Administration: Cat L'Hirondelle, (L'Hirondelle Financial Services)  
Auditor: Joanne Dorman, C.A.

### **Legal Supervision:**

Barb Cornish, Robertson Downe; Rob Horricks

### **1999-2000 Recipient of the Renate Shearer Memorial Award**

Gwen Brodsky

## REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Our last Annual General Meeting was held May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1999 where we elected a new Board of Directors. We had our traditional one day meeting with Board and Staff on June 27, 1999, and set our priorities for the upcoming year. We also held an additional one day retreat on March 5, 2000, where we took an in depth look at our responsibilities as Board Members focusing on liability and conflict of interest. We re-established our basic goals and priorities, and developed a new working structure to meet those goals.

Our Coalition continued throughout this year to work with CLAS to establish a Human Rights Clinic and Centre for Excellence. Ken Smith and Terri Kennedy have been representing the Board on this very important issue. We are currently working with the Ministry of the Attorney-General, and as well have had several meetings on this and other matters with the Advisory Council on Human Rights.

We celebrated International Human Rights Day a day early this year to avoid the Friday Sabbath. The Renate Shearer Human Rights Award went to Gwen Brodsky, for her outstanding contribution to human rights, and specifically for her role as co-counsel in the *Meiorin* decision.

On January 6, 2000, we moved our offices to the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, which gave rise to the need for an Open House. We held it March 22, 2000, to closely coincide with the International Day to Eliminate Racism.

We were pleased to be an Intervener at the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Blencoe* case in January, 2000. We were represented by Frances Kelly at CLAS.

Following our all day retreat on March 5, 2000, we have added new committees to more effectively do the work. We retained the existing committees, which were, Government Liaison, Services and Staff Liaison and Finance and Fundraising. We now have as well a Community Liaison Committee and a Communications Committee. We hope that this will enable us to gain better connections between our Board and other community agencies, and hopefully as well to develop a newsletter. In addition, we have added a Human Rights Commission Committee, to better monitor and evaluate our relationship with the B. C. Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

The Services and Staff Liaison Committee worked very hard this year. Leila Harding

and Gerard Bremault contributed greatly to the successes we were able to achieve. It was a bargaining year for the collective agreement and we were able to make some changes that benefited all staff. As well, we hired our new Administrative Assistant, Susan Jardine. Thanks to Fif Fernandes for stepping in to cover this position until Susan could be hired.

In May, 2000, four of our Directors, Mathew Yun, Judy Lynne, Wendy Liew and Fif Fernandes all attended a two day Media Skills Workshop. The workshop was jointly sponsored by Langara College and Multiculturalism B. C., and was designed specifically for people working in the community to promote multiculturalism and anti-racism.

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

Although members will notice that our financial situation continues to improve, they will also notice from the staff report, that work has doubled in some areas with the same amount of staff. If our Coalition is to continue to grow, it clearly requires a more substantial, stable funding base.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS B. C. HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION

### STAFF REPORT:

#### **Education and Consultation: 1999 -2000**

We provided education to over 1,988 students last year, almost twice as many as last year (1,080). Our education programme travelled all over the province, and covered every aspect of human rights, from harassment training to the duty to accommodate, from policy development to how to conduct an internal investigation. We taught private and public sector employers and employees, public institutions, unions, and community organizations.

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

did over 306 of these consultations since our last Annual Report. This number is up from 143.

**Advocacy: 1999 - 2000**

As you can see, we carried 223 human rights complaints this year, that is a increase from 208 last year. We closed 76 files this year, compared to 120 last year.

As of March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the Coalition is carrying the following files:

Sexual Harassment	17
Sex Discrimination	27
Race Discrimination	14
Physical Disability	29
Mental Disability	3
Place of Origin	23
Age Discrimination	5
Political Belief	1
Criminal Record	2
Family Status	10
Religious Belief	8
Sexual Orientation	3
Section 43	4
Employment Equity	1

147 Open Files

In addition to these, the following files were closed between March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1999 and March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2000:

Sex Harassment	11	2 advice and/or assistance provided; 2 resolved, 2 settled \$6,000, 1 upheld - \$6,000, 1 upheld - \$4,000, 2 dismissed, 1 no instructions
Sex Discrimination	9	1 upheld - \$3,100, 1 settled - \$2,000, 1 partially settled - \$4,000 and balance upheld - \$6,000, 2 advice provided, 2 no instructions, 2 complaint dismissed

Race	7	2 opinion, advice or assistance provided, 1 complaint dismissed, 1 out of time, 1 settled - \$7,000, 1 settled - \$2,700, 1 no instructions
Physical Disability	13	1 settled - \$23,542.67, 1 not a complaint, 1 settled - \$5,000, 2 no instructions, 4 advice and/or opinion provided, 1 settled - \$5,000, 2 settled - \$4,000, 1 complainant successfully accommodated
Mental Disability	3	2 advice provided, 1 conflict of interest
Place of Origin	9	5 dismissed, 1 out of time, 1 no instructions, 1 mediation failed, 1 not a complaint
Sexual Orientation	6	1 settled \$122,000, 2 Commission closed file based on another decision, 1 complaint dismissed, 1 settled - \$2,000 plus pension benefits, 1 client hired lawyer
Age	2	advice and/or assistance provided
Family Status	3	1 settled - \$7,000, 2 advice provided
Marital Status	1	no instructions
Criminal Record	1	advice provided
Section 43 (retaliation)	3	1 upheld - \$1,000, 2 dismissed
Private Contract/Investigation	3	completed
Reconsideration	5	2 denied, 2 granted, 1 referred to Tribunal

76 Closed Files

In conclusion, the Coalition carried 223 human rights complaints over the past year. Each of our files is reviewed approximately every four months by our supervising lawyers. These are Barbara Cornish who is with Robertson Downe, and Rob Horricks.

OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS WORK AT THE COALITION:

Commencing in August, 1999, the Coalition has worked with Multiculturalism B. C., and the Vancouver Alliance Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth to address the human rights issues relevant to children who are exploited and/or trafficked. We are examining the International Human Rights Instruments which Canada has signed to explore ways these instruments can be applied in local situations. We are hoping to host an International Tribunal in Vancouver next year.

In October, 1999, we presented a written submission to the Canadian Human Rights Act Review.

In November, 1999, we contributed to a paper for West Coast Leaf's National Forum on Equality Rights: *The Duty to Accommodate: What Has It Meant for Disadvantaged Groups?*

In December, 1999, we did a written submission to the B. C. Human Rights Advisory Council, assessing the work of the B. C. Human Rights Commission.

In April 2000, we spoke in the legislature at the tabling of the Holocaust Memorial Day Act.