

**B. C. HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2001- 2002**

**Produced for the Annual General Meeting  
Held at the Law Courts Inn Restaurant  
May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2002  
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 the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, Settlement and Multiculturalism Branch, and the City of Vancouver.**

## **Board of Directors 2001-2002**

### **Table Officers:**

President: Kenneth Smith  
Vice-President: Kristen Gagnon  
Secretary: Nafysa Lalani  
Treasurer: Terri Kennedy

### **Members at Large:**

Leila Harding  
Wendy Liew  
Alicia Mercurio  
Joy Olson  
Wendy Potter  
Matthew Yun

### **Staff 2001-2002:**

Peter Beaudin (Advocate)  
Lani Koonpackdee (Administrative Assistant)  
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

### **2001-2002 Recipient of the Renate Shearer Memorial Award**

Pat Pitsula

## REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Our last Annual General Meeting was held May 23, 2001 where we elected a new Board of Directors. We held our full day strategy and evaluation meeting September 9, 2001. We knew by this time that the Attorney General would be maintaining jurisdiction over provincial human rights, and so we set about designing committees and a strategic plan in an effort to remain a stakeholder, and to make a contribution to future changes. We knew that this year would be an extremely challenging one that required some extra effort if we were to influence the future direction of human rights.

We established a political lobbying committee, and a law and commission reform committee at our September 9<sup>th</sup> strategy meeting. These committees worked very hard for the duration of the year, and were able to establish the following:

- Starting in August 2001, we brought together community groups working in equality rights, complainants' legal counsel, and human rights consultants, in order to work together to develop a human rights model that would better serve the parties to a human rights complaint.
- We named the organization the Committee for Advancement of Human Rights (CAHRTS), and met almost every Monday from August 2001 – February 2002.
- We submitted a proposal to the Human Rights Review of the Administrative Justice Project, which proposed a Direct Access Human Rights Tribunal, a Human Rights Clinic to carry complaints, and a Centre for Excellence, for research and education in human rights. We distributed our proposal very widely, to our members throughout the province, to complainants' and respondents' legal representatives, and to community and legal organizations province-wide.
- The Human Rights Review prepared a discussion paper or "backgrounder", and we provided a response to this in February 2002.
- We wrote to the Attorney General in August 2001, seeking a meeting with him. On November 16, 2001, he met with our Coalition President, Ken Smith and two of our staff, Susan O'Donnell and Peter Beaudin. We put our proposal to him at that time, as well as did our best to make him aware of the work that our Coalition does.
- In addition, we have been meeting, from time to time, with

representatives of the Ministry of the Attorney General and as well,

with representatives of the B. C. Human Rights Commission.

- And finally, in this area, we have made submissions to both the Provincial Pay Equity Review, and the Federal Pay Equity Task Force, both of which took place this year.

In addition to this Law Reform work, the Poverty and Human Rights Project was launched last year. The Project receives funding from the Law Foundation of British Columbia, and is an initiative of the Canadian Human Rights Reporter Inc., in collaboration with the Centre for Feminist Legal Studies at the University of British Columbia. Its purpose, in a nutshell, is to bring Canada's international obligations regarding social and economic rights into our domestic human rights framework. The Project brings legal and community advocates together who work in this area to discuss and develop strategies that can address policies and laws that maintain and exacerbate poverty. The first consultation was convened in Vancouver on December 1 and 2, 2001, and the second will take place May 24 and 25, 2002. Our President, Ken Smith, and our Executive Director, Susan O'Donnell, are representing the Human Rights Coalition in these consultations.

The Board of Directors continues to believe that a human rights website can greatly enhance our ability to reach the public, as well as to integrate our human rights issues with others in the community. We remain committed to try and get financial support for this project.

On December 10, 2001, we had our usual celebration of International Human Rights Day, but for the first time changed the venue to JJ's Dining Room in Vancouver Community College. This was our year to choose the recipient of The Renate Shearer award. The award went to Pat Pitsula, recently retired Executive Director of the Law Foundation of British Columbia. The award was given to Ms. Pitsula for her significant contribution to human rights and community organizations through her work as Executive Director of the Law Foundation. It was noted that many lay advocates who are funded by the Law Foundation have relied on Ms. Pitsula's resourcefulness and creativity throughout her 13 years as Executive Director.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

B. C. HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION

STAFF REPORT:

**Education and Consultation: 2001-2002**

We provided education to over 2,350 students this year, a significant increase from last year (1,739). 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, community organizations and groups who wish to know more about us, or who wish some assistance in accessing our library and resources. We also assist groups, employers, colleges and unions who wish some assistance in developing policies on human rights issues. We did over 416 of these consultations since our last Annual Report. This number is up from 334 such consultations reported in last year's Annual Report.

**Advocacy: 2001-2002**

As you can see, we carried 256 human rights complaints this year, an increase from 243 files carried last year. We closed 67 files containing a total of 87 complaints, compared to 58 last year.

As of March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the Coalition is carrying the following files:

Sexual Harassment	16
Sex Discrimination	21
Race Discrimination	17
Physical Disability	32
Mental Disability	12
Place of Origin	22
Ancestry	5
Age Discrimination	3

Criminal Record	1
Family Status	11
Marital Status	4
Religious Belief	7
Sexual Orientation	7
Section 43	1
Employment Equity	1
Opinions	3
Other	6

169 Open Files

In addition to these, the following files were closed between March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and March 11, 2002.

Physical Disability	11	1 settled - \$5,000 general damages; 2 complaints dismissed; 1 referred to Tribunal; 3 advice and/or assistance provided; 1 opinion provided; 3 no instructions.
Sex Harassment	5	1 upheld - \$6,268 lost wages and \$3,500 general damages; 1 settled – unknown amount; 1 reconsideration denied; 1 assistance provided; 1 opinion provided.
Sex Discrimination	11	3 settled: \$9,000; \$9,402.39; \$1,538.46; 4 opinions provided; 4 advice and/or assistance provided.
Race	9	2 settled: \$5,000 lost wages and \$5,000 general damages; \$30,000 general damages, reference letter, reconciliation celebration; 4 assistance and/or advice provided; 2 opinions provided; 1 no contact.
Mental Disability	4	2 assistance and/or advice provided; 1 Commission rejected complaint; 1 complaint dismissed.
Place of Origin/Ancestry	4	opinions provided.
Age	3	1 assistance provided; 1 opinion provided; 1 no instructions.
Family Status	2	1 settled - \$2,500 general damages; 1 no

		instructions.
Religious Belief	2	assistance and/or advice provided.
Sexual Orientation	2	1 complaint resolved: complainant entitled to survivor's benefit; 1 opinion provided.
Retaliation	1	settled - \$30,000 general damages, reference letter, reconciliation celebration.
Private Contract	3	2 harassment investigations – completed; 1 workplace conflict investigation – completed.
Ombudsman Complaint	1	complaint resolved: Commission to set aside original decision to dismiss complaint and a new Human Rights Officer assigned.
Other	9	8 opinions provided; 1 referral provided.

67 Closed Files

In conclusion, the Coalition carried 256 human rights complaints over the past year. Our supervising lawyers review each file approximately every four months. Our supervising lawyers are Barbara Cornish, of Robertson Downe, and Rob Horricks.

OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS WORK AT THE COALITION:

Responding to Incidents of Racism and Hate: A Handbook for Service Providers

This manual was produced in partnership with Multiculturalism B. C., Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and Victim Services Division, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

It is a 46-page handbook which was developed to give professional service providers, both in and out of government, access to the information, skills and resources required to support victims of racism, and to respond effectively to issues of racism that arise in the community. The components of the handbook are as follows:

- Racial Discrimination: A definition
- Prevention: The organizational response to racism
- Representation: Assisting the victim of racism
- Human Rights and Racism: Rights and procedures
- Crime and Racism: Crimes motivated by hate, bias and prejudice
- The Victims Assistance Program

- Remedies for victims of racism
- Community Development: Involving the whole community in responding to racism.

In addition to the manual, we have contracted with the Ministry, to travel around the province orienting people to the handbook, and helping them become familiar with the content. Although the Ministry has sent us to Cranbrook and Prince Rupert, the handbook is unfortunately not published. This is because many of the laws and procedures covered are in the process of being changed.

Hopefully in September, we will be able to rewrite those parts of the manual that are necessary, and the Ministry will see fit to publish it, and continue with the provincial tour.