



United Nations Association in Canada

A Sense of Belonging

December 10, 2007

“

States are not moral agents, people are, and can impose moral standards on powerful institutions.

- Noam Chomsky

”

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Why December 10th?

It is the day back in 1948 when the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).



Eleanor Roosevelt with the English version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1949

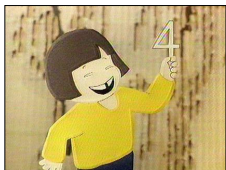
What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (UDHR)?

It is a list of the rights every person around the world is entitled to according to the United Nations. The document consists of 30 articles that cover fundamental rights and freedoms. It prohibits all forms of discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property, birth, opinion or other status.

UDHR is not law, instead it is a statement of the rights the UN believes countries should provide to each of their citizens. The Declaration represents an ideal to be attained by all peoples and nations. Many countries, such as Canada, have made the UDHR part of their own laws.

Canadian Schools celebrate Human Rights' Day

This year, schools from all across Canada are celebrating Human Rights' Day. These events are part of the SB action plans for youth engagement. They are being brought to the students on film. Through a partnership with the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), 14 schools from Yellowknife to St. John's will be watching short Human Rights themed films on Monday, December 10th. The films have been selected by the teachers at each school to insure that the topics covered are accessible to their students and communities. Some of the films include:



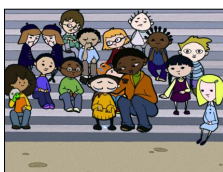
Scene from 'Rights from the Heart'

Rights from the Heart Film Series

The first of three collections based on the values proclaimed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child consists of seven animated stories about children in various situations for five- to eight-year olds.

Talespinners Film Series

A series of short animated films for children aged 5 - 9. Adapted from books, each film is based on an acclaimed cross-cultural children's story that will engage young viewers with appealing characters and dynamic storylines. For more information on the films visit: www.nfb.ca



Scene from 'Talespinners'

You can find these rights in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) and also in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (1977).

DID YOU KNOW...

John Peters Humphrey, a Canadian lawyer, diplomat and scholar from New Brunswick, was the primary author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' first draft.



John Peters Humphrey

The Canadian Human Rights Commission is also helping with the celebration, by donating bookmarks and posters for all the student participants. The overall goal of the project is to help our country's youth relate the large topic of Human Rights to their own lives.

Human Rights Day Time for Canada to Seize the Diversity Advantage in the Workplace

December 10 marks Human Rights Day and the eve of the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Canadians should know and be very proud of the formative role one of our own, John Humphreys – a New Brunswick native, played in drafting of this inspiring, revolutionary and moving document. But the day marks more than a document. And the concept of human rights is not just for countries who only know basic human rights because of their absence.

It may seem more like a challenge than a freedom to you to punch in at work on these cold, dark winter mornings. But let Human Rights Day serve as a reminder that simply holding that job is a right reserved for all of us as Canadians. A right adopted as part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The Declaration covers our right to cast a vote in an election, buy a house and even go to a movie. It prohibits discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property, birth, opinion or other status. Although the UDHR is not law, it is a strong statement of the rights the UN believes countries should provide to each and every one of their citizens, and Canada took the suggestion more than two decades ago putting it into law. You can find these laws enshrined in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) and the Canadian Human Rights Act (1977).

But just because it has been on paper as law for more than twenty years, does not guarantee that all these rights – and their spirit -- are consistently extended to every Canadian. The United Nations Association in Canada's "A Sense of Belonging" initiative has found gaps between the promises of the Canadian Charter and everyday living for many. This diversity programme works in nine communities across the country to target issues of racism and discrimination and promotes integration based on community- developed plans.

In roundtable discussions from Yellowknife to St. John's, visible minorities and groups working with them report local businesses unable or unwilling to seize the diversity advantage. We heard about inadequate 'diversity training' offered as a band-aid approach to welcoming new employees into the work environment, while ignoring that many businesses do not reflect the make up of the communities from which they prosper. The literature is clear that there is a positive effect on the bottom line to have a diverse workforce – and we know many Canadian companies who are leading on this. There is much work to do, however, to get this message out to small and medium sized enterprises as well.

Ultimately, Canada is a leader in enshrining human rights in law and in fact: a great country, whose greatness lies in the resources of 'newcomers' -- which at some point means each of us. The recent census data from Stats Canada reminds us how our future is tied to being an attractive future home to new Canadians. This can only be so if we continue to develop, build and evaluate our tools – from the documents and laws of human rights – to innovations in hiring and extending warm welcomes to the new face of Canada in the workforce. We must get over the protectionism often times implicit in restrictions on those with foreign credentials – for jobs Canada needs filled. And we must showcase and celebrate great practices in companies who are thriving and succeeding through the diversity advantage.

What is being lost to businesses reluctant to hire new Canadians is that a new Canadian brings with them their contacts, expertise and life experience from beyond this country's borders, they are adaptable workers and that accent tends to mean that person can speak another language in addition to English. These benefits not only need to be recognized by employers but by all level of governments through policies that further encourage the private sector.

So when you punch in at work remember it is your right because of the Universal Declaration and the human rights we all aspire to. And although this day is meant as a celebration of what we have achieved in the past, it is also a reminder of the improvements that still need to be made for the future of our communities, our country. Unless we have the willingness to work at establishing institutional readiness for new Canadians, these rights will slowly be chipped away, leaving all of us diminished.

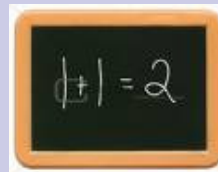


Kathryn White
Executive Director
UNA-Canada

Looking at the numbers...

An estimated 110,000 immigrants came to Canada between 2001 and 2006.

These numbers boosted Canada's foreign-born population by 13.6%. This was four times higher than the growth rate of 3.3% for the Canadian-born population during the same period.



- Statistics Canada,
Dec 2007

New Communications Officer

There is a new addition to the SB team. Sarah Hoyles joined the UNA-Canada Ottawa National office in early November as our Communications Officer.



Sarah Hoyles
Communication Officer

Having worked as a broadcast and print journalist across Canada, Sarah has lived in many of the SB regions from Newfoundland to Alberta.

She is excited to be a part of the team and looks forward to organizing the National Conference and working on the Final Report.

Hamilton remembers the Holocaust

There are some very exciting developments in Hamilton for their 3rd Annual International Day of Holocaust Remembrance on January 27th, 2008. The Holocaust Remembrance Committee at UNA-Canada's Hamilton branch, chaired by Madeleine Levy is very busy putting plans in place.

Since the adoption of the UN resolution in November 2005, the UN Association in Canada, Hamilton Branch has organized the past 2 commemorations. Now they plan to continue these as annual events but with broader educational opportunities.

Part of this year's events will include an exhibit of selected photos from Roman Vishniac's "A Vanished World". Vishniac took the photos between 1935 and 1939 in Eastern Europe to capture the culture of poor Jews in mountainous villages and urban ghettos.

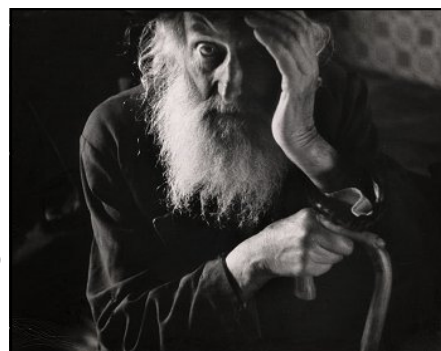
In a very unique development, Roman Vishniac's daughter Mara Vishniac Kohn will be in Hamilton to attend the U.N. commemoration on January 27th. The exhibit will open on January 17th at McMaster University.

A couple days later, on January 29, Holocaust survivor, Dr. Eva Olsson will be speaking at Redeemer College.

The goal of all of the events honouring the **International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust** is for Hamilton students and the wider community, from all backgrounds, to come away with a deeper understanding of the horrific consequences of hate and racism and how they can make a difference.



Jewish schoolchildren
by Roman Vishniac



Elderly Man by Roman Vishniac

Upcoming UN mandated Days

December 11
International Mountain Day

December 18
International Migrants Day

December 19
United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation

January 27
International Day of Commemoration
in memory of the victims of the Holocaust

February 21
International Mother Language Day

March 8
International Women's Day

2008
International Year of the Potato
International Year of Planet Earth
International Year of Sanitation
International Year of Languages

These dates and years help focus the world on the issues in which the UN has an interest and commitment. The UN calls on Member States and other organizations to mark the days in ways that reflect their priorities



The **United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada)** is a national charitable organization celebrating its 61st anniversary. As a think and do organization, UNA-Canada supports a network of 17 volunteer branches and local contacts, with a National office in Ottawa and a Western professional office in Vancouver. Our mandate is to engage Canadians in the work of the UN and the critical global issues that affect us all through innovative projects, policy research, and on-going communications with Canadians.

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For more information on A
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