

Manitoba Humanist



HAM executive members Jake Peters and Allison Nelson flip through the latest issue of Skeptic while at our RREX booth

Published by and for the Humanist Association of Manitoba

“We are beyond belief”



www.mb.humanists.ca

IT WAS AN “EX”-TRA SPECIAL JUNE!

Our first-ever booth at the Red River Exhibition is now history, but it won't soon be forgotten!

In short, all of us who volunteered had a great time. Still, I would like to thank all of the volunteers for your time and effort. You are amazing!

We had time to chat with each other and get to know people better, we got to tell quite a few people who we are and what we believe, we promoted Skepticamp and the MASH film festival, and we got to enjoy all that the Red River Ex had to offer (which includes, of course, those little donuts!).

Most especially, to all of you who took the time to stop by and visit, and are now reading

our newsletter for the first time... Welcome!

We do hope that we can offer you friendship and a sense of community – along with some good conversation, opportunities to learn, and fun.

Please join us at any of our upcoming events (list on page 5 of this newsletter). Our meetings are free and open to the public.

We look forward to getting to know you better over the coming months.

Please feel free to contact us at the ham librarian email address, if you have any questions at all.

- Donna Harris



Our new HAM banner on display!

THE EX WAS A BLAST

Since I first joined HAM last year, I've very much enjoyed listening to the members, speakers, and their many and varied opinions on life, science, and the supernatural. Even though we are for the most part like minded thinkers, the sharing of ideas on the "big questions" has always intrigued me. So when Donna and Diana asked for volunteers for the Red River Ex I was game.

There is nothing better than a good discussion, especially if the person you're speaking with may have a viewpoint opposite from yours. I understand some science, my reasoning and critical thinking skills are intact (for the most part) and my tolerance for woo-woo is at an all time low. I thought this might be fun and I wasn't disappointed.

The hours I spent at the Ex were most enjoyable, getting to know fellow members, letting the public know we exist and exploring that age old question; Why do you believe what you believe? Humanism is my world view but I found trying to sum it up in one or two positive sentences nearly impossible. I don't know if evangelizing humanism will ever be my forte, because I don't have a southern accent and we humanists don't have a big book to wave around.



Ashlyn and Doug at the booth

I would have to say our booth at the Ex was well received. I met a lot of new people who were really interested in what we have to say. Many didn't know humanists and skeptics had groups in Winnipeg, some wanted to know more about

humanism and what we believe. Then there were the free-draw junkies. I swear free-draw junkies would enter a draw for an Antarctic beach vacation in July.

The individuals that stick out always seem to be the ones with view-points opposite yours. I was able to engage a Hutterite gentleman for about a minute and a half. The short exchange consisted of him saying "You don't believe in god"? The way he said it led me to believe he had never heard of the concept of atheism before, and maybe he hadn't. Then he asked "Who made the rain"? Before I could even try to explain the hydrological cycle or how asking 'who' is an assumptive question, he offered a quick reference to Pascal's wager and with an arm tug from his wife they were off. He was a friendly enough fellow, but I feel he thinks we're all nuts.

There was the couple who had a colicky baby, nothing they tried worked, finally after three months of this they picked up a homeopathic cure for colic. After a three week regimen the colic just stopped. I was amazed.... not!

This from Wikipedia:

Colic (also known as *infant colic*, *three month colic*, and *Infantile colic*) is a condition in which an otherwise healthy baby cries or screams frequently and, for extended periods, without any discernible reason. The condition typically appears within the first month of life and often disappears, often very suddenly, before the baby is three to four months old.

I just wish I knew of the wiki article before I spoke to this couple!

Then there was the young man who came by with a brand new black shirt he had just bought from a certain evangelical Christian booth in the other building, which exclaimed in big yellow letters "JESUS LOVES EVERYBODY EVEN SKEPTICS". I told him I loved his shirt, but it wasn't accurate. I explained how christian doctrine says, and most christians believe, that only a certain portion of us get into heaven and a portion will roast in eternal torment. If Jesus loves us why send anybody to the lake of fire? I asked him if he would torture something he loved for a second, let alone eternity. He thought

for a moment then said “God doesn’t send you to hell it’s a choice”.

We spoke for a few more minutes, he had a few more questions. I pointed out how the trinity doesn’t make sense to me and how he earlier avoided the moral question about hell. I also pointed out how if he believes in hell, it can’t be a choice. You see if the day does come and we humanists have to answer to the celestial Big Kahuna, he will ask us “Do you want eternal torment or eternal bliss?” Everybody will say “bliss, please”. If hell is truly a choice, that makes all religions – new and old – completely redundant.

The young man left with his buddy, reading one of our brochures, I thought that was pretty cool. Would I do the booth again? Absolutely. I recommend it to all the members of HAM and the Winnipeg skeptics. What a great experience!

- Pat Morrow

DECLARE YOUR AFFILIATION ON THE NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

Instead of a mandatory long-form census, the Government of Canada has distributed voluntary National Household Surveys, which contain the “religion” question.

While comparing data from previous years still might not be as easy as the government would like, it’s still an opportunity for the non-believing community to be counted.

So, if you’ve received one of these surveys, please don’t hesitate to check off “No Religious Affiliation” and remember to return your survey as soon as possible.

COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION

I am sure we are all familiar with the idea that getting atheists to organize or agree on anything

is like herding cats. We have the reputation for being independent, rational free-thinkers making decisions informed by reason and science, united only by our shared non-belief. Some of us find distasteful the idea of joining groups or being labelled. Whether by necessity or choice, many non-believers are in the habit of keeping their thoughts on religion and faith to themselves.

Well, I have to confess, I am not one of those cat atheists. While I value time alone with my books, thoughts, and self-reflection, I think I am happiest being part of a group, more of a dog atheist. Connecting with the other humanists in our group has brought great emotional satisfaction to my life. Prior to finding HAM, I was fortunate in that I did not have to hide my atheism and had many others in my life that either shared my non-belief or at least respected my right to not believe. But I certainly did not have anyone that felt as strongly or as passionately about these ideas as I did. I am sure they were all getting a little tired of me up on my soap box, spouting off about the evils of religion every chance I got. It was time for me to get off the internet, pull my nose out of my books and seek out some others who shared my views. Fortunately for me, it was right around this time that I was contacted by someone from HAM asking me to come to a meeting. I will always be grateful to Sophie Shulman, our energetic outreach person, for making that phone call.

From my first HAM meeting I felt warmly welcomed. The speakers and topics are always interesting and the dinner conversations are lively. One of the most memorable moments for me was the AGM meeting when we hosted PZ Myers. Walking into that crowd of people who came to hear PZ speak was really moving for me. I actually had a couple of tears in my eyes as I looked around the room, amazed that there really were that many people who cared enough about these issues to come out on a freezing January night. I had found a community where I completely belonged. Every HAM event that I attend offers a new opportunity to connect with someone else. Sharing ideas with others, talking about books we have read and debates we have seen satisfies me both emotionally and

intellectually. Every meeting there seem to be new faces as our group continues to grow. I am very excited to be a part of this growing movement and look forward to making many more connections in the future.

- Diana Goods

GUESS WHO CAME FOR LUNCH!

On May 28, HAM had a rare chance to welcome an unusual guest, Dr. Bryan Tully, a member of the Humanist Association of London, UK. Bryan was coming for his first ever visit to Canada to attend a seminar on geriatric issues held in Winnipeg by Dr. H. Chochinov, a world renowned expert in geriatric psychology and in the problems of dying with dignity.

You see, Bryan, even if by now semi-retired, is a clinical psychologist striving to further his professional expertise, even though lately his interests have been switching from clinical psychology toward humanist chaplainship.

Bryan, while in London, found our HAM website and e-mailed Jeff (Olsson, our president), asking if anyone from HAM would be willing to show him around on his free day. Jeff had already other arrangements on that day away from Winnipeg, so he in turn sent Bryan's request to us all, looking for volunteers. None responded and I said I'd be the one. Well, folks, all this is pre-history.



Dr. Bryan Tully

So, we met on Saturday and off we went. It was Bryan's last full day in Canada, the next morning he had his flight back home. He was well satisfied with the seminar and walked already in the Downtown: we had exchanged e-mails before Bryan left London, in which I had suggested the Art Gallery, the Manitoba Museum and our Parliament with its Masonic secret markings. He had visited these on the days before we met.

He turned out very pleasant (the day before, Jeff in a low voice suggested to me: "I don't want to sound paranoid, but you better phone to the Chochinov's seminar to make sure he is not an Imposter! I'd hate it if something happens to you!"); in addition a music lover: he brought with him and we enjoyed while driving the South African Jazz, the Jewish folk klezmer songs and more) and an active humanist though he did not specify much the latter. He has met in person Dawkins, Dennett and Mariam Namazie.

We talked and talked; Bryan told me some about himself. He had met his future wife Belinda Shaw in Kuwait years ago. She is a journalist, now retired; they have a house in West London, purchased some 25 years ago. Now, he said, they couldn't have afforded to buy it.

He is currently in training for humanist chaplainship and very enthusiastic about this new hobby. I connected Bryan with Agie Smies, who warned him that income-wise clinical psychology works much better. Bryan sounded amused; his response: "But I'm not doing it for money!"

In short, we went to Lower Fort Garry where on behalf of HAM I treated him with a good lunch, and then – to Gimli. The weather was playing tricks with us: at least ten times sunshine changed abruptly with showers. On the way back we lost our way for a while (my fault) and made quite a loop along the perimeter... By 6pm, we were back in Winnipeg.

We agreed to keep in touch, so, we have now a direct line of communication with the London HA (not sure for how long though)!

- Sophie Shulman

GREETINGS FROM VICTORIA

We exchange newsletters with the Victoria Humanists. Recently, they participated in a Canada Day parade, and sent us a couple of snapshots. (Thanks Friends!)

Yes, our former president, Barrie Webster, and his wife Phyllis are now active members in their organization. The second picture is a close-up of Phyllis showing off the flag.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, August 14, 2011

MASH Film Festival

Location: Park Theatre, 698 Osborne Street

Time: 6:30 pm

Theme: "Morality Evolved" – short films, provocative dialog and compelling ideas

Cost: By donation

Saturday, September 10, 2011

Regular Meeting

Location: Canad Inn Polo Park, 1405 St. Matthews Avenue

Time: Meet & Greet 5:00 pm

Meeting 5:30 pm

Speaker/Topic: **Laura Creek Newman**, Registered Dietician, on food myths and fallacies

Cost: Free. But individuals pay for their own food & drink

Saturday, September 17, 2011

The Winnipeg Skeptics' Skepticamp

Location: Aqua Books, 274 Garry Street

Time: 11:00 am to 6:00 pm

Speaker/Topic: Winnipeg's annual open conference celebrating science and skepticism

Website: tinyurl.com/SkeptiCampWinnipeg

Saturday, September 24, 2011

Red River Freethinkers Convention

Location: Fargo, North Dakota

Speakers/Topics: TBA

Website: www.project42convention.org

Saturday, October 15, 2011

Regular Meeting

Location: Canad Inn Polo Park

Speaker/Topic: TBA

Executive:

Jeff Olsson, President
Donna Harris, Vice President
Helen Friesen, Treasurer
Heather McDonell, Secretary

Members at Large:

Greg Christensen
Myrna Donald
Diana Goods
Barry Hammond
Allison Nelson
Jake Peters
Grant Rogerson
Neil Schipper
Scott Shabaga
Sophie Shulman

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

mb.humanists.ca



Yes, I would like to BECOME A MEMBER of the Humanist Association of Manitoba

New Member Renewal

Membership Category:

- Individual Membership \$25.00
- Individual Limited Income \$10.00
- Household Membership* \$45.00
- Household Limited Income \$15.00

* After July 1st, just pay ½ the yearly fee for the rest of the year. After October 31st, pay full fee and get the entire next year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code _____

Telephone#: _____ Cell #: _____

Email address: _____

*Household Memberships: Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or over:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

DONATION (Tax receipts issued for all donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HAM of:

- \$10 \$20 \$30 \$50 \$100
- Other: _____

PAYMENT: Cheque Money Order
 Visa Mastercard Amex

Please complete the following if paying by credit card:

Account No. _____

Expiry Date: ____/____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Please make cheque or money order payable to:
Humanist Association of Manitoba and mail to:
*Humanist Association of Manitoba, 7 Pinehurst Lane,
Mitchell, MB, R5G 2J3.*

Or bring your form and the fees to any HAM meeting and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the executive.