

# Manitoba Humanist



From last year's Solstice Picnic... come on out to this year's event!

Published by and for the Humanists, Atheists and Agnostics of Manitoba

*"We are beyond belief"*

# HAAM

[www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca](http://www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca)



## **TIME FOR A HUMANIST PARTY!**

At this time of year, the axial tilt of the earth is most inclined towards the sun. At this time, we have the most hours of daylight, and the days start to get shorter once again. We call the longest day of the year the Summer Solstice.

To Humanists, it's a reminder of our yearly trip through the solar system, which affects every living thing on this planet, and just happens to be a great excuse for a party!

To celebrate, we're having our annual HAAM picnic/barbeque!

**WHEN: Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**TIME: 5:00 p.m.**

**WHERE: Picnic site #3 at Assiniboine Park**

HAAM will supply basics – such as hamburgers and hot dogs, as well as cutlery and condiments. We ask that attendees bring their own “extras” – salads, drinks, lawn chairs, etc.

This is a family friendly event – so please feel free to bring the children, and even well-behaved pets.

If you have any questions at all, please contact us at [ham\\_news \(at\) yahoo.ca](mailto:ham_news@yahoo.ca).

The event is free, and fun, and open to everyone, so come on out and join us!



## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

All of our upcoming events can be found on page 5 of this newsletter.



Find out why Scott Burton is so excited. Story on page 3

## **WHY THE INACCURACY OF THE CANADIAN CENSUS MATTERS**

Declining religiosity? A recent article in the Winnipeg Free Press correctly identified the fact that there are more “nones” in Canada and Manitoba than ever before. The article states, “The 2011 National Household Survey released earlier this month reports more than 311,000 Manitobans, roughly one-quarter of the population, as having no religious affiliation.” While there are many who think this is good news (myself included), there are also those of us who recognize that the method used to gather this information is flawed.

The 2011 National Household Survey did not ask Canadians what they believe. Instead it stated:

*“22. What is this person’s religion?”*

*Indicate a specific denomination or religion even if this person is not currently a practicing member of that group.*

*For example, Roman Catholic, United Church, Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Muslim, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Greek Orthodox, etc.*

*Specify one denomination or religion only.*

- *No religion”*

The obvious problem with this question is the part that says “even if this person is not currently a practicing member”. It is clearly biased against those who would say, “I was raised (insert religion) and am now a non believer.” It has led to bloated numbers that incorrectly indicate that there are more Catholics, Anglicans and Muslims etc, in Manitoba than there really are. In fact, the number of “nones” has been steadily increasing as people shed the religion of their parents in spite of this bias.

Why does this matter? Because Canada's Federal government spends a lot of taxpayer money on religion. A lot. The whole purpose of a census is for the government to have its own “reality check” and ensure that it is providing services that match the demographics of society. Over the last seven years the

Government of Canada increased its spending for religious agencies dramatically. Consider that the amount of taxpayer money given to religious entities for international development in 2010 was 42 percent higher than in 2005. It went up to 129 million from 90 million per year in that 5 year period. Also consider that religious organizations that have lobbied the government in order to stop legislation allowing same sex marriage or abortion are the ones who have received this funding. Oh I know, they never “directly” lobby the government. But they do organize parades that lead to our legislature, or hold meetings in churches to stop legislation that would make room for homosexuals in Manitoba Schools. Recently, Crossroads Christian Communications received \$544,000 of federal funding while openly espousing homophobia abroad and on its web page.

It’s just my opinion, but a democratic government’s spending should reflect the values and demographics of its citizens. If we want better roads, government should spend the money on that, but when 25 percent of the population has purposely distanced itself from the church, in many cases for good reason, government should also respect that. This is especially true when these churches are already tax exempt. They really have no need for federal money.

It should not be the role of our government to tell any citizen what religion they should follow and yet, because of the wording used, the census does not allow us to leave our religion behind. This is just wrong.

- Jeff Olsson

## **GARAGE SALE RESULTS!**

We’re happy to report that the Mitchell Garage Sale was a great success! The sale itself brought in over \$665. That combined with recent donations, and the sale of a couple of special items donated that were sold separately – our current bus advertising fund stands at: (drum roll please)...

**\$3,751.55**

(cont’d next page)

We're really on a roll!!

Let's hope the word spreads about our fund, and about our new Paypal "DONATE" button on the website! That bus advertising could be rolling around Winnipeg streets sometime soon!

Big thanks to those generous people who donated many fine items, and a big hug to Helen Friesen, for organizing the entire event.

## **SCOTT BURTON'S 24 HOUR RUN**



**THE EVENT:** Scott Burton will run for 24 continuous hours around a loop of commonly used roads and sidewalks in our area of Westdale/Charleswood in support of community charity "Lunches With Love". Beginning and ending at Beaverlodge School from June 12 8:00 am to June 13 8:00 am.

**THE NON-PROFIT:** "Lunches with Love" - a community-based charity that prepares lunches for the homeless of Winnipeg. They are always in need of food donations and volunteers to do their great work. This was started by Nathan Unrau - a student of Westdale Junior High School.

**WHO IS INVOLVED?:** Beaverlodge School and Westdale Junior High will both be a big part of

the event, with student involvement (running and volunteering), food and donation drives, and an assembly presentation (Westdale)

The event is on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/LunchesWithLoveWinnipeg>

### **HOW CAN YOU HELP?**

- Scott needs YOU to cheer him on while he runs! If you want, drop by the route with a bottle or two of water or just cheer him on from the side lines!
- Another way you can help is by sharing the link to help us bring awareness to as many people as we can!
- Donate to Lunches with Love! Follow the Facebook link above or email [elsie.unrau \(at\) shaw.ca](mailto:elsie.unrau@shaw.ca) to see how you can donate or volunteer with that organization!

### **WOULD YOU LIKE TO RUN WITH SCOTT?**

Let him know! We don't expect you to run the whole 24-Hours but Scott would love to share parts of his run with anyone who would like to join him! Email Scott at [scott \(at\) amazingcompanyevents.com](mailto:scott@amazingcompanyevents.com)

## **WASTE OF TIME, WASTE OF MIND**

Recently, I was involved in an on-line discussion on the Winnipeg Free Press website about what atheism has to offer over religion. The discussion was pretty wide-ranging, with the usual theist misunderstandings about the meaning of the word atheist, multiple fallacious references about Stalin, Hitler and co., and the typical drive-by posters who spew bible verses and quickly move on.

However, there were a few people who were engaging in civil discussion, so I did try to answer some of their points. One particular point that came up during the discussion was raised by a commenter who claimed to have been an atheist, but when he realized that the atheists that he knew then were the most discontented with their lives, it caused him to look more closely at the happy religious people he knew

and explore their beliefs more closely. This exploration led to him doing a lot of reading by some sophisticated and knowledgeable theologians, and in the end resulted in his conversion to Christianity. I also think there was some kind of personal experience along the way, but as on-line discussions go, I am not sure of the details.

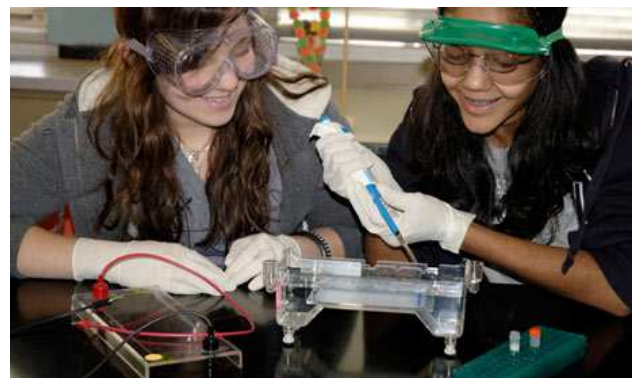
One of the arguments that he brought to the table was one that really made me think. He wanted to know what an atheist position could offer to a child who was dying of cancer, and what I would say to this dying child. Even though I had addressed this in previous posts by answering that it doesn't matter whether or not atheism offers anything positive or not, as many of us who come to our position on the existence of gods are more concerned with determining the truth value of the claim first and that atheism does not necessarily lead to nihilism. For many of us, atheism is just the beginning and accepting a materialist worldview actually leads us down the path of appreciating this life even more, knowing it is finite and any meaning we find it in has to come from ourselves.

However, this particular point seems to come up frequently with theists who believe the comforting aspects of their religion are somehow a valid argument. So I made an attempt to answer this particular point. I explained that, I would likely do the same things that he would do for anyone in this position, for example, try to alleviate their suffering, listen to their fears and offer the comfort of my presence. What I wouldn't do is be able to tell him that he was going to a better place.

This got me to thinking about other things that I wouldn't have to say to this child. If the child asked me why he was suffering and dying before he really had a chance to live, I wouldn't have to tell him that this was God's plan, or that he was suffering because of his sin, or because of the sin of his ancestors. I wouldn't have to tell him that he didn't pray hard enough or that God was allowing his suffering because of the opportunity it created for spiritual growth, or that his suffering was to allow those around him to grow spiritually. I wouldn't have to tell him that

god was allowing his suffering as a demonstration of his power, as illustrated in the book of Job. Or that God was planning on giving his parents a new kid to replace him after he was gone, as explained in that same story.

The more that I wrote this reply, the angrier I found myself, as I considered other things I wouldn't be able to tell this child. For instance, the most glaring one that stood out to me was that unfortunately, I would not be able to tell this child what I most wanted to, that being, we had a cure for his cancer. This then got me to considering another one of the reasons why religious thinking is so harmful. One of the things that rarely get mentioned when talking about the harm of religion, is what a colossal waste of human resources it is. Religion has certainly been directly responsible for blocking scientific advancement, as objection to stem cell research shows quite clearly.



But it also can be held responsible in many other ways that are not so clear cut. For example, the Poster on the Free Press comment board had spent a great deal of time reading numerous books written by highly intelligent, well-educated theologians, who in my opinion were wasting their prodigious intellect trying to justify why a good god would allow suffering, or coming up with complicated apologetics to try to reconcile the inconsistencies in a 2000 year old book.

Imagine what these scholars could have done with their potential if they had not been sidelined into arguing over how many angels can dance on the head of a pin and instead put their minds to solving real problems.

The problem doesn't simply rest with academics in ivory towers, however. This continues to affect us every day. For every child who is home-schooled in order to shield them from being exposed to the Theory of Evolution, we have lost another potential biologist who may have been the one to cure leukaemia. For every girl who is denied an education because of religious ideology, or indoctrinated to believe that her only choice is to be a wife and a mother, we've thrown away another mind. A god who wants us to sacrifice our brains is not worthy of any worship at all.

- Diana Goods

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013**

Solstice Party / Picnic

Location: Assiniboine Park, Picnic Site #3

Time: 5:00 pm

Free. But please bring any specialty items (food, drink, lawn chairs, etc.)

## WE ❤️ THE PRIDE PARADE!

We had such a great time again this year, walking in a group as members of HA<sup>2</sup>M in the Winnipeg Pride Parade, that we're definitely going to repeat the experience.



The group (above); Dorothy & Helen (below)



Allison & Jake (above); Diana & Paul (below)



**Executive:**

**Donna Harris, President**  
**Heather McDonell, Vice President**  
**Helen Friesen, Treasurer**  
**Allison Nelson, Secretary**

**Members at Large:**

**Scott Burton**  
**Cheri Frazer**  
**Diana Goods – HAAM Librarian**  
**Pat Morrow**  
**Jeff Olsson**  
**Jake Peters**  
**Grant Rogerson**

Newsletter Editor:

Donna Harris  
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We're on the Web!

See us at:

[mbhumanistsatheists.ca](http://mbhumanistsatheists.ca)

HA<sup>2</sup>M



Yes, I would like to BECOME A MEMBER of the Humanists, Atheists & Agnostics of Manitoba

New Member       Renewal

**Membership Category:**

Individual Membership                      \$30.00  
 Individual Limited Income                      \$10.00  
 Household Membership\*                      \$50.00  
 Household Limited Income                      \$15.00

\* After July 1<sup>st</sup>, just pay ½ the yearly fee for the rest of the year.  
After October 31<sup>st</sup>, 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 HA<sup>2</sup>M of:

\$10    \$20    \$30    \$50    \$100  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

PAYMENT:     Cheque                       Money Order  
                     Visa                               Mastercard

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 HA<sup>2</sup>M meeting and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the executive.