

Manitoba Humanist



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Atheists, and
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Manitoba



HAM

www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca

WHO GOES THERE?

It's James Duncan and his sidekick Nemo, and they're our special guests at the February meeting. Nemo is a long-eared owl. Find out more about Jim and Nemo on page 2.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Location: CanadInn, Polo Park, 1405 St. Matthews Avenue

5:30 pm: Meet and greet.

6:00 pm: Short business announcements.

6:15 pm: Dinner (optional).

7:00 pm: Speaker

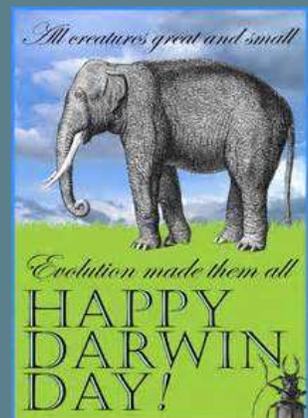
As always, the meeting is free to attend but you can choose to purchase dinner and/or drinks from Aalto's (most of us do).

See you there!

CHARITY OF THE MONTH

This month, James Duncan will be selling a beautiful flying owl poster and/or an owl button with Nemo's face on it for \$2 each. AND he's also bringing a few copies of his owl book (\$20 a copy). Or people can just make a donation. All proceeds go to support Jim's owl research and conservation efforts, including his grad student's efforts.

Don't forget to renew your membership!



COMING UP!

All events are subject to change. Some details are TBA. Watch future newsletters, our website, Facebook page, or join us on Meetup for more information as it becomes available.

Join us! Get involved! Make new friends!

Memberships are available at the door at all our events.

February 2014

Saturday 8th: Free Public Lecture “**Why a Secular Society Needs Religion**” by Dr. Patrick Franklin, instructor, Providence College. McNally Robinson bookstore, Grant Park, in the travel alcove, 7:00 PM

HAAM is not associated with this event, but it may be of interest to our members.

Saturday 15th: **Monthly meeting and Darwin Day celebration.** 5:30 PM Canad Inn Polo Park, 1405 St. Matthews Ave. James Duncan and Nemo, the owl

Wednesday 19th Round Table Discussion

HAAM's next Round Table will focus on being "out" as an atheist. 6:30 PM St. Boniface Library, 100-131 Provencher Blvd. Members only.

March 2014

Saturday 1st: **MASH Film Festival,** 1:30 – 5:30 PM, Millennium Library, Carol Shields Auditorium

Monday 10th: Book Club meeting

Cornish Library, 20 West Gate, 6:30 PM

We will be discussing Pete Boghossian's new book “A Manual for Creating Atheists”.

NB: This book is not in stock in local bookstores and must be ordered in, so allow extra time. Note that the meeting room is NOT wheelchair accessible. Members only.

Thursday 13th – Knight Distinguished Lecturer Dr Neil deGrasse Tyson, 4:00 PM, Investors Group Athletic Centre, U of M, doors open 3:30, open to the public. (Not a HAAM event!)
Details: <http://umanitoba.ca/student/dreambig/>

Saturday 15th: monthly meeting. Speaker: author David McAfee (via Skype)

MEET NEMO THE OWL

Come out and celebrate Darwin Day by getting up close and personal with owls! Learn about the biology, evolution, and conservation of owls with expert James Duncan. James will introduce you to the mysterious lives of these nocturnal creatures using an entertaining combination of multimedia, owl impressions, owl parts and a live male Long-eared Owl (Nemo).

Since the 1980s Dr. Duncan has given hundreds of owl presentations to over 10,000 people around the world, from pre-school kids to university classes to retirees. **Bring your camera or video camera and try to capture Nemo as he flies over your head!**



James Duncan, born in Montréal, Québec, obtained a Ph.D. in 1992 from the University of Manitoba for research on the Great Gray Owl. Currently, James is the Director of the Wildlife Branch of Manitoba Conservation where he is active in local, national and international biodiversity conservation initiatives including species at risk. He has researched owls for over 30 years and has published scientific papers, books and symposium proceedings on owls from around the world. He is also an adjunct professor at the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg where he supervises graduate research students who study owls. James claims that his job is simply a way to support his obsessive habit of studying owls with his wife and fellow zoologist, Patsy. Together they have banded over 2,000 owls in Manitoba.

FEBRUARY ROUND TABLE

There are many misunderstandings held by religious people towards atheists and atheism. One of these inaccuracies involves the prevalence of atheism.

Here is a recent actual quote received: "About 98 percent of people believe in a God. So atheists are weird people to those out in the public". Are we weird? Or are we currently invisible and/or under-represented as a group?

If many people are exposed weekly to friends and family declaring their faith in church but never hear of the atheists living around them, this misconception will continue to foster and we may certainly seem "weird" and the odd ones out.

Is being "out" as an atheist the answer?

Richard Dawkins created the "Out Campaign" to help with a larger "consciousness-raising" to normalize society's perception of atheists and increase awareness of our growing group. Atheist voices overall have become more vocal over the last several years. So how does this apply to you personally?

HAAM's next Round Table Discussion will focus on this idea of being "out" as an atheist. All attendees will have different experiences and a wide range of opinions and all the merrier! All opinions will be heard and discussed with the goal of learning.

Meet with us for what should prove to be an interesting conversation. Your leader will be Scott Burton.

This event is for members only but as always, memberships are available at the door. We hope to see you there!

REVIEW OF OUR PANEL DISCUSSION

When a Christian organization approaches an atheist group to participate in a public debate, it doesn't always fare well for the unbelievers. Which is why we were skeptical when Ravi Zacharias Ministries International asked us to join in a public debate.

Well, the format was sorted out into three speeches presenting different world views (Christian, Muslim and Humanist), with a Q&A session afterwards. And yes, there was certainly

"weighting" of the event towards the organizers. We only found out about the possibility of having a PowerPoint presentation just days before event. But I think our group acquitted ourselves well.



I to r., Richard Cloutier, Shahina Siddiqui, Dr. Andy Bannister and Diana Goods

We sat in the very cold Burton Cummings theatre to hear the three speakers discuss the question "what is your greatest fear and greatest hope for the future." Somewhat predictably, Andy Bannister's answer boiled down to Jesus. For Shahina Siddiqui as well, the overall answer was Allah. Our Diana remarked that "Shahina really is a humanist, she just doesn't know it".

I was extremely proud of Diana Goods' speech. It was personal and informative and didn't let religion off the hook for its absurdities. And during the Q&A session, Diana more than held her own against Bannister's not-so-subtle attacks. I understand that the event was recorded, so we'll certainly let everyone know when the video is available, for those who weren't able to attend. And a special thank you to everyone who attended. Your support is invaluable!

- Donna Harris

TABLING AT THE UNIVERSITY

It's been many years since our organization has set up an information table at either of our universities. But there we were, early in the morning setting up at the U of M. It was interesting to see that we were only a table away from the Jehovah's Witnesses. Funny, but we really didn't interact. I did note, however, that they stood all day, while we sat in comfort, and we had way more interest and fun!

While the mornings were slow, by the afternoon we had a steady stream of visitors. Some were interested in the group and very glad to see us, lots of folks did double-takes, and a few just wanted a free pen and some candy. At one point, we had a whole crowd around the table.



We were talking with a young man who was sure of his beliefs in creation. But it was, his “understanding” of evolution that disturbed me the most. He thought that all mutations were bad, and over time, we were losing information in our DNA. So much so that for him, we were “degraded” from what we once were (almost to the point of imbecility), due to those repeated copies. (Like photocopies – copies of copies). I could have wept by his ignorance of the true nature of our amazing genetic code and the processes behind it.

But then along came our professor in shining armor. One of the biological sciences professors stopped by to listen. And he soon took the young fellow to task. He wasn't rude, but he certainly set him straight on some things. Oh, I wish we'd thought to record the encounter. By then, we had several different stripes of Christians surrounding us (who, by the way, couldn't even agree on a definition of “faith” between them).

They weren't our only visitors. We had an encounter with a young woman who was confident in her belief in spirits and demons, and another group of young Muslim men, just fresh from prayers.

It was heartening to see these young people,

whose ideas were probably being challenged for the first time in their lives. I hope at least one or two of them really think about their beliefs, perhaps do some reading, and maybe let a little seed of doubt grow into some genuine knowledge and understanding.

- Donna Harris

A VISIT WITH MARGARET

By Helen Friesen

I had the pleasure of having cake and coffee in Margaret's kitchen on Saturday before the AGM. It was an absolute delight to converse with her again. It had been too long since we had a chance to visit.

Margaret has been a member of HAAM since shortly after Cec Muldrew and others started the group. Margaret is coming up to 94 years of age, and due to having a difficult time hearing speakers at our meetings, and 'losing her grip on things' (as she said in an email to our outreach coordinator), she has decided to allow her name to drop off the membership list. I was sad to hear this, but could not completely understand. However, the person I visited was in no way 'losing her grip on things'. Margaret was spry, mentally sharp, and in good spirits as she always has been.

I wanted to tell her story as a tribute to her upon her leaving. I know that most of our members have never met Margaret, but I think it's good to hear from members who have gone before us. I was prepared to interview her and write her story, but she surprised me by having her story already written. Here it is.

I was born into a Mennonite family and Mennonites are known to reject war and serve the 10 commandments, “Thou shalt not kill”, referring to killing people.

As a teenager, I extremely disliked Churchill's war trumpeting. None of this repulse had to do with family influences. I was on my own ground. My first husband always resented being rejected from the services because of something wrong with his knees. His 2 brothers and 2 sisters trained for service. His rejection made me happy. He used his talents for peaceful purposes, and a better world.

As a young person, I believed in God, and when challenging problems came up, I asked for His intervention. That never seemed to help. I was always alone and losing. When my first husband, Ed, died, I knew God did not exist. I said, "God, if you exist, let me know." My beliefs had often turned to doubts, but now I knew. There is no God who cares for living beings. When I met Cec Muldrew, I was emotionally prepared to deny God's existence.



HAAM member Margaret

I lived in Thunder Bay with my husband, and when he died, I decided to come back to Manitoba. Our son was living in Alberta with his wife and working in the oil patch, so I moved to Winnipeg where most of my family lived.

Before I moved, I pledged myself I would get involved in very new activities. My first stop was the United Church, and I joined the square dance club. There were more ladies than men, and like other women, I danced the man's part. Before long an ad appeared in the paper discussing the movie "The Valour and the Horror". I had always been against war, against Churchill, talked to soldiers on leave or who had returned.

When I met Cec and others at a meeting after seeing the movie, I knew this was where my interests lay. We held meetings at the Unitarian Church. Most of the members were ex-soldiers who believed alternatives to war should be found, but WW2 had to be fought. (Is war sometimes necessary? I disagreed.)

Cec had been active in the war flying supplies from a base in India to the front. He loved flying, but the ethics of war changed for him when his buddies did not return to base. They were picked off mercilessly until his plane was the only one left. He decided then and there he had enough of war.

This strong belief and others welded our friendship, and we got married.

You know Cec's contributions to the humanists, I know his influence in my life.

- Helen Friesen

NOTES FROM THE AGM

That 2013 was a banner year for activities and outreach became obvious when the annual reports were read at our Annual General Meeting on January 11. Our president Donna Harris was kept very busy with media and publicity. Highlights of the year included our bus advertising campaign, Corn and Apple Festival in Morden, meeting with A.C. Grayling, support of Bill 18, the "Jingle Bells, Infidels" song, and much more.

The election of our executive resulted in one position change and several new faces coming on board. Cheri Frazer will assume the position of secretary, with our president Donna Harris, vice-president Heather McDonell, and treasurer Helen Friesen all continuing in their current roles. New members of the executive are Chad and Gloria Froese, Todd De Ryck, Bob Russell, and Dorothy Stephens.

Under new business, the proposed Position Statements were read, discussed, and approved by the membership with a few minor changes. Since the changes involve only wording and clarifications, rather than the positions themselves, the position statements will be adopted by the executive and posted on our website when the revision is complete.

Executive:

Donna Harris, President
Heather McDonell, Vice President
Helen Friesen, Treasurer
Cheri Frazer, Secretary

Members at Large:

Scott Burton
Todd De Ryck
Chad Froese
Gloria Froese
Diana Goods – Librarian
Pat Morrow – Outreach
Allison Nelson
Jake Peters
Bob Russell
Dorothy Stephens - Newsletter



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or Phone 204-612-0601



Humanists, Atheists, and
Agnostics of Manitoba



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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 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 _____

Phone #: _____ 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 HA²M of:

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

PAYMENT: Cheque Visa
 Mastercard

Please complete the following if paying by credit card:

Account No. _____

Expiry Date: ____/____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Please make cheque 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 HA²M meeting
and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the
executive.

Jan 2014