

# Manitoba Humanist



This 'Stonehenge' cake was a hit at our Winter Solstice Party in December.  
Story on page 5.

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



# HAM

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

## TALKING EFFECTIVELY WITH BELIEVERS



Is this what happens when you try to have a conversation with a believer? **Is there a "best way" to talk to religious people about secular beliefs?** Are there different approaches for different people, or is one way better than all the others? Does it make a difference if it's a stranger, or someone you see regularly like a family member or a co-worker?

As a group, we'll explore how to explain why we don't believe, without completely offending the other party. We'll watch a couple of short videos on the subject, and then talk about what works, and why, and perhaps what doesn't work, and why not. We can also share our own experiences about talking with believers. There will be lots of time for discussion, so bring your questions and join the conversation!

**Saturday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016**  
**Canad Inns Polo Park, 1405 St Matthews Avenue**

4:30 Meet-and-greet  
5:00 AGM  
6:00 Dinner  
6:45 Regular meeting

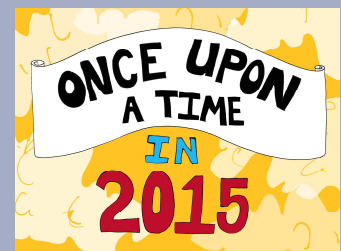
Note that we will be holding our AGM prior to the regular meeting. Please join us as we plan for the upcoming year!



## Charity of the Month



Let's help sponsor a  
refugee family!  
Details page 3.



It's been quite a year!  
Reports and recaps on  
pages 2 and 3.

## UPCOMING EVENTS!

If you're new, welcome! Our regular monthly meetings are always open to the public, but our other events are intended for paid members. If you would like to check us out, you are welcome to attend one or two events before becoming a member. After that, if you wish to continue to participate, we ask that you support the group by joining.

Contact and membership info is on page 6. Past newsletters and more information are on our website.

All events are subject to change, and some details may be TBA. In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances, events may be subject to cancellation. Watch future newsletters, our website, Facebook page, or join us on Meetup for updates.

### January

**Outreach Meeting with the Pembina Valley Secular Community, Morden, Manitoba.** See page 4 for more information.

**Tuesday Jan 26<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup>, U of M Outreach,** 9-5 each day. It's that time of year! HAAM



will again host an Information Table at the U of M to let non-believing students know that we are here and that they are not

alone. We also talk to believers about what they believe and why they believe it. We take a myriad of questions from the curious public, and try to represent HAAM, and Humanists in general, in a positive light. You'll find us on the second floor of University Centre, near the cafeteria. Please stop by and say Hi, sit for a while and just listen, or join the conversation... All Welcome!

### February

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>, monthly meeting,** 5:30 PM. Meeting details are TBA, but will include a celebration of Darwin Day (Feb 12<sup>th</sup>).

### March

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup>, monthly meeting,** 5:30 PM. Topic TBA.

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>, Prairie Infidel Film Fest,** Sir William Stephenson Library, 1:30 PM. More details will follow.

## Save the Dates!

Our regular monthly meetings continue at Canad Inns Polo Park, 1405 St Matthews Avenue, on **April 9<sup>th</sup>** and **May 14<sup>th</sup>**, beginning with our social time at 5:30 PM.

## President's Message

First, thank you for being a HAAM member! It's heartwarming to see our numbers continue to grow over the years.

And well, 2015 was quite a year! We certainly maintained our momentum, with some great meetings and events. We had memorable guest speakers, such as Niigaan Sinclair. Our membership numbers and our social media engagement continue to grow. And, of course, the main event of 2015 was... **River City Reasonfest**. We were all overjoyed that Reasonfest came together, and that we acquitted ourselves quite well for our first effort at putting on something as complex as a two-day conference.

Overall, Reasonfest was a success. All of our speakers (especially the international ones) arrived on time, gave excellent presentations, and managed to get home safely. The feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. We managed to make more friends in other secular groups across Canada.

We didn't even lose as much money as we feared. We did have to dip into the HAAM funds to pay the bills, but not to the degree we once thought. While we didn't make a financial profit, I do believe that the lessons learned and the exposure that it gave us was well worth the effort.

Will we host another Reasonfest? Time will tell. Right now, there are no plans in the works.

Looking ahead to 2016, I would really like to **increase our outreach efforts**. We already have some events on the calendar. I would like us to have more. Especially considering the word "Manitoba" in our name, I believe we should expand and hold more "Intro to Humanism" events beyond the Perimeter. Announce our presence in communities like Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk, etc. I mean, we now have a "satellite" group in Morden. Brandon could easily have its own group.

Considering the world's political climate, and international events, I would like to see us **become more involved in making a difference**. One thing comes to mind – become more active in the campaign to abolish Canada's ridiculous blasphemy law. Closer to home, we would also like to resume holding events like Round Tables and Book Clubs. Only one thing stands in our way: not enough volunteers.



**We need more people to volunteer.** For the Executive, of course, but also to just help out with events as needed. Honestly, folks, your executive needs an infusion of new blood. We would dearly love to see more people on the Executive who would like to devote a few hours and help out where they can. We can't continue to grow as an organization without you!

- Donna Harris



As Donna mentioned in her President's Report, 2015 was quite an eventful year for HAAM. **Reasonfest**, although it was our biggest event, wasn't even half of it!

*Here's a quick review of all the happenings:*

- In addition to our regular monthly meetings, we **hosted** Round Table discussions, Book Clubs, Secular Parenting groups, an Atheist Bible Study, and a Film Festival.
- **Meeting topics** were as diverse as Free Will, the Morality of Religion, Aboriginal Issues, Global Warming, the Sex Trade, and Members' Personal Stories.
- We **donated** to a wide variety of charities, supporting underprivileged kids, animal rescue, the homeless, street youth, and science education in Uganda.
- We **wrote about or discussed** a myriad of topics, including Grieving Without Belief, Was Hitler an Atheist, how we feel about women wearing the Niqab, the Historicity of Jesus, the plight of Syrian Refugees, Conflicts with Believers, the Philosophy of Stoicism, and Spiritual Care vs Professional Counselling.
- We **presented** Outreach and Information events at the U of M and the Morden Corn and Apple Festival, and to an Ethics class at a high school in the Bible Belt.
- We **supported** and spoke out on behalf of organizations and groups with which we share values and goals, like Dying With Dignity, the LGBTQ community (Pride Parade), and Planned Parenthood.
- We **advocated** for freedom of speech (remember Je Suis Charlie?), and secular public schools and workplaces. We strengthened ties with national organizations like CFI Canada and Humanist Canada. We promoted books, blogs, and (relevant) businesses belonging to our members. We expanded our library resources.
- We **celebrated** the launch of our new website (Jan), Darwin Day and the Supreme Court decision on assisted dying (Feb), Pi Day (March), the Truth and Reconciliation report, World Humanism Day, and the US victory on marriage equality (June), and the Winter Solstice (Dec).

Whew! We covered a lot of territory in 2015. If you just joined recently, or missed any of the happenings mentioned above, you can peruse past newsletters, archived on our website, to catch up.

## IT'S MEMBERSHIP TIME – MAKE YOUR VOICE COUNT

*All of HAAM's accomplishments in 2015 required time, effort, ideas, and donations (either directly to the causes themselves, or to our operating budget in the form of membership dues) from our members and supporters.*

**Help us make 2016 just as great!  
In order to keep HAAM active and progressive, we need YOU!**

**January is membership renewal time! Please join or renew your membership today!** Participate by attending our events and activities, or even better, help out with them. Get to know your fellow HAAMsters! We want to continue to grow and build a supportive community and a voice for non-believers.

We count on our members to support HAAM's continuing work. Fees are affordable (no tithing here!) and include a 'limited income' option if applicable. We collect membership dues only to keep our organization afloat. Please continue to support the group that supports you! Memberships can be renewed anytime by credit card using the PayPal link on our website, by cheque in the mail, or by cash or cheque at any event. **Just a friendly reminder - dues must be paid before the AGM if you plan to vote.**



## CHARITY OF THE MONTH

Last month we wrote about the Syrian refugee crisis and posted information on our website about how people can help. We mentioned that HAAM is not a large enough organization to actually sponsor a refugee family, but that there are a number of organizations working with refugees that we can support instead.

Since then we have learned of a wonderful opportunity for Humanists to help directly. **The BC Humanist Association has committed to sponsoring a family to Canada.** This is a huge undertaking, but it is possible for them because they have offers of professional help from their members (an immigration lawyer, a social worker, and a housing donor), and they are already about halfway to raising the estimated \$30,000 in funds that they will need.

*The list of private organizations approved to sponsor refugees by the government is dominated by Christian*

churches. Very few secular options exist. **The Humanist community needs to step up in support of those fleeing persecution.** This could be the most important thing we Humanists do this year as a community! We have a chance to truly put our values into action and help rebuild the lives of people ravaged by war and religious extremism.



Needless to say, the BC Humanist Association is fund-raising far and wide to meet their goal, and HAAM has agreed to help. This way, our members can directly assist a refugee family. **Be a part of the solution!**

For more information, visit their website. Donations are tax-deductible, and can be made to HAAM (we will forward them) or directly to the BC Humanist Association. <http://www.bchumanist.ca/>

## IN OUR COMMUNITY

On July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015, our President, Donna Harris, invited Winnipeg **Mayor Brian Bowman** to speak at one of our meetings. She offered two dates (October



or November) and several suggested topics that would be of interest to our members - *eliminating homelessness using the Medicine Hat model, prayer at city council, his views on religion in politics, or human*

*rights issues related to our diverse city.*

On July 20<sup>th</sup>, HAAM received a response from a representative of the Mayor's Office politely declining the invitation because "due to previously scheduled commitments, the Mayor is unable to attend." The writer thanked us politely for the invitation and wished us well.

Donna made one further attempt to secure Bowman as a speaker. On July 27<sup>th</sup>, she wrote again, asking if he might have some time available in early 2016, perhaps January through March. We did not receive a reply to that second request.

Mayor Bowman does not seem interested in addressing HAAM. Our membership may be small, but "nones" or non-believers represent a significant portion of Winnipeg's population, and our concerns and opinions are just as worthy of consideration as those of any other group in this diverse city.

In contrast, Winnipeg Police Chief **Devon Clunis**, a devout Christian himself, addressed our group in November 2014. He responded to our questions and concerns professionally and respectfully, stated clearly that he represents all the citizens of Winnipeg without bias, and initiated significant changes to police department procedures, in part due to our requests. (Details in the Nov and Dec 2014, and June 2015 newsletters, archived on our website.)

## OUTREACH REPORTS

HAAM members will be on the road again soon, speaking to the **Pembina Valley Secular Community (PVSC)** in Morden, Manitoba. We will be presenting information about the Humanist world view, atheism, secularism and what it all means. Maybe we will even touch on a little woo woo. (Definition: Woo-woo, or just plain woo, refers to ideas considered irrational or based on extremely flimsy evidence, or that involve occult forces, mysticism or spiritualism.)

The PVSC is an organization that we are proud to say HAAM had a small part in founding. From its beginning two summers ago with just five freethinkers meeting for coffee, it has now grown to over 20 members. This will be our first official meeting with the freethinkers of the Pembina Valley and we are really looking forward to it.

The members of the PVSC are not able to be 'out' as non-believers in their communities, so we are not publicizing the details of the meeting. If you live in the area and are interested in attending, contact HAAM.



You may have noticed that HAAM often reports news about and/or promotes external events and organizations. These include **Dying With Dignity**, the **Rainbow Resource Centre/Pride Parade**, **Planned Parenthood**, and others.

These stories are shared with our supporters in accordance with our stated *Philosophy and Position Statements*, which can be found under the 'About Us' tab on our website. Very briefly, as an organization, HAAM supports separation of religion and government, a variety of basic human rights, science, secular public education, sexual and reproductive rights, and end-of-life choices. The statements listed on our website were approved at the AGM a couple of years ago and represent the views of the majority of our members.

If you have read about the recent smear campaign directed at Planned Parenthood in the US, and wondered if it affects PP here in Canada, here's the organization you are looking for.



## Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights

Its name, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, might be unfamiliar, because it was formed only a year ago as the result of the merger of 3 established groups, the *Canadian Federation for Sexual Health (formerly Planned Parenthood Canada)*, *Action Canada for Population and Development*, and *Canadians for Choice*.

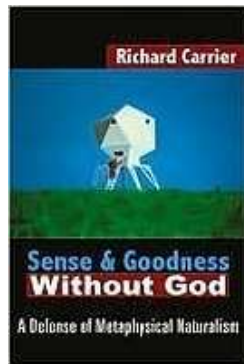
Their website is full of information and resources, including a Holiday Wish List for the new federal government. Check it out!

<http://www.sexualhealthandrights.ca/>

### IN OUR LIBRARY

In view of our recent meeting about the basics of **Humanism**, it's worth noting that we have a number of books in our HAAM library on the topic. They will likely be helpful if you are seeking to better understand Humanism yourself, or are attempting to explain it to your family and friends. Here is one suggestion:

**Sense and Goodness Without God**, by **Richard Carrier** – well-known historian, philosopher, and speaker. If God does not exist, then what does? Is there good and evil, and should we care? How do we know what's true anyway? Do we have free will? What is the nature of the universe and the meaning of life? Carrier explains, without complex jargon, that we live in a physical, natural world without gods or spirits, but that we can still live a life of love, meaning, and joy.



All HAAM members are welcome to borrow books. Browse our collection on the website (under the 'Resources' tab). If you are interested in a particular book, email HAAM so that we can bring it to the next meeting for you. *Note that in an effort to keep track of our books and prevent loss, borrowing privileges are now limited to paid members only.*

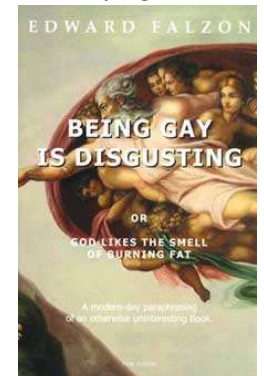
### SOLSTICE PARTY WRAP-UP

We had a lovely year-end event in our Solstice Party. As usual, there was an abundance of good food, and – even better – new people to meet and get to know. It was great to see new people joining us to celebrate.

Our own **Harmonizing Humanists** entertained the crowd with a few “updated” carols, which the audience



thoroughly enjoyed. Newcomer **Christine** brought a special Solstice cake, decorated with shortbread cookies arranged to look like Stonehenge. Trivia guru Lawrence won a *Magic Igloo Maker snow mould*, donated by **Norm Goertzen**, for knowing the most obscure facts about winter holidays and festivals. Door prizes were a knitted *Flying Spaghetti Monster*, provided by **Cheri Frazer**, a copy of Edward Falzon's book *Being Gay is Disgusting*, and a selection of *Skeptic magazines* donated by **Jim Taylor**. Thanks to these donors and congratulations to our winners!



Also, glad to say, many HAAM members were eager to contribute to our **Christmas Cheer Board hamper**.

Thank you to you all! Some last-minute and unexpected donations enabled HAAM to provide a great holiday for one Winnipeg family – a single mom and 2 tween-age kids. We had more than enough to make their Christmas that much brighter, and we were able to purchase additional items beyond the basic minimum guidelines set out by the Cheer

Board. 'Our' family got chocolates, larger gifts for the kids, a treat for Mom (only children's gifts are actually required), and extra groceries to last them well into the New Year. "Angels" **Cheri Frazer** and **Dorothy Stephens** devoted their time to shopping and wrapping. Privacy concerns

prevent us from posting photos of the hamper or gifts, or revealing anything more specific about them, but we can say that this family was very happy when “elves” **Donna** and **Cheri** delivered their hamper the weekend before Christmas. Next year, we will probably start the process earlier - in November - to make the planning and organizing a little easier.

[Photos from the Solstice party can be found on the Media page of our website.](#)



## HAAM's Executive:

President Donna Harris  
Vice President Pat Morrow  
Treasurer Helen Friesen  
Secretary Cheri Frazer

## Members at Large:

Todd De Ryck  
Norm Goertzen  
Tony Governo  
Dorothy Stephens – Newsletter



Contact us at:

<http://mbhumanistsatheists.ca/contact-us/>

[mbhumanistsatheists@gmail.com](mailto:mbhumanistsatheists@gmail.com)

or Phone 204-612-0601



Humanists, Atheists, and  
Agnostics of Manitoba



Humanists, Atheists, and  
Agnostics of Manitoba



@MBHumanists



Humanists, Atheists, and Agnostics of Manitoba

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Registered Charity # 85080 5326 RR0001

New Member       Renewal

Membership Category:

- Individual Membership      \$30.00  
 Individual Limited Income      \$10.00  
 Household Membership\*      \$50.00  
 Household Limited Income      \$15.00  
 Lifetime Membership      \$1000.00 or more

### Special Offer for New Members!

If you are a NEW member joining for the FIRST  
TIME, and you join after September 1st, your  
membership fee will include membership for the  
2016 calendar year.

**DONATION** (Tax receipts will be issued for  
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: \_\_\_\_\_

Please DO NOT send cash in the mail. Make  
cheque payable to: **Humanist Association of  
Manitoba** and mail to: Humanist Association of  
Manitoba, 112 - 230 Barkman Avenue, Steinbach,  
MB R5G 0Y5.

Memberships are also available by credit card on  
our website, or by cash or cheque at any HA<sup>2</sup>M  
meeting or HA<sup>2</sup>M event.