

Photo Credit: Borders by Ha (Cassie) Dong

# THE FIRST 10 YEARS

BY: CARLIE KANE

RESEARCH ASSISTANT & JD CANDIDATE 2024

WITH: ADELE PERRY, SHAYNA PLAUT AND PAULINE TENNENT



**University  
of Manitoba**

Centre for Human  
Rights Research

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# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to acknowledge and honour the work and the impact of the Centre for Human Rights Research (CHRR) at the University of Manitoba during its first 10 years.

The CHRR collectively works together with researchers and community members to contribute to the human rights research landscape, and to illustrate and present human rights, Indigenous rights, and social justice research through a variety of mediums, including public events and open talks, seminar series, workshops, gatherings, publications, and supported research projects. This guide is intended to be a record the CHRR's first 10 years.

## WHAT IS THE CHRR?

The CHRR is a research centre based on Treaty 1 territory on the University of Manitoba's Fort Garry campus in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The CHRR was established in 2012 with the aim to bring together people and organizations – both within and outside the University – to enhance interdisciplinary and collaborative research capacity, create richer training opportunities for students, and facilitate the fusion of research-driven knowledge, public policy and intellectual debate on issues related to human rights and social justice. The centre aims to facilitate research that is both academically rigorous and accessible to the public.

The CHRR is supported by four faculties at the University of Manitoba: Arts, Law, Social Work, and Education. It also works with researchers and practitioners in nearly all the faculties at the University of Manitoba and has a particularly strong relationship with the Rady Faculty of Health Science and the Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resources.

# THE FOUNDERS

The CHRR was the brainchild of Karen Busby. In 2009, the University of Manitoba's strategic research plan identified human rights as a priority, noting that the location of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights aided Winnipeg in its goal to become a globally-recognized centre for human rights. Karen Busby, a professor of law whose research and litigation focuses on sexual/reproductive rights, as well as Indigenous rights, had been approached by the University of Manitoba to begin exploring how to contribute to Winnipeg as a human rights centre. Professor Busby then reached out to award-winning journalist and human rights advocate Helen Fallding and, working together, the Centre for Human Rights Research began to take form.



Karen Busby (left) and Helen Fallding (right), UM Today, 2020.

# THEMES GUIDING CHRR'S WORK

Each year, the CHRR prioritizes areas of research focus, based in part on the human rights context in which we live, as well as the changing composition of the CHRR's Research Affiliates.

**Borders and Human Rights.** Launched in July 2022, the CHRR focuses on the intersection of borders and human rights, recognizing that borders exist beyond the geopolitical boundaries of states – and that it is often the state that forcibly created the border in nations. The CHRR explores borders that may not fit under the “traditional” border language, such as borders of virtue, identity, Indigeneity, gender, the body and economy; all borders that manifest within and across empires and states. View more [here](#).

**Indigenous Peoples & Human Rights.** The CHRR works closely with Indigenous researchers and settler allies to support research that focuses on Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, and the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island and internationally. The CHRR was a strong supporter of the founding of the NCTR and continues to work closely with the NCTR to support its goals in research and outreach. View more [here](#).

**Right to Food and Water.** As per Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being.” (United Nations, 2015). This theme focuses on water rights, sanitation, food security, and food sovereignty. View more [here](#).

**Sexual and Reproductive Rights.** Individuals should be able to exercise control over their bodies, including reproductive decision-making and sexual and reproductive security. The CHRR focuses research on Sexual Assault law, sexual violence at post-secondary institutions, assisted human reproduction, and laws surrounding sex work, acknowledging both sex workers' agency and the risk for exploitation. View more [here](#).

**History and Commemoration.** The CHRR supports research that explores history from a human rights perspective. History is about the past but how we understand, teach, and celebrate it matters to the present and to human rights. View more [here](#).



Photo Credit: CHRR, Demanding job creation, Manitoba legislative building, 1979.

# INDIGENOUS PEOPLES & HUMAN RIGHTS

Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights, to live in freedom, peace, and security as self-determinative and self-governed nations. Human rights is one tool that can work to ensure Indigenous peoples shall not be subjected to any act of violence including any act of genocide. Human rights are also a tool through which Indigenous peoples can pressure the federal government for resources to ensure access to clean drinking water – a fundamental human right, affordable provisions, and access to the Land and its resources. Being able to understand that Indigenous peoples have not been afforded basic human rights is the first step of action. If we continue to work towards Winnipeg being a human rights city and to meeting Canada’s international human rights obligations, we must also acknowledge its genocidal and unjust relationship with Indigenous peoples. These resources and activities listed below and indeed throughout this report are critical in that they capture our focus at the CHRR and allow for a deeper look into the intersection of human rights and Indigenous rights, what defines human rights, and how human rights continue to play into society.

The CHRR has hosted many events and workshops centred on highlighting Indigenous scholars and activists and making space for Indigenous ways of knowing. This includes events that focus on Aboriginal law; the child welfare system; healing and connection; health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples; land rights; Land Back; reproductive rights; and water rights. This also includes the creation of an online platform and open access journal *At the Forks* with Dr. Kiera Ladner to explore the intersection of human rights and Indigenous rights with a particular focus on the prairies. Carlie Kane, CHRR Student Researcher and Law Student at Robson Hall, created a page and timeline for Aboriginal Law Resources which includes landmark jurisprudence and information. View the resource page here.



Photo Credit: Kane, C. 2018, Tipi and Eagle at the University of Manitoba

Through its Small Grants program, the CHRR has dedicated financial support to interdisciplinary research projects that explore and highlight the research theme of Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights. Throughout the years, this has included projects on missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, intergroup dialogue groups, toolkits to build relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth, water rights, repatriation, the legacy of Residential Schools, and residential school denialism.

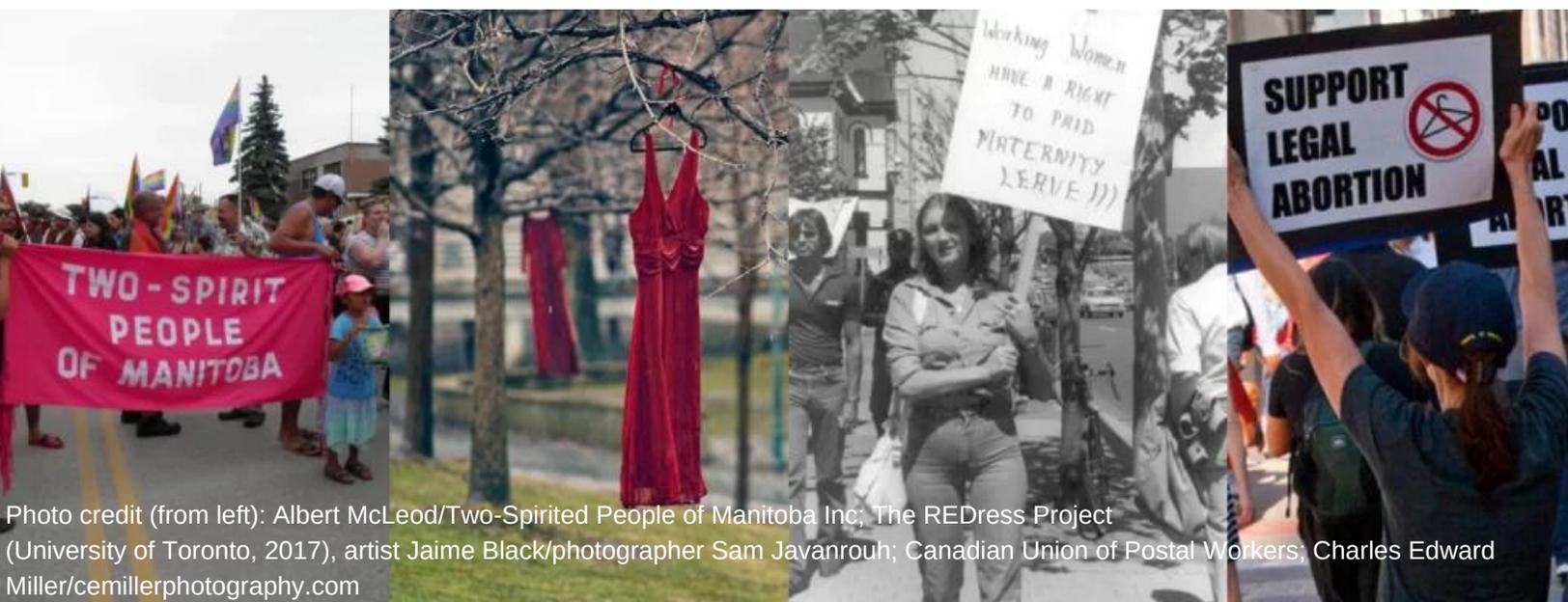
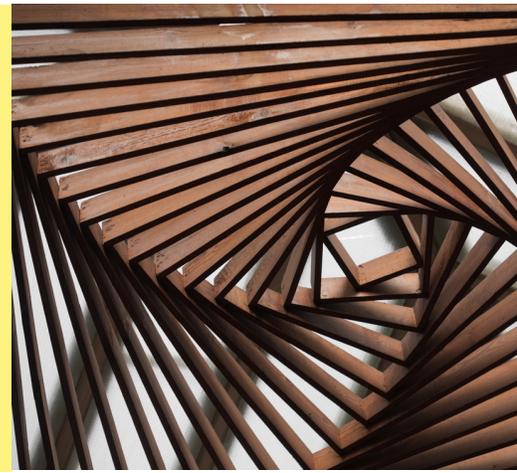


Photo credit (from left): Albert McLeod/Two-Spirited People of Manitoba Inc; The REDress Project (University of Toronto, 2017), artist Jaime Black/photographer Sam Javanrouh; Canadian Union of Postal Workers; Charles Edward Miller/cemillerphotography.com

# RESEARCH & EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



The CHRR continues to support human rights and Indigenous rights research and researchers, both academic and community- based. This support includes, but is not limited to:

1. Assisting in grant writing.
2. Navigating and managing administrative processes for the institution.
3. Programme building and support.
4. Sharing information including creating spaces and outlets for researchers to share their work.
5. Facilitating and hosting events.
6. Providing opportunities for leadership and mentorship of emerging scholars and researchers, including students.

Throughout its first 10 years, CHRR has led or collaborated on a number of funded research projects including:

## WATER RESEARCH PROJECTS [2014-2018]

This included a 6-year project facilitated by Dr. Annemieke Farenhorst and Wendy Ross on access to clean, safe, and accessible drinking water in First Nations communities. See project information, research papers and policy results [here](#).

## IMPLEMENTATION OF UNDRIP [2019]

A 5-year project led by Celeste McKay, in collaboration with Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild and Professor Brenda Gunn exploring the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). “The UN Declaration is monumental because it is the only human rights instrument created with the participation of the rights holders themselves. Further, it specifically recognizes that Indigenous peoples’ rights are both collective and individual. The UN Declaration sets the floor for Indigenous peoples’ rights – the minimum necessary to meet international human rights standards, not a ceiling. States are free to apply higher standards or stronger rights than those set out in the UN Declaration.” (Gunn, 2011, p. 6) This project provided opportunities for Indigenous law students to complete research and included hosting a national academic forum on the human rights of Indigenous peoples. A public lecture on Indigenous self-determination was hosted by UN Expert Member Megan Davis. You can also view the UNDRIP handbook [here](#).



# AT THE FORKS

Fort Garry in 1871 by Toronto News Company

## MISSING THE BUS

A SSHRC-funded project with Adele Perry, Karine Duhamel, and Jocelyn Thorpe examining the connections of public transit and Indigenous women and Two-Spirit Plus people in Western Canada. Read the full report [here](#).

## AT THE FORKS

A SSHRC-funded collaboration between CHRR and Mamawipawin to create a digital platform and meeting place for conversation on the intersections between Indigenous rights and human rights, with focus on the prairies and its neighbours. At the Forks is now available on an open-access platform titled Open Journal System. View more about this project [here](#).



Photo Credit: Anonymous (n.d.) Six Nations of the Grand River.

# SIGNIFICANT EVENTS & PROGRAMMING



Las Fotos Project, (n.d.) Indigenous Rally in the Street



Biascioli, A. (n.d.) People Protesting for Human Rights (Canva Free Image)



Photo Credit: Kane, C. 2019, Wet'suwet'en solidarity protest in Downtown Winnipeg.

## CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS SERIES

Beginning in 2011, the CHRR hosts an annual series of conversations and talks. Each year, the Critical Conversations Series is guided by a theme with guest speakers bringing the topic to life. Although often connected to a University class, the series is always open to the public. Information on the series is available [here](#).

## SPEAKERS BUREAU

Beginning in 2011, the CHRR, with funding from the Faculty of Law Endowment Fund, offers free presentations for teachers (primarily Grades 7-12) on human rights topics. The volunteer presenters are typically law and Master of Human Rights students supported by a paid, part-time coordinator who is often an upper-level law student with previous experience as a presenter. Visit the webpage [here](#).

## SMALL GRANTS

Since 2012, the CHRR has supported research by offering small grants to University of Manitoba researchers for interdisciplinary human rights projects. A list of small grant recipients and their projects can be found [here](#).

## DOING THE WORK

The CHRR, in collaboration with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation hosted a virtual panel and Q & A session on what settlers need to know about the Indian Residential School system in Canada. A video of the event is available [here](#).

## METHODS AND MEDIUMS

Human rights research has been challenged for the laxness to which it has approached questions of methodologies and method (Andreassen, Sano, & McInerney-Lankford, 2017). As such, in 2021, the CHRR created an interactive workshop series to explore methodological questions, research methods, and various means of disseminating information. Many of the workshops are available online [here](#).

# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

When the Canadian Museum for Human Rights broke ground in 2009, Karen Busby was tasked by the University of Manitoba to make the University of Manitoba a top choice for students and scholars of human rights, thus providing the institutional foundation for the Centre for Human Rights Research. In 2010, Prof. Busby received \$75,000 from the University of Manitoba's Academic Enhancement Fund to establish the CHRR with financial support from the Faculties of Law, Education, Arts, and Social Work. Both Karen Busby and Helen Fallding, an award-winning journalist and human rights advocate, worked together to create the foundation of the CHRR and build it into the Centre it is today.

In 2020, Karen Busby stepped down from her role as director of the CHRR. In recognition of Prof. Karen Busby's devotion to founding the CHRR and building interdisciplinary research teams, such as the project to tackle drinking water issues on First Nations, the centre presented her with a print by Métis artist Christi Belcourt. Distinguished Professor of History, Dr. Adele Perry took over as the research centre's new director July 1, 2020. In 2021, co-founder and manager of the CHRR Helen Fallding retired, and Dr. Pauline Tennent became the second permanent manager of the Centre.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaped, and continues to shape, both the content and delivery of the CHRR's work – not least shifting to the world online. Although this shift to online diminished in-person contact, it produced other possibilities and opportunities including the ability to collaborate with people and communities in diverse locations.

Human rights and the struggles for equity and social justice are complex and dynamic. They are often contested and exist in divisive contexts. And as the struggles for human rights continue to evolve, so too must our approaches to human rights and social justice research. This demands collective action at multiple levels, and requires that we as researchers, practitioners, activists, advocates, and community members, work together across and between disciplines, training, and life experiences. The CHRR will work towards greater awareness and public dialogue around human rights issues and the realization of human rights in our communities.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all of CHRR's research affiliates, academics, and scholars who have helped support the Centre with their continued passion for education, research, and human rights.

Thank you to the CHRR staff, particularly Denise Boissoneault-McInnes, for their continued dedication and support. The work of the Centre would not have been successful without you.

Many thanks also to the student research assistants who have contributed to the work of the CHRR over the years including Ha (Cassie) Dong, Viktoria Hergenreiter (Class of 2022) who compiled an extensive timeline of the CHRR's activities, interviewing many of the key people who played a role in the Centre's work, and Corey Petsnik.

## Contact:

Centre for Human Rights Research  
442 - 224 Dysart Road (Robson Hall)  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2N2

[chrrman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:chrrman@umanitoba.ca)

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*[Image]* Anonymous (n.d.) Six Nations of the Grand River.

*[Image]* Black, J. & Javanrouh, S. & Edward, C. 2017, Albert McLeod/Two-Spirited People of Manitoba Inc; The REDress Project (University of Toronto, 2017), Miller/cemillerphotography.com

*[Image]* Biascioli, A. (n.d.) People Protesting for Human Rights (Canva Free Image)*[Image]*

CHRR, Demanding job creation, Manitoba legislative building, 1979.

*[Image]* Dong, C. (n.d.) Borders Image.

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*[Image]* Kane, C. 2018, Tipi and Eagle Staff at the University of Manitoba.

*[Image]* Kane, C. 2019, Wet'suwet'en solidarity protest in Downtown Winnipeg.

*[Image]* Las Fotos Project, (n.d.) Indigenous Rally in the Street (Canva Free Image)

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*[Image]* UM Today News, 2020, Karen Busby

*[Image]* The Sydney Hillman Foundation, 2011, Helen Fallding