

February 1 – March 1



Almost always, the creative dedicated minority has made the world better.
-- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

DATES TO CELEBRATE – MARCH

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 - St. David's Day (Welsh) | 10 - Purim (Jewish)* |
| 2 - Mothering Sunday (England) | 17 - St. Patrick's Day (Ireland, United States) |
| 6 - World Day of Prayer | 20 - Spring Begins (March 20-June 21) |
| 8 - International Women's Day (United Nations) | 21 - Naw-Ruz (Baha'i, Persia) |
| 8 - Daylight saving time begins (3/8-11/1) | 21 - New Year's Day (India) |
| | 25 - Feast of Annunciation (Christian) |



ON TOP OF DIVERISTY EVENTS

Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion Workshop. | February 24--25, 2009. Toronto, ON.

Discover proven tactics to recruit, retain and advance aboriginal talent while building a work culture that flourishes through diversity.

Contact: Crystal Kosa. E: ckose@aboriginalhr.ca. T: 780.922.0713.

Diversity in ADR. | March 6, 2009. Meadowvale, ON.

The ADR Institute of Ontario presents a one-day seminar that includes a panel discussion on diversity awareness and a session on best practices. Keynote speaker: Barbara Hall, chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. E: admin@adrontario.ca. T: 416.487.4447. F: 416.487.4429.

Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion Workshop. | March 9--10, 2009. Toronto, ON.

An event that links diversity, creativity and innovation through panel discussions, workshops, personal mentoring, and networking opportunities.

More details: <http://www.innoversity.com/summit2008/>. T: 416.932.8284. E: info@innoversity.com.

Accommodating Mental Health Issues in the Workplace: Developing and Implementing a Successful Return-to-Work and Stay-at-Work Plan. | March 23, 2009. Toronto, ON.

Mental health issues in the workplace involve different considerations and strategies from other disabilities. This pre-conference workshop uses case studies and video clips of real employees.

E: lan@lancasterhouse.com. T: 416.977.6618/1.888.298.8841. F: 416.977.5873

Five Good Ideas: Board Diversity. | March 24, 2009. Toronto, ON.

As part of its lunch-and-learn program, the Maytree Foundation is presenting a session on board diversity.

Bahadur Madhani, chair of the YMCA of Greater Toronto, will present 5 practical ideas and how to put them into action. Participants are then organized into small groups and continue the discussion to generate the best and most relevant of all ideas.

Registration is FREE. A brown bag lunch will be provided on a first come, first served basis. For more information, <http://www.maytree.com/training/five-good-ideas>.

4TH Work-Life: Successful work-life programs designed to attract, retain and motivate employees. | March 25, 2009. Toronto, ON.

Sessions include The Journey to Inclusion, Building the Bottom-Line through Work-Life and Diversity Initiatives, and How Employers Should Consider The Diversity of Employees When Creating Work-Life Programs.

Register online: <http://www.federatedpress.com/pdf/WLT0903-E.pdf>. E: info@federatedpress.com.

T: 1.800.363.0722 x244/ 416.665.6868.



LOCAL DIVERSITY

Interview with Harold Usher, Councillor for City of London-Ward 12



Harold Usher is, to date, the only person in London of African-Caribbean heritage, or of the African Diaspora, elected to London City Council. He was elected in 2000 and 2003 representing Ward 6. He was again elected in 2006 representing Ward 12 (after municipal reorganization / redistribution equal to half of the previous Ward 6) winning 52% of the votes – more votes than his four opponents combined!

His election in 2000 shows his perseverance as he had run previously – unsuccessfully – in 1994 and 1997 respectively as this was his third attempt at running for council. Few people know that his election in 2000 was his third attempt at running for council, his first and second being in 1994 and 1997 respectively.

Harold (see note) was born in Belize and, with his wife Melba, has three daughters and eight grand-children.

He is a 1972 Civil Engineering graduate of Sir George Williams (currently Concordia) University, in Montreal. After graduation, he landed a job with Bell Canada where he worked in different Management and Engineering positions at various levels, in several cities, until 1996 when he left to embark on a different career in Motivational Speaking, Training and Human Resources development. He currently belongs to several organizations and sits on the Boards and Committees of organizations such as the London Transit Commission; Western Fair Association Directors; Goodwill Industries; Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford Local Training Board and The City's Community and Protective Services Committee (Chair). He is also President of London City Hall Toastmasters Club and is a former Chair of the London Diversity and Race Relations Advisory Committee.

Harold (see note) has been the recipient of numerous awards:

- in 1992 he received the “**Canada 125th Commemorative Medal**” from the Governor General
- in 2000 he received the Toastmasters International President’s Citation
- in 2008 he was a recipient of a Citizen Award presented jointly by the “Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE)” and “Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO).”

In 2008 he also published a book entitled “**PROSTATE! PROSTATE! PROSTATE! A Problem of Men** (available at www.trafford.ca/06-0700).” He was born in Belize and, with his wife Melba, has three daughters and eight grand-children.

HRPLD’s Diversity Committee asked Mr. Usher to comment on the following issues:

DC: What is your definition of diversity?

HU: As far as Canada is concerned: Diversity is the existence or presence of a variety of people with different backgrounds, culture, first language, ethnic origin, country of origin, religious affiliation, abilities, age groups, gender and orientation (sexual). It should be noted that the first Nations People are not considered in this category, as they are considered the original Canadians.

DC: What advice would you give a person from a visible minority should they decide to run for public office?

HU:

- a) Decide that is what you want
- b) Understand what you are getting into
- c) Prepare for it
- d) Find a couple of mentors
- e) Believe in yourself, the venture, the area (City, Province, Country)
- f) Care for people
- g) Learn to communicate and listen well
- h) Make voluntary contributions through organizations
- i) Network so people get to know you
- j) Know this: “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care”

DC: What challenges did you face when you came to London with your family to work as an engineer and when you decided to run for council?

HU: I came here as an employee of Bell Canada, transferred from another City – Ottawa.

When I originally came here, my biggest challenge was the conservative behaviour of the people. There was not much acceptance of newcomers, especially if you were a visible minority and more so if you were black. It took my wife almost four years before she found employment. Fortunately, my neighbours were very welcoming.

Working as an Engineer for Bell gave me a little status.

As a candidate running for City Council, getting people to join my campaign team and / or to make monetary contributions to my campaign was virtually impossible. Several people remarked to me “London was not ready for someone like me.”

DC: Do you feel that the London community has adequate resources to support people of visible minorities (diverse backgrounds)? If not, what do you feel is needed?

HU: Yes, I feel that London has adequate resources to support newcomers and visible minorities, but that doesn't mean that we can't use more. However, we still have to overcome the practice or assumption that there is no "Brightest and Best," among newcomers, visible minorities or foreign trained professionals.

There needs to be a way to help people assimilate into the community faster - particularly those with different cultures, colours and languages. We also need to educate the masses to let them realize that "newcomers are people too" and "We are Canadians too."

DC: What do you think HR professionals need to be mindful of when working with people from a minority demographic?

HU: First, know and understand the statistical demographics, what they mean and why they are what they are. Then, become part of the solution by embracing the demographics and their challenges and allow the solutions to unfold, recognizing simultaneously that within these groups are some of the 'brightest and the best,' as well as many who are highly qualified and can make valuable contributions to your organizations and the community.

Know that many newcomers coming to Canada are very well trained, educated and responsible as well as have high ethics and integrity. Surely those are worth something. Many of them are well traveled, so if given the chance they can fit in, assimilate and make major contribution to our local and global economy.

Don't judge any of them negatively by their colour, accent or country of origin. Remember you are dealing with a significant market here – 16.7% of the population of London being visible minority and they purchase goods and services equally as other who been here before them.

DC: In the November 11, 2005 issue of the London Free Press you were quoted: "I think we need to have a mixture (of socio-economic groups) in each ward so we can embrace each other. I am delighted to have a smaller area to campaign." (www.lfpress.com, December 30, 2008)... Have you seen a change in your Ward?

HU: At the time I made that statement, some people were advocating the formation of Wards according to areas of interests, economic status and cultures. My response was your quotation.

Within my Ward 12, there are a variety of people of different cultures, ethnicity, countries of origin, creeds, economic status, and so on. I wanted to represent all those folks, not just some. The ward is still the same. The people choose to live there because they have easy access to everything at reasonable prices – shopping, worship, schools, recreation, health facilities, reasonable priced homes, safety and many other amenities, including close proximity to the highways and to downtown London. They are the happiest people I have ever encountered, and the variation is enormous. This is richness.

DC: What is the most benefit to be gained by employing someone from a visible minority? - both to the employer and to the employee?

HU: You are being futuristic. When you hire a visible minority you offer them hope, dignity and a quality of life which is deserving of all residents. You are recognizing and embracing the global nature of our economy. You are guaranteeing for yourself a piece of the domestic market shares that 16.7% of the population of this city contribute to.

When your work place and workforce is a representation of the demographics of our community, you can expect to get a share of that market, to gain many things in terms of the knowledge, ability assets, ethics, culture and network that these folks can bring to your business. You can expect quality service with integrity.

By hiring visible minorities, you help them to maintain their dignity and respect and make them a viable contributor to society. You allow them to raise their kids in a decent and respectable manner and you gain scarce resources and qualifications many of these individuals are equipped with, that are not always available in Canada. It provides richness to your workforce and workplace that contributes to valuable growth to all your employees and thus positively affects the community. These individuals show responsibility and open mindedness that translates into balance for your organizations.

Hiring people from the visible minority community says to others that you are keeping up with the times. You understand that there is only one race – the human race. You are saying – I believe in YOU.

“I feel that we live in an era when we have to recognize that all people are the same. That we all belong to the human race and that colour and culture should not be considered an advantage or deterrent when making a contribution in the workplace or the community.”

Harold Usher