

## **‘Citizen of the World’ Exhibit Celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

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Did you know that the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was written by a Canadian? Born in Hampton, New Brunswick, John Peters Humphrey, a professor of Law at McGill University from 1937-1946, and 1966-1971, was asked by Eleanor Roosevelt in 1946 to prepare a draft of the Declaration.

To celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948, Simon Fraser University (SFU), SGI-Canada (Soka Gakkai International), and the UN Association of Canada (Vancouver Region), will present the exhibition, “**Citizen of the World: John Humphrey and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**,” which opens to the public on October 18, 1999, at Library Square in the Main Branch of the Vancouver Public Library (at Georgia and Hamilton). *Perspectives* is a Supporter of the event.

The exhibition celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration with a profile of John Humphrey, and showcases a collection of original, handwritten, and typed, Declaration first drafts dating back to 1947, as well as personal papers, photographs and other documents.

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was hailed by Eleanor Roosevelt as the ‘Magna Carta of Mankind’ and described by Amnesty International as one of the greatest documents that has ever existed,” explains Shirley Farlinger, President of the Toronto Region of the UN Association of Canada. “As author of the first draft, there is no question that John Humphrey is a Canadian hero. His ideas and writings changed the world.”

Professor Humphrey wrote the first draft of the Declaration in 1947, a year after he became Director of the Division of Human Rights at the United Nations. A year later, on December 10, 1948, after much debate, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly. Professor Humphrey was Director of the Division of Human Rights at the UN for twenty years, advancing the cause of human rights around the world. In 1963, he suggested the UN create a High Commissioner for Human Rights, a position that became a reality thirty years later in 1993.

During his later years, Professor Humphrey traveled the world in support of human rights. He was a founding member of the National Section of Amnesty International Canada, and was its first president in 1973. He was also one of the founders of the Canadian Human Rights Foundation, a member of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, a member of the Board of Directors of the International League of the Rights of Man, President of the World Conference on Religion and Peace/Canada, and an Honourary Member of the War Amputees of Canada.

John Peters Humphrey was born in 1905, and faced many personal tragedies early on in his life. At age 6 he lost his left arm, and before turning 11, he had lost both his parents. He died in 1995.

The exhibition is produced by McGill University Archives and is curated by Johanne Pelletier (Director, McGill University Archives) in collaboration with Gerry Grace (National Arts Centre, Ottawa), John Hobbins (literary executor of the Humphrey papers), and Dr. Margaret Kunstler Humphrey. The McGill University Archives is the repository for the Humphrey papers ([www.archives.mcgill.ca](http://www.archives.mcgill.ca))

The exhibit runs at the downtown branch of the Vancouver Public Library until October 30, 1999, and continues throughout November in the SFU Main Library at the Burnaby Mountain campus. For more information, contact the “Citizen of the World” Project Committee by calling 519-6443.