

OWATONNA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



SPRING 2020 NEWSLETTER

Respect, Reflect, Include, Invite, Value

Galab wanaagsan! Side tahay? (Good afternoon, how are you?):

Greeting someone in their own native language is a way to instantly break down pre-conceived barriers. Anyone who has traveled to a non-English speaking country can relate. One of the goals of this Newsletter is to share stories of families who have overcome obstacles – often in the face of racism. Sharing insights and experiences is not to generate sympathy but to gain knowledge and compassion. There are many stories to be told – the time is now for Owatonna to embrace diversity and to see all the positive effects diversity has and continues to have in the community.

What is the Owatonna Human Rights Commission? - The Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) is a seven-member advisory commission to the City Council whose mission is to promote cultural diversity by educating the community on issues of discrimination and advising the City Council on Human Rights issues. The commission was formed by the Owatonna City Council in 2000 to, in cooperation with the MN State Department of Human Rights, to secure for all people in Owatonna an equal opportunity in housing, employment, public accommodations, public services, and education, and to work consistently to improve the human relations climate in Owatonna.

What can we do for you? The Owatonna Human Rights Commission can (1) help celebrate and educate all Owatonna residents on the rich diversity within Steele County, (2) support the Owatonna Schools human rights/diversity programs for our youth and educators, and (3) refer, assist and report any incident of discrimination or harassment in Owatonna.

What we have done? 2019 was a busy year for us. Our activities included cosponsoring the “Better Together” presentations for discussion on creating an inclusive community, sponsoring a presentation on “Building a Community of Dignity and Respect” in collaboration with the Steele County Historical Society, attendance at the “Courageous Community Leaders” training hosted by the Owatonna School District, sponsoring the Martin Luther King Breakfast at the Plaza Morena Campestre Grill and holding two open forums for community comments regarding a disturbance which occurred at the Owatonna High School.

Owatonna Human Rights Commission Mission Statement:

Promoting cultural diversity by educating the community on issues of discrimination and advising the city council on human rights issues.

Helpful Contacts:

Owatonna Human Rights Commission: 507-774-7341 OR
HRC@ci.owatonna.mn.us

Minnesota Department of Human Rights: 651-296-5663
<https://mn.gov/mdhr/intake/discrimination-helpline.jsp>

Owatonna Police Department:
507-451-8232

The Commission meets the second Tuesday of the month at 5:30PM in the 2nd floor meeting room of the City Administration Building, 540 West Hills Circle, Owatonna, MN 55060

Featured stories:

http://www.southernminningirlfriends.com/pdf/feature/Refugees-Helping-Refugees_compressed.pdf

<https://www.startribune.com/minnesota-s-austin-high-school-has-a-melting-pot-athletics-program/567798502/>

Lest we, as human beings, have forgotten, here are words to remember as a reminder – from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 1: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

Article 3: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.