

Fair Comment

The quarterly e-newsletter of MCIC's Fair Trade Manitoba Program > Fall 2009



Welcome to the first edition of MCIC's Fair Trade Manitoba quarterly e-newsletter. This publication features the latest information about our initiatives, ongoing promotional campaigns and fair trade news from Manitoba and around the world.

Fair Trade Manitoba - a program of the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC) - works with retailers, consumers and organizations to inform people about the benefits of fair trade and encourage its wider availability in the province. To find out more about Fair Trade Manitoba, and fair trade issues in general, visit www.fairtrademanitoba.ca. You can also reach it through MCIC's website at www.mcic.ca.

This inaugural issue of Fair Comment features information on Fair Trade Manitoba's recent initiatives - which include assisting Gimli, Manitoba in becoming a Fair Trade Town - as well as campaigns such as Reverse Trick-or-Treating. You'll find information on where to shop for fair trade holiday gifts and discover how ethical consumerism is being employed in other parts of the world.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. We hope you'll take action as a Global Citizen and join us in supporting and promoting fair trade in your community and throughout Manitoba.

Please feel free to contact us at (204) 987 6420 or fairtrade@mcic.ca for more information.

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We have a responsibility as business owners to be as ethically & socially responsible as we can. Selling and supporting fair trade is one of the cornerstones in the foundation towards building real sustainable communities and economies. - Derryl Reid, Green Bean Coffee Imports

Visit us at www.fairtrademanitoba.ca to access

- A Fair Trade Shopping Guide for Manitoba
- Information on fair trade and its benefits
- Resources for bringing fair trade issues to the classroom
- Details on upcoming fair trade events
- The latest international news on fair trade
- A video on fair trade in Manitoba

Manitoba's First Fair Trade Town

Gimli has been officially recognized as Manitoba's first Fair Trade Town.

The town's fair trade status came through on Canada Day, July 2, 2009. Hon. Peter Bjornson, Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth was present at the New Iceland Heritage Museum to officially declare Gimli a Fair Trade Town.

TransFair Canada, the national fair trade certification organization, bases its recognition of Fair Trade Towns on several criteria. To be considered fair trade, towns must have a resolution passed by the local political authority, contain stores and cafes that serve and sell fair trade products, as well as establish a local fair trade committee, among other things.

Gimli is only the sixth Fair Trade Town in Canada and the first in the prairies.



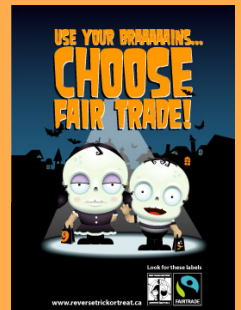
For more information on becoming a Fair Trade Town visit www.transfair.ca or contact MCIC at (204) 987 6420 or fairtrade@mcic.ca. The Fair Trade Town designation has helped towns attract tourists, enhance retail business and promote a sense of social and environmental justice in the community. It helps towns 'do well' by 'doing good'.

Reverse Trick-or-Treating

On October 31, those giving out candy could get a little something in return. To raise awareness on the benefits of fair trade, hundreds of Manitobans are going door to door this Halloween to distribute information and samples of fair trade chocolate.

Reverse Trick-or-Treating is a national campaign run by TransFair Canada. The Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC) is coordinating this initiative provincially through its Fair Trade Manitoba program by providing information and resources to local groups who are committed to raising awareness about fair trade. On Halloween night, these groups will distribute postcards that explain fair trade, as well as fair trade mini chocolate bars to houses in their respective neighbourhoods. Young trick-or-treaters, as well as parent escorts, university students and community groups will participate. MCIC expects that nearly 3000 postcards and chocolates will be given out in Manitoba. Nationally, 25,000 will be distributed.

Let us know if you'd like to participate next year. Contact MCIC at (204) 987 6420 or fairtrade@mcic.ca.



Credit Goes to ACU

Assiniboine Credit Union has been a strong supporter of MCIC's Fair Trade Manitoba program and especially our Fair Trade One-Month Challenge. They have not only provided financial support, but also promotional support of our fair trade activities through ACU's web site, at their branches and at our events. We also appreciate the expertise and advice of ACU personnel as MCIC/FTM works with the community development and small business communities on these important economic and social issues. Thanks!

I eat and teach others about fair trade products because every person in this world deserves the right to earn a living wage and live in a sustainable community that includes access to schools and health care - Cheryl Crowe, Assiniboine Credit Union

News from Away

Cadbury Takes Action

By Zack Gross

Featured in The Brandon Sun on August 29, 2009

Cadbury, Canada's largest confectionery company, will make one of its most successful chocolate bar brands, Cadbury Dairy Milk, available as certified fair trade in this country by the summer of 2010. Twenty-two million dairy milk bars are sold annually in Canada. Thus, their going fair trade will double the number of fair trade chocolate bars sold each year across the country and will also mean that 11% of the chocolate sold by Cadbury in Canada will be fair trade. This announcement was made in Toronto in late August, and simultaneously for Australia and New Zealand. Back in March of this year, Cadbury made a similar announcement regarding its sales in Great Britain and Ireland, and went fair trade there in July, 2009.



"Fair trade is designed to improve the lives of cocoa farmers in Ghana, West Africa by guaranteeing fair payment for their crop, and also paying an additional social premium fee that goes to community improvements. Canadians will have the opportunity to be catalysts of change by purchasing Fair Trade Certified Dairy Milk chocolate, knowing it will improve the lives of 40,000 farmers", stated the Manager for Cadbury Canada. He pointed out that his company has transferred almost a million dollars in social premium to Ghana through the British fair trade process.

A spokesperson for a cocoa production cooperative in Ghana responded, saying that these funds will go toward the construction of fourteen community health and agricultural extension projects in the coming year. TransFair Canada, our national Fair Trade Certification body, will monitor the process and ensure that regulations are followed, "ensuring a guaranteed income and hope for a prosperous future for 40,000 cocoa farmers and 6,000 sugar farmers". All of this is part of the Cadbury Cocoa Partnership, a global initiative supported by the United Nations Development Program that not only offers a better economic deal for producers, but also works to improve crop yields and expand biodiversity. Already, 850 wells have been dug, libraries and schools are being built, and the company will send 5,000 bicycles to Ghana, to improve transportation and access to schools.

Ghana is one of the six largest cocoa producing countries in the world, with Ivory Coast leading the way with 43% of the world's cocoa, and Ghana second at 32%. Forty percent of Ghana's export revenue comes from cocoa and two million of its farmers are involved in cocoa production. However, in West Africa, research done by a number of government, UN and agricultural organizations has shown that almost 300,000 children are performing hazardous labour on cocoa plantations, such as using machetes to cut down and slice open cocoa pods and applying pesticides without any protective equipment. Many of these kids work on family farms and they and their families are victims of extreme poverty. Others are clearly victims of child trafficking, having been marched to the cocoa plantations from as far away as neighbouring countries in slave labour situations, working twelve hours per day,

seven days per week, getting no pay or schooling. Two-thirds of these workers are under age fourteen.

One cause of child labour on cocoa plantations is the low return to producers. A West African family makes \$30 to \$100 annually in the trade, insufficient to meet their needs. One village chief complained to inspectors that their income was not enough for the village to pump in clean water, resulting in rampant disease from drinking dirty river water. Even when cocoa prices rise, villages must sell through exploitive middlemen who take half the revenue. With the recent world economic downturn, producers have had even less money to pay workers, so they are forced to exploit family members, and they have no money for agricultural inputs, so yields drop as well.

The multi-billion dollar global chocolate industry has not, until now, shown much interest in reforming as a corporate citizen. Advocacy organizations have tried to pressure companies such as Hershey's and World's Finest through letter writing campaigns and by promoting fair trade alternatives. Cadbury's announcement has been met with excitement. The paradigm shift to fair trade in a variety of products continues!

Fair Trade Wines Bring Human Rights to Producers

By Zack Gross

Originally published in The Brandon Sun
July 25, 2009

There is no longer any reason to whine! Manitoba has become a leader in bringing in ten fair trade certified wines to its Liquor Marts around the province, sourced from Chile, South Africa and Argentina. Available at your local wine outlet now are six wines from Fairhills (two each from South Africa, Chile and Argentina), two from Wandering Grape (one each from South Africa and Argentina), and two from Winds of Change from South Africa. Representatives from distributing companies report growing interest and brisk sales. The Winnipeg Wine Festival included a busy booth on fair trade wines last spring.

A recent poll by Probe Research of 1000 Manitobans indicated that more than half our province's citizens can define the term "fair trade", and that two-thirds of us are interested in purchasing fair trade products if they are clearly identifiable in stores and restaurants. In the vineyards of fair trade producers, there



is no child labour, many operations are organized as co-operatives or with union labour, salaries and safety measures are supportive of workers' rights, and a "Fair Trade Premium" is used to improve the daily lives of wine-growing communities through educational or primary health initiatives.

One of the great abuses of the wine industry in South Africa, since the 1600s, has been the Dop System, wherein part of the workers' wages was paid in free cups of wine, laying the foundation for centuries of alcoholism and, therefore, many health and social problems. Even after the practice was officially outlawed in 1961, it continued for another generation.

Fair Trade Certification guarantees that this is not the case. While demand for "New World" wine has grown exponentially in recent years, certification has stood against allowing the pressure of demand to outweigh the ethical need for fair wages, safe conditions and community economic development programs.

Wine growing in South Africa has also taken on the dimension, in fair trade, of supporting the empowerment of black entrepreneurship in the post-Apartheid era. In Argentina and Chile, small family farms cultivating wine grapes have been susceptible to low market prices and haven't been able to generate enough income to meet their families' basic needs. This has meant that poor farmers haven't been able to improve their methods or technology, and often meant that they ultimately have lost control of their land to large business competitors. Whether in the wine industry, or for other commodities such as nuts, flowers or spices, "fair trade" is an option that will hopefully improve livelihoods for the poor.

Gift shopping for the upcoming "consumer season"? Consider these and other web sites that feature global, green and ethical products!

For fair trade shopping locations in Manitoba, visit www.fairtrademanitoba.ca and access a detailed fair trade shopping guide. You can also visit the sites below for some unique gift ideas.

www.lonelydinosaur.com - Fun fair trade organic t-shirts from Portland, Oregon.

www.shop.newint.org - Books, cards, calendars, games, etc. from New Internationalist magazine.

www.ethiquette.ca - Fair trade and environmental clothing, lunch bags and stationery from Quebec.

www.birdsandbeans.ca - Get shade grown, bird friendly coffee delivered to your door monthly.

www.greenbeancoffeeimports.ca - Manitoba's only fair trade certified coffee roaster.

www.justshirts.ca - Clothing from a single mother's sewing cooperative in El Salvador.

www.northernsun.com - T-shirts, posters, buttons, bumperstickers and more from Minneapolis.



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