



Growing Humanism, a secular, rational and compassionate worldview through education, connection and community involvement in Toronto

## What's next?

### THE FORUM

Discussion from a Humanist perspective

DECEMBER

**9**

Saturday

**Ayaan Hirsi Ali  
Becomes a Christian?**

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

[Learn more](#)

DECEMBER

**16**

Saturday

**Materialism - Its  
Impacts on Our World**

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

[Learn more](#)

### BEYOND BELIEVING

Humanists' support transitioning from religion  
to secular, fulfilling lives

DECEMBER

**11**

Monday

**Beyond Believing**

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

[Learn more](#)

JANUARY

**8**

Monday

**Beyond Believing**

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

[Learn more](#)

### HAT CHAT

Touch base with members and non-members

DECEMBER

**13**

Wednesday

**Hat Chat**

6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

[Learn more](#)

DECEMBER

**20**

Wednesday

**Hat Chat**

6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

[Learn more](#)

### SOCIAL GATHERINGS & SPECIAL DAYS

Days to Celebrate Humanism and ourselves

DECEMBER

**10**

Friday

**Human Rights Day**

6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

[Learn more](#)

DECEMBER

**17**

Sunday

**HumanLight Festivos  
Party**

1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

[Learn more](#)

NEXT COPY DEADLINE  
**21 DECEMBER 2023**

## A word from the editor

Hello everyone, I'm Sarah, and I'm excited to join you as the new editor of our newsletter. This is my first issue at the helm!

You might wonder why it's taken a bit of time to get this issue out (nearly a whole year in fact). Well, I've recently been diagnosed with ADHD, a discovery that's been enlightening at 28! It's a common yet often overlooked condition in adults, especially women, and I'm looking forward to beginning therapy and medication to help manage it.

While this newsletter isn't specifically about ADHD, I believe in sharing knowledge. So, I've included a couple of links about ADHD and procrastination, which might be insightful or helpful:

[What is ADHD](#)

[ADHD and procrastination](#)

As humanists, our core values include empathy and understanding, not just for others but also for ourselves. Recognizing our challenges and supporting each other through them is part of what makes our community strong.

Thank you all for your patience and a big shoutout to Richard for his unwavering support and my spouse for their proofreading. Here's to our shared journey of curiosity, knowledge, and humanist ideals!

## Steering Committee

The HAT Steering Committee meets monthly to conduct the business of the association. Members are welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings.

Coordinator [HatCoord@gmail.com](mailto:HatCoord@gmail.com)

Treasurer [HatTreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:HatTreasurer@gmail.com)

Program Coordinator [HatProgram@gmail.com](mailto:HatProgram@gmail.com)

Newsletter Editor [HatWebAdmin@gmail.com](mailto:HatWebAdmin@gmail.com)



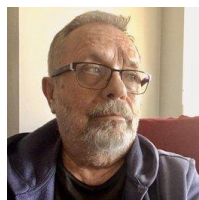
**Coordinator  
and  
Treasurer**  
Richard  
Dowsett



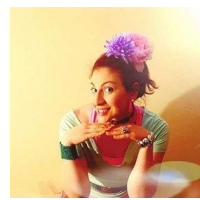
**Spokesperson**  
Catherine  
Francis



**Webadmin &  
Newsletter  
Editor**  
Sarah  
Coudert



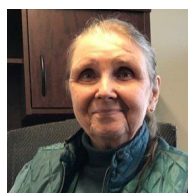
**Public  
Relations**  
Glen Erikson



**Program  
Coordinator**  
Ryn Loewe



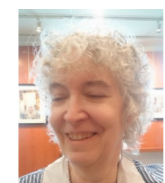
**Membership**  
Michelle  
Edmunds



**Member at  
Large**  
Tanya Long



**Member at  
Large**  
Janet Rudd



**Member at  
Large**  
Cornelia  
Laven

## Recents motions

- HAT will team up with Humanist Canada and the Ontario Humanist Society to march in the 2024 Pride Toronto Parade
- The next big HAT social gathering will be December 17 with a HumanLight Festivus Party.
- Contact [HATCoord@gmail.com](mailto:HATCoord@gmail.com) if you want to get involved in either of these initiatives!

# HAT becomes Humanists International Associate!

By **Richard Dowsett**

On July 13, 2023, The Humanist Association of Toronto became an Associate member of **Humanists International (HI)**, the preeminent body of world Humanism. This concluded an application process that began in January 2023 with a membership request and form, continued through an online interview conducted by HI's Membership Development Officer, Javan Lev Poblador, a vetting process internal to HI and the publication of HAT's intention to join to all existing HI members and associates with a request for comment, and culminated in a resounding YES vote by delegates to the 2023 General Assembly in Copenhagen this past August.

HAT is happy to be part of the **World Humanist Family** that HI coordinates and connects. We received a sneak peek into all things Internationally Humanist when HI CEO **Gary McLelland** spoke to [HAT live from Glasgow, UK on May 20th](#).

HAT looks forward to participating in and adopting various HI initiatives:

- Growing Humanism in countries overgrown with religious intolerance or where the hard soil of the rejection of universally respected human rights predominates
- Defending the conscience rights of individual Humanists worldwide
- Shining a strong light into dark places with the globally respected Freedom of Thought report

## Humanist Ceremonies

Are you planning a wedding, a funeral, a coming-of-age or naming ceremony for a child?

Here are some licensed humanist officiants we trust to create meaningful life-passage ceremonies that'll fit with your values, beliefs and traditions.

**Kerry Bowser - GTA**  
416-807-3094  
[kerry@kerrybowser.com](mailto:kerry@kerrybowser.com)

**Mary Anne Farah - Oakville, Toronto**  
289-837-0303 (L)  
416-419-2167 (cell)  
[maryanne@humanistceremonies.ca](mailto:maryanne@humanistceremonies.ca)  
[humanistceremonies.ca](http://humanistceremonies.ca)

**Janet Rudd - Toronto**  
647-866-4494  
[janetontarioceremonies.com](http://janetontarioceremonies.com)  
[janetontarioceremonies@gmail.com](mailto:janetontarioceremonies@gmail.com)

**Mary Beaty - Toronto**  
[marybeaty@gmail.com](mailto:marybeaty@gmail.com)  
[weddingsoftoronto.com](http://weddingsoftoronto.com)

**Julia Bailey - Large GTA**  
416-904-7783  
[officiant@thecelebrant.ca](mailto:officiant@thecelebrant.ca)  
[thecelebrant.ca](http://thecelebrant.ca)

**Sarah Boyer Messenger - Toronto**  
416-731-1958  
[sarah@sarahmonies.ca](mailto:sarah@sarahmonies.ca)  
[Sarahmonies.ca](http://Sarahmonies.ca)

**Mei Cheung - Oakville**  
905-616-8395  
[info@youroccasions.ca](mailto:info@youroccasions.ca)  
[youroccasions.ca](http://youroccasions.ca)

**Martin Frith - Toronto**  
416-362-1141  
[info@ceremonieswithchoice.ca](mailto:info@ceremonieswithchoice.ca)  
[ceremonieswithchoice.ca](http://ceremonieswithchoice.ca)

# Milestones

- We are sad to report the passing of **John Allan Jackson (1957-2023)**, a member of the Humanist Community. John led the Halton-Peel Humanist Community as President for a number of years until 2015. His obituary is [available here](#). We offer our condolences to his family and friends.

- We are also really sad to report the passing of **Melanie Milanich (1945-2023)**. Here is a remembrance and eulogy kindly written by our dear member Moses Klein:

Melanie Milanich was one of the friends I got to know soon after I returned to Toronto in 2005 and got involved with HAT. She was especially active during HAT's ill-fated experiment with a physical home; during the 2006-7 year, she coordinated volunteer programming at the Secular Freethought Centre. I saw her most often then, collaborating on a jigsaw puzzle, or listening to a talk she had arranged as part of her "hobbies and interests" series. After that arrangement fell through, she began coming to HAT events less frequently, although she remained a part of the organization.

Melanie was very sensitive to what she perceived as conflict. She therefore began opening up to fewer and fewer people. It is unfortunate, because she showed a strong need for personal interaction, and was at risk of severe loneliness. So she became very deliberate about a small group of friends she trusted. In 2011 she began inviting a few of her chosen inner circle for monthly potlucks.

Through those I got to know the connections from other aspects of her life. She had a strong sense of place, which expressed itself as an interest in all things local – both the local history and the flora and fauna of the Toronto area, but

especially of the old East York neighbourhoods where she made her home. She used to volunteer at Mackenzie House, write articles for the East York Historical Society newsletter, and lead nature walks in the parks and ravines of East York. In 2012 she received an Arbor Award for volunteer service to the U of T community, in recognition of her work introducing international students to their new home through these nature walks.

But if Melanie was always firmly rooted in her local setting, she also showed a global consciousness. She was involved in organizations such as the World Federalists and Amnesty International with a global focus. Her environmentalism was manifest as a concern about the future of the world as much as an appreciation of the beauty of her natural surroundings. She lived her conscience as well as anyone: I never knew anyone as careful to keep her environmental footprint small. Melanie never adjusted to the digital world. She never had a home computer, using the library for email while she was still able to get out a lot.

She always much preferred the personal character of handwritten communications. After she moved to a smaller place and stopped hosting her potlucks, she began sending me, and a few others of her close friends, frequent letters, always with a handwritten note and stuffed full of clippings from her many periodicals and newsletters that she thought would interest us. They arrived faster than I could read them. During the pandemic, she often asked me to run errands for her. Among other things, she would send me a cheque and ask me to buy her some stamps. After I sent her a book of stamps, they'd start coming back to me one at a time on her too-frequent stuffed envelopes.

It was only this past summer when, after being hospitalized from a fall, she learned that the

breast cancer she had been treated for a few years ago had metastasized to her brain, and that she could not survive it. She spent her final months in palliative care at Michael Garron Hospital. She kept telling me, on my regular visits, that she was ready to go, but that her greatest concern about the timing was that she may not be able to experience the fall colours one last time. She was always happiest when surrounded by nature. She appreciated it when, on one of my visits, I brought a bag of fallen leaves harvested from the neighbourhood parks.

It is unfortunate that she insulated herself socially as much as she did, because I believe people who knew her valued her and cared about her more than she realized. When she was first hospitalized she asked me not to announce it except to her designated shortlist of friends – she did not want to be inundated by well-wishers. I respected her choice, although I often thought it would have done her well to hear from more people what she meant to them.

“Melanie cared so much about the state of our world and supported many important environmental and social justice causes. She asked for so little and often expressed gratitude for the simple pleasures in her life. She will be missed.” – **Janet Rudd**

“Melanie was a wonderful, caring person. I believe she had great integrity and tried harder than most to live a life in tune with her values.” – **Richard Dowsett**

“She made many contributions to the betterment of society and helped others.” – **Ronny Yarron**

# Hats Off to Creativity

I don't write poetry anymore by Elka Enola

I don't write poetry anymore

Poetry needs words

All I have are tears

Tears  
for democracies    shrivelling in agony

Tears  
for weather    strangled by climate neglect

Tears  
for the futility    of future plans

Tears  
for generations    cursed by greed

Tears  
for the suffocation    of security

Tears  
for the loss    of sanity

Tears  
for a world    under a blanket of madness

I cry a lot  
But I don't write poetry anymore

# Democracy in Action!

Canada will likely be having a **federal election** in **2024** and it is time again to become informed on our choices. Various polls and public opinions suggest that there may be significant changes coming to our political map.

Already, the airwaves are being inundated with emotional appeals and promises being made by our politicians.

How can we raise our understanding of real issues that would fit with our humanist worldview? At this point, the political parties and the leaders have offered very little information on specific platform ideas. But when they do, HAT plans to critique these platforms fairly, without bias and from a **HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE**.

If you are politically interested, aware and able to provide thoughtful analysis as part of a Team of like-minded Humanists, we would like to hear from **YOU!**

Please contact our project leader Glen Erikson c/o [HATCoord@gmail.com](mailto:HATCoord@gmail.com)

## You can be part of this newsletter too!

Send us your submission before the next copy deadline to have a chance to be included in this newsletter.

Note that we may modify what you send to us, for readability or because of our limited space.

### Mail Submissions and Advertising

HAT EDITOR  
Humanist Association of Toronto  
Box 68559, 360A Bloor St West

Toronto, Ontario M5S 1X1  
**Email Submissions**  
[HATCoord@gmail.com](mailto:HATCoord@gmail.com)  
[HatWebAdmin@gmail.com](mailto:HatWebAdmin@gmail.com)

# HAT Hall of Fame Inductee

## Elka Enola

HAT Coordinator and Membership Secretary

### 1. Tell us about your background

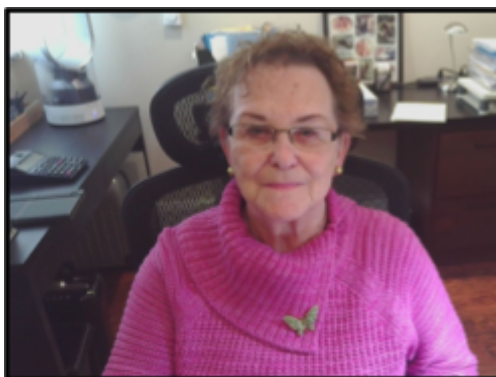
In 1941, in Montreal, I was born into an immigrant Jewish home of extreme poverty. I remember, while still a preschooler, wondering about things, especially 'people things' like why all the women were at home. I asked many 'why' questions to which I either received absurd answers or was told not to ask such questions. So, at an early age I learned that adults knew little, were not to be trusted, and that I was on my own on my quest for 'the truth'...about anything.

Home life was very unhappy, so at age 14, I decided to leave home, get a job, rent a room and finish high school at night. The search for knowledge and truth has been central to my life as long as I can remember.

From 1959 onwards, I taught in the daytime and attended university at night.

In 1962, I moved to London, England, which was the international centre of socio-political activity. Upon my return to Montreal in 1964, I resumed my university studies. When four of my professors learned that I was homeless and could not afford any textbooks, they came to my rescue, arranging grants, bursaries and a bank loan so that I could complete my studies in a much more comfortable manner.

I have never forgotten those early hardships nor the people who, unasked, provided essential support.



Those times form the filter through which I evaluate the world. I define myself as a Social Activist and Poet, both being ways in which I serve my community. Throughout my life, both academically and informally, I turned to philosophy to provide a scaffolding for my thoughts.

I also started and ran three successful businesses, so my world view is from quite diverse experience.

In my travel to over 100 countries, I was fortunate to spend time moving freely among societies gaining insights which have been invaluable in my understanding of world politics and of the acquisition and wielding of political and economic power.

I lived in London, England from 1962-1964, returned to Montreal and in 1970 moved to Ontario. Although adamantly opposed to the institution of marriage, I was married twice, each time compelled to do so by the laws of the land; federal the first time and provincial the second.

I am passionate about the arts and, while I write poetry seriously, I dabbled in painting just for the pure joy of it. I love music (everything except rap and its ilk) and bemoan my inability to create music either vocally or via instrumentation.

## **2. How did you become a secular humanist?**

If I were to say, "I was born that way," it would not be far off the mark. I most definitely was a secular humanist long before I knew either word.

My family were very observant Jews so there was an overabundance of stupidities to question, and for which there was either no answer or unbelievably ridiculous responses. That made me an early atheist.

However, my Humanist values and empathy are a direct result of my immersion in Jewish culture and values.

## **3. When did you become involved with HAT and what roles did you play?**

I became involved with Humanism in the late 1950s when I ran the Sunday school for children whose parents were attending Humanist meetings upstairs at Henry Morgentaler's home in Montreal. After moving to Ontario, I joined HAT and later, in Oakville, started a humanist group which has since evolved into The Halton-Peel Humanist Community.

I served as HAT Coordinator and Membership Chair, edited the newsletter, helped organize special speaker events, helped run the Forum, and regularly contributed both poems and articles to the newsletter.

## **4. Are there accomplishments at HAT you are especially proud of?**

Presenting the Humanist of the Year Award to June Callwood had a lasting impression on me because I respected her so much. Watching her interacting with residents and staff was a wondrous example of Humanism in action.

The highlight for me was my significant contribution, while Coordinator, to the prevention of Sharia Law being established as part of the official Ontario legal system.

## **5. What does HAT mean to you?**

First and foremost, HAT is Community. Human community. HAT is a haven for those dealing with religious oppression, confusion and fear.

It is a place where truth and ethics are examined through a secular lens, with the understanding that neither is an absolute. Contemporary Western philosophy considers all ideas contextually. Although it has never been specifically said at HAT, all discussions assume a continuum of values and as such, often conclude that a situation holds only under particular circumstances.

That is very different from both religion and society as a whole where almost all values are Cartesian and are viewed dually. Either / Or. Right or Wrong. No conditionals.

Although HAT succeeds magnificently in providing a community of truth searchers, and although we are improving in providing social hugs, we have a long way to go to even begin matching the kind of practical and material support religious group provide to members in need.

The Forum is still centrally important to me so my Saturdays are organized around that. And now, with Zoom, we are international. What an enrichment HAT is to my life!

## **6. What are your current interests?**

Throughout my life, my interest in the arts as a participant and as an observer haven't changed. Neither has my interest in politics, sociology, philosophy, food, human rights and the human condition. What has changed is the way I am now able to participate.

Covid-19 which is now (2023) in its most transmissible form, prevents me from all in-person group activities, like concerts, theatre, travel, museums, art galleries and restaurant



dining. However, In the 40 years prior to Covid-19, I had an overabundance of travel, fine dining, museums, art galleries, concerts and theatre. In those years, unfortunately, my intellectual needs were undernourished.

With Covid came ZOOM. Now, though I don't go to theatres or concert halls, I have almost all the streaming services so I have a wealth of cultural choices, e.g, a full live season of the outstanding Berliner Philharmonic.

Likewise I have an abundance of international intellectual stimulation, most notably Philosophy. There are also many Mensa activities which are now online and bring international minds together.

I am the President of the Oakville Literary Alliance which offers the monthly Literary Café via ZOOM.

What used to be a very Oakville centric organization is now available worldwide. I have resumed both writing and sharing poetry, which became impossible during the years of caregiving for my husband, Ernie.

I have also resumed philosophical, sociological, economics and political presentations which I now share internationally via Zoom. I continue my social-political activism, regrettably, not in-person, but like other activities, Zoom has opened international avenues.

Another Zoom advantage is that where I would have had to choose one event a day, I can now attend three a day, no matter the weather or location. One thing is certain, I never was and never will be: bored.

## Want more?

Every HAT Hall of Fame is available [on our website!](#)



## Put our Thinking Cap

**“What's in Your Genome?:**

90% of Your Genome Is Junk” by **Laurence A.**

**Moran.**

[U of T Press article](#)

In his book, Laurence Moran, a fellow humanist and an active member of the [HPHC](#), argues that our knowledge of genomics points to the fact that 90% of the human genome is useless junk.

This idea is not new, but it has become unfashionable in the last 20 years, without good evidence, the author argues. Most of our genome is still junk, and a central argument is that many other species don't need that much DNA, or have much more without any “good” reason like the organism's complexity.

Indeed, the complexity and “beauty” of the human genome and its supposedly perfection are arguments often used by believers and/or creationists. However, when taking a closer look, it turns out neither evolution nor our genomes are “perfect” or “flawless”. We are products of this imperfect - yet successful - process called “the evolution”, and we are only an animal species among others. After all, it's not “survival of the best” but of “the fittest”, which makes a huge difference!



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

New Member

Renewal Member

If new member: What influenced you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Please print. If this is a 'Household' membership, please include all member names

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: We will only use your contact information for HAT-related communication.

**Please circle the appropriate amount(s)**

Membership HAT membership Cost	Amount
Individual	\$30
Student/Limited Resources	\$10
Household	\$40
Limited Income Household	\$15
Life Member	\$200
Donation	
<b>TOTAL</b>	

**Please pay in one of three ways:**

- By cheque payable to: Humanist Association of Toronto and mailed to:

**PO Box 68559, 360A Bloor St. W., Toronto, ON M5S 1X1**

- By Interac Email Transfer via your online bank.

Please send payment to the [HatTreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:HatTreasurer@gmail.com) with a one word answer in lowercase answered question

- By Stripe online at [www.humanisttoronto.ca/join-hat/](http://www.humanisttoronto.ca/join-hat/)

❖ May we exchange your name and address with like-minded organizations?  Yes  No

HAT issues official Receipts for all Donations or Contributions.

We welcome your membership and hope to see you at our meetings and events!

Thank you ♥