



2023-2024 Annual Report





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Recognizing our Origins



The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (“the Commission”) respectfully acknowledges that it operates in Mi’kma’ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the L’nu’k (Mi’kmaq), the Indigenous people of Mi’kma’ki. As an unceded territory, the Mi’kmaq have legal and rightful ownership of lands and sovereignty as a Nation. This territory is covered by the treaties of peace and friendship signed by the Mi’kmaq and the British Crown between 1725 and 1779. L’nu’k have made this land their home from time immemorial and they are its past, present and future caretakers.

Despite this, the pursuit of colonialism resulted in stolen lands, encroachment on sacred territory, cultural genocide and oppression that served to advance the lives of settlers at the expense of the Mi’kmaq.

It is in the context of this history that the Commission seeks to address persistent, systemic, and institutionalized discrimination resulting from the ideals of white supremacy.

The Commission’s origins are rooted in the work of African Nova Scotians who have been present in Mi’kma’ki for more than 400 years. From a history of slavery and legislated segregation, African Nova Scotians came together, coordinated, and fought against institutionalized racism, discrimination, and oppression, which led to the creation of the Human Rights Commission. As we build upon their work together to address the harms of colonialism, we do so in the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, drawing upon the resilience and commitment of our forebearers to guide us in our important work to protect and promote the human rights of Nova Scotians.

We recognize the intergenerational impacts of the historic and ongoing injustices against Mi’kmaq people and African Nova Scotians, and the resulting privileges of those who continue to benefit from these offences.

We honor and embrace Mi’kmaw wisdom, such as Msit No’kmaq – meaning “all my relations” - which values the inherent interconnectivity of all things, as we strive to foster relationships based on respect for one another’s inherent dignity.

We invite you to join in this work with humility and optimism for a better future.



Message from the CEO

Dear Minister Druhan,

On behalf of the staff and Commissioners of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, I am pleased to present the Commission's annual report for the 2023-24 fiscal year. The Commission remains actively invested in fostering equitable and inclusive communities. We do this by protecting human rights through a formalized dispute resolution process, and by advancing human rights understanding through education, awareness building, and community engagement.

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Commission continued to innovate in its approach to public awareness building. We launched the Human Rights on Screen series in partnership with the Atlantic International Film Festival. Leveraging the work of Nova Scotian filmmakers, arranging free online screenings and hosting panel discussions centered on first-voice experience, offering a unique introduction to human rights topics through film.

The Commission strengthened ties with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community amid concerns over rising hateful rhetoric and threats to safety. We celebrated the first Nova Scotia Human Rights Week, proclaimed by the Premier, marking the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. We had the privilege of moderating a discussion with Mi'kmaw experts on how Etuaptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing) might shape the future of human rights in Nova Scotia. Also, in collaboration with African Nova Scotian leaders in New Glasgow, we co-hosted an event celebrating the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and produced a short documentary film on the community's history.

Operationally, the Commission remains committed to enhancing our processes and service delivery for all Nova Scotians. This year, staff improved workflows and service quality, and we continued to build our capacity through ongoing learning and development. As we strive for further enhancements and greater engagement with Nova Scotians, we remain dedicated to providing relevant and meaningful support to those we serve.

Joseph Fraser, *Director and CEO*

Commissioners and Commission Meetings

The Commission is legislated under the *Human Rights Act* to have no fewer than three and no more than twelve Commissioners. Within the 2023-24 fiscal year, there were two Commissioner terms that concluded, and five Commissioners appointed. The following community members served as Commissioners during the fiscal year:

Cheryl Knockwood (*Chair*)

Joseph Fraser (*Director & CEO, non-voting member*)

Jenifer Tsang (*Vice-Chair*)

Blair Eavis

Cynthia Dorrington

Deepak Prasad

Diana Brothers

Fola Adeleke

Julien Matte

Monica Paris

Natasha Pearl

Robin Thompson

Savannah Dewolfe

Sharon Ross

Theodore Morrison

Commissioners come from diverse backgrounds, representing various communities of Nova Scotia. They are appointed by an Executive Order of Executive Council.

Commissioner responsibilities are described within the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* (the “Act”), and include responsibility for the strategic direction of the Commission, as well as for making decisions on human rights issues, including referrals of complaints to Boards of Inquiry.

Normally, Commissioners meet six times annually. These meetings are typically held virtually, or at the Commission’s Halifax office. Additionally, Commissioners convene in communities outside of the Halifax Regional Municipality. Regular bi-monthly meetings were held to review and decide on human rights cases, discuss emerging human rights issues in Nova Scotia, and to promote human rights awareness.

Through strategic partnerships, we can advance equity and ensure all Nova Scotians can access the services they require to live lives of dignity.





Mandate and Vision

Mandate

The Commission has a unique role within Nova Scotia. It is an independent government agency tasked with administering the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* (the “Act”), a provincial statute created in 1969 and most recently amended in 2012. The Commission is mandated by the Act to help build inclusive communities and protect human rights in Nova Scotia.

The Act also sets out the specific duties of the Commission, primarily administering and enforcing the provisions of the Act. In addition, it develops public information and education programs in the field of human rights to advance the principle that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights without regard to age, race, colour, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental disability, irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease, ethnic, national or Aboriginal origin, family status, marital status, source of income, political belief, affiliation or activity, association with protected groups or individuals, sexual harassment, harassment of protected groups or individuals, or retaliation.

The Commission is also mandated to conduct and encourage research by universities and other bodies in the general field of human rights, provide advice to government departments and agencies regarding human rights issues, and assist individuals and private organizations concerned with human rights matters, offering recommendations on increasing awareness both within and outside the province.

Pursuant to the Act, the Commission reports to the Minister of Justice on its activities, and considers, investigates, or administers any matter or activity referred to it by the Minister or the Governor-in-Council.

There is an inherent tension created by the duality of the Commission’s mandate to protect human rights through administration of the Act, and advance human rights through education, community outreach and engagement.

The scope of this work ranges from the very personal, one-on-one discussions with people who have been mistreated, to public dialogue, education sessions and special events. It is the Commission’s responsibility to ensure people know their rights, and that they are aware of and have confidence in the process that exists to protect those rights.

While the Commission and its staff cannot advocate on behalf of individuals, groups, or organizations, they can advance equity through strategic partnerships, ensuring that all Nova Scotians can access the services they need to live their lives with dignity.



Our Vision

A Nova Scotia where every individual is afforded an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life.



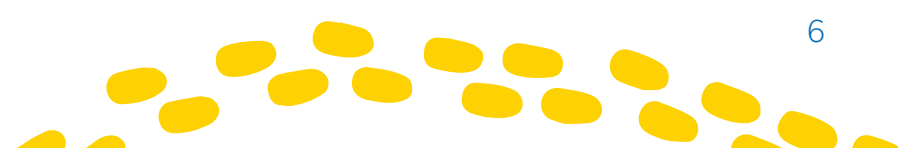
Our Mission

To protect and promote a common standard of human rights for all Nova Scotians, based on the inherent dignity, equality, and inalienable rights of every individual.

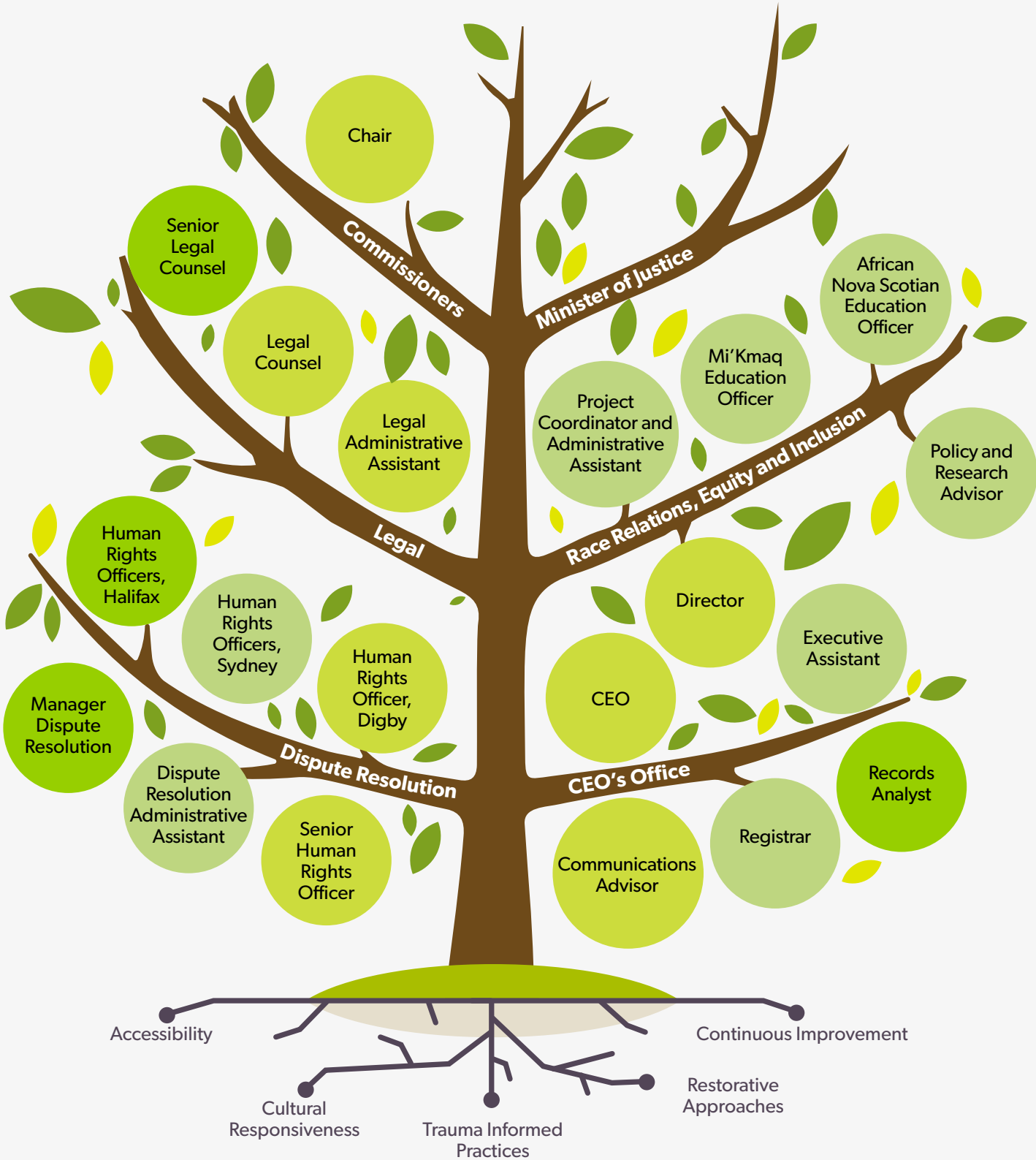


Our Values

The Human Rights Commission is committed to Accessibility, Accountability, Cultural Responsiveness, Diversity, Fairness, Integrity, Public Good, Respect, Restorative Approaches, and Trauma-informed Practices.



Organizational Structure





Inquiries and Dispute Resolution

The Commission receives many inquiries from the public, including straightforward questions about the Act, requests for information, and serious concerns about potential human rights violations, discrimination, and harassment related to protected characteristics. Some inquiries may be formalized as complaints and advanced to either early resolution or an investigation.

Once a complaint is verified to fall under the Commission's jurisdiction and accepted, Commission staff engage the impacted parties and encourage collaboration toward a mutually agreeable resolution. The Commission employs restorative methods aimed at healing and mending relationships while fostering mutual understanding to address the damage and assist all parties in progressing constructively.

During an investigation, it may be determined that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate claims of discrimination as defined by the Act. If this occurs, or if the complaint is resolved amicably or retracted, the Director and CEO has the authority to dismiss the complaint pursuant to section 29(4) of the Act.

Further details on the Commission's dispute resolution process can be found on our website at humanrights.novascotia.ca/process.

Below is a table illustrating the number of human rights inquiries received in the fiscal year 2023-24, the number that proceeded to the complaint phase, and the average duration for a complaint's progression through the system. It should be noted that some human rights disputes are more complex and may require an extended period to resolve.

The restorative processes used by the Commission focus on restoring and repairing relationships and building understanding amongst the parties to repair harm and help those involved move forward in a positive way.

April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024

Inquiries Received (all incoming calls/emails/visits)	2155
Complaints Accepted	148
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(a) - Best Interests Not Served	17
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(b) - Complaint is Without Merit	5
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(c) - No Significant Issue	17
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(d) - Previous Alternate Process	4
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(e) - Bad Faith/Improper Motives	0
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(f) - No Reasonable Likelihood	2
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(g) - Exemption Order Granted	0
Complaints Closed by Non-Jurisdictional	0
Complaints Closed by Settlement Reached	23
Complaints referred to Board of Inquiry	21
Total No. of Complaints Closed	89
Average Days from Initial Contact to Complaint Signed	234
Average Days from Initial Contact to Conclusion	668

Complaints by Area

The Commission accepts complaints when it is demonstrated that the situation is reasonably connected to at least one prohibited area and one protected characteristic under the Act. A complaint may involve multiple characteristics or areas.

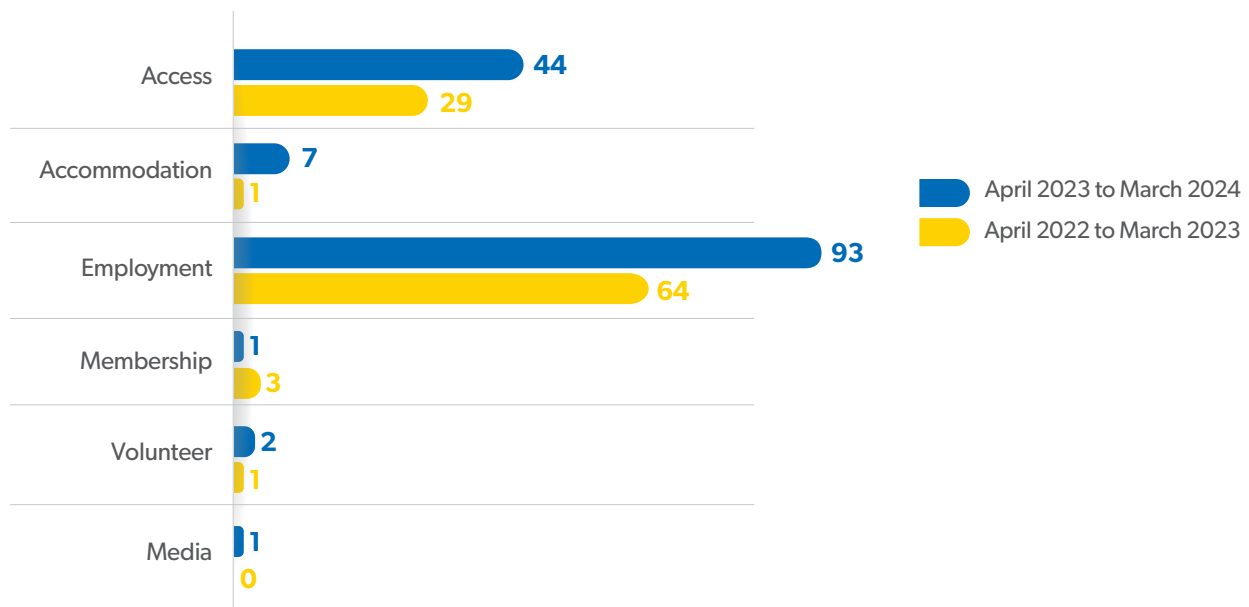
Employment-related complaints were the most frequent, totaling 93, up from 29 in the previous year, highlighting a significant increase.

Complaints related to access to services or facilities followed, with 44 complaints, compared to 29 the prior year, also indicating an upward trend.

Accommodation-related complaints increased to 7, from just 1 in the preceding year. Conversely, membership-related complaints decreased to 1, down from 3. Volunteer-related complaints rose to 2 from 1, and 1 media-related complaint was recorded, where none were accepted the previous year.

Overall, the data reveals an increase in complaints across most categories.

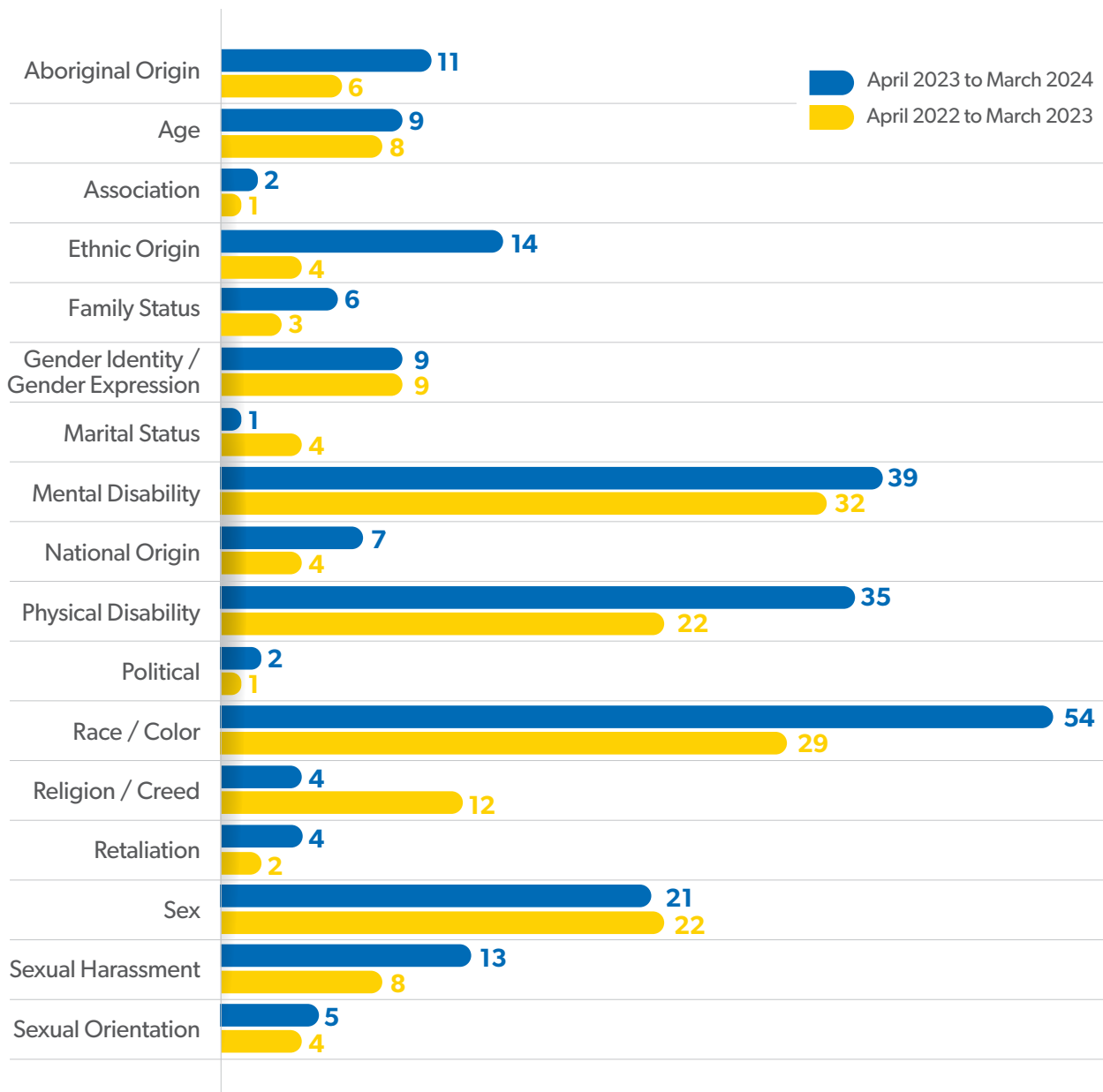
Complaints by Area



Complaints by Characteristic

Race/Color (54) and Mental Disability (39) recorded the highest number of complaints by protected characteristic. Comparatively, there were 29 and 32 complaints for Race/Color and Mental Disability respectively in the previous year.

Complaints related to aboriginal origin, ethnic origin, physical disability, race/color, and sexual harassment have noticeably increased this year. Conversely, the instances involving religion/creed and marital status saw reductions of 8 and 3 complaints, respectively.

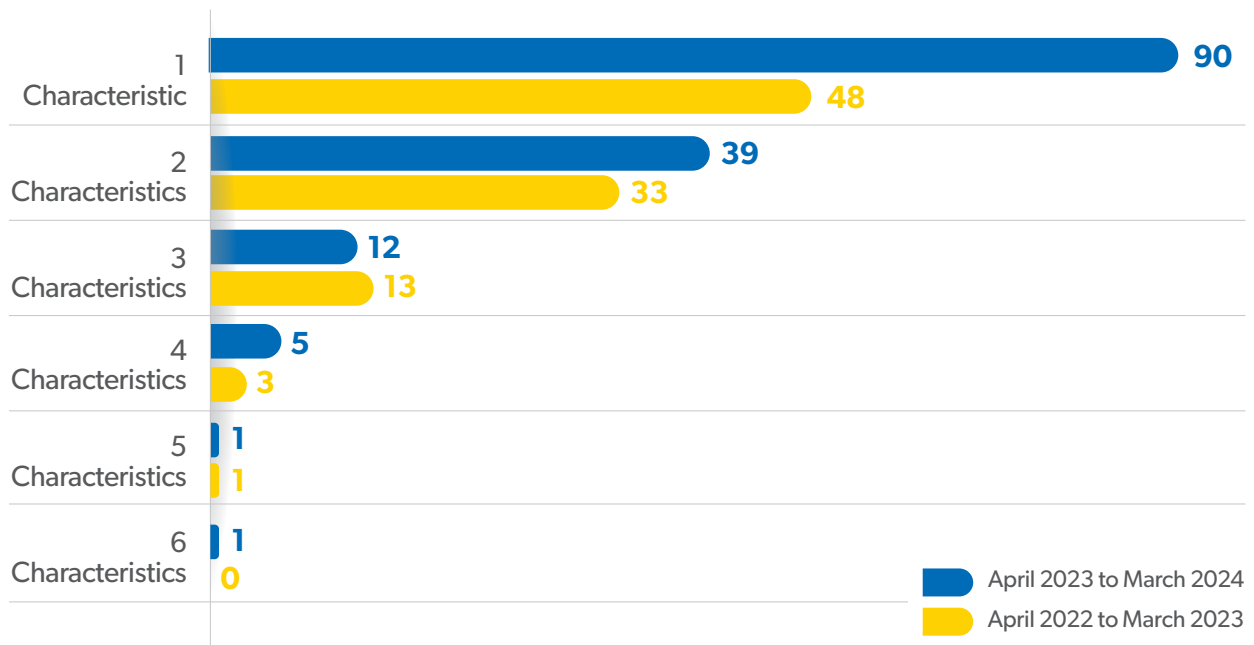
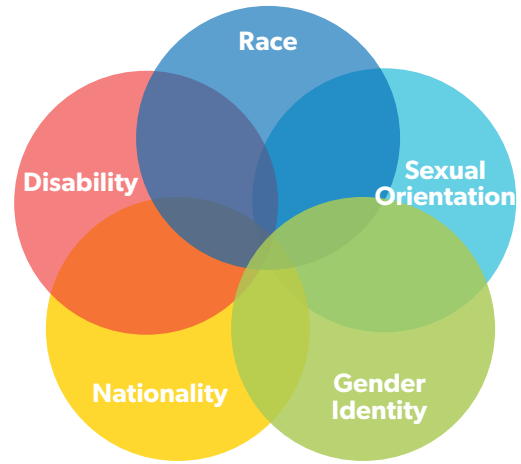


Complaints having Multiple Characteristics

No single characteristic defines an individual. While most complaints filed with the Commission were based on a single protected characteristic, some involved multiple characteristics. The intersection of protected characteristics, such as race, gender, and disability, is not isolated; rather, these aspects interact and intersect, shaping individuals' experiences of privilege or oppression.

“Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there.” ”

Kimberlé Crenshaw, professor, Columbia University
<https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later>



Board of Inquiry Hearings

When a complaint cannot be resolved among the parties involved, an investigation may be conducted, and an investigation report is presented to the Commissioners of the Commission for review and decision. The Commissioners may dismiss the complaint or refer it to a Board of Inquiry (BOI). A BOI is an independent administrative tribunal led by a chair appointed by the Chief Judge of the Nova Scotia Provincial Court.

Even after a BOI is appointed, there remains an opportunity for the matter to be settled before or during the hearing. This year, five BOIs were settled between the parties.

The table below provides an overview of the status of Boards of Inquiry during this reporting period.

April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024

BOI Referrals	21
Ongoing BOIs	25
Settled BOIs	5
BOI Decisions	2
Judicial Reviews Ongoing	5
Judicial Reviews Decisions	2
Appeals Ongoing	2
Appeals Decisions	1



Board of Inquiry Decisions

The full text of board of inquiry decisions can be found online at humanrights.novascotia.ca as well as by searching the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLii) website at canlii.org.

Appeal Decision Reaffirms Concurrent Jurisdiction in Human Rights Claims | Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

On September 20, 2023, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal confirmed that the Commission retains jurisdiction in matters involving unionized workplaces. Unionized workers can file complaints with the Commission or through workplace collective agreements. This decision underscores the importance of protecting the rights of unionized workers under the Act and resolves ambiguity arising from an October 2021 Supreme Court of Canada decision in the matter of Northern Regional Health Authority vs. Horrocks, a Manitoba case concerning whether a unionized worker could pursue a workplace grievance and/or a human rights complaint.



Timothy Parsons v. Bedford Investments Limited o/as Sunnyside Restaurant and True North Diner

Mr. Parsons alleged that he was sexually harassed by a co-worker at the True North Diner, including acts of reprisals both directly and in front of co-workers. Mr. Parsons also alleged that he was isolated at the Sunnyside Restaurant workplace and that his race and/or colour were factors in the termination of his employment.

The Board found, on a balance of probabilities, that Mr. Parsons' race and/or colour were factors in his termination, contrary to the Act. Based on the evidence, the Board also determined that the conduct of another employee, including various acts of reprisal, constituted sexual harassment of Mr. Parsons, as defined by the Act.

Johnson v. Bartimeaus

The Board approved the settlement agreement between the parties.

Promoting Human Rights

The Commission serves Nova Scotians with a steadfast commitment to its dual mandate of protecting and promoting human rights. This mandate is embodied in the work of every unit within the Commission, with the Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion (RREI) unit holding a special responsibility for proactively promoting human rights.

Established in 1991 following the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Donald Marshall Jr. prosecution, RREI collaborates with community organizations, government, and the private sector. Its mission is to foster racial harmony, equity, and inclusion while addressing and preventing systemic discrimination, striving to build a more inclusive Nova Scotia. This role is reinforced by section 26A of the Act.

Leading the Commission's efforts to promote human rights across Nova Scotia, RREI employs a five-prong approach as outlined below:

RREI Service Delivery Framework



Human Rights Education and Public Awareness:

RREI delivers human rights education and raises public awareness on human rights topics across Nova Scotia, employing key adult education principles from a culturally relevant and decolonized perspective. Training may be mandated under the terms of a settlement agreement or a Board of Inquiry decision. It can also be provided proactively at the request of organizations.

Some examples of human rights education provided by RREI include:

Workshop	Duration	Description
Human Rights 101	1 Day In person 3-Day Virtual	Participants gain a general overview of the Act, the mandate of the Commission, discrimination, protected characteristics, prohibited areas, privilege, employment equity, and workplace accommodation.
Working Together Better	2 day In person	This session is designed to help participants better engage with others within their organization/ community/ company to promote a more diverse and inclusive workplace reflective of the communities they serve.
Serving All Customers Better	1 Day In person	This session is designed to provide knowledge and understanding to address and correct consumer racial profiling and the attitudes and behaviours which contribute to this issue.
Disrupting Anti-Black Racism	1 Day In person	This session is designed to help build workplace culture and community where African Nova Scotians, all people of African descent and others can fully belong, grow, and develop. It equips participants with knowledge that can help them lead by positive example in their workplace and the communities they serve.
Supporting Trans and Gender Variant Employees	½ day In person or virtual	This session provides a deeper understanding of gender, terms related to Transgender and non-binary communities and gender identity, how to be more trans inclusive in the workplace and understanding gender expression as a protected characteristic of the Act.

In addition to the training outlined, RREI also provided customized education and engaged in awareness-raising activities, such as public events, guest speaking opportunities, media interviews, social media campaigns, around key human rights issues. These efforts involved government entities, schools, not-for-profit/community organizations, businesses, and private enterprises.

Human Rights Education Statistics



98

education sessions held during the 2023-24 fiscal year



2,928

attendees of education sessions in 2023-24 fiscal year



23

public presentations and conferences, that Commission staff participated in this year



2,320

individuals that were reached by events this year

Description	No. of Sessions		No. of Attendees	
	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23
Human Rights Education Workshop	20	32	360	460
Information Session/Requested Education	6	6	83	104
Mandated Education	1	4	10	33
Presentations/Conferences	23	17	2320	1008
Guest Speakers	4	20	113	255
Inquiries	42	98	42	108
TOTAL	98	177	2928	1968



Free Online Training

The Commission offers a suite of free, self-directed online training modules, providing valuable learning resources for individuals and organizations seeking to enhance their awareness of several important human rights topics.

Safe Spaces Make Great Workplaces **Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

Safe Spaces Make Great Workplaces is a free online course designed to address and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. The course aims to help employers understand the importance of having a clear sexual harassment policy, educating staff, and enforcing the policy.

1,332
Courses completed

Serving All Customers Better **Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

Serving All Customers Better is a free online course designed to help frontline service staff address and prevent consumer racial profiling. The course helps businesses create inclusive and welcoming environments for all customers.

1,241
Courses completed

Working With Abilities **Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

Working With Abilities is a free online course designed to provide practical information and advice to help employers support individuals with disabilities, fostering inclusion and respect in workplaces across Nova Scotia.

1,027
Courses completed

Total online training courses completed: **3,600**

Initiatives, Partnerships and Events

The Commission strengthened relationships with key community partners while expanding its efforts to forge new partnerships. Throughout the fiscal year, several opportunities emerged for collaboration on various initiatives.

Key Partnerships

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” - African Proverb

The Commission appreciates its partners who collaborated on various projects:

Aboriginal Peoples Training & Employment Commission (APTEC)

Accessibility Directorate

African Nova Scotian Justice Institute (ANSJI)

Akoma Holdings Inc.

Atlantic International Film Festival

Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia

Black Loyalist Heritage Centre

Canadian Mental Health Association (Annapolis Valley)

Canadian Museum for Human Rights

Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21

Cape Breton University

Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM)

Department of Community Services

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Delmore Buddy Daye Learning Institute

Halifax Regional Municipality

Immigrant Services Association of NS (ISANS)

Literacy Nova Scotia

Lucasville Community Association

Michaëlle Jean Foundation

Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre

Mount Saint Vincent University

My Home My Rights

Native Council of Nova Scotia

New Dawn Enterprises

Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities (NSLEO)

Nova Scotia Works

NSCC Achieve Program (Akerley Campus, IT Campus)

NSCC Kingstec Student Association (Kentville Campus)

NSCC Women Unlimited (Akerley Campus)

Office of the Federal Housing Advocate

Sipekne'katik First Nation

St. Francis Xavier University

Ummah Society

Team Works Nova Scotia

The Youth Project

York University

Human Rights on the Road

Human Rights on the Road is a community information series that offers Nova Scotians the opportunity to learn more about the Commission, its mandate, and its processes. The sessions are designed to foster a two-way conversation between Commission staff and community members. This year, the Commission partnered with various community associations and groups to facilitate these sessions, including one for the Preston Township.

Achieve Program Community Connections Fair

In collaboration with NSCC's Achieve Program, Commission staff hosted and attended a table at the NSCC Akerley Campus to engage with organizations serving people with disabilities and connect with individuals who benefit from their services.

Africville Reunion Gala and 40th Anniversary Events

Commission staff attended both the annual Africville Reunion Gala and the celebrations marking the 40th Anniversary of this event, which honors the rich cultural heritage of the African Nova Scotian community of Africville, its people and their descendants.

Dartmouth High Career & Resource Fair

Sponsored by the Aboriginal Peoples Training & Employment Commission (APTEC) and the Indigenous Support Worker at Dartmouth High School, Commission staff hosted a booth at the Dartmouth High Career & Resource Fair. They discussed the Commission's work and highlighted human rights as a career option.

Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute, 2nd Africentric Conference

Commission staff attended the event created by Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute in collaboration with St. Francis Xavier University and the University of Venda, South Africa. The event brought together scholars, educators, researchers, students, community activists, and advocates for the 2nd Africentric Conference. The theme of the conference was "*Transformation through Ubuntu: An Africentric Perspective*".

Equity-Focused Career & Resource for High School Youth

The Commission hosted an information booth at the Equity-Focused Career & Resource for High School Youth event at Sackville High School.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

In collaboration with the Community of New Glasgow and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, the Commission co-hosted an evening gathering to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The theme of the event was “*Ubuntu: I am Because We Are*,” was inspired by the events of March 21, 1960, when approximately 7,000 protesters gathered in front a police station in the Black township of Sharpeville, South Africa, to peacefully protest the oppressive apartheid pass laws. A short documentary film produced during the planning for this evening has since garnered over 22,000 views on YouTube.

Journey Back to Birchtown

The Commission hosted an information booth at the annual Journey Back to Birchtown event, which celebrates the legacies of the Black Loyalists.

King’s County Volunteer Symposium

In partnership with the NSCC Kingstec Student Association, Commission staff spoke on the topic of Human Rights and Volunteerism at the King’s County Volunteer Symposium in Kentville.

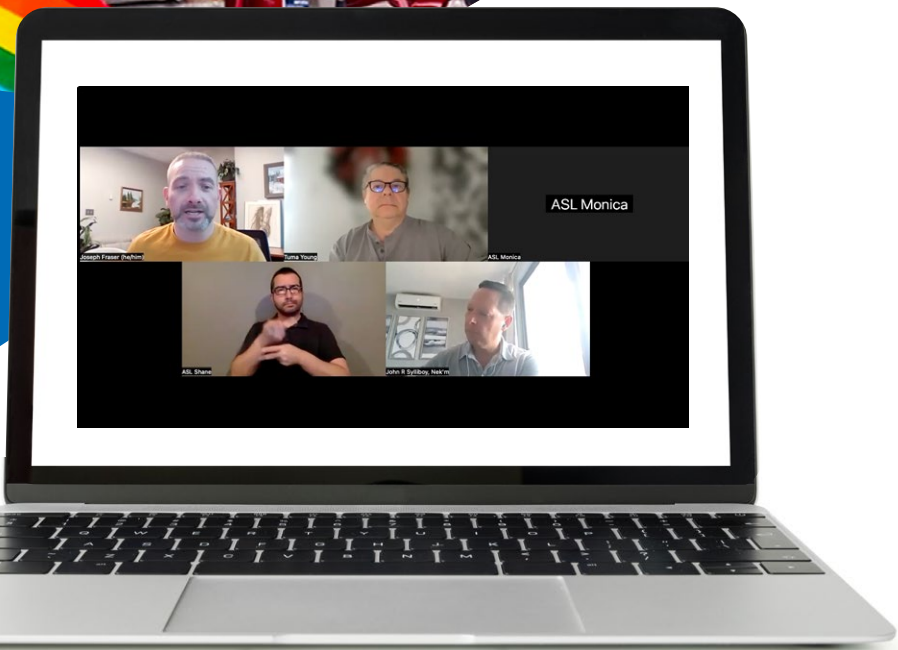
Mosque Open House Event & Training on Islamic Culture

Commission staff attended the Mosque Open House & Training on Islamic Culture at the Ummah Masjid and Community Centre.

Mawita’jik Competition Pow Wow

Commission staff hosted an information booth and provided support to Elders during the Mawita’jik Competition Pow Wow, an annual celebration of Indigenous dance and singing.

HUMAN RIGHTS ON SCREEN: DAWN, HER DAD & THE TRACTOR





Nova Scotia Human Rights Week

The Commission coordinated and supported the Premier in proclaiming December 3–10 as the inaugural Nova Scotia Human Rights Week, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The weeklong celebration highlighted human rights in Nova Scotia, raising awareness through both online and in-person events, culminating in the presentation of the annual Human Rights Awards.

Events included:

- **Panel on Housing and Human Rights**

The Commission organized a panel to discuss the role human rights play in Canada’s national housing crisis. Panelists included representatives from the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, the Canadian Mental Health Association (Annapolis Valley), New Dawn Enterprises and Akoma Holdings Inc.

- **Human Rights on Screen: Trans Representation in Film**

In partnership with the Atlantic International Film Festival, the Commission launched the Human Rights on Screen series with the panel discussion “Trans Representation in Film.” Filmmaker Shelley Thompson (Dawn, Her Dad & the Tractor), Brody Weaver (Youth Project), and Marley O’Brien (Artist), discussed how transgender representation in film can help advance understanding and challenge assumptions and misconceptions.

- **Panel on Human Rights, Indigenous Knowledge, and the Environment**

The Commission organised a panel discussion addressing the question: *“How could the legal foundation of 75 years of human rights law and thousands of years of historic and traditional Indigenous knowledge be considered together to evolve a more holistic approach to human rights in the context of our natural environment and ways of being?”* The discussion, hosted by Commission Director and CEO Joseph Fraser, featured John R. Sylliboy (Executive Director of the Wabanaki Two-Spirit Alliance) and Tuma Young (Two-Spirit L’nu lawyer). The panel focussed on how the next 75 years of human rights could be shaped through the application of an Etuaptmumk (“two-eyed seeing”) perspective.

2023 Human Rights Awards

On December 8, 2023, in Halifax, four individual Nova Scotians and two groups were honored with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Awards in recognition of their contributions to creating a more equitable, inclusive, and respectful province.

Recipients



Pamela Glode Desrochers *Wel-lukwen Award*

Pamela Glode Desrochers has dedicated over 28 years to working with the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, where she has served as Executive Director for more than 12 years. The Friendship Centre's mandate is to provide quality programs to urban Indigenous people, focusing on reducing poverty and crime, health, housing, homelessness, and justice, and promoting personal and community health and well-being.

Pamela has played a pivotal role in the development of a new Friendship Centre aimed at providing opportunities for the urban Indigenous community to become self-sustaining. Under Pamela's leadership,

the number of programs and services offered at the Friendship Centre increased from 8 to 40. These programs include housing and homelessness support, employment and training, early childhood education, several literacy programs, and a youth program.

Pamela currently serves on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Friendship Centers. She was honored with the Governor General's award: Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers in Ottawa for Outstanding Indigenous Leadership.



Tia Upshaw
Dr. Burnley Allan “Rocky” Jones Award

Tia Upshaw stands out as a committed mother, celebrated author, and innovative serial entrepreneur whose endeavors significantly impact her community. Balancing family life with inspired writing, her books motivate readers to overcome challenges and realize their full potential.

Tia’s entrepreneurial ventures have generated both successful companies and valuable job opportunities, contributing to the local economy and earning her nominations for notable business awards, such as Business Leader of the Year and RBC Woman of Influence. Tia proudly holds distinctions such

as one of the Top 100 Black Women in Canada for 2023 and recipient of the Dave Richardson Champion Award from Rise. Dedicating her expertise to the next generation of leaders, Tia serves as Professional in Residence at the Saint Mary’s University L. Authur Entrepreneurship Center, mentoring upcoming entrepreneurs.

Founder and CEO of Blk Women in Excellence since 2020, she champions the empowerment of Black women in Nova Scotia and Kelowna, BC through support networks that inspire collaboration and success. Also engaging with St. Mary’s University initiatives, Tia mentors through the Rise and Scotia Bank Women’s Mentorship program and delivers motivational speeches, providing practical advice for entrepreneurs through an Afrocentric perspective.

Tia Upshaw is a powerful force for positive change, an inspirational leader whose dedication shapes communities and encourages excellence.



Veronica Merryfield *Individual Award*

Driven by her passion for music, **Veronica Merryfield** began her journey into electronics in her early teens. After completing her formal education in Electrical and Electronic Engineering at Portsmouth University, England, she worked in a broad spectrum of markets and holds a few patents. Now mostly retired from the technology sector, Veronica has turned her focus to advocating for equity, diversity, inclusion and trans rights, drawing from her own experiences as a transgender and intersex individual.

Veronica serves as Board Chair for the Every Woman's Center, Cape Breton Center for Sexual Health, and the Marion Bridge School Advisory Council, and is a member of the Status of Women Advisory Council and Cape Breton Pride board. She has been instrumental in driving legislative changes and collaborating with the Department of Health and Wellness on gender-affirming care initiatives. Veronica is also the founder of the Cape Breton Transgender Network and the Nova Scotia Intersex Support Network.

Veronica has two daughters and four grandchildren, makes musical instruments, plays bass guitar and keyboards, is a writer, photographer and is partial to a decent cup of tea.



Nia Summit Youth Ambassadors

Youth Award

A group of 12 high school students dedicated themselves to planning the first-ever all-Black Youth Summit called the Nia Summit. They were involved in every aspect of the event, from choosing a keynote speaker and creating the logo to selecting promotional items and leading marketing efforts. The team also handled the planning of the menu, hired caterers, arranged for volunteers, set up decorations, and facilitated a panel discussion.

Their collective efforts resulted in 130 high school students from across the province gathering at the Black Cultural Centre on September 22 for the Nia Summit. The event themed “Equal in Dignity and Rights: Anti-Black Racism from a youth perspective”, was a significant milestone, showcasing the hard work and dedication of these students.

Individual Youth Ambassadors:

Dasia Abbey, Moriah Aladejebi, Nwadiioramma Azuka-Onwuka, Praise Babalola, Jorja-Rain Cain, Linden Chambers, Keira Grady, Nevaeh O’Connell, Princess Okorie, Joshua Paris, Nathan Tesfazion, Jayreece Whiley



Sheila Wildeman

Individual Award

Sheila Wildeman is the Associate Director at the Health Justice Institute of Dalhousie University and holds an Associate Professorship at the Schulich School of Law. Her teaching repertoire includes Administrative Law, Poverty Law and Human Rights, as well as courses on Imprisonment and Penal Policy. Sheila also serves as Co-Chair (alongside Harry Critchley) of the East Coast Prison Justice Society [ECPJS] and is instrumental in the Visiting Committee project as a founding member and part of the Steering Committee. This initiative aims to monitor jail conditions in Nova Scotia through a human rights lens, offering monthly insights and an annual report for public consumption.

Sheila's research and publications focus on using law to promote justice for marginalized individuals, particularly disabled people and prisoners. Drawing on human rights legislation, critical disability theory, and critical carceral studies, Sheila advocates for intersectional equality, autonomy, and fair participation in society.

Over the past three years, Sheila has worked on the "My Home My Rights," an arts-based action research project highlighting the experiences of individuals with intellectual and other disabilities. Supported by a SSHRC Partnership Engage grant through the law school and Inclusion Nova Scotia, this project has produced impactful artwork and videos that aid in advocacy efforts.

Sheila attributes her accomplishments to the collaborative efforts of her partners, including the ECPJS, Elizabeth Fry Societies Mainland NS and Cape Breton, Wellness Within, the Coverdale Justice Society, and the My Home My Rights Action Research Collective.



The Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, Group or Organization Award

Founded in 1984, the **Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia** is a charitable organization committed to addressing the underlying causes that lead to the criminalization of women, girls, and individuals of diverse genders. The dedicated team at “E Fry” works closely with these at-risk groups to promote personal agency and help them strengthen their connections within their communities.

The organization provides a wide range of services, including housing assistance, innovative programs, justice system advocacy, and skill development, all aimed at fostering positive community relationships. Some of the key services offered include:

- Relapse Prevention seminars to address substance misuse
- Women for Change courses focusing on healthy relations
- Creating Communities of Care projects designed for Indigenous people and African Nova Scotians within the justice system
- The Abundance Program for job and education improvement
- Girls Against Trafficking and Exploitation, a program supporting at-risk young women.

Timeline of Statements and Events

April 28, 2023

Celebrating Asian Heritage Month

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

May is a time to celebrate the diverse cultures and contributions of people of Asian descent; while also addressing the systemic discrimination, racism, and violence they face to ensure their rights and freedoms in Nova Scotia and across Canada.

May 3, 2023

Red Dress Day

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

May 5th is Red Dress Day, honoring the lives of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people, raising awareness of ongoing violence against them, and committing to address systemic issues contributing to this crisis.

May 15, 2023

International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

May 17 marked the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia, promoting equality, raising awareness, combating discrimination and violence against 2SLGBTQ+ communities, and advocating for their rights and safety.

May 19, 2023

Celebrating Cultural Diversity

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

May 21, the United Nations' World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, emphasizes cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and human rights protection, fostering inclusivity, social cohesion, and sustainable development through mutual understanding and respect.

May 26, 2023

Access Includes Everyone

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Each spring, Nova Scotians celebrate Access Awareness Week to highlight efforts to remove barriers for people with disabilities, coinciding with National AccessAbility Week, and emphasizing their contributions and leadership to foster equitable participation through awareness, partnerships, education, and dialogue.

May 29, 2023

June is Pride Month

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Pride celebrations originated from activism for 2SLGBTQIA+ rights and protection, and Pride Month is a time to recommit to inclusion, celebrate diverse 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in Nova Scotia, and honor the contributions of activists and advocates for equity, dignity, and respect.

June 7, 2023

National Indigenous History Month

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

June is National Indigenous History Month in Canada, a time to educate on the lives, cultures, and traditions of Indigenous, Inuit, and Métis communities, affirm their rights, and reflect on historic and contemporary injustices to foster reconciliation and social cohesion.

June 12, 2023

Gifts from Indigenous Youth

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

The Commission received meaningful gifts from Indigenous students at J.L. Ilsley High School and their Mi'kmaq/Indigenous Support Worker, Tish Sock-Sachetti, including a Spirit Blanket, a Talking Stick, and a hand-crafted Dream Catcher, which are now displayed at the Halifax office and used in the Commission's dispute resolution process and internal meetings.

June 13, 2023

Imagine a World with No Equity Gaps, Lessons from the National Urban League

The free public talk, titled "Imagine a World with No Equity Gaps: Lessons from the National Urban League," was presented in partnership with the Consulate General of the United States (Halifax), the Delmore Buddy Daye Learning Institute, the Black Cultural Centre of Nova Scotia, and the Commission, featuring Marc H. Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League.

June 20, 2023

National Indigenous Peoples Day

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada, a time to honor the rich history, culture, and contributions of Indigenous communities, fostering understanding, cultural diversity, and inclusion while reflecting on historical and ongoing injustices and working towards reconciliation and healing.

June 29, 2023

Disability Rights Coalition Board of Inquiry Decision on Remedy

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

The Chair of an independent human rights board of inquiry issued a decision on remedy in the matter of Beth MacLean, Sheila Livingstone, Joseph Delaney, and the Disability Rights Coalition of Nova Scotia vs. Province of Nova Scotia, including an interim consent order, a 5-year resolution process, and retained jurisdiction to monitor progress with an independent review panel and experts.

July 31, 2023

Emancipation Day

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

August 1 marks Emancipation Day in Canada, commemorating the 1834 *Slavery Abolition Act*, confronting the legacy of anti-Black racism, and celebrating the leadership of African people in achieving systemic change and the abolition of slavery.

August 10, 2023

National Acadian Day

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Since 1881, Acadians have celebrated National Acadian Day on August 15, honoring their cultural vitality and heritage, while Nova Scotia communities showcase traditions, music, cuisine, and language, emphasizing the importance of preserving diverse cultural backgrounds.

September 11, 2023

Standing with Africville

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

A noose was found in a tree behind Africville Park, a sacred space for the African Nova Scotian community, highlighting the ongoing threat of vandalism and the park's significance as a memorial to resilience and a reminder of systemic anti-Black racism.

September 14, 2023

Steven Estey

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

The esteemed disability rights advocate Steven Estey passed away after dedicating his life to advancing dignity, equity, and the rights of people with disabilities. His passion, commitment, and ability to connect on a wide range of issues impacting people with disabilities will be remembered, along with his incredible sense of humour and laughter.

September 22, 2023

Nia: A Black Youth Led Summit

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

In September 2023, the Commission, in partnership with the Delmore Buddy Daye Learning Institute and the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, organized the first-ever Nia Summit, where Black high school students from across Nova Scotia engaged in dialogue on the history, lived experiences, and fight against anti-Black racism.

September 27, 2023

Understanding Truth

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Phyllis Webstad's story, symbolized by the orange shirt, highlights the traumatic experiences of residential school survivors, and National Truth and Reconciliation Day on September 30th encourages learning about this legacy and supporting Indigenous people in reclaiming their heritage.

September 29, 2023

Mi'kmaq History Month: A Statement from the Chair

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

The 30th anniversary of Mi'kmaq History Month in Nova Scotia celebrated societal progress and Mi'kmaw heritage, with a focus on Mi'kmaw sports, traditional games, and pastimes, highlighted by the success of the North American Indigenous Games and the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Summer Games.

November 9, 2023

Commission Condemns Hate Speech, Antisemitism, and Islamophobia

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Incidents of hate speech, threats, and discrimination are rising globally in response to conflict, pressuring individuals to "choose sides" amidst divisive issues. The Commission calls on all Nova Scotians to protect the dignity of all people, condemn hatred in all its forms, and support peace, freedom, and dignity for everyone.

November 17, 2023

Transgender Day of Remembrance

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

On November 20, we remember victims of anti-trans violence, stand against hatred, and urge all Nova Scotians to reflect on the lives lost, acknowledge the impact on families and communities, and advocate for a world where transgender lives are celebrated, supported, and protected from prejudice and violence.

December 1, 2023

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

December 3 is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, promoting full access to a barrier-free life, supported in Nova Scotia by the *Accessibility Act*, Access By Design 2030 strategy, and various Accessibility Plans to reduce stigma and foster inclusion.

December 4, 2023

Nova Scotia Marks 75th Anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

The Housing and Human Rights panel discussion with Nova Scotians working to find housing solutions for unhoused people. A representative from the Office of Canada's Federal Housing Advocate provided context and insights from the Advocate's recent interim report on housing encampments in Canada.

December 5, 2023

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women is a crucial time for Nova Scotians to reflect on gender-based violence, commemorate the 1989 École Polytechnique massacre, and take steps to prevent violence, support survivors, and advocate for systemic change.

December 10, 2023

2023 Human Rights Awards Recipients Honoured

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission presents the awards annually on or around International Human Rights Day (December 10) to recipients nominated by their peers.

January 31, 2024

Celebrating African Heritage Month

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

For over 400 years, people of African descent have called Nova Scotia home, and despite centuries of prejudice, the Black community continues to champion equity and inclusion, celebrated during African Heritage Month with the theme "Our Smiles, Our Joy, Our Resilience as African Nova Scotians."



February 13, 2024

Urgent calls to action from Canada's Federal Housing Advocate

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Canada's Federal Housing Advocate Marie-Josée Houle's final report on housing encampments called for an urgent, coordinated human rights response, and Commission Director and CEO Joseph Fraser urged Halifax's Mayor to consider these recommendations in addressing the city's encampments.



March 07, 2024

International Women's Day

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

International Women's Day on March 8th highlights the global fight for gender equality, amplifying women's voices and fostering solidarity for equality, freedom, and dignity.



March 20, 2024

Human Rights on Screen: Freedom Swell

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

The "Human Rights on Screen: Freedom Swell" panel, part of the Atlantic International Film Festival series, commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and featured a documentary about a surf program for youth of African descent.



March 21, 2024

Stand United Against Racism

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21st reminds us to respect everyone regardless of their background and urges us to work towards a world free from racism, promoting equality and inclusion.



March 28, 2024

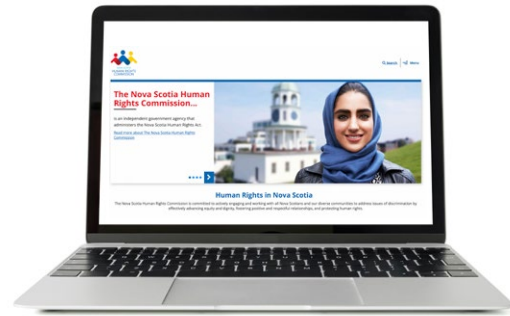
Transgender Day of Visibility

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Transgender Day of Visibility on March 31 honors transgender and gender-diverse people, raises awareness about their challenges, and celebrates their contributions, promoting acceptance and equality.

NSHRC Website Statistics

April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024



Page	Unique Page Views
Home	14,543
Contact Us	6,621
Complaint Self-Assessment Tool	6,436
Know Your Rights for Individuals	5,735
Inquiry Form	4,046
Frequently Asked Questions	2,658
Online Training	2,378
Dispute Resolution Process	2,164
Know Your Rights for Employers	1,916

Due to changes in how web traffic is reported, comparisons year-to-year prior to this reporting year will not be a reliable measure of increases or decreases in activity.

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