



NOVA SCOTIA  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMISSION



ANNUAL REPORT 2017–2018



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# Message from the CEO

Dear Minister Furey,

On behalf of the staff and Commissioners of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, I am pleased to present you with the Commission's annual report for the 2017–18 fiscal year. The Commission has come a long way in advancing human rights awareness since its inception in 1967. 2017–18 marked the 50th anniversary of the Commission and a period of continued modernization and innovation.

The Commission launched a virtual campus with two free online human rights education courses. "Serving All Customers Better" was created to support Nova Scotia's business community in preventing and addressing consumer racial profiling. "Safe Places Make Great Workplaces" was launched on International Women's Day and provides free resources to help organizations prevent and address sexual harassment in their workplaces. Over 10,000 Nova Scotians were trained using the virtual classroom in the first year alone.

The Commission also engaged, collaborated, and partnered with many stakeholders, including various government departments and community groups, to celebrate 50 years of human rights in Nova Scotia. Initiatives included a youth art exhibit that travelled to different locations across the province; and a signature event on December 8 to coincide with International Human Rights Day. During this event, the 2017 Nova Scotia Human Rights Awards were presented to deserving Nova Scotians who contributed to the advancement of human rights in the province. On International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 21, the Commission, in partnership with the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs, hosted two lectures by well-known anti-racism activist Tim Wise. During Mi'kmaq Heritage Month, the Commission also partnered with the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre on the initiative "Reconciliation: Let's Start the Conversation", which engaged various government, private sector, and community partners.

In continued collaboration with the Halifax Police Board of Commissioners and representatives of African Nova Scotian communities, the Commission retained Dr. Scot Wortley of the University of Toronto to review the use of street checks by Halifax Regional Police and RCMP. Several informal meetings were hosted by the Commission to provide members of African Nova Scotian communities with an opportunity to contribute to Dr. Wortley's review and analysis of the police data.

The Commission continued refining its dispute resolution processes to ensure fair, effective, and accessible services for all Nova Scotians. Processes for reviewing complaints were improved, and the average number of days to resolve a complaint was significantly reduced.

My sincere thanks go to the staff, management, and Commissioners for their commitment and hard work to ensure the best possible service to the public throughout this period.

## Commissioners & Commission Meetings

The Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* stipulates that the Commission shall have no less than three and no more than 12 members, or Commissioners, who are appointed by the Governor in Council. The Commissioners make up “the Commission”. As of March 31, 2018, there were 10 Commissioners, including the Director and CEO who is a non-voting member:

- Eunice Harker (Chair)
- Christine Hanson (Director and CEO, non-voting member)
- Karen Armour
- Vishal Bhardwaj
- Jerry Blumenthal
- Dr. Joan Boutilier
- Norbert Comeau
- Cheryl Knockwood
- Chief Andrea Paul
- Deepak Prasad

The Commissioners represented several areas of Nova Scotia, including Antigonish, Lunenburg, Windsor, Halifax Regional Municipality, Wolfville, Church Point, Membertou, and Trenton.

### COMMISSION MEETINGS

Regular bi-monthly meetings were held during 2017–18. As per legislation, two of these meetings were held outside Halifax Regional Municipality. The purpose of these meetings is to not only review and decide on human rights cases, but also to identify emerging human rights issues within the province, and to formulate ways to raise awareness. The meetings outside Halifax Regional Municipality provide the Commissioners with opportunities to meet with different Nova Scotians and discuss human rights issues directly affecting them. In September 2017, the meeting was held at the Black Loyalists Heritage Museum in Birchtown. In addition to the regular agenda, the meeting included a viewing of a new video on Dr. Carrie Best and a tour of the Birchtown museum and surrounding grounds. In January 2018, the meeting was held in Membertou at the Membertou Heritage Park and included the regular agenda as well as a tour of the facility. The January meeting coincided with the start of Black Heritage Month and the Commissioners and members of the senior staff were in attendance for the annual flag raising ceremony and the Gala.

## Mandate & Vision

### MANDATE

The Commission has a unique role within Nova Scotia. It is an independent government agency charged 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, mainly 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, ethnic, national or Aboriginal origin, sex (including pregnancy and pay equity), sexual orientation, physical disability, mental disability, family status, marital status, source of income, harassment (including sexual harassment), irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease, association with protected groups or individuals, political belief, affiliation or activity, gender identity, gender expression or retaliation.

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

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.

### VISION

The Commission is committed to actively engage and work with all Nova Scotians and its diverse communities to effectively:

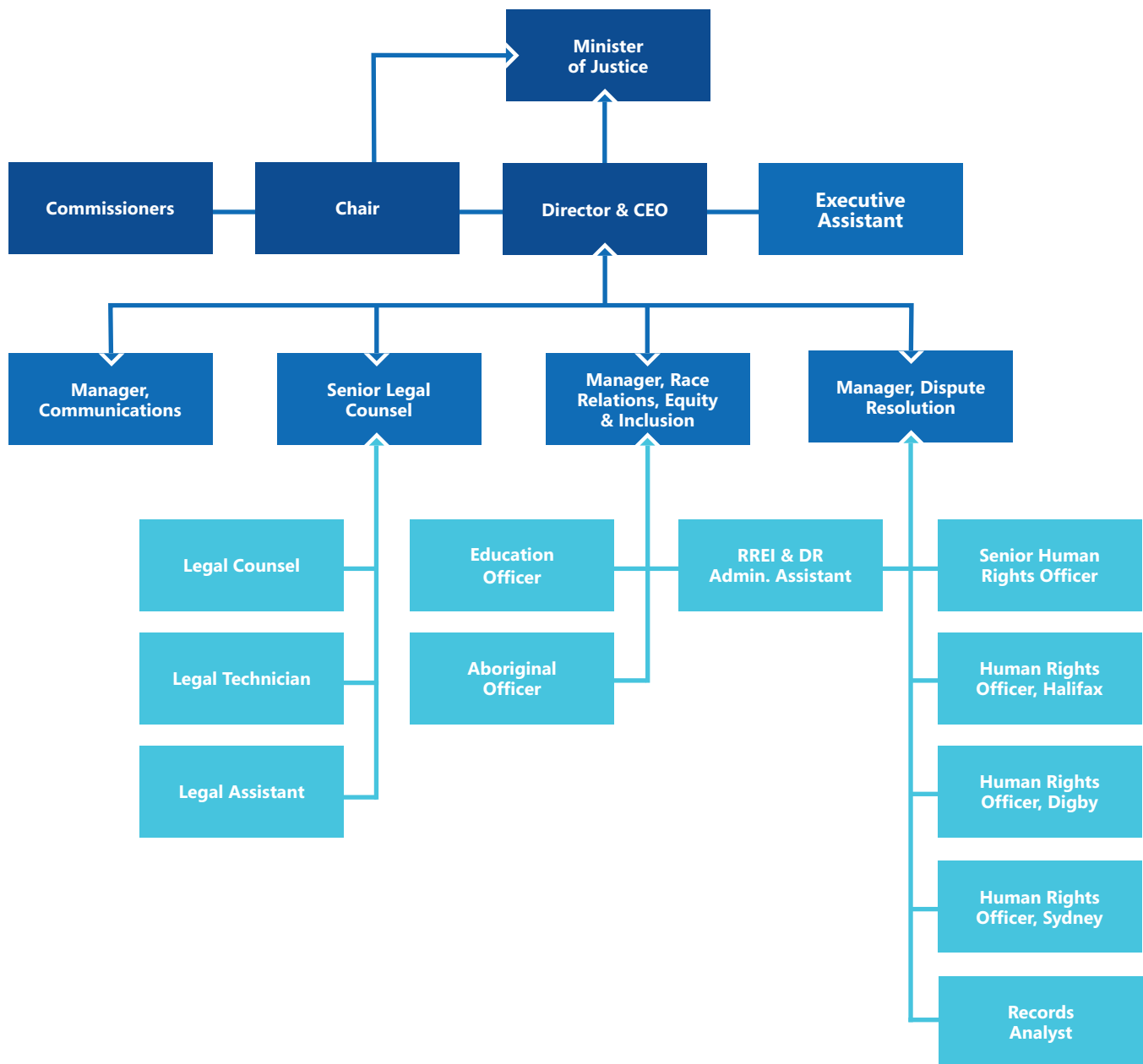
- advance equity and dignity;
- foster positive and respectful relations; and
- protect human rights.

The Commission believes in and is committed to:

- restorative processes;
- respectful and productive relationships;
- inclusivity;
- service excellence; and
- continuous learning through research, innovation and transparency.

## Organizational Structure

The Commission is an independent government agency that reports directly to the Minister of Justice.



## 2017–18 Strategic Priorities

As described in its 2017–18 Business Plan, the Commission defined its strategic priorities as:

- Meaningfully engaging, educating and supporting people and communities to raise awareness and address issues of systemic discrimination;
- Demonstrating leadership in the protection of human rights through innovation and the use of best practices; and
- Being a respectful workplace that is dynamic, embraces differences, and fosters continuous learning.

The Commission continued its multi-year engagement strategy to renew its relationships with African Nova Scotian communities and with other protected groups who would also benefit from heightened awareness of human rights within the population at large. During the past fiscal year, the Commission continued to work collaboratively with communities, government, and other stakeholders, including the Mi'kmaw Friendship Centre, the Decade for People of African Descent Coalition, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Disabled Persons Commission, and Partners for Human Rights.

During fiscal year 2016–17, the Commission invested in the development of online training tools to make human rights education more accessible to all Nova Scotians. On March 27, 2017, the first module, “Serving All Customers Better”, was launched to help educate front-line retail and security staff on consumer racial profiling and how to prevent it. This online training was the first of its kind in the country. On March 8, 2018, International Women’s Day, the second module, “Safe Places Make Great Workspaces”, was launched in response to increased attention on sexual harassment in the workplace and has been well received by the business community. The Commission is currently developing its third module, “Accommodating People with Mental and Physical Disabilities”, with a planned launch in fiscal 2018–19.

In response to concerns raised by the Decade of People of African Descent Coalition concerning police racial profiling during street checks, the Commission retained Dr. Scot Wortley from the University of Toronto to conduct an analysis of 11 years’ worth of data collected by police. Throughout the 2017–18 fiscal year, the Commission organized consultations with African Nova Scotian communities as well as representatives of Halifax Regional Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police to further examine the issue of police street checks.

## Inquiries & Dispute Resolution

One of the primary duties of the Commission is to help resolve public disputes regarding discrimination in relation to protected characteristics under the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*. Not all public inquiries proceed to the complaint stage and some are simply an opportunity to educate individuals and organizations about human rights.

Once it has been determined that a complaint falls under the Act, the matter can be investigated further. To improve access to resolution, procedures for handling human rights complaints have been streamlined. The restorative processes used by the Commission focus on restoring and repairing relationships and building understanding amongst the parties to reduce harm and help everyone move forward in a positive way.

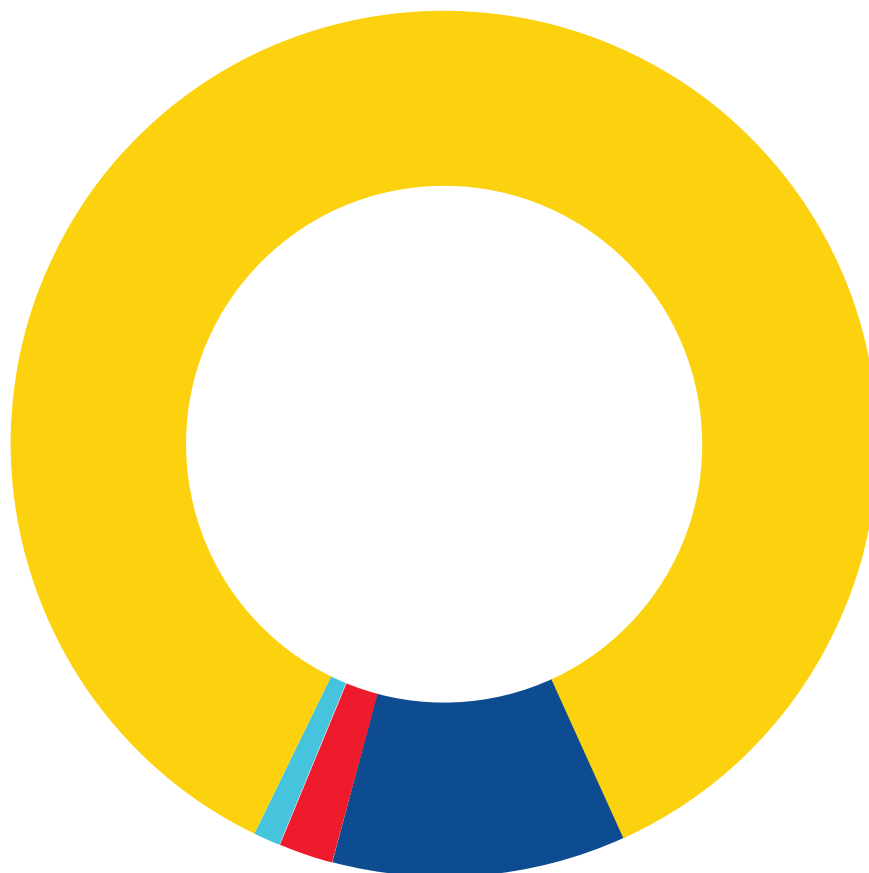
The table below provides the number of human rights inquiries received, the number of inquiries that proceeded to the complaint stage, and the average time for a complaint to move through the process. It should be noted that some human rights disputes can be quite complex and take longer periods of time to resolve.

	<b>April 1, 2017–March 31, 2018</b>
Inquiries Received (all incoming calls/emails/visits)	2,329
Complaints Accepted	121
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(a) – Best Interests Not Served	16
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(b) – Complaint is Without Merit	25
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(c) – No Significant Issue	6
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(d) – Previous Alternate Process	8
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(e) – Bad Faith/Improper Motives	0
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(f) – No Reasonable Likelihood	14
Complaints Closed by s.29(4)(g) – Exemption Order Granted	0
Complaints Closed by Non-Jurisdictional	0
Complaints Closed by Settlement Reached	36
Complaints Closed by BOI Decision	7
Total No. of Complaints Closed	105
Average time from Inquiry to filing Complaint (Days)	53
Average time from filing Complaint to Conclusion (Days)	231

Inquiries and complaints are made on the basis of a prohibited area and protected characteristic as defined under the Act. In many instances, inquiries and complaints involve more than one area or characteristic. While the majority of complaints in 2017–18 related to discrimination in the area of employment, particularly with respect to mental and physical disabilities, the Commission noted a marked increase in the number of complaints related to discrimination in the area of access to services, as illustrated in the below diagram.

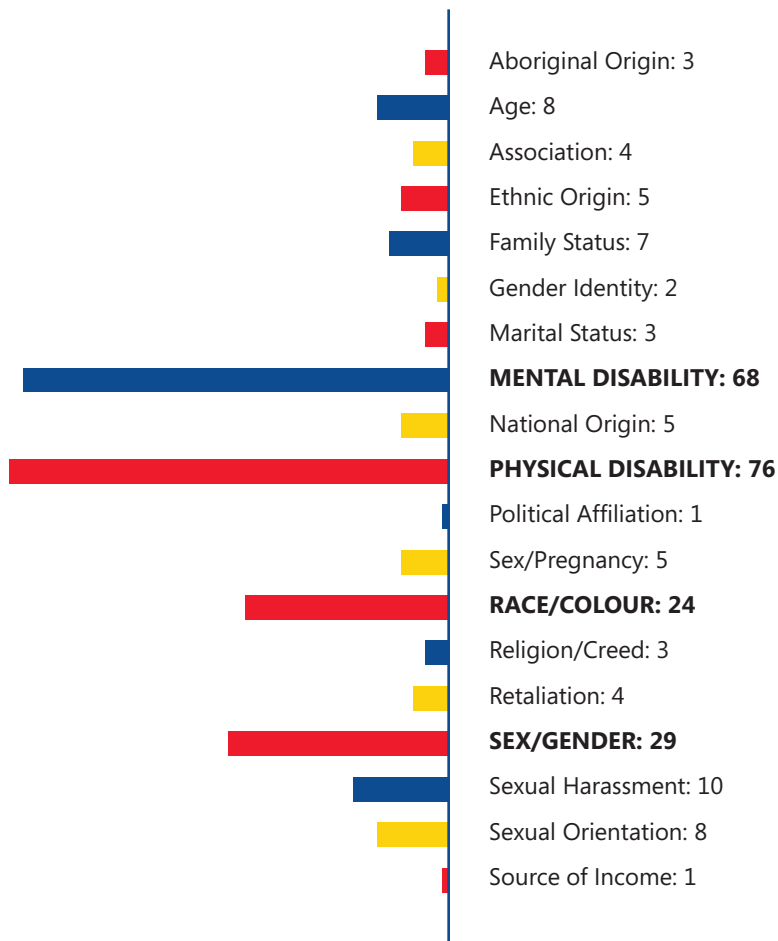
### NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS BY AREA

- ✦ Employment: 132
- ✦ Access to Services: 23
- ✦ Accommodation: 2
- ✦ Membership: 1



As noted in the previous diagram and shown in the chart below, the majority of complaints received during the 2017–18 fiscal year were on the basis of mental and/or physical disabilities. The Commission also noted an increase in the number of complaints of discrimination on the basis of gender.

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS  
BY CHARACTERISTIC



## Board of Inquiry Hearings

When parties are unable to resolve a complaint through the dispute resolution process, the matter is placed before the Commissioners to determine whether a Board of Inquiry (BOI) should be created. A BOI is an independent administrative tribunal, closely resembling a civil trial, that is conducted separate and apart from the activities of the Commission.

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

	<b>April 1, 2017–March 31, 2018</b>
BOI Referrals	4
Ongoing BOIs (including referrals 2016 to 2018)	7
Settled BOIs	6
BOI Decisions	1
BOI Dismissed	0
Judicial Reviews Ongoing	4
Judicial Reviews Dismissed/Withdrawn	2
Judicial Reviews Settled	1
Appeals Ongoing	4
Appeals Dismissed/Withdrawn	0

## BOARD OF INQUIRY DECISIONS 2017–2018

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

### **Sandra Wakeham v. Nova Scotia Department of the Environment**

<i>Interim Decision date:</i>	June 9, 2017
<i>Remedy Decision date:</i>	June 30, 2017
<i>Board Chair:</i>	Kathryn Raymond, QC
<i>Outcome:</i>	Finding of discrimination on the basis of physical disability
<i>Summary of decision:</i>	Ms. Wakeham was involved in a motor vehicle accident in 1999 and 2005 in which she was injured. The Department of the Environment was ordered to pay Ms. Wakeham \$86,000 in damages, plus a gross-up amount to offset any additional income tax. Additionally, simple interest will be calculated at a rate of 2.5% annually commencing from February 21, 2012. Decision under appeal by the Department of the Environment

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### **Curtis Coward v. Metro Housing Authority**

<i>Board Chair:</i>	Lynn Connors, QC
<i>Summary of decision:</i>	Chair Connors issued a brief decision accepting a settlement agreement put forth by the parties who settled before the commencement of a hearing. Terms of the settlement are confidential.

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### **Y.Z. v. Halifax Regional Municipality**

<i>Interim Decision date:</i>	March 19, 2018
<i>Board Chair:</i>	Lynn Connors, QC
<i>Outcome:</i>	Finding of discrimination on the basis of race; colour; ethnic, national or aboriginal origin; and that individual's association with another individual or class of individuals having characteristics referred to in clauses (h) to (u)
<i>Summary of decision:</i>	Y.Z., a Caucasian man married to an African Nova Scotia woman, filed a complaint of discrimination based on his association with his wife and several co-workers who were racialized people and whom he befriended. A decision on remedy is expected to follow.

## Education & Training

The Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* gives clear direction to the Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion (RREI), or education unit, of the Commission. The Act stipulates that RREI is to work with government departments, agencies, boards, commissions, non-government organizations, the community, and the private sector to develop programs and policies that facilitate Nova Scotians working together with respect and dignity, with knowledge of the Act and of human rights.

The majority of complaints received by the Commission result from disputes at the workplace, including those specifically involving people with disabilities. In many instances, one of the remedies that arises from the resolution of human rights disputes is for the respondent to develop or revise its organizational policies to help them meet their obligations under the Act.

In 2017-18, the number of mandated human rights education and training sessions that resulted from settlements or Board of Inquiry decisions remain on par with the previous fiscal year. Several Nova Scotia organizations and businesses requested human rights training and workshops for their managers and staff. As noted in the table below, a total of 42 education sessions with over 3,629 attendees were held during the 2017-18 fiscal year. The significant increase in the number of attendees is related to the Commission's participation in third party conferences such as the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education Regional Conference and the annual Passport 2 You—th Success.

### Description

### April 1, 2017–March 31, 2018

	<i>No. of Sessions</i>	<i>No. of Attendees</i>
Human Rights Education Workshop	8	98
Information Session/Requested Education	8	143
Mandated Education	13	122
Presentations/Conferences	8	3,102
Guest Speakers	5	164
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>3,629</b>

# STARTING THE CONVERSATION

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN OR BLACK COMMUNITY?

JOIN THE CONVERSATION WITH  
DR. SCOT WORTLEY ON STREET CHECKS!

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21ST  
THE WALLACE LUCAS COMMUNITY CENTRE  
596 LUCASVILLE RD. LUCASVILLE  
6:30P-8:00P

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND  
BEECHVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH HALL  
1135 ST. MARGARETS BAY RD. BEECHVILLE  
6:30P-8:00P

For more information contact 424-7281 or  
[HRCEducation@novascotia.ca](mailto:HRCEducation@novascotia.ca)



In addition to the education and training sessions held during the 2017–18 fiscal year, the commission promoted several initiatives related to human rights issues within the province: to engage communities with stakeholders; to develop partnerships; to advance human rights education; and address systemic discrimination. Some of these initiatives include: Police Street Checks, Consumer Racial Profiling, and Safe Places Make Great Work Spaces.



## POLICE STREET CHECKS

On September 18, 2017, the Commission announced that Dr. Scot Wortley was selected to conduct independent research into police street checks data related to persons of African descent. Informal meetings facilitated by Dr. Wortley were held with members of the African Nova Scotian community and provided an opportunity for community members to voice their concerns and ask questions. They also provided an opportunity for community members to contribute to Dr. Wortley's process and analysis of the data. These informal meetings were held in several African Nova Scotian communities throughout HRM, including Halifax, Cherry Brook, North Preston, Lucasville and Beechville.



## CONSUMER RACIAL PROFILING

In partnership with the Retail Council of Canada, the Commission launched an online course, “Serving All Customers Better”, on March 27, 2017 which has already been used by thousands of front-line retail and third-party security staff across Nova Scotia. The Commission continued to promote this initiative throughout 2017–18 in an effort to encourage participation province-wide.



## SAFE PLACES MAKE GREAT WORK SPACES

Forty-three per cent of women in Canada say they have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment at work is illegal under the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*. The Commission has experienced a significant rise in the number of calls concerning sexual harassment from employees and employers asking for advice on what constitutes sexual harassment and possible preventative training for their managers and staff. In response to these inquiries, the Commission, on International Women’s Day, March 8, 2018 and with support from the Nova Scotian business community, launched online tools to help employers address and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. Through the “Safe Spaces Make Great Workplaces” campaign, the Commission provided a free online course “Safe Spaces Make Great Workplaces”, as well as a free template for a sexual harassment policy that could be adapted by Nova Scotian business and organizations.



## Major Events

Through new and ongoing partnerships, Commission staff helped to advance public awareness and foster better engagement with the communities it serves. Part of this work involved coordinating and participating in major events throughout the fiscal year. Some of these events included:



### PRIDE 2017

The Commission returned as a proud sponsor of the 2017 Halifax Pride Week. Several staff and Commissioners participated in Pride Week events. Staff and Commissioners joined with staff from the Public Services Commission to share a float in the Halifax Pride Parade. The Commission handed out special rainbow wristlets “you have the right to be who you are”. Staff and commissioners in Digby, Sydney and Yarmouth participated in each communities Pride Parade.

*Photo: Commission CEO & Director and Commission staff share float with PSC at 2017 Halifax Pride Parade*



### 34TH ANNUAL AFRICVILLE REUNION

The Commission sponsored an information table at the 34th Annual Africville Reunion held on July 29, 2017 at Africville Park. This gathering, organized by the Africville Genealogy Society, welcomes hundreds of former residents, their families, and the wider community in celebration of the resilient spirit of Africville and as a memorial to this African Nova Scotian community located on the Bedford Basin which was demolished by the City of Halifax in the 1960s. The Commission provided pamphlets about the Commission and the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. On July 30, 2018, members of Commission staff also participated in the annual 3 p.m. church service which honours the historic Seaview Baptist Church, once the spiritual centre of Africville, and pays homage to all of the original family names of Africvilleans and their descendants.

*Photo: Manager of Race Relation, Equity and Inclusion at Commission's Information Table at 34th Annual Africville Reunion*



## 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION & INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY: DECEMBER 10TH

In collaboration with Partners for Human Rights, the Commission held celebrations for International Human Rights Day at the Spatz Theatre at Citadel High on December 8, 2017. As anniversaries are a time for reflection and renewal, the theme of this celebration was *"Learning from Our Past, Building for Our Future"*. In addition to distinguished speakers and cultural performances, there was the presentation of the 2017 Human Rights Awards and the presentation of a Certificate of Recognition on behalf of the Senate of Canada for 50 years of promoting human rights in Nova Scotia by Senator Wanda Thomas-Bernard.

*Photos: (top) Premier McNeil chatting with Commissioners of the Commission; (middle) Burundi drummers performing at 50th Anniversary Celebrations; (bottom) Senator Bernard presenting certificates*



Photos: (left) Nova Scotia Human Rights Commissioners; (bottom, left) Human Rights Awards 2017 program; (below) Senator Bernard speaking; (bottom, right) Certificate of Recognition



THE NOVA SCOTIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

in partnership with  
PARTNERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

# INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY AND AWARDS

in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

LEARNING FROM OUR PAST, BUILDING FOR OUR FUTURE

CITADEL HIGH SCHOOL SPATZ THEATRE  
08 DEC 2017 • 8:00 AM

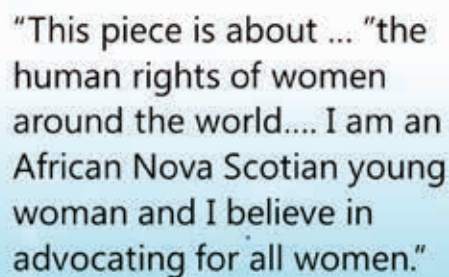
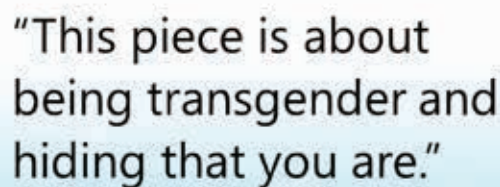
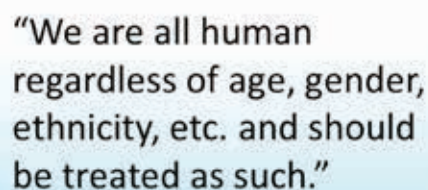




## YOUTH ART

To celebrate our 50th Anniversary, the Commission launched an initiative with Partners for Human Rights that encouraged youth aged 12–24 from across the province to submit works of art on what human rights means to them. The submitted work was displayed in libraries and community centres in Nova Scotia, including Halifax Central Public Library from May 1 to 12, Bridgewater in June and July, Wolfville Farmer’s Market in August and Truro from September 15 to 29. Four pieces of art were selected to be featured on the interiors of Halifax Transit buses during July, and digital displays of the art were playing at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport during September and October. All the young artists attended at the Human Rights Day and Awards and received recognition on their efforts from Premier McNeil and those in attendance.

*Photo (above): Premier McNeil with the Youth Artists;  
Graphics (right): Youth art featured inside Halifax Transit buses*





## 2017 HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD RECIPIENTS

The 2017 Nova Scotia Human Rights Awards were presented at the Commission's 50th Anniversary and December 10 International Human Rights Day celebrations. Nominations are received from the public in the categories of youth, individuals and group/organizations.



### YOUTH AWARD

*Joshua Cochrane, Yarmouth*

At a very young age, Joshua Cochrane was diagnosed with autism. Now, at 11 years old, he uses his personal journey to show the world that people on the spectrum can do anything that they want to do and help to foster a more inclusive environment for persons with disabilities. Josh has attended the World Autism Festival several times, which has enabled him to connect with his peers who have autism from over 60 different countries. He was featured in a documentary called *Connected: A Film About Autism*, which was screened in Hollywood, New York City and other cities around the world. Since the age of 2, Josh has used his musical talents to help raise awareness about childhood cancer, veterans, mental health, organ donations, stem cell/bone marrow donations, PTSD, Wounded Warriors Canada, Hospice, Relay for Life and Children's Miracle Network. By the time that he was 8 years old, Josh raised over \$300,000 for various charities. He was recently one of four recipients of the 2017 Prince of Wales Youth Service Award.

*Photo: Premier Stephen McNeil presents award to Joshua Cochrane*



### DR. ALLAN BURNLEY "ROCKY" JONES INDIVIDUAL AWARD

*Nicole Doria, Halifax*

Nicole Doria is a recent graduate of the Master of Health Promotion program at Dalhousie University and currently works in patient-oriented research at the Maritime SPOR Support Unit. Nicole holds leadership positions on the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre Board of Directors and the Indigenous Health Interest Group at Dalhousie, which aim to close the human rights gaps that exist for victims of sexualized violence and Indigenous peoples in Nova Scotia. Through her various roles, Nicole has become a strong advocate for improved Indigenous health and wellness, the advancement of an Indigenous curriculum, improved affirmative action policies, and the prevention of sexualized violence across the province. She is described as having a spirit of excellence, an incredible work ethic, a genuine ability to lead, and an inspirational desire to improve the world around her.

*Photo: Commissioner Cheryl Knockwood presents award to Nicole Doria*

*Dr. Allan Burnley "Rocky" Jones Individual Award*



*Wade Smith, Halifax*

Wade Smith embodied the "Each One, Teach One" philosophy and delighted in giving back to his community. An educator, mentor, community activist, loving husband to Sherry and father to Jaydan and Jaxon, Wade was a passionate humanitarian who championed human rights for all. A proud African Nova Scotian, he attained a Bachelor of Arts from Saint Francis Xavier University, a Bachelor of Education from Saint Mary's University, and a Master of Education degree from Mount Saint Vincent University. As a teacher and principal in public school, adult and university education for over 25 years, Wade was genuinely concerned about all students, particularly marginalized youth. He was solutions-focused; working conscientiously to create a safe learning environment that welcomed diversity, embraced equity and protected against discrimination and harassment. To fellow educators, he was a role model; leading the way on culturally proficient mentorship, curriculum and training development.

A devout athlete, he gave back to the basketball world through coaching at the Community YMCA, high school, and Basketball NS which led to the pinnacle of his coaching career when he was named head coach of Nova Scotia's U-17 Boys Canada Games Team. As a mentor, Wade believed in setting goals, sharing his time and making a difference in the lives of everyone he encountered. He often expressed, "Giving back was not a choice. It was an obligation." "You get up everyday and go to work and make a difference in someone's life." Above all, Wade emphasized that his family was paramount. His wife and sons were his source of support and strength enabling him to enrich the lives of many Nova Scotians. Wade's legacy lives on in the lives of all whom he inspired.

*Photo: Rev. Dr. Lennett Anderson presents award to Wade Smith's wife Sherry and son Jaxon*

*Dr. Allan Burnley "Rocky" Jones Individual Award*



*Angela Simmonds, Cherry Brook*

Angela Simmonds believes that the law can be used as a tool to address discrimination, systemic racism and inequities in our society. She has become a legal expert on Preston land claims and issues relating to the Land Titles Clarification Act (LTCA). Because of her work helping African Nova Scotians to obtain titles to their land that their families have lived on for generations, she appeared before a United Nations expert panel that subsequently echoed her recommendations in their preliminary report. She also worked closely with the Nova Scotia Community College to create a video on the subject that was recently awarded the Human Rights Amnesty Award. A JD graduate from the Dalhousie Schulich School of Law, Angela currently works for the Nova Scotia Legal Aid – Youth Office. She has previously worked for the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society, Federal Prosecution Service Canada, the Department of Natural Resources, Schools Plus and the Halifax Regional School Board. She is a recipient of the 2017 Judge Corrine Sparks Award and the 2017 Dalhousie Legal Aid Service's Sarah MacWalker MacKenzie Clinical Law Award.

*Photo: Tracey Jones-Grant presents award to Angela Simmonds*



**GROUP OR ORGANIZATION AWARD**

*Syria-Antigonish Families Embrace (SAFE)*

SAFE is a community initiative that has sponsored Syrian refugee families displaced from their homes by war and helped them to start a new life in Antigonish. It has a core organizing group of 20 people from all walks of life, but they are fortunate to have the active involvement and support of the larger community. Since May 2015, SAFE has sponsored four Syrian families with one more expected in early 2018 and another later in the year. The community has come together to secure and renovate housing; find furniture and clothing; connect the families with healthcare; settle the children in school and the adults in English language classes; help the adults to open bank accounts; and so much more. SAFE truly believes that the Syrian refugee families have helped Antigonish to become a better, more loving community and they are humbled by the generosity of all those who have supported the initiative.

*Photo: Minister of Immigration Lena Diab presents award to Syria-Antigonish Families Embrace*

#### *Group or Organization Award*

##### *Bill 59 Community Alliance*

The Bill 59 Community Alliance is a group of advocates that formed a single voice for persons with disabilities. It was supported by 35 organizations representing all disabilities. The Province of Nova Scotia invited the Alliance to help draft the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act. The first time such a collaborative legislative drafting process has been undertaken in the province. The result: perhaps the most progressive accessibility act in Canada with a stated goal to make the province fully accessible by 2030. It is the third such Act in Canada. It also profoundly changed the institutional landscape for supporting persons with disabilities, transforming it from a Social Service Model to a Human Rights Model. The Act resides with the Minister of Justice.

*Photos: (below) Diana Whalen presents award to Bill 59 Community Alliance; (top, right) CEO with Gerry Post and the late Luc Robicheau of the Bill 59 Alliance; (middle, right) Minister of Justice, Diane Whalen making presentation to Gerry Post on behalf of Bill 59 Alliance; (bottom, right) Other members of Bill 59 Alliance*



## Group or Organization Award



### *Women's Wellness Within, Halifax*

Women's Wellness Within is a non-profit organization that supports criminalized women and trans individuals who are pregnant or parenting young children in Nova Scotia. In addition to one-on-one client support, WWW facilitates monthly workshops on women's health for imprisoned women; leads seminars for health professionals and students; and speaks publicly to raise consciousness of the rights and reproductive health experiences of criminalized women. WWW's work also includes advocacy on behalf of criminalized women on issues, such as banning the solitary confinement of women; providing access to internet and phone for incarcerated women to communicate with their families and to develop health literacy; ensuring dignity and respect for imprisoned trans individuals; and developing alternatives to incarceration to advance reproductive justice and women's rights to parent. WWW's 50+ members include formerly incarcerated women, doulas, health care providers, lawyers, students, researchers and mentors. It works in close partnership with the Chebucto Family Centre, the Elizabeth Fry Societies of Cape Breton and Mainland Nova Scotia, the IWK Health Centre, and the Halifax Branch of the Women's Legal Education Action Fund.

*Photo: Commission Chair Eunice Harker presents award to Martha Paynter on behalf of Women's Wellness Within*

## Major Events



### **MARCH 21, THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

In recognition of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 21, the provincial government presented the Commission with a proclamation proclaiming March 21, 2018 as International Day for the Elimination of Racism in the province of Nova Scotia.

The Sydney Office of the Commission also recognized International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by sponsoring the annual Harmony Lunch which featured Rev. Mother Phyllis Marsh, the first African Canadian Woman to be ordained in Canada, as special guest speaker.

*Photos:  
Minister Ince  
presenting Chair of  
the Commission,  
Eunice Harker, with a  
Proclamation  
re: International Day  
of Elimination of Racial  
Discrimination in the  
Legislature*

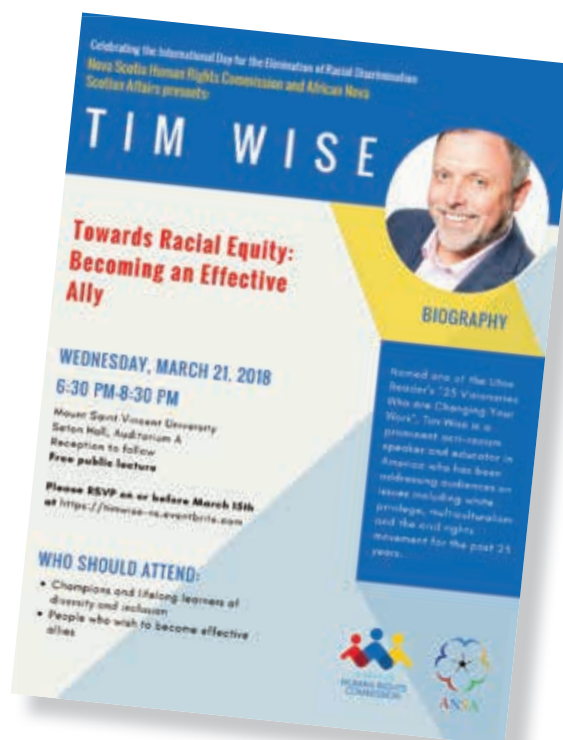




## MARCH 21 PUBLIC LECTURE WITH TIM WISE – TOWARDS RACIAL EQUITY: BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE ALLY

On March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Commission and the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs sponsored a presentation by Tim Wise, one of the most prominent anti-racist writers and educators in the United States. Tim Wise has been addressing audiences across the U.S. for 25 years. He has been named one of Utne Reader's "25 Visionaries Who are Changing Your World" and has contributed chapters or essays to over 25 books, and his writings are taught in academic institutions across the nation. He also hosts a new podcast, Speak Out with Tim Wise. The topics of Mr. Wise's two presentations were Unpacking White Privilege and Towards Racial Equity: Becoming an Effective Ally.

*Photos: (top, left) Well-known anti-racism activist, Tim Wise; (top, right) Minister Ince, Tim Wise, Minister Diab, Minister Furey*





## AUBA CONFERENCE

The Commission sponsored an information table at the African United Baptist Association's (AUBA) 164th annual conference held in Beechville on August 20, 2017. Information materials on the Commission and the Act were made available to African Nova Scotian delegates and others attending the conference. The AUBA is the oldest African Nova Scotian organization, established in 1854 under the visionary leadership of Rev. Richard Preston. This organization was formed to connect Black Baptist churches throughout Nova Scotia. The annual association continues the AUBA's tradition of meeting with its members across the province during the third weekend of August for fellowship, informative workshops, lively music, and inspired preaching.

*Photo: Manager of Race Relation, Equity and Inclusion, at Commission's information table at the AUBA Conference*



## RECONCILIATION: LET'S START THE CONVERSATION

October is Mi'kmaw Heritage Month. On October 18, 2017, the Commission, in collaboration with the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, held a community event, "Reconciliation: Let's Start the Conversation", to develop a strategy on how the urban indigenous community and residents of Halifax can move forward together towards Reconciliation. A panel presentation on topics including Justice, Residential Schools, Culture and Education was held, followed by an interactive discussion on ways to move ahead with Reconciliation. Attendees learned more about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings, and what they mean for the community.

# Contact Us

## **NOVA SCOTIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

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