



Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

2024-2025
Annual Report

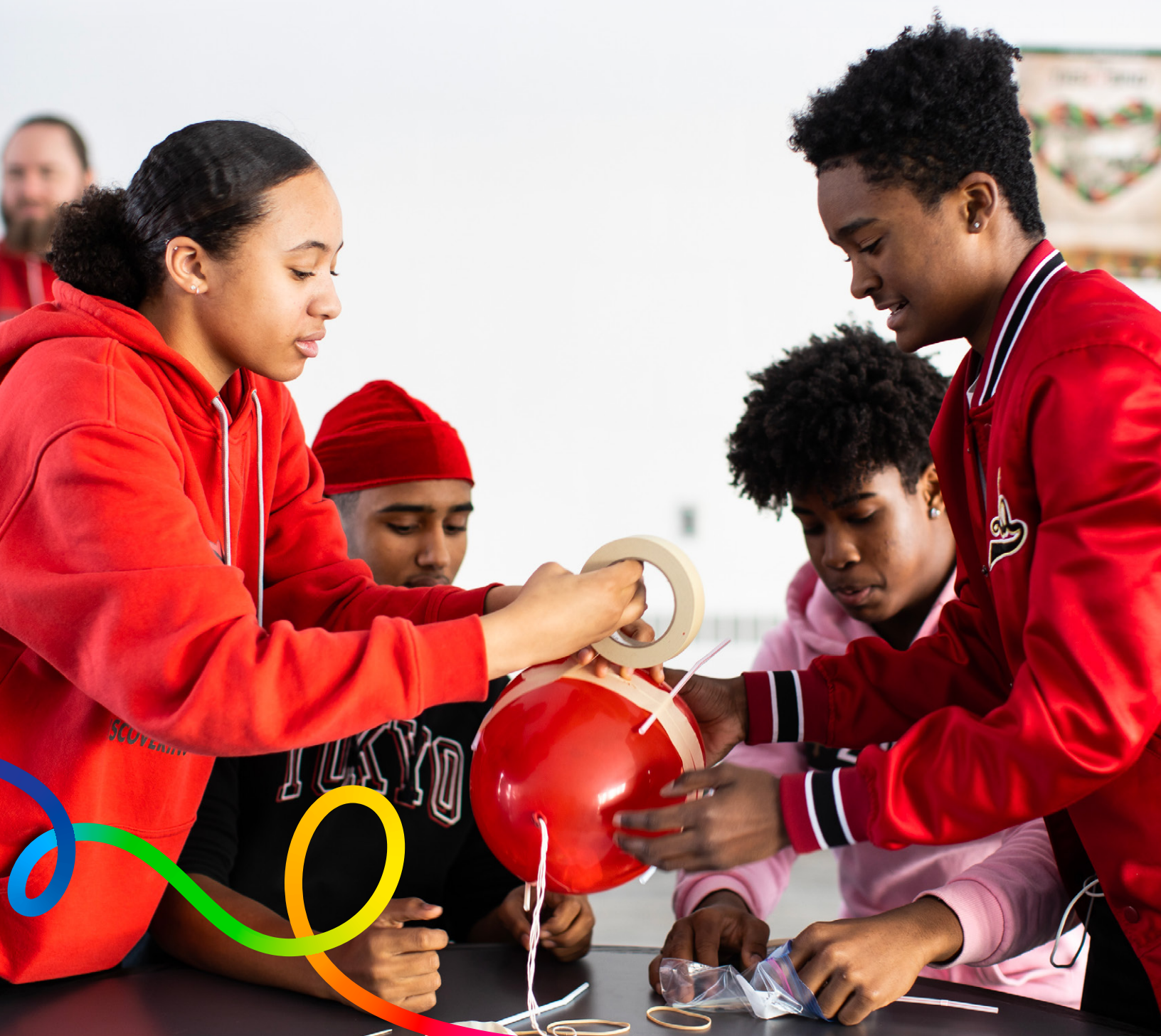


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Recognizing Our Origins

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 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 our annual report for the 2024–25 fiscal year.

This year, the Commission advanced its mandate to protect and promote human rights by modernizing services, strengthening community partnerships, and expanding public education. We remain firmly committed to building inclusive communities through approaches that are accessible, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and restorative.

We continued to advance access to justice by refining complaint processes, enhancing data collection, and modernizing systems to better serve the public. These changes, paired with inclusive and trauma-informed practices, have made our services more responsive and effective. Internally, staff development, clear service standards, and ongoing process improvements have further strengthened accountability and transparency.

Our outreach extended across the province through education and training sessions, guest speaking, media engagements, public events, and participation in observances such as Emancipation Day, Pride, Mi'kmaw History Month, and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We were also proud to support community initiatives including the Eskasoni Two-Spirit Festival and African Heritage Month, and many others.

The Commission strengthened key partnerships through collaborations with the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, and other community organizations. Together, we advanced initiatives in housing, anti-racism, accessibility, and newcomer inclusion, while deepening our relationships with L'nu, African Nova Scotian, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and persons with disabilities.

The annual Human Rights Awards honoured inspiring Nova Scotians whose efforts are strengthening equity and justice across the province. Human Rights Week featured events, panel discussions, and a screening of the award-winning documentary Sugarcane, reinforcing the importance of reflection, dialogue, and action.

This year marked the beginning of the five-year remedy in the Disability Rights Coalition v. Province of Nova Scotia, during which the province issued its first annual report on progress toward a transformative shift away from the institutionalization of persons with disabilities.

These achievements reflect our collective progress in protecting rights, fostering inclusion, and building a stronger, more equitable Nova Scotia. I extend my sincere thanks to our staff and Commissioners for their dedication as we advance a modernization process that will strengthen our ability to meet the evolving challenges of today's human rights landscape.

Joseph Fraser, *Director and CEO*

Commissioners and Commission Meetings

The Commission is legislated under the *Human Rights Act* (the “Act”) to have at least three and no more than twelve Commissioners. Within the 2024-25 fiscal year, there was one new Commissioner appointed. The following community members served as Commissioners during the fiscal year:

Cheryl Knockwood (<i>Chair, Apr – May</i>)
Cynthia Dorrington (<i>Chair, Jun – Mar</i>)
Joseph Fraser (<i>Director and CEO, non-voting member</i>)
Jenifer Tsang (<i>Vice-Chair</i>)
Blair Eavis
Diana Brothers
Fola Adeleke
John Boddie
Julien Matte
Monica Paris
Natasha Pearl
Robin Thompson
Sharon Ross
Theodore Morrison

Commissioners are selected from a wide range of backgrounds and represent the diverse communities within Nova Scotia. Their appointments are made by an Executive Order of Executive Council.

Commissioner responsibilities are outlined in *the Act*. These include providing strategic direction for the Commission and making decisions on human rights matters, such as referring complaints to Boards of Inquiry.

The Commissioners typically convene six times per year, with meetings generally taking place virtually or in person at the Commission’s Halifax office. Sessions are also held in various communities beyond the Halifax Regional Municipality. Regular bi-monthly meetings focus on reviewing and adjudicating human rights cases, addressing emerging human rights concerns in Nova Scotia, and advancing awareness of human rights issues.



Our Strategic Direction

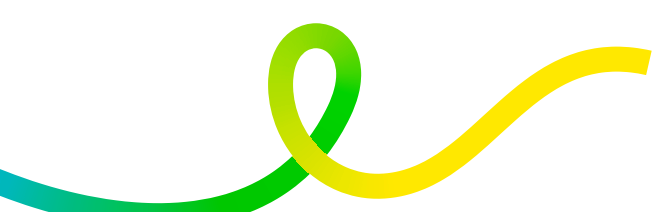
Fiscal 2024-25 saw the Commission re-center L'nu and African wisdom to help hone our focus and define our objectives. By operationalizing a vision that empowers Nova Scotians to leverage a tradition of social justice toward a more equitable future through education, collaboration, and inclusion we hope to honour the L'nu people whose land we occupy as well as the people of African descent who fought for justice, the establishment of the Act, and the Commission. The two pillars of our strategic direction that guide our work are:

1. Removing barriers to social justice through inclusive practices

The Commission believes that social justice should be accessible to all, regardless of background or circumstances. The Commission's goal is to establish a practice that is centered around the needs of individuals and communities, where everyone has equal access to services, and a dispute resolution system that is trauma-informed, restorative, and culturally competent.

2. Empowering communities through transformative education

The Commission envisions a path forward where education is not only a means of acquiring knowledge, but also a proactive tool to create transformational change. The Commission's goal is to galvanize this change by empowering communities to combat discrimination through education that is accessible, inclusive, and equitable.





Mandate and Vision

Mandate

The Commission serves a distinct function in Nova Scotia as an independent government agency responsible for administering *the Act* - a provincial statute established in 1969 and last amended in 2012. Under its legislative mandate, the Commission is dedicated to fostering inclusive communities and safeguarding human rights throughout Nova Scotia.

The Act outlines the duties of the Commission, which include administering and enforcing its provisions. Additionally, the Commission is responsible for developing public information and education programs relating to human rights, with the aim of promoting the principle that every individual is entitled to equality and dignity. This applies regardless of factors such as 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 beliefs or activities, association with protected groups or individuals, experiences of sexual harassment or other harassment, or retaliation.

The Commission is responsible for conducting and promoting research related to human rights through universities and other organizations. It provides guidance to government departments and agencies on human rights concerns and supports individuals and private organizations involved in human rights matters by presenting recommendations to enhance awareness both inside and outside the province.

In accordance with *the Act*, the Commission submits reports on its activities to the Minister of Justice and undertakes consideration, investigation, or administration of matters referred to it by either the Minister or the Governor-in-Council.

The dual responsibilities entrusted to the Commission—administering the provisions of *the Act* to safeguard human rights, as well as promoting human rights through educational initiatives, community outreach, and engagement—naturally present a healthy tension between its protective and proactive functions.

The Commission strives to ensure everyone understands their rights and has access to a clear, fair, and effective process.

The Commission does not advocate for any particular individual or group but rather represents and promotes the public interest in advancing its vision and mission.



Our Vision

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



Our Mission

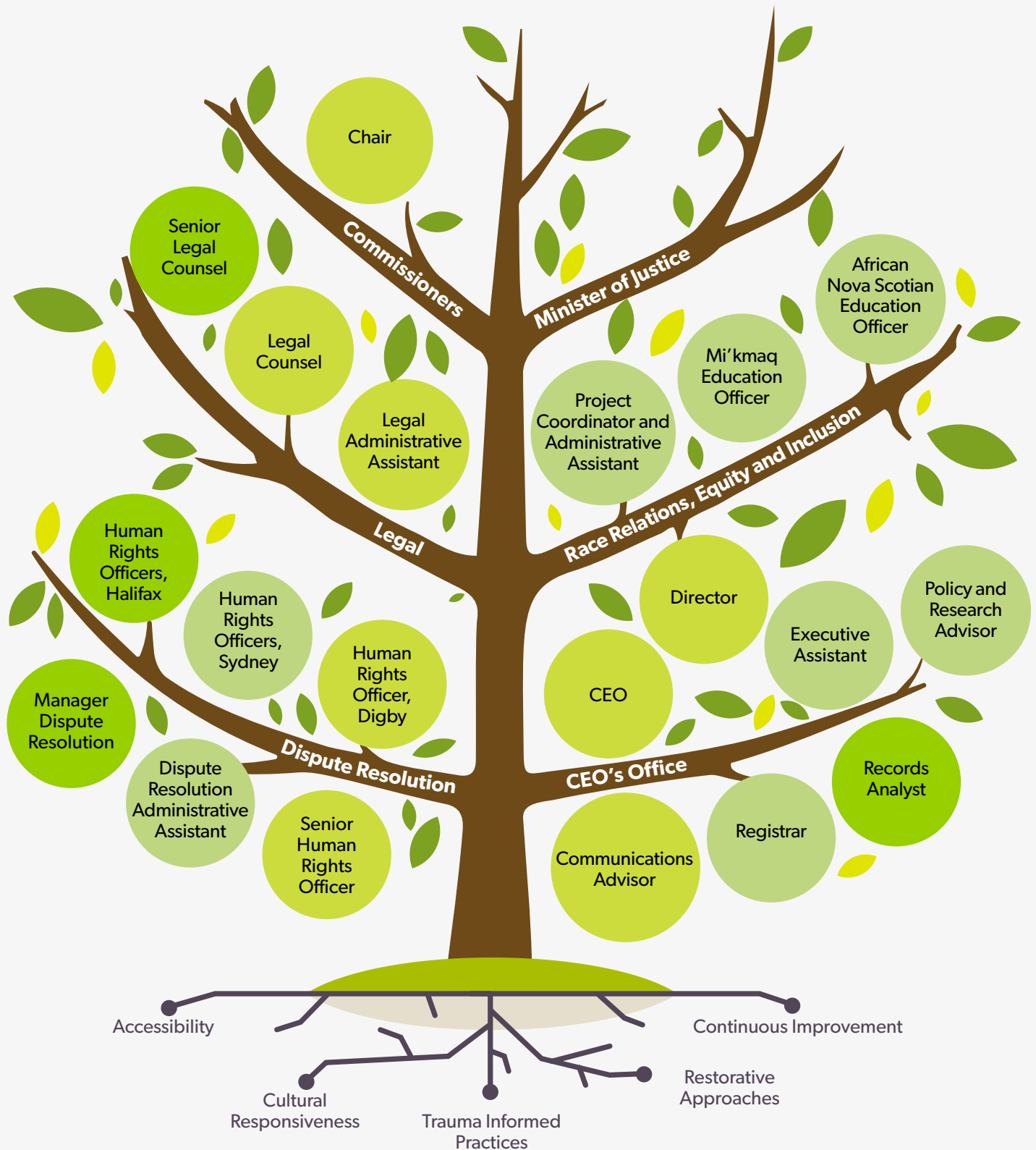
To protect and promote a common standard of human rights for all Nova Scotians based on the inherent dignity, equality, and inalienable rights of every individual.



Our Values

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

Organizational Structure



Inquiries and Dispute Resolution



The Commission routinely handles a significant volume of public contact, which includes general questions regarding *the Act*, requests for information, and substantive concerns relating to potential human rights violations, discrimination, and harassment based on protected characteristics. Inquiries that fall within the Commission's jurisdiction may be formalized into complaints and proceed to either the early resolution process or an investigation.

Upon confirming that an inquiry falls within the Commission's jurisdiction and accepting it as a complaint, Commission staff engage with all relevant parties, facilitating dialogue and cooperation to reach an amicable and mutually satisfactory resolution where possible. The Commission utilizes restorative approaches designed to promote understanding, repair relationships, and assist all parties in moving forward constructively.

During the investigation phase, if it is determined that there is insufficient evidence to support allegations of discrimination as defined by the *Act*, or if the matter is resolved informally or withdrawn, the Director and CEO is authorized to dismiss the complaint under section 29(4) of *the Act*.

Comprehensive information regarding the Commission's dispute resolution procedures can be accessed on our website at humanrights.novascotia.ca/process.

The table below presents data from the 2024-25 fiscal year including the total number of human rights inquiries received, the number of inquiries that escalated to the complaint stage, and the average timeframe for complaint resolution. Please note that some cases may involve greater complexity and require additional time to resolve.

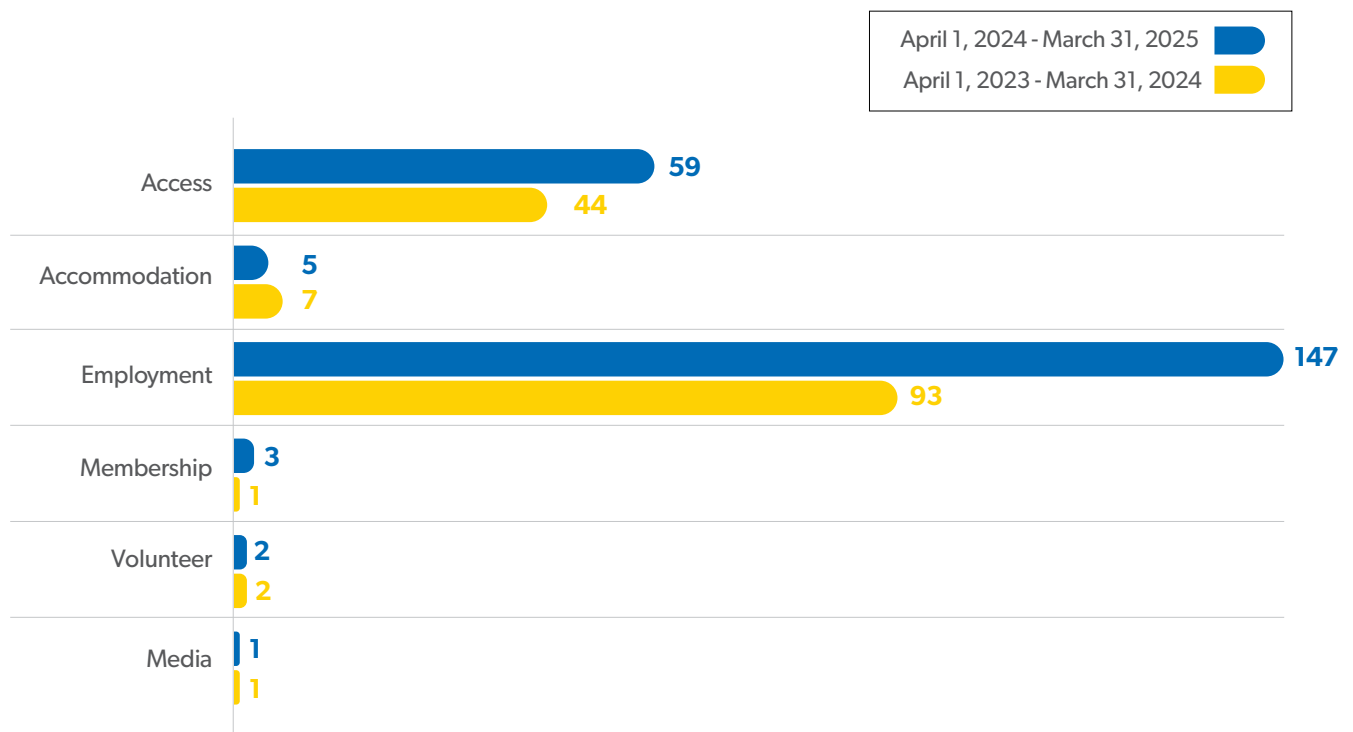
April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025	
General contacts (all incoming calls/emails/visits)	2,142
Inquiries received	509
Inquiries not accepted as complaints	292
Complaints accepted	217
Complaints closed by s.29(4)(a) - best interests not served	17
Complaints closed by s.29(4)(b) - complaint is without merit	1
Complaints closed by s.29(4)(c) - no significant issues of discrimination	19
Complaints closed by s.29(4)(d) – appropriately dealt with pursuant to another Act or proceeding	2
Complaints closed by s.29(4)(e) – complaint is made in bad faith or for improper motives or is frivolous or vexatious	0
Complaints closed by s.29(4)(f) - no reasonable likelihood that an investigation will reveal evidence of a contravention of this Act	0
Complaints closed by s.29(4)(g) – circumstances for which an exemption order has been made pursuant to Section 9	0
Complaints closed by settlement reached	15
Complaints referred to Board of Inquiry	19
Total no. of complaints closed	73
Average days from initial contact to complaint signed	297
Average days from initial contact to conclusion	897

The Commission has established a framework for making process improvements throughout its service delivery. The initial project addressed inefficiencies in the intake process. These changes, which targeted a reduction in processing time, led to a 47% increase in accepted complaints compared to the previous year, while the number of general contacts from the public remained largely unchanged. The intake assessment criteria was maintained, but enhancements were made to the tools and resources used to expedite the process, making the process 47% more efficient overall. The investigations process will be the subsequent area of focus for process enhancements.

Complaints by Area

The Commission accepts complaints that demonstrate a reasonable link between at least one prohibited area and one protected characteristic as stipulated by *the Act*. It is possible for a single complaint to involve more than one characteristic or area.

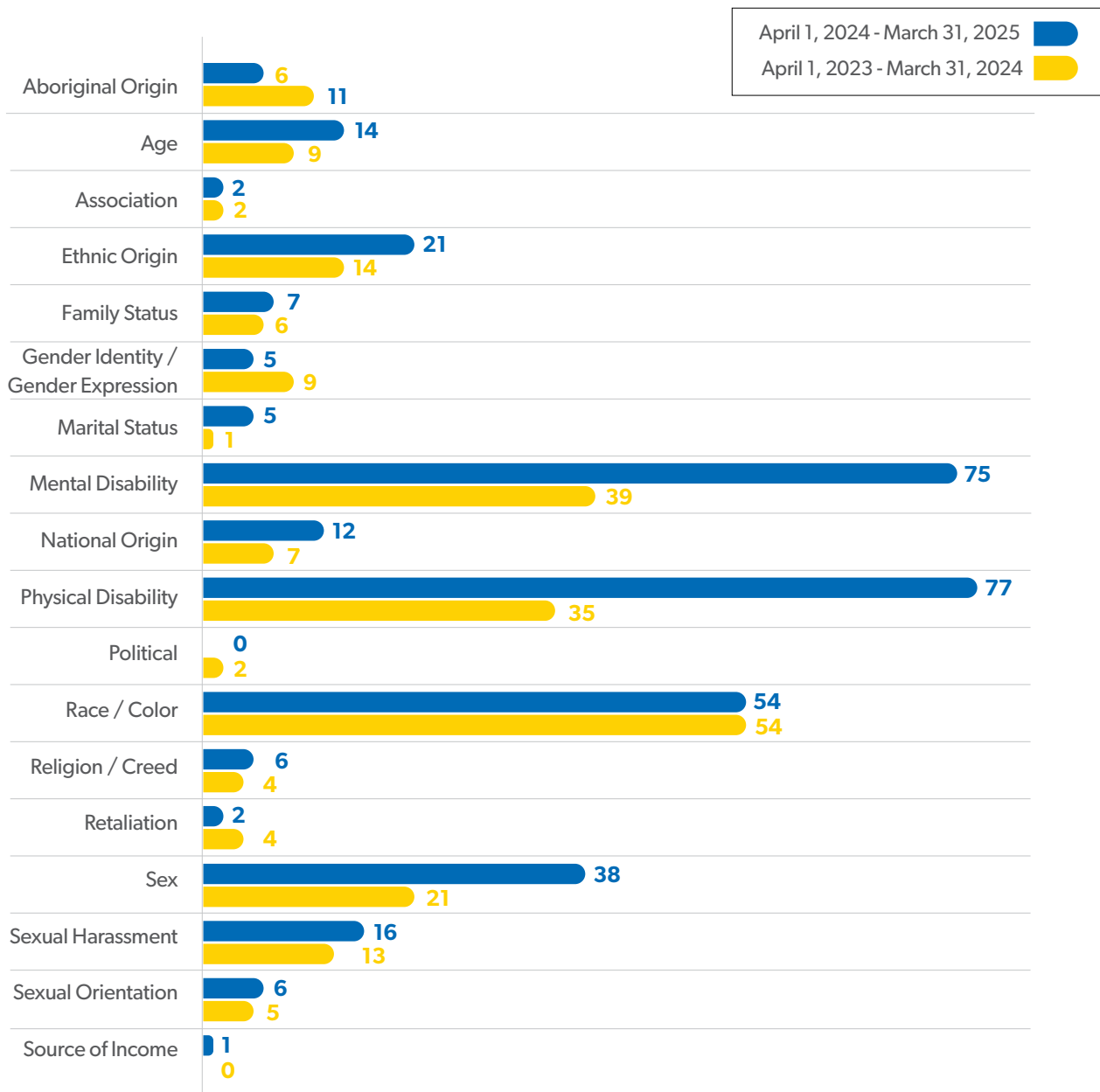
Employment-related complaints represented the largest category, reaching 147 cases compared to 93 in the previous year, marking a substantial increase. Complaints concerning access to services or facilities ranked next, with 59 reported cases versus 44 previously.



Complaints by Characteristic

Race/color (54), mental disability (75), and physical disability (77) represented the highest number of complaints received by protected characteristic this year. Compared to the previous year, physical disability complaints increased by 120% (42 additional complaints) and mental disability complaints increased by 92% (36 additional complaints). Race/color complaints remained unchanged at 54.

During this period there were also notable increases in complaints related to age (56%), ethnic origin (50%), national origin (71%), and sex (81%). Complaints concerning aboriginal origin, gender identity/gender expression and political belief, affiliation or activity decreased moderately.

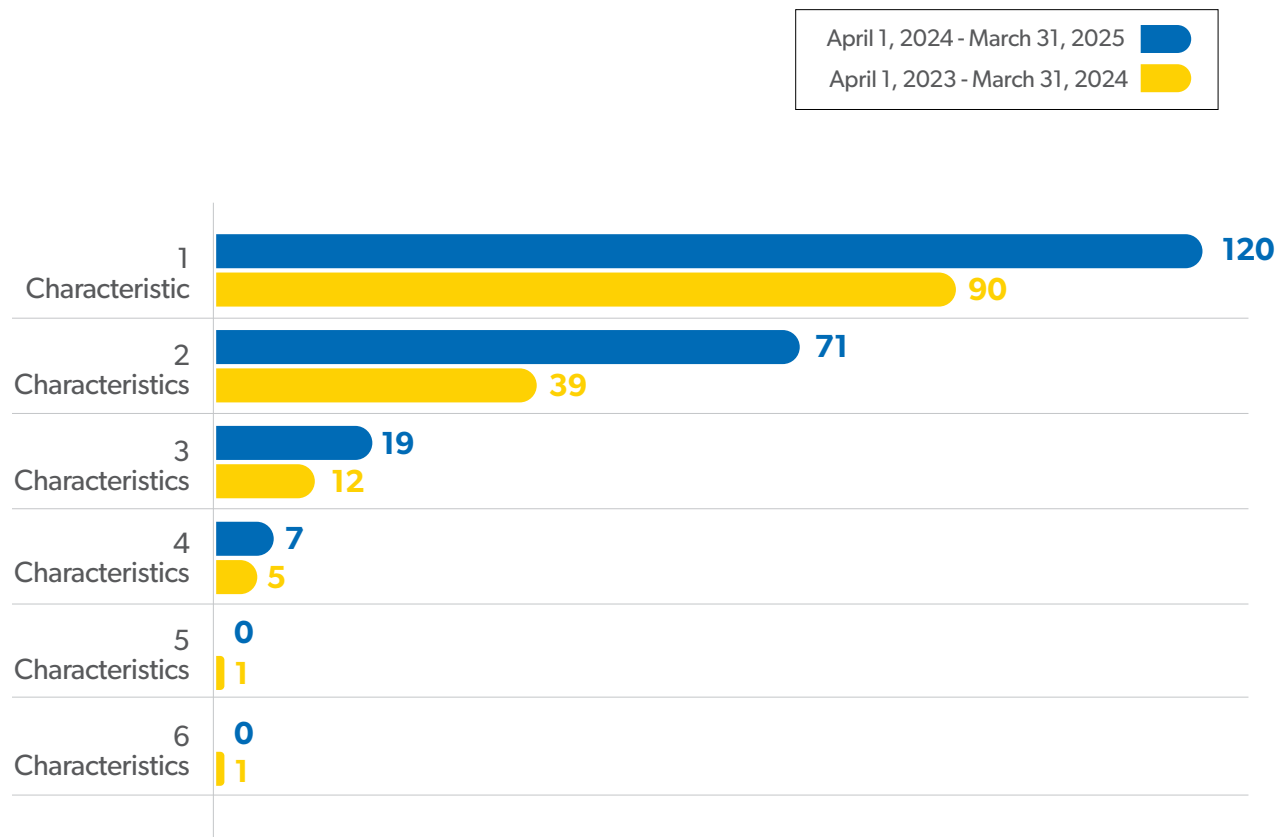


Complaints having Multiple Characteristics

No individual can be defined by a single characteristic. Although most complaints submitted to the Commission were predicated on one protected ground, some cases involved multiple intersecting characteristics. The convergence of attributes such as race, gender, and disability is not isolated; rather, these factors interact to shape each person's experience of privilege or marginalization.

There has been a rise in the number of protected characteristics identified in accepted complaints. This upward trend extends beyond mere statistics, reflecting a growing recognition that discrimination often involves multiple protected characteristics.

The compounding impacts of discrimination based on multiple characteristics result in more complex cases being brought to the Commission, underscoring the ongoing need for greater skill and time required in both dispute resolution and public education.





Board of Inquiry Hearings

If a complaint cannot be resolved between the parties, an investigation may be initiated, culminating in the presentation of an investigation report to the Commissioners of the Commission for their review and decision. The Commissioners have the authority to dismiss the complaint or refer it to a Board of Inquiry (BOI). The BOI functions as an independent administrative tribunal, chaired by an individual appointed by the Chief Judge of the Nova Scotia Provincial Court.

Following the appointment of a BOI, there remains an opportunity for the matter to be resolved through settlement before or during the hearing process. During this reporting period, seven cases before the BOI were settled between the parties.

The following table summarizes the status of Boards of Inquiry considered during this reporting period.

April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025

BOI Referrals	19
Ongoing BOIs	34
Settled BOIs	7
BOI Decisions	1
Judicial Reviews Ongoing	6
Judicial Reviews Decisions	3
Appeals Ongoing	0
Appeals Decisions	1

Adjudicators Appointed to Roster for Human Rights Inquiries

In 2024-25, a call for applications for BOI adjudicators was issued, and a six-member selection committee representing diverse perspectives was formed under the leadership of the Chief Judge of the Provincial and Family Courts. Candidates were evaluated on their qualifications for the position, with recommendations for appointment subsequently provided to the Commissioners. As a result, ten Nova Scotia lawyers were appointed to a roster from which members are selected to adjudicate complaints of alleged discrimination under *the Act*. This selection process increased the diversity of the roster, helping ensure diverse perspectives inform the evolution of human rights law.

Adjudicators serve a vital function within the province's independent human rights system as outlined by *the Act*. In instances where allegations of discrimination cannot be resolved through the Commission's dispute resolution framework, the matter may be referred to a BOI for a public hearing and decision. These boards operate independently of the Commission.



Board of Inquiry Decisions

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

Ross Gray v. Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission and/or Commissionaires of Nova Scotia

Ross Gray was walking his bicycle across the MacDonald bridge. Someone else was unlawfully riding their bicycle at the same time and in almost the same location. The bridge patrol officers mistakenly assumed the complainant was the cyclist and erroneously stopped him to investigate a potential by-law infraction. Gray alleged that he was racially profiled and discriminated against by the officers.

The evidence showed the incident was a mistake, not discrimination and Gray did not prove on a balance of probabilities that race or colour were factors in how he was treated by the respondents. Even though there was a distinction in this case that resulted in disadvantage and harm to the complainant, the test for discrimination was not met. The complaint was dismissed.

Remedy in the Disability Rights Coalition v. Province of Nova Scotia

The human rights complaint of Beth MacLean, Sheila Livingstone, Joseph Delaney, and Disability Rights Coalition of Nova Scotia vs. Province of Nova Scotia examined the practice of institutionalization of persons with disabilities resulting in a finding of systemic discrimination and a remedy that promises to transform how Nova Scotians with disabilities are supported to live in community.

This is a monumental undertaking guided by a five-year resolution process which is being monitored by an independent expert and progress reported annually.

Importantly, progress reporting and monitoring of this work is available to the public with the reporting done on a scheduled basis to monitor the work of the province in the implementation of the terms of the interim settlement agreement.

The first round of reporting by the Province and the independent monitor were issued in May 2024 and are available via the Commission's website at humanrights.novascotia.ca/remedy.



Promoting Human Rights



The Commission is dedicated to serving Nova Scotians through its dual mandate of safeguarding and advancing human rights. This commitment is reflected in all aspects of the Commission’s operations, with the Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion (RREI) unit specifically tasked with proactively promoting human rights.

Established in 1991 in response to recommendations from the Royal Commission on the Donald Marshall Jr. prosecution, RREI engages collaboratively with community organizations, government agencies, and the private sector. The unit’s mission is to foster racial harmony, equity, and inclusion while addressing and preventing systemic discrimination, thereby contributing to a more inclusive Nova Scotia. Section 26A of *the Act* further underpins this responsibility.

To advance human rights across the province, RREI leads the Commission’s efforts by implementing a strategic five-pronged approach, as detailed below:

Human Rights Education and Public Awareness



Human Rights Education and Public Awareness

We are noting a shift in public discourse on human rights. In some countries, this has led to initiatives affecting the rights of certain groups and changes to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs. In Canada and Nova Scotia, these trends are less pronounced, which may be attributed to differences in government systems and the quasi-constitutional legal status of human rights. Nonetheless, there has been growing discussion in Nova Scotia sometimes characterized as a “rights vs. rights” debate, with confusion regarding the limitations on individual rights. There is now a greater need for public education about the obligations and protections under *the Act*. Education plays a key role in supporting equal treatment and preventing discrimination and harassment.

Public requests for information and services have increased this year, nearly doubling the number for the same period last year.

RREI provides human rights education and promotes awareness of human rights issues throughout Nova Scotia, using adult education principles from culturally relevant and decolonized perspectives. Training can be mandated by settlement agreements, BOI decisions, or it may be offered proactively upon request from organizations in the non-governmental, public, and private sectors. Educational offerings can also be tailored to specific needs.

Some examples of human rights education provided by RREI include:

- **Human Rights 101:** Participants gain a general overview of *the Act*, the mandate of the Commission, discrimination, protected characteristics, prohibited areas, employment equity, workplace accommodations, and bona fide occupational requirements.
- **Disrupting Bias:** In this workshop, participants explore how specific language, and words can either strengthen or challenge relationships depending on context. Participants are introduced to methods to disrupt challenging language and set expectations to support an inclusive climate.
- **Wije'winen (Come with us):** In this workshop, participants are introduced to the intersection of Mi'kmaw culture, and human rights as protected under *the Act*. The session invites participants to engage with Indigenous worldviews and values while deepening their understanding of equity, dignity, and inclusion.

In addition to the training outlined above, RREI also provided customized education and engaged in awareness-raising activities, such as public events, guest speaking opportunities, media interviews, and social media campaigns around key human rights issues. These efforts involved government entities, schools, post-secondary institutions, community organizations, and private businesses.

This year Commission staff completed training in restorative conferencing, intercultural approaches to gender-based violence with newcomer communities, disrupting bias, Healing Workplaces: Having Dignified and Equitable Conversations, supporting trauma and violence-informed work environments, "Magit's Doll" workshop, self-care seminar, Occupational Health and Safety for Managers and Supervisors, Accessibility-Confident Leadership, Diversity for Leaders, Preventing Violent Extremism, and various other topics.

Staff also participated in observances for Access Awareness Week, Red Dress Day & MMIWG2S Gatherings, Pride Parade (Halifax), Emancipation Day, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Mi'kmaw History Month, African Heritage Month, the Grand Pow Wow held by the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, and others.

External Trainers

The Commission maintains a roster of external educators with a variety of lived experiences and dynamic offerings. Some topics offered include:

2SLGBTQIA+ and gender inclusion,
Anti-racism and anti-black racism strategies,
Combatting antisemitism and racism,
Cultural competence,
Cultural audits and diversity recruitment strategies,
Diversity and inclusion,
Employee engagement & cultural intelligence,
Inclusive leadership,
Inclusive sport fundamentals,

Intersection of gender and race in the workplace,
Mental health in the workplace,
Neurodivergent realities,
Preventing sexual harassment,
Role of policies, practices and processes in building equitable organizations,
Unconscious bias and anti-oppression training, and understanding microaggressions.

For more information on our External Trainer Roster, please visit:
<https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/education/external-human-rights-trainers>.

Human Rights Education Statistics

In the 2024-25 fiscal year, 187 services were offered, engaging 2,944 participants. There was a marked increase in public requests for services this year.



2,944
participants engaged with
education sessions in 2024-25

Description	No. of Services Offered		No. of People Engaged	
	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24
Human Rights Education Workshop	18	20	259	360
Information Session/Requested Education	12	6	446	83
Mandated Education	6	1	57	10
Presentations/Conferences	21	23	1,701	2,320
Guest Speakers	11	4	362	113
Public Request	119	42	119	42
TOTAL	187	96	2,944	2928

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.

1,580
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.

1,172
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.

1,427
Courses
completed

Total online training courses completed: **4,179**
This represents an increase of 16% from the previous year (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 this year:

Aboriginal Peoples Training & Employment Commission (APTEC)

Acadian Affairs and Francophonie

Accessibility Directorate

African Nova Scotian Justice Institute

African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition

Ally Centre (Sydney)

Atlantic International Film Festival

Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia

Atlantic International Film Festival

Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia

Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies

Canadian Mental Health Association (Annapolis Valley)

Canadian Museum for Human Rights

Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21

Canadian Sport Institute Atlantic

Cape Breton University

Centre for Migrant Workers' Rights

Citadel High School GSA

Clean Nova Scotia

Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM)

Dalhousie University

Department of Opportunities and Social Development

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Delmore Buddy Daye Learning Institute

Halifax Immigration Partnership

Halifax Public Libraries

Halifax Refugee Clinic

Halifax Regional Municipality

Halifax Regional Police

Immigrant Services Association of NS (ISANS)

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Immigrant Migrant Women's Association of Halifax (IMWAH)

Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia (IONS)

Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre

Native Council of Nova Scotia

New Dawn Enterprises

Nova Multifest

Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage

Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs

Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities (NSLEO)

Nova Scotia Public Prosecution Service

Nova Scotia Status of Women

Nova Scotia Works

NSCC Achieve Program (Akerley Campus, IT Campus)

NSCC Women Unlimited

Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs

Office of Equity and Anti-Racism

Office of the Federal Housing Advocate

Office of Workplace Mental Health (OWMH)

Rainbow Refugee Association of Nova Scotia (RRANS)

Reachability Association

Regional Residential Services Society (RRSS)

Saint Mary's University

Sea Change CoLab

Screen Nova Scotia

Millbrook First Nation

Skills for Change (Ontario)

Sport Nova Scotia

Ummah Society

Tajikeimik

Team Works Nova Scotia

Tribal Council of the Union of NS Mi'kmaq (UNSM)

The Youth Project

YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs

Walk to Honour MMIWG2S

Commission staff walked together with the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre on May 5 in remembrance of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S). Also known as Red Dress Day, this important observance raises awareness of the disproportionate harm and violence done against Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people across Turtle Island.

Access Awareness Week

Commission staff worked with the Partnership for Access Awareness Week Nova Scotia in the planning, promotion and hosting of a week-long celebration of inclusion of persons with disabilities commemorated annually throughout the last week of May. Members of the public attended events celebrating this year's theme "Our Voices, Our Votes: Disability Rights in Action," including a virtual panel discussion focusing on the engagement of persons with disabilities as candidates in the electoral process which featured politicians with disabilities sharing their experiences engaging in elected office at all levels of government.

Eskasoni Two-Spirit Festival

Commission staff attended the Eskasoni Two Spirit Festival, a celebration of Two-Spirit Pride artistry and talent. Staff promoted mutual learning and awareness by holding information tables, participating in talking circles, and other cultural activities with local community members.

African Nova Scotia Justice Institute (ANSJI) Symposium

Commission staff attended the Inaugural ANSJI Symposium which included expert panels on topics such as: Understanding African Nova Scotians as a Distinct People, Public Prosecution Service (PPS) Fair Treatment of African Nova Scotians Policy, and Impact of Race and Culture Assessments (IRCA's).

Pride Parade and "Pop Up for Pride"

Commission staff participated in the annual Pride Parade in Halifax and held a "Human Rights 101 Pop-Up" information session at the Halifax Central Library for the public that was also live streamed. This session highlighted the history of the Commission and protections and obligations under *the Act*.

AMANS Municipal Equity and Anti-Racism Symposium

Commission staff attended the Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia (AMANS) Equity and Anti-Racism Symposium to support Nova Scotia municipalities and villages to develop plans and implement improvement projects in accordance with the *Accessibility Act* and the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act*. Staff participated in a Connection Cafe and Open Space tables for conversation with others.

Screening “Long Road to Justice: The Viola Desmond Story”

In honour of African Heritage Month, the Commission hosted members of the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism and the Accessibility Directorate for a screening of “Long Road to Justice: The Viola Desmond Story” with guests Michelle Stevens and Brian Murray from Communications Nova Scotia. In September 2011 the Government of NS released this special production following the granting of a free pardon for Viola Desmond in 2010 as a way of ensuring that Nova Scotians would never forget the story of her act of bravery and wrongful arrest. Michelle portrayed Ms. Desmond, and Brian led the project and directed the film.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

On March 21, Commission staff hosted and recorded an online panel discussion on the issue of racial discrimination in sports and the uniquely Nova Scotian approach being taken to fostering greater understanding, and building the capacity needed to prevent it. Diverse panel members included representatives of the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, Canadian Sport Institute Atlantic and Sport Nova Scotia. The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination commemorates March 21, 1960, when police in Sharpeville, South Africa opened fire on peaceful anti-apartheid demonstrators protesting in response to the *Pass Laws Act* of 1952. These laws required Black South Africans over the age of 16 to carry a ‘passbook’ designed to enforce segregation and restrict movement.

Pjila’si – A New Permanent Exhibit

Commission staff attended the opening of a new permanent exhibit celebrating Mi’kmaw culture *Pjila’si* which means “welcome”. This new and interactive space is located at the Museum of Natural History in Halifax and is open to the public, inviting Nova Scotians to experience the power of cultural preservation.

Skills for Change “Together Against Violence” Conference

Commission staff participated in a panel discussion on a human rights approach to gender-based violence in newcomer and new settler communities. The panel explored the intersecting experiences of members of these communities including topics such as language, immigration status, age, low employment, cultural expectations, changing familial roles, mistrust of police and service providers, historical and generational trauma, and the cumulative impacts of experiences of colonization.

Citizenship Ceremony, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Staff participated in a citizenship swearing-in oath ceremony on December 10, 2024, to commemorate Human Rights Day, and delivered congratulatory remarks on behalf of the Commission to new Canadian citizens.

Nova Scotia Human Rights Week

The second annual Nova Scotia Human Rights Week was observed from December 3-10 across the province. The week included a series of events, panels, and discussions aimed at promoting inclusion, equity, and human dignity. The activities addressed topics such as systemic challenges, colonial histories, and forms of discrimination. The purpose was to facilitate dialogue and recognize individuals involved in human rights work in Nova Scotia.

The week featured a variety of events focusing on equity, inclusion, and justice. Some highlights were a free online screening of the documentary *Sugarcane* and sessions covering disability inclusion, anti-racism, gender-based violence, Indigenous rights, and housing issues. Events took place online or in hybrid formats, coinciding with notable dates like the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and Human Rights Day. The program concluded with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Awards and discussions on Mi'kmaq identity and community wellness.

Each session was recorded and can be found online here: [Celebrating Human Rights Week: December 3 – 10 | Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission](#)



2024 Human Rights Awards

On December 10, 2024, in Halifax, five individual Nova Scotians and one group were honored with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Awards in recognition of their contributions to creating a more equitable, inclusive, and respectful province.

Recipients



Rosalie Francis *Wel'lukwen Award*

Rosalie Francis is a distinguished advocate for Indigenous and Mi'kmaq Treaty Rights, whose extensive career in human rights research, education, and advocacy has had a profound impact on her community.

Among her many accomplishments, Rosalie has worked with the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq to advance implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Throughout her career, Rosalie has empowered Mi'kmaq leadership with crucial legal expertise on self-determination, free, prior, and informed consent, and environmental justice. Her work has contributed to numerous justice initiatives, negotiations, and reconciliation efforts with both Mi'kmaq communities and governments.



Jude Clyke Dr. Burnley Allan "Rocky" Jones Award

Jude Clyke is a lifelong resident of Truro and a respected leader and advocate for the African Nova Scotian community. He is a dedicated volunteer and mentor who has coached basketball across all age groups and skill levels, inspiring youth through his guidance.

As a founding member of Community Strong, he fosters youth engagement and promotes intergenerational connections within the local community. Jude's contributions to the community include creating a Men's Wellness Group and founding the Truro ANS Justice Institute, which bridges gaps between the community and the justice system. Jude's unwavering commitment to community-building, advocacy, and social justice make him a deserving recipient of the Dr. Burnley Allan "Rocky" Jones Award.



Caelin Lloyd Youth Award

Caelin Lloyd is a dedicated advocate whose impact is being felt both locally and across Canada. He is a champion for equity and social inclusion for youth living with sight loss through his work with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) including as a mentor with the Learning Academy and the SCORE Scholars program.

His leadership in the Nova Scotia Secondary School Students' Association has advanced numerous accessibility initiatives. In 2022, Caelin founded a grassroots group to address declining services for blind students in Atlantic Canada, leading efforts to secure critical support.



Jemma Bowers Youth Award

Jemma Bowers is a 16-year-old student at Memorial Composite High and already an inspiring leader and advocate.

Diagnosed with autism at a young age, Jemma defied expectations, excelling academically with a 90% average while actively engaging in numerous volunteer and extracurricular activities. While the target of racism herself Jemma remains committed to promoting empathy and understanding.

Jemma has organized initiatives for Indigenous and Black History Months, tutored at-risk youth, and advocated for international students' inclusion. She also volunteers at the Elizabeth Fry Society and is working on mental health support initiatives. Jemma's passion, resilience, and dedication to social change make her a remarkable community leader.



Laura MacDonald Individual Award

Laura MacDonald received this year's Individual Award in recognition of her lifelong advocacy, resilience, and groundbreaking achievements.

Living with cerebral palsy and quadriplegia, Laura defied significant physical and social challenges, earning two university degrees and becoming the first person with her level of disability to graduate from Cape Breton University.

At 74, Laura courageously fought against age-based exclusion when told she could no longer attend Camp Tidnish. Her persistent advocacy led to the creation of a specialized camp for seniors with disabilities, ensuring that her victory extended to others as well. Laura's unwavering determination continues to inspire positive change.



Cumberland Homelessness and Housing Support Association *Group or Organization Award*


As a relatively new organization, **the Cumberland Housing and Homelessness Association** has made a significant impact in addressing housing and food insecurity in Amherst and Cumberland County.

They have successfully fundraised, secured grants, and constructed a new complex offering emergency shelter and supportive housing.

Their collaborative approach includes partnerships with municipal services, addictions and mental health support, the YMCA, and other local organizations to provide comprehensive outreach and services.

The Association's dedication to inclusivity, care, and community support ensures that no one is turned away - making them a vital resource in the region.

Timeline of Statements and Events

- 
- Apr 30, 2024

Celebrating Asian Heritage

Each year throughout the month of May we celebrate the rich contributions of Asian communities to Canada's cultural tapestry; Asian Heritage Month also serves as a reminder of the work that remains to address ongoing discrimination and racism faced by people of Asian descent.
 - May 3, 2024

Red Dress Day

May 5 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 13, 2024

Human Rights on Screen: Our Hearts Aren't Disabled

The Commission partnered with the Atlantic International Film Festival for another installment in the Human Rights on Screen series. During Access Awareness Week Nova Scotia (May 26 – June 1) Nova Scotians were invited to watch the documentary film "Our Hearts Aren't Disabled."
 - May 16, 2024

Standing Up Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

May 17 marked the 20th International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia.
 - Jun 05, 2024

Celebrating Pride


Pride Month takes place throughout June annually to honour and celebrate the 2SLGBTQIA+ community's history, culture, and contributions to all facets of society.
 - Jun 10, 2024

Public Asked to Defend Against Hate and Discrimination

A recent IPSOS poll warned Canada is among few countries globally where public support for queer and trans rights is declining.
 - Jun 20, 2024

National Indigenous Peoples Day

June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day, an important occasion to honor and learn about the history, culture, and contributions of L'nu people, and the Indigenous, Inuit, and Metis peoples who have made the lands we know as Canada their home since time immemorial.



Jul 05, 2024

Protection from Hatred

A news story reported an incident of online hate that targeted a social media post about a Pride-focused craft project of a pre-primary class on Nova Scotia's south shore. The activity highlighted inclusion ahead of Lunenburg County Pride.

Jul 31, 2024

August 1 is Emancipation Day

Emancipation Day commemorates the abolition of slavery across the British Empire, which took effect on August 1, 1834, following the passage of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833.

Aug 14, 2024

National Acadian Day

August 15 marks National Acadian Day, a vibrant cultural celebration for the Acadian people throughout Canada and particularly in Nova Scotia. It commemorated the rich heritage and history of Acadian communities, descendants of French settlers who arrived in the 17th century.

Sep 10, 2024

Human Rights on Screen: The Jackie Shane Story

The Commission partnered with the Atlantic International Film Festival to screen *Any Other Way*; *The Jackie Shane Story* on September 16.

Sep 16, 2024

25 Years Since Marshall Decision

On September 17, 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Donald Marshall Jr., a Mi'kmaq man from Membertou, was lawfully exercising his treaty rights when he was arrested for catching and selling eels out of season and without a licence.

Sep 27, 2024


Committing to ReconciliACTION

It has been almost nine years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its watershed final report detailing the horrors inflicted upon generations of Indigenous persons across Canada and the institutionalized racism that made it possible. As we commemorated National Truth and Reconciliation Day on September 30, all Nova Scotians were urged to commit to action.

Oct 01, 2024

Statement from the Chair: Mi'kmaq History Month

Throughout October Nova Scotians had a special opportunity to honor the rich heritage, culture, and contributions of Mi'kmaq people, as well as reflect on our shared history and the importance of upholding the treaties that underpin our relationships.



Oct 16, 2024

Commission Condemns Discrimination Targeting Political Candidates

Amidst reports of municipal political candidates facing discrimination as they campaign for office, the Commission asked all Nova Scotians to remain vigilant against discrimination and hatred.

Oct 29, 2024

Racial Discrimination Wrong and Unlawful

The Commission asked all Nova Scotians to consider their privilege and the impacts of their actions after several high-profile instances of anti-Black racism.

Oct 30, 2024

Avoiding Cultural Appropriation and Discrimination at Halloween

Nova Scotians that were choosing to participate in Halloween festivities were asked to avoid cultural appropriation or discrimination when selecting their costumes. Awareness and empathy are key to making respectful decisions.

Nov 18, 2024

Transgender Day of Remembrance

Transgender Day of Remembrance is observed on November 20 as a day to honor and remember transgender and gender diverse individuals who have lost their lives to acts of anti-trans violence.

Jan 23, 2025

Legal Obligations Underpin Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Organizations are encouraged to support inclusion through Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Reconciliation initiatives. Many businesses benefit from diversity by attracting talent, fostering innovation, improving customer relations, and meeting responsibilities, which contributes to productivity and profit. Despite some moving away from these commitments, human rights obligations remain legally protected.

Jan 24, 2025

International Holocaust Remembrance Day

January 27 is International Holocaust Remembrance Day which calls us to reflect on the unspeakable horrors of Nazi Germany leading up to and during World War 2.

Jan 30, 2025

World Interfaith Harmony Week

Interfaith harmony and human rights are woven together by the universal values of dignity, equality, and mutual respect.



Jan 31, 2025

Celebrating African Heritage

Nova Scotia's 52 historic African Nova Scotian communities reflect a rich and powerful history extending more than 400 years.



Feb 13, 2025

Supporting a Human Rights Approach to Housing

One year after her report, Canada's Housing Advocate renewed calls for urgent, rights-based action on encampments as \$250 million in federal funding rolls out. The Commission supports her recommendations for immediate, dignified housing solutions.



Feb 27, 2025

Moving Forward

On February 27, government announced plans to modernize the way the Commission protects the rights of Nova Scotians and administers the province's human rights complaints process.



Mar 06, 2025

For All Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment

Women's rights are human rights. In Nova Scotia and across Canada, we must continue working to ensure that every woman and girl has the freedom, opportunities, and support they need to thrive.



Mar 20, 2025

Committing to the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, observed annually on March 21, is a crucial reminder of the global fight against racism and the ongoing need to uphold human rights for all.



Mar 26, 2025

Violence in Ontario During Ramadan Has Impact in Nova Scotia

A recent act of violence against a hijab wearing Islamic woman at a library in Ontario has impacted the local Muslim community. The Commission learned that community members were shocked and becoming desensitized to examples of Islamophobic hate in the media.



Mar 31, 2025

Transgender Day of Visibility

Transgender Day of Visibility, observed annually on March 31, celebrates transgender and nonbinary people, recognizing their contributions to society while also raising awareness about the discrimination they continue to face.



Website Statistics

Page	April, 2024 - March, 2025	April, 2023 - March, 2024
Home	19,284	14,543
Contact Us	7,560	6,621
Complaint Self-Assessment Tool	6,848	6,436
Know Your Rights for Individuals	6,717	5,735
Inquiry Form	5,347	4,046
Online Training	4,389	2,378
Frequently Asked Questions	3,168	2,658
Know Your Rights for Employers	2,354	1,916
Dispute Resolution Process	1,665	2,164

Overall, the Commission experienced increased volume of unique visits to its website by 17%. The Home page saw an increase of 33% and Contact Us rose by 14%. Know Your Rights for Individuals grew by 17%. The Inquiry Form saw a significant increase of 32%, and Online Training had the largest growth at 85%. Frequently Asked Questions rose by 19% and Know Your Rights for Employers increased by 23%. In contrast, the Dispute Resolution Process was the only page to see a decline.

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