

A YEAR IN REVIEW

>>> 2016/2017 ANNUAL REPORT



YUKON
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

COMMISSION
DES DROITS
DE LA PERSONNE
DU YUKON



RUSSELL KNUTSON
Chair

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

It is sometimes hard to believe that the protections from discrimination and harassment that we enjoy in the Yukon have existed for less than a generation. It was in 1987, just 30 years ago, that the territory brought into law legislation aimed at protecting the most vulnerable among us. The Yukon *Human Rights Act* and the Yukon Human Rights Commission have helped make Yukon a safer and more inclusive place to call home, that's something to celebrate.

Our celebration comes at a time in world history when human rights are under attack. The effectiveness of social media as an influence on public opinion has allowed latent anger and fear in certain populations to boil over, generating hysteria and darkness and conflict not seen since the end of World War II. As a father trying to help teenagers understand and define the world as it shifts, I find myself in our frequent discussions using words like respect, dignity, equality, responsibility, fairness. They also happen to be among the key words found in the UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the Yukon *Human Rights Act*. And they remind me of one of our principal objectives at the YHRC: to promote and enhance human rights through education.

Another important part of our mandate is the enforcement of the *Act* through the complaint process. We all have a responsibility to be informed about our rights and responsibilities as individuals, and as landlords, tenants, employers, employees, business owners or consumers. Human rights issues can sometimes arise out of miscommunication, or a lack of knowledge about rights and how to recognize and protect them. That is why we have made reaching out to the community through initiatives like education seminars, workshops, and our website a high priority. We hope to prevent a lot of conflict, anxiety, and expense by helping the community understand the *Act* and its intent.

The work of the Commission requires tremendous personal and professional commitment and dedication from our lawyers, student researchers, and support staff. In addition to our hard working staff, dozens of Yukoners have dedicated countless hours to sit as commission members in the 30 years since the Yukon Human Rights Commission was created. I would encourage anyone with an interest in human rights to consider stepping forward to volunteer for this challenging, rewarding and necessary endeavour.

We reflect on the past three decades with pride and embrace the future with optimism and resolve. We will continue to advocate for the full implementation of the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We hope to advance our efforts to secure a more robust independence. We will expand our commitment to public education and awareness. With a recently updated human rights act to guide us and positive developments like the entrenchment of transgender rights to encourage us, we continue towards building a more inclusive Yukon for all.

OUR MISSION

The Yukon Human Rights Commission promotes equality and diversity through research, education and enforcement of the *Yukon Human Rights Act*

OUR VISION

The YHRC is respected as a trusted, impartial and impactful organization:

- Providing accessible public information and education about human rights throughout Yukon,
- Partnering proactively with individuals and institutions to improve understanding of and respect for human rights in Yukon,
- Providing a fair and effective process for dealing with human rights complaints,
- Modeling best practices as an employer and organization.

OUR GOALS

Priority 1: Meeting our mandate through consistent high quality service

Priority 2: Improving transparency and accountability

Priority 3: Improving our relationship with the Yukon Government

DID YOU KNOW?

Gender identity and gender expression was added to the *Act* as a protected ground in 2017



JESSICA LOTT THOMPSON

Director of Human Rights

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Every day, our Commission strives to live our values of inclusion, equality, and justice for all. We have implemented a bias-minimizing hiring process, developed new collaborative partnerships with local organizations, and ensured that our office facilities (including the washroom) are accessible and gender-inclusive.

This year, the Commission continues to struggle with funding challenges, and a large drain on our operational resources related to active litigation. As of March 31, 2017 we have nine cases set for hearing – this is an extraordinarily high

number especially considering that each year, over the last 20 years, rarely has there been more than one case heard before the Board of Adjudication.

We have expanded our student internship program and Pro Bono Students Canada legal researcher program to help support our legal work. We are also increasingly applying for external grant funding to support our public education mandate.

One step at a time, the Commission is working with Yukoners to protect and promote human rights for all.

2016/2017 BUDGET AT A GLANCE

REVENUE	2017	2016
Yukon Government Department of Justice funds	677,972	598,000
Grants and other income	15,704	3,752
Total revenue	693,676	601,752
EXPENSES	2017	2016
Administration	39,961	41,195
Staff	535,431	469,776
Commission	29,276	25,658
Public Education	7,487	5,236
Complaints Management	49,479	3,136
Operational	42,584	42,807
Total expenses	704,218	587,808

2016/2017 HIGHLIGHTS

New Protected Ground: Gender Identity and Gender Expression

In 2017, we were delighted to see an expanded legislative protection for trans and non-binary Yukoners. The *Yukon Human Rights Act* was changed to include “gender identity or gender expression” as a prohibited ground of discrimination.

At the same time, the *Yukon Vital Statistics Act* was changed to remove the requirement for invasive surgery before an individual can alter the sex designation on their birth certificate. While there is still a long way to go towards equality on the basis of gender, these are important steps forward to be celebrated.

If you're curious how these changes to the *Act* will affect you, your business, or your organization, please contact the Commission. We're here to help answer questions about gender inclusion and gender diversity, and to help guide organizations interested in making policy changes about human rights.

Simon & Simon v. Sallows

The Yukon Board of Adjudication, a separate body different from the Commission that serves as a tribunal for human rights matters, heard the case of *Simon and Simon v. Sallows (White Tornado Cleaning Services)*. In this case, it was found that an employer had used derogatory terms to refer to her employees. The Board found the Respondent Rhonda Sallows had discriminated against the two Complainants by harassing them on the basis of their sex. The Board awarded \$2500 to each Complainant to compensate them for the injury to their dignity, feelings and self-respect.

You can read the full decision online at yukonhumanrights.ca.

New Office

The Yukon Human Rights Commission moved in November 2017 from our office on Quartz Road to our new location at 215 - 305 Main Street. We also updated our website and logo in 2017 in conjunction with our move to a new location, and to allow for enhanced accessibility to our online resources.



Commission Members at a disposition meeting at our old office at 9010 Quartz Rd

PROTECTED AREAS

A complaint must fall within one or more of the protected areas covered by the *Yukon Human Rights Act*:

- Employment, and any aspect of employment
- Receiving goods and services
- Housing, leasing or renting
- Union or professional association membership
- Public contracts

PROHIBITED GROUNDS

It is illegal to discriminate against people on the basis of their:

- Ancestry, including colour and race
- National origin
- Ethnic or linguistic background/origin
- Religion or creed
- Age
- Sex, including pregnancy
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity or gender expression
- Physical or mental disability
- Criminal charges or criminal record
- Political belief, association, or activity
- Marital or family status
- Source of income
- Actual or presumed association with any of the grounds listed above

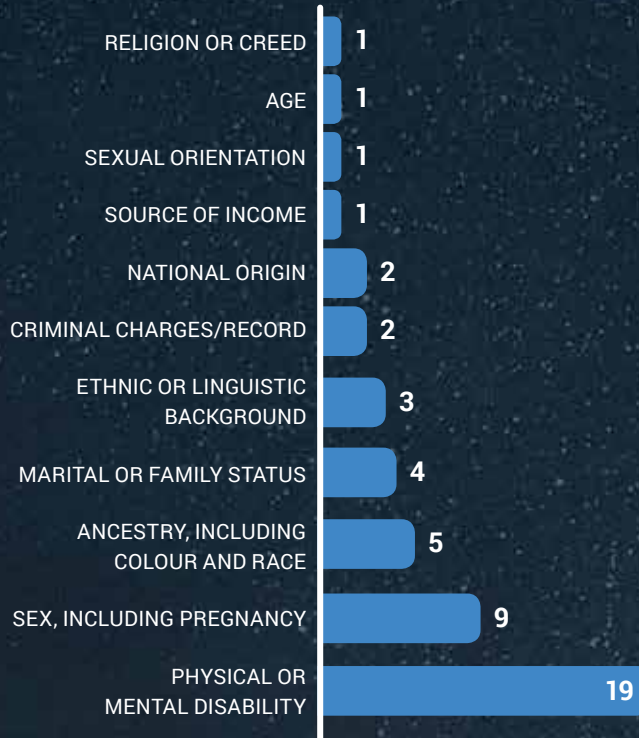
2016/2017 BY THE NUMBERS

COMPLAINTS CLOSED

- 7 | Informal Resolution
- 2 | Stopped by Director
- 7 | Withdrawn
- 5 | Dismissed by Members of the Commission
- 1 | Referred to Hearing - Settled before hearing

22 TOTAL

NEW COMPLAINTS BY GROUND



DID YOU KNOW?

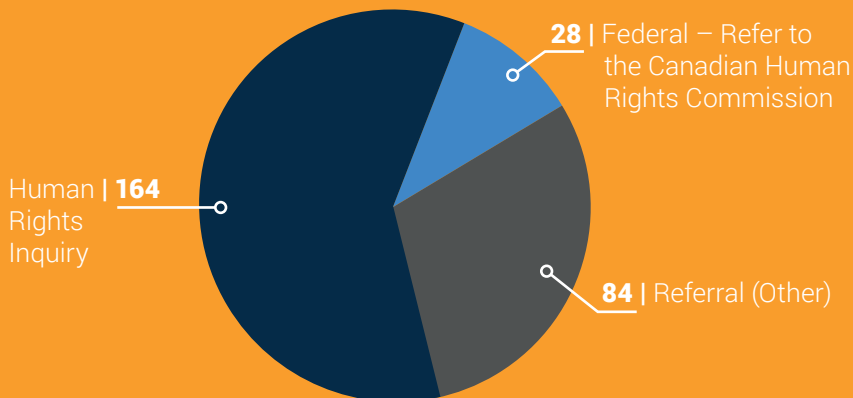
44 Complaints were accepted 2015/2016

35 Complaints were accepted 2016/2017

DID YOU KNOW?

276
INQUIRIES

were made in 2016/2017



HEARINGS



between 1993 and 2013

9

hearings pending as of March 31, 2017

CONNECT WITH US

215 - 305 Main Street
Accessible entrance on 3rd

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yukonhumanrights.ca

HELP LINE
(867) 667.6226
Toll Free 1.800.661.0535

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Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2B4

@ yukonhumanrights

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

- **Russell Knutson**, Chair, April 2018
- **Geneviève Chabot**, Deputy Chair, May 2019
- **Kathleen Avery**, December 2018
- **Louise Bouvier**, December 2018
- **Karen Moir**, May 2019

COMMISSION STAFF

- **Jessica Lott Thompson**, Director of Human Rights
- **Colleen Harrington**, Legal Counsel
- **Lynn Pigage**, Intake Officer/Office Manager
- **Emma Hanes**, Public Education Coordinator

