

# YUKON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

## A YEAR IN REVIEW

### 2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

#### A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR



Human rights are a constant in the everyday lives of Yukoners. In today's changing world we are reminded that each generation is called upon to protect their human rights lest they be eroded. A healthy,

robust human rights system requires both independence as well as dedicated and adequate resources in order to fulfill its obligations to Yukoners. The Yukon *Human Rights Act* makes a commitment to all of us that our rights will be protected and promoted. As you will see in our report this year, the Commission's work has more than doubled in recent years, while our funding level remains unchanged.

The current split funding and reporting framework for the human rights system in Yukon is inadequate. It needs to change to improve the independence of the Commission, as recommended by an all-party committee in 2008. Currently, the Commission reports to the Legislative Assembly, but the Department of Justice controls our funding and administration – which impacts our ability to access resources to meet our core mandate. The Commission urges the Legislative

Assembly to take immediate action to address this serious concern.

The Commission exists to promote equality and diversity through research, education and enforcement of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*. That would not be possible without the dedication of the Commission staff and those appointed to sit as Commission Members. We thank you all.

A special thank you to Alan Hubley and Jolene Waugh for their service as Chair of the Commission, and thanks to Jennifer Cunningham, Janet Wood, Barbara Joe and Marius Curtenau for your service as Commission Members in 2015-2016.

2017 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*. We look forward to celebrating three decades of protecting the human rights of all Yukoners.

- Russell Knutson, Chair

#### A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR



The Commission's dedicated and professional staff and volunteers are proud of the work accomplished in 2015-2016 towards promoting human rights in Yukon, and providing a fair, effective, and accessible enforcement system for complaints filed under the Yukon *Human Rights Act*.

In our world today, human rights face unprecedented challenges both in Canada and abroad. As Yukoners, we are reminded that ideas know no borders, and that more than ever it is important to

stand up for each other, for the rule of law, and for an inclusive society where no one is left out or left behind.

When we see sexism, racism, xenophobia, or intolerance it is important not to turn away but instead to listen, ask questions, and to speak out loudly with the message that "My Yukon includes everyone."

- Jessica Lott Thompson,  
Director of Human Rights



This report, as well as the Commission's financial statements, are available at [www.yhrc.yk.ca](http://www.yhrc.yk.ca)

Ce rapport est également disponible en français sur notre site web - voir <http://yhrc.yk.ca>

## 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

## HIGHLIGHTS 2015-2016

Over the past year, the Commission has continued our ongoing efforts to improve communication, accessibility, and transparency in our system. We have updated and improved content on our website, including new materials such as a chart explaining the life cycle of a complaint, and a printable poster for display in local businesses or organizations to demonstrate their support for human rights. We will continue to distribute our Annual Report online and around the territory in the newspapers, to reach as many Yukoners as possible – we're always glad to hear from you!

Staff and volunteers continue to be guided by our 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, and will work to be creative about finding ways to improve efficiency in our operations, within the limits of our available resources.

### ENFORCEMENT

In the enforcement area, the Commission faced a record number of inquiries from the public as well as complaints filed in 2015-2016. There was a total of 323 inquiries, up from an average of 256 per year over the last 5 years – a 26% increase. There were also total of 44 complaints filed, more than double the average over the last 5 years.

However, the area where our workload reached extraordinary

levels was in the area of matters set for hearing – as many as 9 matters were pending for hearing during 2015-2016. This is an enormous increase from the average of one hearing per year over the last 22 years, and placed critical demands on the internal operational capacity of the Commission.

### RESEARCH

In terms of our research mandate, we requested and were denied funding from the Department of Justice to meet our legislative mandate set out in Section 16(2) of the Yukon *Human Rights Act* to conduct research

into pay equity in the private sector. This section of our *Act* is unique in Canada, and addresses pay equity not only in relation to sex and gender, but all protected grounds including race, age, and disability. We will continue to seek appropriate funding to be able to meet this part of our mandate.

However, the Commission was glad to have the opportunity to pilot a small research partnership with vol-

#### DID YOU KNOW?

YHRC has received 26% more inquiries from members of the public compared to last year

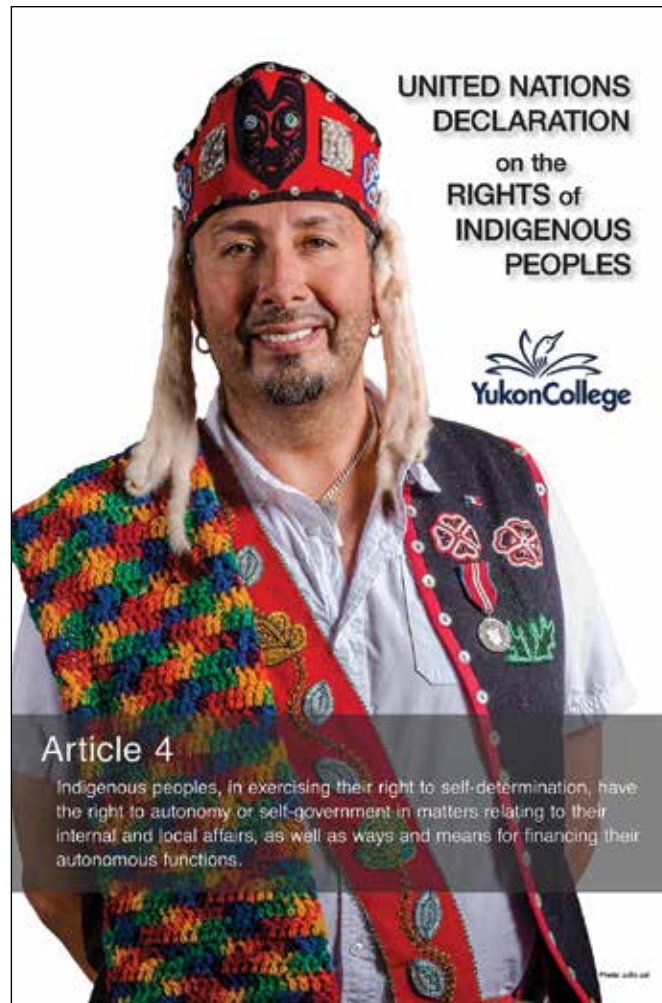
## 2015-2016 BUDGET AT A GLANCE

Revenue	2016	2015
Yukon Government Department of Justice funds	598,000	582,000
Grants and other income	3,752	1,157
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>601,752</b>	<b>583,157</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Administration	41,195	42,939
Staff	469,776	490,331
Commission	25,658	33,924
Public Education	5,236	9,105
Complaints Management	3,136	1,539
Operational	42,807	42,994
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>587,808</b>	<b>620,832</b>

unteer law students with Pro-Bono Students Canada from January-March 2016. They did a short research report on criminal charges and criminal record as protected grounds under the *Act*. We are looking forward to expanding this volunteer student research partnership next year in order to meet our core mandate for research into human rights in Yukon.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

In public education, 2015-2016 saw improvements to our website, and new materials available online, as well as several public information sessions delivered by our Public Education Specialist in the community. The Commission continues to thrive on partnerships and opportunities to co-sponsor activities and events in the community that align with our mandate. We provided public education workshops for a range of community groups including



Challenge, Kaushee's Place, as well as to youth, newcomers to Canada, employers, and many others.

## RECONCILIATION

The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was released on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, and the 94 Calls to Action were released on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015. In his speech at the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, Justice (and now Senator) Murray Sinclair singled out human rights commissions as key partners in the implementation of the Report's recommendations.

In support of Reconciliation, the Commission was delighted to partner with Yukon College and members of the First Nations community to produce a series of striking posters highlighting the key articles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Those posters were displayed at the Adäka Cultural Festival in 2015, and

at the Commission's 2015 celebration of International Human Rights Day on December 10<sup>th</sup> at the Old Fire Hall. The poster series will be on long-term display at Yukon College.

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Commission organized a meaningful gathering of Yukon organizations, businesses, and government agencies with support of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Hosted by Melissa Atkinson, former Chair of the Yukon Human Rights Commission, the event included presentations from local First Nations and non-First Nation groups who highlighted their commitment to reconciliation and concrete steps being taken by their organizations.

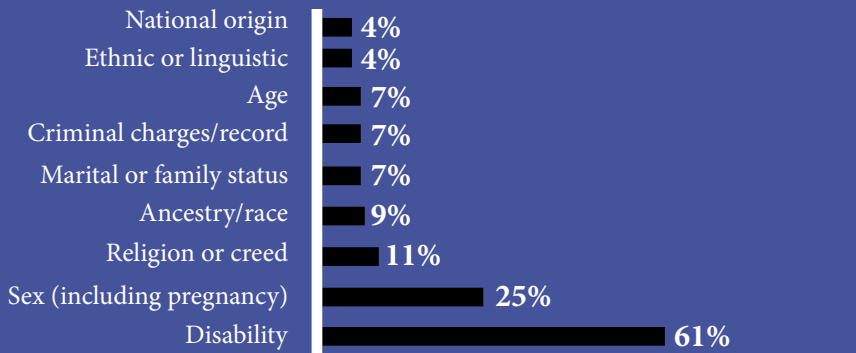


YHRC Director of Human Rights Jessica Lott Thompson speaking at the opening of the "Yukoner" art exhibit about identity, at the Yukon Transportation Museum on March 21, 2016, in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. (Photo: Tracey Wallace, Art: Mark Lange)



# 2015-2016 BY THE NUMBERS

## NEW COMPLAINTS BY GROUND



## DID YOU KNOW?

This year **40%** of complaints were settled, and **36%** of complaints were stopped or dismissed

## TIME TO CLOSE COMPLAINTS

**10.9**  
months

2014-2015  
with 29 complaints  
closed

**8.8**  
months

2015-2016  
with 22 complaints  
closed

## HOW COMPLAINTS WERE CLOSED

Stopped by Director – 2  
Early Settlement – 7  
Withdrawn – 7  
Dismissed – 5  
Settled after investigation – 1

## DID YOU KNOW?

There were 323 inquiries in 2015-2016.  
Forty-four of them went on to become complaints.

## 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
- 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

## MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

**Russell Knutson** - Chair - *appointed April 2015*  
**Geneviève Chabot** - Deputy Chair - *appointed May 2016*  
**Kathleen Avery** - *appointed December 2015*  
**Louise Bouvier** - *appointed December 2015*  
**Karen Moir** - *appointed May 2016*

## COMMISSION STAFF

**Jessica Lott Thompson** - Director of Human Rights  
**Colleen Harrington** - Legal Counsel  
**Lynn Pigage** - Intake Officer/Office Manager

## CONNECT with us

We are located at  
101 - 9010 Quartz Road,  
in the same building as the  
Whitehorse Public Health Centre  
(between Earl's restaurant and the Feed Store).



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