

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMISSION



# Annual Report

## 2024 – 2025



We envision a Territory that is  
**diverse, fair, safe**  
and **inclusive**, where  
**everyone** is **equal**.

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## Letter from the Chair

The Commission works in the traditional territories of the Dene, Inuvialuit, and Métis peoples where Treaty 8 and Treaty 11 began a process of negotiation that continues to this day. These negotiations began after decades of trauma and abuse were inflicted upon the Indigenous people of what we call the Northwest Territories. Our organization strives to rebalance equity by asserting the equality rights of all persons within our borders.

2024-2025 marked 20 years since the NWT *Human Rights Act* established the Human Rights Commission. The NWT *Human Rights Act* is the successor legislation to the Fair Practices Act and its enactment brought the NWT in line with other jurisdictions which have comprehensive human rights legislative regimes.

I was deeply saddened by the passing of Commission Member Gail Cyr. Gail brought to the Commission her understanding and empathy that goes with having experienced the discrimination she personally went through during the Sixties Scoop. She was courageous in her willingness to share her experiences. Gail tried to help people empathize with what, far too many, had endured and played a pivotal role in the Commission's work towards reconciliation.

This year we also said goodbye to our longest serving employee, Linda Noseworthy, who has been with the Commission for fifteen years. Linda provided essential administrative and financial support to both the Commission members and the Executive Director's office, and did so always with a wonderful sense of humour. Linda will be greatly missed, but we wish her and her family all the best in her well-earned retirement and thank her for her invaluable years of dedicated service.

As part of the Commission's 20th anniversary, we increased our number of community visits across

the territory this year. Commission representatives and Executive Director staff spent time in seven communities including: Behchokò, Gameti, Hay River, K'atł'odeeche First Nation, Dettah, Aklavik, and Fort Smith. While visiting, we met with community leaders, gave presentations in the schools with great engagement from the students, and hosted human rights themed movie nights.

The Commission has repeatedly made recommendations to the Legislative Assembly about developing accessibility legislation. Nine other jurisdictions in Canada already have accessibility legislation, with the province of New Brunswick most recently enacting their Accessibility Act in 2024. The GNWT's Department of Infrastructure has previously stated that they do not currently have a mandated role to play in the accessibility standards for private and municipal infrastructure. The Commission again urges the GNWT to re-examine this mandate and to consider how important accessibility is to many people regardless of their disability. Providing person-centred services means that physical and online spaces are prepared to meet everyone's needs.

In the past we have advocated for inclusion of genetic discrimination as a ground in the NWT *Human Rights Act*. The Canadian *Human Rights Act* includes genetic discrimination as a protected ground. The Commission continues to encourage the GNWT to reconsider adding genetic discrimination to the NWT *Human Rights Act*.



Charles Dent  
Chair,  
NWT Human Rights Commission

## Introduction

The NWT Human Rights Commission is an independent agency that works to promote equality human rights and protect individuals and groups from discrimination under the NWT *Human Rights Act*. The Act creates a human rights system that is independent from the Territorial Government. During the period covered by this report, the system had three parts: the Commission, made up of three to five members of the public; the office of the Executive Director of Human Rights; and the NWT Human Rights Adjudication Panel.

The Commission continues to strengthen our commitment that a restorative approach be used in the work done throughout the human rights system. The Act requires the Commission “use and promote, wherever possible, restorative principles and non-adversarial processes that contribute to the understanding of and commitment to human rights by parties, and reconciliation between parties.” Our statistics continue to show that parties involved in a human rights complaint can come together to resolve issues and repair relationships when given the opportunity and support to do so.

Brandy Shymko joined the Executive Director’s office this year as a human rights officer. Brandy is a lifelong resident of the Northwest Territories and started with the Commission in 2024. Armed with over 18 years of decision-making expertise within the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission and complemented by a stint in Human Resources, Brandy brings a wealth of hands-on experience to her role. She is currently broadening her knowledge through enrollment in programs at the International Institute of Restorative Practice and the Justice Institute of BC. Welcome Brandy!



Linda cuts her cake during the celebration of her retirement held at the Elks Lodge.

Linda Noseworthy took her hard-earned retirement this year. After fifteen-years supporting the Commission through many changes, Linda will be exploring life beyond work. Linda has been a valued member of the Commission staff since 2009, organizing travel, trade shows, and two sets of finances! Her gregarious spirit will be greatly missed around the office. We wish you all the best in the next chapter: Go little soul!

## Commission Members

The Commission is responsible for equality rights promotion and education, monitoring the administration and assessing the effectiveness of the *Human Rights Act*, advising the NWT Legislative Assembly on matters related to the Act, undertaking research, and making decisions on whether to refer or dismiss complaints.



Commission Members L-R: Gail Cyr, Charles Dent, Yacub Adam, and Marion Berls.

The Commission is made up of three to five members from various NWT communities appointed by the Commissioner on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly.

Members are part-time appointees who are paid an honorarium for their human rights work.

Commission members serving in 2023-2024:

- Charles Dent – Chair
- Yacub Adam – Vice Chair
- Marion Berls – Member
- Gail Cyr – Member
- Norman Yak'e ula – Member

### Executive Director's Office

The Executive Director of Human Rights is responsible for the complaints process, is a non-voting member and Secretary to the Commission and manages the office and staff of the Commission. Appointed by the NWT Commissioner on the recommendation of the NWT Legislative Assembly, the Executive Director works closely with staff and the public during the complaint process. The Executive Director's office also provides education workshops and promotes equality human rights in communities across the NWT.



Director's Office L-R: Nicole MacNeil, Brandy Shymko, Marcus Jackson, Linda Noseworthy, Mogan Wouters, Raegan Mager, and Roger Wah Shee.

Executive Director and staff in 2024-2025:

- Nicole MacNeil – Executive Director
- Raegan Mager – Deputy Executive Director
- Roger Wah Shee – Legal Counsel
- Linda Noseworthy – Administrative Officer
- Marcus Jackson – Human Rights Officer
- Morgan Wouters – Human Rights Officer
- Brandy Shymko – Human Rights Officer

### The NWT *Human Rights Act*

The Northwest Territories *Human Rights Act* protects the equality human rights of **everyone** in the NWT. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone based on a protected ground in any of the following areas:

- Employment, including membership in professional organizations
- Access to public services like hospitals, schools, and stores
- Tenancy including business leases
- Published material such as signs, newspapers, or other advertising





Adjudication Panel Members: Colin Baile, Jay Sengupta, Paul Parker, Sheldon Toner (Chair), Kandace Groenewegen.

## Adjudication Panel

The Adjudication Panel hears complaints referred to them by the Executive Director or the Commission (depending on the time the complaint was filed) as well as any appeals of the Executive Director's or Commission's decision to dismiss complaints. Adjudication Panel Members are appointed to the Adjudication Panel by the Commissioner on recommendation of the NWT Legislative Assembly.

Adjudication Panel members serving in 2024-2025:

- Sheldon Toner – Chair
- Colin Baile – Adjudicator
- Paul Parker – Adjudicator
- Jay Sengupta – Adjudicator
- Lou Sebert – Adjudicator

## What is a Ground?

A ground is a specific characteristic of an individual. It is illegal to discriminate or harass anyone based on the following grounds:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Colour
- Ancestry
- Place of origin
- Ethnic origin
- Nationality
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
- Family status
- Family affiliation
- Marital status
- Social condition
- Religion
- Creed
- Political belief
- Political association
- Pardoned criminal conviction
- Record suspension

## Remembering Gail Cyr

The NWT Human Rights Commission is deeply saddened by the passing of Commission Member Gail Cyr, a trailblazer and passionate advocate for Indigenous rights. Gail dedicated her life to championing justice and equality, making long lasting contributions to the social and political landscape of the Northwest Territories.

During her five terms as a City Councilor in Yellowknife during the 1980s, Gail broke barriers and worked passionately to uplift marginalized communities. Gail was never shy about expressing her opinion and demonstrated the common sense it takes to be a meaningful contributor to civic governance.

One of Gail's proudest achievements was her work in establishing the Native Court Workers Program in the Northwest Territories. This initiative ensured that Indigenous individuals charged with criminal offenses received timely legal support throughout criminal justice process. Her national advocacy extended through both her role as a Special Advisor on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and her time as Executive director of the Native Women's Association. These roles reflected her commitment to calling out systemic injustices and effecting change.

Beyond her professional endeavors, Gail embodied the spirit of volunteerism. From her years of service with St. John Ambulance, ensuring safer community events, to sewing and distributing face masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, she consistently demonstrated her dedication to the well-being of others. As an active member and former President of the Rotary Club of Yellowknife True North, Gail exemplified the Rotary motto, "Service Above Self."

In recognition of her decades-long dedication to advancing Indigenous representation and



improving the lives of Northern communities, Gail was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada in 2021. This prestigious honor celebrated her transformative impact and advocacy for equality.

Gail's work with NWT Human Rights Commission furthered her legacy as a fearless advocate for equality and human rights. She was well known in communities across the NWT and was a very popular representative of the Commission when she traveled on our behalf. Her honesty, humour, and respectful approach made Gail a valued member of the Commission.

Gail's lived experience, resilience, and compassion were central to her work. Her advocacy was deeply informed by her personal experiences, and her mentorship and leadership inspired many. She leaves behind a legacy of courage, service, and compassion.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to her son Jesse, her family, and the countless friends and colleagues whose lives she touched. Gail will be deeply missed, but her contributions will continue to resonate across the North.



# Community Outreach

## Community events

- **May 11-12 2024** Commission Members hosted visitors at the annual Yellowknife Trade Show.
- **June 2, 2024** Commission Chair Charles Dent, Executive Director Nicole MacNeil, Deputy Executive Director Raegan Mager, and staff members Marcus Jackson, Roger Wah Shee, Morgan Wouters and Brandy Shymko participated in the 2nd annual Yellowknife Pride Parade.
- **June 21, 2024** Commission Chair Charles Dent and Members Yacub Adam, Marion Berls, and Gail Cyr hosted a booth at the Indigenous People's Day celebrations in Yellowknife. Former Commission Member Gerri Sharpe made her famous bannock for visitors to the Commission's information booth.
- **October 3-4, 2024** Commission Members Gail Cyr, Yacub Adam and Executive Director Nicole MacNeil participated in the Native Women's Association's Community Summit which focused on the challenges facing Indigenous women in the NWT.
- **December 6, 2024** Commission Chair Charles Dent and Vice Chair Yacub Adam attended the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women vigil held in Yellowknife.
- **December 10, 2024** The Commission hosted a free online webinar regarding Restorative Practice – What it is and why it works – in partnership with the International Institute for Restorative Practice. This event was held on International Human Rights Day and open to organizations and individuals across the NWT.

- **December 15, 2024** Commission staff and Deputy Chair, Yacub Adam attended Gail Cyr's Celebration of Life. Yacub spoke of Gail's contributions on behalf of the Commission.



Commission Chair Charles Dent (left), former Commission Member Gerri Sharpe, and members Yacub Adam, Gail Cyr, and Marion Berls (front) celebrate Indigenous People's Day.

## Presentations

- **April 16, 2024** Deputy Director Raegan Mager and staff member Morgan Wouters gave a human rights presentation to NWT Health and Social Services Office of Client Services.
- **June 12, 2024** Deputy Director Raegan Mager and staff member Brandy Shymko facilitated a 2 hour workshop organized by the Foster Family Coalition for the new Camp Connections counselors.
- **June 18, 2024** Commission Chair Charles Dent, Executive Director Nicole MacNeil, and Deputy Director Raegan Mager, provided a presentation to the Alberta Human Rights Commission on the move to the restorative dispute resolution process.
- **June 18, 2024** Commission staff Roger Wah Shee and Morgan Wouters provided a

presentation on human rights at CDETNO as part of the YESS program for youth.

- **November 17-18, 2024** Commission Chair Charles Dent, Deputy Director Raegan Mager and Human Rights Officer Morgan Wouters attended the National Restorative Justice Symposium in Ottawa hosted by the International Institute of Restorative Practice. Our delegation provided a workshop outlining the Commission's journey from an adversarial approach to conflict resolution to a restorative one.
- **January 22, 2025** Deputy Director Raegan Mager and Human rights officer Brandy Shymko gave a presentation on human rights and employment to participants of the Administrative Skills Building program at CDETNO. Eight people attended.
- **February 14, 2025** Human Rights Officers Morgan Wouters and Brandy Shymko gave a presentation to the Foster Family Coalition on human rights and employment. 15 people attended.



Commission Chair Charles Dent presents the 2024 Accessibility Award to Rob Selby of Tłıchō Community Builders.

### Accessibility Award

The Accessibility Impact Awards took place on May 31, 2024, during National Disability Awareness Week. This year's winner was the Tłıchō Community Builders for the accessibility features of the new Tłıchō government building in Wekweètì. Under the supervision of project manager Rob Selby, the building was constructed with numerous accessibility features including a wheelchair ramp, slip-resistant paint and grab bars, increased seating areas, barrier-free washrooms, preferential parking for persons with disabilities, and accessible safety equipment.

This new building demonstrates inclusive person-centred thinking which identifies and eliminates many of the limitations faced by community members with mobility challenges.





Commission members and staff host a screening of *Rez Ball* produced by Lebron James at the Hay River Youth Centre in October.

## Community Visits

- **April 23, 2024** All Commission Members, Executive Director Nicole MacNeil, Deputy Executive Director Raegan Mager, and the Commission's legal counsel Roger Wah Shee, visited Behchokò, meeting with community leadership and visiting with the students of Chief Jimmy Bruneau High School and Elizabeth MacKenzie Elementary School.
- **June 6, 2024** Commission Chair Charles Dent, Deputy Director Raegan Mager and legal counsel Roger WahShee visited Gametì, meeting with community leadership and visiting with the students at Jean Wetrade Gameti School.
- **October 24-25, 2024** Commission Chair Charles Dent, Deputy Chair Yacub Adam, Executive Director Nicole MacNeil, and staff member Brandy Shymko visited Hay River and the Kátl'odeeche First Nation. The Commission held its monthly meeting in Hay River, met with community leadership, conducted school presentations, and hosted a movie night at the Youth Centre.
- **November 14, 2024** Executive Director, Nicole MacNeil and staff member Morgan Wouters visited Dettah and spent time with the students of Kaw Tay Whee School.
- **December 11-13, 2024** Deputy Chair, Yacub Adam, and Deputy Executive Director, Reagan Mager visited Aklavik meeting with community leadership and visiting with the students of Moose Kerr School.
- **February 11, 2025** the Commission held a human rights information session in Fort Smith. Commission Member Marion Berls and legal counsel Roger Wah Shee attended Paul William Kaeser High School for community outreach education. Students in grades 7, 8 and 10 learned about the history of human rights in Canada and the Northwest Territories, discrimination, and the protected areas and grounds covered by the NWT *Human Rights Act*.



## Reconciliation

In August 2024, the Commission revised and adopted a new Reconciliation Strategy and Workplan. Some of the work the Commission did this year included:

- Hosting an annual week-long Facebook awareness and education campaign in the week leading up to National Truth and Reconciliation Day September 30th;
- Releasing public statements each year in recognition and support of National Truth and Reconciliation Day and National Day of Action on MMIWG;
- Commission Members and staff participated in five Truth and Reconciliation Day lunch and learn webinars during the week of September 23, 2024;
- Commission Members Gail Cyr, Yacub Adam and Executive Director Nicole MacNeil participated in the Native Women's Association's Community Summit on October 3-4 which focused the challenges facing Indigenous women in the NWT.;
- Commission Members and staff participated in the Housing is a Human Right National Housing Day webinar hosted by the BC Human Rights Commission and the Federal Housing Advocate on November 22, 2024; and
- All Commission Members began the completion of the GNWT's Living Well Together modules through self-study and reflection discussion at each monthly Commission meeting.



Chair and staff at the Yellowknife Pride Parade in June 2024.  
L-R: Raegan Mager, Charles Dent, Morgan Wouters, Brandy Shymko, Marcus Jackson, Nicole MacNeil, and Roger Wah Shee.

## Community Initiative Funding

The NWT Human Rights Commission has a small fund dedicated to community initiatives that support human rights. This year the Commission received an application from and approved a \$1000 grant to the organizers of Yellowknife Multicultural Day.

## International Human Rights Day

December 10, 2024 The Commission hosted a free online webinar regarding Restorative Practice – What it is and Why it Works – in partnership with the International Institute for Restorative Practice. This event was held on International Human Rights Day and open to organizations and individuals across the NWT.

## Professional Development

The Commission and staff remain committed to continuous learning and professional growth focused on human rights and equality. This year

Members and staff participated in self-directed training including online workshops, webinars, and skill-building sessions. Training aims to support staff development, improve performance, and ensure our team remains equipped to meet the needs of the public.

As a group, the Commission Members and staff participated in the following activities:

## Facebook

Facebook continues to help us reach into communities across the Territory, with approximately 3,700 followers. Ongoing contests and awareness campaigns are helping to keep our Facebook followers engaged and attract new ones. We share local events, scholarships, surveys, and news from community groups and Indigenous governments as well as resources and good-news stories all related to equality human rights.

### Targeted Campaigns

- April 2024 We ran a week-long contest April 15-19 focused on increasing awareness of neurodivergence and the importance of inclusion.
- May 2024 We ran a week-long campaign highlighting the contributions of Asian Canadians in celebration of Asian Heritage Month.
- May 2024 We ran a week-long campaign focused on accessibility in the built environment during National Accessibility Week.
- June 2024 We ran a week-long campaign June 19-23 focused on Indigenous experiences and reconciliation in celebration of Indigenous People's Day. We gave away an iPad.
- September 2024 We ran a week-long engagement contest to raise awareness of National Truth and Reconciliation Day.

## Facebook Action Week

Each year the Commission runs a Facebook campaign in the week leading up to International Human Rights Day. The Commission did not host a contest this year as we were in the midst of mourning and celebrating the life and work of Commission Member Gail Cyr



## Stories for Peace

Stories for Peace bookbags filled with human rights-related books and resources were delivered to schools in Bechokò, Gametì, Hay River, Kátł'odeeche First Nation, Dettah, Fort Smith, and Aklavik as part of the Commission's community visits. Books were also dropped off to the Mary Kaeser library in Fort Smith and received with much gratitude.

During our Facebook contests, prizes included backpacks with human-rights related books and films as well as snacks and Commission promotional items.

## Pro Bono Students of Canada

The NWT Human Rights Commission had the opportunity to collaborate with three law students from Osgood Hall Law School through the Pro Bono Students of Canada Program (PBSC). The PBSC is a national pro bono student organization with a mandate to provide legal services without charge to organizations and individuals in need across Canada. The collaborative research projects have been ongoing for five years and we are grateful for the quantity and quality of research we've received from our PBSC students.

This year, three law students conducted research for the Commission in the following areas:

**Brandon Mastronardi**, a second-year law student conducted research on Indigenous identity and human rights in Canada. He examined recent legislative developments across the country aimed at addressing racism against Indigenous people. Brandon compiled and synthesized leading cases on human rights issues facing Indigenous peoples to highlight human-rights issues facing Indigenous people. Brandon also looked at how tribunals are incorporating the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) objectives when issuing decisions about discrimination against Indigenous people. His memo also included a section on social context evidence and how it can be useful for adjudicators when deciding cases with Indigenous complainants.

**Nikesh Mehta-Spooner**, a first-year law student researched and summarized human rights case law regarding online platforms and related discriminatory issues i.e., hate speech, advertising, and opinions, and explored jurisdictional questions as to which instances fall within the federal vs. provincial/territorial jurisdiction.

**Julia Cremonese**, a first-year law student researched non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and the increasing scrutiny NDAs are receiving in Canada when it comes to allegations of harassment and discrimination in human rights law. Julia looked at the use of expansive NDAs compared to traditional "settlement and release agreements" in settling human rights cases. Julia highlighted current legal and ethical issues around NDAs, noting trends in emerging case law, and summarizing which provinces have passed, or are contemplating bills to limit the use of sweeping NDAs in particular instances.

## Lancaster Webinars

**April 11, 2024** *Discrimination and Harassment: Experts examine recent cases, emerging trends*

**May 9, 2024** *Untangling the Web: Sorting out administration and accommodation issues in sick leave, LTD, STD and workers' compensation claims*

**June 25, 2024** *Extraordinary Harms, Extraordinary Remedies: Learning from exceptional damage awards in human rights and arbitration cases*

**July 4, 2024** *Returns that Work: Expert guidance on navigating the return of injured or ill employees to work*

**August 1, 2024** *Adapting to an Older Workforce: Accommodation, benefits, retirement options*

**August 15, 2024** *Recovering the Balance: Practical guidance on flexible work, the right to disconnect, and avoiding burnout*

**August 27, 2024** *Can We Be Friends? Navigating workplace interactions in an increasingly conflicted world*

**September 10, 2024** *Beyond the Open Door: Expert guidance on proactively recognizing and responding to employee mental health concerns*

**November 5, 2024** *Compliance and Compassion: Providing representation while accommodating disabilities and meeting professional obligations*



**November 21, 2024** *Attendance Management: Addressing issues raised by disabilities, remote work, childcare and elder care, and absences due to illness and emergencies*

**January 30, 2025** *Annual Human Rights Update: Latest Cases and Legislative Developments*

**February 13, 2025** *Anti-Racism at Work: Strategies for proactively addressing discrimination and promoting equity*

**February 27, 2025** *Faith at the Fore: Key principles and recent decisions relating to religious accommodation at work*

**March 13, 2025** *Supporting Complainants, Addressing Root Causes: Trauma-informed approaches to workplace violence, harassment, and bullying*

### Restorative Training

**June 19, 2024** Commission Members, staff, and Adjudication panel Members attended a restorative refresher training with Pat Lewis of the IIRP. The day-long event focused on the skills and themes of restorative practice and explored ways the Human Rights system can improve and maintain restorative practices within the compliance process.

### Publications

This year, the Commission developed a brochure in response to human rights issues that arose during COVID-19, and the flood and fire evacuations of more recent years. It is important to consider the potential disproportionate impacts emergencies can have on vulnerable groups including indigenous and racialized peoples, people with physical and mental-health disabilities, older people living alone or in institutions, children in foster care, people relying on social assistance, and others. The information in the brochure is meant to support both those providing care and those in need of support

during an emergency or evacuation. Understanding how the NWT *Human Rights Act* applies in these situations helps ensure that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect.



## Compliance

The NWT Human Rights Commission answers hundreds of questions from the public every year. Inquiries come from all corners of the territory and can be made by telephone, email, or in person.

The Human Rights Commission represents the public interest when it is party to complaints at hearing. The Commission promotes the public interest by encouraging a hearing process that is efficient, effective, and as non-adversarial as possible.

This year you will notice a change in our reporting as files affected by the amendments to the NWT *Human Rights Act* passed in June 2019 have made their way through our process. Changes to the Act mean that files accepted by the executive director after April 1, 2021 are carried to hearing by the Commission who also decides whether to refer or dismiss complaints. On carriage files, the Commission is an independent party, it does not represent the Complainant or the Respondent at hearing. The Commission has the responsibility of representing the public interest and upholding the principles of the Act. Having carriage of a complaint signifies that procedurally, as between the Commission and the Complainant, it is the Commission which takes the lead and has the procedural burden of advancing the case with a view to establishing that the complaint is justified.

Because carriage files are no longer “closed” once a decision is made to refer, we have changed our reporting to reflect the number of new files opened, files in process (dispute resolution/investigation/administrative decisions/decisions), files resolved (dismissed, withdrawn, settled) and carriage files.

Files referred to the Human Rights Adjudication Panel (HRAP), and any appeals of a Commission decision to dismiss will show as new files in HRAP statistics. Carriage files will be indicated under HRAP’s statistics.

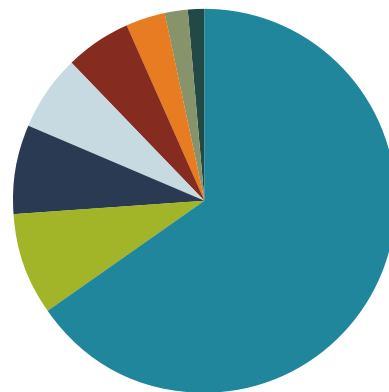
## Inquiries

The Executive Director’s office receives inquiries from employers and landlords requesting information about their responsibilities under the Act as well as from people who believe they have been discriminated against. All inquiries to the Commission are confidential.

From April 1, 2024 through to March 31, 2025 the Executive Director’s office received 398 inquiries. Many inquiries are not related to equality human rights and never result in a complaint. Inquiries made at community visits, trade shows, or other public events are not included in the Inquiries statistics.

Whenever possible, human rights officers will direct a person to the agency or organization that is best equipped to help the individual with their issue. Sometimes individuals initiate the complaint process but decide not to file a complaint for personal reasons. In 2024-2025, the office opened 26 complaint files.

### Inquiries by Region



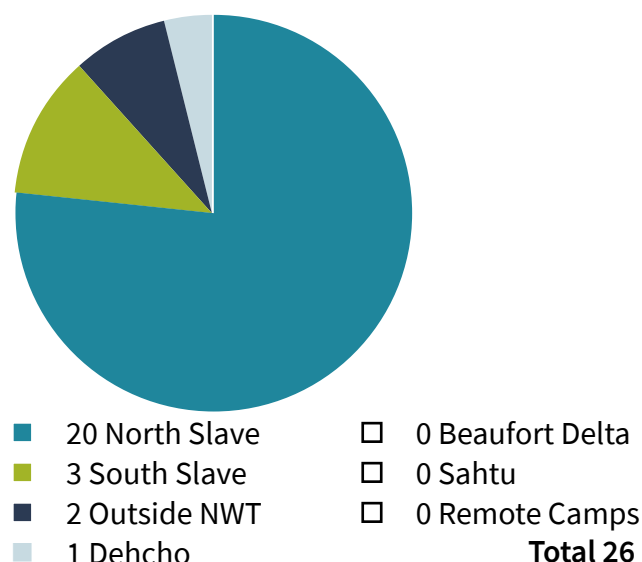
260 North Slave	13 Sahtu
35 South Slave	8 Deh Cho
30 Not Recorded	5 Remote Camp
25 Beaufort Delta	
22 Outside NWT	

**Total 398**

## Complaints

Complaints may be very complex and involve other processes such as union grievances. All parties are afforded adequate time to respond to information gathered about the complaint so they are prepared to move through our complaint process. Parties are also offered the opportunity to settle a complaint through our restorative dispute resolution process prior to the Executive Director making a decision whether to dismiss the complaint or refer it for adjudication.

## New Complaints by Region

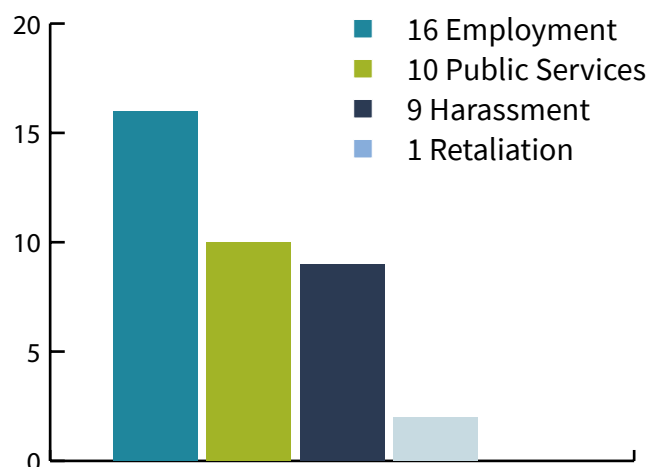


In 2024-2025, the Executive Director's office had 90 complaints in process. The Executive Director accepted 26 new complaints during the fiscal year and resolved 14. Of the 14 files resolved, 8 were settled, 1 was withdrawn, 3 were referred to the Adjudication Panel for hearing, and 2 were dismissed.

## Areas and Grounds

The NWT *Human Rights Act* protects people from discrimination in employment; public services, goods, accommodation, and facilities; tenancy; and publications. The Act also protects people from harassment based on a protected ground

## Areas included in Complaints



and from retaliation for filing or participating in a human rights complaint.

The bulk of complaints of discrimination are filed in the area of employment. Employers have a responsibility to not discriminate against employees and to provide an inclusive workplace.

There are currently 22 grounds protected by the NWT *Human Rights Act*. A person may claim discrimination based on more than one ground in their complaint. The most common ground cited when filing a complaint of discrimination is disability.

**In 2024-2025**  
**54%**  
**of all new complaints**  
**included an allegation of**  
**discrimination based on**  
**DISABILITY**

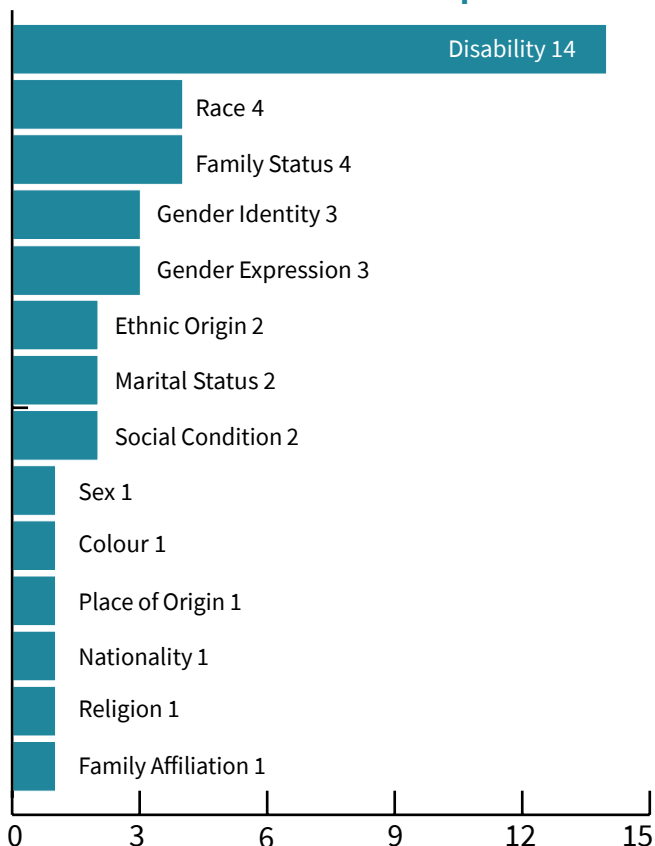
## Adjudication

When the Executive Director is unable to dismiss a complaint and the parties cannot resolve their dispute, the complaint is referred to the Adjudication Panel for a hearing. Complainants may appeal the Executive Director's decision to dismiss their human rights complaints. The Adjudication Panel hears these appeals.

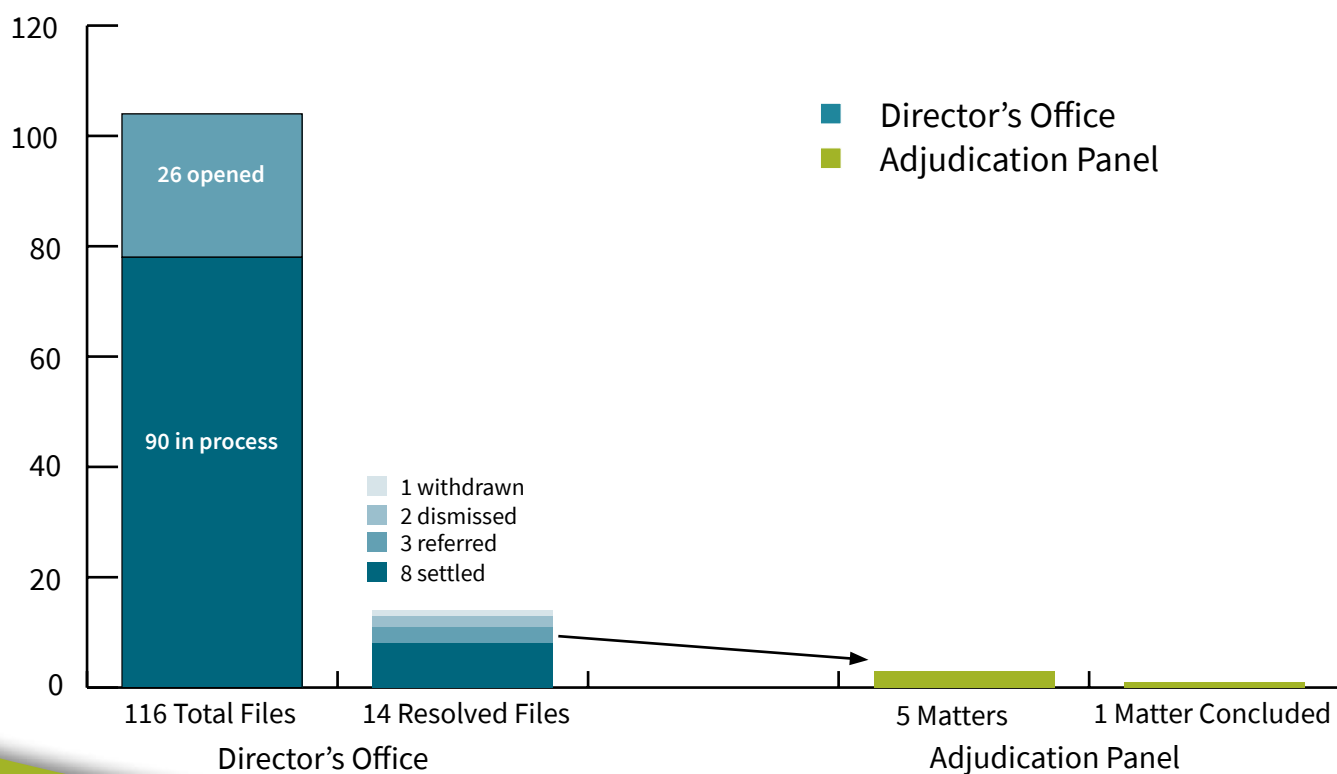
The Adjudication Panel had 5 matters in process at the beginning of the 2024-2025 year. The Executive Director referred 3 files to the Panel over the course of the fiscal year which were files accepted before April 1, 2020. There were no appeals of complaint dismissals.

The Adjudication Panel issued one decision this year. No other matters were concluded in 2024-2025. A complainant may withdraw their complaint when parties reach a settlement or when the complainant decides not to pursue their complaint.

## Grounds included in Complaints



## Complaint Files in Process



## Decisions

The Human Rights Adjudication Panel issued one decision between April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.

### AA v. Inuvik Regional Hospital

AA brought a complaint against the Inuvik Regional Hospital in 2018 alleging that they breached his medical confidentiality and delayed his return to work when they altered the template medical questionnaire for his physician to complete. AA experienced a disabling condition which resulted in his hospitalization and a short absence from his place of employment.

AA also alleged that Inuvik Regional Hospital harassed him by delaying his return to work, removing him from the schedule, changing the door code while he was away from the workplace, and engaging in increased scrutiny and unwarranted criticism upon his return.

Inuvik Regional Hospital stated that it took reasonable steps to accommodate AA after determining the length of time he would be away, ensuring a safe return to work, that there would be adequate coverage during his absence. Inuvik Regional Hospital stated that they did not delay the complainant's return to work and took reasonable steps to return him to work while meeting its responsibilities as an employer.

Inuvik Regional Hospital denied AA was harassed or experienced differential treatment during his absence or upon his return to the workplace and says that any decisions made, and supervision provided, were reasonable exercises of management rights.

Adjudicator Sengupta determined that AA had experienced a significant medical crisis, was receiving treatment and working towards recovery, when his medical information was unnecessarily sought and obtained by his employer. AA was not in a position to return to work in December 2017, as he was still

hospitalized. Once that fact had been confirmed, it was improper for Inuvik Regional Hospital to amend the form in order to receive more information about AA's limitations at that time. The only way Inuvik Regional Hospital was able to receive that information was by significantly and substantively altering the medical prognosis template form: The form was fundamentally altered in such a way that it allowed the Inuvik Regional Hospital to seek and obtain sensitive medical information that went beyond what was needed, and what they were entitled to know at the time.

Adjudicator Sengupta noted concerns with how Inuvik Regional Hospital had altered the medical prognosis request seeking answers regarding limitations and accommodation in the workplace, when AA was not able to return to work at that time. She awarded AA \$5,000 for injury to his dignity, feelings and self-respect. She stated that the award takes into account the complainant's vulnerability at the time the breach occurred as well as the objective impropriety of seeking and receiving unnecessary and private medical information.

### Hearing Results

All decisions made by the Adjudication Panel are public. You can access the latest hearing results at: [canlii.org/en/nt/nthrap](https://canlii.org/en/nt/nthrap)

## Looking Forward

In the 2025-2026 year, the Commission will receive the results of our research project initiated to understand how we can better serve Indigenous people and new Canadians. The project aims to learn more about what people know about human rights in the Northwest Territories. Our third-party researchers invited Indigenous people and new Canadians who live in Dettah, N'dilo, or Yellowknife to complete a survey and participate in a focus group. Our hope is the resulting recommendations will help inform our processes and community outreach.

This year there were numerous stories in the media describing the barriers to equality that still exist across the territory for disabled persons. Disability has been the number one ground in our human rights complaints since the Commission's establishment twenty years ago. As such, the Commission is pleased to be partnering with CDETNO and the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE) as a mentor for the national MentorAbility initiative. MentorAbility is built on a supported employment foundation that promotes the recruitment, employment, and retention of persons experiencing disability. The initiative provides and celebrates in-person and virtual mentoring experiences, networking and learning events, social media campaigns, as well as building a body of evidence through research activities. With a specific focus on facilitating unique, short-term (from 1 hour to 1 day) mentoring opportunities between employers and persons experiencing disability, this initiative is part of a national effort to promote the employment of persons experiencing disability. Throughout 2025-26, the Executive Director's office will be matched with various mentees from across the territory to provide the benefit of brief mentoring experiences meant to expose mentees to the world of human rights work.

Further to our partnership with CDETNO and CASE, the Commission will, for the first time, celebrate and promote Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) in October. One in five working-age persons in Canada who are in the labour force have a disability. Unfortunately, Statistics Canada reports the unemployment rate for persons with disability (6.9%) is twice as high as for persons without disabilities (3.8%). DEAM was first proclaimed in Canada in 2010. Currently, all jurisdictions except the NWT, Nunavut, and Canada have formally proclaimed October Disability Employment Awareness Month. The Commission encourages the GNWT to demonstrate its support for workplaces as diverse as our communities by formally proclaiming October Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Artificial intelligence is here. So too are the increased concerns its use may pose from a human rights perspective. It is recognized that in order to move forward with AI and truly take advantage of its benefits, a better understanding of its possible impacts on fundamental human right is necessary. This year, the Commission will undertake research into the human rights impacts of AI technology and what tools may be available to increase awareness in policy makers and organizational users of the risks of discrimination that may come along with it.

Part of the role of the Commission is to advise the Legislative Assembly when we see things that should be changed. The Commission has repeatedly made recommendations to the Legislative Assembly about developing accessibility legislation. The GNWT's Department of Infrastructure stated they do not currently have a mandated role to play in the accessibility standards for private and municipal infrastructure. The Commission will continue to bring awareness to businesses and organizations about the gap between the National Building Code standard of



accessibility and an organization's responsibility to provide accessible spaces and accommodation under the NWT *Human Rights Act*. We have a significant amount of information on our website about ways to improve service provision to make spaces, documents, and processes more accessible to everyone regardless of their ability. The Commission again urges the GNWT to re-examine this issue and to consider how important accessibility is to many people regardless of their disability. The Commission believes the GNWT should join the now nine other Canadian jurisdictions and adopt accessibility legislation. Providing person-centred services means that physical and online spaces are prepared to meet everyone's needs.



# Financial Report

## Statement of General Operations

For the year ended March 31,	2024	2025
<b>Revenue</b>		
Legislative Assembly of the NWT		
Operating grant	\$ 180,000	\$ 180,000
Expense reimbursement (Note 4)	(49,826)	(71,308)
Refunded to GNWT		
	130,174	105,120
<b>Expenses</b>		
Accounting	9,383	9,500
Advertising and promotion	17,656	20,217
Benefits and pension	436	464
Contracts -Administration (Note 6)	21,530	62,609
Contributions and Donations	997	1,000
Events	6,668	7,513
Honorarium commission chair	23,693	29,277
Honorarium commission members	34,023	37,075
Legal expenses	255	602
Membership fees	2,259	2,217
Office and Administration	7,150	2,032
Professional development	11,005	3,965
Translation and Interpretation	539	1,182
Travel - commission chair	-	1,278
Travel - commission members	-	-
	135,594	178,931
<b>Excess revenue</b>	<b>\$ (5,420)</b>	<b>\$ (70,239)</b>

4. Expense Reimbursement The Commission gave the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories a portion of funding to pay for various expenses on behalf of the Commission. The GNWT spent \$71,308 on behalf of the COmmission and \$8,692 i shown as receivable.

6. Contingency The Commission has received statements of claim related to matters arising in the ordinary course of operations. These matters are at various stages but their outcome and an estimate of loss, if any, is not determinable. Costs related to these matters, if any, will be recorded when the matters are resolved.

## Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended March 31,	2024	2025
<b>Cash provided by (used in) operating activities</b>		
Excess revenue	\$ (5,420)	\$ (70,239)
Change in non cash operating working capital		
Due from GNWT – Legislative Assembly	(30,054)	21,482
Prepaid expenses	5,380	
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(6,752)	(2,218)
<b>Change in cash</b>	<b>(36,846)</b>	<b>(50,975)</b>
<b>Cash, opening</b>	<b>351,918</b>	<b>315,072</b>
<b>Cash, closing</b>	<b>\$ 315,072</b>	<b>\$ 264,097</b>

# Appendix 1 : Accessibility and the Building Code

Disabilities affect the way people interact with their environment. Creating an accessible environment means removing barriers so people can access your space more easily.

Many people have hidden disabilities such as vision impairment, hearing impairment, or painful conditions that affect their strength and energy levels.

Not all disabilities are permanent. A broken arm or leg can also decrease a person's mobility.

Disability-related complaints make up 49% of ALL complaints received by human rights commissions across Canada. (CHRC, 2019).

## Expectations for accessibility have changed

Many business owners believe they are exempt from current accessibility standards because they have been “grandfathered” based on the age of the structure but this is not always the case. Many business owners are surprised to learn that **meeting the minimum standards set out in the National Building Code may not mean a space is considered accessible.**

Courts and Tribunals are making decisions that show compliance with the National Building Code (NBC) does not always protect a business from human rights complaints. Businesses have a responsibility to accommodate individuals for their specific needs.

There are plans to reform the NBC, however it is not expected to happen until 2025. It may be in your best interest to consider taking measures to assess the accessibility of your own space and make any necessary changes.

## Accessibility is Good for Business

Businesses that incorporate accessibility are more likely to meet legal requirements under the *Human Rights Act*, be innovative, inclusive, and have positive brand messaging that reaches a larger market.

When accessibility is part of strategic planning, businesses are better equipped for success.

- **Drive Innovation:** Accessibility features in products and services often solve unanticipated problems.
- **Enhance Your Brand:** Diversity and inclusion efforts so important to business success are accelerated with a clear, well-integrated accessibility commitment.
- **Extend Market Reach:** The global market of people with disabilities is over 1 billion people with a spending power of more than \$6 trillion. Accessibility often improves the shopping experience for all users whether online or in person.
- **Minimize Legal Risk:** Businesses that are inclusive and accessible to all people are less likely to encounter human rights complaints.

Since 2013, the most common concern for people filing human rights complaints in the NWT is discrimination and/or harassment on the basis of a DISABILITY.

## Cost of Accommodations

Many accommodations are simple and inexpensive. There are several resources available online that can assist business owners with making their businesses and events more accessible. Some simple things you can do to improve accessibility might include:

- Propping open heavy doors
- Adding a removable ramp over a lip or step at your entrance
- Increasing the size of a readable font on your signs, brochures, or website
- Including a variety of seating options in your waiting areas
- Adjusting the height of desks, phones, service counters, etc.
- Installing grab bars in accessible washrooms

Only about 25% of accessibility requirements in the NBC reflect current national and international best practices. (The Canadian Commission of Building and Fire Codes, 2015)

## Learn More about Accessibility Standards

Accessibility begins with awareness. Applying an accessibility mindset toward your business environment and functions will help you to be able to identify and resolve barriers before they result in an accessibility-related complaint. **The CSA standard B651-18 “Accessible Design for the Built Environment” can help you understand what is required to meet current accessibility standards.**

The Commission has a list of free tools, resources, and funding options dedicated to helping businesses become more accessible. You can access these any time day or night from the resource page on our website [nwthumanrights.ca/resources/accessibility](http://nwthumanrights.ca/resources/accessibility)



# Appendix 2: Emergency Preparedness and Accessibility

## Introduction

The Commission developed a brochure in Emergency Preparedness and Accessibility in response to human rights issues that arose during COVID-19, and the flood and fire evacuations of recent years. This information is meant to support both those providing and those in need of support during an emergency or evacuation. Understanding how the NWT Human Rights Act applies in these situations helps ensure that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect.

It is important to consider the potential disproportionate impacts emergencies can have on vulnerable groups including indigenous and racialized peoples, people with physical and mental-health disabilities, older people living alone or in institutions, children in foster care, people relying on social assistance, and others.

## Impact on Persons with Disabilities

Public health emergencies and evacuations can create additional challenges for persons with disabilities, such as:

- **Access to Information:** Emergency information must be provided in accessible formats, ensuring that all individuals can understand and respond appropriately to emergency instructions.
- **Healthcare Access:** Persons with disabilities may require specific medical care or assistance, which must be maintained during emergencies. This includes ensuring that medical facilities, medications, and support services remain accessible.
- **Mobility and Evacuation:** Evacuation plans must consider the mobility needs of individuals with disabilities, including accessible transportation and evacuation routes.

- **Support Services:** Essential support services, such as personal care attendants, service animals, and assistive devices, must be considered and provided for during emergencies.

## Impact on Neurodivergent Individuals and Vulnerable Populations

Public emergencies can also disproportionately affect individuals with disabilities beyond mobility, such as those who are neurodivergent (including ADHD, autism, and dyslexia), as well as individuals with depression, anxiety, and addictions. They may face unique challenges in understanding and responding to emergency instructions, accessing specialized care, and coping with heightened stress and anxiety during emergencies. Emergency plans must include provisions for clear communication, sensory-friendly environments, and mental health support.

Vulnerable populations, such as elderly individuals in institutions and children in foster care, also require special consideration. Ensuring their safety involves maintaining access to necessary medical care, support services, and a stable, caring environment during evacuations or public health crises. Coordination with care providers and institutions is essential to protect these individuals and uphold their rights during emergencies.



## Preparing for Emergencies

Individuals and families should take proactive steps to prepare for emergencies, considering the specific needs of persons with disabilities:

- **Create an Emergency Plan:** Develop a detailed plan that includes accessible evacuation routes, communication methods, and a list of essential items and support services needed during an emergency.
- **Stay Informed:** Regularly update yourself on emergency procedures and ensure that you have access to information in formats that are accessible to you.
- **Communicate Needs:** Inform local emergency services about any specific needs related to disabilities to ensure they are prepared to assist you effectively during an emergency.

## Conclusion

Emergencies can be challenging for everyone, but they can pose additional risks for persons with disabilities and our vulnerable populations. By understanding your rights and responsibilities under the NWT *Human Rights Act* and taking proactive steps to prepare, you can help ensure that you and your loved ones are protected and supported during public health emergencies or evacuations. Remember, equitable treatment and accessibility are fundamental rights, even in times of crisis.

### [Emergency Planning and Preparedness for People with Disabilities in Canada's North](#)

is a document to help persons with disabilities and their caregivers create an emergency plan. A copy of this guide can be found on our website in English, French, and Tłıchǵ.

