

***HUMAN RIGHTS in the WORKPLACE***  
**A Glossary of Terms**



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## **Preface**

Canadian society is multicultural and becoming increasingly diverse. Strategically addressing the inherent challenges in diverse organizations can be an opportunity to develop a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining a wide variety of skills, expertise and talent.

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission's mission is to reduce individual and systemic discrimination in support of a society characterized by equity and inclusion.

The goal of this glossary is to explain and contextualize common terms in literature regarding Human Rights, Diversity & Inclusion and Human Resource Management in Nova Scotia.

## **Acknowledgments**

This glossary was prepared by Louise Adongo with support from Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission staff.

*Please note:*

This glossary is meant to be used as a general resource but should not be relied upon as a legal document. The definitions provided are a synthesis of information from a range of sources. It will likely be updated as new terms, situations and areas of consideration arise over time.

## GLOSSARY of TERMS

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### A

#### **Absenteeism**

Absence from the workplace for genuine illness, poor morale or other (sometimes inappropriate) reasons

#### **Aboriginal Peoples**

Individuals or groups who are original inhabitants of (native to) a country

In Canada, they include: Mi'kmaq, Inuit, Métis, Iroquois, etc. The terms "Native" or "First Nations" are also used to refer to Aboriginal people.

#### **Access (to services or facilities)**

Access to service; for instance, health care or educational facilities is a *protected area* in the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*

#### **Accommodation**

In the context of property (housing, office space, etc), see *tenancy*

In the context of the workplace or access to services (for example), see *Reasonable Accommodation*.

#### **Acculturation**

The process of adopting cultural traits or social patterns of another group

An individual or group from one culture becomes 'acculturated' when they enter into and integrate with a different culture for an extended period of time.

#### Organizational Acculturation

This can be observed in an individuals' changes in: language use and preference (in policies and practice); cultural identity (with or alienation from other organizational cultures); association with members of one's own culture (including ethno-racial, religious, professional etc.). This occurs over time as the individual settles into their role within the organization.

#### **Advocacy**

The act of supporting or recommending a course of action upon recognizing a need as expressed by an individual or members of a particular (often underserved or disenfranchised) group

#### **Affirmative Action**

Action taken by a government, public agency or private organization to make up for past prejudice, exclusion and discrimination that led to unequal access to education, employment or promotion within the workplace on the basis of *gender, race, ethnic origin, religion, disability, etc.* Previous differential treatment is often addressed through *Affirmative Action Policies*

### **Affirmative Action Policy**

A practical policy to increase the diversity within an organization that is implemented through human resources initiatives which increase attraction, recruitment and retention in the hiring of members of *designated groups*.

Due to a variety of false assumptions and inappropriate applications of affirmative action policies (including preferences, quotas and reserved slots not based on merit) there is a shift towards *Employment Equity* terminology.

### **Ageism**

The institutional, cultural and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their age

Age is a *protected characteristic* in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. The potential for age-based discrimination can be addressed in the development and implementation of hiring, and *employment equity policies*.

In western societies, a fall in the birth rate and increased longevity has led to a shift in the age profile of the population and the workplace.

Soon the NS workforce will comprise older people returning to work; recent immigrants (from outside Canada and other parts of the country) are seeking different work requiring different time commitments and skill sets.

### **Assimilation**

Usually refers to the loss of the original ethnic identity as a person is absorbed into the dominant culture in an attempt to adjust to what is required by that dominant culture.

In an organization, 'cultural assimilation' often propagates systemic discrimination of which individuals may be unaware.

## **B**

### **Baby Boomers**

Persons who were born during the unusual spike in birth rates after World War 2 (between the years 1946 and 1964)

**Bias**

Distortion of facts or reality because of one's predisposition to a particular point of view (also see *prejudice*).

**Bicultural**

See *Multicultural*

**Blended families**

These are families in which either or both parents enter a marriage after having either been married before or having children outside of the current marital/family unit.

**Bona fide Occupational Requirement (BFOR)**

This is a standard, reasonable, and necessary rule, which is a requirement for a specific employment position.

A BFOR is a defense to a discriminatory practice or policy and is often based on factors such as safety or effectiveness. For instance, courts have found that an airline pilot must have good eyesight.

When an employment standard is a BFOR, an employer is not expected to change it to accommodate an employee because doing so would constitute an undue hardship to the employer.

However, in order to legally qualify as a BFOR, the rule must be as inclusive as possible.

**Business Acumen**

Having keen business judgment or insight

**C****Career Progression**

Giving staff room to grow and develop their careers within an organization is crucial to *staff retention*. Lack of career progression is the main reason people decide to change jobs. Three types of career progression have been identified in research:

- (i) Education-related career progression - there is a direct connection between education and work
- (ii) Individualized career progression - flexible and dynamic career path, series of challenging jobs, no connection to previous educational experience
- (iii) Re-directed career progression - external life events lead a person to explore a radical shift in careers

**Civil Rights**

The rights of citizens to liberty and equality, they include, but are not limited to, freedom to worship, to express oneself, to vote, to take part in political life and to have access to certain information.

**Classism**

A system of *oppression* that gives one group *power* and *privilege* over another group, often based on income and access to resources.

**Collective Rights**

The rights of groups to protect their interests and identity.

For example: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and associated case law recognizes that the "existing *treaty* and Aboriginal rights" of Aboriginal peoples of Canada include certain rights of a collective nature. Although these collective rights have yet to be fully defined, they do include matters such as the inherent right to self-government; hunting, fishing and gathering rights; collective land rights; and the right to the preservation of traditional languages, cultures and traditions.

**Complainant**

Person who initiates a complaint which is then handled through a *complaint process* either established within the organization or undertaken by a neutral third party

**Come From Away (CFA)**

Phrase used to describe people from outside Nova Scotia (often derogatorily) whether migrants from other parts of Canada or outside the country.

**Complaint process**

A process through which individuals or groups have their concerns investigated and/or determined on their merits by a third party.

**Conflict**

A disagreement between opposing groups or individuals  
A state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility of ideas

**Covenant**

See *treaty*

**Convention**

See *treaty*

**Cross cultural management**

This is an important element of organizational life in a diverse workplace. It involves interactions with staff from cultural backgrounds other than one's own in a manner that is respectful, and acknowledges the strengths inherent in differences and not just similarities.

**Culture**

This can be described as the shared attitudes, behavior, and interactions that characterize the functioning of a group or organization.

Culture can also be considered as socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought considered as the expression of a particular community, or population. For instance: Japanese culture, corporate culture, culture of health professions, etc.

**Colour**

Pigmentation of a person's skin (also see *race* and *ethnicity*)

Colour is a *protected characteristic* in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*

**Creed**

A set of principles (spiritual or other) or a philosophy of life (usually spiritually-based)

Creed is a *protected characteristic* in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*

**Cultural Identity**

Seeing and addressing oneself in relation to one's own cultural group.

**D****Declaration**

A document stating agreed upon standards by which an agency, government, or organization addresses issues. Unlike treaties, covenants and conventions, declarations are not legally binding.

**Designated Groups**

These groups comprise individual members who have been denied equal access to: employment, education, social services, housing, etc., because of their membership in such groups.

The designated groups in Nova Scotia are: Aboriginal peoples, racially visible people, women, and people with disabilities.

**Disability**

This can be defined as a physical or mental limitation or incapacity to perform certain actions. Physical and mental disabilities are *protected characteristics* in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*

Disabilities include visible or invisible conditions that have: developed over time, resulted from an accidental injury, or been present from birth. It involves physical, mental, and learning disabilities. For example, persons with mental disorders, sensory disabilities (such as hearing or vision limitations) and epilepsy are protected under the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*.

Addictions can also be considered as disabilities under the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* (Also see *mental health* and *episodic disabilities*.)

### **Discrimination**

Treating an individual or members of a particular group differently (by intention or otherwise) based on one or more of the *protected characteristics* (perceived or actual) in the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*, which results in a disadvantage to that person or individuals.

Discrimination in an organization often occurs when policies and practice represent the perspective of the dominant cultural group. Discrimination can result in inaccessibility of opportunities for jobs and career advancement, rights and privileges (such as benefits and ergonomic workplaces) as well as lower wages.

Direct discrimination - discrimination against a particular group that is explicit, purposeful and intentional, e.g. "No blacks allowed."

Indirect/Adverse Effect Discrimination - a policy which is neutral on its face can impact individuals in a differential fashion. Such policies provide for "equal treatment in equal circumstances", but under unequal social conditions. For instance when one group is the norm for whom institutional rules policies and practices are formulated, these are then applied to "everybody else" including different groups that have other (cultural, religious, etc.) norms.

For example: The Supreme Court of Canada found that an extremely high aerobic standard for firefighters in British Columbia was unrelated to the actual physical requirements necessary to carry out the duties of the job. The Court found that this aerobic requirement negatively impacted upon female firefighters who were generally physiologically unable to meet that standard.

Systemic Discrimination -A pattern of discrimination throughout a place of employment, service or program that is a result of pervasive and interrelated actions, policies, or procedures

### **Disenfranchise**

To deprive an individual of rights to full participation in civil society (usually voting rights)

In an organizational context, disenfranchisement is defined as: being deprived of the capability to participate in, and to influence agenda-setting and decision-making.

### **Disadvantaged Group**

See *designated group*

### **Diversity**

The presence of a wide range (different kinds) of a particular quality, attribute or group in a specified area. In Human Rights, diversity infers a wide range of people who may exhibit *protected characteristics* in *protected areas*.

A healthy workplace is diverse. Fostering workplace diversity often requires a commitment from organizational leadership create policies and programs (such as *Employment Equity*)

## **E**

### **Employment Equity**

Employment in a fair, non-biased manner

This requires policies and strategies that create and foster equal access to opportunities for all members of the organization. In the context of the workplace, commitment to equity is evidenced by: fair hiring policies and the provision of opportunities for professional development in recognition of the implications of diverse backgrounds & pre-existing knowledge (or lack thereof).

### **Employment Equity Agreement**

### **Employment Equity Measures**

Processes to create equal access to people who face barriers in access to: to: employment, education, social services, housing, etc., because of their membership in such groups. Also see *preferential measures*

### **Employment Equity Partnership**

### **Employment Equity Plan**

### **Environmental Racism**

Intentional or unintentional racial discrimination in the enforcement of environmental rules and regulations

The intentional or unintentional targeting of racial minority communities as locations for polluting industries, waste treatment plants or resource use

### **Episodic Disability**

A physical or mental illness that is unpredictably recurrent. For instance, recovering from chemotherapy, symptoms of arthritis, bipolar episodes etc.

### **Ethnic group**

Ethnic groups are determined by socially selected cultural traits (see *ethnocultural & racial group*)

### **Ethnicity**

An ethnic group is socially defined on the basis of cultural characteristics of diverse types such as language, religion, kinship organization, dress and mannerism, or any other set of cultural criteria deemed relevant to the actors concerned.

Use of "ethnicity" rather than or in addition to "race" is preferable in written text as it has fewer

negative connotations.

**Ethnocultural**

Concerning, about or with reference to a particular ethnic group

**Equality**

The quality, fact, or state of being the "same"

Equality is an ideal of providing the same opportunity to all. BUT treating everyone equally (the same) does not create equality.

The starting base(s) are unequal - because society consists of levels (class, advantage, privilege, exclusion etc.)

**Equity**

Equity is a just application of fairness that incorporates justice in providing opportunities to all. It is a process that enables the disadvantaged to eventually attain equality.

Equity takes into account the unequal access experienced by disadvantaged groups (see *Employment Equity*).

**F**

**Frontline**

The frontline of an organization are the members of staff closest to the public; that is, the service user interface (see *frontline staff*).

**Frontline Challenge**

Improved quality of service provision requires the creation of judgment capability at the frontlines of the organization.

**Frontline Staff**

Staff that work directly with customers, clients or beneficiaries of public services, often as part of wider delivery or operational groups of staff.

In the workplace they often have more operational expertise than understanding of policy and program development.

Early involvement of frontline staff in the planning process ensures effective implementation of policy and programs and addresses the *frontline challenge*.

**Family Status**

The grouping of individual(s) in a family through blood relation, marital, sexual, economic or other close

association

Family Status is a *protected characteristic* under the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* and has been defined as being in a "parent and child relationship".

The definition of family status includes: the presence or absence of children, the belonging to a consistent unit of affiliation.

In addressing the need for a *Work Life Balance*, a number of organizations have developed *Family- friendly policies*.

### **Family friendly policies**

These are policies that provide flexible working arrangements to accommodate the family obligations of staff.

While in the past these policies were mainly focused on childcare, there is a shift to include eldercare as well as care for relatives who don't fit into either category (elderly or children).

Inclusive organizations need to consider and account for various types of family types (including: single parent, blended families and same gender partnerships) when formulating family-friendly policies.

## **G**

### **Gender**

Socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that are considered appropriate for men and women

Gender is a *protected characteristic* in the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*

### **Gender Identity**

An internal sense of being male or female which can be partially or fully opposed to physical anatomy and gender roles assigned at birth (see *transgender*).

### **Gender Inequality**

The outcome of overt (obvious) or subtle (hidden) differential treatment of individuals based on gender.

The workplace often mirrors and may exacerbate gender inequalities and discrimination in society.

For instance, income disparity - in situations where women are paid less for doing a job with same qualifications as men

### **Gender Mainstreaming**

The process of creating the knowledge, awareness of, and responsibility for, gender equity in the workplace

This requires a change in attitudes and organizational cultures which may impede successful main

streaming.

### **Generation X, Y and Z**

Generation X is a term used in many countries around the world to describe persons born from 1965 to around 1982

Generation Y (see *Millennials*)

Generation Z describes persons born after 1997

## **H**

### **Harassment**

Harassment is a course of comment or conduct which is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. Harassment on related to any of the protected characteristics in the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* is prohibited.

In the workplace, harassment can occur as objectionable or unprofessional conduct or comment directed towards a specific individual(s). This harassment serves no legitimate purpose and has the effect of creating an intimidating, humiliating, hostile or offensive work environment.

### **Heritage Language**

The first language or original language of an ethnic group, other than French and English (Canada's official languages)

When there are multiple languages and cultures represented in the workplace, it should be understood that communication problems will arise and employers should develop a system of dealing with the challenge.

Language used in advertising material should be adapted to reflect, and meet the needs of, the local community an organization serves. It would be useful to translate print materials (brochures, factsheets, etc.) for service users at the local level into the various languages present. For instance: Mandarin, Chinese, Arabic, Tagalog and so on.

### **Heterosexism**

The institutional, cultural and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their sexual orientation

The negative attitude, personal prejudice and discriminatory behavior against people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual

### **Homophobia**

The irrational fear of lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and hatred or intolerance brought about by this

fear

The negative attitude, toward women or men who are homosexual

However, not all discrimination against homosexual persons is based on phobia (see *heterosexism*)

### **Human Rights**

The universal recognition of the rights of all persons to fairness and freedom by moral and/or legal entitlement

Human Rights are protected and become enforceable when they are codified as statutes, conventions, covenants or treaties (see *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, Treaty*).

## **I**

### **Impact**

A strong effect or impression; in Human Rights, impact refers to a significant outcome as a result of a negative event (see *negative impact*). Impact is the key element in deciding if discrimination or harassment has occurred during a *complaints process*.

### **Income**

Source of income (where an individual obtains her/his income) is a *protected characteristic* in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*

## **J**

### **Jurisdiction**

In law, jurisdiction is the authority granted to a legal body or to a political leader, to deal with legal matters, and to pronounce or enforce legal matters. Issues of jurisdiction can be legally complex.

For example: The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission has jurisdiction to deal with allegations of discrimination on the basis of race by a landlord against a tenant within the province.

However, it does not have jurisdiction to deal with allegations of discrimination on the basis of race by an employer in the field of interprovincial transportation. (This would fall within the jurisdiction of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.)

### **Jurisdiction (Aboriginal perspective)**

Legislation governing First Nations jurisdiction is a complex segment of Canadian law. Existing laws and treaties governing First Nations jurisdiction may be subject to clarification, amendment and/or reinterpretation in the courts.

Although the federal government has been assigned jurisdiction to most affairs related to First Nations

people and First Nation communities, it is advisable to consult with the office of Aboriginal affairs to determine whether or not a particular issue assigned to the federal or provincial government

## K

### **Knowledge Management**

Identifying, creating, presenting, and distributing knowledge tied to organizational objectives such as: improved performance, competitive advantage, innovation, developmental processes

Focuses on the management of knowledge in an organization as an asset and the development and cultivation of channels through which knowledge and information flow

## L

### **Language**

In Canada, the official languages are English and French. However census statistics show that there are areas in the country where people don't use either of these languages in the workplace (see *Heritage Language*).

Misunderstandings in a multilingual and culturally diverse workplace can occur from small nuances in the language used (spoken or written).

### **Learning Organization**

An organization that continually creates desired results because people at all organizational levels are individually and collectively increasing their capacity to produce results they really care about.

Commitment to equity and inclusion will require clear policies at the highest level of the organization as well as the formulation of consistent procedures for dealing with people and conflicts between people (see *complaint process*).

It is useful to keep in mind that effective learning takes place when people are motivated both by the learning process itself and the purpose of the learning.

### **Legal Rights**

These rights are enforceable by law. Legal rights can be defended or enforced before courts, tribunals, or other administrative bodies.

## M

### **Marginalization**

The process through which people are prevented from finding work, attaining enhanced levels of education, gaining access to social services and therefore cannot become fully participating members of society (also see *disenfranchised* )

**Marital Status**

Descriptions of an individual's state of relationship including: common-law, divorced, engaged, married, separated, single, spousal (including same-sex) and widowed.

Marital status is a *protected characteristic* in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*

**Mediation**

A negotiation to resolve differences between two parties conducted by an impartial (neutral) third party (the mediator)

Mediation is a useful way to resolve conflicts that arise within the work environment.

**Mental Health**

A term used to describe a level of cognitive or emotional wellbeing

**Millennials**

These are the children of the baby boomers, born between the years 1980 to 1997. They are also referred to as *Generation Y* and are a succession to *Generation X*.

**Minority Group**

A group that is numerically small in comparison to the general population AND lacks power or has restricted access to social, economic, political and educational structures due to such characteristics as ethnicity, language, race, sex (gender), sexual orientation, disability, religion.

**Moral Rights**

These rights are based on general principles of fairness and justice and are not necessarily legally binding (see *legal rights*)

**Multicultural**

The ability of an individual to participate actively in several cultures without having to negate one's ethnic identity

People often bring their multi-dimension identities into the workplace (including ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, gender, abilities, age and sexual orientation) resulting in practices influenced by several layers of values, beliefs and attitudes .

**Multiculturalism**

A societal policy that endorses cultural pluralism where all cultures have equal status

Multiculturalism implies that the many cultural groups have equal status; no cultural group has more power than another.

**N**

**(The) N-word**

A *racial slur*; a derogatory term often used to address or refer to dark-skinned persons (of Black African ancestry)

**Negative Impact**

A harmful effect or impression that is a result of a negative event

For instance, the feeling of humiliation is a negative impact of an event.

**Nova Scotia Human Rights Act**

This is the statute that governs *Human Rights* law in Nova Scotia.

**O****Occupational Assignment**

The types of tasks staff are asked to perform in accordance with their job description. Ideally, occupational assignment should be based solely on qualification and ability. However certain tasks may be assigned differentially within the workplace in instances where discrimination based on gender, assumptions about abilities (for persons with disability) or race and ethnicity occur.

**Official Language**

In Canada, English and French are the national official languages. In the provinces and territories, one or the other of the languages is official, except in New Brunswick where both languages have official status.

**Oppression**

The act of treating others harshly or with injustice

The state of being in the minority or underclass due to injustice

Prolonged harsh or cruel treatment based on one or a combination of factors by which 'difference' or 'otherness' is determined including: race, ethnicity, religion, gender, ability, class, etc.

**P****Political Belief, Affiliation or Activity**

One's connection with or support for a particular political party or group.

Political Affiliation is a *protected characteristic* in the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*. Lack of political affiliation can also ground a discrimination complaint under the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*.

**Power**

Possessing control, influence or authority

It is a state of relationship between individuals and/or groups, implied or overt, whereby one has the ability to exercise influence or control over another.

In the workplace, power can be manifest in: organizational authority, professional status, social status, cultural group, religious affiliation, physical size and so on.

### **Prejudice**

A set of negative personal beliefs about a social group that leads individuals to prejudge people from that group, or the group in general, regardless of individual differences among members of that group. Prejudice can come from anyone, and can even exist between people who may be perceived by others to be the same. All that is required is some way for a prejudiced individual to see or think of another as different.

### **Preferential Measures**

Usually used in the context of employment equity, and referred to as *Employment Equity measures*. These are targeted measures directed towards specific groups in order to overcome the specific identified barriers to participation in a *representative workforce*.

### **Privilege**

A right or advantage available only to a particular group of people

### **Protected areas**

These are public spaces in which discrimination of individuals takes place. The following are protected areas identified in the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*:

- ◆ Accommodation
- ◆ Access to services or facilities
- ◆ Employment
- ◆ Volunteer public service
- ◆ Service Provision
- ◆ Purchase or sale of property

◆ Media (publication, broadcast or advertisement) and

◆ Membership in an association or organization (including professional, business, trade, employers or employees)

### **Protected characteristics**

These are the features for which discrimination is prohibited. The following are protected characteristics identified in the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*:

- ◆ age
- ◆ family status
- ◆ physical disability
- ◆ source of income
- ◆ race
- ◆ marital status
- ◆ mental disability
- ◆ sexual orientation

- ◆ color
- ◆ sex (gender)
- ◆ sex (harassment)
- ◆ political affiliation
- ◆ creed
- ◆ religion

- ◆ ethnic, national or aboriginal origin
- ◆ association with individuals above and
- ◆ irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease

## Q

### Quality Assessment

Evaluating the organization's *quality assurance* goals

### Quality Assurance

A declaration, solemn promise or guarantee about the standard of general excellence in organization's performance of role as manifest in programs and practice

In the workplace quality assurance can be applied to service provision and organizational policies internal and external

## R

### Race

Race is a construct to describe each of the major divisions of humankind, loosely summarizing ancestry, place of origin, skin *colour* and/or *ethnicity*.

Race and racial difference has been matched to divisions and inequalities in society including access to employment, accommodation and services. Race is a *protected characteristic* in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*

### Race Relations

Interactions between diverse racial groups within one society

### Racialization

The social process by which (racial) groups are singled out for unequal treatment on the basis of real or imagined physical (race related) characteristics.

A set of powerful beliefs and ideas about race that directs decisions resulting in social hierarchy with differential status and access to civic society for groups perceived as 'racially different'

In the workplace, racialization can limit career advancement for members of racial groups incorrectly perceived to be less professional, less rational/objective/driven/ambitious etc.

**Racialized group**

A term that underlines the social construct of race that ranks individuals and people groups based on race. The term racialized group more accurately reflects the economic, social, political and cultural power relationship that is implicit in *racism* and *racial discrimination*. Also see *visible minority*.

**Racial Group**

A broad and non-technical term used to refer to groups of people, usually with a shared biological heritage, which are distinguished by their skin color and physical characteristics.

Racial groups are determined by socially selected physical traits (see *ethnic group*)

**Racial Minority (ies)**

See racialized group and visible minority (ies)

**Racial slur**

Words or terms used to insult individuals or groups based on race, ethnicity or nationality

**Racism**

Differential treatment of individuals through institutional, cultural and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their race (also see *environmental racism*).

Racist behavior humiliates, intimidates, isolates and excludes an individual or group by focusing on that person's or group's race, ethnicity, and place of origin or skin color.

Examples of racist behavior in the workplace can include unwelcome verbal, written, or physical actions or limiting opportunities for persons of a certain race

**Reasonable Accommodation**

The responsibility of employers, unions, service providers, etc., to adapt or adjust facilities, services or employment requirements to the needs of an individual or group protected by human rights legislation up to the point of undue hardship.

**Religion**

A system of belief regarding the meaning of life, and the expression of this *religious faith* in worship

A belief in a superhuman controlling power (especially in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship). Religion is a *protected characteristic* in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*

**Religious faith**

A particular system of worship

In a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace, people in leadership positions will need to take account that there are multiple religious holy days (regardless of the religion) and make decisions about what when and how celebration(s) will be acknowledged.

**Representative Workforce**

A workforce that reflects the proportion of *designated groups* in the working age population, at all organizational levels and in all occupational classifications

**Respondent**

The accused party in a *complaint*

**Responsibilities**

The state of being responsible, capable of good conduct, morally accountable for one's actions

The ability to act independently and make rational decisions

**Rights**

(See *civil rights, legal rights, moral rights*)

**S****Sex**

The biological and physiological characteristics by which men and women are defined

**Sexism**

Institutional, cultural, or individual set of practices and beliefs which assign differential value to people according to their *sex* and/or *gender*.

**Sexual Harassment**

Unwanted or unwelcome conduct or course of comment of a sexual nature made by a person who knows, or ought reasonably to know, that such conduct or comment is unacceptable. Sexual harassment is a *protected characteristic* in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act and it includes but is not limited to:

- ◆ expressed (or implied) promise (or reward) for complying with a request of a sexual nature;
- ◆ actual reprisal (or an expressed, or implied threat of reprisal) for refusal to comply with a request of a sexual nature;
- ◆ actual denial (or an expressed, or implied threat of denial) of opportunity for refusal to comply with such a request;

◆ the conduct or comment intended to, or has the effect of, creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

### **Sexual Orientation**

Used to describe sexual interests and lifestyles including: homosexuality, bisexuality, heterosexuality and celibacy

Sexual Orientation is a *protected characteristic* in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*

### **Special Rights**

See *Collective Rights*

### **Staff Retention**

The ability of an organization to keep staff working for an indefinite period

Staff retention strategies include: good benefits, healthy and respectful work environments.

### **Stereotype**

A widely held but fixed generalization and (over)simplified image of a particular type of person, group of people or quality allowing for little or no individuality or critical judgment.

Often a negative belief which regards all members of a group as being the same in relation to a particular attitude or attribute

### **Succession Planning**

The process of ensuring that skills and training are provided for people to take on positions that will be left vacant by retiring staff (usually mid level and senior leadership)

## **T**

### **Transgender**

A term used for a variety of individuals, behaviors, and groups centered on the partial or full reversal of gender roles.

Transgendered people may have a partial or completely opposing gender identity to that which they were assigned at birth.

Generally describes people who are inclined to cross the gender line including transsexuals, transgenderists (full-time, non-surgical cross-dressers) and part-time cross-dressers.

### **Treaty**

Binding agreement between states; also referred to as *covenant* or *convention*.

Formal agreement between states that define and modify their mutual duties and obligations

Unlike *declarations*, treaties (covenants or conventions) are legally binding for governments that have signed them.

**Tenant**

An individual who pays rent to use or occupy property which is owned by another.

Discrimination in the landlord-tenant relationship is prohibited by the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*.

**U**

**Underclass**

A second-tier, lower level, segment of society

The underclass is either subject to *underrepresentation* within the workplace (see *designated groups*), or are not able to advance to higher levels into leadership positions in the organization.

**Under-Representation**

When designated groups are employed in disproportionately low numbers compared with their qualifications and availability in the workforce.

**V**

**Values**

Principles or moral standards held as important by an individual or group.

**Visible minority (ies)**

A political construct that was intended to be used within the specific context of *Employment Equity measures*. In this context, it is defined as non-White and non-Aboriginal.

The term has negative connotations both from those who are part of this 'non-White ' group, as it evokes the idea of being 'other' while being White is normal. Preferred terms include racial minority (ies) or *racialized group(s)*

**W**

**Welcoming Community**

A community that promotes and supports hospitality, to encourage settlement and integration for migrants into that community

**Work Life Balance**

This is an attempt to address the challenge of fitting the working life into peoples' overall life plan. For many, part of the work life balance involves spending time with family and pursuing personal interests in addition to following career and work-related activities.

An organization committed to equity and inclusion can review or formulate *family friendly policies* to address work life balance.

Employers who want to attract recruit and retain highly skilled people will require flexibility of working hours, rewards packages and broader (more inclusive) organizational policies.

Maternity and parental leaves, benefits such as provision of childcare (or eldercare or caring for persons with disability) subsidies as well as spousal pensions are related issues.

### **Workplace**

With respect to human rights law, anywhere that activities related to the organization occurs. If conduct has workplace impact, or began from a workplace relationship, the place the conduct occurred may be considered part of the workplace (e.g. restaurant, conference, and park). The workplace is a *protected* area in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act

### **X**

### **Xenophobia**

Irrational fear and dislike of foreigners or people significantly different from oneself

A fear or contempt of that which is foreign or unknown, especially of strangers or foreign people

### **Y**

### **Z**

### **Zenith**

Highest point or state; the peak

The highest point from which to observe the horizon attained

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