



NOVA SCOTIA
Human Rights Commission

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 and inclusion and human resource management in Nova Scotia.

Acknowledgments

This glossary was prepared by Race Relations, Equity & Inclusion staff 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

A

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.

Absenteeism

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

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.

Organizational Acculturation

This can be observed in an individual's 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 a 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 implemented through human resources initiatives which increases attraction, recruitment and retention in the hiring of members of *designated groups*

Due to a variety of false assumptions and inappropriate application 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 which 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 Nova Scotian workforce will comprise older people returning to work as well as recent immigrants and people from other provinces 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' may propagate systemic discrimination of which individuals may be unaware.

B

Baby Boomers

Persons born during the unusual spike in birth rates after World War II (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

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

Bona Fide Occupational Requirement (BFOR)

A standard, reasonable and necessary 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.

Bullying

A form of harassment and violence that can be based on *protected characteristics*. It can also be a form of psychological or personal harassment that is not based on any of the *protected characteristics*. *See also Harassment and Workplace Harassment*

Business Acumen

Having keen business judgment or insight

C

Career Progression

Giving staff room to grow and develop their careers within an organization

Lack of career progression is the main reason people decide to change jobs, and is therefore crucial to *staff retention*.. 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

Civil rights 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

Discrimination or prejudice based on social or economic class

Classism, in which one group has power and privilege over another group based on income or access to resources, can lead to systemic oppression.

Collective Rights

The right of groups to protect their interests and identity

For example: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and associated case law recognize 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.

Colour

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

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

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.

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

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

Convention

See *treaty*

Covenant

See *treaty*

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*

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 similarities and strengths inherent in differences.

Cultural Identity

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

Culture

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.

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

Comprised of individuals 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

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 resulting from an injury or trauma or present from birth, as well as 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*.)

Disadvantaged Group

See *designated group*

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 practices represent the perspective of the dominant cultural group. Discrimination can result in inaccessibility of opportunities to 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 which 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 groups which 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 which 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 ability to participate in, and to influence, agenda setting and decision making.

Diversity

The presence of a wide range (different kinds) of a particular quality, attribute or group in a specified area. In human rights, diversity implies 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 to create policies and programs (such as *employment equity*)

E

Employment Equity

Provision of jobs and job conditions in a fair and unbiased manner

This requires policies and strategies which 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 and pre-existing knowledge (or lack thereof).

Employment Equity Measures

Processes to create equal access to people who face barriers in access to employment, education, social services, housing, etc., because of their membership in one of the designated groups

Also see *preferential measures*

Environmental Racism

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

Environmental racism can include the intentional or unintentional targeting of racial minority communities as locations for polluting industries, waste treatment plants or resource use.

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 bases are unequal because society consists of levels (class, advantage, privilege, exclusion, etc.)

Episodic Disability

A physical or mental illness which is unpredictably recurrent

This can include recurrence during recovery from chemotherapy, arthritis flare-ups, episodes of bipolar depression, etc.

Ethnic Group

Determined by socially-selected cultural traits (see *ethno-cultural* and *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 mannerisms, or any other set of cultural criteria deemed relevant to the persons concerned.

Use of “ethnicity” rather than or in addition to “race” is preferable in written text as it has fewer negative connotations.

Ethno-cultural

Concerning, about, or with reference to a particular ethnic group

Equity

An application of fairness which incorporates justice in providing opportunities to all and which enables the disadvantaged to eventually attain equality

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

F

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

Policies in an organization which 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 family types (including single parent, blended families and same-gender partnerships) when formulating family-friendly policies.

Frontline

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

Frontline Challenge

Improved quality of service may require providing for and trusting the judgment capability of the organization's frontline

Frontline Staff

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

In the workplace frontline staffs 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*.

G

Gender

Socially-constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes which 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

Unfair overt (obvious) or covert (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 with the same qualifications as men are paid less for doing the same job

Gender Mainstreaming

The process of creating the knowledge, awareness of and responsibility for gender equity in the workplace, incorporating such policies into the workplace culture, and ensuring that gender difference is treated as inconsequential within the workplace culture

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

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 or 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, fact sheets, 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, and 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, and 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 right 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, 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 is 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 which 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

Rights 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 which 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 successors 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 and 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 perceived to be assigned differentially within the workplace in instances of discrimination based on gender, assumptions about abilities (for persons with disability) or race and ethnicity.

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.

Oppressed

The state of being in the minority or underclass due to harsh or unjust treatment

Oppression

The act of dominating others by treating them harshly or with 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 be grounds for 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 by professional status, social status, cultural group, religious affiliation, physical size and so on.

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*.

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.

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
- ◆ Service provision ◆ Volunteer public service ◆ Purchase or sale of property
- ◆ Media (publication, broadcast or advertisement)
- ◆ 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
- ◆ color
- ◆ creed
- ◆ religion
- ◆ marital status
- ◆ sex (gender)
- ◆ mental disability
- ◆ sexual orientation
- ◆ ethnic, national or aboriginal origin
- ◆ sex (harassment)
- ◆ political affiliation
- ◆ irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease
- ◆ association with individuals with any of the above characteristics

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 or role as manifest in programs and practices

In the workplace quality assurance can be applied to service provision and organizational policies, both 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

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/or 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

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 which 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*.

Racism

Differential treatment of individuals through institutional, cultural and individual practices and beliefs which 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 a 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 into 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*

Responsible

The state of being capable of good conduct or morally accountable for one's actions, or conferred with the authority to make decisions independently and conscientiously

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 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 which 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, and a healthy and respectful work environment.

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

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*.

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 from 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 which defines and modifies their mutual duties and obligations

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

U

Underclass

A second-tier, lower-level, segment of society

The underclass is either subject to *under-representation* 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 from those who are part of this ‘non-white’ group, as it evokes the idea of being ‘other’ while being ‘white’ is considered the norm. 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, any location where activities related to the organization occur. 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 or park). The workplace is a *protected area* in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.

Workplace Harassment

Objectionable conduct or comment directed towards a specific person, which serves no legitimate work purpose, and creates an intimidating, humiliating, hostile or offensive work environment.

A form of bullying, harassment and violence in the workplace; often a manifestation of abuse of *power*

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 or enjoy the goal attained

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