



Alberta  
Human Rights Commission

# Your Voice: Advancing Human Rights in Alberta

## A Conversation with the Chief of the Alberta Human Rights Commission

**A Summary Report**

**DECEMBER 2017**

Respect  
than civil  
rights • Bigger  
being who you are  
opportunities • Comfortable  
Dignity and equity • Accessibilities • Equal  
needs • Basic  
Rights • Fundamental rights  
for past treatment • Extending participation  
Creator's laws • Education and  
Responsibilities and  
without fear • Fairness  
collective rights and  
Practice compassion  
Constant vigilance,  
learning • Celebrate  
of rights • Mutual respect  
• Rule of law  
Experience and knowing  
Opportunities —  
Unconditional — based  
Sustainability —  
More than integration  
• Adapt, respect  
Humanity — values,  
Education on rights  
Appreciate  
cultures

• Live within  
Safe environment  
understanding  
rights • Live  
Freedom from  
responsibilities  
• Tolerance  
advocacy and  
diversity • Balance  
• Intersectionality  
• Acceptance  
rights • Inclusion  
equality — equity  
on circumstances  
ongoing issues  
• Assumptions  
and humble  
human equality  
• Interaction  
others and their  
• Mindsets  
• Evolving  
Freedom • Progression  
and progression of  
Balance of rights and  
understanding • Indivisible  
Fundamental rights • Continuum of  
rights — discovery and value • Access  
to resources • Same rights • Equality • Respect  
• Acceptance • Legal construct • Belief and without  
consequence • Open acknowledgment about history of people  
• Access to services • Employment and health care • Right to feel  
safe • Protection from mistreatment • Tolerance and understanding • Right to  
be supported and acknowledged • Human — existing — not just punitive • Right to  
be visible in education • Celebration of diversity • Human responsibility • Standard that  
applies to all • Do what you want — don't infringe on others • Right to be heard when discriminated  
of discrimination • Mutual respect for one another and the importance of educating the uneducated • Equality and respect  
upbringing • Ability to be who you are, accepted and loved by everyone • Keeping my dignity and housing • Life without fear  
protect, help, mobilize and advance ALL, despite race, color or religion • Respect, freedom, and protection • Protection of language and tradition • Being responsible  
• Ability to live, work and act freely without barriers or discrimination • Need human rights to avoid a tyranny of the majority or those in power • Being a human  
every human being regardless of race, color or religion • Provide access to power for those who are left out of the mainstream or status-quo • Inclusive communities • Respecting  
Dignity and security • Rights for basic needs and wants • Freedom from discrimination • Self-care, no pressure, equal and fair • People who are not thought of in  
inequalities to move forward • Being treated with respect and fairness regardless of race, religion, sex and age • Right to live with dignity and respect  
the policy or political process • Inclusive and equality at all levels, spiritual, physical, mental and emotional • Belong in a community • Addressing historical  
all human beings • Acknowledgment that you as a human being are worthy of rights • Right to full participation with no restrictions • Right to  
• Acknowledge that you are not taking away from me • Protection of the individual and the society pertaining to human rights • Being a human  
anywhere without barriers • Need human rights to avoid a tyranny of the majority or those in power • Inclusive communities • Respecting  
well-being and achieve full potentials • Security and protection • Freedom from discrimination • Self-care, no pressure, equal and fair • People who are not thought of in  
anywhere • Being able to be in a relationship with others in peace • Belong in a community • Addressing historical  
yourself, without prejudice • Having access to all basic needs (food, shelter, clothing etc.) • Right to  
basic rights and full • Establishes a baseline for equal treatment of all people • Live a life of  
from power • Natural law — live it • Address the past • Independence  
Being able • Essential expectations  
of being human

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction . . . . . 1**
- Part A: Summary of regional conversations . . . . . 3**
  - Calgary conversation . . . . . 3
  - Lethbridge conversation . . . . . 7
  - Red Deer conversation . . . . . 10
  - Wood Buffalo conversation . . . . . 14
  - Edmonton conversation . . . . . 18
  - Municipal Inclusion Symposium . . . . . 22
- Part B: Provincial Summary of Conversations . . . . . 24**
- Part C: Questions Posed to the Chief of the Commission  
and Tribunals . . . . . 31**
- Part D: Conclusion . . . . . 34**
  
- Appendix A: Participant breakdown . . . . . 36**
- Appendix B: Report considerations . . . . . 40**

# INTRODUCTION

Between March and June 2017, Robert A. Philp Q.C., Chief of the Commission and Tribunals (the Chief), Alberta Human Rights Commission (the Commission), hosted a series of meetings with organizations in regions across Alberta to learn about local human rights issues and priorities. The meetings involved conversations with individuals and organizations representing various sectors. The topics discussed included: human rights issues in their communities; current actions being taken to address these issues; barriers to dealing with these issues; as well as supports needed to move forward.

The meetings were held in context of the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Individual's Rights Protection Act* and the *Alberta Bill of Rights*, which form the basis of Alberta's current human rights legislation, the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, and the establishment of the Alberta Human Rights Commission in 1972. The meetings also provided an opportunity for the Chief to extend the Commission's appreciation to communities and stakeholders for their efforts in advancing human rights.

The information garnered from the conversations will help communities identify strategies for advancing their proactive, preventative and educational human rights work in Alberta. What was heard during these conversations will also help inform the Commission's work in moving forward and strengthening its education and engagement mandate.

This report provides a summary of the conversations in each of the meetings.

## MEETING LOCATIONS AND PARTICIPATION

In order to engage with individuals and organizations actively working in the area of human rights, as well as communities across the province, the Commission visited five Alberta communities—Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Wood Buffalo and Edmonton—in May and June 2017, with an additional meeting held in conjunction with the Municipal Inclusion Symposium in Edmonton in March 2017. In Lethbridge, Red Deer and Wood Buffalo, the Commission collaborated with local organizations to co-host the meetings, including helping to organize and identify their key stakeholders in the regions to participate in the meetings. These collaborations with local organizations allowed the Commission to further strengthen and enhance existing partnerships. The Commission is extremely grateful to its partner organizations for their support in coordinating the conversations in their communities.

The regional community conversations involved organizations and individuals representing various sectors and interest areas, including those from the social justice community who work in human rights, as well as grant recipients of the Commission's Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund. Participants represented a range of areas including: individuals working in the area of human rights, community organizations, nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, and municipal and provincial governments.

Appendix A provides a breakdown of the numbers of attendees and sectors represented at each of the meetings.

## CONVERSATIONS METHODOLOGY

The conversations began with the introductory question, “What does ‘human rights’ mean to you?” Participants discussed this question with a partner and then shared with the group. This question helped set the stage and focus the discussion by creating a shared understanding.

The small group conversations with participants were structured using The Interview Matrix facilitation method. This method is used to help facilitate dialogue in small groups, providing each participant an equal opportunity to contribute their perspective and expertise.

Using The Interview Matrix method, the following four questions were asked:

- 1. What are two or three human rights issues that you are seeing in your community?**
- 2. What two or three actions are you or your agency taking to address the human rights issues in your community?**
- 3. What are two or three barriers that you or others are facing in dealing with the human rights issues in your communities?**
- 4. What two or three supports would help you or your agency address the human rights issues in your community?**

Responses to the questions were recorded by each interviewer on a questionnaire sheet. Following the matrix facilitations, highlights of the discussion related to each of the questions were shared by the participants and recorded by facilitators on flipcharts.

The event ended with an informal question and answer roundtable with the Chief. Responses and follow up questions were not recorded, as this portion of the event was an informal discussion between the Chief, Commission staff and participants.

## REPORT CONSIDERATIONS

Several considerations and limitations presented when formulating this report. These relate to participation and representation at the meetings, as well as limitations and considerations related to the methodology and recording of the conversations. Appendix B provides a detailed listing of the report considerations.

## PART A: REGIONAL SUMMARIES

This section of the report summarizes the conversations that took place in each meeting location. The report highlights the key themes that emerged in each region regarding the current human rights issues identified in communities, the actions that have been taken to address these issues, some of the barriers and challenges faced, and the support needed to move forward. Note that supports needed are numbered for ease of reference only and not to indicate priority.

A key theme is defined as a topic or a discussion point that was frequently raised by participants in the regional conversations. Some themes, although raised at a regional meeting, were not raised frequently enough as a topic of discussion within the regional meetings to be defined as a key theme. However, where such themes were commonly addressed across the regions, they have been reported in the provincial summary section.

### CALGARY CONVERSATION

Fifty-one participants representing various sectors attended the Calgary meeting held at the McDougall Centre on May 9, 2017.

The following outlines some of the key themes that emerged from the Calgary conversation.

#### ■ What does 'human rights' mean to you?

Calgary and area participants shared that "human rights" means...



## ■ Current issues

There are many important human rights issues that are top of mind for individuals and organizations in Calgary and surrounding communities.

Participants at the Calgary event reported that **immigrants, refugees and Indigenous people experience racism and discrimination**, particularly in the areas of housing, employment, healthcare and education. It is believed that many people stereotype and make racist assumptions about these groups, and that racism is often “internalized and unconscious.”

**“Refusal by landlords to rent to individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.”** *Calgary participant*

**“Name discrimination” is experienced by groups of various backgrounds when applying for housing, education and employment.”** *Calgary participant*

Participants also shared that **economic inequality and discrimination based on socio-economic background** is a reality for many and that discrimination is fueled by assumptions about people’s socio-economic status. There should be a stronger focus on reducing economic inequality, rather than poverty or wealth disparity.

**“Inequality between rich and poor for childcare and education.”** *Calgary participant*

**“Immigrants experience poverty discrimination.”** *Calgary participant*

Finally, participants reported that **basic services, like food, shelter and health, are limited and often too difficult to access**, and that those already marginalized and most vulnerable in society, such as Indigenous people, people who are homeless, refugees and immigrants, face the most barriers in accessing services. Participants also expressed that there is a lack of funding for these basic services.

**“The right to safe, affordable housing.”** *Calgary participant*

**“Equal access to health services for First Nations.”** *Calgary participant*

## ■ Taking action

Participants shared numerous examples of actions taken to address the human rights issues in their communities.

**Education** is an important way to create cultural awareness, understand rights and responsibilities, and address human rights. For example:

- By providing **cultural awareness and diversity training and education**, organizations are working towards building awareness and better understanding of the culture and the experiences of immigrants, refugees and Alberta's Indigenous people. Participants expressed that cultural awareness efforts help to debunk myths and stereotypes that are believed to perpetuate the cycle of discrimination. Individuals and organizations are building empathy and understanding through cultural awareness and diversity training using a range of vehicles and tools, including social media, traditional media, the arts, events, conferences and dialogues.
- By **educating about human rights and responsibilities in the workplace** using workshops and training sessions for employers, employees and non-profit organizations.
- By **engaging with and educating youth about human rights**. This includes education programs in public schools, as well as teacher training, to support young people in knowing their rights.

**Empowering** individuals and communities to address social issues and supporting and advocating for vulnerable groups are also important in addressing human rights.

**"The Community Empowerment Project supports geographic neighborhoods to get organized and mobilized to address social issues they identify as important." Calgary participant**

Participants shared examples of **strong collaborative community strategies, policies and initiatives to help address human rights issues**, such as homelessness, poverty, inequality and discrimination, social isolation and exclusion.

Engagement in **human rights and diversity committees and coalitions** was also frequently cited and helps to influence policy and awareness about human rights, as well as to respond to human rights issues and concerns in communities and agencies.

**"Created coalition 'voices' that focuses on issues about members of colour in the LGBTQ community." Calgary participant**

## ■ Barriers

While individuals and organizations in Calgary and area are working hard to advance human rights in their communities, they continue to face a number of barriers that impede their efforts.

One of the biggest barriers cited was **limited funding and resources for human rights work**. Short-term, in particular project-based, funding was reported to hinder progress and the ability to move forward with the longer-term strategic planning goals set by organizations. Participants shared that momentum is lost when funding ceases.

Another barrier is **public attitudes and stereotyping**. Preconceived thoughts, myths and stereotypes about certain groups were also described as barriers in dealing with human rights issues in communities.

Participants also reported that there is a **lack of sharing of information and resources and of coordinating efforts**, and this presents a barrier to advancing human rights efforts. Some organizations are working in silos and are reluctant to share work or collaborate to address human rights issues.

Human rights incidents, issues and concerns go unreported, as there is a **fear of reporting or speaking up about human rights**. Many people are reluctant to talk about issues or afraid to ask for help and report issues.

## ■ Supports needed

To better address the human rights issues in their communities, participants in the Calgary conversation called for the following supports:

- 1. Sustainable funding and resources.** Participants expressed that increased and ongoing funding would allow organizations to meet human rights needs and to grow. They also identified a need for increased funding for awareness campaigns and public education.
- 2. Educational initiatives and resources,** including initiatives to educate about Indigenous culture and history.
- 3. Stronger government leadership and stronger leadership** within organizations. For example, a committed board of directors who help to raise funds to support work efforts.
- 4. Support for Indigenous people,** including recruiting Indigenous scholars and an Indigenous ombudsman.





A number of participants reported that **systemic bias impacts access to services**. They expressed that systemic bias, including racial bias and racism, impacts the experiences and outcomes of some Albertans in accessing services, including services related to housing, employment and healthcare.

**"Even for those integrated into the system or society, there are still some systemic issues like racism, prejudice and discrimination." Lethbridge participant**

## ■ Taking action

Individuals and organizations in Lethbridge and area are taking action to address the human rights issues in their communities.

Participants shared many examples of community events to educate and raise awareness about human rights and diversity. **Community events were identified as important in bringing together diverse groups and promoting cultural awareness**. Events are also organized to raise awareness about specific human right issues.

**"Inclusion events organized year round and sponsored by various organizations focus on bringing minorities to the majority communities." Lethbridge participant**

**"Helped to organize the combat white supremacist event in Lethbridge." Lethbridge participant**

Organizations and individuals are very active in **stakeholder committees addressing human rights and diversity issues**. Committees were identified as important for building relationships with other stakeholders, increasing knowledge and understanding of the issues, and offering a coordinated response to issues.

**"Creation of various committees to support human rights work and keep the conversation alive." Lethbridge participant**

Participants shared examples of their roles as **advocates for groups experiencing barriers and human rights issues**, such as refugees and newcomers from Syria, Indigenous people, individuals with addictions, as well as persons with disabilities. Agencies are **empowering individuals to speak up and seek help** when they feel they have experienced a human rights violation.

**"Training the individuals we support so that they can train others to better be aware of their rights." Lethbridge participant**

**"Empower other agencies to help themselves and help others." Lethbridge participant**

Participants reported that they are engaged in **research and data collection to identify and understand the human rights issues impacting communities**. They are identifying trends and demographic changes to create a better understanding of the communities where organizations are working.

## ■ Barriers

While individuals and organizations in Lethbridge and area are working hard to advance human rights in their communities, they continue to face a number of barriers that impede their efforts.

The **lack of awareness of human rights and how to report incidents** were frequently cited by participants as barriers to addressing human rights in their communities. Participants reported that many people lack awareness and understanding of their basic human rights. As well, people are unaware of where to go if they believe that have experienced a human rights issue. Many are not aware of the Commission's complaint resolution service and how to make a complaint. The absence of a human rights office in Lethbridge was also reported as a barrier to people reporting and seeking help.

**Public attitudes and the unwillingness by many people to educate and engage in human rights issues** are also considered to be significant barriers. Participants reported that many are reluctant or unwilling to change or accept changes in their society.

**"Discrimination runs deep and lasts long." Lethbridge participant**

Finally, participants shared that there **is a lack of trained staff** educated about human rights in organizations, as well as a **limited funding and capacity** to advance work.

## ■ Supports needed

To better address the human rights issues in their communities, participants in the Lethbridge conversation called for:

- 1. Resources for individuals dealing with human rights issues**, specifically a human rights advocate or liaison to support individuals with human rights concerns.
- 2. Enhanced access to the Alberta Human Rights Commission**. Participants expressed that a key contact with the Commission would better support organizations and their clients through the Commission's complaint process.
- 3. Stronger promotion of human rights services and how to access them**, including how to inquire about a human rights issue or make a complaint with the Commission.
- 4. Educational supports for community to understand, learn and build relationships with diverse groups** in the community.
- 5. The need to identify and address specific human rights issues**—including issues about discrimination and with city police—impacting the community.
- 6. More funding** for human rights education and promotion.

## RED DEER CONVERSATION

The Red Deer event was hosted in collaboration with the City of Red Deer. Twenty-seven participants from various sectors met at the Red Deer Museum + Art Gallery on June 1, 2017.

The following outlines some of the key themes that emerged from the Red Deer conversation.

### ■ What does 'human rights' mean to you?

Red Deer and area participants shared that "human rights" means....



### ■ Current issues

There are many important human rights issues that are top of mind for individuals and organizations in Red Deer and surrounding communities.

Meeting participants reported that **racism and discrimination is experienced by refugees (including refugee youths in schools), immigrants and Indigenous people**. It is believed that media, and social media in particular, heighten racial discrimination in communities. In addition, stereotyping of certain groups is believed to be a contributing factor to racism and discrimination. Some participants described a "red-neck" society in Red Deer, which includes beliefs about white pride and racial supremacy.

Finally, participants shared that they believe geo-political issues are affecting local perspectives and attitudes.

**Human rights issues related to the LGBTQ+ community** in Red Deer and area were frequently cited. Participants reported that homophobia is a reality and impacts the experiences of members of the LGBTQ+ community. Also discussed were the challenges and barriers faced by transgender people in accessing housing and employment.

Many participants described the **barriers to addressing and reporting racism and racial discrimination** as a human rights issue in their community. Participants shared that many people lack awareness about where to seek help when someone believes they have experienced a human rights violation. Some participants described the Commission's complaint resolution process as a barrier, citing the level of proof needed for the Commission to accept complaints of discrimination is a barrier to people reporting incidents of discrimination.

**"Onerous process to report incidents of discrimination." Red Deer participant**

Others shared that there is a lack of mechanisms to report acts of discrimination when they occur, including mechanisms at a community level, such as in schools. Participants reported that many people who experience discrimination are often reluctant to report incidents for fear of reprisals.

**"We don't have a system in place to address racism and discrimination on a community level." Red Deer participant**

## ■ Taking action

Individuals and organizations in Red Deer and regional communities are taking action to address the human rights issues in their communities. Participants shared many examples of initiatives to help address human rights in their communities.

A key theme that emerged was the importance of **building cultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding** in communities. For example, participants shared examples of initiatives that focus on educating about Indigenous culture and history, with Indigenous people as the educators. Programs to promote cultural awareness are taking place in the community, as well as in schools.

**"Cultural awareness sessions in schools through the curriculum." Red Deer participant**

**"Organized diversity programs to access other cultures to learn about them and debunk myths and fears." Red Deer participant**

Participants shared many examples of **active human rights and diversity networks, coalitions and collaborative initiatives**. In Red Deer and region there is strong participation in human rights and diversity networks, coalitions and other collaborative initiatives that strive to influence policy and awareness, as well as address and respond to issues of human rights.

**"Addressing discrimination through our local diversity, equity and human rights committee." Red Deer participant**

**"Active member of WIC (Welcoming and Inclusive Communities), CAPRA (Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance) and DRVIC (Domestic Relationship Violence Initiative Committee) networks that strive to influence policy and awareness." Red Deer participant**

Finally, many organizations are specifically addressing and breaking barriers in employment and supporting inclusion. Participants shared a number of examples of initiatives that support the inclusion of groups who face barriers in gaining employment, such as persons with disabilities and Indigenous people.

**"Creating interview questions employers can use for people with autism." Red Deer participant**

**"Hiring more Indigenous people." Red Deer participant**

## ■ Barriers

While individuals and organizations in Red Deer and area are working hard to advance human rights in their communities, they face a number of barriers that impede their efforts.

Many participants expressed that **negative public attitudes and opinions** present a significant barrier to addressing human rights in their communities and reported that many people are reluctant or unwilling to change or accept changes in their society. Participants described a "redneck" and "old-school" culture in this region and indicated that preconceived thoughts, myths and stereotypes about certain groups create a barrier to dealing with human rights issues in communities. Many people simply deny that racism exists.

**"Lack of empathy and how it can be built into the general population." Red Deer participant**

**"Narrow mindedness, people forming opinions on selected faces and ignoring the reality, pretending discrimination doesn't exist." Red Deer participant**

Another key theme to emerge when participants were asked about the barriers in dealing with human rights issues was that **many people fear speaking out about human rights violations**. As a result, many incidents go unreported and the wider issues go unaddressed. Participants also repeated what they had shared previously related to **barriers to addressing and reporting racism and racial discrimination**, adding that existing mechanisms are daunting and confusing to people experiencing the discrimination.

**"For me and my children, they have not chosen to be activists, but are on the receiving end of judgment and persecution based on my choices." Red Deer participant**

Participants also shared that they are limited in their capacity to support human rights efforts because **government funding for agencies is uncertain and unreliable**.

**"Lack of capacity to address issues that our client base has." Red Deer participant**

There was also strong discussion related to the **Alberta Human Rights Commission** in context of the barriers to addressing human rights. A few participants felt the Commission's complaint process was more punitive than educational or supportive. Others expressed that the absence of a local Commission office is a barrier to individuals reporting incidents of discrimination.

## ■ Supports needed

To better address the human rights issues in their communities, participants in the Red Deer conversation called for the following supports:

- 1. Increased and sustainable organizational funding** to support human rights efforts, including educational initiatives.
- 2. More resource support for community education**, for example speakers from the Commission available for community education.
- 3. Stronger government accountability and fulfillment of its commitment and promises** related to human rights, including: fewer inquiries and more action and implementation of best practices; action on recommendations emerging from inquiries; and the protection of human rights initiatives by government. Decisions should be driven by the community, not by leader or party.
- 4. Increased efforts to identify and raise awareness of human rights issues** and be proactive (rather than reactive) in response.
- 5. A regional Alberta Human Rights Commission office** in Red Deer.

## WOOD BUFFALO CONVERSATION

Thirty-three participants from various sectors in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo attended the meeting held in Fort McMurray at the Royal Canadian Legion on June 6, 2017.

The following outlines some of the key themes that emerged from the Wood Buffalo conversation.

### ■ What does 'human rights' mean to you?

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo participants shared that "human rights" means...





## ■ Current issues

Organizations and individuals attending the Wood Buffalo regional meeting shared the human rights issues that are impacting their communities.

Participants reported that **Indigenous people experience racism and racial discrimination** and that systemic racism in institutions, including in the child welfare, education and the justice systems, impacts the experiences of Indigenous people. The lack of capacity to address human rights in Indigenous communities was also raised as a human rights issue.

Participants reported that **stereotyping contributes to the discrimination of certain groups**, including Indigenous people, immigrants and refugees, and shared that it is the lack of knowledge and understanding about others that contributes to negative stereotyping and consequent discrimination of groups.

**“Labelling and discrimination leads to people being denied services.”** *Wood Buffalo participant*

**“People have assumptions of others and are judgmental without really knowing or acknowledging all the facts. They do not have an open mind.”** *Wood Buffalo participant*

Another key theme to emerge in Wood Buffalo is that **women are experiencing discrimination and harassment in the area of employment**. Discrimination based on gender is a reality for many women, as well as sexual harassment on worksites. Others reported the lack of accommodations to support women who have children in the workplace, such as the ability to work from home.

**“Sexual discrimination. It’s shocking this still exist.”** *Wood Buffalo participant*

Participants also reported that many other groups, including **minorities, the LGBTQ+ community and persons with disabilities, experience discrimination in employment**.

Finally, equitable access to services was raised as a human rights issue in the community. Participants shared that **many people are struggling to access basic services** and there is a lack of affordable services. Many Albertans lack awareness of the basic services that are available to them, including access to health services and services related to food and shelter. Furthermore, participants expressed that discrimination impacts access to these services.

## ■ Taking action

Individuals and organizations working in Wood Buffalo are taking action to address the human rights issues in their communities.

There is a strong focus on **educational and awareness initiatives** to address human rights in communities. Participants shared many examples, including: workshops and training sessions to educate about human rights and diversity; community outreach efforts, including community events; and social media and other forms of public communication to raise awareness of human rights issues.

Participants shared they are **working to build their capacity to address human rights issues through networks and partnerships**, for example, by accessing and sharing resources.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has many **strong collaborative initiatives, including coalitions and advisory committees**, to address and respond to human rights and diversity issues.

**"The Coalition for Religious Inclusion brings together like-minded organizations located in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo to promote unity through religious inclusion and understanding."** *Wood Buffalo participant*

**"The Regional Advisory Committee on Inclusion, Diversity and Equality (RACIDE), formed by common advocates, brings recommendations to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo on issues related to diversity, equality and inclusion."** *Wood Buffalo participant*

**Efforts to advocate and support vulnerable groups**, including supporting vulnerable groups to access resources and services, were shared by participants. Participants also spoke about their efforts to encourage people to speak up when they believe they have experienced a human rights violation.

**"Educating myself about human rights and how I can be a support or ally to others."** *Wood Buffalo participant*

## ■ Barriers

While individuals and organizations are working hard to address human rights, they face a number of barriers to advancing human rights in communities.

Participants reported that many people **lack awareness of how to report human rights incidents**. They simply “don’t know where to go” if they have a human rights issue or complaint and are unfamiliar with the Commission’s complaint resolution process. Participants also expressed that the absence of a local Alberta Human Rights Commission office creates a barrier to dealing with human rights.

The underreporting of incidents of discrimination is also seen as a barrier. Participants shared that **people are afraid of speaking up about human rights** for fear of reprisals (for example, being fired at work for reporting discrimination).

**“Silence – people are not talking.”** *Wood Buffalo participant*

**“People don’t talk about discrimination because they don’t know how to deal with it.”** *Wood Buffalo participant*

Many participants expressed that **public attitudes, including the refusal to believe there are issues related to human rights**, was limiting their efforts. Participants shared that many lack an understanding or a willingness to understand other people’s perspectives and experiences.

Finally, there is a **dearth of accessible services to support human rights efforts**, including language support for the ethno-cultural and Francophone communities, as well as accessible and affordable legal services.

## ■ Supports needed

To better address the human rights issues in their communities, participants in the Wood Buffalo conversation called for the following supports:

- 1. More community education and awareness** about human rights and responsibilities, as well as cultural awareness and diversity. Participants expressed the need for public education campaigns and other tools to raise awareness of rights, and stronger community involvement to create awareness and understanding.
- 2. Better access** to the Alberta Human Rights Commission. Some participants recommended the establishment of a local Commission office or the appointment of a human rights commissioner in the region.
- 3. A community-based approach to address complaints.**
- 4. Increased funding and resources** for organizations focusing on human rights work.
- 5. More information sharing and sharing research on best practices** among organizations and communities.



## ■ Current issues

A number of human rights issues were reported by participants attending the Edmonton meeting.

Participants shared that many groups, including **Indigenous people, immigrants, refugees and Black people, are experiencing racism and discrimination**. Islamophobia and anti-Semitism were also identified as human rights issues in the communities represented at the meeting.

**“Black and Indigenous youth experience racial profiling by the police.”** *Edmonton participant*

Many in attendance expressed that there are **barriers to the inclusion of refugees in communities**, including discrimination in housing and employment. Participants expressed that there are high expectations of refugees to integrate without support or recognition of their unique conditions and needs. The lack of resources in the community to address refugee and immigrant needs was also identified as a current human rights issue.

**Human rights issues related to the LGBTQ+ community** in Edmonton and area were frequently cited. Participants reported that homophobia is a reality and impacts the experiences of members of the LGBTQ+ community. Discrimination related to gender identity and gender expression was also reported and the need for increased knowledge of human rights related to these areas.

Economic inequality was a strong theme to emerge in Edmonton. Participants reported that **economic inequality impacts the most vulnerable and already marginalized in society** and described economic inequality and economic discrimination as systemic human rights issues.

**“No matter what the human rights issue is, they all have economic roots.”** *Edmonton participant*

**“Immigrants are often unemployed and underemployed because of racial discrimination, resulting in increased economic disparity and economic instability in communities.”** *Edmonton participant*

## ■ Taking action

Participants from Edmonton and area shared numerous examples of actions to address the human rights issues in their community.

Education about rights and responsibilities is considered central to advancing human rights in communities. Participants offered many examples of initiatives to **educate people about rights and responsibilities in the workplace**, including training and workshops for employers, employees, leaders in organizations and nonprofit organizations. Participants also expressed that **educating youth about human rights** is crucial and participants shared examples of school-based initiatives, including integrating human rights education in traditional school courses.

Organizations are also offering **advocacy and support services for individuals who have experienced discrimination**, as well as **supporting vulnerable groups with access and inclusion**. Participants offered many examples of actions to support vulnerable groups, including homeless people, seniors and immigrants, in accessing services and actions to support their inclusion by gaining housing and employment.

**"Outreach programs for seniors living below the poverty line to help them find financial and social resources." *Edmonton participant***

Central to providing advocacy support is **empowering voices**, which encourages people to speak up if they have been a victim of racism or discrimination.

Participants reported that they are **working to build relationships with other organizations and collaborating to strengthen their work to address human rights**, including sharing accomplishments and best practices.

## ■ Barriers

While individuals and organizations are working hard to address human rights in their communities, they face barriers to advancing their efforts.

Many shared that **public attitudes** and the unwillingness of people to accept that racism and discrimination occur, as well as the unwillingness to engage in conversations about human rights, are significant barriers in dealing with human rights issues in communities. Participants also described **privilege and specifically "white privilege"** as deeply embedded in society and perpetuating the cycle of discrimination in Edmonton and region.

**"Privilege gets reproduced. Newcomers face barriers to accessing funding, women face barriers to accessing capital." *Edmonton participant***

**"Perceived financial or other benefit perpetuates discrimination." *Edmonton participant***

Another key theme to emerge in Edmonton was **the lack of funding and resources for human rights work**. Participants shared that many organizations are under-resourced, with limited staff and lack of capacity to address human rights issues.

**"Short-term and project-based funding makes it difficult to grow and sustain work."** *Edmonton participant*

**"The budget for the Alberta Human Rights Commission is too small to meet needs."** *Edmonton participant*

Participants expressed frustration with the public sector, including what they described as limited engagement with the community at a grassroots level.

**"The public sector is reluctant to engage in meaningful ways with the community at the grassroots level."** *Edmonton participant*

**"Consistent transition of staff in public sector institutions takes time away from meaningful change."** *Edmonton participant*

Finally, participants expressed that the Alberta human rights legislation is limiting. For example, they felt that the current and updated legislation is inadequate and that "economic condition" should be included.

## ■ Supports needed

To better address the human rights issues in their communities, participants called for the following supports:

- 1. More initiatives** to increase awareness about roles and responsibilities related to human rights.
- 2. Increased awareness and education** about the specific human rights issues affecting communities.
- 3. Stronger outreach** by organizations to marginalized communities.
- 4. More collaborations and coalitions** between nonprofit organizations.
- 5. Stronger relations and engagement** between public sector and grassroots organizations.
- 6. Stable resources and ongoing funding** for nonprofit organizations to do human rights-related work.

## MUNICIPAL INCLUSION SYMPOSIUM

The Municipal Inclusion (MI) Symposium was jointly hosted by the Alberta Human Rights Commission and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) on March 15, 2017. Representatives from 13 Alberta municipalities gathered to share ideas and discuss potential strategies to eliminate racism and discrimination and to help build welcoming and inclusive communities in Alberta.

On the first day of the symposium, the Chief had an opportunity to engage in conversation with attendees as part of the series of conversations held in recognition of the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Using a Conversation Café facilitation method, municipalities were asked, **“What two to three supports would help you or your agency in making your communities welcoming and inclusive, as well as free of racism and discrimination?”**

Participants shared many suggestions and ideas, and the following key themes emerged:

### A need for more research and sharing of promising practices

Municipalities in attendance called for more research about issues, such as racism, discrimination and inclusion, to support their efforts in building welcoming and inclusive communities. This includes research to: identify the issues and needs related to racism, discrimination and inclusion; support how diversity benefits communities; and identify promising practices and strategies on how to combat racism and discrimination and help build welcoming and inclusive communities.

Municipalities also suggested collaborations with academic institutions to support research development. Many participants identified the value of sharing promising practices and called for more opportunities to share ideas and best practices between communities.

### More resource development and sharing of resources

Participants stated that more resources from the AUMA, including toolkits and educational and networking opportunities, such as symposiums, would support their efforts. The importance of and need for more resource-sharing—between municipalities and organizations—was also frequently cited.

**“Contact list of online community of practice to share ideas, ask questions and find resources.”** *MI Symposium participant*



## Engaging the diverse communities in research development and educational initiatives

Another key theme to emerge was the opportunity for and the importance of engaging the diverse population in research development, as well as in educational programs.

**"Engaging the diverse population in decision-making or research what type of discrimination exists." *MI Symposium participant***

**"Resource list of diversity champions to come and speak with a municipal focus." *MI Symposium participant***

## Engaging youth through school programs

Engaging and educating youth on topics related to human rights, diversity and inclusion was another key theme addressed. The school is seen a key vehicle to engage and educate youth.

## Enhancing educational opportunities for municipalities

Municipalities called for more and enhanced opportunities for education about human rights and diversity, including cultural awareness and inclusion, as well as education about racism and discrimination. Participants suggested that ongoing training and workshops should be offered to municipal employees, as well as to elected officials.

## Increased access to funding

Municipalities called for grants to support them with needs assessments, as well as initiatives, such as collaborative partnerships, to connect all community players. The need for specific funding for nonprofit organizations to collaborate with others on Welcoming and Inclusive Communities initiatives was also raised. Finally, municipalities shared the need for dedicated municipal government staff to take on work related to building welcoming and inclusive communities.

**"Funding to hire someone to lead this work in our own community; difficult to do off the side of one's desk." *MI Symposium participant***

## PART B: PROVINCIAL SUMMARY OF CONVERSATIONS

This section summarizes the common themes that emerged across the regional meetings and the Municipal Inclusion Symposium. Many of the key themes detailed in the regional summaries were addressed across all or most of the regions and therefore have been included in the provincial summary as well. Other themes, although mentioned at some of the regional meetings, were not identified as key themes in the regional summaries. That is, they were not frequently raised as a topic of discussion within the regional meetings and therefore not defined as a key theme for purposes of the regional reports. However, when looked at across the regions, they were significant enough to warrant inclusion in the provincial summary. The regional reports, together with the provincial summary, will be important in supporting Education and Engagement's efforts in moving forward with its strategic planning and program implementation.

### Common Human Rights Issues Identified Across the Regions

#### Minority and marginalized groups are discriminated against

- In all locations, meeting participants reported that minority and marginalized groups, including immigrants and refugees, Indigenous people, the LGBTQ+ community and persons with disabilities, experience discrimination in various sectors of society. Youth, seniors and women also experience discrimination.
- Discrimination was reported to occur in housing, employment and education, as well as in the justice and health care systems.
- Discrimination was described in many cases to be overt and, in others, subtle or covert. Participants also identified unconscious or internalized bias as contributing to the continued discrimination, including systemic discrimination, of the minority and marginalized groups listed above.

#### Many groups experience racism

- Across the regions, participants shared that immigrants, refugees, Indigenous people and people of colour experience racism in their communities.
- Islamophobia and anti-Semitism were also raised as human rights issues across communities.
- Many participants shared that social media is contributing to the spread of racism and hate in the province.

## Myths, stereotypes and assumptions fuel discrimination

- Myths, stereotypes and assumptions, for example about Indigenous and immigrant communities, were identified across the regions as a cause of discrimination and inequities.
- People with mental health issues continue to be stigmatized and consequently experience employment discrimination, specifically underemployment and unemployment.
- Misconceptions are a result of a lack of knowledge and awareness about diverse groups.
- Participants across the regions expressed that media and social media heighten and reinforce stereotypes and support continued discrimination.

## Homelessness and poverty are fundamentally human rights issues

Across the regional meetings, participants reported there was a lack of affordable housing in their communities.

- Minority and marginalized groups, such as immigrants, Indigenous people, seniors and persons with disabilities, are most at risk of homelessness.
- Homelessness was reported to continue to perpetuate the cycle of poverty. For example, individuals are challenged to move forward and gain access to employment without a home address or identification.
- Those trapped in the cycle of poverty are unable to fully participate in society and consequently remain marginalized.
- Economic inequality was a strong theme to emerge across the regions. Participants reported that economic inequality impacts the most vulnerable and already marginalized in society and described economic inequality and economic discrimination as systemic human rights issues.

## Systemic biases result in institutional barriers

- Many participants across the regions expressed their frustration with systemic biases, such as institutionalized racism and discrimination, that result in institutional and systemic barriers.
- Internalized racism and unconscious bias were identified as examples of systemic bias.
- Systemic bias was reported in the child welfare, education and justice systems.

## Many Albertans struggle to access and navigate basic services

- Many reported that basic services that support the most vulnerable and marginalized are difficult to access and navigate for many. Participants reported that many Albertans simply do not know what basic services exist to support them.
- Wait times and processing concerns were addressed across all systems.

## There is a lack of awareness of rights and responsibilities related to human rights

- Across the regional meetings participants reported that many Albertans lack awareness and understanding of their basic rights and responsibilities related to human rights.
- Lack of awareness of rights results in exploitation and continued discrimination.

## Common Actions to Address Human Rights in Communities

### Awareness-raising

- Participants across the regions shared that raising awareness of human rights and diversity issues was central to their efforts to address human rights in their communities.
- They reported using a range of mediums to raise awareness, including: new technologies, such as social media; traditional media, including television; community events; and the arts, including theatre and museums.
- While new technologies prove effective in reaching out to and engaging with individuals and communities, face-to-face, community and social events continue to be important for educating and engaging communities in issues related to human rights.
- Organizations stressed the importance of being proactive and promoting ongoing awareness about specific human rights and diversity issues in the community.

### Developing empathy and greater understanding through dialogue

- Across the regional meetings, participants expressed the importance of engaging various groups in dialogue to promote greater understanding of one another and their respective experiences.
- Developing greater understanding and empathy was a consistent theme in all meetings and was identified as crucial in helping to debunk myths and stereotypes that were reported to perpetuate the cycle of discrimination. Initiatives to educate about the experiences of others and the barriers that certain groups face were considered effective in helping to increase understanding and to build empathy.
- Dialogues are considered important for trust-building and exploring differences and commonalities between communities.
- Participants expressed that it is important to create a safe environment to allow groups who are engaging in dialogue to ask difficult questions.

### Offering training and workshops about the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, including educating about rights and responsibilities related to the Act

- Meeting participants shared many examples of workshops and training provided to employers and non-profit organizations that are supporting Albertans and the public to increase understanding of rights and responsibilities related to human rights and diversity.

### Supporting individuals who have experienced human rights violations

- Advocacy and other support services, like referrals, are offered to individuals who have experienced human rights violations.
- People are encouraged to seek help and support when they feel their rights have been infringed.

## Empowering individuals, communities and organizations to speak out about discrimination

- Participants across the regions shared examples of initiatives that help empower individuals, as well as communities, to speak up and seek help when they feel they have experienced a human rights violation.
- The importance of creating a culture of courage to speak up in organizations, companies, communities and social media was commonly addressed across the regional meetings.

## Stakeholder engagement through committees

- Engaging with stakeholders was identified as important in helping to address human rights issues in all meetings held across the province.
- Participants provided many examples of active committees and networks that help influence policy and awareness about human rights, as well as respond to human rights issues and concerns in communities.

## Collaborative initiatives

- Participants shared examples of strong community and multi-stakeholder collaborative initiatives to promote diversity and human rights in their communities.

## Addressing homelessness and poverty

- Participants shared examples of strong collaborative community strategies to reduce social isolation and exclusion, poverty and homelessness.

## Sharing expertise and resources with other organizations

- Participants across the regions shared that they are collaborating with agencies to share expertise and resources that allow agencies to better support and provide a holistic service to clients with human rights concerns.
- Developing best practices in collaboration with other agencies.

## Building diversity in employment

- Participants offered examples of initiatives that increase diversity in workplaces, including: actively hiring a diverse workforce and hiring more Indigenous people; helping immigrant women attain job skills and successfully apply for jobs; and building diversity in workplace human rights plans.

## Implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Calls to Action

- Many organizations spoke of their participation in, commitment to and efforts towards implementing the 94 Calls to Action outlined in the TRC Final Report.

## Common Barriers to Dealing with Human Rights Issues in Communities

### Limited funding

- The lack of sustainable and ongoing funding for nonprofits was reported by participants across the regional meetings as a significant barrier in dealing with human rights issues in their communities.
- Government funding was reported to be uncertain and unreliable.
- Short-term, in particular project-based, funding was reported to hinder progress and the ability to move forward with the longer-term strategic planning goals set by organizations.
- Participants shared that it was difficult to have a growth mind-set with limited funding.
- Some organizations reported that they were running deficit budgets into the future.

### A dearth of important supporting resources

- Regional participants also shared that there is a dearth of some resources required to support them in helping deal with human rights issues in their communities, such as: language resources to support communities where multiple languages are spoken, including language support for the ethno-cultural and Francophone communities; and a lack of affordable legal services.

### Lack of sharing and collaboration amongst organizations

- The lack of collaboration amongst organizations was frequently cited as a barrier by participants across the regional meetings.
- Organizations are reported to be working in silos and using isolated efforts to resolve issues.
- It was reported that many organizations are “hanging on” to their resources and reluctant to share resources and work with others.
- Participants expressed the importance of working collaboratively.

### Challenges to reporting and pursuing complaints of discrimination

- Lack of knowledge about where to go and with whom to speak when people feel their human rights have been violated.
- Across the regional meetings participants shared that there are a lack of mechanisms to report incidents of discrimination. Existing mechanisms are often daunting and confusing to people experiencing discrimination.
- It was reported that the Alberta Human Rights Commission’s complaint process is hard on the complainant (i.e., the level of proof needed for a human rights complaint to be accepted).
- There is no formalized process to address discrimination on a municipal level, with direct action or consequence.

## Public attitudes and unwillingness to engage in human rights issues

- Public attitudes toward issues such as racism, discrimination and diversity are considered to be a significant barrier in dealing with human rights issues, with many Albertans:
  - Continuing to adopt “old ways” and attitudes,
  - Unwilling to change or accept changes in their society,
  - Fearing their world changing,
  - Denying or pretending discrimination does not exist, and
  - Being defensive and shutting down conversations related to human rights.
- People are often not willing or are afraid to engage in a conversation about human rights.
- People avoid conflict and are reluctant to talk about sensitive issues like human rights.

## Supports Needed to Address Human Rights

### More human rights educational support and resources related to human rights, including:

- Educational resources, like informational brochures with general human rights information, as well as resources about the specific grounds protected under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*,
- Informing and engaging websites presented to organizations about human rights,
- Clear direction on how to appropriately work on and respond to specific human rights issues, such as racism and Islamophobia,
- Cultural competency training,
- Educational supports for the community to learn more about and build relationships with other cultures in communities,
- Plain-language materials, and
- Direction for diversity and inclusion.

### Sustainable and long-term funding to allow organizations to:

- Set longer-term and more strategic goals and meet program and organizational goals related to human rights, and
- Implement communication and public education initiatives, as well as awareness campaigns.

### Increased access to services to support human rights work and efforts, such as:

- Counseling (including culturally-sensitive counseling) and bereavement support,
- Language (translation and interpretation), and
- Legal aid and affordable, reliable legal services.

## Stronger promotion of the services related to human rights available to Albertans

- Participants shared that there needs to be clarity about what human rights services are available to Albertans and how to access them.
- Many participants shared that a central database of organizations and stakeholders involved in human rights work and offering services related to human rights would be extremely helpful.

## Collaborative practices and resource-sharing

- Participants addressed the need for increased collaborative practices to provide a more holistic and seamless service for those in need of support.
- Some participants suggested a “one-stop-shop” of services to allow better access and support for Albertans with human rights concerns.
- Stronger networks and coalitions of organizations and people doing complementary work was also identified as a strategy for supporting organizations in dealing with human rights issues in their communities.
- Participants called for funders to invest in collaborative, community-driven solutions.

## Information gathering, information sharing and sharing best practices

- Across the regional meetings, participants expressed that increased data collection related to human rights issues would support better understanding of and responses to issues, for example, information on ways in which people are discriminated against. It would be helpful to have knowledge of how other communities handle issues.
- Participants called for stronger research on best practices on how to deal with human rights issues in their communities.
- An information-sharing platform was identified as a valuable tool to support organizations in their human rights work.
- A contact list or online community of practice to ask questions and share ideas in order to find resources.
- Participants called for increased funding to support research and resource development.

## More access to the Alberta Human Rights Commission, including:

- Increased contact at the Alberta Human Rights Commission for advocacy and support to organizations with the complaint process, and
- A local or regional human rights office.

## A human rights ombudsman to respond to complaints of discrimination.

## Stronger municipal and provincial government leadership and support of human rights.



## PART C: QUESTIONS POSED TO THE CHIEF OF THE COMMISSION AND TRIBUNALS

Following the facilitated portion of the events, participants were invited to participate in an informal question and answer session with the Chief. The questions were recorded in order to get a sense of the issues concerning each community. The answers were not recorded due to the informal nature of the conversation and the complexity of the answers. This section lists the questions that were posed to the Chief.

### CALGARY

1. What did you think you would have liked to do as Chief Commissioner, but so far have been unable to do?
2. Section 16 of the *Alberta Human Rights Act* identifies political rights. How does this impact civic participation and issues such as voter turnout, permanent resident status and mandatory voting? What can we do about Canadian aversion to politics, especially in newcomers to Canada? I suggest that you as Chief advocate on it.
3. What is the difference between civil rights and human rights?
4. What is the plan for the near future of the Commission?
5. The human rights complaint system is not friendly or timely. How can we get more advocates and navigators?
6. The complaint system is not efficient. Complaints take a long time to be heard. How can these barriers in addressing human rights issues be addressed?
7. How can we be vigilant to stop hate speech and ensure that the government does not take away Section 3 of the *Alberta Human Rights Act*? Work re: hate speech versus free speech debate needs to be embedded within human rights and government ministries. What can be done?
8. How can we imbed a social justice structure in our society?
9. Is there anyone compiling human rights data in Alberta?
10. Can there be a report card to communities on violations that are taking place in Alberta to keep communities informed? The Commission does a good job of sending out a newsletter and information to keep people informed.
11. Permanent residents pay taxes yet they can't vote. What can we do about it?

## LETHBRIDGE

1. People don't know where to go to complain about human rights. Can you give us some options?
2. How can there be better knowledge transfer of human rights?
3. Are there any supports available for the community, such as train-the-trainer?
4. What support is there for more reconciliation work?
5. There is an influx of Syrian and other refugees. We are not funded for this. How can we prepare more for this and is there a human rights angle?

## RED DEER

1. Residential School – why is it so difficult to know right from wrong? Human rights are not about who is right and who is wrong. Why is this so complicated?
2. What is the state of the Human Rights Commission in this province?
3. We have freedom of speech under the Charter. Some media provides anti-Muslim rhetoric. Any tips on combatting anti-immigrant rhetoric?
4. How do we respond to hate and retribution on complainants (LGBTQ+)?
5. At what point would the Commission weigh in on the funding of institutions that have discriminatory practices? Can we cut funding for public institutions that promote discrimination?
6. How do we respond to discrimination when the organization says it is an isolated incident?

## WOOD BUFFALO

1. Why don't we have a Human Rights Commission office in Fort McMurray?
2. First Nations issues: What has the Commission done to include and inform Indigenous people?
3. What auditing function does the Commission have?
4. How does the Commission deal with systemic discrimination issues (Indigenous)?
5. What can First Nations and the Commission do to change things for the better?
6. What deliverables will there be from this meeting?
7. How can we partner with industry to adhere to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?
8. For First Nations boil water orders, what can they do?
9. The right to education is a human right. What can the community do?
10. Police criminal history disclosure and record checks: Are these discriminatory?

## EDMONTON

1. How do we support the review and rebuilding of (and not just tinkering with) the Human Rights Commission and *Act*?
2. How does the recent case on drug testing affect the Commission?
3. How can we support delegation of power to the community (Indigenous women)?
4. How do we respond to the swings in government policy regarding the protections of vulnerable persons and the protections of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression when governments change?
5. What gains and progress have been made with Indigenous people regarding human rights?
6. How does whistleblower protection under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* (PIDA) "Safe Disclosure" impact the work of the Commission?
7. As we become more diverse, how can we support the Indigenous community and prevent the legacy of "kiyām," (Cree: translated to Let it be, it's all right)?

## PART D: CONCLUSION

### INSIGHTS FROM SURVEY RESULTS

Seventy-nine participants from across the regional meetings completed the post-event survey.

When asked about their overall assessment of their meetings, the majority of respondents (45 participants or 65 per cent) reported that the event was excellent or very good. It was reported by 81 per cent of participants that their event “definitely” or “mostly” met expectations, while 70 per cent of participants completing the survey said their event “definitely” or “mostly” will be useful or applicable to their work.

A number of participants shared that they valued the opportunity to network and dialogue with others and learn about their work. Many commented that they found it useful to hear from and engage directly with the Chief. Survey respondents shared that there was a need to engage in “more frequent conversations such as these.”

Survey respondents offered a number of suggestions on how the Commission can make conversations such as these more effective in the future, including: more time to dialogue and network with other agencies; suggestions on the facilitation process, such as more time for participants to answer questions; having the group break up into human rights areas of interest and focus; and suggestions for room set-up, such as additional tables to allow individuals to write down answers to questions.

When asked to suggest future activities or initiatives supported by the Commission that would be useful to promote human rights and inclusion, respondents suggested: more frequent meetings to allow organizations to network and to connect people addressing common issues to find opportunities to collaborate; conversations and learning opportunities with focused discussions about specific and emerging human rights issues in Alberta; more human rights education, including more educational sessions for organizations and wider public education programs; and organizing events and inviting those in leadership positions and positions of influence, such as city councillors, human resource representatives for industry and law enforcement managers.

### NEXT STEPS

The Commission is hopeful that the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary conversations reinforced and recognized the great human rights work that has been accomplished in communities across the province, helped identify current issues, challenges and gaps, and created opportunities for meaningful engagement between organizations in order to collectively move forward on the human rights issues facing communities in Alberta.

Through networking and conversing about the human rights issues in the respective regions, the Commission is encouraged that participants forged new, or strengthened existing, relationships. Strong themes emerged within the regional meetings and at the Municipal Inclusion Symposium, which have been captured in this report. Through the themes presented, it is hoped that this report will help communities identify areas where they can work together to make progress on addressing these human rights issues and that they were a catalyst for taking further action in overcoming the human rights issues identified in the regions. In addition, the Commission hopes that the themes highlighted in this report will assist organizations in strengthening their individual human rights mandates and in taking action.

The Commission's Education and Engagement area places emphasis on meaningful engagement with communities, businesses, governments and organizations in order to more effectively influence social change. The focus of these efforts is on building relationships and moving forward toward complementary goals.

The 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary conversations were beneficial for Education and Engagement in highlighting the depth and breadth of human rights efforts occurring across the province, identifying the gaps and barriers that exist, and recommending ways in which the Commission can further support efforts to overcome these challenges and take collective action to improve human rights in Alberta. The conversations provided a vast amount of data with which to go forward. The Commission's Education and Engagement staff wishes to support you and work with you on the issues that you have identified as important for your community, including those identified in the roundtable discussions.

In addition to identifying opportunities and ways in which to support organizations and communities with their human rights efforts, these themes will also be used to inform the Commission's education and engagement mandate and the planning and implementation of its future programs and services. They will be used to set out strategies to address the province-wide human rights issues identified at the conversations.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Commission is extremely grateful to all the individuals who participated in the conversations with the Chief of the Commission and Tribunals and offered their insights and perspectives.

The Commission also sincerely appreciates the wisdom, prayers and greetings brought to each event by Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, including: Doreen Spence (Calgary meeting), Tom Little Bear (Lethbridge meeting), Rosena Winnie (Red Deer meeting), Robert Cree (Fort McMurray meeting), and Gary Moostoos (Edmonton meeting).

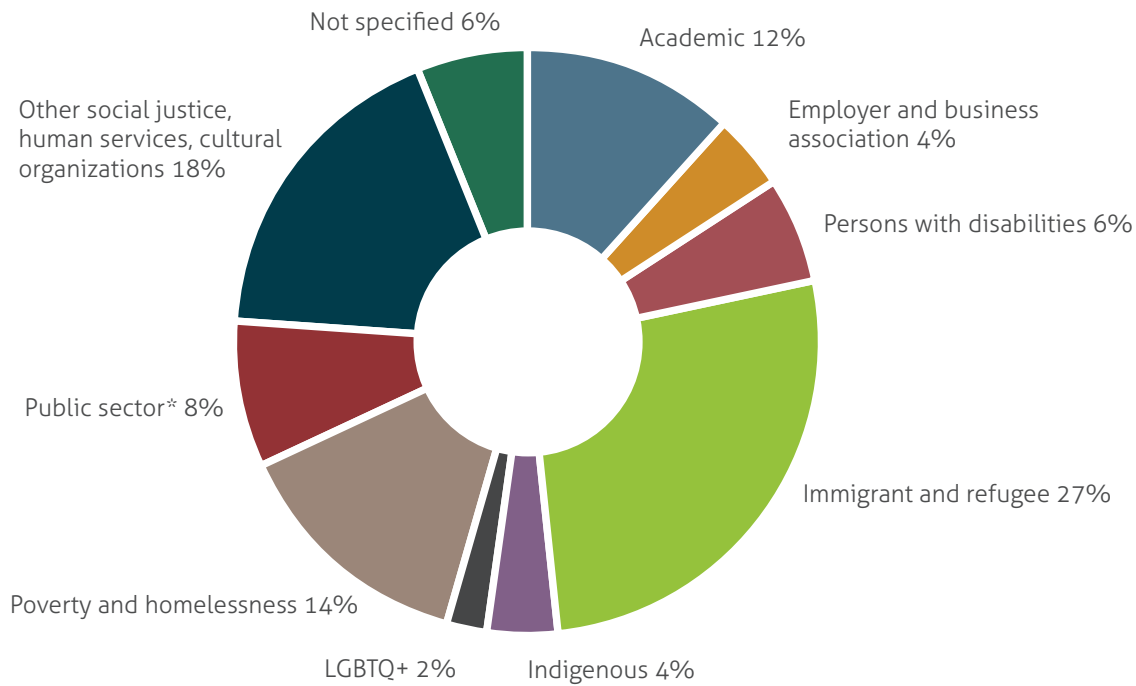
In addition, the Commission would like to thank the City of Lethbridge, the City of Red Deer, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and the Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo for their support in organizing and hosting the meetings in Lethbridge, Red Deer and Fort McMurray, respectively.

Finally, the Commission is grateful to representatives, including dignitaries, of our partner organizations for bringing greetings and inspiration to the meetings, including: Police Chief Robert Davis (Lethbridge Police Service); Mayor Tara Veer (Mayor of Red Deer); and Mayor Melissa Blake (Mayor of Wood Buffalo) and Justine Rukeba (Executive Director of the Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo).

# APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN

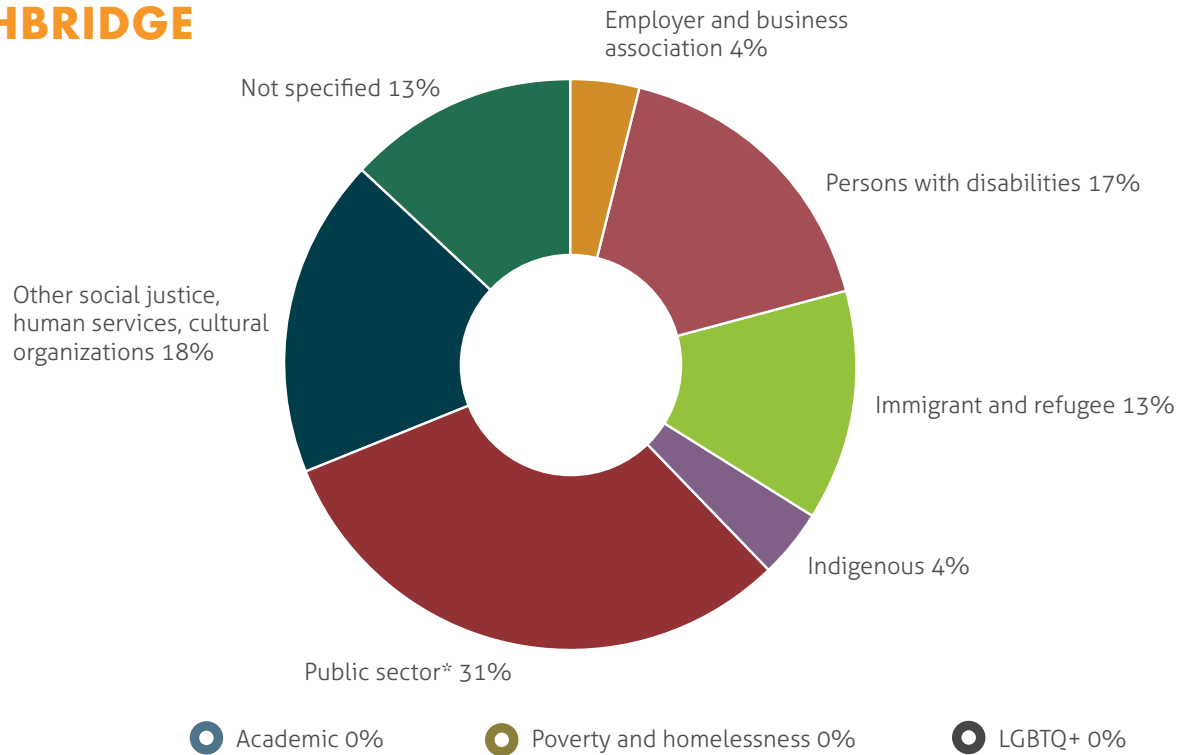
	Calgary	Lethbridge	Red Deer	Fort McMurray	Edmonton	Municipal Inclusion Symposium	
<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Total number of participants across regions</b> <b>136</b>
<b>Number of organizations represented</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Total number of organizations across regions</b> <b>93</b>

## CALGARY

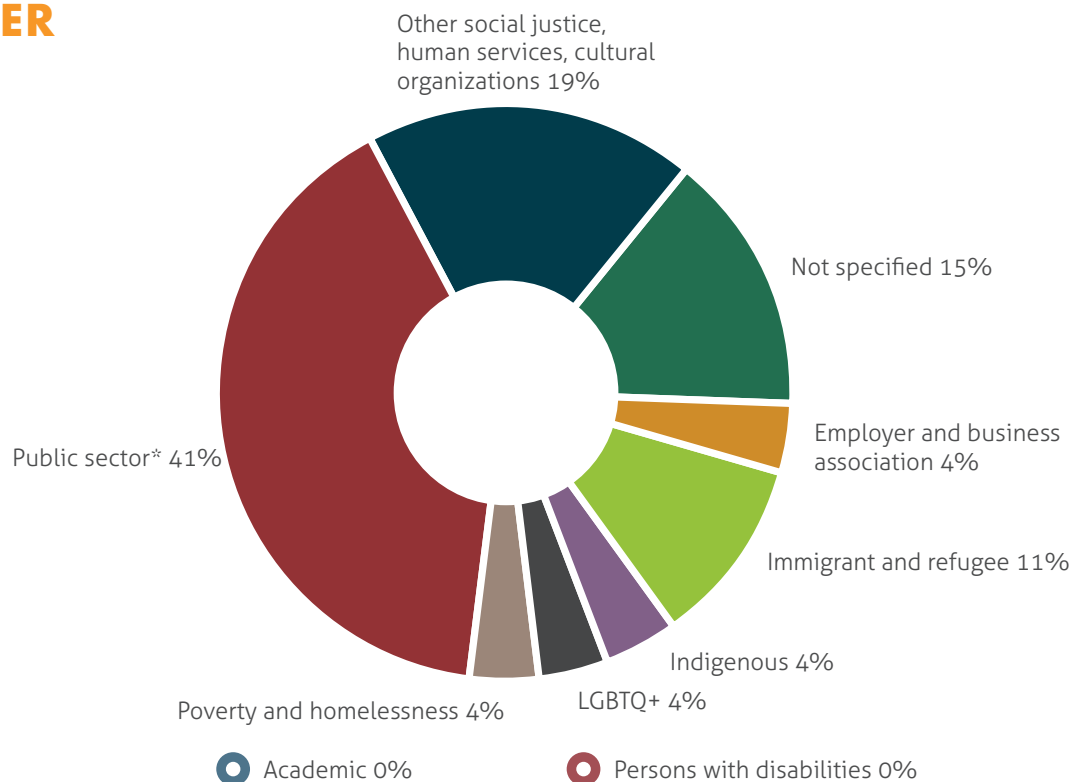


\*Includes municipal and provincial government, provincial health services, the police service and education and school boards.

## LETHBRIDGE

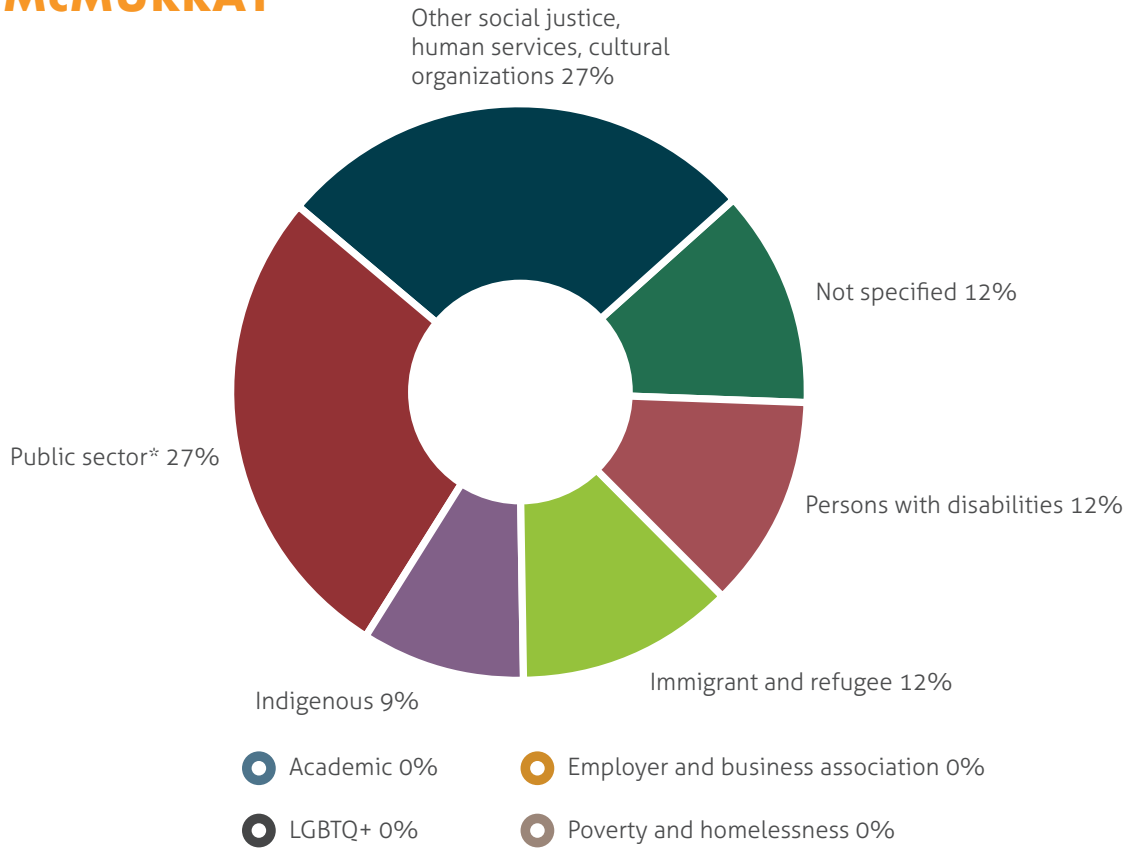


## RED DEER

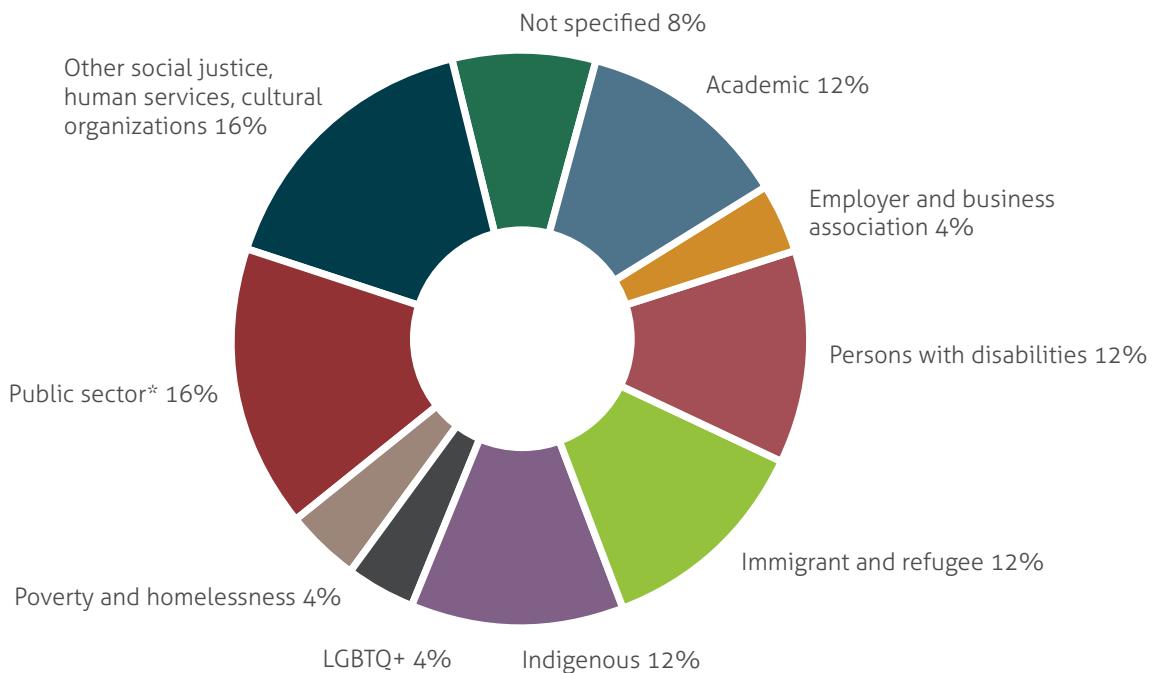


\*Includes municipal and provincial government, provincial health services, the police service and education and school boards.

## FORT McMURRAY



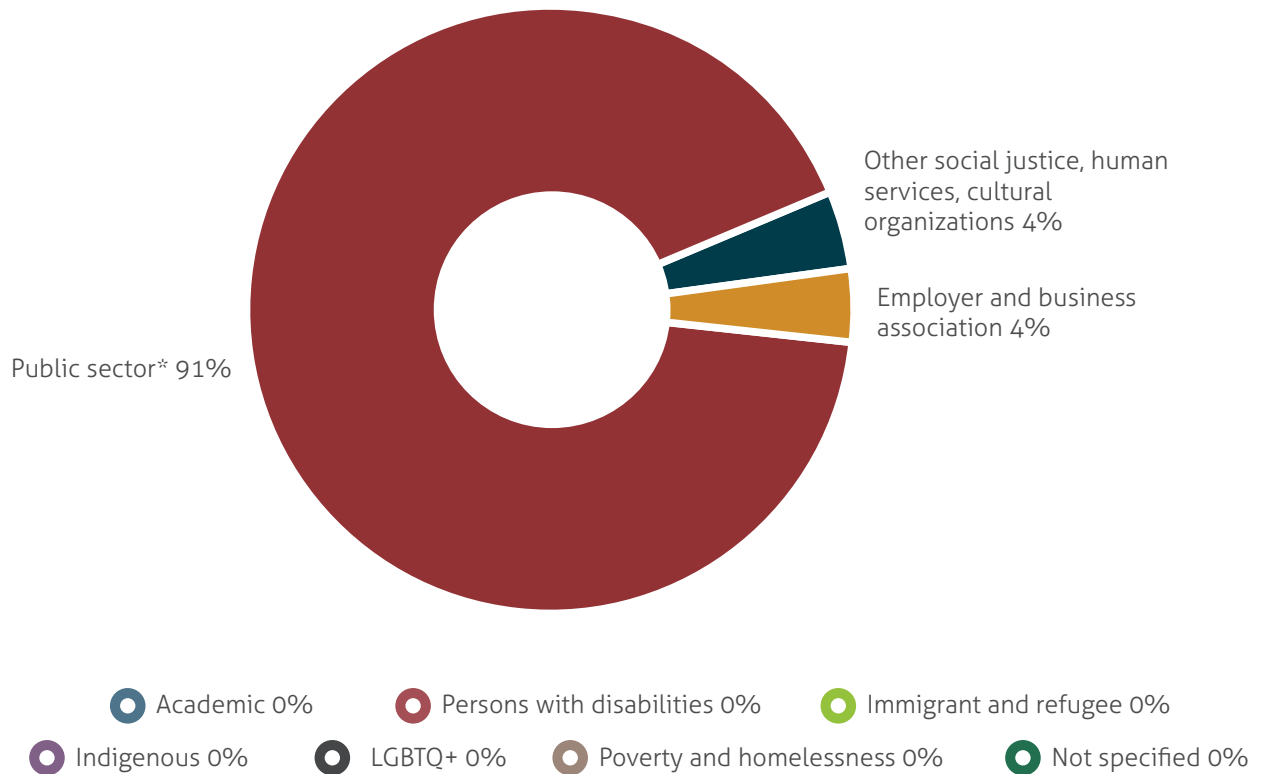
## EDMONTON



\*Includes municipal and provincial government, provincial health services, the police service and education and school boards.



## MUNICIPAL INCLUSION SYMPOSIUM



\*Includes municipal and provincial government, provincial health services, the police service and education and school boards.

## APPENDIX B: REPORT CONSIDERATIONS

1. Only organizations with a current working relationship with the Commission or our host partners were invited, so it is likely that some organizations working in the area of human rights were not in attendance. Therefore, what we heard is a reflection of the interests and opinions of the attendees and may not include all community perspectives.
2. The report reflects the experiences and the voices of those who attended the meetings and is not reflective of the community as a whole.
3. These conversations represent a snapshot in time. Community, provincial, national and international events influenced the discussions.
4. Responses on the interview matrix and flip charts sometimes came in the form of fragmented or incomplete sentences. Comments did not provide a lot of detail. The Commission is hesitant to make assumptions about or incorrectly frame the context of the comments. As much as possible, the information was left as presented, with spelling or grammatical errors corrected.
5. The time limitations imposed by The Interview Matrix facilitation may not have provided adequate opportunity for participants to offer complete and detailed responses.
6. The answers to each of the questions asked during The Interview Matrix facilitation relied on the interviewers' interpretations and recordings of what was said. In addition, interviewers had a limited time frame to capture the comments they heard from the interviewee.
7. Finally, the Chief's answers to the question and answer sessions were part of an informal conversation and were not intended to be recorded.



[www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca](http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca)