

## EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT, 2011-2012

The EAC mandate is to

- to promote educational and workplace equity across the University;
- to maintain communication between the various University constituency groups and the Committee;
- to advise and assist the Human Rights Advisor in formulating annual work plan, policies and program development;
- to provide information and guidance to the Advisor on issues of relevance to the mandate of the Equity Office;
- to assist with ongoing equity awareness, education and training programs among all University constituencies;
- to support the work of the Coordinator

The EAC mandate is also outlined in the *StFX Discrimination and Harassment Policy*: An Equity Advisory Committee (EAC) comprising representatives from various constituencies across the University will maintain communication between the various groups on issues of human rights and equity, assist with ongoing education and awareness programs, and provide information, guidance and support to the Human Rights & Equity Office.

Dr. Nancy Forestell and Dr. Joanne Tompkins are the co-chairs of the EAC.

### **Areas of priority for the EAC in the 2011-2012 year were as follows:**

- 1. Equity Committee Meetings.** The committee met 6 times during the year. (May 3 2011, September 30 2011, October 21 2011, November 25 2011, January 20 2012, March 16 2012). There are 30 members on the EAC and these meetings provide an important forum for information sharing among constituents and creating a focus for equity and human rights on campus. At every EAC meeting, the members are informed about the upcoming equity events and are asked to collaborate and to attend. Participation on the EAC has helped to develop a sense of the interlocking nature of discrimination. There is a deepening understanding that creating equity for one marginalized group on campus improves the quality of the experience for other members of the campus community.
- 2. Beginning with Equity in mind. Inclusion of Human Rights and Equity Advisor on Key committees on campus.** Too often equity issues are thought of as 'separate' from issues of campus or academic life. The EAC feels that the expertise of the Human Rights and Equity Officer is missing from key committees on campus with the result that committees are making decisions without having a lens on equity. An example of this would be not having the Human Rights and Equity Officer as part of the newly formed Safety & Security Advisory Committee, in spite of the fact that issues of safety and security are major issues for certain populations on campus. Another example is that in developing the Sexual Assault Response Procedure the input of the Human Rights and Equity

Officer were sought very late in the development of the policy yet there are legal and human rights issues implicit in the development of such a protocol. To better utilize expertise of the Human Rights and Equity Officer, the co-chairs of the EAC met in the Fall with both the President of the University and Vice President of Student Experience to identify the key committees of which that the Human Rights and Equity Officer should be part. The response to this initiative has been slow and another academic term has passed. The EAC will continue to lobby for this to happen so that equity is a more central part of university affairs.

**3. Black Student Advisor position**

The EAC, along with other groups on campus, is lobbying that the position of Black Student Advisor be filled as soon as possible. As a marginalized group, Black students need the support of the Black Student Advisor to lobby on their behalf on an individual basis, to identify policies and practices that are barriers for Black students, and to educate the wider campus community on how to create an environment (in the classroom and on campus) that supports and affirms Black students.

**4. Sexual Assault Response Procedure.** On October 21 2011, Angela Marshall (Director of Health and Counseling Centre) presented a draft Sexual Assault Response Procedure to the EAC. On November 25<sup>th</sup>, a second presentation was made with an updated version of this Sexual Assault Response Procedure. Many questions were raised and the main concern about this document was the fact that StFX would only issue a Safety Bulletin to the Campus Community when a stranger sexual assault has been reported. The EAC strongly disagrees and suggests that these Safety Bulletins should not be restricted to stranger sexual assault cases but should also be available in cases of a sexual assault where the perpetrator is known to the survivor, which is more frequently the case in residence based campus such as StFX.

**5. Equity Issues in a Climate of Fiscal Restraint.** The EAC is committed to monitoring continued and adequate funding for the Office of Human Rights and Equity. In times of fiscal restraint it is important to ensure that matters of Human Rights and Equity do not suffer cuts that are unfair or disproportionate to other areas on campus.

**6. Human Rights and Equity Advisor is meeting on regular basis meetings with the President.** The EAC is pleased that regular meetings (1 per term) has been established between the Human Rights and Equity Officer and the President and these meetings have been very productive.

**7. Education Awareness Raising Events.** The EAC wishes to commend the Human Rights and Equity Officer who, frequently in conjunction with other groups on campus and in the community, created a high around equity related events this year. There have been numerous events where the campus and

community have become better educated about diversity issues. These presentations ranged from information on the Truth and Conciliation Hearings for Residential School Survivors, to talks by Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian scholars, to theatrical performances about the challenges of living with mental health issues, to arts based presentations on Africville, and forums in which students themselves could speak about challenges they face regarding inclusion at X. Marie Brunelle is to be applauded for her efforts to raise the profile of equity related lectures, films and presentations on campus.

## **8. Positive Space Training**

The EAC is pleased at the continued focus on providing Positive Space Training sessions for faculty, staff and students. This volunteer program with approximately 69 volunteer trainers is an effective way to 'educate' the campus community in ways to promote a Positive Inclusive environment for LGBTQ students. The EAC is quite pleased to see that the campus and community training sessions continue to be well received and commends, Marie Brunelle, for her role as coordinating this program.

Respectfully submitted

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Nancy Forestell  
(Co-chairs, Equity Advisory Committee)  
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