

# CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

COURAGE

FAIRNESS

RESPECT

EQUITY

**Annual Report**  
**2009 / 2010**

[www.yorku.ca/rights](http://www.yorku.ca/rights)

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## About the Centre for Human Rights


The Centre for Human Rights (the Centre) advocates for the adherence to the spirit and intent of the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code) as well as all human rights policies at York University (York U). Its mission is to assist individuals and groups in addressing and resolving allegations of discrimination and harassment as defined by the Code and York University's human rights related policies. Furthermore, the Centre promotes and encourages respect, equity and inclusion at York U through both broad and targeted educational initiatives. It is also a free information and dispute resolution resource for all university community members, supported by staff members that are objective, neutral and trained in case management, dispute resolution and mediation. When allegations are raised, an inquiry is conducted at an informal level, seeking resolution early and effectively for the individual(s) involved. Where a complaint cannot be resolved informally by the Centre, the matter is investigated in accordance with established University policies, practices and agreements.

The Centre plays a significant role in human rights awareness and education by promoting a culture of equity, inclusion and mutual respect by mounting educational initiatives. As part of its educational role, the Centre liaises with human rights groups, committees, associations, and organizations both within the University and in the external community as resources permit, in an effort to gain knowledge and information about emerging issues as well as best practices. Over the past year, the Centre has worked extensively on fulfilling its expanded educational mandate and on furthering its outreach initiatives, and as a result has been able to reach a much larger audience than in previous years.

A total of 142 files were opened between September 2009 and August 2010, of which 79 (56%) were human rights related complaints, 31 (22%) were Ombuds cases and an additional 32 files were human rights related enquiries that did not result in formal complaints.

As of August 31, 2010, 15 complaint files remain open/active, while the remaining 127 were addressed and closed.

As noted in the 2008/2009 Annual Report, the Centre's staff receives numerous human rights related informal calls and emails throughout the year that are not tracked in its current database due to the database's limited nature. Staff responded to these calls and e-mails with informal advice and guidance, often within one call/e-mail, and the result is a quick resolution of a concern that might otherwise have become a formal complaint. These contribute to the timely and effective resolution of several human rights related concerns in addition to those where a file is opened.



## Case File Data

### Human Rights Complaints

The largest proportion of complaints for 2009/2010 concerned disability related concerns, with a total of 31 case files opened, representing over one-third of all human rights cases handled by the Centre. This is consistent with previous years in terms of proportion, but the overall number of disability complaints has decreased compared to the same period last year, when 37 case files related to disability were opened. As the Centre has continued to work closely with the Counseling and Disability Services, as well as with groups such as Access York to improve access and accommodation for York U community members with a disability, it may have resulted in fewer complaints being made with the Centre, as informal advice and guidance was provided earlier than before. In addition, the Centre partnered with student and other York U community member groups and supported disability and accommodation awareness-raising campaigns.

The increase in sexual orientation related complaints stemmed from an incident involving a faith-based group that made remarks in an email that was perceived to be homophobic in nature. The Centre responded swiftly to complaints by setting up meetings and facilitating respectful dialogue between the faith-based group and several individuals and groups that raised the concerns

about the remarks. In doing so, the Centre helped create a forum for dialogue. This prompt response is a demonstration of the Centre's important role in raising awareness and promoting tolerance amongst York U community members.

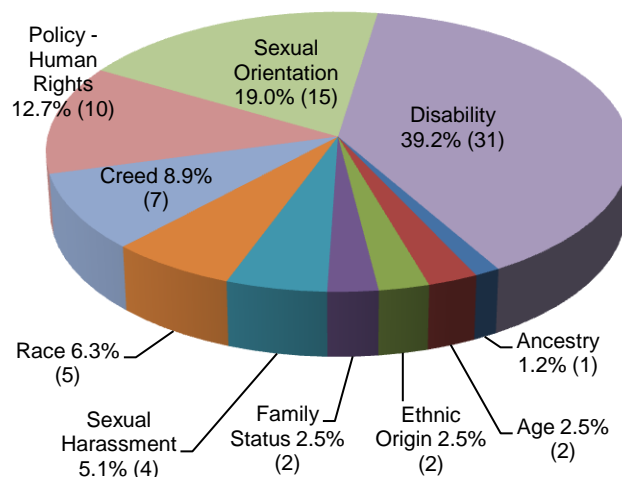


The third category of complaints that continues to be of concern relates to discrimination and harassment based on race, ancestry and ethnic origin. This is consistent with past Annual and other reports from human rights Commissions and organizations across the country. Racism persists in society and our community is no exception. Ryerson University and the Canadian Federation of Students released reports on racism in early 2010. These recommendations in these reports along with those in the Graduate Students Association report on equity concerns released in early 2008 are being carefully reviewed by the Centre with a view to incorporating relevant recommendations in its Education and Outreach initiatives.

Finally, there were a several enquiries relating to human rights related policies (10 cases, 13%). These enquiries relate to concerns and questions about York U's policies themselves. The increase in these inquiries may also be a result of the targeted outreach and awareness initiatives undertaken by the Centre since August 2009. As more York U community members become aware of human rights issues, how to recognize violations, and the resolution mechanisms available to them, more individuals have contacted the Centre about possible complaints.



## Human Rights Complaints by Type 2009/2010



## Ombuds Cases

Although the Centre is no longer formally linked to the Office of the Ombudsperson, it continued to receive Ombuds-related inquiries. The 31 enquiries received in 2009/2010 were not formal complaints, and the Centre was able to address most of these through early dispute resolution mechanisms. The cases that could not be preemptively resolved by the Centre were referred to the Ombudsperson or an appropriate body for further action.

## Complainant and Respondent Data

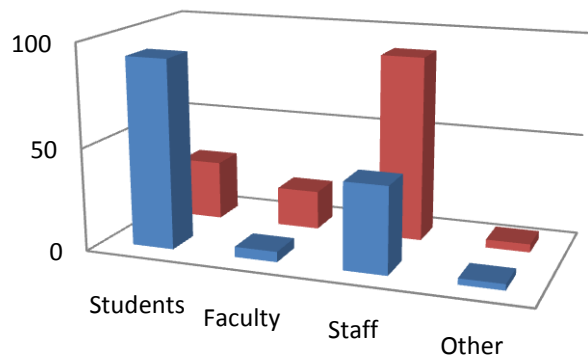
As in previous years, the majority of enquiries and complaints were made by students, representing 92 cases or 65% in 2009/2010. However, this is a decrease in both the total number (92 versus 120 last year) and in proportion (65% compared to 79% last year) to other complainant groups. The second largest number of complaints came from staff, with 42 complaints filed – up from 17 last year. The Centre sees this as a positive statistic in one regard, as serious efforts were made over the course of the year to engage community members who would not normally access the Centre and its resources. The fact that several staff members have felt

safe enough to take advantage of the information and assistance available through the Centre is an encouragement to continue targeted outreach activities that enhance the Centre's range and reach.

On the respondent side, there was a more significant variation from last year's data. The largest number of respondents was staff, with 90 cases (63%), compared to 46 cases (30%) last year. This may be attributable to the outreach and educational efforts whereby the Centre's mandate of covering all York U community members is more widely known. Meanwhile, the number and proportion of student and faculty respondents decreased. Cases that named a student respondent accounted for 29 files (20%), compared to 41 (27%) last year. Similarly, faculty members were respondents in 19 cases (13%) in 2009/2010, versus 54 cases (35%) in 2008/2009.

As regards the decrease in the number of students as respondents, this appears to be attributable to a shift in the use of the Office of the Student Code of Conduct. In terms of faculty, the decrease appears to be directly related to the decrease in the number of student complaints and the early resolution efforts that the Centre has implemented. The number of respondents under the category "other" related to complaints made against individuals who were not members of the York U community and this figure remained consistent with previous years.

Complainants and Respondents 2009/2010



	Students	Faculty	Staff	Other
Complainant	92	5	42	3
Respondent	29	19	90	4

## Beyond the Centre

### Partnerships and Outreach

The 2009/2010 academic year saw a further increase in the Centre's partnerships and collaborations with various on- and off-campus groups. This is a result of targeted outreach initiatives that involved Centre staff communicating with a wider range of organizations, providing information about the Centre and seeking partnerships and/or collaborations with respect to human rights related trainings, events and initiatives. The Education and Communications team, which was expanded in the summer of 2009, has been instrumental in forging and nurturing these relationships.

Some of the partnerships continuing from previous years include Learning & Development, the Centre for the Support of Teaching, the Aboriginal Council, Access York, the York Federation of Students, and SexGen. These well-established groups have contributed to expanding the Centre's reach in terms of delivering training and information sessions, especially to staff and faculty. But there are many new relationships that the Centre has formed more recently, with organizations ranging from issue-specific student groups to off-campus associations. Below are a few notable examples of recent partnerships and the work that has resulted from these collaborations.

- **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Working Group:** staff participated on the committee and supported the mandate of creating an e-learning tool as well as a centralized web-site
- **Sexual Assault Initiatives Committee:** staff participated on the committee that had a goal of developing a new resource folder and handbook for survivors of sexual assault and harassment as well supporting awareness and prevention initiatives
- **CUPE 3903:** organized meetings with the Equity Officer to develop and discuss programming, training and collaboration opportunities
- **Trans Bisexual Lesbian Gay Allies at York (TBLGAY):** organized a Transgender Day of Remembrance, supported by awareness-raising posters, a silent vigil, and a movie followed by a discussion



- **York University Black Students Association (YUBSA):** although not new, along with other partners, staff and YUBSA collaborated in cross-promoting and increasing awareness initiatives for Black History Month
- **Workplace Harassment Prevention Program Working Group:** staff participated on the review of Bill 168 and the development of a policy and program to help York U fulfill its obligations under the Act and create a mechanism to protect staff and faculty from harassing and bullying behaviours. Awareness about these new protections are now included in the Respectful Workplace series of workshops jointly offered with Learning & Development

Lastly, the Centre for Human Rights has continued to contribute to the President's Advisory Committee on Human Rights. In 2009/2010, the Centre's reports to PACHR were expanded to include information about current human rights issues in the York U community, in addition to detailing educational initiatives and special events. As suggested by the Centre, it was agreed that PACHR should meet more frequently, and the committee, which now includes student representation in addition to staff and faculty meets regularly on a quarterly basis.

#### Featured Partnership:

##### Health as a Bridge to Peace

Health as a Bridge to Peace (HBP) is a student club established in 2007 by a group of students who wanted to encourage dialogue on campus and create an environment where members of the York U community could explore perspectives related to health, peace, community, culture, identity and resilience. The club uses health to foster peaceful cooperation both at the campus and international levels through various events, shared projects and networking, in the hope of building positive relations on campus and internationally.

Since 2009, the HBP has been very active in seeking support from the Centre as well as exploring partnerships. Out of this relationship grew several opportunities for cooperation, including HBP's participation in delivering an educational session at Inclusion Day 2009, and the Centre's support for HBP's Photo Voice project in 2009/2010.

Photo Voice was an initiative that, over the course of several months, brought together a small group of diverse York U community member volunteers to participate in a series of

workshops to share their stories through photos, spoken word and dialogue. The culmination of the series of workshops was a presentation, sponsored by the Centre, which saw Photo Voice participants expressing their appreciation for health, for life, for diversity, for each other and most importantly for themselves, through a group performance that included song, photos, and poetry.

HBP's commitment to promoting awareness, communication, dialogue and collaboration on issues of health, identity and culture is an important example of how diverse York U community members can advance human rights on campus, even when dealing with sensitive issues. The Centre will continue to support HBP and other student groups that organize human rights related programming through event sponsorship, assistance with promotions, and future partnerships on educational initiatives.

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VOLUNTEER FOR THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS at YORK UNIVERSITY.

ENGAGE. LEARN. EDUCATE.

Join our **DIVERSITY PEER EDUCATION TEAM**

PICK UP AN APPLICATION @ S. ROSS 327  
HAND DELIVER BY MARCH 8 @ 2:30 PM.

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## Education and Training

Stemming from the increase in outreach activities, the Centre expanded the number of trainings, information sessions, and educational workshops it conducted. It is estimated that the Centre has significantly increased its reach compared to previous years. The Centre also achieved a goal set last year, to provide more relevant and participatory education opportunities. This can be

seen in the now regularly scheduled workshops and presentations as well as the in the customized ones.

The Education & Communications team increased its presence around campus (and in the greater community), to deliver information about the Centre, human rights, inclusion, respectful language, non-discriminatory interviewing and hiring practices, and much more. Some of the training sessions were already in place, but have since been delivered to a broader range of individuals. Others are completely new and target community members who might not otherwise engage in human rights and social justice education. This includes students, faculty, staff, and non-university groups. Below, is a sampling of some of the important sessions provided:

- **Diversity training** – presentations on Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice were delivered in the respective Fine Arts, Engineering and Sociology classrooms and at the York Leadership Conference and Red Zone Ambassadors outside the classroom
- **In-depth training sessions** – targeted workshops provided to Peer Health Educators, Faculty of Education staff, and Counseling & Disability Services; Don training; and sessions delivered to Residence Life staff
- **Human Rights presentation** – delivered to the York Youth Connection Day camp, an important educational session for off-campus community members
- **Respectful Workplace series** – in collaboration with Learning & Development, developed and delivered 4 training sessions on maintaining a respectful workplace which now include a Violence and Harassment prevention component
- **Orient the Leader** – inclusivity training delivered to 700 Student Leaders; the course was expanded to include information on recognizing discrimination, preventing sexual harassment, and; how to foster a safe and welcoming environment for incoming students
- **Respect and Inclusivity Awareness Tutorial (RIAT)** – pilot was launched in October 2009 and five focus groups were held over the course of the year to evaluate its content and effectiveness. The feedback has been positive and work on refining the tutorial will continue into 2010/2011

Tell us what YOU THINK about the new online

# RESPECT & INCLUSIVITY AWARENESS TUTORIAL

...Choose one date! March 9th 12:00pm-2:00pm (Glendon Campus) OR March 17th 11:00am-1:00pm (Keele Campus)

Receive a \$5 **GIFTCARD** & chance to win an **iPOD!**

**HOW:**

1. Register for the Tutorial at [www.yorku.ca/rights/tutorial.html](http://www.yorku.ca/rights/tutorial.html)
2. Become part of the focus group by contacting Nythalah Baker : [nythalah@yorku.ca](mailto:nythalah@yorku.ca)

CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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### Featured Educational Initiative:

#### Students and Experiential Learning at the Centre

Students are given the opportunity to work at the Centre on a variety of human rights and social justice related projects. This in-depth exposure provides the students with valuable, relevant work experience – from promotional initiatives and outreach activities, to background research – while allowing the Centre to foster the next generation of human rights supporters at an early stage.

The Advanced Credit Experience (ACE) students are participants from local high schools who come in to the Centre on a weekly basis over the course of the school year. They help with greeting and reception duties and administrative file management thereby learning about the day-to-day functions of the Centre, while at the same time taking a university course.

In 2009/2010, the Centre also employed two Work Study students from York U, who were worked between 10 and 15 hours per week. Each Work Study student had their own area of focus. One worked primarily on policy and relevant research with the Case Management team, while the other was involved in the promotions side of things with the Education and Communications team. This included student engagement at events, from campus advertising to on-site presence at the Centre's table or booth.

Finally, the Centre hosted a York U Bachelor of Social Work student from September 2009 through April 2010. The student came in 3-4 days per week to assist with some of the Centre's initiatives, such as the student outreach meetings and walkabouts to connect with York U student groups. He was also involved with the planning and promotion of some trainings and events facilitated by the Centre in 2009/2010.

The Centre also makes efforts to engage volunteers outside of these formal channels, by announcing volunteer opportunities online and through its network of partners. Volunteers are invited to participate at several levels, from event planning to promotions, in addition to supporting the Centre's staff during events or workshops. The events include Inclusion Day, December 6 Day of Remembrance, Transgender Day of Remembrance, International Women's Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Racism. As such, the Centre had a significant amount of student support in its operations. This type of engagement, whether volunteer, paid or for course credit, allows the Centre to expand its reach through new voices, while contributing to the students' personal and professional development thereby helping the Centre fulfill some of the White Paper recommendations related to student engagement.



## Events

Another outcome of the Centre's increased outreach and partnership initiatives has been the expansion of its events calendar. In collaboration with various York U community groups, the Centre organized and/or sponsored a greater number of human rights related public engagement activities and awareness-raising presentations than in previous years. To maintain this trend moving forward, the Centre collaborated with the Centre for Support in Teaching and Learning & Development to create a long-term events and training

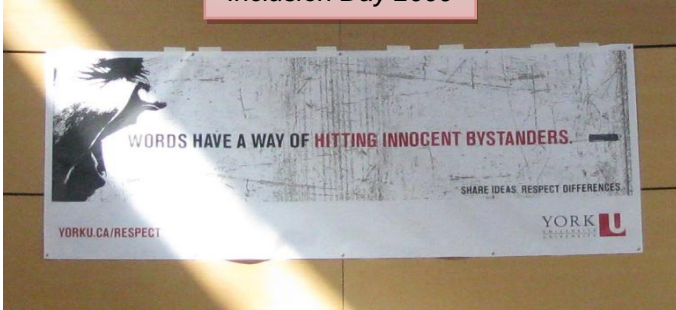
calendar, to maximize participation and avoid duplication. In 2009/2010, the Centre proudly promoted and supported several important community-driven events, which drew diverse attendees because of their relevance to community members and important link to current issues at York U. Some highlights from the past year include:

OCT 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centre for Human Rights' inaugural Inclusion Day, in conjunction with a Respectful Speech campaign and presentation by keynote speaker Alan Borovoy</li> </ul>
NOV 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Week</li> <li>Transgender Day of Remembrance</li> </ul>
DEC 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remembrance of the Montreal Massacre and National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women; this included the Silent Witness Project. Activities held on December 6<sup>th</sup> were the result of a very positive partnership between the Centre, the Sexual Assault Survivors' Support Line, the Centre for Women and Trans People, and Fine Arts students, who collaborated to put on presentations, a silent walk, a vigil, art installations, and community member pledges in support of raising awareness about violence against women</li> </ul>
FEB 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black History Month, which included a seminar, and supporting discussions and performances</li> <li>LGBTQ and Religion dialogue session</li> </ul>
MAR 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International Women's Day</li> <li>"Building a Culture of Peace" photo exhibit</li> <li>"Initiatives for Change" multi-faith panel on peace-building, during the second week of March</li> <li>Competing Rights Conference, in collaboration with the York Centre for Public Policy &amp; Law and the Ontario Human Rights Commission</li> <li>International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination</li> </ul>
APR 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disability Awareness event</li> </ul>
JUN 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pride Week on campus, featuring a flag-raising ceremony at Keele and Glendon campuses</li> </ul>





*Inclusion Day 2009*



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#### Featured Event:

#### The Centre's inaugural Inclusion Day + Respectful Speech Campaign

The Centre's inaugural Inclusion Day was held on October 5, 2009 and was designed as a conference. During the day, the Centre also launched the Respect & Inclusivity Awareness Tutorial as well as the Respectful Speech campaign.

The theme for this event was "The Power of Words, Language and Speech" and sought to address these notions. Presentations and discussions were held to explore various aspects of words, language and speech from different perspectives: creating respectful spaces for discussing sexuality; promoting inclusivity in the digital age; teaching by using respectful language; and, improving cross-cultural communication.

In addition to the welcoming words by President Mamdouh Shoukri and Vice-President Academic & Provost Patrick Monahan, Inclusion Day featured keynote speaker Alan Borovoy, general counsel emeritus of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) who is also a course director of Glendon College's Canadian Studies Program. Alan delivered a speech entitled "Whatever Happened to Free Speech? The Declining Status of Free Speech from Anti-Hate Law to Campus Speech Codes". He supported the spirit behind the Centre's Respectful Speech campaign called "Share Ideas / Respect Differences", which advocates free speech that is respectful. He went on to explain however, that sometimes free speech can be difficult to hear, or it may seem controversial, but it is in these instances that it must be especially valued: exposing difficult or challenging topics is the only way to learn more about them and promote dialogue.

Approximately 100 people participated in the conference, including several who signed up on the day of the event, and the feedback received was very positive overall. Some of the suggestions for improvement will be taken into consideration for next year's conference, including announcing a call for discussion topics much earlier in the year, and extending invitations to faculty and students who can participate as a class.







*Pledges to end violence against women*

## Events

As mentioned, the Centre's calendar of events continues to grow; with the participation of interested community groups, new events, conferences and workshops are being added on a regular basis. Some ongoing initiatives and annual events are now well-established, such as the December 6<sup>th</sup> Day of Remembrance, International Women's Day, Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the Pride Week festivities. Others are picking up momentum and the Centre will foster their growth and expansion in 2010/2011. A key event going into its second year is Inclusion Day, which will again be held in October. In an effort to proactively plan ahead and encourage greater participation, the Centre decided to send invitations and begin the call for discussion papers early, in April-May 2010. The submissions were numerous – more requests than the Centre could accommodate in terms of presentations – and topics were selected after a review process that occurred in July 2010. As a result of this early invitation and more time in the planning process, the Centre has been better organized for this year's event, and has been able to engage key speakers that will be of special interest to diverse members of the York U community.

## Looking Ahead

### Education and Outreach

The Centre will continue with ongoing initiatives to expand its educational mandate and extend its reach into the York U community. The progress that has already been made in these areas has yielded positive results, from new partnerships and collaborations, to the exploration of specific issues and fresh approaches. The Centre will also strive to reach out to groups and individuals who may not normally access its resources or seek help with human rights related issues. In 2010/2011, the Education and Communications team is taking special steps to work with CUPE 3903 to deliver training for its members, as well as with Learning & Development and the Centre for Support in Teaching to provide tailored human rights education components to staff and faculty. Further collaboration with both L&D and the CST will continue, in public engagement planning and developing a joint calendar of educational initiatives. Finally, the RIAT module, which the Centre and its partners are evaluating and improving with the help of students and other community members, will go into its second phase. Although the course is initially targeted for student use, anyone will be able to access it and take advantage of the lessons presented. It is hoped that the RIAT will be accepted as an important learning module and eventually become a standard part of orientation for all incoming students, staff and faculty.

## FIND YOUR PEACE

MARCH 1-6, 2010

### SEE PEACE.

*Culture of Peace*—Soka Gakkai International (SGI)

EXHIBIT: March 1-6, Vari Hall

SGI Buddhists at York

FILM: March 4, 12:30-1:30pm at York Lanes 390

### SPEAK PEACE.

*Initiatives of Change*

INFORMATIVE DISCUSSION:

March 2, 11am-1pm at Accolade West 106

### LISTEN for PEACE.

*Competing Rights Dialogue*

LIVE BROADCAST: March 5-6 at Vari Hall D



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## Mediation and Alternative Case Resolution

A significant consideration for next year will be the expansion and promotion of early conciliation/mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution opportunities to the case resolution process. There has been significant amount of interest expressed by various York U community groups in having such a resource available as an alternative to the formal complaints process. So far, the Centre has connected with the Osgoode Mediation Intensive Clinical Program and the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies Mediation Certification Program. These two programs could assist the Centre in fulfilling the White Paper's recommendation that more opportunities be provided for student engagement.

## Reporting

Several opportunities arose over the course of the 2009/2010 academic year for the Centre to provide input and direction regarding human rights awareness in university policy and procedure. The Centre's contribution to York U's White Paper (initiated by the office of the Vice-President Academic & Provost), specifically regarding student engagement, has translated into suggestions for improving the student environment through education and awareness-raising. The Centre will consider how best to incorporate the goals and recommendations of the White Paper into its upcoming Integrated Resource Plan.

The Centre has also contributed to the Task Force on Student Life; it will follow up and keep advocating for a respectful and inclusive university environment that includes human rights education, awareness and positive spaces. Finally, the Centre will participate and help address human rights related recommendations made in the recent The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) safety audit. The report suggested improvements surrounding education and prevention about sexual harassment and sexual assault. In response, the Centre will seek to strengthen its relevant awareness and prevention methods, including hosting a new event titled "Can I Kiss You?". This event will take place in early September 2010, and will feature an outside dating expert conducting an interactive presentation about recognizing and addressing instances of sexual harassment/assault in real-life situations and the importance of communication in intimate relationships.

As the Centre continues to grow its audience and resource base, it will seek to further cement its presence as a vital actor and reference point for the promotion of human rights, inclusion and diversity on campus and in the broader community.

### Featured Resolution Tool:

#### Alternative Dispute Resolution and Early Conciliation

What is alternative dispute resolution? Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) involves employing a range of methods to resolve conflict in a collaborative, respectful manner. This can be as straightforward as giving impartial advice, conducting shuttle mediation between two polarized groups, or conducting in-depth training.

What is early conciliation? Early conciliation seeks to address issues between a Complainant and Respondent in such a way that a resolution can be reached before a formal complaint and investigation is necessary. Early conciliation methods will vary depending on the issue being addressed, but the process can involve a meeting and discussion, conducted in a respectful and inclusive way, to lay out the Complainant's concerns, hear the Respondent's side and explore possible solutions.

Other ADR methods that can be used include one-on-one mentoring/coaching, giving advice, facilitating a meeting or discussion, and even providing education and training.

ADR and Early Conciliation programs are very much in line with the remedial purpose and intent of the Ontario Human Rights Code and also in keeping with the mandate of the Centre.

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