



NOVA SCOTIA  
BARRISTERS' SOCIETY

# **Update: #TalkJustice**

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**August 13, 2015**

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# About #TalkJustice

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## CONTEXT

Council has identified “advocating for enhanced access to legal services and to the justice system for equity-seeking and economically disadvantaged groups” as a strategic initiative for 2014-2015 in the 2013-2016 Strategic Framework. Much of the work for this initiative is carried out under the mandate of the Society’s Equity Office, which works to fulfill the Society’s responsibilities under Section 4(2)(d)(i) of the *Legal Profession Act*. This includes a specific obligation to improve the administration of justice by engaging in regular community consultations.

The Equity Office is also mindful of its coming obligations under the new Regulatory Objective #5<sup>1</sup> and the role that community consultation will play in fulfilling them.

## #TALKJUSTICE

#TalkJustice is a community outreach initiative designed to allow the Society to better understand the challenges and barriers equity-seeking communities face when going through the justice system. Through #TalkJustice, we hope to strengthen our rapport with equity-seeking and economically disadvantaged communities and to improve relationships between these communities and other justice system sectors, including the Courts, police, and social services.

#TalkJustice started with a series of meetings and interviews throughout fall 2014 and winter 2015 with community groups, individuals, and justice system actors to generate in-depth, frank discussions about barriers to justice for Nova Scotia’s diverse communities. Excerpts from some of these discussions were then posted to the Society’s social media accounts and to talkjustice.ca.

A report detailing the campaign’s findings was released on May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015 at a special launch event.

## LAUNCH EVENT

### Venue

Courthouses, law firms, legal aid offices, and other justice system spaces can be mysterious and intimidating to members of the public. They are spaces where justice system actors hold positions of power and are used to dictating proceedings.

For this reason, the #TalkJustice launch event was held at the Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre on Gottingen Street in North End Halifax. MNFC has a deserved reputation among diverse populations as a hub for important community conversations, and it allowed us to create an environment where the public and our panelists felt comfortable sharing their experiences. Hosting this event at MNFC sent a clear non-verbal message that we were coming to a community space to listen rather than to talk.

### Agenda

The launch event was structured to be solutions-oriented, with a particular focus on generating ideas for collaboration between the Society, other justice system actors, and the public. The activities were designed to

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<sup>1</sup> “Promote diversity, inclusion, substantive equality and freedom from discrimination in the delivery of legal services and the justice system”

bring justice system actors and community members together to have candid discussions on equal footing, where everybody's contributions were valued. The day's agenda is appended to this report.

## **Attendance and themes**

Nearly 100 people attended the launch event, including community members, judges, lawyers, police, social workers, and Society staff and Council members.

The day began with opening remarks by Darrel Pink, Executive Director, Tilly Pillay QC, President, and Michael McDonald, Chief Justice of Nova Scotia, who all acknowledged the existence of an access to justice crisis in Nova Scotia and stressed the importance of public input in determining how to solve it. All three framed #TalkJustice as the start of a new conversation between the justice system and the public – one that puts community voices at the centre.

The day's events brought our attention to those community voices. In both the panel discussion and the workshop, people talked candidly about their negative experiences with the justice system. Their feelings of frustration, disempowerment, and confusion echoed the findings in the community engagement report. Despite the intensity of their feelings, it is important to note that participants did not feel hopeless: they were equally candid about their ideas for improving access to justice and were eager to share them with the Society, courts, police, and lawyers. Participant feedback fell into the following common themes, which will help guide our future work:

- **Education:** both for the public (on the law and the justice system) and for justice system actors (on cultural competence);
- **Collaboration:** both among justice system actors and between justice system actors and community groups;
- **Listening:** continuing to actively seek out community voices when designing access to justice initiatives;
- **Transparency:** ensuring that the community is aware of how #TalkJustice continues to inform our work; and
- **Individual empowerment:** promoting and taking seriously ideas for small scale/high impact change from both justice system actors and the community.

# Lessons for the Society

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## OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

### Measurement instruments

Evaluating #TalkJustice is a challenge for the following reasons:

- **Wide range of target groups:** The target audiences for #TalkJustice included justice system actors, the general public, Nova Scotia's equity-seeking communities, the news media, and the broader access to justice community in Canada. Having such a wide range of target audiences means also having a wide range of participant knowledge, contributions, and goals. Developing common measurements for each of these groups would be inappropriate, and creating ones custom to each group would be beyond our current capacity.
- **Qualitative nature of program goals:** The aim of #TalkJustice was to build relationships and start a conversation around access to justice both in Nova Scotia and across the country. These are difficult concepts to define, let alone to quantify and measure.
- **No specific end date:** #TalkJustice is an ongoing program with many different components, including the social media campaign, the community engagement report, and the launch event. Consequently, it is difficult for us to measure the success of #TalkJustice as a whole.

Despite these challenges, we are still able to measure individual components of #TalkJustice. In fact, #TalkJustice is an exciting "stretch assignment" for us in some ways as it provides us a manageable opportunity to measure participant behaviour and program impact, two areas that would normally be outside of our current capacity.

This report contains findings from our short term indicators: media coverage, social media engagement, and reaction from the access to justice community. These measure the extent to which we have succeeded in promoting #TalkJustice and getting its message to resonate with the public in Nova Scotia and with relevant communities across Canada.

Longer term indicators will determine the extent to which #TalkJustice is succeeding at its goal of bringing community voices to the forefront of justice system reform initiatives. Reporting on the following indicators will be submitted at a future meeting of Council:

- **Relationships created:** Have new community-justice sector partnerships been established as a result of #TalkJustice?
- **Initiatives started:** What new community or justice sector programs have been created as a result of #TalkJustice?
- **Extent to which findings are used at the Society:** To what extent are we allowing feedback from #TalkJustice to guide our work?

### Media monitoring

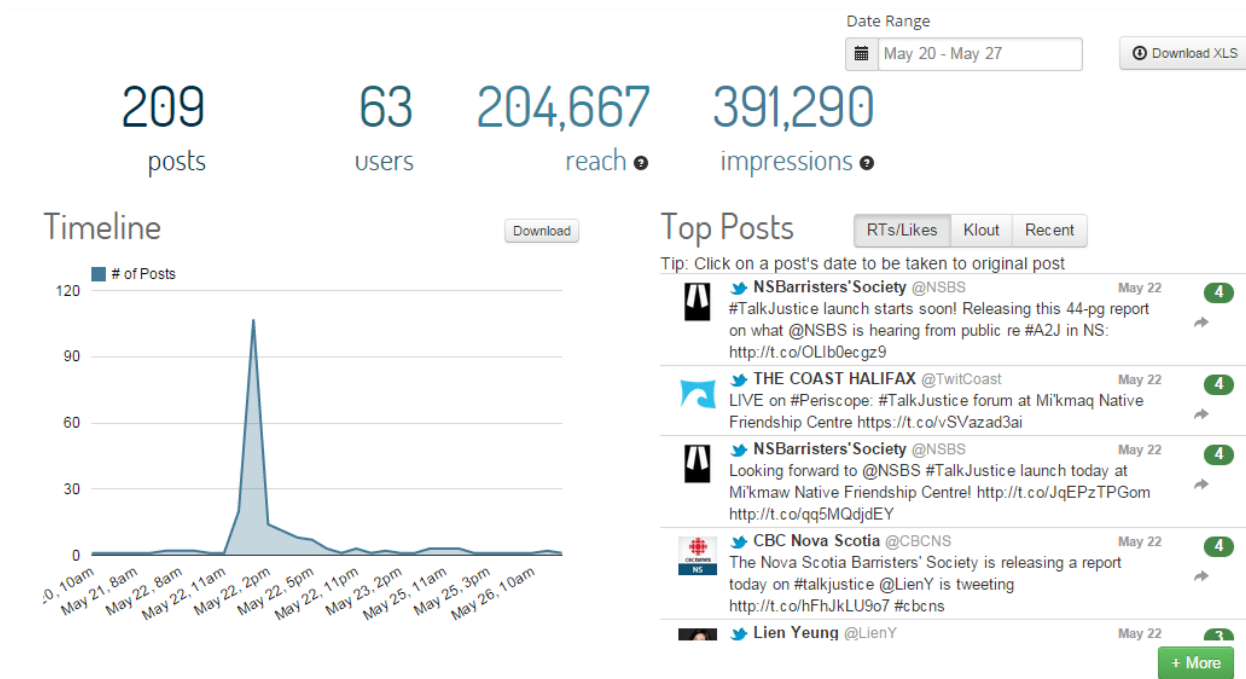
The #TalkJustice launch event was well-attended by the local news media and is, to date, the most well-covered public engagement event in our history. Reporters from CBC, Global, the *Chronicle-Herald*, and *The Coast* were present, with all but *The Coast* filing stories. A list of articles about the launch event is appended to this report.

## Social media monitoring

As reported to Council previously, #TalkJustice created a noticeable increase in engagement on its social media accounts.

We enjoyed an even larger second spike in engagement following the launch event. We used Keyhole (<http://keyhole.co/>) to run analytics on the performance of the #TalkJustice hashtag around the time of the launch event. Keyhole measures hashtag mentions on both Twitter and Instagram.

During the week of the launch event, #TalkJustice was used 209 times by 63 different users. Through these users, we reached over 200,000 people with nearly 400,000 individual impressions<sup>2</sup>:



These statistics show that reaching a wide audience does not necessarily require a large number of active users. 63 users is not a large number, but given the number of influential journalists and community members who were among those 63, we were able to grow our audience well beyond them.

### *Reaction from the access to justice community*

We have been impressed by the positive attention #TalkJustice continues to receive from access to justice groups on a national and international level. This level of interest shows how a) we are breaking new ground for Law Societies with this initiative and b) there is an unmet need for more public perspectives on access to justice. A sampling of this positive feedback is appended to this report.

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<sup>2</sup> “Reach” is the number of unique people who may see these posts. “Impressions” is the total number of potential views (including same users seeing multiple posts). For example, if you have 500 followers and share 2 posts, your reach would be 500 but your impressions would be 1,000.

## KEY LESSONS

The experience of planning and executing #TalkJustice has proven invaluable for Society staff. The success of this initiative to date has given us a model for our future public engagement work. In particular, #TalkJustice has clearly demonstrated the value of:

### 1. *Relationship building*

Although #TalkJustice is a brand new Society initiative, its success represents a culmination of several years of dedicated community outreach, youth engagement, and trust building.

The participation of LaMeia Reddick as our community engagement consultant was crucial to the success of #TalkJustice. Ms. Reddick, a community organizer from North Preston, brought this project instant attention and credibility among the audiences we most wanted to target. Without her skills, knowledge, and connections, we would not have been able to elicit the detailed, candid, sincere answers we received, nor would we have enjoyed such high levels of community participation.

It is important to note that Ms. Reddick did not join our team through a conventional hiring process. Her relationship with us is the direct result of dedicated engagement and mentorship by the Equity Officer.

Relationship building is not easily defined or measured and can take years to bear fruit. Despite this, it is important that the Society invest the time and resources necessary to continue this sort of engagement. The continued existence – let alone success – of #TalkJustice hinges on it.

### 2. *Transparency*

Put simply, we increase our credibility amongst members of the community when we are honest about what the justice system gets wrong. In some ways, this may seem counterintuitive: would it not make more sense for us to increase our credibility by talking about what we get right? This perspective ignores that when we talk to communities about the great work the justice system is doing on their behalf, we are not speaking into a vacuum. People will compare our words to how they experience our actions. If our words do not match their experience, we lose credibility.

#TalkJustice showed Nova Scotians that those in positions of power in the justice system acknowledge that it is broken and that fixing it requires public input. Had we come with the aim of promoting existing access to justice initiatives, we likely would have seemed less serious about reform in the eyes of participants.

### 3. *Listening*

#TalkJustice made clear to us that members of the public are more interested in telling us their ideas for improving the justice system than they are in listening to us talk about our own initiatives. This can be a difficult pill for us to swallow, as we want the community to learn about the programs and initiatives we undertake for their benefit. What we must recognize is that this sort of *promotion* is different from *engagement*. Promotion should come after, and in response to, dedicated community engagement.

Halifax Poet Laureate El Jones, who moderated the panel discussion at the launch event, wrote in the *Halifax Examiner* about #TalkJustice, where she stressed the importance of listening (emphasis added):

One young Black man at the event was sitting beside the judge who sentenced him. The police sat in the audience while Black and Indigenous people on stage recounted their experiences of police violence. **Formerly incarcerated people sat and taught lawyers about their experiences and the lawyers took notes. The community spoke and the “experts” listened.**

The process at Dalhousie has led people to feel like restorative justice is a joke, but **when Indigenous and African people engage in transforming justice in a collective, communal manner, with truthfulness, openness and integrity, we can at least begin see how our relationships can look differently and what an equal society might look like.** It's a start.<sup>3</sup>

The reality is that justice system actors are accustomed to having the undivided attention of people whose lives often hinge on their words. A judge handing down a sentence; a lawyer explaining a legal strategy to a client; a police officer giving orders to a suspect under arrest; and a social worker explaining to a couple why their child is being removed can all expect that the person to whom they are speaking will give them full attention and accept what they say with few questions.

#TalkJustice has given us the opportunity to flip this dynamic. As justice system actors, we are experts in the rituals, rules, and processes of the system, but we are not experts in what it feels like to go through it, particularly if you are economically disadvantaged or from an equity-seeking community. Having this perspective is important to any efforts to successfully reform our justice system, and we can only gain this perspective through regular consultation with those who have expertise - in this case, the public.

We commend the many justice system actors who participated in #TalkJustice – they did so genuinely and without defensiveness, no matter how troubling the feedback they received from community members. Their positive attitude did not go unnoticed by those in attendance. The continued engagement of justice system actors will be critical to the future success of #TalkJustice.

### **Barriers to bigger success**

As we begin to plan the next phase of #TalkJustice, we keep at front of mind ideas for further improvement based on the following barriers discovered during the initial planning process:

- **Restrictions on staff use of social media:** Society staff are currently prevented from commenting on Society activities through their social media accounts. While this is a sensible policy for most situations, it hindered our ability to promote this initiative. Revising the policy to allow staff to promote public engagement projects should be considered.
- **Lack of diversity amongst engaged populations:** Urban African-Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq populations were well-engaged through #TalkJustice, but other equity-seeking groups were not as well represented. Future phases of #TalkJustice should focus on establishing connections in rural Nova Scotia.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Participants expressed a clear desire to see that the launch event is not the end of our engagement with them. #TalkJustice has brought us a lot of goodwill from the communities we reached. However, it is important to note that this goodwill is a limited time offer. Sincere, successful public engagement demands follow-up and follow through on the commitments we have made.

The feedback we received requires us to confront some challenging questions regarding how we can work to improve access to justice in Nova Scotia: How do we reconcile the need for us to focus on “our piece” of access to justice with the clear demand from the public to collaborate better across sectors? How do we facilitate discussions among the public and justice sector participants, such as the police, the courts, and lawyers?

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/featured/ask-me-why-i-classify-my-rhymes-will-terrify-morning-file-saturday-may-23-2015/>



## *#TalkJustice Phase II*

Society staff are preparing to meet with Ms. Reddick to receive an update on community collaborations resulting from #TalkJustice, and to collaborate on the next phase. Preliminary planning considerations include:

- Developing an outreach strategy that targets populations we failed to reach in the first phase, namely in rural Nova Scotia.
- Identifying roles for internal participants, including Society staff and the equity committees.
- Determining how to best incorporate user feedback, both from the report and the launch event; lessons learned from the outcome measurement process; and any input from the equity committees.

Society staff involved at this stage include the Equity Office and the Communications Office. We will report to Council when we have more details.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our dedication to public outreach and to fostering positive relationships with other justice sectors has allowed us to successfully position ourselves as a matchmaker, bringing together community voices and the justice system in ways that are productive and respectful. #TalkJustice is the product of these efforts, and it should be seen as a standard for how Law Societies can engage the public in whose interest they regulate.

# Appendices

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## APPENDIX A: #TALKJUSTICE LAUNCH EVENT AGENDA

# TALK JUSTICE

Location: Mi'kmaq Friendship Centre

Date: May 22, 2015

## Purpose

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- Convene the voices we've heard- cross sector community engagement
- Talk about the report, check in/add to recommendations
- Shine a light on what's happening
- NSBS get to know the community and vis-versa

## Basic Agenda

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12:00	• Arrival and Lunch / Questions at tables to guide conversation
12:30	• Welcome / Framing: Remarks from Chief Justice and Deputy Minister • Who we are (engagement team, society), Who's in the room? • Poem from Killia Atencio (setting the stage)
1:15	• Panel discussion moderated by El Jones
2:00	• Tour the room and look and images • Emma and LaMeia, Present Findings and Bigger Picture of the Process, share report
2:45	• Table Conversations-small groups
3:45	• Closing

Live tweeting of workshop and photos from workshop...

Designed to begin the conversation through social media

Time	Length	Event	Content	Who	Harvest
12:00 pm	30 min.	Arrival & Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Question and images posted to guide lunch conversations</li> </ul>	Rachel	Graphic Record Questions
12:30 pm	40 min.	Welcome & Framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prayer by Elder Billy Lewis</li> <li>Opening: Welcome by Darrel</li> <li>Chief Justice and Tilly Pillay to provide opening remarks</li> <li>Present the Agenda: LaMeia</li> <li>Overview of the Community Engagement Report: Emma</li> <li>Poem by Killa Atencio: <a href="#">50 Shades of Brown</a> (bridging into the community voice)</li> </ul>	Darrel	Graphic Record Key Points
1:10 pm	45 min.	Voice from the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panel: El/Lason/Rodney</li> <li>Stories from justice system and the differences in their experiences and paths</li> <li><b>Questions:</b> How have interactions with the justice system shaped the direction of your life (police, courts and lawyers etc)?</li> <li>Do you have suggestions, based on your experience, to improve the way police, courts and lawyers work and interact with the public?</li> </ul>	LaMeia	Draw Images
2:00 pm	30 min.	Sensing Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LaMeia framing what people have just heard and preparing folks to walk around and experience the voices and images in the room. Ask attendees to circulate and look at images and come with the questions: what has come up for you? (what are you hearing? What are you seeing? What are you thinking?)</li> </ul>	LaMeia	Graphic Record Key Points
2:30 pm	1 hour	Table Conversation (3 rounds at 20 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The NSBS is taking on access to justice work, are there questions that are coming up for you? Do you have any advice?</li> <li>What would collaboration look like and with whom?</li> <li>What can you personally do, either with the NSBS or in the community?</li> </ul>	LaMeia	Graphic Record Key Points
3:40 pm	10 min.	Wrap Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflection on what was heard throughout the day</li> </ul>	Rachel	Share Back/ Post-it Themes
3:50 pm	10 min.	Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closing comments</li> </ul>	Darrel	

## **APPENDIX B: MEDIA COVERAGE OF LAUNCH EVENT**

### **NSBS #TalkJustice project addresses barriers to justice**

Touch BASE: The Magazine for Global Canadians  
Vol. 16, Issue 11 | June 2015 (print edition only)

### **Ask Me Why I Classify, My Rhymes will Terrify: Morning File**

Halifax Examiner | May 23, 2015

BY EL JONES (**scroll down to #5**)

<http://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/featured/ask-me-why-i-classify-my-rhymes-will-terrify-morning-file-saturday-may-23-2015/>

### **Access to justice system not equal for all communities, says N.S. report**

By Julia Wong, videojournalist

Global News | May 22, 2015

<http://globalnews.ca/news/2011909/access-to-justice-system-not-equal-for-all-communities-says-n-s-report/>

### **#TalkJustice campaign calls for equal access to legal services**

By EVAN WEBSTER

Chronicle Herald | May 22, 2015

<http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1288468-talkjustice-campaign-calls-for-equal-access-to-legal-services>

### **Nova Scotia Barristers' Society examining access to justice**

Project comes after society met with community groups about challenges, barriers to justice

By Lien Yeung

CBC News | May 22, 2015

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/nova-scotia-barristers-society-examining-access-to-justice-1.3083688>

### **Positive 'tweets' throughout the event**

By Jacob Boon, News Editor (*no article yet, perhaps with next phase?*)

The Coast | May 22, 2015

(*Other media and attendees were also tweeting continuously*)

## **APPENDIX C: SAMPLING OF A2J COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO LAUNCH EVENT**



**Julie Macfarlane**  
@ProfJulieMac

Follow

Our friends @NSBS have been busy  
[#talkjustice](#) [tinyurl.com/l6kvcqq](http://tinyurl.com/l6kvcqq)

CBC News



**Legal Help Centre**  
@LegalHelpCentre

Follow

This is what we need more of: [#TalkJustice](#)  
report shares public feedback on [#A2J](#) in  
Nova Scotia via [@NSBS](#)  
[nsbs.org/news/2015/05/t...](http://nsbs.org/news/2015/05/t...)





**Winkler Institute**  
@winklerinst

Follow

Nova Scotia Barristers Society just released a report w/ important ideas on [#A2J](#) [ow.ly/NiJAC](http://ow.ly/NiJAC), [ow.ly/NiJ4n](http://ow.ly/NiJ4n) [#TalkJustice](#)



**John-Paul Boyd**  
@JP\_Boyd\_CRILF

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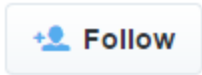
Great report on perceptions of the justice system and [#A2J](#) in Nova Scotia from [@NSBS](#) [#talkjustice](#) initiative! [nsbs.org/sites/default/...](http://nsbs.org/sites/default/...)



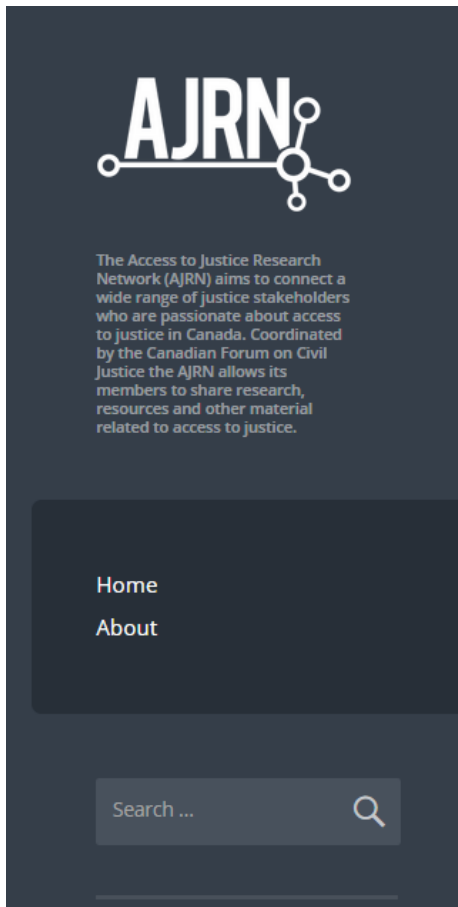
**John Howard Society**  
@JohnHowardNS

Follow

[#TalkJustice](#) campaign calls for equal access to legal services | The Chronicle Herald [herald.ca/qPe#.VWM6HDUtu...](http://herald.ca/qPe#.VWM6HDUtu...) via [@chronicleherald](#)



Have you seen the @NSBS #TalkJustice report? It outlines lack of justice experienced by Nova Scotians. Check it out: [bit.ly/talkjustice](http://bit.ly/talkjustice)



### Having a Public Conversation About A2J: Nova Scotia's #Talk Justice Project

MAY 25, 2015 / AJRN1



The Equity Office of the Nova Scotia Barrister Society has just published a report discussing its recent #TalkJustice project. As part of the Office's mandate to explore access to justice issues in Nova Scotia, #TalkJustice involved reaching out to equity-seeking and economically disadvantaged groups throughout the province to hear what they had to say about justice. This final report identifies the key themes that emerged from the project, and explains the methods, goals and inspiration behind the initiative.

The project website offers an overview of the conversation and is also worth a visit.