



## New Brunswick Human Rights Commission

### **Dr. Patrick Malcolmson**

#### **Building empathy**

I think the key in my mind is to bring things down to a personal individual level so that you're not just talking about abstract ideas, you're not just talking about movements. I mean, those things are all important, you know, both for women and when did they get to vote, and that sort of thing. Of course, that's a crucial sort of moment in history, and so on, but it doesn't bring home to the ordinary student in the school—in Woodstock or Fredericton or Bouctouche—the nature of discrimination itself. And I think the best and the key way to do that is you need to meet and talk to people who've had that experience of different kinds of discrimination: What does it make you feel like? How do you feel as a human being? What does it leave you with in terms of your fears and concerns about dealing with other people? You often find that people that come from minority communities, they're very concerned, "Is that person discriminating against me?" Well why? Because they have been discriminated against. And so it's that experience, and developing a sense of empathy when you talk to a person who's been through that, who has been obviously discriminated—say in an encounter with a public official or something like that—and being able to say, "Gee, you know, when I hear the story and I imagine myself being in that situation, then I can see why this is such an important issue." I think that would be the key thing: a sort of trying to have experiences for young people where they can develop empathy, in a sense of saying, "Yeah, I can see why that would be such a big concern, and we can't have that."