



British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner

MAY 26, 2022

The Honourable Jennifer Whiteside
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC, V8W 9E2

Via Email: educ.minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Whiteside,

I want to begin by acknowledging with gratitude the spirit of openness and collaboration that you and so many of your Ministry staff have shown over the past two years.

As you know, part of my statutory responsibility as Human Rights Commissioner is to develop and deliver public information and education about human rights, and my Office has an education team who provide a variety of direct programming. More broadly, my statutory mandate includes promoting compliance with the *Human Rights Code* and international human rights law—in other words, changing hearts and minds and working towards a new culture of human rights in the province. Making an impact at the societal level will be difficult without a strong partnership with the public education system.

Students' exposure to human rights concepts in the classroom is affected by numerous factors, from teacher training and ongoing professional development to the availability of relevant teaching and learning resources. Underpinning all of this is the B.C. curriculum and the expectations it sets for age-appropriate learning about human rights concepts. It is my belief that human rights content must be embedded and emphasized in the curriculum in every grade.

In order to effectively exercise my statutory mandate, I am seeking to gain a better understanding of the current state of human rights content in B.C. curriculum. I am writing to ask for your assistance in this regard. Specifically, I am requesting that your Ministry produce and share a summary of where and how direct references to human rights appear in the curriculum, including how concepts of equity, discrimination (on the basis of gender, age, race, disability etc.), social justice and social responsibility are addressed. This request follows discussions between our staff in which your staff indicated that this request could be fulfilled.

I am seeking a summary similar to the one your Ministry published on [Indigenous knowledge and perspectives](#) where content is organized in a cross-curricular manner (i.e. grade-by-grade) from Kindergarten to Grade 12 and also by curricular area. I am interested in both explicit and implicit references to the above concepts, and I ask that the summary distinguish between these three elements within the curriculum: big ideas, curricular competencies, and content. I would also ask that the summary be made publicly available so that others may benefit from a deeper understanding of the current curriculum.

I know the resources of your Ministry are valuable, and that there are many important initiatives that require attention, and I would be grateful for your assistance and that of your staff in the midst of these other priorities. If I can provide further clarity on my request, please do not hesitate to reach out.

I look forward to continuing to work together on issues of mutual concern in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kasari Govender', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kasari Govender, Commissioner
BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

CC: Nick Poescheck, Director, Curriculum & Classroom Assessment, Nick.Poescheck@gov.bc.ca

