



British Columbia's
**Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

B.C. Human Rights Commissioner ignites hope with anti-hate mural in Nanaimo

Nanaimo, B.C. – A new mural in Nanaimo aims to bring people together to combat hate. Unveiled on Thursday by B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, the mural is a direct response to the final report of the Commissioner's Inquiry into hate during the pandemic, titled "From Hate to Hope," which highlights the need to build inclusion and belonging in B.C.'s communities.

As outlined in "From Hate to Hope," the province witnessed a troubling surge in hate exacerbated by the pandemic—an issue that persists to this day. Through the inquiry, thousands of individuals and organizations shared their encounters with hate and highlighted a need to fortify community strength and community bonds to prevent disinformation and fear.

Co-created with Humanity in Art and with inspiration from youth from RISEBRIDGE's IBPOC summer program, the mural unveiled this week is a testament to how strong and resilient Nanaimo's community can be. The chosen location, the Nanaimo Aquatic Centre, is part of an area that was targeted by racist, homophobic and transphobic vandalism just this fall. Through the mural project, this site has been transformed into a space for community healing.

"This powerful piece of public art not only transforms a space previously marred by hate, but also symbolizes Nanaimo's collective commitment to combatting discrimination," said **Commissioner Govender**. "The mural—and the collaborative process by which it was created—serves as a poignant reminder that community care is a potent antidote to the isolation and lack of belonging that so often drive hate. It is a testament to the strength we can find when we stand together."

Muralist **Lauren Semple** stated: "The mural was inspired by our conversations with the youth, with the repeating themes of community, transition, contrast and our connection to land and water."

"It's more than just paint on a wall," added Semple's Humanity in Art collaborator **Lys Glassford**. "It's changed this space completely, created an invitation to talk and celebrates Nanaimo's unique community."

"As we unveil this magnificent creation, let it be a reflection of our city's commitment to uniting the community and inspiring change through public art," said **Nanaimo Mayor Leonard Krog**. "Let's celebrate the extraordinary talent of our artists and continue creating spaces that reflect our deep love and appreciation for the inclusive and vibrant city we proudly call home."

The unveiling of the Nanaimo mural is part of a larger initiative following from the Commissioner's Inquiry findings, which focuses on community activation through art and placemaking. This project follows a series of events and workshops held earlier this year where civic leaders came together to discuss local experiences of hate and strategies for responding to and preventing hate in their communities.

The Nanaimo mural is the last of four installations across the province, with other murals showcased in Vancouver, Fort St. John and Keremeos. Each mural serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of unity, understanding and the need for communities to come together to stand up against hate.

Resources

- Photos of the mural are available here: bchumanrights.ca/media-kit#NanMural
- Learn more about BCOHRC's inquiry here: [From hate to hope: Inquiry into hate in the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

-30-

Media contact

To request an interview with Commissioner Kasari Govender, please contact Lindsey Bertrand, Acting Manager, Communications, at media@bchumanrights.ca or 604-306-736.

Media kit

[Visit](#) our media kit for images of Commissioner Kasari Govender and other resources.

About BCOHRC

BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner exists to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures. We do this work through education, research, advocacy, inquiry and monitoring. Learn more at: bchumanrights.ca

About the Commissioner

B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, started her five-year term on Sept. 3, 2019. As an independent officer of the Legislature, Commissioner Govender is uniquely positioned to ensure human rights in B.C. are protected, respected and advanced on a systemic level. Her work through BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner centres listening deeply to British Columbians to inform educational materials, policy guidance, public inquiries, interventions, community-based research and more that protects marginalized communities, addresses discrimination and injustice and upholds human rights for all.

About the Inquiry into hate in the pandemic

B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* gives the Human Rights Commissioner broad powers to inquire into matters that would serve to promote or protect human rights in B.C., including through a public inquiry with the ability to report the findings publicly and to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

A public inquiry is an opportunity to delve deeply into the human rights implications of a particular incident or issue, gather factual and expert evidence, hear directly from those impacted (for example, through witness statements, public hearings or surveys) and make recommendations for how to address the human rights issues raised. An inquiry is not a court of law and cannot make legal findings regarding specific incidents of hate. The Inquiry into hate in the pandemic was the first inquiry conducted by an independent human rights commissioner in B.C. Beginning in August 2021, the Inquiry analyzed data from multiple sources, drew on extensive independent research and heard from thousands of people in B.C. The final report, "From hate to hope," was released in March 2023. Learn more: bchumanrights.ca/inquiry-into-hate



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