



British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Commissioner says Settlement Agreement between Johnson family and the Vancouver Police still has potential to dismantle racism in policing

Vancouver B.C. – B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, has released her final report on the fulfilment of the Agreement between the Vancouver Police Board (VPB) and the Johnson family to address systemic anti-Indigenous racism in policing. Commissioner Govender, whom the agreement names as an independent third-party reviewer, reports that while some progress has been made, many of the Agreement's provisions were not realized.

The Settlement Agreement between the VPB and Maxwell Johnson and his granddaughter was struck in September 2022 to settle a human rights complaint. The complaint, filed by Mr. Johnson on behalf of himself and his granddaughter, centres on an incident in which Vancouver police handcuffed the pair outside a Bank of Montreal location in Vancouver. As part of the Settlement Agreement, which directly involves the Heiltsuk Nation as well as the parties to the Agreement, B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner was tasked by all parties with overseeing the implementation of the parts of the Agreement relating to systemic reforms, including providing an interim and final review of their progress.

The Commissioner's final report looks at implementation of Part C of the Agreement related to actions intended to bring about systemic change. Her report finds that due to a differing understanding of obligations and impacts related to an apology ceremony, fulfillment of many of the provisions of the Agreement that required collaboration were not realized. In the absence of a collaborative relationship, the VPB fulfilled several of its individual obligations.

The Agreement marked a milestone of the Johnson family, the Heiltsuk Nation and the Vancouver Police Board trying to work together to chart a path towards addressing racism in the service. Though the official timeframe for the Agreement has passed, the Commissioner hopes that this work will find a way to continue outside the bounds of the Agreement but in keeping with its goals and vision.

"Without truly collaborative systemic reform to policing in British Columbia—work that requires good faith partnerships with those who have been harmed by systemic racism—Indigenous people will continue to face discrimination at the hands of law enforcement," said Commissioner Govender. "Both the process and the outcomes of addressing systemic racism matter; without inclusive processes, outcomes will falter. Addressing racism in policing doesn't end with the expiry of this formal process; I hope the parties continue to work towards the important goals that they all committed to in this Agreement."

Arising from the same incident, misconduct proceedings under the *Police Act* were conducted. On Jan. 28, 2026, the Police Complaint Commissioner granted the Johnson's reconsideration application related to the misconduct proceedings. The Police Complaint Commissioner ordered a review to determine whether and on what terms the officers must provide an oral apology to the applicants. For clarity, the misconduct proceedings are entirely separate from the settlement of the human rights proceedings.

All parties had an opportunity to view and respond to draft versions of the Commissioner's report through an administrative fairness process. Parties received the final version in advance of today's release.

Read the report: [Final review: Settlement agreement between Maxwell Johnson Sr. and A.B. and the Vancouver Police Board](#)

Resources

- [Interim review: Settlement agreement between Maxwell Johnson Sr. and A.B. and the Vancouver Police Board](#)
- Interim review press release: [Vancouver police, Johnson family and Heiltsuk Nation should collaborate to realize the promise of systemic racism settlement: Human Rights Commissioner](#)
- Press release: [B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner will audit the implementation of settlement agreement between Vancouver Police Board and Heiltsuk grandfather and granddaughter with critical human rights implications](#) (September 2022)
- Press release: [B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner's Police Act submission data reveals disturbing pattern of discrimination in B.C. policing](#) (November 2021)

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Media contact

To request an interview with Commissioner Kasari Govender, please contact Sandi Barrett, A/Manager, Communications, at media@bchumanrights.ca or 604-306-7369.

Media kit

[Visit our media kit](#) for images of Commissioner Kasari Govender, pronunciation guidance, bios and more.

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

Kasari Govender began her work as B.C.'s first independent human rights commissioner in September 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 has included public inquiries into experiences of hate in the pandemic and detentions under the *Adult Guardianship Act*, a report on systemic



discrimination in policing, community embedded research about a range of human rights issues experienced by people living in British Columbia, public awareness campaigns about ableism and racism and guidance to government that, among other things, informed the creation of both the *Anti-Racism Data Act* and the *Anti-Racism Act*. Commissioner Govender was reappointed for a second term beginning in September 2024.

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