



British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner

MONDAY, JULY 7, 2025
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ADVISORY: Media are invited to join Human Rights Commissioner for live discussion on talking to kids about gender inclusion with author Jessica Love and BC Summer Reading Club's Georgia Franklin – July 14

Vancouver B.C. – The third livestreamed event in the B.C. Human Rights Commissioner's [Beyond the Headlines](#) conversation series will highlight how we discuss gender identity and expression with young people.

On Monday, Jul. 14 at 10:30 a.m. PDT, Commissioner Kasari Govender will sit down with Jessica Love, author and illustrator of *Julián is a Mermaid*, and Georgia Franklin, Provincial Coordinator of the BC Summer Reading Club, for a conversation about how we discuss [gender identity](#) and expression with young people in age-appropriate ways—and how we can help them take pride in their identities and celebrate those of others.

To open the conversation, Jessica Love will give a reading of *Julián is a Mermaid*.

Media and public are invited to watch the discussion via Zoom or livestreaming on the Commissioner's website. Those who register and join the Zoom webinar will be able to ask questions during the event that may be answered live.

As described in the Commissioner's landmark Rights in Focus report, released in 2024, students with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities routinely face discrimination in schools. While verbal and physical manifestations of transphobia and homophobia have declined in the last decade, a 2021 study cited in the report shows 62 per cent of LGBTQ2SAI+ students across Canada still feel unsafe at schools. Celebrating gender identity and expression—highlighting the joy of being one's full self—is a powerful antidote to the hate and erasure faced by LGBTQ2SAI+ people, including youth.

WHO: **Kasari Govender**, B.C.'s independent Human Rights Commissioner
Jessica Love, author and illustrator of *Julián is a Mermaid*
Georgia Franklin, Provincial Coordinator of the BC Summer Reading Club

WHAT: Beyond the Headlines: Celebrating gender identity and expression with Jessica Love and Georgia Franklin

WHEN: Monday, Jul. 14, 2025
10:30 – 11:30 a.m. PDT

WHERE: Via a Zoom webinar and streaming live via bchumanrights.ca/beyond-the-headlines

- REGISTER:** To register for the Zoom webinar, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/Gender-Identity-Expression>
- Notes:** To submit questions for the Commissioner or guests to answer, participants must register and join us via the Zoom platform.
- When registering, please advise us of any accessibility or translation requirements you may have. We will work to accommodate you.

Beyond the Headlines resources

- [Beyond the Headlines](#) is a series of conversations with leaders and change makers about key issues facing people in British Columbia. Watch the first two Beyond the Headlines episodes:
 - [Housing and Human Rights](#) with Marie-Josée Houle, Federal Housing Advocate
 - [Migrant Workers' Rights](#) with Ketty Nivyabandi, Secretary General for Amnesty International Canada's English-Speaking section
- The [Rights in Focus](#) report, from which Beyond the Headlines topics are drawn, describes 10 key systems impacting human rights in British Columbia. The experiences of LGBTQ2SAI+ students were highlighted in the Inequities in the Education System section. To learn more about the report, visit: baseline.bchumanrights.ca/in-focus
- Julián is a Mermaid was the [Commissioner's Book Club](#) pick for preschool-aged children in March 2025. To learn more about the book club and find current and past selections and discussion guides, visit: bchumanrights.ca/book-club

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Media contact

To request an interview with Commissioner Kasari Govender, please contact stephanie goodwin, Acting Executive Director, Communications and Operations, at media@bchumanrights.ca or (250) 216-4534.

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. In her first five-year term, her work through BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner included a public inquiry into experiences of hate in the pandemic, a report on systemic discrimination in policing, community embedded research about a range of human rights issues experienced by British



Columbians, 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.

About Jessica Love

Jessica Love is the author and illustrator of *Julián is a Mermaid*, *Julián at the Wedding*, and *A Bed of Stars*, published by Candlewick Press, and the illustrator of *I Love You Because I Love You* by Mượn Thị Văn, *Will It Be Okay?* by Crescent Dragonwagon, *Gaga Mistake Day* by Emma and Susan Straub, *The Poet and the Bees* by Amy Novesky and *Little Passenger* by Deirdre Sullivan. Jessica grew up in Southern California, raised by a pair of artist parents. She studied printmaking and illustration at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and then went on to study Drama at Juilliard. After working as an actor in New York for ten years, she made a pivot and created *Julián is a Mermaid*, her first book. Jessica lives in the Hudson Valley with her husband and their son.

About Georgia Franklin

Georgia Franklin is the Provincial Coordinator for the BC Summer Reading Club, a free, inclusive literacy program offered through public libraries, connecting young people with stories, resources and community. Georgia is based out of the traditional and unceded homelands of the xʷməθkwəyʼəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaɫ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples, where she is currently an MLIS candidate at UBC's School of Information. She has an extensive background in public libraries, working for over a decade at the Vancouver Public Library, most recently in the Accessible Services department.

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