



**TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 2023  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Human Rights Commissioner hosts community conversation in Penticton to advance recommendations from inquiry on hate in the pandemic**

Vancouver B.C. – B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, will be in Penticton tomorrow speaking with decision makers and community leaders about the recommendations from her recently completed Inquiry into hate in the pandemic (the Inquiry).

In March 2023, the final report of the Inquiry, titled "From hate to hope," revealed a dramatic spike in hate incidents across B.C. during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the Penticton event, Commissioner Govender will review key findings and recommendations from the report, answer questions and create opportunities for engaged discussion between leaders in the South Okanagan-Similkameen region about how their communities are and can take an active role in responding to hate.

"We have findings and recommendations from the Inquiry," said Commissioner Govender, "and now it is time to take steps toward addressing hate and ensuring we are ready to respond to hate in future states of crisis. As we heard often during the Inquiry, there is great power within local communities to address hate. Tomorrow's event with leaders in Penticton is a step forward in that work, centring collective care and community-led strategies to foster belonging, promote accountability and repair harm."

The two-hour event is hosted in partnership with South Okanagan Immigrant Community Services (SOICS). Leaders from Summerland, Okanagan Falls, Oliver, Penticton, Keremeos, Hedley, Osoyoos and the Penticton, Osoyoos, Upper Similkameen and Lower Similkameen Indian Bands were invited to attend.

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### **Media contact**

Commissioner Govender will be available for interviews, including in-person interviews in Penticton, between 11:15 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 7. To request an interview, please contact Lindsey Bertrand, Senior Communications Advisor: [media@bchumanrights.ca](mailto:media@bchumanrights.ca) or 604-306-7369.

### **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](https://bchumanrights.ca)

## About the Commissioner

B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, started her five-year term on Sept. 3, 2019. Since then, our Office has been working swiftly to build a strong team, to listen deeply to the concerns of British Columbians, to deliver education materials on our rights and responsibilities, to issue policy guidance to protect marginalized communities and to lay a human rights-based foundation for our work. As an independent officer of the Legislature, the Commissioner is uniquely positioned to ensure human rights in B.C. are protected, respected and advanced on a systemic level throughout our society.

## About the Inquiry into hate in the pandemic

In September 2020, legal changes to B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* gave the Commissioner new broad powers to inquire into matters that would serve to promote or protect human rights in B.C., including through a public inquiry and 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: [hateinquiry.bchumanrights.ca](https://hateinquiry.bchumanrights.ca)

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