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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

B.C. Human Rights Commissioner sends a message with anti-hate mural in Fort St. John

Fort St. John, B.C. – B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, hosted a special event in Fort St. John on Thursday to unveil a remarkable mural that aims to bring the community together in the fight against hate and to promote inclusion and belonging. The mural, co-designed by artists Facundo Gastiazoro and Stephanie Anderson of the Raven-Tacuara Artist Collective, incorporated input from the residents of Fort St. John and builds upon the final report of the Commissioner's Inquiry into hate in the pandemic, titled "From Hate to Hope."

The "From Hate to Hope" report lays out evidence of a sharp rise in hate in B.C. during the pandemic, which continues to this day. Through the inquiry, thousands of people and organizations shared their experiences of hate and demonstrated a need to fortify communities against the disinformation and fear that often feed it.

"My hope is that the unveiling of this mural provides an opportunity for people in Fort St. John to process their experiences of hate and inspires connections that can strengthen the community," said Commissioner Govender. "This work of art represents a collective effort to combat hate and promote inclusivity. By engaging artists and incorporating the voices of the community, we hope to inspire positive change, foster a sense of belonging and send the message that hate has no place here."

The unveiling event was co-hosted by the Fort St. John Community Arts Council (FSJCAC), which also led community engagement for the design of the mural, with support from the City of Fort St. John. In addition to providing community members an opportunity to witness the mural's unveiling, the event was a platform for attendees to share their thoughts and experiences about hate in their community and to consider how public art can spark change.

"In unveiling this extraordinary mural, we not only reveal a work of art but a narrative of connection and resilience in Fort St. John," said Rosemary Landry, FSJCAC President. "The powerful result of this collaboration between artists and local residents shows the profound impact art can have when it emerges from the collective heartbeat of a community. The Fort St. John Community Arts Council is thrilled to have been a part of this exciting project and we hope it is the first of many murals in our community."

"As they walk through the area, we want people to be surrounded by a field of colours and images that express hope," said mural artist Facundo Gastiazoro. "It was such a positive experience working with the organizers, volunteers and community members; even passersby would stop as we were painting and tell us how happy they were to see the colours. And really, that's what we want: Everyone is very busy with their lives, and we hope our mural will make people take a moment to pause and, hopefully, feel something. It's very rewarding when that happens."

The unveiling of the Fort St. John mural marks the second of four new murals to be showcased across the province. A mural in Vancouver was [unveiled last week](#) and subsequent installations are in progress Keremeos and Nanaimo.

This project is an extension of the Commissioner's Inquiry into hate and focuses on community activation to build connection through art and placemaking. These community activation projects follow closely on a series of events and workshops hosted across B.C. earlier this year, which brought together civic leaders to talk about local experiences of hate and paths forward for responding to and preventing hate in their communities.

Resources

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

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Media contact

To request an interview with Commissioner Kasari Govender, please contact Lindsey Bertrand, Senior Communications Advisor, 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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