



British Columbia's  
Office of the Human Rights  
Commissioner

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner unveils inspiring mural in Keremeos to confront hate and inspire community connection**

Keremeos, B.C. – B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, travelled to the South Okanagan today to reveal a captivating new mural in Keremeos. This powerful work of art, co-designed with local Sylix artist Haley Regan and youth from the South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS) One World Youth Crew, aims to unite the community in their efforts to comprehend and combat hate.

The project builds upon recommendations from the Commissioner's Inquiry into hate in the pandemic, compiled in the "From Hate to Hope" report. Thousands of people from across B.C. participated in the Inquiry and provided first-hand accounts of a wave of hate that arose during the pandemic and which continues today. Based on these accounts and a mountain of other evidence, "From Hate to Hope" calls for concrete actions by government to address hate, as well as calling on people in B.C. to treat each other with respect and dignity. The mural unveiled in Keremeos today represents a step forward in helping community members to process their experiences of hate and come together to create change.

"This mural stands as a testament to the South Okanagan community's collective resilience and a resounding call to stand united against the corrosive forces of disinformation, fear and hate," said Commissioner Govender. "Through this project, we are reminded of the power of art and collective action to build a more inclusive and compassionate future."

The Keremeos mural consists of four distinct panels, each conveying a unique message. The 'Rainbow Cross Walk' panel serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges faced by LGBTQ2SAI+ communities in the valley, exemplified by the repeated defacement of the Penticton rainbow crosswalk. The 'Orchard' scene recognizes diverse communities that have migrated to the region from around the world, including migrant agricultural workers. The 'Round Dance' panel pays tribute to the 2022 Truth and Reconciliation Day event in Penticton, in which the mayor of Penticton, the Chief of the Penticton Indian Band, Four Seasons Cultural Society committee members and local residents all participated in a round dance, illustrating what a diverse and connected community can look like. And lastly, the 'Community Library' image encourages continuous learning and unlearning as essential steps in addressing hate.

Mural artist Haley Regan described her experience: "Painting this mural brought the youth group, myself and the SOICS staff together and made us really think about what 'From Hate to Hope' means to us as young people and how our words and actions will affect our community. That's what

art does. It brings people from all walks of life together and makes you think about the bigger picture.”

The unveiling of the Keremeos 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 Keremeos mural is the third of four installations across the province, with other murals showcased in Vancouver and Fort St. John and in development in Nanaimo. 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/#KerMural](https://bchumanrights.ca/media-kit/#KerMural)
- 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, Acting Manager, Communications, at [media@bchumanrights.ca](mailto: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](https://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](https://bchumanrights.ca/inquiry-into-hate)

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