



British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner



Rising to the challenge: Path to 2030

Strategic Plan 2025/26–2029/30

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Strategic Plan 2025/26 – 2029/30

October 2025

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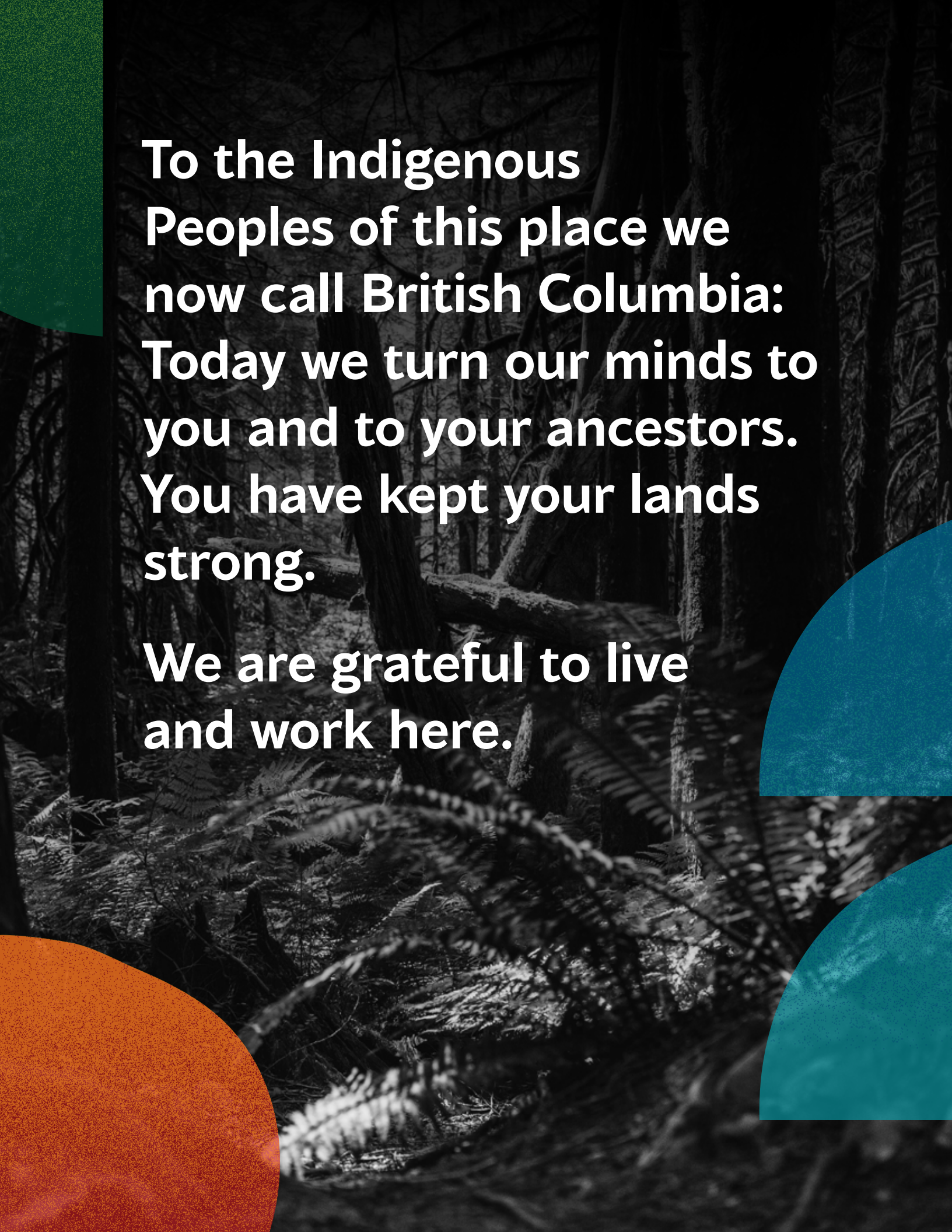
British Columbia's
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Strategic Plan 2025/26 – 2029/30



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Commissioner**



**To the Indigenous
Peoples of this place we
now call British Columbia:
Today we turn our minds to
you and to your ancestors.
You have kept your lands
strong.**

**We are grateful to live
and work here.**

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Gratitude

We extend our immense gratitude to the multitude of individuals, organizations and communities who have provided insights and knowledge directly or indirectly to the development of this Strategic Plan. This includes consultations with our staff and contributions from partners, organizational evaluation learnings and jurisdictional scans, as well as insights from our work with Indigenous Peoples and other diverse communities across British Columbia. Thank you for all your contributions.

Message from the Commissioner

When we started this Office, I had a vision. A vision of social change, fostering a culture of human rights and equality in our province, and a recognition that a human rights respecting society benefits everyone.

Entering my second and final five-year term in this role has been a chance to reflect; to look both back at the path we have taken and ahead at the forks in the road. The long-term vision for change remains:

our job is to work towards a world in which everyone's human dignity is respected and in which equality and justice are our guiding lights.

Our last Strategic Plan was developed during the cataclysmic events of the global COVID-19 pandemic, during the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement on the international stage and the growing movement of Indigenous land defenders closer to home. This plan has been developed during a time when threats of authoritarianism and the dismantling of our global human rights infrastructure loom large, our economy faces growing uncertainty and rapid technological developments simultaneously advance human capacity and threaten human and environmental rights. Our first plan was developed for our first five years in existence, when our goal was to breathe life into the words of the *Human Rights Code* that define the Commissioner's role, and create an organization capable of leveraging change. This plan grows out of our learnings six years in, with numerous reports, inquiries, educational tools, legal cases and recommendations under our belt; a robust and expert staff team; a network of relationships across the province including with Indigenous leaders, civil society organizations and governments of all levels; and an infrastructure of in-house corporate, operational and administrative services to scaffold our work. Our first plan was a vision for a start up; this plan is a vision for a strong, credible and sustainable organization, capable of driving transformative social and legal change today and long into the future.

In my first term as Commissioner, one of our key steps forward was conducting an inquiry into the rise



of hate during the pandemic and seeing the implementation of a number of the recommendations that emerged from the inquiry. We also worked on addressing systemic racism in policing and guarding against the risk of arbitrary detention in health care facilities, as well as developing a framework for government to collect and use disaggregated demographic data of people in B.C., and a toolkit for employers looking to make their workplaces more equitable and fair for all. We sought to produce outputs that are both in demand and timely, as well as work that is proactive and speaks to minority experiences that might otherwise be ignored.

In this second Strategic Plan, we are focusing on the right to the highest attainable standard of health and protections against democratic encroachments—manifesting, for example, in our 2025 campaign on how mis- and disinformation undermine our shared sense of reality and ultimately, democracy itself through the proliferation of conspiracy theories, racial and other stereotypes and distrust of public institutions. These goals are in addition to our ongoing strategic priorities of addressing discrimination as it's defined in the *Human Rights Code*, decolonization and a focus on Indigenous rights and poverty as both a cause and effect of inequality and injustice.

In a world of human rights concerns, these issues have surfaced through an examination of what we have heard from diverse communities across the province over the last six years, our deep research into the human rights landscape that manifests in a Rights in Focus report every three years (the first one was released in August 2024) and recent and current events that are shaping our world and threatening to undermine some of the rights and systems that many of us—up until recently—have taken for granted.

As I travel around the province to speak everywhere from schools to community halls to professional gatherings, I am often asked how I keep my hope alive and my compassion from burning out. I always have the same answer:

it is only by dedicating ourselves to the pursuit of justice that we can generate the hope necessary to keep doing this work.

It is, at times overwhelming. However, BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner was created to do this hopeful work. So, while this work is at its core based on a fundamentally optimistic view of humanity—that a more just and equal future is both possible and foreseeable—it is not just idealism that keeps us all working towards the same goals. We have the backing of human rights law in the province, in the Canadian Constitution and in international human rights law. And the support of thousands of people across these lands, bending “the arc of the moral universe” towards justice together.

Sincerely,



Kasari Govender

B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner

What we have heard

Every day, we hear about human rights challenges that persist in B.C., including housing insecurity, job discrimination, health care gaps, barriers in education, issues in the justice system and hate-based violence, among other things. These are problems that disproportionately affect already marginalized people and communities; indeed, public polling from 2024 shows 67 per cent of people living in British Columbia see systemic discrimination as a problem.¹ Our Office has strived to shine a light on inequities in these systems and address them through a combination of advocacy, legal interventions, education and partnerships.

Since BCOHRC's inception, we have made progress and had a positive impact on systemic human rights issues. While these issues persist, we have heard through a comprehensive third-party evaluation process that BCOHRC has laid a strong foundation for fostering equity and justice while tackling some of B.C.'s most pressing human rights challenges—problems that disproportionately impact marginalized communities.

In May 2025, we published the BCOHRC Strategy and Organizational Evaluation as well as a report entitled Where We Stand, which measures and details uptake on the Commissioner's recommendations to public provincial entities. Through the evaluation—a mixed-methods effort that included focus groups, surveys, interviews and more—as well as significant outreach and engagement over the last five years, we heard from members of the public, community representatives, duty holders, civil society, human rights institutions, academia, Indigenous leaders and communities and our staff about the status of human rights in British Columbia and the impact of BCOHRC.

We have learned that BCOHRC's processes and strategies have been effective in driving progress toward its strategic priorities, supported by a highly motivated team with a strong commitment to human rights. We have also heard that achieving greater positive impact will require deepening outreach to marginalized communities and strengthening collaborative efforts, as well as strengthening organizational capacity and sustainability. We are committed to doing so.

We know that, pursuant to the *Human Rights Code*, BCOHRC maintains authority and responsibility to adequately address systemic human rights issues. What we heard and the learnings from the past five years have informed this Strategic Plan. It reflects our context and helps shape our strategic priorities and associated goals, focus areas and actions; as well as how we measure our success over the next five years.

¹ BCOHRC polls people living in British Columbia about their attitudes to human rights issues annually; BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner 2024 Annual Poll.



Strategic context and grounding approaches

Strategic context

Context:

Human rights have been brought into focus as societies everywhere are grappling openly with issues of systemic discrimination and inequity. Profound threats to democracy, erosion of protections for our fundamental rights, existential threats to our international human rights institutions, worldwide protests, action and advocacy by the public desperate for change have brought us to a tipping point; a tipping point that provides the strategic context for BCOHRC's response, strategic priorities, focus areas and action.

BCOHRC has matured and grown as an organization in its first five years. At first, the Human Rights Commissioner and her potential team existed only in newly added sections of the *Human Rights Code*. The appointment of the first Commissioner led the organization to its seedling stage, where the task was to envision the organizational structure, hire staff, find office space, build an internal policy base and secure a workable budget along with responding to a rapidly changing human rights environment with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, six years in and with a dedicated, highly skilled and value-driven workforce, BCOHRC has established a foundation of human rights expertise, operational systems, internal policies and processes to support in achieving its mandate. Building on this foundation over the next five years, BCOHRC will further strengthen its internal systems and processes to optimize its organizational capabilities.

British Columbia is continually growing in the size and diversity of our population. Immigration and growth in younger demographics of Indigenous communities have led to significant shifts in the demographic profile of the province over the last 20 years and is expected to continue in the future.² Furthermore, human rights issues continue to gain public attention and discourse provincially, nationally and globally.

Governments worldwide are navigating a challenging fiscal environment and economic crisis that has significant human rights implications. In the face of budget constraints and economic uncertainty, the threat of tariff wars and other global challenges, it is essential for BCOHRC to consider these externalities on British Columbia. In addition to the economic uncertainty, around the world and close to home, growing politicization of human rights and social polarization nationally and provincially, all have implications for human rights and the

² "Annual Population July 1, 1867–2024 (CSV)," Population Estimates, Government of British Columbia, 2025, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/population-estimates>; "Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census of Population," British Columbia, Statistics Canada, 2022, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?lang=E&topic=8&dguid=2021A000259>.

preservation of democratic states. Furthermore, public emergencies such as extreme weather events, natural disasters and public health emergencies impact human rights, all crises that are on the rise in an era of global warming.

Emerging opportunities:

BCOHRC will continue to be alert, agile and responsive in addressing new and pressing human rights issues. We are reserving space for issues that are emerging, such as public health emergencies, economic crisis or extreme weather events. By allocating a portion of our capacity to the unexpected or unpredictable, we can continue to advocate for the needs and rights of those experiencing vulnerabilities as difficult issues emerge. Pressing emerging issues and/or opportunities will need to be prioritized for response based on our internal evaluation of scope, impact, jurisdiction, magnitude, capacity and opportunity for impact and influence. This will be guided by our three grounding approaches ([p. 12](#)).





Snapshot of communities in B.C.

This demographic snapshot of the province can help us understand which and how communities are most directly impacted by human rights violations, and where the needs may lie:

- B.C.'s population has grown significantly over the past ten years. BC Stats estimates that B.C.'s population in 2024 was 5,698,430. This represents a 21 per cent increase from 2014 (estimated population of 4,712,691).³
- B.C.'s population is aging. In 2021, 20.3 per cent of B.C. residents were aged 65 years and over, compared with 13.6 per cent in 2001.⁴
- One-third of B.C. residents have a mother tongue other than or in addition to English. 21.5 per cent report that they most often speak a language other than or in addition to English at home. The most common languages spoken at home were Punjabi, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, Korean, Farsi, Spanish, Hindi, Vietnamese and Russian.⁵
- In 2021, 5.9 per cent of B.C. residents were Indigenous (up from 4.4 per cent in 2001). This includes 3.7 per cent who identify as First Nations and 2.0 per cent who identify as Métis. 2.8 per cent of all B.C. residents report having Registered or Treaty Indian status.⁶
- In 2021, over one-third of B.C. residents (34.4 per cent) identified as a visible minority, compared with 21.6 per cent in 2001.⁷ 11.2 per cent of B.C. residents identified as Chinese, 9.6 per cent as South Asian, 3.5 per cent as Filipino, 1.5 per cent as Southeast Asian, 1.5 per cent as Korean, 1.4 per cent as West Asian, 1.3 per cent as Latin American and 1.3 per cent as Black.⁷

³ "Annual Population July 1, 1867–2024 (CSV)," Population Estimates, Government of British Columbia, 2025, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/population-estimates>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.





- In 2022, 28.6 per cent of B.C. residents aged 15 and older identified as a person with disabilities. Among B.C. residents aged 65 and older, 42.8 per cent identified as a person with disabilities.⁸
- In 2021, 67.5 per cent of B.C. residents were non-immigrants, 29.0 per cent were immigrants and 3.5 per cent were non-permanent residents.⁹ By comparison, in 2001, 72.9 per cent of B.C. residents were non-immigrants, 26.1 per cent were immigrants and 1.0 per cent were non-permanent residents.¹⁰
- According to our 2024 annual poll, more than two-in-five people living in British Columbia (45 per cent) talk about human rights issues with people they care about “at least once a day” (10 per cent) or “at least once a month” (35 per cent). Only 21 per cent say they “rarely, if ever” discuss human rights issues.¹¹
- According to our 2024 annual poll, 67 per cent of people living in British Columbia agreed that “systemic discrimination is a problem in B.C.” and 77 per cent agreed that “governments should do more to identify and address sources of systemic discrimination, including the areas of employment, housing and services.

⁸ “Persons with and without disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and gender,” Statistics Canada, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl/en/tv.action?pid=1310037401&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.13&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.6&pickMembers%5B2%5D=3.1&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2022&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2022&referencePeriods=20220101%2C20220101>.

⁹ Government of British Columbia, “Annual Population July 1, 1867–2024 (CSV).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ BCOHRC polls people living in British Columbia about their attitudes to human rights issues annually; BC’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner 2024 Annual Poll.

Grounding approaches

Our grounding approaches describe the analytical frameworks that guide how we do our work. This helps define BCOHRC's culture and practice, as well as direct and guide our strategic priorities and actions. These grounding approaches: 1) human rights-based approach; 2) decolonization; and 3) climate justice are central to our work.

A human rights-based approach:

How we do things matters. A human rights-based approach seeks to centre the voices of those most marginalized, and to make inequality visible in order to redistribute power.

Key principles include:

- indivisibility, inalienability and universality of rights
- intersectional equality and non-discrimination
- meaningful participation, inclusion and empowerment
- transparency and accountability
- rule of law

Intersectionality: “intersectional equality”

Intersectionality is a framework for understanding the ways multiple aspects of our identities intersect, influence each other and combine to create our lived experiences. This concept is often used to explain the ways societal privilege and oppression are complicated by the different parts of people's identities that are privileged or marginalized. Intersectionality illustrates the ways in which oppressive systems (racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, classism) are interconnected and cannot be studied or understood in isolation from each other. This concept was first developed by American lawyer, activist and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, who identified how the United States legal system failed Black women because it did not acknowledge, or address, systemic inequalities linked to the intersections of racism and sexism.

Decolonization:

Decolonization is the dismantling of the process by which one nation asserts and establishes its domination and control over another nation's land, people and culture. It is the framework through which we are working toward undoing the oppression and subjugation of Indigenous Peoples in what is now known as British Columbia and unlearning colonial ways of thinking and being.

Key principles include:

- equality and non-discrimination
- listening, learning and honouring Indigenous worldviews, including the value of reciprocity and working in relationship
- self-reflecting as a mechanism to expose systems of bias
- recognizing and addressing intergenerational trauma as a direct result of colonization
- recognizing and supporting self-determination, including the right to govern under their own laws and legal orders
- dismantling or transforming laws and institutions designed to oppress Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous ways of knowing and being
- restoring a respectful relationship to land

A decolonizing approach to human rights requires us to recognize both collective and individual rights and responsibilities. It applies the Four 'Rs' to building respectful relationships: reciprocity, reflexivity, responsibility and relevance.¹²

Climate justice:

Climate change is the existential crisis of our time. It poses a massive threat to our planet and all life that grows on it—and therefore to our human rights. We cannot have rights if we do not exist. This crisis is a matter of life and death for all of us; however, climate change, environmental degradation and extreme weather patterns disproportionately impact the daily lives of marginalized people. Those most impacted are often those who have contributed least to the crises. All people should be able to live with dignity, yet the climate crisis is causing loss of homes, safety, lives and livelihoods; putting many at risk of food and water shortages; and triggering displacement and societal conflict.

Key principles include:

- Human rights are indivisible, including our right to a healthy environment.
- Climate justice is fundamentally intertwined with decolonization and recognition of Indigenous rights.
- Substantive equality and non-discrimination require action to address and remedy the disproportionate impacts of climate change on the most marginalized, and in consideration of future generations.
- Decisions on climate change policy must be participatory, transparent and accountable, informed by Indigenous world views.
- Solutions require valuing community-based adaptations and responses.

¹² These criteria are adaptations of the four key principles (known as the 4Rs) for participating in Indigenous research—respect, reciprocity, relevance and responsibility—as initially described in 1991 by Kirkness, V.J. & Barnhardt, R.; Kirkness, V.J. & Barnhardt, R, "First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's—Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility," *Journal of American Indian Education*, 30(3): pp. 1-15.

- Climate policy must enable an equitable transition, including for workers.¹³
- Climate crisis is not inevitable. Education can be a key driver of change. Indeed, we all have an imperative to act, in big and small ways, to tackle the crisis, including through educating ourselves.

The term “climate justice” recognizes that addressing climate change is a matter of justice and requires both a human-rights based and decolonizing approach. It is for this reason that BCOHRC has decided to add a climate justice framework as a grounding approach for our five-year Strategic Plan. This framework shares many overlapping areas of focus with the other two approaches detailed in this section.



¹³ The Paris Accord preamble notes the importance of “taking into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities”. A “just transition” has been explained as follows, “Fifty years after the first United Nations conference on the environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, many of the concerns at the intersection between environment and development continue to be relevant as countries are confronted with the depth of the transformations required to transition towards greener, more resilient and climate-neutral economies and societies. It has become increasingly evident that, for this transition to be successful, it has to be done in a way that, among other challenges, addresses socioeconomic disparities and avoids creating new ones – the concept of a ‘Just Transition.’” <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-does-just-transition-mean-middle-income-countries>.



Strategic direction

As the Commissioner was re-appointed for a second five-year term, the new Strategic Plan will emphasize continuity and elaboration of her mandate. This section highlights the purpose, vision, mandate and guiding principles that underpin BCOHRC's strategic direction.

Our purpose

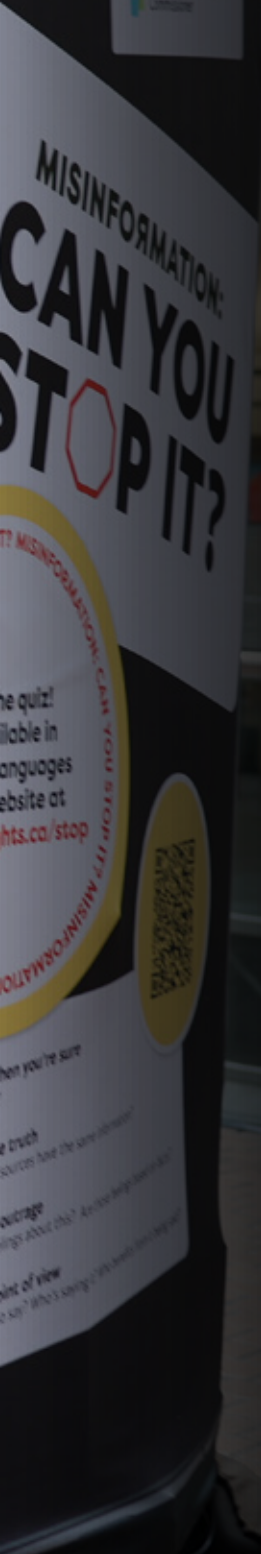
We exist to promote and protect human rights.

Our vision

A province free from inequality, discrimination and injustice where we uphold human rights for all and fulfil our responsibilities to one another.

Our mandate

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.



♥ Our guiding principles

- We operate **on the basis of nothing about us without us**. We centre the perspectives and rights of those most marginalized and seek to empower those whose rights are at stake.
- We strive to be **trauma-informed** and **culturally safe** in all our relationships.
- We understand that all of us have **intersectional identities** and experience discrimination and privilege in diverse ways. Inequality, discrimination and injustice are rooted in the systems around us and must similarly be addressed in a systemic way.
- We **move at the speed of trust** when engaging with community. We recognize the importance of **flexibility and learning** from the stories of diverse people on these lands, including both our elders and our young people.
- Entrenched problems require **bold actions**. Acting boldly means taking risks, and sometimes we will make mistakes. We are committed to having **humility, being curious** and **courageous** and **continually learning**. We will give grace to ourselves and others as we learn.
- We are **strategic** and **proactive** in creating change, and balance timeliness with sustainability and accountability.
- We believe that the protection and promotion of human rights is essential to a **functioning democracy**. We are committed to a vision of democracy in which the rights of the majority do not trample upon the rights of those in the minority, and law, policy and practice is rooted in evidence.
- Ensuring information, space and services are **accessible to everyone** is essential to the realization of human rights. Our work is designed for a range of abilities, cultures, languages, education and literacy levels, learning styles and perspectives.
- We recognize the **humanity in everyone**. We are accountable to all people on the lands known as British Columbia, and we will continue to be **responsive, compassionate** and **transparent**.



The shifts we need to make

The purpose, vision, mandate and guiding principles form the foundation of BCOHRC's strategic direction. In actioning our strategic direction, there are shifts we need to make.

In August 2024, BCOHRC published *Rights in Focus*, a report describing the state of human rights in British Columbia. The report highlighted key inequities and injustices in ten systems: housing, supports for an adequate standard of living, education, employment, healthcare, the protection of public spaces, the criminal justice system, the family sphere, the child welfare system and the environment. The report discussed the extent to which each system raises human rights concerns and impacts the most marginalized or vulnerable people. In addition, BCOHRC recently conducted an organizational evaluation and assessed the implementation record of the Commissioner's recommendations from her first term.

BCOHRC does not exist in a vacuum in the human rights ecosystem. There are learnings from other jurisdictions—nationally and internationally—that inform and guide the shifts we need to make as a human rights organization. In other jurisdictions, there are similar issue areas such as homelessness, inequality in the workplace, balancing freedom of expression with the right to be free from hate and discrimination, systemic racism in policing and gender-based

violence, as well as emerging issues such as human rights analysis of climate change and artificial intelligence, among many others.

Taking the Rights in Focus report, organizational evaluation report and recommendation monitoring report, ongoing project specific and strategic community engagements, existing strategic priorities and learnings from other jurisdictions together, the shifts BOHRC will need to make are:

Deepen engagement with Indigenous, rural and remote and other marginalized communities on all of our strategic priorities, including discrimination under the Code, poverty, decolonization, health and democracy.

Intensify strategic work on attaining the highest possible standard of health, with an emphasis on the social determinants of health, as well as engaging with erosion of democratic institutions and systems using a human rights-based approach.

Strengthen capabilities as an organization with particular focus on internal coordination, knowledge retention and administrative efficiency.

Increase transparency to bolster public awareness of human rights and the initiatives of BCOHRC to further the Commissioner's mandate.

Strategic priorities

Based on everything we have learned over the last five years, particularly in the process of preparing research reports such as Rights in Focus, the Commissioner has articulated five strategic priorities to guide the work of the organization over the course of this plan:



Decolonization



Discrimination under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*



Poverty as a cause and effect of inequality and injustice



Right to the **highest standard of health**



Right to participate in **democratic systems**





Strategic priority: Decolonization and Indigenous rights

Historic and ongoing colonialism, including the dispossession of lands, has a deep and devastating impact on Indigenous Peoples and their communities. Indigenous people are overrepresented in police interactions, prisons and child protection systems and excluded from many societal benefits due to the ongoing burden of colonization.

Our Office is committed to listening deeply to Indigenous Peoples, supporting self-determination of Nations and working to dismantle structures that impede the full, equal and just participation of Indigenous Peoples in all aspects of economic, social, cultural and political life. We are committed to cultivating right relations with the Indigenous Peoples on whose lands our work is situated.

As noted in our Grounding Approaches, decolonization is the dismantling of the process by which one nation asserts and establishes its domination and control over the land inhabited by another nation, as well as over their people and culture. It is the framework through which we are working towards undoing the oppression and subjugation of Indigenous Peoples in what is now known as British Columbia and unlearning colonial ways of thinking and being.

Key stats:

- As of Jan. 31, 2024, Indigenous children account for a disproportionate 69 per cent of all children placed in the care of child protection services in B.C. while making up only 10 per cent of the general population (aged 18 and younger).¹⁴
- Indigenous people are grossly overrepresented in the criminal justice system.
 - Arrests or detentions by the police; for example, Indigenous women are the fastest growing population of arrested and incarcerated people in B.C.
 - In B.C., Indigenous men make up 42.5 per cent of incarcerated people.
- The percentage of Indigenous people with a high school credential is significantly lower than that of non-Indigenous people as per Canada's 2021 census.¹⁵
- Life expectancy is substantially shorter for Indigenous Peoples. For example, First Nations men live to an average of 72.5 years compared to 81.4 years on average for non-Indigenous men; and 77.7 years on average for First Nations women compared to 87.3 years on average for non-Indigenous women.¹⁶

¹⁴ "New position expedites progress on Indigenous child welfare," Children and Family Development, BC Gov News, Government of British Columbia, March 7, 2024, <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024CFD0002-000292>; Indigenous children in care make up 69 per cent (3331 of 4835) of all children in care.

¹⁵ "Education – having at least a high school credential," An update on the socio-economic gaps between Indigenous Peoples and the non-Indigenous population in Canada: Highlights from the 2021 Census, Government of Canada, 2023, <https://sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1690909773300/1690909797208#chp3-1>.

¹⁶ Michael Tjepkema, Bushnik, T and Bougie, E, Life expectancy of First Nations, Métis and Inuit household populations in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2019), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/82-003-x/2019012/article/00001-eng.pdf?st=2ADaQp7a1>.

Goals:

- work to dismantle colonial structures, including supporting and advocating for self-determination of Indigenous Peoples
- promote and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples

Example focus areas:

- advocate that UNDRIP is meaningfully applied in B.C. in a fashion that supports the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples including self-determination
- work collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples, following their lead and being respectful of their governing structures, distinct languages, cultures, customs, practices, rights, legal systems, institutions, relationships to the land and Indigenous knowledge systems
- continue to build BCOHRC understanding of Indigenous legal approaches to human rights and building into our recommendations and advocacy work
- advocate for systemic changes to address disproportionate negative impacts of policing practices on Indigenous Peoples

The desired outcomes

BCOHRC is working toward are:

- Indigenous Peoples and communities are able to access mechanisms to protect their rights and seek redress for human rights violations, including through respect for Indigenous legal systems.
- The rights of Indigenous Peoples are protected and promoted, and the disproportionate obstacles faced by Indigenous Peoples in their full participation in the social, economic and political aspects of society are alleviated.
- BCOHRC is considered a trusted partner and ally to Indigenous Peoples in the work of decolonization and self-determination.



2

Strategic priority: Discrimination under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*

The core purpose of BCOHRC is to ensure the rights of everyone in our province—particularly those guaranteed by B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*—are protected and respected. We all have the right to be free from discrimination in employment and housing, when accessing services, in union membership and in publications.

Equality and non-discrimination are foundational to our concept of human rights; at their heart, human rights are premised on human dignity and a belief that we are fundamentally of equal value and deserve equal opportunities. Our definition of equality is substantive, or equity based, which looks at the impact of a law or policy to see whether the outcome is equal for different groups of people. We recognize that sometimes for an outcome to be fair, laws, policies or institutions may need to treat people differently depending on their needs and circumstances.

Under the Code, we are protected from discrimination based on a number of grounds such as gender, race and disability. Dismantling or restructuring the laws, policies and practices that create and sustain such discrimination as a regular part of many people's lives is foundational to the work of the Office.



Key stats:

- In 2023/24, the most common grounds of discrimination in Human Rights Tribunal complaints were ethnicity (31 per cent), followed by disability (29 per cent), sex (11 per cent), family and marital status (nine per cent), age (five per cent), religion (five per cent), sexual orientation (four per cent) and political belief (four per cent). Many complaints allege more than one ground of discrimination.¹⁷
- The most common areas of complaint were in employment (44 per cent) and service complaints (29 per cent).¹⁸
- As reported by Statistics Canada, the number of hate incidents reported to police in B.C. increased from 321 incidents in 2019 to 692 crimes in 2024, (a 115 per cent increase).¹⁹ Hate incidents targeting race and ethnicity were most common, followed by hate incidents targeting religion and sexual orientation.

Goal:

- address discrimination in communities by improving access to the protections of human rights law

Example focus areas:

- continue to address equity in employment, including misconceptions about equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) approaches
- foster emergency response policies centring the needs of those most impacted by climate disasters
- address equitable access to education and other services for children and adults with disabilities
- address discrimination from elected officials

The desired outcomes BCOHRC is working toward are:

- The public has an improved understanding of human rights and law, including greater knowledge of how to use B.C.'s human rights system to respond to discrimination.
- Duty holders such as governments increasingly make decisions and institute policies and practices that respect and protect human rights in compliance with their obligations under the Code.
- Systemic discrimination is reduced or eliminated in all forms.

¹⁷ BC Human Rights Tribunal "2023/24 Annual Report", <https://www.bchrt.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/876/2024/09/2023-2024.pdf>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Police-reported hate crime, by type of motivation, selected regions and Canada (selected police services," Statistics Canada, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=3510006601>.

3

Strategic priority: Poverty as a cause and effect of inequality and injustice

An inadequate standard of living is both a cause and an effect of inequality and injustice. It is important to understand the up and downstream causes of poverty—from the impacts of colonialism, racism, misogyny, xenophobia, ableism and other discriminatory systems on generations of communities and individuals to the income and social support systems, and housing and taxation policies that continue to push families far below the poverty line.

Domestic protections have lagged behind while the high rates of poverty in B.C. continue to violate provincial obligations to respect people's right to an adequate standard of living as enshrined in international law. BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner is committed to working toward effective and meaningful domestic protections for economic rights by engaging with poverty as a human rights issue and working to dismantle discrimination against people living in poverty.

Economic, social and cultural rights—such as access to fundamental necessities like food, water and housing—continue to be routinely violated in Canada, despite our international commitments to ensure an adequate standard of living. In the current climate of economic uncertainty, a human rights-based approach necessitates that we stand firm against placing the brunt of economic downturn on the shoulders of those most marginalized and impoverished.

Key stats:

- As of 2022, 597,000 people living in B.C. (11.6 per cent of the population) are living below the poverty line, including 97,000 children.²⁰ People aged 65 and over represent 20 per cent of the total population of B.C., with 8.7 per cent living in poverty as of 2022.²¹
- Persons with disabilities are over twice as likely to be living in poverty.²²
- Indigenous people are about 50 per cent more likely to live in poverty than non-Indigenous people, with 16.8 per cent of Indigenous people in B.C. living in poverty.²³
- In 2022, 28,710 people experienced homelessness in B.C.²⁴

²⁰ "Canadian Income Survey, 2022," Statistics Canada, 2022, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240426/dq240426a-eng.htm>.

²¹ "British Columbia's 2024 Poverty Reduction Strategy," Government of BC, 2025, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/about-the-bc-government/strategies/poverty-reduction-strategy>.

²² Statistics Canada, "Canadian Income Survey, 2022".

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Annual Estimates of the Homeless Population in B.C.," Preventing and reducing homelessness: An integrated data project, Government of BC, 2023, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/affordable-and-social-housing/homelessness/homelessness-cohort#reports>.

Goals:

- reduce discrimination on the basis of poverty
- promote compliance with economic and social rights protections

Example focus areas:

- advocate for the realization of the right to housing, including respecting the rights of people living in encampments
- advocate for the addition of social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*
- address equitable access to infrastructure necessary for safety and wellbeing in a warming climate, such as cooling in housing

The desired outcomes BCOHRC will work toward are as follows:

- Discrimination based on socio-economic status or poverty is reduced or eliminated.
- The rights of people living in poverty are respected and protected.
- Rates of poverty, homelessness and other indicators of socio-economic inequality are reduced.



4

Strategic priority: Right to the highest standard of health

There are many international laws that protect the right to the highest attainable standards of health.²⁵ In Canada, many people are not aware that their right to health is not protected in domestic human rights law.

According to international law, the right to health includes four essential, interrelated elements:²⁶

- availability, such that functioning health facilities, goods and services are available for all
- accessibility, including assessing and overcoming discriminatory barriers, financial barriers, physical barriers and barriers to information
- acceptability, meaning that health services are ethical, culturally appropriate and gender sensitive
- quality, which speaks to both the determinants of health such as access to food and to the quality of the provision of health care services

These “right to health” elements stipulated by international law are critical in advancing human rights in B.C. Critically, our right to the highest attainable standard of health includes *but is not limited to* how the health care system itself is structured. While health care in B.C. must be of high quality and available, accessible and acceptable to all people equally, other conditions for a healthy life must also be provided to satisfy this right. For example, criminal law cannot pose a barrier to accessing health care and governments must create the conditions for the best health possible through access to food and protections against violence.

Key stats

- Between April 2020 and March 2021, there were about 30,000 detentions under the *Mental Health Act* of 20,000 individuals.²⁷ Additionally, between 2018 and September 2023, designated agencies detained 300 people under the *Adult Guardianship Act*.²⁸
- In April 2016, B.C. declared a public health emergency in response to the rising number of deaths linked to toxic drugs. Since that announcement, over 16,000 people

²⁵ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 12); Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 5(e) iv); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Articles 11(1) (f), 12 and 14(2)(b)); Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 24); International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Articles 28, 43 (e) and 45 (c)); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 25).

²⁶ These elements are reflected to some degree in the Canada Health Act principles of portability, accessibility, universality, comprehensiveness and public administration. Compliance with the federal legislation is tied to provincial transfer payments.

²⁷ Moira Wyton, “Forced Mental Health Treatment Spikes in BC,” The Tyee, Nov. 23, 2021, <https://thetyee.ca/News/2021/11/23/BC-Forced-Mental-Health-Treatment-Spikes/>.

²⁸ BC’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, “We’re Still Here”: Report of the Inquiry into detentions under the Adult Guardianship Act, (BC’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, 2025), https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/BCOHRC_Were-still-here_2025.pdf.

have died.²⁹ Unregulated drug toxicity is the leading cause of death in B.C. for people aged 10 to 59.

- The Chief Coroner's report on the 2021 heat dome found that most of the 600 people who died during the heat dome were older adults with compromised health who lived alone.³⁰
- In 2022, about 14,000 B.C. residents reported intimate partner violence (IPV) to the police, of which about 79 per cent were women and girls. The majority of perpetrators have been men. Women are also disproportionately affected by the most severe forms of IPV and are more likely than men to report that the violence they experienced made them fear for their lives.³¹

Goals:

- address inequities in access to health care and the conditions for a healthy life
- improve respect for human rights, including climate justice, in healthcare settings or institutions

Example focus areas:

- apply a human rights-based approach to the toxic drug crisis
- address discrimination and inequitable access in health care, including discrimination based on Indigeneity, race, gender and sex, age, social condition and disability
- safeguard against arbitrary detention by promoting and protecting human rights of those detained in health care institutions
- advocate for governmental commitment to implementing decades of recommendations addressing gender-based violence
- ensure public health policy has equitable outcomes, including ensuring population level health decisions do not violate the rights of marginalized or vulnerable peoples such as people with disabilities

The desired outcomes BCOHRC is working toward are:

- Health institutions recognize, understand and make meaningful improvements towards addressing systemic discrimination.
- Every person living in British Columbia—whether they live in an urban, rural or remote area—has access to the highest attainable standard of health.

²⁹ CBC News, "Unregulated drugs killed fewer people in 2024 in B.C., but advocates say numbers still far too high," CBC, Feb. 4, 2025, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/2024-unregulated-drug-deaths-1.7450367>.

³⁰ British Columbia Coroners Service, A Review of Heat-Related Deaths in B.C. in Summer 2021, British Columbia Coroners Service (2022), https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/death-review-panel/extreme_heat_death_review_panel_report.pdf.

³¹ BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, *Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C.*, (BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, 2023), 65, https://baseline.bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/BCOHRC_Aug2024_Rights-in-focus.pdf.

5

Strategic priority: Right to participate in democratic systems

The UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has declared that democratic systems are essential to the protection of human rights.³² Democracy includes the following essential elements:

- respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of association and freedom of expression and opinion;
- access to power and its exercise in accordance with the rule of law;
- the holding of periodic free and fair elections and a pluralistic system of political parties and organizations;
- the separation of powers;
- the independence of the judiciary;
- transparency and accountability in public administration; and
- free, independent and pluralistic media.



As noted by the OHCHR, free and fair elections are essential but are also only one part of a broader set of democratic principles, institutions and practices. In a functioning democracy, public policy must be supported by and based on clear evidence wherever possible, which is essential to address the perpetuation of systemic discrimination.

In a constitutional democracy, the views and interests of the majority will not take precedence over the rights of minorities; instead, the rights of all people are protected, and the rule of law prevails to ensure that our laws bind all of us including those with the most power. Respect for the rule of law entails strong systems of transparency and accountability for police, as well as other institutions that wield power. Importantly, the rule of law does not require that we ignore the legal pluralism that exists in our province and country; indeed, to truly be a rights respecting society, we must acknowledge and come to terms with the ongoing jurisdiction of Indigenous laws and how they may work in relationship to the common law.

This Strategic Plan is being developed in a hyper-polarized era where we see an increase in

³² "About democracy and human rights," Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-democracy-and-human-rights#:~:text=Democracy%20as%20a%20form%20of,effective%20realization%20of%20human%20rights>.

backlash against the institutions of democracy, from oversight mechanisms to a free press. This strategic priority will allow BCOHRC to focus on addressing these attacks on democracy, always placing substantive equality and the rights of those most marginalized at the centre.

Key stats:

- The Independent Investigations Office (IIO) reports statistics regarding police-involved incidents in B.C. that result in serious harm or death.³³ In fiscal year 2022-2023, Indigenous Peoples were overrepresented (34 out of 220 Affected Persons, or 15 per cent of the Affected Persons versus 5.9 per cent of the B.C. population).³⁴
- In 2022/23, Indigenous individuals made up 30 per cent of adult custody admissions in B.C.³⁵ Black adults account for about one per cent of B.C.'s population but three per cent of admissions to custody.³⁶
- In January 2025, a BCOHRC poll found that more than four-in-five people living in British Columbia (81 per cent) say they see misinformation or disinformation “all of the time” or “most of the time” while using social media.³⁷

Goal:

- protect the right to equitable and informed participation in democratic systems, including a free and responsible press and the ability to peacefully protest

Example focus areas:

- addressing discriminatory impacts of police actions and ensure that police are accountable and transparent
- protecting the right to peaceful protest, freedom of the press and freedom of expression within the limits of hate speech, which protects spaces for marginalized voices to be heard
- addressing the spread of misinformation and disinformation

The desired outcomes BCOHRC will work toward are as follows:

- Freedom of press, speech and protest are protected within the limits of hate speech.
- Police institutions are transparent and held accountable for respecting human rights and for addressing systemic discrimination in their practices and cultures.
- Legal and other governance decisions are made on the basis of demonstrable evidence.

³³ Independent Investigations Office of BC, *Annual Report 2022-2023*, (Independent Investigations Office of BC, 2023), 5, https://iiobc.ca/app/uploads/sites/472/2023/07/2022-2023_IIO-Annual-Report_Final.pdf.

³⁴ Independent Investigations Office of BC, *Annual Report 2022-2023*, 25, https://iiobc.ca/app/uploads/sites/472/2023/07/2022-2023_IIO-Annual-Report_Final.pdf.

³⁵ “Adult custody admissions to correctional services by Indigenous identity,” Statistics Canada, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510001601>.

³⁶ “Overrepresentation of Black People in the Canadian Criminal Justice System,” Government of Canada, 2022, <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/obpccjs-spnsjpc/index.html>.

³⁷ Every year, BCOHRC polls people living in British Columbia about their attitudes to human rights issues; BCOHRC 2025 Annual Poll.

A photograph of three people of diverse backgrounds smiling and interacting. On the left is a Black man with a beard wearing a white and brown striped shirt. In the center is a white man with a beard wearing a light blue button-down shirt. On the right is a Black woman with braided hair wearing a blue and white striped shirt. They are all smiling and appear to be in a collaborative setting.

Organizational capabilities

Our organizational capabilities are essential in enabling BCOHRC's work, including strategic priorities, focus areas and associated actions. Organizational capabilities depend on the Commissioner's mandate as defined by the legal framework, and include our approach to work and our staffing complement, as well as our culture and capacity.

Legal framework

Our organizational capabilities are rooted in the *Human Rights Code*, as the Commissioner's home statute. There are three layers of human rights protection in B.C. as follows:

- **statutory human rights law** - *B.C.'s Human Rights Code*;
- **constitutional law** - *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; and,
- **international human rights law** such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the *International Bill of Human Rights*.

It must be noted that the *Canadian Human Rights Act* is relevant for First Nations people or communities in B.C. under federal jurisdiction. Both laws aim to prevent discrimination, but the *Canadian Human Rights Act* focuses on federal matters, and *B.C.'s Human Rights Code* addresses provincial matters, including most businesses and workplaces within B.C., excluding the federal government and federally regulated industries such as banks.

B.C.'s Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination based on various personal characteristics (such as race, sex, religion, gender identity and disability) in the following areas of daily life: housing, employment, services, publications (and other public statements) and membership in unions and associations.

The Commissioner's duties, powers and governance are also established in *B.C.'s Human Rights Code*. As set out in the Code, the Commissioner is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in British Columbia. The Code requires that a Legislative committee review the Commissioner's statutory framework every five years, starting in 2025.

Who we are

The Code sets out the ability of the Commissioner to appoint employees necessary to carry out the duties of the Office. This results in the organization that is BCOHRC, which includes the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and various levels of staff.

The team is built with leaders in research and policy, education and engagement, law and public inquiries, communications and operations, as well as public administration and corporate services with a hiring approach based on justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.

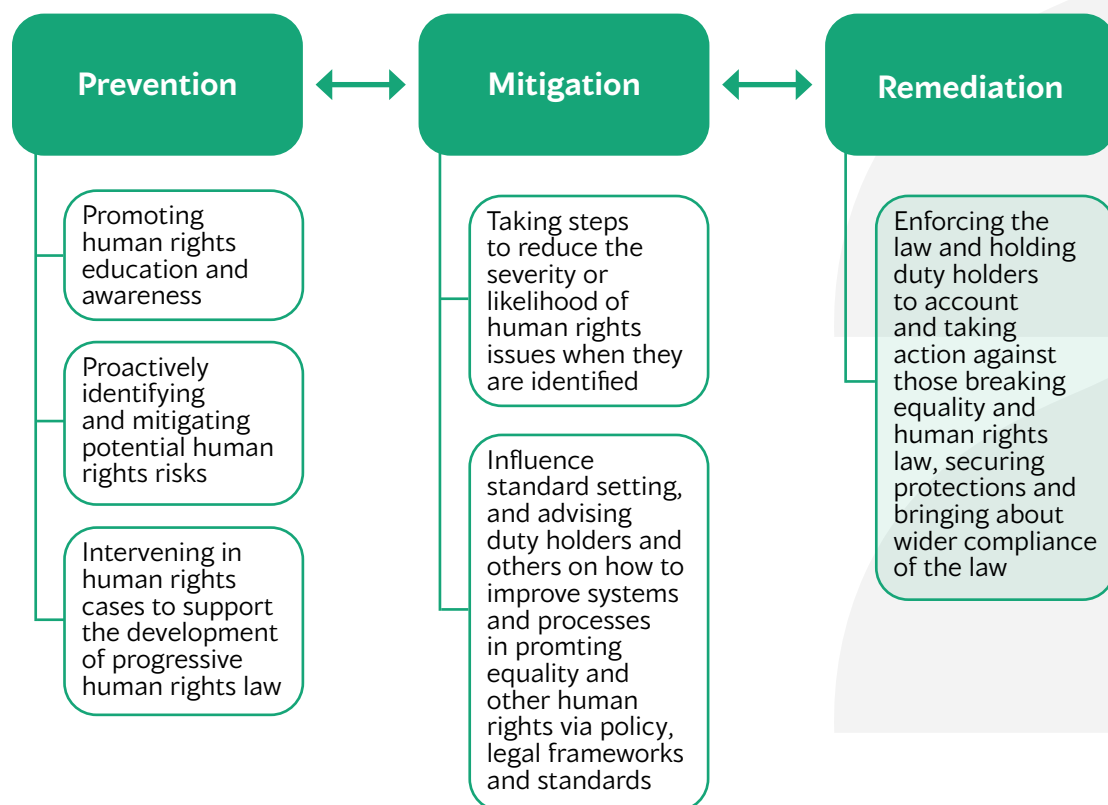


Approach to our work

Our work is directed by our grounding approach and guiding principles, and expressed through our tools of education and engagement, research and policy reform, inquiry and intervention, special program applications review and awareness raising through public communication. We work to both prevent discrimination and other human rights abuses from occurring and to address the systemic discrimination that already exists.

Below is an illustration of the human rights continuum, from prevention and mitigation to remediation, which outlines the process for addressing human rights issues, moving from proactive measures to prevent harm from occurring to reactive responses when harm occurs. It emphasizes the importance of prevention, mitigation and remediation as interconnected steps in ensuring respect for human rights. BCOHRC's work is focused on prevention and mitigation measures on the human rights continuum; our only remedial work has been in the context of prevention, for example, working on policing reforms following human rights complaints.

Figure 1: illustration of the human rights continuum



The role of the Commissioner in promoting and protecting human rights in B.C. as stipulated by B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* is outlined as follows:

- identify and promote the elimination of discriminatory practices, policies and

programs through law and policy reform

- develop, deliver and support research and education about human rights
- create guidelines and recommendations to prevent discrimination and ensure policies, programs and legislation are consistent with B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*
- promote compliance with international human rights obligations
- approve special programs to improve conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups
- intervene in human rights proceedings before the BC Human Rights Tribunal or other courts and tribunals
- assist complainants in human rights proceedings, as appropriate, to create systemic change
- conduct human rights inquiries and issue reports and recommendations

We are not alone in the human rights ecosystem. We continue to collaborate with many others—especially with our colleagues who form the three parts of the B.C. human rights system as outlined below. This includes our joint commitment and emphasis on a “no wrong door” approach to the human rights system.

The human rights system in B.C.



Our culture and capabilities

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is critical as a foundation to our organization. The human rights-based approach (HRBA), a grounding approach of BCOHRC, and EDI both aim to promote equality and fairness although they differ in their scope and focus. The HRBA is a broad, legal framework grounded in human rights principles, emphasizing the rule of law and the importance of transparency and accountability of governments. EDI, on the other hand, is a more specific, often organizational, framework that focuses on promoting diversity, equity and inclusion within a particular context, like a workplace. In utilizing both frameworks, BCOHRC recognizes that equality or equity sometimes requires treating people differently

* If you belong to a union and have experienced discrimination at work, you may want to talk to your union. Unions can help employees file grievances about human rights issues.

according to their needs and circumstances. This means that implementing an EDI approach can include targeted preferential hiring from marginalized communities or building a trauma informed workforce.

Given the Commissioner's mandate to promote and protect human rights, we recognize that having a diverse team helps us to achieve our goals and that we have an obligation to reflect our stated values in how we organize ourselves. Our organization consistently strives to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected—a place where everyone can truly be themselves while achieving their personal and professional potential.

BCOHRC continues to be strongly committed to EDI both internally and externally. Internally, we will develop a rolling three-year action plan on EDI flowing from this organizational Strategic Plan. The EDI action plan will provide a shared direction and commitment for BCOHRC so we can work together to respect and value our staff, partners and the public in building a more inclusive space. It will comprise four overarching goals that are aligned with the Global, Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks.³⁸

The four overarching EDI goals for BCOHRC are:

- **a leadership driven EDI commitment**
- **attract and retain people:** create an environment in which diverse people can thrive
- **promote EDI learning culture,** including EDI data collection and analysis, in accordance with the Grandmother Perspective methodology.
- **listen to and serve the public:** advance or reflect EDI commitment when engaging the public, partners and duty-bearers

These EDI goals for BCOHRC will generate the priorities and actions that BCOHRC will undertake over the next three years in alignment with this Strategic Plan. It will also outline the key roles and responsibilities and how progress and success will be measured.

Corporate Services and Operations

Our established Corporate Services and Operations Teams are critical to how BCOHRC runs and its capabilities as a progressive and sustainable organization. The Corporate Services Department includes Finance, Human Resources and Information Management and Information Technology (IMIT). Operations include administrative services and organizational system and process management.

Finance helps the Commissioner ensure every dollar is spent wisely in service of the Commissioner's mandate and BCOHRC continues to be accountable in finance, procurement and budgeting. Human Resources ensures that BCOHRC's staff are supported and empowered to do their best work, and supports recruitment, retention, professional development and performance management. IMIT ensures that BCOHRC has the technology and associated systems and processes to do its work, while supporting staff working remotely and in

³⁸ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Standards for Organizations Around the World," Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks, 2025, <https://globaldeibenchmarks.org/>.

the office, as well as on travel status. The Operations Team ensure that all departments can function efficiently and effectively by providing essential support services across the organization.

In the next five years, the strategic focus of Corporate Services and Operations in supporting the mandate and strategic priorities of BCOHRC are as follows:

- **Focus area: Enhance organizational effectiveness**
example key actions:
 - optimize finance and cost management
 - streamline finance and human resource processes
 - leverage technology
- **Focus area: Build organizational capacity and sustainability**
example key actions:
 - maximize human resources plan, practices and tools (for example, performance and leadership development, core capabilities, training, succession management)
 - automate processes, including diversified clear communication channels
 - optimize IMIT operations
- **Focus area: Enhancing organizational efficiency**
example key actions:
 - ensure administrative support services are delivered as effectively as possible
 - implement proactive strategies for facilities management
 - enhance project management methodologies and tools
 - strengthen systems to support stakeholder management
- **Focus area: Fostering collaboration, knowledge management and modernization**
example key actions:
 - establish robust records management and secure storage systems
 - modernize BCOHRC information systems to enable cross-departmental coordination and integration, and knowledge management
 - support compliance with policies and practice, accountability directives and service excellence

Finally, fostering a learning culture is essential in building organizational capacity and sustainability. BCOHRC will continue to focus on creating and implementing a learning and development strategy that aligns with the organization's goals and addresses gaps in identifying skills. This includes a variety of learning methods, such as formal training,

mentorship programs and on-the-job learning opportunities, as well as professional development and knowledge sharing.

Reputable and maturing organization

As described earlier, our organizational capabilities are founded on the legal framework, the approach to our work, our culture and capabilities such as EDI, as well as corporate services, operations and learning priorities. We are committed to maintaining and building our reputation while we continue to mature as an organization.

Reputation

BCOHRC is committed to building and maintaining the Commissioner's reputation in support of achieving the statutory mandate. To do this, BCOHRC has a skilled and progressive Communications Team with the following focus areas in the next five years:

- enhance public image and reach to support impact of value driven work—cultivate and maintain a positive and recognizable reputation that reflects BCOHRC's values and commitment to ensuring trust and service excellence to the public
- mature internal communications—strengthen internal communications internal to support the engagement and job satisfaction of staff
- strengthen connections—continue to build strong and transparent relationships by employing diverse and multiple channels for the public, duty holders and communities

A maturing organization

BCOHRC is a young organization that continues to mature. Focus areas on maturing organizational capabilities include:

- updating performance measurement (how things are going) and evaluation (how well things went) framework
- integrating learning outcomes with organizational performance metrics
- improving risk management maturity and developing robust risk management, which will play a vital role by identifying, assessing and mitigating potential threats to the Commissioner's goals, and ensuring BCOHRC can adapt to change and achieve sustainable success

Our organizational capabilities also rest on driving innovation. This means encouraging creativity and innovation in all areas of our organization to foster collaboration, resiliency and sustainability in achieving our goals and desired outcomes.



Getting there: Measuring progress and success

As we move into the next five years through our identified milestones, contributions and insights from all collaborators and the public are critical to achieving social and legal change that promotes and protects human rights in British Columbia. Understanding success enablers and measuring impact are important factors in meeting our goals.

Success enablers

It will take more than just new systems and new processes to be successful—new thinking, responsive public discourse, change management and new behaviours are required. Further, to be successful in fulfilling the Commissioner’s mandate in a complex environment, sufficient, predictable and sustainable resources and assured budgets are also required.

In summary, the success for the Rising to the Challenge: Path to 2030 Strategic Plan is founded by the following factors and require sustainable, effective change that takes time, significant resources and perseverance.



Measuring and monitoring impact

Hands-on ownership and accountability are needed to measure and monitor progress and impact. Strong governance and effective leadership are critical, supported by performance measurement and evaluation. A performance measurement tells us how well we are doing; and an evaluation tells us how well things went. A performance measurement and evaluation framework—identifying key performance indicators and associated metrics, as well as targets where possible must be established. Our approach to performance measurement and evaluation will include Indigenous specific approaches and/or metrics to appropriately assess the impacts on Indigenous communities. Metrics will be set after validation with representatives of diverse partners, communities, academics and stakeholders. BCOHRC is responsible for leading the measuring, monitoring and reporting on the impacts—measuring progress and successes.

As we move through the journey of Rising to the Challenge: Path to 2030, it is imperative that we continue to solicit feedback—externally and internally—and make applicable adjustments in implementation along the way.

Feedback and comments

Feedback and comments on the Rising to the Challenge: Path to 2030 Strategic Plan to: info@bchumanrights.ca



Foundation

Our mandate

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.

Our guiding principles

- We operate on the basis of nothing about us without us. We centre the perspectives and rights of those most marginalized and seek to empower those whose rights are at stake
- We strive to be trauma-informed and culturally safe in all our relationships
- We understand that all of us have intersectional identities and experience discrimination and privilege in diverse ways
- We move at the speed of trust when engaging with community.
- Entrenched problems require bold actions. Acting boldly means taking risks, and sometimes we will make mistakes
- We are strategic and proactive in creating change, and balance timeliness with sustainability and accountability
- We believe that the protection and promotion of human rights is essential to a functioning democracy
- Accessibility of information, space and services is essential to the realization of human rights
- We are accountable to all people on the lands known as British Columbia, and we will continue to be responsive, compassionate and transparent

What we do

- education and engagement
- research and policy reform
- legal interventions and inquiries
- systemic advocacy
- monitoring and reporting
- relationship building
- awareness raising through public communication

Strategic priorities



1. Decolonization

- work to dismantle colonial structures
- support and advocate for self-determination of Indigenous Peoples



2. Discrimination

- address discrimination in communities by improving access to the protections of human rights law



3. Poverty

- reduce discrimination on the basis of poverty
- promote compliance with economic and social rights frameworks



4. Health

- address inequities in access to health care and conditions for a healthy life
- improve respect for human rights in healthcare settings or institutions



5. Democracy

- protect right to equitable and informed participation in democratic systems (i.e., free and responsible press, right to peaceful protest)
- counter mis- and disinformation through individual empowerment and societal resilience

Strategic direction and organizational goals

Grounding approaches

A human-rights based approach

BC's Office of the Commissioner's (BCOHRC) work is grounded in a human rights-based approach. How we do things matters. A human rights-based approach seeks to centre the voices of those most marginalized, and to make inequality visible in order to redistribute power.

Climate justice

Climate change is the existential crisis of our time. It poses a massive threat to our planet and all life that grows on it—and therefore to our human rights. We cannot have rights if we do not exist. This crisis is a matter of life and death for all of us; however, climate change, environmental degradation and extreme weather patterns disproportionately impact the daily

lives of marginalized people.

Decolonization

Decolonization is central to human rights work today and to our work at BCOHRC. Decolonization is the dismantling of the process by which one nation asserts and establishes its domination and control over another nation's land, people and culture. It is the framework through which we are working toward undoing the oppression and subjugation of Indigenous peoples in what is now known as British Columbia and unlearning colonial ways of thinking and being.

Organizational capabilities

Legal Framework

- B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*
- Canadian constitution
- international human rights law

Approach to the Work

- a diverse, skilled staff
- active actor/participant in continuum of human rights system, with focus on prevention, mitigation and informing remediation
- relationships with key human rights actors such as the BC Human Rights Tribunal and the BC Human Rights Clinic

Our Culture and Capabilities

- foundation of equity, diversity and inclusion for BCOHRC with four overarching goals in leadership, attracting and retaining staff, promoting learning culture and serving public
- corporate services and operations teams focused on organizational efficacy, efficiency and sustainability while promoting innovation, collaboration and modernization

Reputable and Maturing Organization

- skilled and progressive communications team that enhances reach and positive reputation
- strong culture of learning and development

Measuring Progress and Success

- focus on updating performance measurement and evaluation to support a learning and maturing organization
- integrating learning outcomes with organizational performance metrics
- improving risk management maturity and developing robust risk management
- understanding success enablers and reflecting in the complex human rights ecosystem with multiple, sometimes competing interests
- ongoing monitoring and reporting on impact in supporting accountability, transparency and reflexivity

Desired outcomes

The impacts we make with our strategy

- the human rights ecosystem is more responsive and accessible to Indigenous Peoples and communities, including through respect for Indigenous legal systems
- the rights of Indigenous Peoples are protected and promoted, and the disproportionate obstacles faced by Indigenous Peoples in their full participation in the social, economic and political aspects of society are alleviated
- BCOHRC is considered a trusted partner and ally to Indigenous Peoples in the work of decolonization and self-determination
- people in B.C. have an improved understanding of human rights and law.
- there is greater public knowledge of how to use B.C.'s human rights system to respond to discrimination

- systemic discrimination is reduced or eliminated in all forms
- discrimination based on socio-economic status or poverty is reduced or eliminated
- the rights of people living in poverty are respected and protected
- rates of poverty, homelessness and other impacts of socio-economic inequality are reduced
- health institutions recognize, understand and make meaningful improvements toward addressing systemic discrimination
- every person living in B.C. — whether they live in an urban, rural and remote area — has access to the highest attainable standard of health
- freedom of press, speech and protest are protected within the limits of hate speech
- police institutions are transparent and held accountable for respecting human rights and

- for addressing systemic discrimination in their practices and cultures
- legal and other governance decisions are made based on demonstrable evidence

Purpose and vision

The difference our organization makes

Our Purpose

We exist to promote and protect human rights.

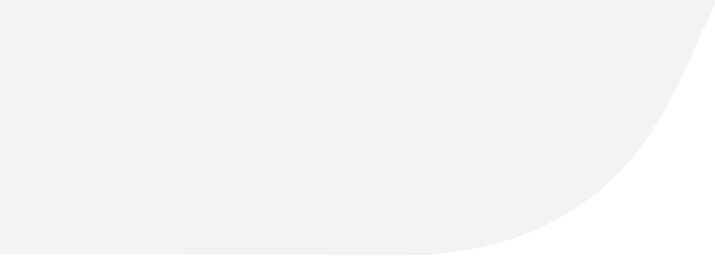
Our Vision

A province free from inequality, discrimination and injustice where we uphold human rights for all and fulfil our responsibilities to one another.

Rising to the challenge: Path to 2030

Strategic Plan for BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC) for 2025/26–2029/30







British Columbia's
**Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner**

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