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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner will audit the implementation of settlement agreement between Vancouver Police Board and Heiltsuk grandfather and granddaughter with critical human rights implications**

Vancouver B.C. –

On Dec. 20, 2019, Maxwell Johnson and his granddaughter went to the Bank of Montreal (BMO) branch on Burrard Street in Vancouver and tried to open a bank account. After looking at the pair's identification documents, including their government-issued Indian status cards, BMO staff called 911 to report an alleged fraud. Attending officers from the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) put both Johnson and his 12-year-old granddaughter in handcuffs without speaking to either of them or otherwise investigating.

Following the 2019 incident, Maxwell Johnson filed a human rights complaint on behalf of himself and his granddaughter against the Vancouver Police Board. Today, parties to the complaint are announcing that they have reached a settlement agreement, which they are making public.

"As B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, my role in this audit is to review and report on the parties' compliance with the terms of the agreement related to systemic change in the police force, including the Vancouver Police Board's commitment to take certain steps such as improving training for officers and improving accessibility of complaint mechanisms for Indigenous complainants." said B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender.

"My Office's role as auditor arises out of a request from the Heiltsuk First Nation, representatives of the complainants, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. This request follows on a report and recommendations we released last year, which detailed serious concerns with systemic racism in policing in this province including data showing the highly disproportionate impact of certain police practices (such as arrest) on Indigenous people in Vancouver. Ensuring that the systemic actions outlined in this settlement agreement are fully implemented is one step we can take towards addressing these significant human rights issues. I'm pleased to be able to undertake this important work," she concluded.

The Commissioner is not available for interviews on this release at this time but will continue to release new information related to the audit as it becomes available.

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## Media contact

If you have further questions, please contact Charlotte Kingston, Director, Communications, at [media@bchumanrights.ca](mailto:media@bchumanrights.ca) or 1-250-216-4534.

## Media kit

[Download](#) our media kit for images of Commissioner Kasari Govender.

## 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](http://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.

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