



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

# **B.C. communities speak human rights**

## **What Chilliwack said**

MARCH 31, 2024







# Ice breaker

- name
- pronouns
- organization and/or role
- one thing you appreciate about Chilliwack

# Agenda

- opening and introductions
- overview of the Baseline Community Briefs
- key human rights issues in our community
- what helps
- next steps

# Session goals

By the end of our session, you will:

- become familiar with the Baseline Community Brief
- identify key human rights issues
- consider impacts of these issues on community members
- become aware of successful actions
- consider next steps

# Community agreement

- **acknowledge** we all have different levels of understanding and experience
- **ask** questions in a respectful way
- **accept** that this is not a space to debate whether the issues identified in the Brief are real
- **participate** with an open heart and mind
- **contribute** what you feel comfortable sharing
- **respect** confidentiality

# Introduction to the Baseline Community Brief



# BCOHRC's 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.



Photo: B.C. Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender





# Community Briefs overview

## How and why were they developed?

- BCOHRC Baseline Project
- human rights issues across B.C.
- research in four communities

## What are the goals?

- provide a human rights story in your community
- celebrate community strengths and actions
- offer a snapshot of several significant issues
- inspire action



# Community partners

- Chilliwack Community Services
- Mountainside Harm Reduction Society
- Unique Get Together Society
- Chilliwack Society for Community Living



# Baseline Community Briefs process

- November 2022 to June 2023
- 8 focus groups and 17 interviews
- 74 individuals
- service providers, clients and people with lived experience
- additional data sources
- snapshot of issues

# Key human rights issues and their impacts





# Community snapshot

The City of Chilliwack has a population of

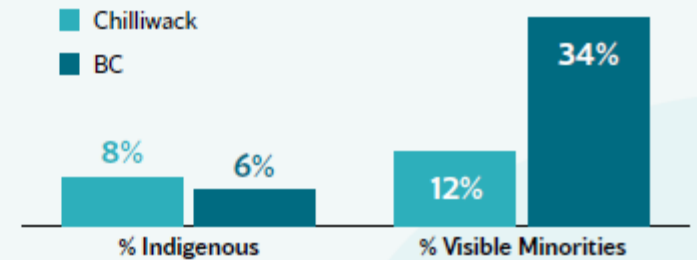
**93,203**

people<sup>8</sup> and is rapidly growing at a rate of

**11%**

which is faster than the provincial rate of 8%. Due to the rise in the cost of living in Metro Vancouver, Chilliwack's population is expected to grow, especially with younger families relocating to the area.

**As of 2021 about 8% of residents were Indigenous, 12% were visible minorities and 80% were white.** The visible minority population doubled from 2016 to 2021.



**Chilliwack has a diverse refugee population** including people from Ukraine, Syria and Lebanon.

Today, **Chilliwack is home to major agricultural and food manufacturing industries** and has numerous services to meet the needs of its growing population.



What human rights issues  
are you aware of in our  
community?





# Key areas

- housing
- health
- discrimination and hate
- employment

# Human rights issues in housing



- housing crisis
- inequities for Indigenous peoples
- inequities for a diverse spectrum of needs

**Key issues in housing**





## **What community members said about the housing crisis**

- rising costs
- pressure on the housing market
- barriers to accessing housing
- homelessness
- discrimination in services

# Impacts of the housing crisis

“Traditionally, people experiencing homelessness are often thought to be either struggling with substance use or mental health or both. But we are seeing more and more people who are just... they just can’t afford it. They have jobs. They have cars ... but they don’t have a home because either they can’t find one or they can’t afford the one that they can find.”

## **What community members said about inequities in housing**

- Indigenous peoples
- complex care
- youth aging out of care
- short-term housing
- safety for gender-diverse people



In what other ways do  
human rights issues  
related to housing impact  
our community?





# Human rights issues in health





- barriers to access
- discrimination
- mental health and substance use

**Key issues in health**



## **What community members said about barriers to accessing health care**

- staff shortages
- barriers related to transportation
- barriers to navigating pathways
- access to dental care



# Impacts of barriers to accessing dental care

“I only had two dentist appointments this year and I’ve already gone through whatever money the disability has for my dentist. They’re like, well if you need another dentist’s appointment, you’re going to have to pay for it. I can barely afford food right now.”

**What community  
members said  
about  
discrimination in  
health care**

- anti-Indigenous discrimination
- stereotyping and stigma
- barriers to whole-person care
- delayed care
- interaction with medical staff
- beyond Indigenous cultural and safety training

# Discrimination in health care

“Being unhoused is a huge barrier to health care. They go to hospital. They get treated like dogs. [Health care professionals] give you antibiotics or antipsychotics but how are you supposed to take them? Even if you are in a huge crisis, they move you through as quickly as they can. You’re triaged even if you’re ready to kill yourself. People are just not served for health and mental health.”



## **What community members said about mental health and substance use**

- high Indigenous suicide rates
- lack of mental health providers
- toxic drug supply
- limited range of supports

# Impacts of limited range of supports

“We need detox beds in every single community. When a person is ready that day, they need to be able to go that day because the next day they could be dead.”

In what other ways do human rights issues related to health impact our community?









# Discrimination and hate



**What community members said about groups impacted by discrimination and hate**

- Indigenous people
- Black people
- Muslim women
- rise in LGBTQ2SAI+ hate



# Rise in LGBTQ2SAI+ hate

“The LGBTQ2SAI+ community is just starting to form and there is a really violent and aggressive pushback against that community formation. I think that it can push some people away from even joining in the benign things like it’s something as simple as going to a youth dance. You get protests, or like, that youth now going becomes a political act. It shouldn’t be a political act. It should just be ‘I’m going to hang out with my friends.’”

In what other ways do discrimination and hate impact our community?





# Human rights issues in employment





- underemployment
- discrimination
- migrant workers' working and living conditions
- impacts of climate change on migrant workers

**Key issues in employment**



**What community  
members said  
about  
underemployment**

- immigrants
- people with disabilities

# Underemployment

“I managed ten or twelve projects from the United Nations ...  
but here, I am a laundry attendant. Can you believe that?  
Because I can't find another job close to my position.”



**What community  
members said  
about  
discrimination in  
the workplace**

- Indigenous peoples
- racialized immigrants
- newcomers
- women

# Discrimination in the workplace

“Women often get left out of high positions in the workplace ... especially if you’re young. The employer thinks the person has kids ... they take that into consideration, and women are sometimes discriminated against because of that.”

## **What community members said about migrant workers' living and working conditions**

- power imbalance
- substandard conditions
- abuse
- risk of exploitation



# Mistreatment of migrant workers

“These guys are just totally powerless in this situation. There is an endless stream of people who want to work in Canada, so if they speak up, if they report, if they injure themselves, they are sent home and told, ‘You’ll never work in Canada again.’ Then their whole livelihood that might be supporting an entire family for the year is gone.”


**What community members said about the impact of climate change on migrant workers**

- inequitable impacts
- working & living conditions impacts
- inadequate service provider support
- delayed access to flood relief

# Impact of climate change on migrant workers

“The migrant workers are in a constant state of emergency. The flood just brought everything to the surface ... and it will only continue each day with climate change getting worse.”





In what other  
ways do human  
rights issues in  
employment  
impact our  
community?

# Summary

Housing crisis	Health	Discrimination and hate	Employment
Housing crisis	Barriers to access	Indigenous peoples	Under-employment
Inequities	Discrimination	Black people	Discrimination
	Mental health and substance use	Iranian women	Migrant worker rights
		Rise in LGBTQ2SAI+ hate	



# Examples of what helps





# Mental health and substance use

- Collaboration to Reduce Stigma
  - Mountainside Harm Reduction Society
  - Chilliwack Community Action Team
  - Shxwhá:y Village

# Community member's response

“I feel like there should be a lot more like peer-led organizations and things like [Mountainside] rather than someone that doesn't have lived experience ... so, they can empathize with you more, more compassion, more equality.”

# Anti-LGBTQ2SAI+ hate

- Queer Cafés



# Migrant workers' rights

- Dignidad Migrante

What else helps to  
address human  
rights issues in our  
community?



# BCOHRC resources

- Baseline Community Briefs from other communities
- Baseline recommendations database
- Baseline microsite
- human rights educational resources
- BCOHRC reports



# Session goals (reminder)

- become familiar with the Baseline Community Brief
- identify key issues
- consider impacts of these issues on community members
- become aware of successful actions
- consider next steps



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# Thank you

Visit **bchumanrights.ca** for  
more resources or find us on  
social media  
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**Information**

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