



British Columbia's  
Office of the Human Rights  
Commissioner

# B.C. Communities speak human rights

**What Cranbrook said**

MARCH 31, 2024

CRANBROOK

# Agenda

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



# 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

- ANKORS
- Cranbrook Food Bank
- Cranbrook Women's Resource Centre
- REALM Services Inc.
- Self-Advocates of the Rockies
- Ktunaxa Nation's Health and Social Sector

# Baseline Community Briefs process

- November 2022 to June 2023
- 14 focus groups and 7 interviews
- 90 individuals
- service providers, clients and people with lived experience
- additional data sources
- snapshot of issues



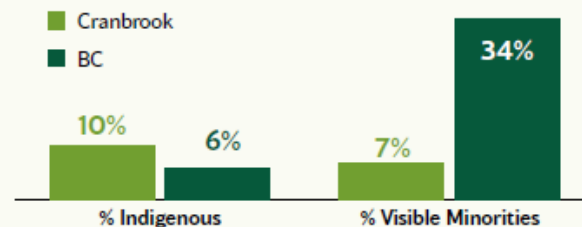
# Key human rights issues and their impacts



# Community snapshot

The City of Cranbrook has a population of

**20,499**  
people.



**Cranbrook is a major service hub for the entire East Kootenay region,** which has a total population of 65,896 people. The biggest industries by share of labour force employed are retail (17 per cent), health care and social assistance (14 per cent) followed by construction (eight per cent) and food and accommodation services (eight per cent).

Some **10%** of Cranbrook residents are Indigenous and **7%** are visible minorities.

In 20 years, the **Indigenous** population nearly **doubled**



and the **visible minority** population nearly **tripled**



**The population of Cranbrook is rapidly aging.**

Over the past twenty years, the share of the population aged 65 or older rose from 14 per cent in 2001 to 24 per cent in 2021. In comparison, across B.C., 20 per cent of the population is aged 65 and older as of 2021.

**Cranbrook is only a two-hour drive from the Alberta border.**

Vancouver is twice as far away from Cranbrook as Calgary. Alberta has a major economic, cultural and political influence on the city, including a shared time zone (Mountain Standard Time).



# Key areas

- housing and poverty
- health
- discrimination and hate



# Human rights issues in poverty and housing



- housing crisis
- social assistance
- food insecurity

**Key issues in poverty and housing**



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

- limited access and rising costs
- exploitation by landlords
- homelessness
- access to emergency housing
- barriers to services and employment
- emergency and non-market housing bans
- inequities in housing



# Rising costs and exploitation by landlords

“My rent went up 20 per cent overnight, and I know the law is four per cent but what am I going to do?  
If I say anything, I’m out on the streets.”

# Homelessness

“The rents have come up to a point where it’s absolutely [ridiculous], so one of the things that I’m seeing is that families are camping at Horseshoe Lake. They’re camping out in the woods.”

# Limited access to emergency housing

“We had somebody that was being discharged from hospital [at] 6:00 p.m. and needed ... a warm place due to medical reasons. And even having workers advocate and call down, offer to stand in line, they were like, ‘No, 4:00 p.m. is the cut-off. They can stay on the streets.’”



## **What community members said about social assistance**

- inadequate social assistance rates
- barriers to access

# Inadequate social assistance rates

“If you really want to help homeless people, give them some way out of the situation. Don’t keep them perpetually locked there. ‘Cause when you’re handed not even enough money to survive every month ... you’re never going to be able to save for this or that or get yourself up out of here.”

# Barriers to access to social assistance

“There’s nothing but shame and indignity and people just won’t make it. I can’t believe how many people I meet who aren’t on social assistance.”



## **What community members said about food insecurity**

- increased reliance on food banks
- community stigma

# Increased reliance on food banks

“I have people that work in the school system and they say the breakfast program and the hot lunch program, they’ve seen an exponential increase including staff that have to access it.”

# Community stigma

“[We have clients] that drive nice cars. We have clients that live in the bush. We have all sorts of demographics and food insecurity can happen to everybody. We deliver to every neighbourhood. It is your neighbours.”

# Human rights issues in health





- barriers to access
- mental health and substance use

**Key issues in health**



## **What community members said about barriers to access**

- chronic understaffing
- insufficient resources
- travel out of region
- gaps in continuous, primary care
- inequities in health care

# Insufficient resources

“Our hospital is constantly fundraising ... to get more equipment.... If we had more resources here, we probably wouldn't have to send families ... to Kelowna or Calgary or go to Vancouver to access service.”

# Inequities in health care: Indigenous people

“[Indigenous patients] feel that they’re ... talked down to, not listened to, and people have already decided what their problem is and it usually has nothing to do with why they’re [actually] there.”



## **More about mental health and substance use**

- toxic drug supply
- barriers to accessing supports

# Barriers to accessing supports

“I don’t get to see mental health unless I have a breakdown or an issue, right? You don’t get to sit there and say, ‘I’m going to have one. Let’s talk.’”

## Barriers to accessing supports (Cont'd)

“We put people into detox ... only to bring them back to the street. And then they die because they overdose.”





# Discrimination and hate



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

- Indigenous people
- unhoused people
- people using substances
- people with disabilities

# Discrimination against Indigenous peoples

“Being an Aboriginal, we don’t get hired in a lot of places. I’ve applied everywhere in the last 30 years and I’ve only received about three jobs.... They tell me [to] go back to the reserve.”

# Discrimination against people living with a disability

“There’s ‘Help Wanted’ signs everywhere but they’re not being given a chance, right? Or they are being given a chance and then being fired for things that are so far beyond their control.”

## **What community members said about hate**

- gender-based violence
- Indigenous women
- women who use substances
- women with disabilities



# Hate: Gender-based violence

“We’re talking about the vulnerability of women who are living in partner violence and still not being supported community wide. And so, yes, we have a transition house, yes, we have a women’s centre. We have people working with women, but they’re still very discriminated against in many different areas of Cranbrook, including the RCMP.... [T]he discrimination just poses more risk for them.”

# Summary

Housing and poverty	Health	Discrimination & hate
Housing crisis	Barriers to access	Indigenous peoples
Social assistance	Mental health and substance use	People using substances
Food insecurity		Unhoused people
		People with disabilities
		Gender-based violence

# Examples of what helps



# An example of what helps with food insecurity

- Cranbrook Food Bank
- *ᑭᐱᑭᐅᐅ* health clinic

# Community member's response

“When you go there, you kind of feel like you’re being greeted by family, which is not something you usually get.... You guys recognize us.”



# An example of what helps with mental health and substance use

- ANKORS fireside chats
- service provider and peer-based support

## Community member's response cont'd

“Having peer-based community support in this setting helps people feel safe and allows them to connect with other services and supports when they leave the hospital.”

# Anti-Indigenous discrimination

- First Nation health and social services

“It’s exciting to have the opportunity to do things this way. A lot of Elders in their wildest dreams wouldn’t have seen this happening. It’s providing hope and a bit of ease for Elders to see there will be a system conducive to them. Child protection is a reality even though no one wants it, so it means a lot being able to do it in a way that aligns with our values.”

# Discrimination based on disability

- Self-Advocates of the Rockies

“That’s why it’s good for us to be self-advocates and help the ones that are scared to speak up.”

# Gender-based violence

- Ktunaxa Nations cultural revitalization

“Since it was within the St. Eugene Mission School that the culture of the Kootenay Indian was taken away, it should be within that building that it is returned.”



# BCOHRC resources

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



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# Thank you

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**Information**

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