



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

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

## **What Terrace said**

MARCH 31, 2024



# Agenda

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

- Terrace and District Community Social Services
- Terrace chapter of the Council of Canadians

# Baseline Community Briefs process

- November 2022 to June 2023
- 8 focus groups and 10 interviews
- 47 individuals
- service providers, clients and people with lived experience
- additional data sources
- snapshot of issues

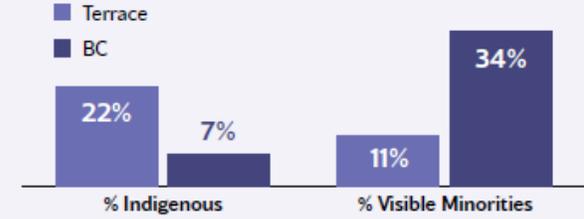
# Key human rights issues and their impacts



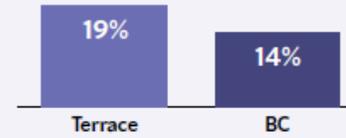
# Community snapshot

The City of Terrace has a population of about

**12,000**  
people.



The Greater Terrace area, which includes communities directly surrounding Terrace, has a population of about **19,000 people**.<sup>10</sup>



**Terrace has a younger population than B.C. as a whole.** In 2021, about 19 per cent of the population of Terrace was aged 0 to 14, compared with 14 per cent across B.C.

**At the same time, Terrace is aging.** Between 2001 and 2021, the number of adults aged 65 and older living in Terrace nearly doubled, which is similar to the provincial trend.



**Terrace is a services hub for the region.** The biggest industries by share of labour force are health and social assistance (18 per cent), retail (12 per cent), construction (10 per cent) and education (9 per cent).

**Terrace has been shaped by major resource development projects in the region.** This includes the LNG Canada liquefied natural gas export terminal, the Coastal Gaslink pipeline and the Rio Tinto aluminum smelter and hydropower facility. We heard concerns from many participants about the environmental and social impacts of these resource projects.



*“Even though we’re small and away from Victoria or from Vancouver ... these issues impact this community so much more greatly because of that.... I often feel that community members feel like they’re forgotten by the province.”*

# Key areas

- colonization, racism and discrimination
- poverty and housing
- essential services
- health
- education

# Human rights issues related to colonization, racism and discrimination



- anti-Indigenous racism
- experiences of newcomers
- gender-based violence

**Key issues in colonization, racism and  
discrimination**



**What community  
members said  
about anti-  
Indigenous  
racism**

- legacy of colonization
- discrimination

# Anti-Indigenous racism

“It’s so sad because I have three children who are blonde, fair skinned, and I have three children who are dark skinned and look like their mom. I’m more worried about my children who are dark skinned.”

**What community  
members said  
about the  
experiences of  
newcomers**

- human rights violations by employers
- risk of housing loss
- racism from community members

# Risk of housing loss

“On their [lease] it said even though [you] have [an] open work permit, if you get a second job ... you have to leave within forty-eight hours. If you get fired, you have to leave within twenty-four hours.”

## **What community members said about gender-based violence**

- discriminatory attitudes
- gaps in essential services
- limited response and support
- role of resource sector
- Indigenous women more at risk

# Gender-based violence

“[Indigenous women] have gone through perhaps years of trauma, both in our families and societally, and have witnessed police brutality against our family members ... [If] we are sexually assaulted or abused ... we feel very scared to be cared for medically, very afraid to call police as sometimes police have been the perpetrators of said abuse.... It’s very hard for us to seek assistance when we do not have a level of trust ... that our bodies will not be put in any more harm and that our rights will be upheld.”

# Human rights issues in poverty and housing



- poverty
- housing
- being unhoused

**Key issues in poverty and housing**



## **What community members said about poverty**

- unequal impacts
- rising cost of living
- food insecurity

# Impacts of poverty

“A lot of us aren’t eating enough ... because when it comes down to money, the first thing you’re going to pay is your bills before you’re going to feed yourself.”

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

- insufficient supply
- soaring costs
- disproportionate impacts
- discrimination

# Impacts of housing crisis

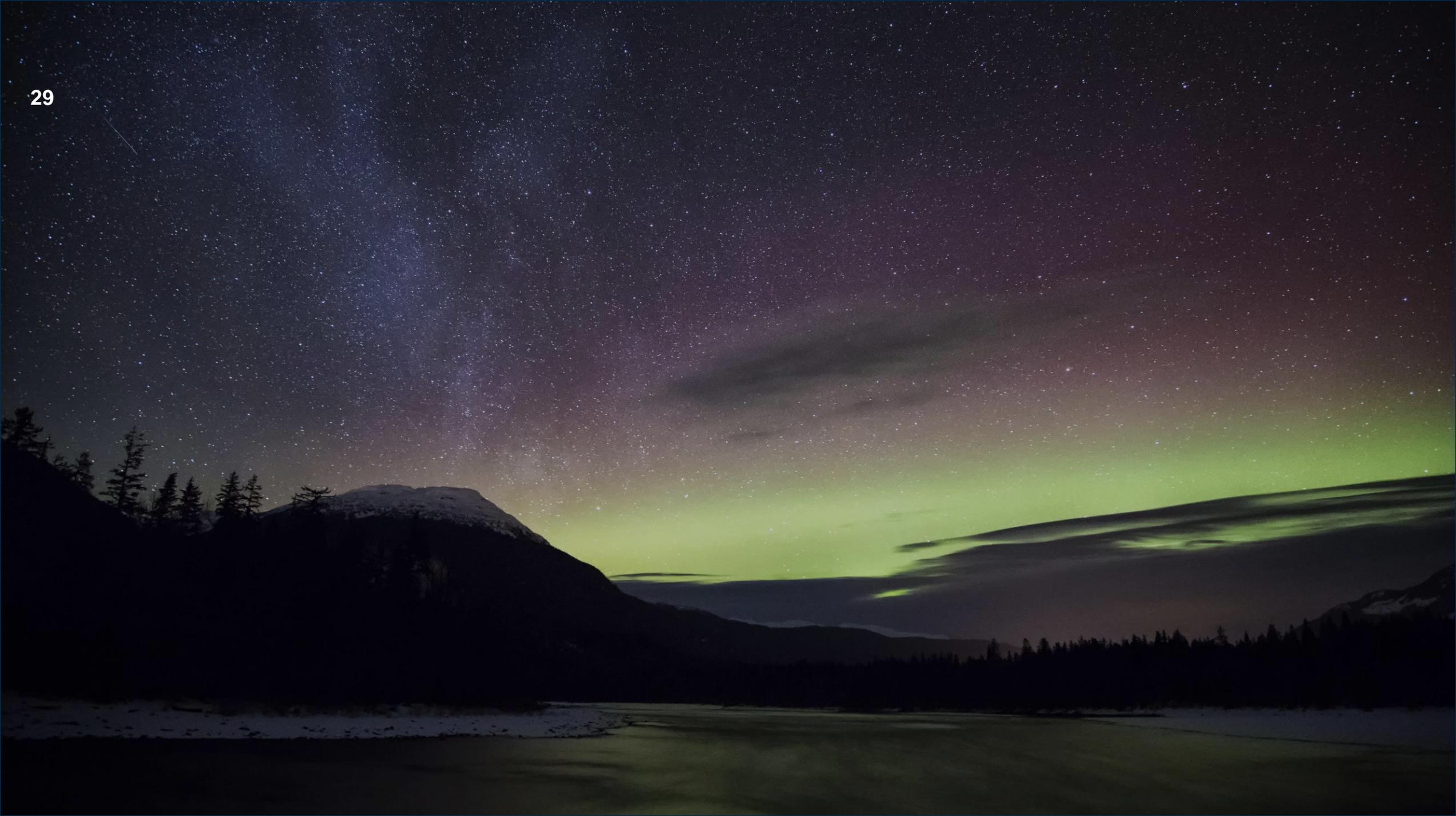
“We have a lot of [older adults] who are in rental accommodations who are struggling to make their payments each month ... [who are] cutting down on food or medications and things like that.”

**What community members said about being unhoused in Terrace**

- growing unhoused population
- 84% of unhoused population are Indigenous
- insufficient emergency housing
- discrimination

# Impacts of being unhoused

“I have witnessed RCMP ... doctors and nurses ... government officials mistreat people on the streets and at-risk peoples.... Police brutality continues. There’s a lack of adequate medical care for those who are homeless and there’s a lack of acceptance from many local officials here that homeless people have the right to be treated as people, as any other citizen, as fairly as they can be treated.”



# Human rights issues in essential services



- staffing challenges
- barriers to access
- barriers for children and youth with disabilities

**Key issues in essential services**



**What community members said about staffing challenges in essential services**

- staff shortages
- essential services capacity limits
- higher workloads and stress
- barriers to training

# Barriers to training

“You can’t get by on one job, so you’re going to be doing multiple jobs and school, which can be intense for some young people. It’s hard to achieve your goals when there’s so much money that plays into it.”

**What community members said about barriers to accessing services**

- unsafe or difficult access
- systems difficult to navigate
- lacking trauma informed approach
- children & youth with disabilities

# Barriers to accessing services

“You can’t expect people that aren’t doing well, that have complicated situations to fit into a colonial system where you must find this person and you must do this specific intake and this intake has to be done at this specific time and then you’ve got to wait two to three weeks to get the appointment. Then you have to show up on a Thursday at 2 and if you miss that appointment well too bad.”

# Human rights issues in health



- under-staffing
- discrimination
- insufficient services for older adults
- toxic drug crisis

**Key issues in health**



## **What community members said about understaffing in health care**

- recruitment and retention
- limited access to primary care
- disproportionate impacts
- barriers accessing telehealth
- insufficient mental health care

# Insufficient staffing

“We’re getting called in to somebody who’s in crisis because they haven’t taken their medications for four months because their prescription ran out. Or the wound has become infected.... We’re ending up dealing with far more acute cases because people just haven’t been able to get access in a timely fashion.”

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

- Indigenous individuals
- unhoused people
- people who use substances
- people with mental health issues
- culture of discrimination
- seniors

# Discrimination in health care

“Things I’ve overheard at the hospital... ‘Oh, it’s his third time in here OD’ing this week. I wish they’d just ship ‘em away.’”

**What community  
members said  
about  
insufficient  
services for  
older adults**

- insufficient services
- long wait lists
- strain on system
- seniors in crisis

# Services for older adults

“We have a lot of seniors [in] their 80s and 90s living in their homes because there is nowhere to go until they are in such poor health that they end up in the hospital, which only has so many beds.”

## **What community members said about the toxic drug crisis**

- increasing drug fatality rate
- limited access to services
- discrimination delaying programs
- lengthy travel to access services
- expansion of services
- barriers to housing and treatment

# Toxic drug crisis

“We don’t have detox beds or sobering beds. Apparently, there’s two in the hospital but, if they’re utilized for something else, they’re not available ... and they never seem to be available. So, our detoxing takes place typically in the RCMP station, which is not a healthy spot to go through withdrawal.”



# Human rights issues in education



- unequal treatment of students

**Key issues in education**



**What community  
members said  
unequal  
treatment of  
students**

- Indigenous students
- students with disabilities
- LGBTQ2SAI+ students
- alternate school

# Anti-Indigenous racism in schools

“[My son] now accepts who he is, but growing up he didn’t. Like when I was putting him into [middle school] he said, ‘Mom, I do not want you to register me as I’m status.’ ... I was really offended and upset with him, but it’s part of the friends that he had ... they put down First Nations people.”

# Unequal treatment: students with disabilities

“[Middle school] was definitely very difficult for a lot of students who had disabilities, even [some staff] were pretty rude to students with autism or just some sort of disability.”

# Summary

Colonization, racism and discrimination	Poverty and housing	Essential services	Health	Education
anti-Indigenous racism	Poverty	Staffing challenges	Under-staffing	Unequal treatment
Experience of newcomers	Housing	Barriers to access	Discrimination	
Gender-based violence	Being unhoused	Children and youth with disabilities	Insufficient services for older adults	
			Toxic drug crisis	

# Examples of what helps



# Examples of what helps gender-based violence

- 'Ksan Society Sexual Assault Response Program
  - accompaniment to services
  - sexual assault kits

# Community member's response

“It’s really about empowering a survivor and giving that control and that power back to them to help them feel safe after a very traumatic experience.”

# Example of what helps with poverty

- 'Ksan Donation Room

# Examples of what helps the unhoused population

- Gitlaxdax Nisg'a Terrace Society
  - peer-based, Indigenous outreach

## Community member's response cont'd

“The peer supports have been a game changer ... [for] the street-involved population.... They've been incredibly successful at getting people into treatment programs, connected to harm reduction services, into mental health support services.... Their impact has been phenomenal in a very short time.”

# Gaps and barriers in services

- The Garage
- bus passes for school

# Mental health and addiction

- The power of ceremony

## Community member's response cont'd.

“You aren't your position, you aren't your status, you aren't how much money you have. Everyone has stuff that they [need to] work through ... when you're sitting shoulder to shoulder in that sweat, and you're healing together.”

# Anti-Indigenous racism in schools cont'd

- 'Na Aksa Gyilak'yoo School
  - integration of Indigenous culture
  - response to community events
  - revitalizing language and culture

## Community member's response cont'd..

“Some of the kids that I had taught in public school had switched over to [‘Na Aksa Gyilak’yoo] School and I saw a huge difference in those kids being more engaged and I think it was because they had cultural support there.”

# BCOHRC resources

- Baseline Community Briefs from other communities
- Baseline recommendations data base
- Baseline micro-site
- human rights educational resources
- BCOHRC reports



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# Thank you

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## Information

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