



Media kit: “Am I racist?” public awareness campaign

NOVEMBER 2020 – DECEMBER 2020

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“Am I racist?” campaign overview

When BC’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC) identified “the rise of hate and white supremacy” as one of its priorities in December 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic had not yet impacted the province. We had prioritized hate because of a general rise in acts of hate over the past decade. By the time the province had adopted wide-spread shutdown measures in the Spring of 2020, a significant rise in acts of hate targeting Asian-Canadians was occurring. In this climate, BCOHRC decided to make racism and anti-racist action the subject of its 2020 provincial public awareness campaign.

Quick facts

Duration	The campaign will run for four weeks from Nov. 16, 2020 to Dec. 11, 2020.
Number of ads	This campaign uses 77 ads: 30 transit shelter ads (TSAs), 37 “super tail” ads on the backs of buses and 10 billboards

Locations	24 B.C. communities were selected for this campaign: Abbotsford, Campbell River, Castlegar, Chilliwack, Cowichan Valley, Cranbrook, Enderby, Fort St. John, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nanaimo, Oliver, Penticton, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Revelstoke, Salmon Arm, Sicamous, Squamish, Terrace, Vancouver, Vernon, Victoria and Williams Lake.
Online resources	The ads will direct people to visit bchumanrights.ca/BeAntiRacist , where they will be asked to grapple with additional questions, directed to anti-racism resources and have an opportunity to share their experiences and opinions of the campaign.

Methodology

Method

This campaign uses teaser/reveal ads with interactive website content to deliver ideas and information to the public.

Teaser campaigns work by presenting an initial vague “teaser” message for a period of time until a “reveal” message is released to clarify the meaning of the original teaser. Since racism may be a difficult issue to talk about, the slow reveal of this type of campaign allows time for the public to become accustomed to the fact that we are going to be talking about racism. The delay makes it easier to hear the next part of the campaign.

The campaign begins with ads that simply ask the question, “Am I racist?” Two weeks after the ads began appearing, they were updated to include more specific questions and to direct people to visit BCOHRC’s website to engage with anti-racism resources. Those additional questions include:

- “If I say I don’t see skin colour, am I racist?”
- If I assume you are not from here, am I racist?
- If I want to forget our province’s history, am I racist?

Theory

BC’s Multiculturalism branch defines anti-racism as: “...the practice of identifying, challenging, preventing, eliminating and changing the values, structures, policies, programs, practices and behaviours that perpetuate racism.” The practice of becoming anti-racist can be said to comprise four steps:

1. Awareness of racism in society on an interpersonal and systemic level
2. Understanding personal privilege
3. Examining internal biases
4. Confronting acts of discrimination

BCOHRC’s “Am I racist?” campaign focuses on steps one through three. It works by asking people to think through their own values and ideas (appeal to reason), to consider the impact on others (appeal to empathy) and to join together to be anti-racist (appeal to common purpose).

Overall the practice of anti-racism involves empowerment, education, alliance building, language shifts, alternative healing strategies, advocacy, social justice/activism, and fostering reflexivity. As we take our first steps in anti-racism education at BC’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner,



we look forward to walking through all of these strategies together with British Columbians to chip away at the root causes of inequality, discrimination, and injustice by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures.

Sample posts

- Fight racism. Work from the inside, out. It's time to ask: "Am I racist?" Learn more: bchumanrights.ca/BeAntiRacistBC #BeAntiRacistBC
- Help end racism. Start with yours. Dare to ask: "Am I racist?" Learn more: bchumanrights.ca/BeAntiRacistBC #BeAntiRacistBC
- Become anti-racist. Begin within. Ask yourself: "Am I racist?" Learn more: <https://bchumanrights.ca/BeAntiRacistBC> #BeAntiRacistBC

BCOHRC posts to share

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/humanrights4BC/posts/448819606503492>
- Twitter: <https://www.facebook.com/humanrights4BC/posts/448819606503492>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CIQpOAagoRX/>

Press release

Human rights campaign prompts British Columbians to examine their internal racism

Vancouver B.C. – Large black signs with bold, white writing have popped up in municipalities across British Columbia. From billboards, transit shelters and the backs of buses, they pose a seemingly simple question with complex implications: "Am I racist?"

The messages are part of the first major campaign of BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC). The Office began its work in September 2019 with a strong mandate to educate the province on issues of systemic racism, following the 17-year absence of a provincial human rights commission.

BCOHRC's "Am I racist?" public awareness campaign takes British Columbians through the first steps toward a more anti-racist B.C. by asking them to examine their inner biases.

Today, the campaign was updated to ask more specific questions about what constitutes racism. One sign asks: "If I say I don't see skin colour, am I racist?" Another questions: "If I want to forget our province's history, am I racist?"

Starting Monday, Nov. 30, these signs will direct viewers to an interactive educational experience on BCOHRC's website at bchumanrights.ca/BeAntiRacist, designed to help British Columbians look deeper at the issues that divide us.

"Systemic racism is a difficult and urgent problem in B.C.," said Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender. "Statistics show a rise in hate crimes in B.C., both gradually over the last decade and rapidly since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in the province. We need to name the problem



before we can solve it, and that starts when we confront our own, often subconscious, racial biases.”

Reported hate crimes in B.C. rose by over one third (34%) between 2015 and 2018. In the first nine months of 2020, the Vancouver Police Department reported a 116 per cent rise in hate crimes in Metro Vancouver compared to the same period in 2019, with Asian communities bearing the brunt of the increase. Anti-Asian hate crime incidents increased from just nine reported last year to 88 reported in the 2020 period, an 878 per cent increase

The campaign also comes amid concerns of structural racism in health care and other institutions, including concerns that COVID-19 is having a disproportionate impact on health outcomes for racialized communities in B.C. A Statistics Canada report found COVID-19 mortality rates between March and July 2020 were higher in B.C. communities where more than 25 per cent of residents are visible minorities.

“Canada has a reputation of being a safe place with minimal racism, but this does not truly reflect the history and present-day experiences of Indigenous and racialized people in this province and country.” Govender said. “I know it’s uncomfortable to recognize this racism and to start to work on it, but it’s crucial that we do so—because uprooting systemic racism starts when we change ourselves.”

BCOHRC’s “Am I racist?” campaign launched on Nov. 16 and will run in communities across B.C. until Dec. 11, 2020. To learn more, please visit bchumanrights.ca/BeAntiRacist or follow the hashtag [#BeAntiRacistBC](https://twitter.com/BeAntiRacistBC) on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/BeAntiRacistBC) or [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/BeAntiRacistBC).

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About us

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

About the Commissioner

BC’s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, started her five-year term on Sept. 3, 2019, 17 years after BC’s last human rights commission was dismantled. Since then, our Office has been working swiftly to build a strong team, to listen deeply to the concerns of British Columbians, to issue policy guidance to protect vulnerable communities and to lay a human rights-based foundation for our work. As an Independent Office of the Legislative Assembly we are uniquely positioned to ensure human rights in B.C. are protected, respected and advanced on a systemic level throughout our society.

Follow us

Get the latest human rights news from us on Twitter ([@humanrights4BC](https://twitter.com/humanrights4BC)), Facebook (facebook.com/HumanRights4BC), Instagram ([@humanrights4BC](https://www.instagram.com/humanrights4BC)).



Media highlights

['Am I racist?': Billboard poses question as rise in hate crimes prompts public awareness campaign](#)

CBC News | Nov 30, 2020

Excerpt:

"If I want to forget our province's history, am I racist?"

The question, written in white block lettering on a large black poster at a Metro Vancouver transit stop, is one of a few currently printed on billboards across the province as part of a public awareness campaign launched this month by B.C.'s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC).

The first wave of the campaign rolled out Nov. 16 with signs that simply ask, "Am I racist?" and are part of the office's first major campaign following the 17-year absence of a provincial human rights commissioner.

On Nov. 30, the campaign was updated to ask more specific questions about what constitutes racism, such as "If I don't see skin colour, am I racist?" and "If I assume you're not from here, am I racist?"

The new signs also direct viewers to an interactive educational experience on BCOHRC's website designed to help British Columbians look deeper at the issue and their own biases.

['This isn't about guilt or shame' says B.C.'s human rights commissioner Kasari Govender](#)

Joanne Lee-Young | Vancouver Sun | Nov 14, 2020

Excerpt:

On Monday, the commission will launch a provocative, new awareness campaign to combat racism.

Govender, who describes the campaign as "a really different approach," said it is "about looking inward on our own biases on our own" to fight racism.

"How do we say that people need to learn about B.C. and Canada's racist history not as a means to feel guilty, but as a way to understand: What's my role now? How does that impact how we relate to each other? It's not about guilt, but about problem solving."

Advocates and activists say the campaign flips the focus away from those who are impacted by racism to those who carry it out.

RJ Aquino, a community organizer and director of the Tulayan Filipino Diaspora Society, and other community advocates said an original version of the campaign was more focused on what victims of racism face. But after taking feedback, "it paused and took off in another direction that we feel is a lot more effective in really addressing what we have seen here in the province and challenging what racism is here.



“It wasn’t going to be effective, and ask more difficult questions,” said Aquino of the initial tack.

“Overall, with anti-racist efforts, there’s a lot of care towards not putting people into a high level of discomfort, but we want people to feel uncomfortable because it persists and it affects people.

“People need to ask: Am I a racist?” said Aquino.

“Individual change is a necessary part of it,” said Govender. “This isn’t about guilt and shame. It is not learning based on being told what you’re doing or thinking is wrong. It’s about building a shared commitment to make change that makes us a more equal society.”

