



British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner

B.C. communities speak human rights

What Chetwynd said

MARCH 31, 2024



Agenda

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

- Tansi Friendship Centre Society
- Chetwynd Public Library
- individuals with lived experience
- individuals serving the community

Baseline Community Briefs process

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

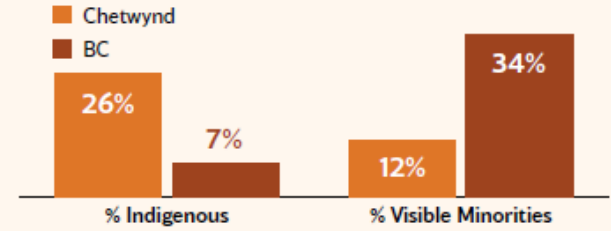
Key human rights issues and their impacts



Community snapshot

The City of Chetwynd has a population of

2,302
people.¹⁵



As of 2021, **26 per cent** of Chetwynd residents were **Indigenous** and **12 per cent** were **visible minorities**.¹⁷

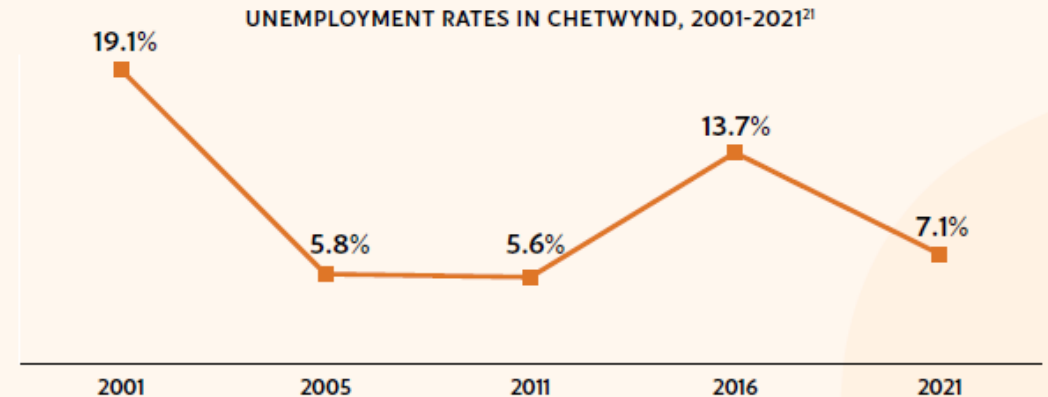
From 2016 to 2021, the Indigenous and visible minority populations increased by **69 per cent**.¹⁶

The nearby Saulteau and West Moberly First Nations' reserves have **396 residents**.¹⁸



Filipino people represent the largest ethnic minority group in Chetwynd (5 per cent of the total population in 2021).¹⁹

As a “boom and bust” town, the unemployment rate in Chetwynd has fluctuated significantly over the last 20 years
In 2021, the unemployment rate was 7.1 per cent, but has likely increased since the Canfor sawmill closed in April 2023.²⁰



Key areas

- colonization, discrimination and hate
- boom-and-bust economy
- health

Colonization, discrimination and hate



- colonization and anti-Indigenous racism
- policing and access to justice education
- Caribou Agreement consultation process
- employment

Key issues related to colonization, discrimination and hate



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

- intergenerational trauma
- erosion of Indigenous rights
- mistrust of public institutions
- fear of practising traditions

Colonization and anti-Indigenous racism

“I went through lots, like I grew up in a residential home. I grew up in day schooling. I got put down because I was Native. I got put down because I was a woman. I got put down because I wasn’t the right colour.”

What community members said about policing and access to justice

- control of Indigenous peoples
- under- and over-policing
- inadequate access to justice

Over-policing

“He went to the college for a little while, but then he met some friends. They had some firecrackers ... and put [them] in his backpack. They took the powder out, put it in a bottle or something. Next thing you know my son is being handcuffed out in the parking lot because they thought he was building a bomb. But the other kid, the white boy ... nothing happened to him.”

What community members said about education

- racism in schools
- sense of being monitored
- lower expectations
- discriminatory treatment

Monitoring

“I [did] not necessarily want to register them as Aboriginal kids because there’s two different forms. And on this form it said something about how they were going to monitor absences and how they were going to report it and I’m thinking, ‘this should be for every student in the class.’ ...

Why would you just [do] this for Aboriginal kids? [You think] these parents are less able to determine why their kids are staying home from school? Why they’re sick or what? I found it almost offensive.”

**What community
members said
about the
Caribou
Agreement
consultation
process**

- inadequate communication
- heightened racial tensions
- barrier to reconciliation

Impacts of the consultation process

“There were threats made to Indigenous people who ... weren’t aware that that agreement was even there ... [the B.C.] government is saying, ‘oh yeah, the bands have signed off and all the people on the territories just signed off,’ and those people didn’t even know. And so, they’re defending the integrity of their own cultures and values, but [the B.C.] government threw everybody under the bus.”

What community members said about everyday discrimination

- systemic
- anti-Indigenous
- anti-LGBTQ2SAI+
- barriers to taking action

Anti-Indigenous discrimination

“Being an Indigenous person in a small community, everyone just suspects we’re alcoholics and we’re drug users. That’s the stigma we’ve lived with for our whole lives. Especially in a small town ... People still look at me and think, ‘that’s all you’re going to do with your life.’ I have an amazing job. I had an amazing family, and a lot of my friends grew up with amazing families with love from both and they’re doing stuff with their lives. But a lot of them now have kids and like we’re [in our late twenties] now, but still it’s, ‘Oh she was a young mom and that’s all she’s ever going to amount to.’”

**What community
members said
about
discrimination in
employment**

- Filipino international students
- job competitions
- Indigeneity, gender and age
- preferential hiring of students
- stigma for sex workers

Discrimination in employment

“If your name is tainted, it really impacts women that are trying to freshly start because everyone knows everyone and it’s hard to keep any business quiet and private. So, it doesn’t take long for people to know who you are and to judge you based off of what you did yesterday or the days before, right?”

Human rights issues related to the boom- and-bust economy



- affordable housing and food security
 - gender-based violence
 - transient labour force

Key issues for the boom-and-bust economy



What community members said about affordable housing and food security

- fluctuations in cost of living
- increase in rent and food prices
- transportation barriers

Increased cost of living

“When industry is really high and we’ve got a pipeline in town, groceries go through the roof, rent becomes unaffordable ... violence goes up ... more problems, more deaths.”

What community members said about gender-based violence

- increased rates and intensity
- Indigenous women and girls
- increase during periods of bust
- inadequate RCMP response

Gender-based violence

“There are mostly non-Indigenous men who [come] to our area, and there’s so many incidents of sexual violence against women and girls that are not ... reported, that nobody knows about but us.”

**What community
members said
about the
transient labour
force**

- sawmill closure
- increase in social problems
- loss of essential services
- mental health and substance use

Impacts of the transient labour force

“If you don’t have nurses, you don’t have doctors. And if you don’t have doctors, you don’t have hospitals, so you know, you have got to be able to have a good grasp of how much one mill will cost and how much two mills will cost.”



Human rights issues in health



- access to services
- discrimination

Key issues in health care



What community members said about access to health care

- retention and recruitment
- workplace environment
- limited services
- barriers to travel
- diversion

Impacts of limited access to health care

“Because we don’t offer these services, people have to go elsewhere. And often, they can’t because they don’t have the money to travel. They don’t have a vehicle to travel, or they don’t want to do it in the winter because holy mackerel, you’ve been up here, right?... Winter here is ... I mean, people die.”

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

- anti-Indigenous racism
- inequitable health outcomes
- stereotyping

Discrimination in health care

“Your file gets pulled.... They label it as drug-seeking. Then you go in and something’s really wrong and they just automatically look at this person like, they’re just drug-seeking and they can’t get rid of you fast enough.”

Summary

Colonization, discrimination and hate	Boom and bust economy	Health
Colonization and anti-Indigenous racism	Affordable housing and food security	Access to services
Policing	Gender-based violence	Discrimination
Consultation process	Transient labour force	
Education		

Examples of what helps



Example of what helps with discrimination and hate

- Tansi Friendship Centre
- Chetwynd Public Library

BCOHRC resources

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



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

Thank you

Visit **bchumanrights.ca** for
more resources or find us on
social media
@humanrights4bc

Information

info@bchumanrights.ca