



## Cowichan Valley Anti-Racism Statement

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## Cowichan Valley Leaders Condemn Racism; Call for Renewed Community Cohesion

February 5, 2026

Cowichan Valley, B.C. - Leaders from Cowichan Tribes, Cowichan Valley Regional District, City of Duncan, Municipality of North Cowichan, Cowichan Valley School District, and the North Cowichan-Duncan RCMP met in January to discuss the

collective wellbeing of citizens in our region. A key topic of concern discussed at the meeting was growing anti-Indigenous racism.

Today, they were joined by the Towns of Ladysmith and Lake Cowichan in issuing this **Cowichan Valley Anti-Racism Statement**:

“We want to recognize previous Cowichan Tribes Chief, the late William Seymour, for the work he did to bring leaders across the Cowichan Valley together to address racism in 2017 and 2021. While it is lamentable that we must continue to speak out on this topic, the relationships that late Chief Seymour fostered with partners in the region remain strong. These relationships are essential for our work together on regional issues.

While divisiveness and blame make popular sound bites and social media posts, they do not lead to solutions. We know that innovative solutions that enhance the quality of life of all people require a willingness to have meaningful conversations, learn from one another, and collaborate. Examples of what has been accomplished when Cowichan Valley leaders, organizations, and citizens roll up our sleeves to work together in a good way include:

- The Village on Trunk Road, located in the City of Duncan and operated by the Lookout Housing and Health Society, provides 34 sleeping units to the unhoused, daily meals, and access to supports and skills training available through local service providers, including Cowichan Tribes.
- The new Mischa Lelum, Youth Emergency Shelter, operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association – Cowichan Valley, is the result of the advocacy of the Cowichan Youth at Home Team, local fundraising through CHMA – Cowichan Valley’s annual Coldest Night of the Year Walk, the generosity of the Mischa Weisz Foundation, and provincial funding.
- The Cowichan Watershed Board, which brings together Cowichan Tribes and the Cowichan Valley Regional District with representatives from the community, and local, provincial, and federal bodies to care for the watershed that sustains us all.

- Each year on September 30<sup>th</sup>, the Every Child Matters Walk is organized by Cowichan Tribes Councillor Audrey George and supported by the City of Duncan and many local organizations, bringing together thousands of people across the Cowichan Valley in the spirit of reconciliation.

Who we are as residents of the Cowichan Valley is defined by our actions. We must act together to protect and ensure our region remains the beautiful community we know and love, where we raise our families, and continue to come together to address challenges.

We remain committed to this work and invite our partners, community groups, businesses, and all residents across the Cowichan Valley to join us in recognizing that the wellbeing of our community depends on our ability to stand together as humans and neighbours who respect, support, and care for one another. Please sign on as a supporter of this statement against racism and hate in our community.”

## **Quotes from Local Leadership**

### **Sulsulxumaat, Chief Cindy Daniels, Cowichan Tribes:**

“Our citizens are increasingly concerned for their safety due to the rise in hate they are experiencing. From posts and comments on social media, to remarks made by fellow shoppers in local stores, to being shouted at from passing vehicles, the negativity directed at our citizens is unfounded and wrong.

“One of our snuy’uw’ulh (teachings) shared by our Elders is to help one another and work together for the good of all. We know most residents in the region are respectful people. Each day, our citizens and staff work alongside colleagues and partners to care for our communities and people across the region. We are calling on our allies to take an active role in calling out racism and saying no to hate.”

### **Kate Segall, Chair, Cowichan Valley Regional District:**

“Racism harms all of us as a society; it creates fear, fractures trust, and undermines dignity. When racism goes unchallenged, it weakens the collective care and respect that all communities depend on. Positive change starts with awareness and accountability. Let’s support one another as neighbours and community members by choosing kindness and fairness through our words and our everyday actions.”

**Michelle Staples, Mayor, City of Duncan:**

“Racism is real and sadly alive in our community. I've sat with families who are subjected to assaults of racism as they venture into social situations, businesses, and online communities. I've listened to Elders who are exhausted from repeating the same truths for decades and young people having to work twice as hard at everything they do to overcome the stereotyping and ignorance they face on a daily basis while they are simply trying to live their lives.

“And I've lived through what's possible when we choose each other, the times we walk with our neighbours instead of turning our backs on them. The decision to face racism relies on the actions of each one of us to use our voices to stand up to hate, our minds to educate ourselves, and our hearts to guide us. That's the Cowichan Valley I believe in and work for every day.”

**Rob Douglas, Mayor, Municipality of North Cowichan:**

“The Cowichan Valley is built on caring for one another, and when we listen, reflect, and treat each other with respect, we all benefit. Choosing kindness and accountability over division brings people together, and I stand with our regional partners and Cowichan Tribes in denouncing racism, affirming that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity.”

**Lorna Vomacka, Deputy Mayor, Town of Lake Cowichan:**

“The Town of Lake Cowichan Mayor, Council, and Staff stand firmly with Cowichan Tribes against hate and racism of all forms and character. There is no room in our communities for hatred against any person based on their ethnicity, culture, or

gender. It takes less energy to build a person up than it does to tear them down, so let's build community one person at a time with love, compassion, and understanding.”

**Deena Beeston, Mayor, Town of Ladysmith:**

“The rise of racism in the Cowichan Valley is not only alarming, but profoundly unacceptable. These attitudes and behaviours inflict real harm on individuals and further divide our communities. Confronting racism and embracing respect, understanding, collaboration, and inclusivity remain essential for our shared progress.”

**Cathy Schmidt, Board Chair, Cowichan Valley School District:**

“As a Board of Education, we stand firmly against racism. Every student, family, and community member deserves safety, dignity, and respect. Anti-racism is not a single action—it is a shared responsibility. We remain committed to walking this path together, listening, learning, and ensuring our schools uphold the values of equity and inclusion. We call on our entire community to join us in taking an active stand against racism—challenge harmful behaviours, amplify marginalized voices, and show your support by signing onto this statement against racism in our community.”

**Ken Beard, Staff Sergeant, North Cowichan – Duncan RCMP:**

"As a community we must challenge racist actions when we see them. It is our collective responsibility to show others there is no place for racist comments or behavior in our community. By taking a stand against others who perpetuate racist views, we can positively contribute to everyone's safety and the community's sense of unity."

*I will stand up against  
racism in our community.*

**Click here to join the list of  
supporters**

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### Organizations

- [Add your organization. Join the list of supporters](#)
- Canadian Mental Health Association – Cowichan Valley Branch
- Cowichan Community Action Team
- Cowichan Watershed Board
- Cowichan Valley Youth Services
- Cowichan Women Against Violence Society
- Cowichan Youth at Home
- Eldercare Partnership in Cowichan
- Our Cowichan Communities Health Network
- Khowutzun Development Corporation
- Alexander Elementary PAC
- Cowichan Intercultural Society
- First Nations Health Authority, Vancouver Island Region
- Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society

- Sunrise Waldorf School
- Social Planning Cowichan
- Cowichan Women's Health Collective
- Cowichan Community Policing & Engagement Society
- South Cowichan Community Policing Advisory Society
- Cowichan Pride Society

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### Resources:

- [Racist Incident Helpline: 1-833-457-5463](#)
- [Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria Bystander Intervention Training](#)
- [Culturally Committed](#)
- [Indigenous Relations Academy](#)
- [Len Pierre Consulting Learning Hub](#)
- [Cultivating Safe Spaces](#)
- [The Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre \(IRSHDC\) at UBC](#)
- [Resilience BC Anti-racism Tools](#)
- [Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024-2028](#)

### **Free Online Courses & Training:**

- [Course: Historical, Systemic and Intersectional Antiracism: From Awareness to Action](#)
- [Right to Be](#)
- [See Different: Programs for youth ages 15-26](#)

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