



Inquiry into hate in the pandemic: Hearing transcript

Transcription prepared by BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

Presentation date: Nov. 25, 2021

Presenting organizations: Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), Vancouver Holocaust Education Center, Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver

Roundtable attendees: Nico Slobinsky, Shelley Rivkin, Nina Krieger, Etti Goldman

BCOHRC¹ attendees: Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender, Sarah Khan, Carly Hyman, Emily Chan

Please note that third-party personal information has been removed from this transcript.

[Introductory comments by Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender not included in transcript.]

Nico Slobinsky: Thank you, Commissioner. We are honoured and grateful to be here with you. I'm particularly grateful to be speaking to you from the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. Here with me today we have a group of community organizations and colleagues. With me we have Shelley Rivkin from the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, whom I think some of you know well, we have Nina Krieger from the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, who I also think some of you know well. And Etti Goldman, my colleague that leads our partnerships work, and myself, Nico Slobinsky, the director of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. Just before we start, we have a little presentation I'm going to try to share. Host disabled participant screen sharing. So could I be...

Carly Hyman: It should be OK for you now, Nico.

Nico Slobinsky: OK, let's see now. Let's try to share. Right there. Yeah, there we are. You should be able to see my slides, that correct? Great. Let's go into presentation mode here. Fantastic. So we'll get going with these slides in a moment. So shalom and tzoharaim tovim to all of you, hello and good afternoon. It is an honour to be able to open the Jewish community presentation in the traditional language of [inaudible] people. This is very important to me, and I want to share why.

¹ BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

Hebrew holds a very special place in our culture, in our religious practices, in our traditions. Hebrew is more than a communications tool to us and is more than the language of the Tanach, or the Torah.

And this week, and I want to thank you Commissioner and your team. I want to thank Carly Hyman and [third party personal information removed] and all your colleagues, because this week as I was preparing this presentation I got an email confirming that the inquiry's material, your website, and many of the other communications tool that you use will now be effectively translated into Hebrew, making the BC Human Rights Commission more accessible and inclusive to all. So this is very meaningful to all of us. And for that, a big toda raba and a thank you.

So we used the questions to guide our presentation and to share our experience with hate. Certainly over the pandemic, recognizing that hate is a continuum that has existed well before the pandemic, and that sadly as hate morphs and transforms will continue to exist also after the pandemic. But before we get into the details of that and into our presentation, I want to say that it was really difficult to prepare some of these slides, particularly because it was reliving some of our experience with her during the pandemic and actually pausing to pay attention to what we wanted to share with you, right? And you can be assured that we were paying attention when the incidents took place, but having to think about it and having to think how we're going to communicate to you about those incidents and how they have affected us wasn't very easy.

So today here with us, who do we have? You have three community organizations. You have the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, you have the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, and you have the Jewish Federation. And why you have the three of us? Because in many ways, the three of us as organizations interact together to provide a community response to hate, whether it's directed at an institution, at a set of beliefs and ideas, or at individuals. So a little bit about-

Commissioner Kasari Govender: Nico, I'm really sorry to interrupt you, I just wanted to let you know that what we're seeing is we see your notes as well.

Nico Slobinsky: You see my notes?

Commissioner Kasari Govender: So I thought you might want to know that.

Nico Slobinsky: And I'm on presentation mode. And that is weird. Let me just see here. Thank you for that.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: Completely up to you, I just didn't want you to share something you didn't want to.

Nico Slobinsky: Yeah, I know. It's interesting because I have a split screen and the presentation actually has moved to the other screen. Let me just see if I can minimize this in any way. And look, there's nothing on our notes that is secret. It's [inaudible] notes I would not be sharing with you.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: Completely up to you.



Nico Slobinsky: Yeah, it's just weird that I cannot share the other screen with you. So if it's OK with the rest of you, we can just carry on like this. Is that OK?

Sarah Khan: Yes.

Nico Slobinsky: [inaudible] OK, great.

Sarah Khan: Oh, yes. However.

Nico Slobinsky: For the benefit of time. Sorry, just a second here. Thanks. Not sure what's happening. OK, so we have the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, which was founded in 1994 by Holocaust survivors who settled in Vancouver, envisioned as legacy to the citizens of British Columbia in the form of an anti-racism education centre. VHEC is now Western Canada's leading education teaching museum dedicated to the promotion of social justice, human rights, and genocide awareness. The Centre's mandate is achieved through a variety of initiatives, educational programs and resources aligned with the provincial curriculum, professional development for educators, exhibitions, commemorate and public programs, as well as a library archive and museum collection. Education is at the heart of what the centre does and at the name and mission, and the VHEC typically engages more than 25,000 students each year.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver is an umbrella organization representing about 26 other organizations in the Lower Mainland Jewish community. Their mandate is to [inaudible] engage the community in collaborative planning to address the social services, health, education and spiritual needs of Jewish communities locally, in Israel, and around the world. They currently fund 64 local programs delivered by their partners to address social issues ranging from poverty, mental health, isolated seniors, to the arts and culture and Holocaust education. They undertake research on new and emerging issues and collaborate with our partners to launch new programs and services.

In 2016, in response to a growing number of physical attacks on Jewish community institutions locally, the Jewish Federation invested in the hiring of a permanent Director of Community Security to ensure the safety and protection of the Lower Mainland Jewish community. And more on that later.

And now about the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. We are a national, non-partisan, non-for-profit organization dedicated to protecting Jewish life in Canada through advocacy. CIJA represents hundreds of thousands of members of the Jewish community across the country. In our province we work in direct partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, and we represent roughly about the voices of 30,000 Jewish British Columbians. CIJA's core priorities include combating anti-Semitism and racism, increasing community safety, educating Canadians about the different aspects of Jewish life in Canada and advancing a range of public policy issues in jurisdictions from coast to coast to coast.

So this is just to give you a little bit of a taste of who is at the table from our community. So you may ask yourselves, OK, why are we presenting together and who do we serve? We represent the organizations that make our community. The synagogues, the schools, the community centre, the home for the elder, the food bank, the housing societies. And we serve all members of our



community. But also in our partnership we serve all British Columbians by way of partnerships with other groups and communities in confronting hate in all of its forms.

So we thought that at this point we would share a bit of the key characteristics that make our community. We are a community that is growing. Since 2001 our community has grown about 2% per year to approximately 30,000, as I mentioned. We have seen a new immigrants also come into our community. One of them is talking to you right now. I'm a Latino Israeli Jewish cisgender man that has come to this community, has made this community home. We have seen members from the Community come from other places in Latin America, South Africa, in previous decades from Russia, also in Israel, which continues to be a growing set of our community population.

We are moving. Roughly 40% of our community has moved away from the typical 41st and Oak corridor where most of our Jewish community organizations physically sit. I'm speaking to you today from the Jewish Community Centre at Oak and 41st. We are very diverse, as I mentioned. 36% of the community was born somewhere else outside of Canada. This is the largest number in Canada for a Jewish community. And we are young. Roughly 20% of our community is under 14 years old.

I also want to take a pause for a moment and mention a very special group in our community. With us we have about 300 first generation Holocaust survivors still in our community, and we also have second generation and third generation Holocaust survivors. And why I'm mentioning them in particular is because when I think of hate and how hate affects us, it definitely affects us all in different ways. But for this specific group that deals with intergenerational trauma, every time they relive a hate incident they're reliving that trauma. Right? Whether it is racism in general or the particulars of Jew hatred.

So one last piece of information about our community. We have a number of institutions, as I mentioned, that represent us. You have here today CIJA, the Jewish Federation and the Holocaust Education Centre. We have four Jewish day schools, five part-time Jewish educational programs, mostly in synagogues, but not only, one assisted living and extended care facility, one multi-purpose family service agency, the Jewish Family Services, four housing societies and our community centre. I hope that this paints a picture of who we are, why are we presenting to you today and the partners at the table. I'm now going to turn it over to my colleague Nina Krieger, who will take on the next part of the presentation.

Nina Krieger: Thank you very much, Nico, and thank you, Commissioner and team. I, too, am joining from the traditional ancestral unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. Over the next few minutes I'll provide a brief overview of data and examples that speak to the rise of anti-Semitism that we have recently witnessed across the world. Canada and BC are not immune from these trends. I recognize that the focus of the BCOHRC's inquiry is on the increase in hate in the COVID-19 pandemic. As Nico alluded to, while incidents of anti-Semitism have increased over the last 18 months, anti-Semitism is a persistent presence in our society independent of COVID-19. If it did not originate with COVID, anti-Semitism has clearly adapted to and been amplified by COVID, with the pandemic used as a pretext for spreading hatred against Jews.

Anti-Semitism is defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance as a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred towards them. Rhetorical and physical



manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, towards Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

A bit of background about this working, non-legally binding definition. A distinctive feature of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which Canada joined in 2009, is that it brings together government representatives and experts in its mission to advance Holocaust education, remembrance, and research globally. Each delegation is comprised of policy makers and leading scholars, educators and museum professionals in the field of Holocaust studies and human rights.

The IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism was developed by an IHRA expert committee and adopted by consensus by member countries in an IHRA plenary in 2016. The definition has since been endorsed by numerous countries domestically, including by Canada as part of its national anti-racism strategy. Informed by experts in the field and adopted by consensus, the IHRA text is now the international standard for defining anti-Semitism. The definition and accompanying list of illustrative examples serves as an educational resource and a practical tool to distinguish hatred of Jews from legitimate discourse.

The slides that follow are by no means an exhaustive list, but a sample of recent anti-Semitic incidents with an emphasis on the BC context. Next slide, please. Thank you. Anti-Semitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and is often used to blame Jews for societal ills. It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits. Anti-Semitism often takes the form of graffiti in public spaces, such as this example from a park in Surrey. Next slide, please.

Anti-Semitism can also manifest through symbols such as the swastika signifier of the Nazis and the efforts of Nazis and their collaborators to systematically persecute and exterminate the Jews of Europe, resulting in the murder of 6 million Jews during the Holocaust. This story references a swastika painted next to a car of an identifiably Jewish resident of Kelowna this last summer. These symbols can target individuals, though Jewish passersby and witnesses are also deeply affected by such acts. Anti-Semitic acts also frequently target Jewish religious and cultural institutions, such as graffiti that defaced a Victoria synagogue on Holocaust Remembrance Day this year, a solemn day of remembrance for the victims of the Holocaust.

Next slide, please. Thank you. We have also seen a proliferation of anti-Semitism online, particularly via social media platforms, which are largely unregulated. And we know that what starts with words never ends with words, and that online hate has real world implications. This underscores the importance of critical thinking and media and information literacy, and building resilience against so called fake news, misinformation and conspiracy theories online.

During the pandemic we have seen a marked increase in inappropriate and highly offensive Holocaust analogies, evident in comparisons between public health measures and the treatment of Jews during the Holocaust. My colleague Shelley will expand on the theme of Holocaust distortion during the pandemic shortly.

Manifestations of anti-Semitism also include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived of as a Jewish collectivity, in a way that is distinct from criticism directed at other countries. Such anti-Semitism includes efforts to delegitimize Israel, demonize Israel, and subject Israel to double



standards. Next slide, please. It includes annihilationist language directed towards Israel and the Jewish people. During the May 2021 conflict in the Middle East, we witnessed at home and abroad alarming attacks on Jewish individuals, the targeting of Jewish community institutions, and anti-Israel vitriol on social media that affected many Jews, particularly youth. Next slide, please.

This chart reveals reported hate crimes data as provided by the Vancouver Police Department from 2018 to date. Data from other municipal police departments and the RCMP is not currently available. While reported hate crimes in Canada increased by 7% from 2018 to 2019, hate crimes and hate-themed incidents in Vancouver remained consistent during this period and only increased by one from 141 to 142. Vancouver incidents motivated by hate, prejudice, or bias increased by 97% between 2019 and 2020. This increase was driven primarily by anti-East Asian motivated incidents that went from 12 in 2000 to 98 2020, a 717% increase.

The Jewish community remains the most targeted religious group for hate crimes in Vancouver, and according to Statistics Canada, Jewish Canadians remain the most targeted religious group for hate crimes in Canada. While representing 1% of the overall population, the Jewish community is recipient of about 18 to 20% of all hate crimes committed in Canada. This is a striking statistic. Perhaps Jews are more likely to report acts of racism than other communities. This may be because Jews, having experienced 2000 years of discrimination culminating in the murder of 6 million, know better than others the consequences of failing to respond to hatred. Next slide, please.

This slide outlines a number of unreported anti-Semitic incidents targeting Jews and their community institutions. History has taught us that what starts with Jews never ends with Jews. Combating anti-Semitism is not only about protecting Jews, but it is essential to protecting all of us from the threat hatred poses to the very fabric of our diverse democratic society. Unfortunately, in recent years, and particularly during the pandemic, the VHEC and our partners have been called on with increasing frequency to offer programming in direct response to specific incidents of anti-Semitism in educational settings, from elementary schools to postsecondary institution. And we know from our engagement with students, teachers, administrators, and parents that the reverberations of anti-Semitic incidents in schools are complex and injuring.

I'd like to close this section of our presentation by sharing a letter we recently received from **[third party personal information removed]**, which I'm sharing with permission. **[third party personal information removed]** writes:

"I usually like school. I know a lot of kids, families, and teacher, and it makes me feel safe. On one Friday, something changed. We were finishing up lunch and getting ready to go back to class when one of the boys asked, 'Who here is Jewish?' I raised my hand. Another girl pointed to her Jewish friend. The boy then pointed at us with his hand as a gun and pretended to shoot us. Later, my friends told me about what happened earlier at lunch that day when kids in class were shouting 'Hail Hitler,' and 'Death to Jews.' I learned that all this started online with on Snapchat with these kids sharing memes and saying things against Jews and for Nazis. When it happened, I felt singled out and it made me feel bad. I thought this was all in the past, that after World War II we had moved on. I don't like to think or talk about it, but I thought I should share so that things like this don't happen to others and so they don't get worse."



These are, I think, quite the insights from a [third party personal information removed]. And in the wake of events in [third party personal information removed], the VHEC worked closely with our colleagues at CIJA to offer support and programming for the students and teachers in response to this incident. There's clearly much work to be done on the education and awareness fronts, and a need to ensure that efforts to recognize and resist anti-Semitism are advanced at all levels of society. I would now like to pass the floor on to my colleague, Shelley.

Shelley Rivkin: Thank you. Every time I hear that letter I get quite choked up, so... I also am joining you from the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh people, and I'm just going to speak very briefly about the role of the pandemic and hate. So throughout history, throughout Jewish history, plagues have brought a rise of anti-Semitism in persecution. So at some level it should be at no surprise that this pandemic, although we didn't see state sanctioned persecution, we saw individual behavior that re-traumatized many people in our community.

I have to say that the beginning of the pandemic, the lockout provisions and the social isolation were very traumatizing for many in our community. People in our community who had gone through the Holocaust, children who had been hidden, members of our community from the former Soviet Union who had to hide and deny their identity. The whole COVID experience was traumatizing. When the visual representation started to occur, I think this re-traumatized people. So, slide.

So I think one of the most difficult illustrations of this is when we started to see the yellow star, when we started to see the connection between vaccines and immunization, a public health measure being connected to the yellow star, which represents for so many Jewish people both a sense of othering, a sense of pending persecution, a sense of history repeating itself. Second slide.

When we also see a very respected public health official being compared to Minister Goebbels, probably the most terrifying man, using propaganda not against just the Jews but against many persecuted groups, this creates tremendous fear in our community. When we really see the rise of this kind of language, this kind of distortion, and this kind of statement. So just wanted to be able to kind of compare what we saw in terms of Holocaust distortion with the re-traumatizing of many individuals because of the COVID provisions. I'll now turn it back to Nico.

Nico Slobinsky: Nina, I think we go over to you on this section.

Nina Krieger: Thank you, Shelley, and thank you, Nico. In response to anti-Semitism, CIJA Pacific Region and the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver provide support to community members who report hateful incidents to law enforcement. CIJA acts as a support group to community members who are victims of anti-Semitic incidents, often engaging in restorative justice processes. In terms of political advocacy, our community issues include online hate. CIJA's efforts on this particular front are numerous. They have launched a social media literacy campaign to sensitize British Columbians to the potent role social media plays in contributing to bullying, harassment, intimidation, the dissemination of hate and threats. They have also increased resources for law enforcement, Crown attorneys and judges to ensure they receive sufficient training on how to apply existing laws to effectively address online hate.



Nationally, CIJA has been engaged in directing Statistics Canada to address the gap in data collection by allocating resources to create a national database of hate crimes where individuals can report online hate incidents. CIJA's National Office has also launched a campaign, Not on My Feed, to advocate for the reduction of toxic online hate. Next slide, please.

CIJA also plays a role in advocating for more robust law enforcement resources to counter hate and to build bridges to vulnerable communities. Designated hate crime units ensure that such incidents are investigated by officers who are equipped with the knowledge, experience and resources to do so. Additional resources are needed to bolster existing hate crime and community liaison units. Where such units do not yet exist, funding could be used to establish them. On the education front, as the leading Holocaust teaching museum in Western Canada, the VHEC develops and presents a range of programs that sensitize students, teachers and the general public to the dangers of anti-Semitism and hate more broadly.

As an anti-racism education centre, much of our work is realized in partnership with other groups, and we have engaged closely with Indigenous, Chinese, Japanese, Muslim, and LGBTQ2S+ communities, among others. We have a strong provincial, national, and even international reputation for developing education materials and professional development initiatives for educators in alignment with the BC curriculum.

And I think with the rise of anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia during the pandemic, more teachers than ever are turning to us for programs and resources that promote social responsibility, critical thinking, historical thinking, and empathy. These are big ideas in the BC curriculum and skills that are essential to our collective ability to resist disinformation, which as we have seen can pose a real threat to diverse societies and democratic norms. In response to these trends and the remote learning requirements during the pandemic, we recently launched a new free online workshop, Anti-Semitism: You Can Make a Difference. This explores this timely theme in an accessible format and aims to equip young people with tools for recognizing and responding to anti-Semitism.

I think fundamentally, teaching and learning about the Holocaust is about engaging with history, but also reflecting on its significance for the present day. Broad themes that emerge from a study of the Holocaust, such as the dangers of dehumanizing all members of a particular group, what is at stake when remaining a bystander, and the dangerous consequences of hate unchecked are perhaps more relevant than ever. Although the community's responses to hate are multi-pronged, challenges remain. While Genocide Studies 12 and another electives offer opportunities to integrate the Holocaust into classroom teaching, the Holocaust is not a mandated topic of study in BC. The many issues that are potentially addressed in the Social Justice 12 elective are at the discretion of individual teachers.

How to navigate the absence of the Holocaust in the BC curriculum is a challenge given the broad framework of big ideas as opposed to content-specific scope and sequence. Few students take Social Justice 12, so mandating the inclusion of the Holocaust here would be of limited impact. One can argue that grades 11 and 12 are far too late to introduce students to the topic. Instead, the Ministry of Education can consider how and when to introduce anti-racist pedagogy, which must also address anti-Semitism, throughout the K to 12 system. This could help ensure that all students



develop the skills, such as digital literacy, and attitudes, such as a social justice orientation, to preserve and strengthen civil society.

Robust professional development for educators navigating this complex terrain is needed and generally under-resourced. This echoes challenged flagged earlier in terms of training for law enforcement. Another challenge of that my colleagues and I have noted is the tendency to exclude anti-Semitism from much equity, diversity and inclusion training.

Furthermore, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism could be more widely adopted by professional bodies in various levels of government to assist in recognizing and responding to this insidious form of hate. I think a robust best practice-based definition of anti-Semitism can support policy makers, law enforcement educators and other frontline practitioners in upholding their respective mandates, thereby protecting the rights and security of Jewish citizens, and indeed all citizens. Thank you very much. Excuse me, I'm just losing my voice, and I would now like to pass the floor over to Nico, I believe.

Nico Slobinsky: Thank you, Nina. So at this point in time I would like to talk to you a little bit about the tools, services, and support that exists in our community. Over the last number of years, what we have noticed in this multi-prong approach to responding to hate, that sometimes incidents, whether they are reported to law enforcement or not, get reported to us in different ways. Through different community organizations or in different ways into our community. So I wanted to speak a little bit about that, and how do we provide those services and support?

So first of all, in our community we do have a Canada-wide community reporting portal. This is a page in the CIJA website, which is www.cija.ca. This is a great tool to take a room temperature at any given time to see what's happening in the community across the country. Perhaps part of the challenge is that it is a Canada-wide portal, and it could benefit from, in many cases, a more local adoption and distribution to the community. But this is definitely a place where community members or British Columbians at large can go to report hate incidents. And you would be surprised, this is sometimes, many times, the way into reporting a hate incident, and that gets then directed to us here locally.

I spoke earlier about the dedicated position for the Director of Community Security, and this was also a slide that wasn't really easy to put together for the reason that sometimes when I think of other minority communities who have dedicated position for a Director of Community Security, I cannot come up with a lot. And that is tough, right? I think of my children who have to go to a school that has three security guards, and I always ask myself why. Right? Why couldn't they just go to school where security guards will not be needed? Right?

But I want to see you little bit about this position and what this position does, and how it works with us. The Director of Community security focuses on four priority areas. One, ensuring the safety and protection of the Lower Mainland Jewish community, but also more and more responding to calls from smaller Jewish communities in the interior like Kelowna, Victoria and other places that are in need of these services. Facilitating the delivery of training and educational workshops to ensure key community organizations and leadership stay up-to-date of best practices and trends as they relate to community security.



Cultivating a volunteer network to help enhance the security preparedness of our local institutions, particularly around major community events. But also liaising with law enforcement, particularly around hate incidents targeting community institutions. It is very often that in our response to hate incidents, if there is a component that connects to law enforcement, that Federation, Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre and CIJA will be working together with the Director of Community Security to liaise with law enforcement.

We also have a community care line. This is not a dedicated care line to report hate incidents, it is under the [inaudible] of the Jewish Family Services, but it is an easy point of access for many in our community. Many who are clients of the Jewish Family Services. This helpline was established in March 2020, and I have a little stat for you from November 2020. Since November 2020, more than 500 unique calls have been received through this helpline. They involve things from requests for counseling and financial aid, food banks, home support, house intake, but also reporting as a first point of contact for hate-related incidents. And one of the most common incidents that we have seen, certainly in the pandemic, particularly in stratified settings in condo buildings, is the removal of mezuzahs from the doors of apartments that are occupied or owned by Jewish members of our community.

And the last the last point of contact for community, which is usually also how we get notified of the incidents if they don't come directly to us, is through the Rabbinical Association of Vancouver and the rabbis that represents the synagogues. And the reason why they get involved is because in many cases we notice is that when someone wants to report hate incident, they will go to someone in the community they feel comfortable with, that they know, that there's a level of familiarity. And rabbis very much play that role, they're spiritual and religious leaders in our community.

So often what will happen is a family that is a member of the synagogue or that knows the rabbi will reach to the rabbi and will speak to the rabbi about what happened. And it has happened certainly with incidents in schools, and universities, and in the workplace, and the rabbis will connect that family to us and then we will work all together to provide support in reporting, in answering to the incident, in providing education, or in providing funder further understanding for anyone involved as to the nature of the incident. And I think that to close our presentations for today I'm going to turn it over to Shelley, who's going to speak to you a little bit about the road ahead. Shelley?

Etti Goldman: Nico, Shelley had to go on an urgent matter.

Nico Slobinsky: Oh, OK.

Etti Goldman: Sorry.

Nico Slobinsky: Well, then I'll be speaking to the road ahead. Thank you, Etti, for letting me know. So, well, we thought this would be that last question that you asked. What else could we do, what our recommendations should include. What are the opportunities?

So first of all, we spoke a little bit about this earlier, the importance of defining hate. And yes, for the purpose of the inquiry, you are working with the definition of hate. What we want to add to that is that it is important to work with the affected groups to define their hate, and how they



experience it. Hate is hate, but groups do experience hate differently, and more importantly, hate is manifested in different ways depending who hate is targeting.

So the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism would be a vital tool that we would put forward in our fight against the rise of anti-Semitism. During the pandemic, but overall in the continuum of hate. The other thing I wanted to speak to you about is on the area of inclusion. Nina spoke a little about this in a previous section of this presentation, the importance of including education about hate crimes in the Social Studies 12 curriculum, but also making sure that anti-Semitism, the lived experiences of members of our community with racism, are recognized in opportunities for training. One of the areas that we're very challenged in is particularly in the areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion training, which we also spoke about.

When it comes to data collection, we are very supportive of all initiatives that pertain to disaggregated data collection. We think that we could benefit from having a standardized data collection that is disclosed on an annual basis and that provides input not only from law enforcement, but also from other sources that collect data on hate incidents. We think that this transparency will foster more trust in how communities, civil society, law enforcement and government can work together to tackle hate.

And the last thing that we would like to put forward in terms of the road ahead is the need to establish an anti-hate working group. All right? If we want to make a meaningful difference in how we fight anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred, we believe that there is room for community organizations to come together from the different minority communities to work in a working group that can report directly. Where this would sit, it depends on the structures, but to work directly with government and provide input into government's response to addressing hate, right? And involving policy work in a collaborative manner. We think that this is missing and this is an important step in having communities work together to combat hate. So toda raba, thank you, and I think over to you, Commissioner. This would conclude our part of the presentation.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: Thank you so much to each of you, and please do send our best to Shelley when you when you speak to her, I hope everything's OK. I have a number of questions, so perhaps I will jump in and then it pass it over to you, Sarah, is that OK?

Sarah Khan: Yes.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: Great. So on the Canada-wide community reporting portal, I had a couple of questions. Maybe I'll just ask them both at the same time. What do you see as the primary benefit of reporting? I noted that you talked about the opportunity for education, but I wondered if you could speak any more to why you want to encourage reporting and what you see as the benefits flowing from that. And whether you are able to share the results of that reporting from an... Well, anything that you're able to share from that, but in particular if you've noticed any intersectional results there. Are you kind of noting the gender identity of people who are reporting or whether people have disabilities, and whether you've noticed any intersections there or whether that's beyond the role of the portal.

Nico Slobinsky: Yeah, I can speak to that, definitely, and thank you for the question. The benefit of reporting and why we encourage reporting is because we believe in the benefit of having that data.



That's why we're also encouraging further reporting of the sharing of data province-wide. All right? It allows us to look at trends and what's happening across the country. It allows us to look at, oh, this is happening in Vancouver, but something similar is also happening in Montreal, right?

So it allows us to calibrate our community's response and supports that we provide internally to the community and community organizations. For example, two years ago many Jewish community institutions were targeted with threatening phone calls that resulted in false bomb phone calls, right? So we noticed with reporting that this was starting to happen in many parts across the country, and it started from the east all the way to the west, Victoria, right? So it allows us to calibrate our community response and supports available to the community.

It also allows us to quantify and qualify the types of incidents. Are these physical, is hateful graffiti in Jewish schools, which usually when we see in one school, rest assured that we will see them in the other schools as well. Right? so it gives us a holistic view of what's happening. Now, it also allows us to look at what's missing in terms of response, or in terms of measures, or in terms of liaising with law enforcement or liaising with government. It's like taking room temperature at any given time of the situation of hate and how it affects our community.

Now, in terms of trends or if we notice anything in particular in terms of intersectionality, that is a good question. I don't have a definitive answer for you in terms of that. I can tell you that what we see, usually in terms of waves of hate, as we talk internally. And the intersectionality of that is we see, for example, a wave of hate targeting community institutions. So this could be hate mail, graffiti, it could be a bomb threat by phone call. We also sometimes see a wave of hate targeting students in schools. And when we hear, again, from one public school in North Vancouver, the day after that, the week after, I heard of three schools in Richmond. Right? And two schools in New West.

And that was in the span of six weeks, right? So that's what we are seeing. I don't have the information as to how it affects, perhaps, or how it intersects with other subsets of our community's population. But I can get that information more to you. I can tell you that the last thing that we see with the reporting tool is, for example in the case of tenants, Jewish tenants and the mezuzahs on their doors. The little scroll that we hang on our doors. That is usually the trigger. We see that it's like if you are an owner of the strata building, it's less likely. If you are a tenant in the strata building, it's more likely, particularly for people that are in situations of a precarious housing situation. So in transition housing or in things like that, we notice we get a lot of those reports as well.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: Thank you, Nico, and yeah, anything you're able to share with us on terms of the results of the reporting portal would be much appreciated. And I'm not sure if you're intending on putting in written submissions later on in the process, but welcome to share it through that or whatever means works for you.

I did want to return, and this may be a question for you, Nina, although I appreciate that you're losing your voice, so thank you for being here with us and using so much of it up with us. But it's reflecting on what you told us, and I so appreciate the incredibly disturbing letter from the child that you shared, and brings home that no matter how much we know these things, to actually hear



them from the person who's directly impacted has an entirely different impact when we hear it. And so I'm really grateful to you for sharing that with us, and to her for being willing to share that.

And I wondered if you had any suggestions of how... You've talked about education pieces and recommendations there about embedding in curriculum, and I appreciate what you shared there, but I'm wondering if you have anything to share about the responses in the moment. If I heard correctly, you provide some of that support after an incident has happened, and I wondered if you could build that out a little bit. Tell us a bit more about what you've found works or doesn't work about that immediate response function.

Nina Krieger: Because our mandate is to encourage sensitivity and understanding about the dangers of anti-Semitism and racism broadly, we hope that much of the work that we do is preventative. The students that we engage with reflect the diversity of our region, and we often hear from students and teachers that an encounter with a VEHC program is among the most transformative of their school careers. Many of our most impactful programs feature eyewitnesses to the Holocaust sharing their testimonies of persecution, loss and survival with students, and they're featured in one of our long-standing programs called the Symposium on the Holocaust, and it's in its 47th year. And we actually now have teachers bringing classes that first attended a symposium as a student and tell us that they decided to become educators with a commitment to social justice because of their encounter with one of our survivor speakers years ago. So that's an interesting intergenerational aspect of our work that we're proud of.

But despite our best efforts, incidents do occur. We do not certainly... We engage with 25,000 students each year, but Holocaust education is not mandated in the province. And certainly we have encountered, as Nico has alluded to, a really significant rise in the last five years, but in particular over the pandemic, of incidents within school settings that we're tasked with responding to. And although we developed that new resource, Anti-Semitism: What You can Do to Make a Difference, to add to our arsenal of pre-emptive tools, and it can be used in responses to specific incidents to sort of dig in with students about what anti-Semitism is historically, contemporary manifestations, how they can recognize and respond, each incident, because the effects are so complex and profound... Sometimes we hear about it from a parent, sometimes administrators, sometimes a teacher, sometimes a friend of a parent in the... The effects on the students, and only the students in the in the affected community group but also the witnesses, the bystanders are also affected in different ways.

So the effects are profound, and each incident demands a bespoke response that involves close consultation between VHEC, CIJA, often we liaise with the teacher, CIJA takes the lead in perhaps touching base with the parents and the students, ensuring that they have the support that is needed. And often we engage Holocaust survivor speakers in going to the classrooms. Some of our trained educators, a member of our staff, in unpacking the incidents without also revictimizing the victims, and also, in a sense, victimizing the perpetrators. And the perpetrators may perpetrate for a number of reasons that could include just lack of knowledge and information.

And so each case requires a really bespoke solution, and it's something that we've been resourcing more intensely on staff. Because sadly, these incidents used to be something that we responded to every now and then, but they can now happen multiple incidents on a weekly basis, as Nico



suggested. But certainly demand a very careful, nuanced approach. And where they've been most successful, I think, is where all of the stakeholders are involved. The students are engaged with programming, the teachers, the administrators become involved, and often the parent groups as well. So I hope that that gives you some sense of the work that we do in that area.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: It does, thank you. I had a question for Shelley, so I'll just maybe post it here, and maybe one of you can answer it. If not, maybe, again, if you're planning on giving us any submissions. She talked about the history, that pandemics have often led to a rise in anti-Semitism throughout history, and I wondered if you had any good sources to point us towards there. And again, that might be a better question sent back to us in an email anyway. But if you're able to share that would be much appreciated.

Nico Slobinsky: Yeah, I will make a note of that and we'll send you some resources for sure.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: Wonderful. Thank you, Nico. Nico, sorry. I know another Nicos.

Nico Slobinsky: It's OK.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: Do you know, and this is certainly not something that's specific to anti-Semitism, but something that we're giving a lot of thought to, of course, is the role of education within schools, as you have spoken to so much. And I'm wondering as well whether you have any... It sounds like you do a lot of work in this area, as you've just spoken to, Nina, in terms of the bespoke responses, but also, again, pushing for changes in the curriculum and introducing changes within the young people that you reach. Do you have any recommendations to us or sources of evaluation of those kinds of programs? I think all of us instinctually believe that that's an effective response, but do you have evidence that you rely on to push for those changes in saying that, yes, indeed, it does make a difference?

Nina Krieger: There are a couple significant studies on the impact of Holocaust education, specifically on promoting empathy, social responsibility, that we can certainly share. One was commissioned in Canada by the Israeli Foundation that can speak to the potential impact that teaching and learning the Holocaust has on students, which is again not only about learning about the events of the Holocaust, but as a paradigmatic genocide. It provides a really useful framework for recognizing the escalation of persecution and reflecting on human behavior in times of moral crisis, and the consequences of various possibilities of action and inaction. So it's a very useful educational tool, and we're very fortunate.

I've been a member of The Canadian Delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, and the field really benefits from having this incredible international thinktank, in a sense, of the foremost experts across 35 member countries now. And they're constantly putting out material such as best practices in teaching and learning about the Holocaust that I think are very adaptable across contexts, as well. So certainly we can share those studies with you and resources with you.

And certainly I think there's often advocacy of making Holocaust education a mandated topic of study, and many states in the United States have such mandates. Some provinces, even in Canada, are moving in that direction. And the BC curriculum we recognize is framed around big ideas and



not necessarily set topics, so I think there are plenty of entry points, particularly at the elective levels, and that's all our programs and resources create those and make links with those entry points in the curriculum. But certainly there's opportunities to integrate anti-racism pedagogy across the K12 system and ensuring that that pedagogy includes and addresses anti-Semitism as well.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: That's great, thank you, Nina. I really appreciate the sharing of those studies. Last question for me, and then I'll pass it over to you, Sarah. You talked about the impact of online hate and Shelley walked us through the re-traumatizing. I believe that was Shelley, walked us through the re-traumatizing impact of the Holocaust distortion around the pandemic comparisons or analogies. And certainly this is something that we're hearing, of course, from many sources. I wondered if you had any recommendations that were specifically targeted at that issue of online hate in particular?

Nico Slobinsky: We have a full set of recommendations. Many of them are of federal nature, [inaudible] only. But in terms of the federal government we are looking at a strong mandate to regulate online hate, right? To define what online hate is, and also to make the social media giants accountable for properly dealing with online hate. I think that we have all seen lately how some of these companies actually profit from online hate and how they use it, right? So there's definitely that type of work.

The other recommendation that I think we actually included in the presentation, it's the need for a province-wide social media literacy [inaudible] that would educate those more [inaudible] all of us about the dangers of social media. I always use the example of the manifest of the hateful act in Christchurch, New Zealand. Within 24 hours, that illegal manifest was shared more than 1.7 million times. That's the speed. Let that sink in for a moment. So imagine a smaller setting in a school in North Vancouver where an image targeting a student of a minority group is shared within TikTok, Snapchat, you name it, with the school community. Right?

So again, we're coming from a place of education and the need to really put in resources there that are perhaps more proactive, less reactive in terms of, let's educate about the dangers of online hate. Let's educate about best practices in online hate. And we cannot do that alone. We believe that a province-wide campaign by the provincial government with different entities that operate in this space is much needed.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: Thank you, Nico. Over to you, Sarah.

Sarah Khan: Thank you so much everyone for these presentations. I just have a few additional questions for you. I really appreciated the examples that you shared with us of the anti-Semitism incidents that have been happening in BC. Have you been cataloguing all of these incidents by date and location, and is that something that you might be able to share with us?

Nico Slobinsky: Absolutely yes, Sarah. That's a really good question. I can tell you that all the information that we shared with you are from incidents that happened between March 2020 to November 2021. If you want the specific dates, we can give you the dates. Etti, I think when we did this work we actually were cataloguing these in anticipation of the work, so we can share the specific dates and locations also. There's a lot more, this was not an exclusive or extensive list of all the



incidents. For the benefit of time we tried to choose the most iconic but also to show that expressions of hate targeting our community have appeared in places from Kelowna to Kamloops to Victoria to Vancouver and beyond, right? But if you want that list we can make a note to give you the dates. The dates that we share with you, again, they're all from March 2020 to November 2021.

Sarah Khan: Thank you very much. And we're not trying to add to your workload, but if it is something that you are able to provide to us, we would really appreciate it.

Nico Slobinsky: Yeah, will do.

Sarah Khan: Nina, you had mentioned that there was a... I think this is what we heard, that you hadn't been able to access some data from the RCMP and municipal police services relating to hate crimes, and I'm wondering if you could elaborate a bit on the data that you weren't able to receive or access.

Nina Krieger: Yeah, I'll pass to Nico, actually. I think he's best positioned offer a fulsome reply.

Sarah Khan: Thank you.

Nico Slobinsky: Yeah, and the point of that is in many cases when we ask for the data, the data is made available to us. I think part of the challenge is that there is a lack of consistent reporting and standardized reporting. For example, if you look at police boards, right? In many cases police boards do report in our province numbers of hate incidents, but they do so not in standardized times, and not in a standardized way. So again, they may report on hate incidents this quarter, at the end of this year, but we may not have that information for two years, right?

So if we proactively seek that information we can access it, but we are trying to change that equation and say, if you want transparency and build trust and holistically engage communities in providing a response to hate, then the information about how hate is manifested, how hate is reported, the types of incidents should be made readily available. And perhaps it should be done solely at the provincial level, right? In an annual report by the Solicitor General, for example. So that's where we're coming from with that. So when we looked at the data, we have the [inaudible] data, we have Statistics Canada data because they report on it proactively every year. But for the rest of British Columbia, it was hard to find if we were not asking for it. And then when you were asking for it, all sorts of questions are asked from you as to, "Well, why do you need this?" Right? Which creates a problem with accessibility and transparency.

Sarah Khan: Thank you. And are you finding the same thing with the municipal police boards and the RCMP?

Nico Slobinsky: For the most part, yes. I will say that the exception to it are Vancouver PD and Victoria PD, and I will have to say also that we don't have contacted every municipal police to ask for this data. We try to go to the places where, for the purpose of this inquiry and sharing our information, to the places where have the most representation of the Jewish community, right? So perhaps the challenge is not only whether information is available or not, but also us reaching out to get that information. But I do strongly believe that we could all benefit from having more



transparency and more data available in a standardized report that is consistent and that is shared with British Columbians once a year or something like that.

Sarah Khan: Thank you very much. I don't have any further questions. Kasari, back over to you.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: I just have one small one I forgot to ask. Nico, when you went over the overview of the organizations and the mandates and the population, when you mentioned 300 Holocaust survivors, is that in BC? What were the parameters of the population that you're talking about?

Nina Krieger: [crosstalk] Yeah, that's in the Metro Vancouver area.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: OK, OK. That's what I thought.

Nico Slobinsky: And that, again, Kasari, that is not an exact number. We know that there is perhaps more than 300, but there are 300 that we know of and that we have contact with. I think that we were also waiting for some numbers from our Jewish Family Services and some other of our community partners who also provide services to this population, and we are blessed to really have with us 300 survivors in our community, but there's probably some more.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: Right. OK, thank you for that.

Nina Krieger: Just to give you another sense of perspective on numbers, we have 11 survivors that are active currently in outreach speakers program and that number diminishes every year.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: I'm sure. I'm sure. I think that that wraps it up from our side. I just wanted to say again, thank you so much for your time, and your energy, and the work that you do. And not just for what you've done here appearing before us, but all the work that you do to support folks in reporting these circumstances, and building these education models and having survivor speak and so on. So really grateful to hear that we've heard today, really appreciate all the follow ups that you've suggested that you will do. I appreciate that in advance. And Emily, did you want to speak about next steps?

Emily Chan: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah, happy to. Thanks, Kasari. A couple of dates coming up, a couple have been mentioned already. One is that we are launching a public survey in January for individuals who want to participate in the inquiry by sharing their experiences. So we do have a consultation meeting about that survey on December 1st. I think Etti and Nico have already RSVPed for that, but I'll send it as well to you, Nina, in case you're able to come. It's in the afternoon of the Wednesday, so we would love if you're able to join us.

And the other deadline that the Commissioner mentioned is the deadline for written submissions, and that's at the end of March of next year. So if you want any more information about that, you know how to contact us, and feel free to let us know. And just to echo again the thanks to all of you and to Shelley, I hope she's doing OK. [inaudible] Nico, what you said at the beginning about how difficult it is to talk about these kinds of things and put together this kind of presentation. So just wanted to tell you how much I can't thank you enough for doing that for this project. Thank you.



Nina Krieger: Thank you for the opportunity.

Sarah Khan: We really appreciate it. The time and effort that you put in is so... We're so grateful, and thank you.

Commissioner Kasari Govender: Thank you, everyone. Take care.

Nina Krieger: Thank you

Etti Goldman: Thank you.

Nico Slobinsky: Goodbye.

Carly Hyman: Thank you.

