



For Immediate Release
May 2021

Diversity Video Promotes Message of Compassion and Respect

(PENTICTON) - South Okanagan Immigrant & Community Services (SOICS) is continuing its work to create a more inclusive community and highlight the ongoing issue of racism and discrimination in the Thompson Okanagan - this time with the help of the Okanagan Chambers COVID Response Coalition, #OkWeGotThis.

SOICS has released a video titled 'What Do You See?' to raise awareness around the ongoing problem of racism towards ethnic minorities and the indigenous community and to encourage viewers to approach these groups with the same compassion and respect provided to other members of the community. The diversity video covers the Thompson Okanagan region featuring the communities of the South Okanagan, Peachland, Kelowna, Vernon, Salmon Arm, and Kamloops.

"Chambers of Commerce are grass roots organizations that know how important it is for leading business associations like ours to speak up when racism raises its ugly head and unfortunately it seems the pandemic has led to an increase in such activity," says Dan Rogers, Executive Director of the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce who co-chairs OkWeGotThis. "Our future success is very much linked to putting out the welcome mat for newcomers to the region and also not being silent when there is an act of racism so supporting SOICS on this powerful video only made sense."

The #OkWeGotThis initiative started over a year ago as a means for Chambers of Commerce in the Okanagan to work collaboratively to support those businesses and organizations that are facing challenges as a result of COVID-19.

The video, which is the second release in a series created originally to humanize and bring forward the faces of Essential Workers, has evolved into a wider message of understanding. Inspired by the experience lived experience of a young child as she interacted with her peers and struggled to build a sense of belonging at the age of three.

Cherry Fernandez, SOICS Executive Director, explains, "After months of being withdrawn from children her age, my 3-year old's question "Do you like being brown?" gives insight that even at a young age she was being singled out as different based on her ethnicity. It demonstrates that discrimination, racism, and hate impact us all...even our most vulnerable – our children."

Research clearly shows that children not only recognize race from a very young age, but also develop racial biases by the ages of 3 to 5¹ however, instances of racism and discrimination unfortunately stretch far beyond childhood.

¹ 2009 Highreach Learning Inc, Erin N/ Winkler, Ph.D.





**SOUTH OKANAGAN
IMMIGRANT AND
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

340 Ellis St., Penticton B.C. V2A 4L7
Tel 250.492.6299
Fax 250.490.4684
www.soics.ca

The video's messaging is clear: Be proud of who you are and always remember that you are not alone. It speaks to the beauty in diversity and the strength that can be found in mutual respect and understanding.

Originally shared for the 8th Annual Multicultural Festival, the video has been gaining traction through private screenings. The video will be a launching pad for increasing awareness, stimulating conversation and building greater understanding. SOICS hopes to provide tools to be an ally and be a part of creating more inclusive communities.

What Do you See? | #OkWeGotThis
Public Release: **Thursday May 6, 2021**
<https://youtu.be/GORCKBhZP9Y>
(Available on the day of release)

Find out more about Anti-racism initiatives at www.soics.ca

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Cherry Fernandez
Executive Director SOICS
P: 250-492-6299
E: cherryf@soics.ca

Dan Rogers
Executive Director Kelowna Chamber
P: 250-469-7356
E: dan@kelownachamber.org

About SOICS

South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS) is a one-stop shop that provides a range of free services to all immigrants, temporary foreign workers, post secondary international students, and refugees through education, advocacy and projects, which assist in their integration. We have been managing community projects, building partnerships and achieving integration and multicultural outcomes in the South Okanagan-Similkameen region for over 40 years. Our service area includes Summerland south to Osoyoos and west to Princeton, including Naramata, Kaleden, and OK Falls. Indirectly, we serve the broader community by enhancing its capacity to increase the pace of social and economic integration for newcomers so that they are contributing to the community as civically minded members.

About #OkWeGotThis | Okanagan Chambers COVID Response Coalition

The Okanagan We Got This initiative (#OkWeGotThis) consists of the Chambers of Commerce in Enderby, Armstrong Spallumcheen, Greater Vernon, Kelowna, Peachland, Penticton and South Okanagan, as well as the Greater Westside Board of Trade. The coalition is helping businesses in the Okanagan access information on government programs and guidelines, share stories of resiliency, and reinforce the power of shopping local as a means of economic recovery from the current pandemic. You can learn more about the collaborative efforts of the Chambers at: <https://www.okanaganwegotthis.com/>





**Link to Diversity Video:
What Do You See? | #OkWeGotThis**

<https://youtu.be/GORCKBhZP9Y>

Other Resources:

- Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network
 - <https://www.resiliencebc.ca/learn-more-about-racism/anti-racism-tools/>
- Respect Network
 - <http://www.respectnetwork.ca/index.php/>
- Focus on Diversity
 - **[“Companies that have more diverse management teams have 19% higher revenue due to innovation.”](#)**
- Unlearn Racism
 - <http://unlearnracism.ca>
- How to Be an Ally
 - Refer to FREE Bystander Training - Hollaback! - https://www.ihollaback.org/app/uploads/2016/11/Show-Up_CUPxHollaback.pdf
 - 5D's Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay, and Direct (Hollaback!) <https://www.ihollaback.org/bystander-resources/>

Community Organizations Support Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives

South Okanagan Immigrant & Community Services www.soics.ca

Kamloops Immigrant Services <https://immigrantservices.ca/>

Shuswap Immigrant Services Society <http://www.sissociety.ca/>

Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan <https://socialplanning.ca/>

Vernon & District Immigrant & Community Services Society <https://www.vdicss.org/>

Kelowna Community Resources <http://www.kcr.ca/>

Okanagan We Got This <https://www.okanaganwegotthis.com/>

