



Growing Recruitment and Representation in Planning: Findings from the PIBC Equity Audit

Eve Hou and Kai Okazaki, PIBC JEDDIA Working
Group Co-Chairs and Miranda Eng, RADIUS SFU

Planning Institute of BC (PIBC) Webinar | October 14, 2026

As part of SFU, RADIUS is on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Səlílwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), q̓íçəy̓ (Katzie), and kwikwəłəm (Kwikkwetlem) Nations.



Growing Recruitment and Representation in Planning:

Findings from the PIBC Equity Audit

Webinar Agenda

Welcome and Setting the Space

Part 1. Foundations and Perceptions of JEDDIA

- **Group share:** Understandings and perceptions of JEDDIA
- JEDDIA in thought, theory, and reality

Part 2. Equity Audit Findings: A Systems View

- Building our systems lens (iceberg model, two ways)
- **Individual reflection:** Social location wheel

Part 3. Equity Audit Findings: Diving Deeper into Key Themes

- Key insights and findings
- **Group share:** Observations, aha moments, and Q +A

Wrap-up and Next Steps

Getting to know each other

Chat: Introduce yourself!

- Name, pronouns
- Location and whose lands you are on

Getting to know each other

Poll: How would you describe your planning field / role / interest?
Select all that apply.

- Land-use planning & development
- Residential & commercial planning & development
- Facilities & infrastructure planning
- Transportation planning
- Social planning & policy
- Housing planning & policy
- Health planning
- Community engagement and development
- Indigenous planning
- Heritage planning & policy
- Environmental planning
- Parks & recreation planning
- Resource management planning
- Economic development
- I am a planning student
- I am not a planner, but I work with and support planners
- Other

Getting to know each other

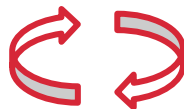
RADIUS SFU has a vision to transform the economy, from our workplaces to wider systems change. We do this through our dual approach:



Consulting & Training

We work directly with institutions and decision-makers to build inclusive leadership, cultures, and policies so underrepresented staff and communities can contribute, lead, and thrive.

Services include training and leadership development training, policy reviews and equity audits, action planning, research, and impact measurement.



Community Programming

We work directly with impacted communities and changemakers from Indigenous, Black, migrant, and equity-deserving groups to equip them with the capacity and connections to grow their leadership and economic livelihoods.

Programs include our Refugee Livelihood Lab, Health Equity Action Lab, Black Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, Hastings Crossing Food Entrepreneurship Collective.

Getting to know each other

Poll: Why did you come to this webinar?

- Justice, Equity, Decolonization, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (JEDDIA) is important to me and I want to feel seen and heard
- I'm curious about JEDDIA in practice and in the planning profession
- I'm curious about the PIBC equity audit findings
- I need CPL Learning Units and this was free
- I'm skeptical of increasing representation in the planning profession
- I'm skeptical about JEDDIA

Leaning into the Learning Zone

These conversations, and the learning, unlearning, and growth for them, often entail leaving our "comfort zone."

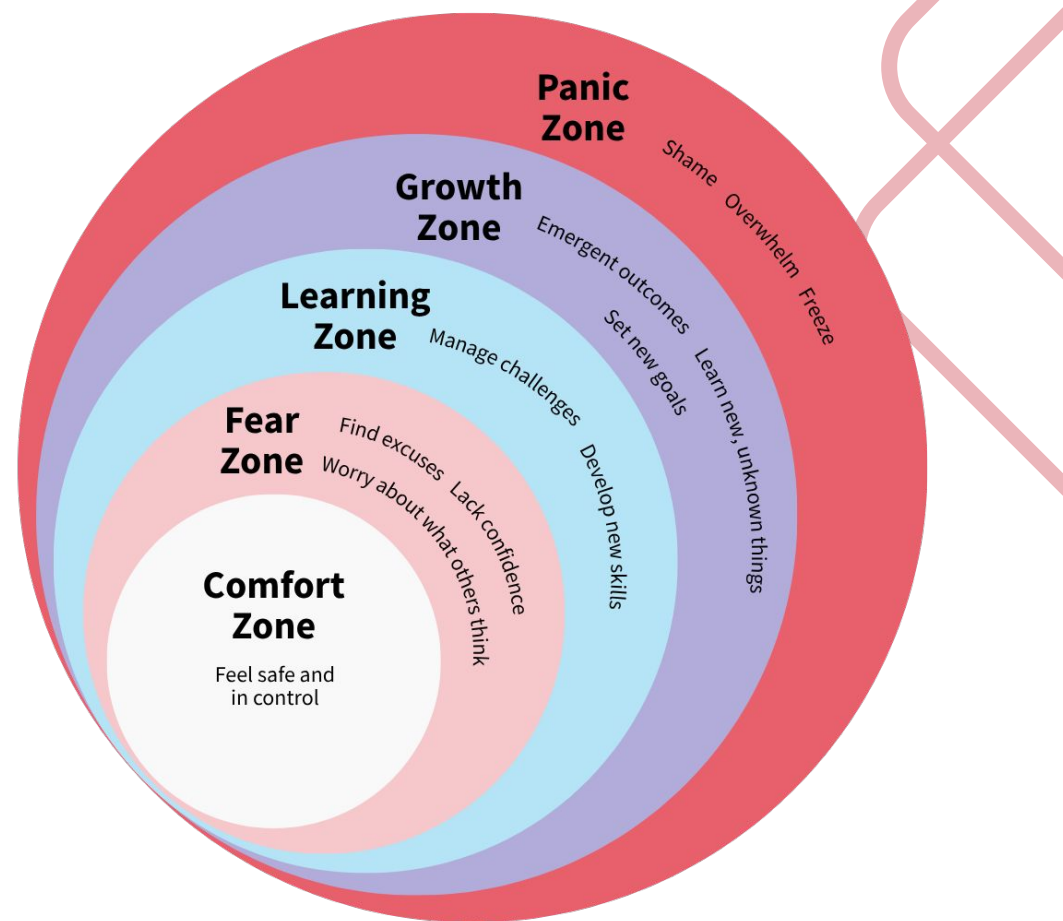


Figure: The Growth Zone (Image adapted from Page, O. (2020, November 4). How to leave your comfort zone and enter your "growth zone". Positive Psychology. <https://positivepsychology.com/comfort-zone/>)

Source: SFU RESPECT Program, Learning Bundle 1.3: Strategies for Holistic Learning

Group Guidelines for Accountability and Care



Own Your Words and Actions (Intent & Impact Matter)



Lead with Curiosity and Challenge Yourself by Choice



Accept Openness rather than Closure



Do not Debate Validity of the Project and Findings



Show and invite authenticity and vulnerability



Respect the Journeys, Stories and Experiences



Take Care During & After the Session



Check in, Reflect, Debrief

Part 1:

Foundations and Perceptions of JEDDIA



Group Check-in

When it comes to the planning profession,

- What does Justice, Equity, Decolonization, Diversity, and Accessibility (JEDDIA) mean to you?
- How is JEDDIA perceived?



JEDDIA in Thought

Common rhetoric and misconceptions:

JEDDIA = Diversity and Hiring Quotas

All EDI / DEI / JEDI / JEDDIA work is focused on diverse hiring.

JEDDIA = Identity

Someone who is Indigenous, Black, and/or from an equity-deserving background automatically has a JEDDIA lens and inclusive practices.

JEDDIA = Loss for Me

JEDDIA will take away opportunities for me.

JEDDIA in Theory

Inequality

Unequal access to opportunities



Equity

Custom tools that identify and address inequality



Equality?

Evenly distributed tools and assistance



Justice

Fixing the system to offer equal access to both tools and opportunities



JEDDIA in Reality



Photos of the **Hogan's Alley and Chinatown walking tour (put on by Hogan's Alley Society and hua foundation)**, attended by RADIUS SFU team members along with collaborators from Vancity, BC Community Alliance, Hastings Crossing Business Improvement Association, Inner Activist, Law Foundation of BC



Simplifying JEDDIA:

“The people closest to the problem are often closest to the solution.”

Part 2:

Equity Audit Findings: A Systems View



EQUITY AUDIT PROCESS

Phase 1: File Review (August to October 2025)

Phase 2: Engagement (October to December 2025)

Phase 3: Reporting (December 2025 to May 2026)

Files included:

- Several policy and process documents governing PIBC, including the Bylaws, Board Manual, CPL Guide, membership and award processes, etc.
- Several policy and process documents governing the planning profession including the various accreditation pathways and processes, requirements, the Registered Planning Professional Competency framework, etc
- Past and ongoing PIBC initiatives, including the Planning Practice & Reconciliation Committee and Sanala Planning's Phase 1 report

Engagement process included:

- Engagement planning and question design with the JEDDIA Working Group
- Online Survey: Open invitation to prospective, current, and past planners from October 29 to November 21, 2025 and completed by **142 participants**.
- Focus groups and interviews: Open recruitment call to meet with prospective, current, and past planners who face systemic barriers and challenges, resulting in **three virtual focus groups with 10 participants and seven 1:1 interviews**.
- The online survey and focus groups were promoted through PIBC communication channels and amplified by JEDDIA Working Group, RADIUS SFU, and Live Educate Transform Society.

Reporting and revisions included:

- Draft report development by RADIUS SFU and Live Educate Transform Society
- Initial review conducted by JEDDIA Working Group Co-chairs and Kelly Chan, PIBC Manager of Member Programs & Services
- Review conducted by JEDDIA Working Group members and Dave Crossley, PIBC Executive Director
- Feedback workshop conducted with RADIUS SFU and JEDDIA Working Group
- Final report submitted and received by the PIBC Board in June 2026

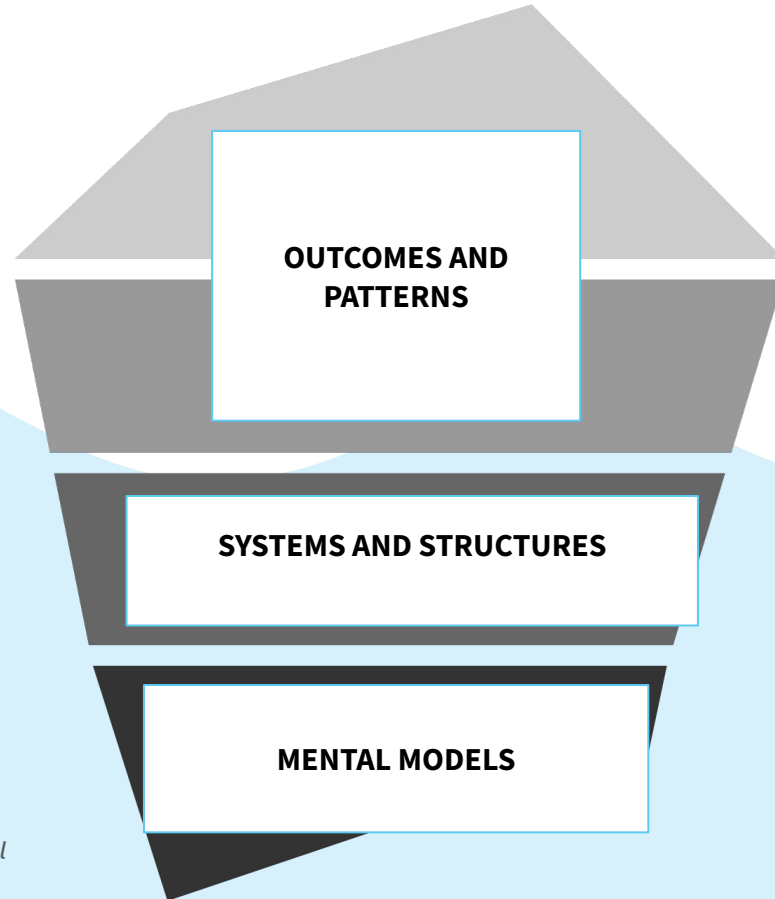


Iceberg Model #1: Looking at the Planning Profession

Outcomes and patterns: *What are we seeing? What are the impacts?*

Systems and structures: *What culture, policies, practices help normalize and institutionalize beliefs and values?*

Mental models: *What assumptions, beliefs, and values do people hold about a system? What beliefs keep the system in place?*

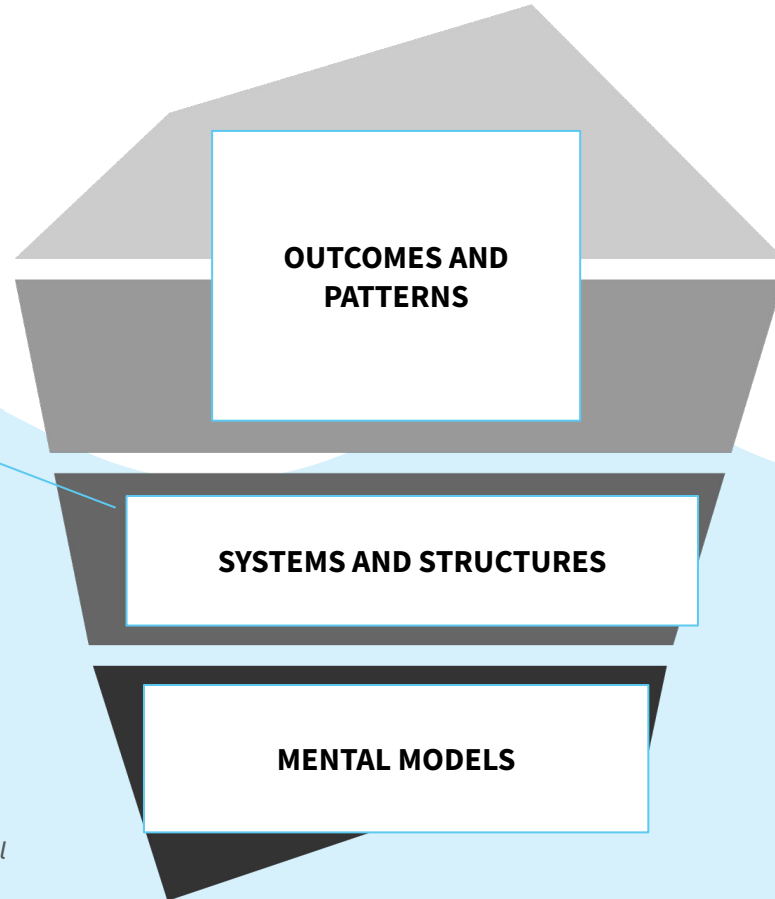


Iceberg Model #1

Structures are the institutional pieces (culture and policies, practices, and processes) that **create and reinforce** what we expect to be 'Right', 'Normal', 'Excellent', 'High Performing', 'Valuable'.

For PIBC and the Planning Profession:

- Certification pathway eligibility and requirements
- Career advancement based on individual, Western-style achievements and education (publications, titles, narrowed metrics of project evaluation)
- PSB Core Competencies missing community-based and relational competencies
- What is perceived to count/not count for CPL units, etc

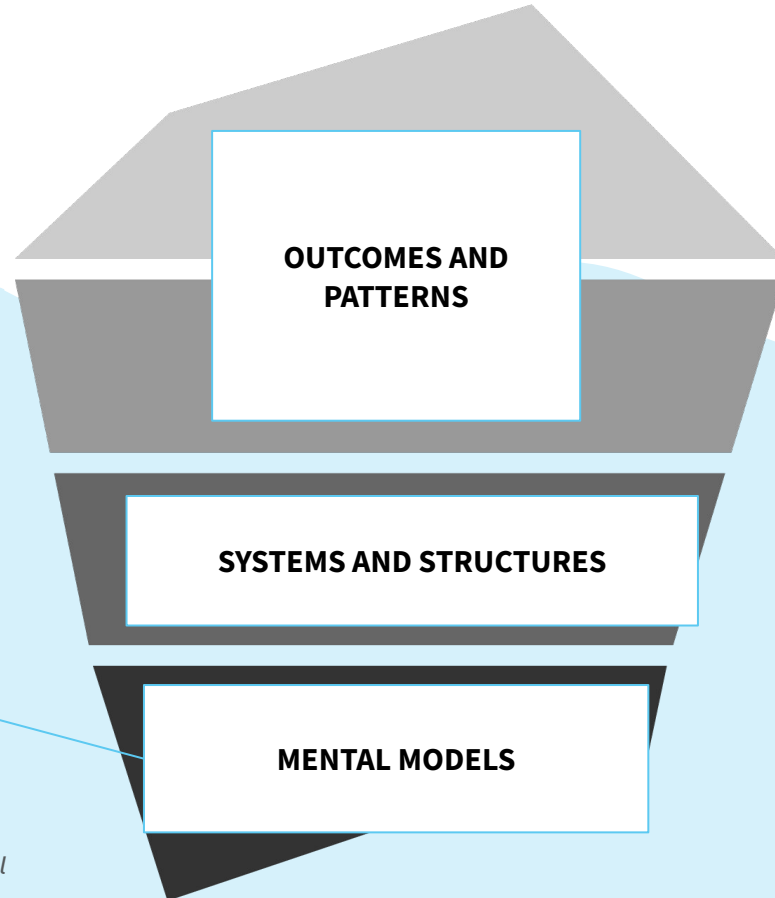


Iceberg Model #1

A **mental model** shapes what we believe, value, and define as 'Normal', 'Excellent', 'High Performing', 'Valuable'.

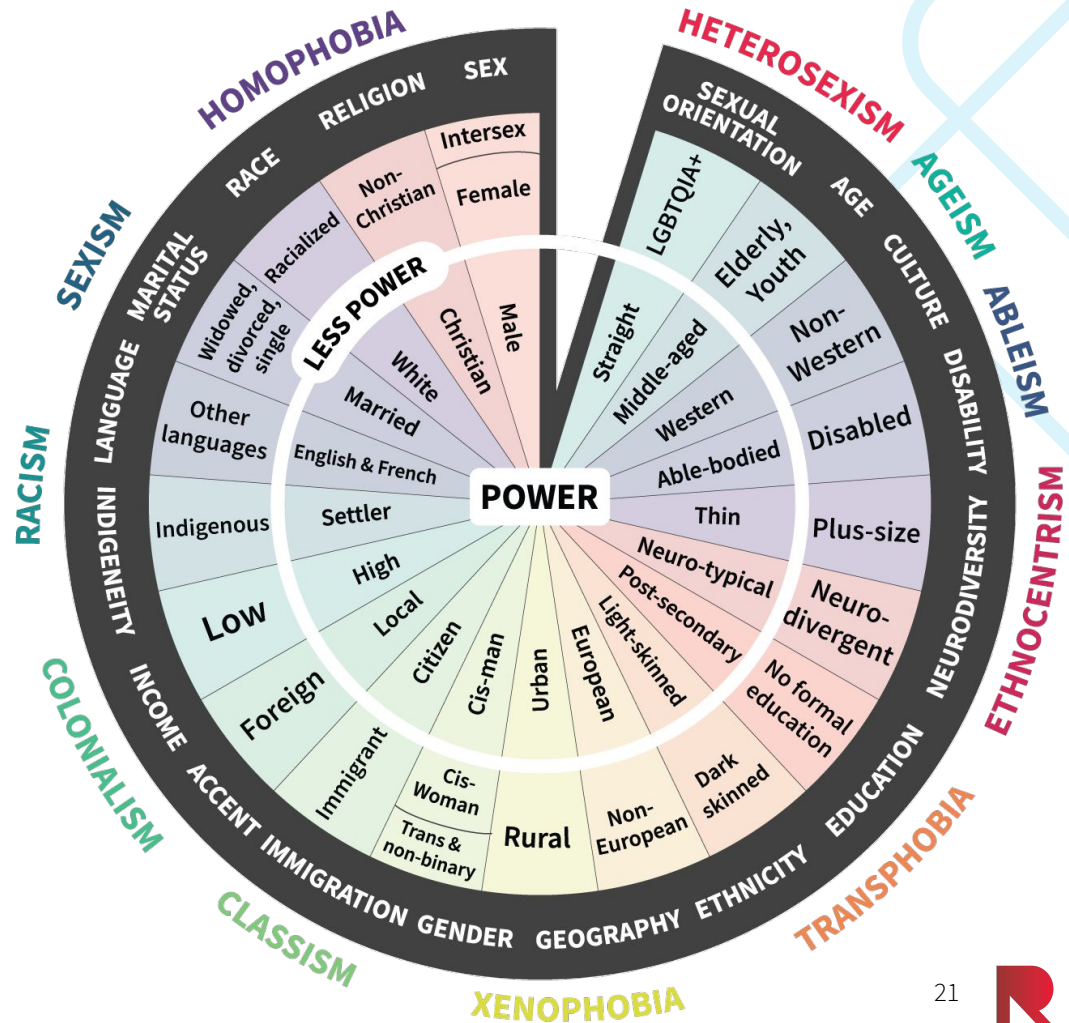
For PIBC and the Planning Profession:

- Technical skills are more important than relational competencies
- Eurocentric approaches are more legitimate and right than Indigenous approaches and knowledge
- institutional experience is better than community roles
- Undervaluing lived and community experiences



Reflection Exercise:

The **social location wheel** is a tool to help understand the dominant cultural and institutional norms shaping our mental models and what we normalize, admire, and value.



REFLECTION EXERCISE

- **Where am I on the wheel?**
- **In the planning profession, where are most decision makers situated on the wheel? (i.e. Directors of Planning, university faculty, Professional Standards Board, etc)**
- **How might this impact what PIBC and the profession considers as “normal,” “right,” “professional,” “knowledge,” “qualified,” “valuable,” “good fit” ?**

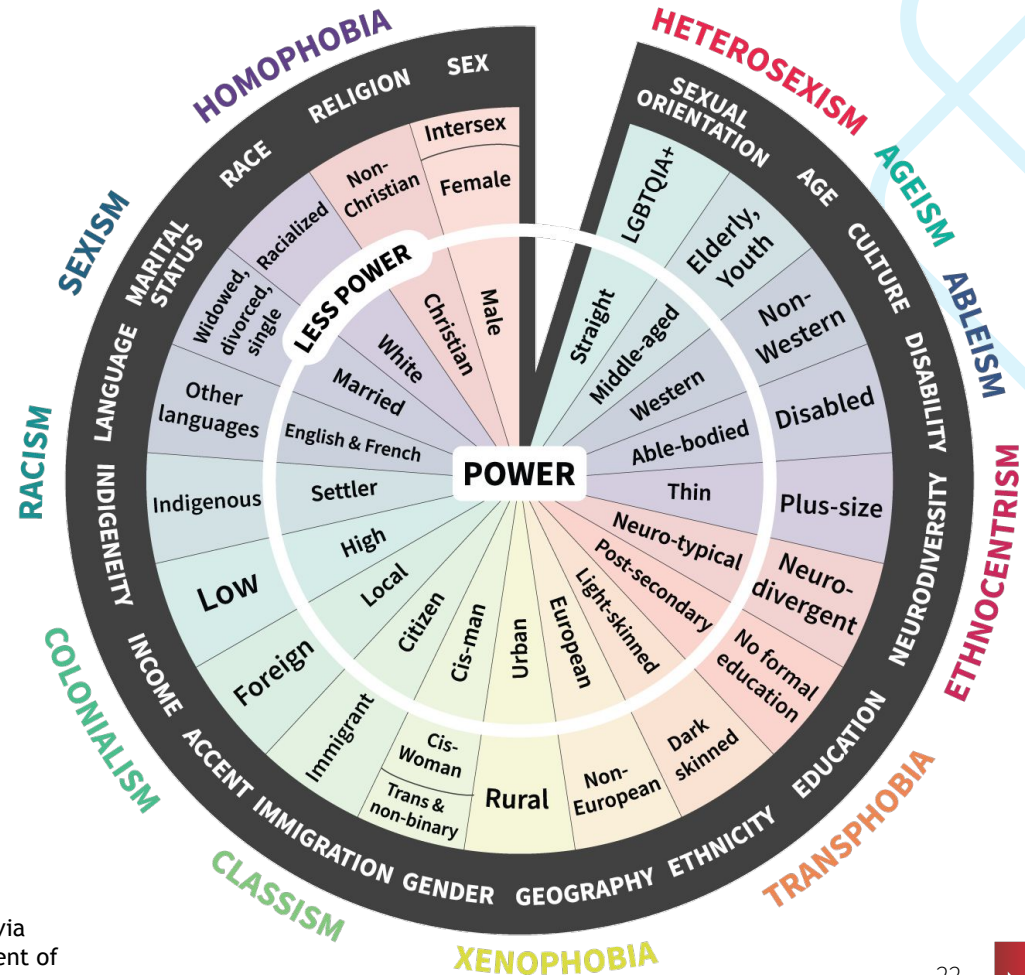
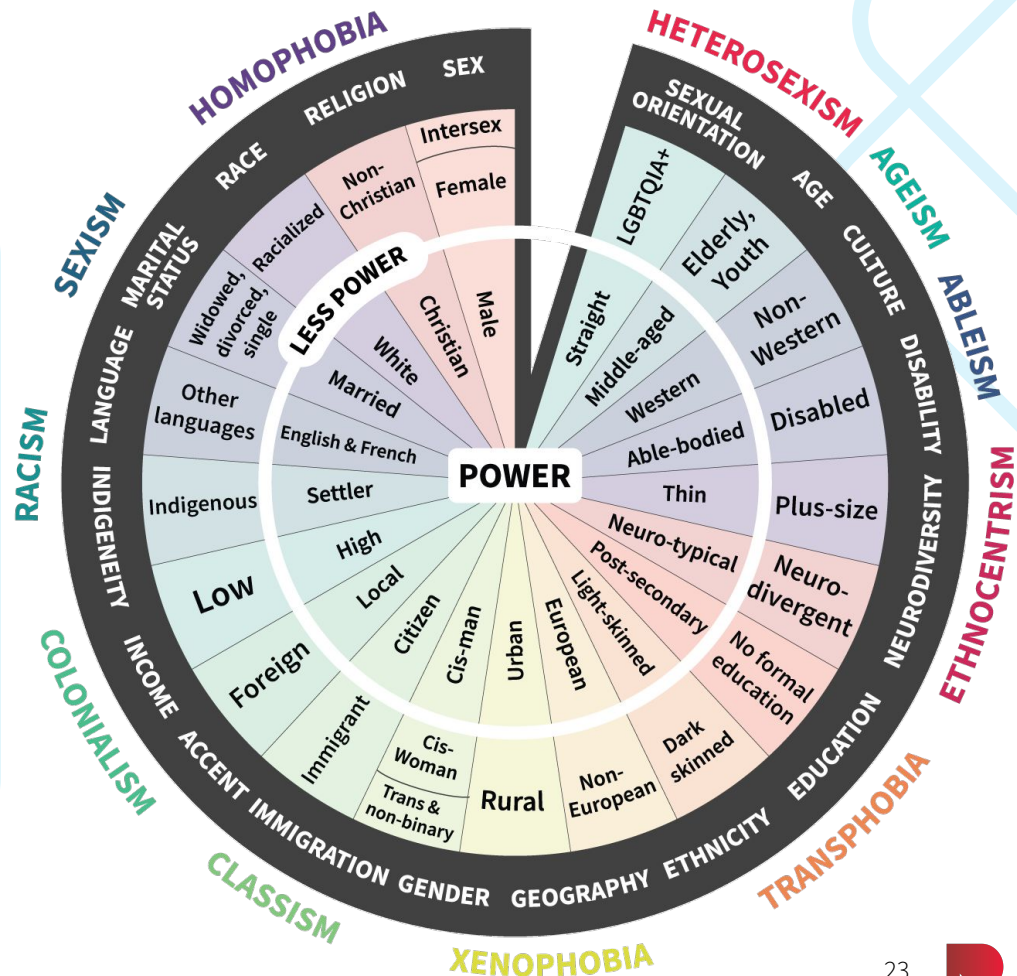


Image Source: RADIUS 2023, adapted from Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), Sylvia Duckworth (2020), and The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW-ICREF, 2009)

REFLECTION EXERCISE

- In BC and the Yukon, where do our communities sit on the wheel?
- What about communities closest to and most impacted by challenges (i.e. housing affordability, climate emergency, inaccessibility, etc) - where do they sit on the wheel?
- How might this impact how we understand problems and design solutions in planning?
- How might that impact trust in the profession, and how it can foster “inclusive, resilient and thriving communities?”



Iceberg Model #2: Diversity as an Outcome

Three conditions for diversity:

Inclusion: What do power dynamics, psychological safety, and organizational culture look and feel like? Do people feel valued and respected, can they thrive?

Equity: What practices, processes, and policies are there or not there to support needs, address biases, and eliminate structural barriers for recruitment, career development, recognition, and retention?

Accountability: What culture, practices, policies, and resources are in place to increase awareness, action, and responsibility to address challenges and advance change?



Iceberg Model #2 | Case Study in Recruitment and Retention

DIVERSITY

*Organizational commitments, right language (“Brochure was shiny”)
Challenges in retaining staff leading/working on files and projects with Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving groups, impacting reputation*

EQUITY

Emphasis on equitable recruitment but not talent management and mentorship, acting appointments, and promotions

INCLUSION

Externally, the organization looked promising, but after joining, workplace culture was not inclusive, safe, or supportive for staff

ACCOUNTABILITY

Workload and urgency were in conflict with relational community approaches.

Supervisors and leaders did not have strong inclusive leadership competencies (i.e. defensiveness, conflict avoidance, not providing feedback to support growth, accountability for change and repairing harm)



JEDDIA in Practice

JEDDIA ≠ Diversity and Hiring Quotas

Focusing on diversity alone can be harmful to incoming staff without the conditions of equity, inclusion, and accountability in place.

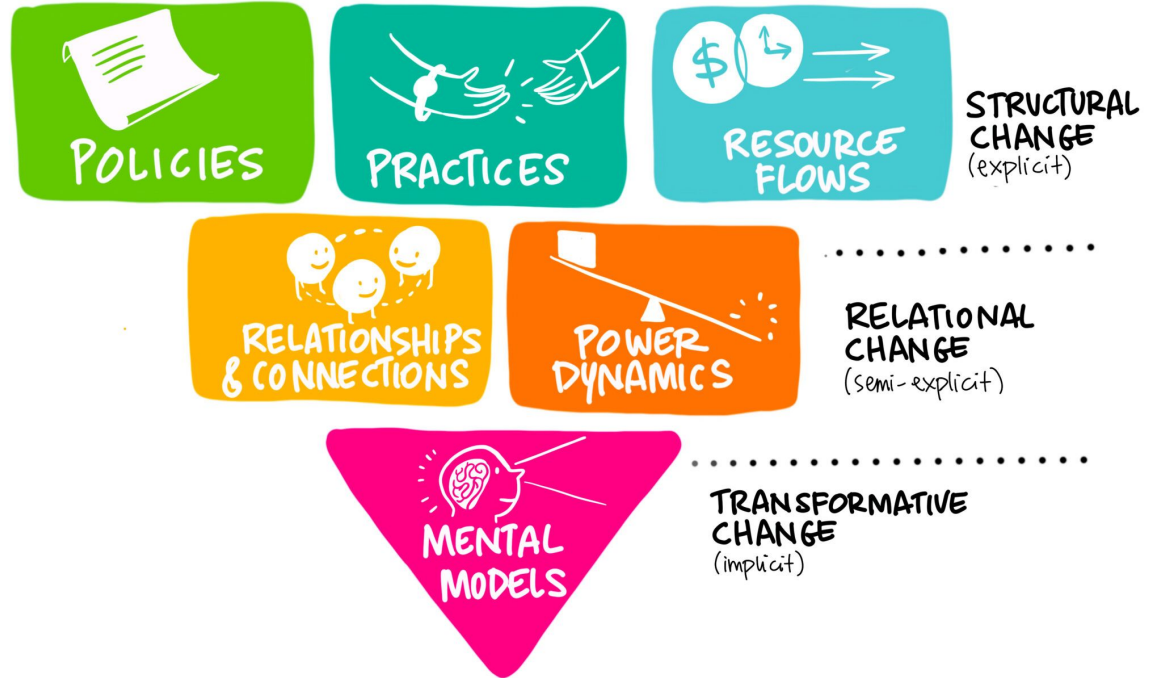
JEDDIA ≠ Identity

Just because someone is from an underrepresented group does not mean they have a JEDDIA lens. It does not mean they can work well with community, understand systemic barriers, advance Reconciliation, and be a good leader.

JEDDIA ≠ Loss for Me

Changes in policy, practice, and culture can be widely beneficial.

SIX CONDITIONS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE



JEDDI in Practice

Approaching the PIBC Equity Audit

Questions?
Aha moments?
Observations?



Part 3:

Equity Audit Findings:
Diving Deeper into Key Themes



Perceived State of Diversity and its Impacts on Planning Processes and Outcomes

Among the 160 participants, perceptions of diversity within the planning profession in BC and the Yukon varied:

- About half (50.7%) rated as ‘some diversity’;
- Nearly one-third (31%) rated diversity as low
- 17% rated the profession as diverse or very diverse.

Participants spoke to limited representation of Indigenous planners, newcomers, racialized communities, and people with disabilities and those coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds —**particularly in leadership roles (“cappuccino effect”).**

“

- *“A lack of diversity means they come to the same conclusions about what the solutions to problems ought to be, so it means the policies that government planners and planning consultants provide aren’t as effective as they ought to be.*

Most of the people who work on the policy—not questioning their professional integrity, more their blinders—are from the same type of economic background, and it led to an impact where the policy wasn’t useful for the average person.”

- *“Accessibility isn’t prioritized when no one at the table understands disability firsthand. Most planning is still designed for able-bodied adults aged 18–60.”*
- PIBC Equity Audit engagement participants

”

Definition of Planning and Planning Competencies

There are persistent hierarchical and colonial norms that continue to guide and sustain how things are done, who is considered an expert, and what and who is valued in the profession and in workplaces.

Structures and systems that reinforce this include:

- The definition of planning (PIBC's 'What is planning' website, History of Planning, etc)
- PSB RPP Competencies (about compliance and tolerance - 'Understand demographics of society and diversity and inclusiveness considerations including, but not limited to Aboriginal people')
- The 18 CPL Learning Units (LUs) having a minimum of 9.0 Organized & Structured LUs, and a maximum of up to 9.0 Independent and Self-Directed LUs

“

- *“Planning is still shaped by colonial systems and expectations.”*
 - *“There’s a lack of Indigenous planners because the pathways aren’t built with Indigenous realities in mind.”*
- PIBC Equity Audit engagement participants

”

Barriers and Complexity of the Certification Process

The certification process surfaced much frustration around the barriers and complexity, particularly when there are limited accredited and recognized programs, lower incentives, and return on investment.

Unrecognized education and/or experience:

- Only four accredited degree programs in BC (UBC, SFU, UVF, UNBC) and none in the Yukon (of the 17 total universities in urban centres across Canada)
- Despite extensive planning experience, other Canadian and international university degrees still require the PLAR certification pathway
- Narrow definition for 'Employment in Planning' on PSB's website to meet the practical work experience requirements for certification

Complexity of the PLAR Process

- Participants described it as a high-barrier process that is overly complex, administratively burdensome, and difficult to navigate. The volume of documentation, narrative writing, and outdated competency formats were cited as major deterrents
- Particularly complex for newcomers who are unfamiliar to these systems and processes, and who have difficulty finding evidence of experience and portfolio examples

Time Limit and Leaves

- The period of a membership leave is eligible from 6-24 months, but is counted within the 7 year time limit for the accredited program certification process. Parental leave could take up to 1/5 of this time limit.

"I was a candidate member and had to go on maternity leave during that time. My candidacy was able to be paused but not the 7 years to get my accreditation. I was unable to work while on maternity leave and therefore had less time to accrue work experience and hours or work towards my designation, which felt a bit of an oversight for birthing parents."

- PIBC Equity Audit engagement participant

Perceived Value of Certification

Many spoke to the certification being costly and demanding to attain and maintain, yet is not required or rewarded to practice or advance as a planner.

Survey Question: *Considering the context of your work, career progression, and the profession, what is the value of being a "certified" planner?*

What we heard: (132 survey responses):

- 4.5% indicating that it is *Not important*
- 19% indicating *Low importance*
- 29% indicating it is *Somewhat important*
- 26% indicating it is *Important*
- 22% indicating it is *Very important*

Professional Value and Incentives

- Certification provides credibility, ethical assurance, risk mitigation, professional legitimacy, networks, visibility, and career mobility
- Diminishing incentive when individuals without certification hold equivalent titles, responsibilities, and compensation

Growing Disconnect with Planning Practice

- Certification is perceived as more closely aligned with traditional land-use/development planning than the broader roles planners now occupy

Cost and Return on Investment

- Certification process and exams are viewed as costly and time-intensive
- Perceived benefits are inconsistent, with limited employer recognition, salary incentives or salary premiums
- Cost barriers can disproportionately affect racialized planners, newcomers/internationally educated planners, caregivers, people with disabilities, sole proprietors, and those balancing work and education

Perceived Value of PIBC Membership

Participants spoke to cost membership fees and the difficulty and disincentives of meeting required Continuous Professional Learning when there is no/little return on investment.

Survey Question: If you are a PIBC member, are there barriers or disincentives in maintaining your membership?"

What we heard: Of the 127 responses in the survey:

- 52% responded 'Yes'
- 32% responded 'No'
- 16% responded 'Not applicable' as they were not PIBC members

Value for money

- High membership fees were the most frequently mentioned barrier from nearly one-third (31.5%) of respondents, and 12% speaking to limited material or reputational consequences on their career and credibility if they discontinued their membership.
- Costs are an increasing challenge with salaries not adjusted for inflation, membership fees not being covered by employers, CPL requirements costing more than professional development budgets, and being too expensive for nonprofits and sole proprietors.
- Social and networking event offerings are perceived as less helpful and interesting, do not feel inclusive or accessible (i.e. needing to buy drinks at a bar)
- Membership fees on leave is still ~32% the amount of the full Certified membership fee for a membership they actively cannot use.

CPL requirements and topics

CPL requirements and reporting were seen as barriers with limited capacity, professional development funds, and at times, little relevance to their planning interests and roles

- Barrier of meeting CPL requirements and the cost and administrative process to maintain them with competing high workloads, caregiving, cultural, and community responsibilities
- Little flexibility with carryover, however there is a waiver for leave status
- CPL topics are largely focused on land-use planning and less on social, environmental, heritage, Indigenous planning, community engagement, and public policy
- No mandated learning on Indigenous cultural safety, inclusive planning with communities, and/or inclusive leadership practices
- Currently a maximum of 9.0 Independent and Self-Directed learning units out of 18 required per year
- Gap in what is considered and counted for CPL versus what is perceived

- *“CPL requirements that don’t fully recognize Indigenous planning, Nation-based work, cultural responsibilities, or community-led processes as legitimate planning learning.”*
- *“Much of the most meaningful learning I do isn’t captured by the current categories. Limited relevance of some professional development offerings...”*
- *“CPLs are getting increasingly hard to keep up year to year given my workload.”*
- *“For experienced practitioners, the [CPL] process can feel so onerous that it may ultimately push us away from the Institute, rather than drawing us in.”*

- PIBC Equity Audit engagement participants

Certification as a Prerequisite

Existing Certification requirements for certain roles could limit the perspectives shaping a Candidate's learning pathway and experience, strategic direction and decisions on the PIBC Board, Committees, and the PIBC awards nominated and selected.

While findings showed a diminishing appetite for certification, Certified status is still a requirement for the following:

- To mentor a Candidate in the certification process, having more than three years' experience as a Certified member;
- To sponsor a Candidate within the certification process (and you cannot have the same person mentor and sponsor)
- To sit on many voting positions on the PIBC Board and Committees
- To nominate and endorse PIBC award candidates

The Value of and Limited Supply of Mentors

Mentorship was identified as a key incentive for certification and essential support for career advancement, yet this has and will continue to be limited.

Value of Mentorship

Indigenous, racialized, and neurodivergent planners emphasized the importance of mentorship grounded in shared lived experiences and central to a sense of belonging and safety, confidence, and long-term retention in the profession.

Mentorship was also recommended multiple times in the [PPRC and Sanala's 2023 report](#) to support Indigenous planners in the certification process and for the “*continued growth and wellbeing in the Institute.*”



“I wished there were more coaching and mentoring opportunities from racialized planners. I’m specifically looking for leadership with racialized backgrounds that can mentor and support the growth of professionals within the field.”



Barriers in Mentor Matching

- Candidates have to find their own mentors
- Many have trouble finding professionally aligned and personally relatable informal and formal mentors
- There is a small pool of eligible Certified with capacity to mentor, and an even smaller pool of those from underrepresented backgrounds (job precarity, family and community roles, workloads)
- Complaints have been brought to the PSB level around finding mentors and having quality mentoring relationships

Limited Mentor Incentives

- No honoraria available for mentors
- Formal mentors can claim up to 4.0 LUs/year (four hours) per mentee and have more than one mentee. Mentees can also claim up to 4.0 Organized & Structured LUs/year.

Exclusionary Professional and Workplace Cultures

Participants noted a disconnect between their motivations to be a planner(to affect change) and the actual professional structures and environments that limit who is seen, heard, and valued. Participants described the cognitive and emotional toll of navigating these environments, including self-doubt, reduced confidence, and questioning their professional legitimacy.

Sense of contributing and advancing change

Pressure to adapt to dominant professional norms and more colonial, risk averse, and more exclusionary approaches to planning. Persistent “*business as usual*” leadership cultures can make it difficult for new perspectives to shape planning processes.

“doesn’t change course because those pointing out systemic issues are often punished for saying that” and it “means things don’t ultimately change in the direction we’re hoping for.”

Sense of belonging impacting confidence and career advancement

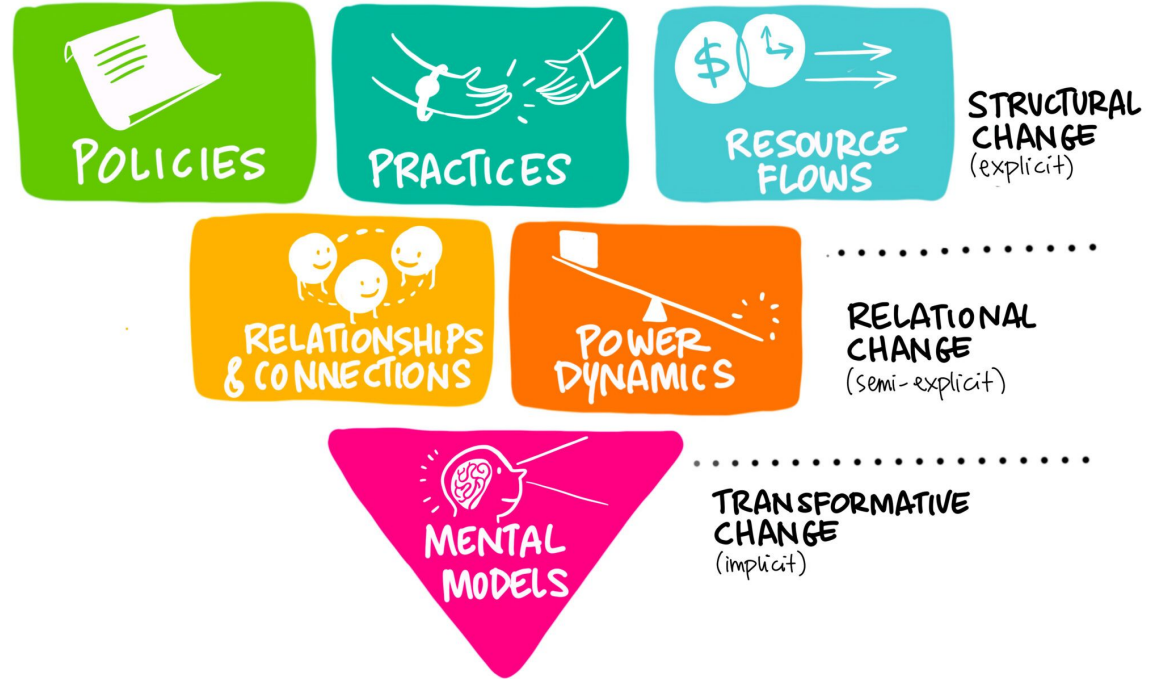
- Experiences of being overlooked, misrecognized, or deferred to others, being talked over, ignored, mistaken for junior staff, or subjected to heightened scrutiny of language and accent. Some positive shifts, yet need for code-switching, self-monitoring, and emotional labor in workplaces
- Events often exclusionary and centered around drinking culture and sports

Lack of safety and pathways for support, repair, and recourse

- Experiences of overt discrimination and ongoing microaggressions from peers, colleagues, members of the public, and those in positions of power and leadership
- Workplace dynamics where planners felt unsupported by colleagues when harm occurred, participants described feeling hesitant or unsafe to raise concerns

Thinking about my position (on my team, in and with communities, in my organization, in planning, in PIBC), **what could I do to help foster a more inclusive planning culture and profession?**

SIX CONDITIONS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE



Adapted from Kania, Kramer, Senge
Frameworks Collection by finegood@sfu.ca | Illustrated by sam@drawingchange.com | © CC BY-NC-ND

Questions?
Aha moments?
Observations?





Thank you for your time and thoughts today.

Any follow-up thoughts or questions?
Please reach out!
Miranda (meng@radiussfu.com)



sfu.ca/RADIUS



[@RADIUS_SFU](https://www.instagram.com/RADIUS_SFU)



[/RADIUS-SFU](https://www.linkedin.com/company/RADIUS-SFU)

Follow us online