

Going Virtual with the *Elevation 2020* Webinar Series

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Due to the pandemic, in place of the 2020 annual in-person PIBC Conference in Whistler, PIBC and the Canadian Institute of Planners instead partnered to hold a virtual online webinar series in late November. In total, more than 15 webinars were hosted on a wide range of emerging and complex planning issues.

Opening Keynote: Bending Lines and Making Circles – Our Way Home, Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm, Government of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation



True to this year's conference theme, Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm's keynote address contained 'elevating' and inspiring ideas for taking action on climate change. His big picture thinking was a refreshing look at the problem of climate change, how we got here, and how Indigenous people can be a vital part of the solution.

Chief Tizya-Tramm explained that his community of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, located in Yukon, is like many others in the north – they don't have the luxury of denying climate change since the evidence is all around them. They are experiencing unprecedented changes like accelerating permafrost and sea-ice melt, increasing forest fires, 30 percent loss of bird species, and changes in animal migration patterns. Bottom line – the Arctic north is warming nearly twice as fast as the rest of the world.

So how did we get here? For Chief Tizya-Tramm, the explanation lies in a Western linear mind-set that has sought to dominate and exploit nature. This mindset has driven the first three industrial revolutions – mechanical, electrical and internet – which have resulted in the domination of corporations and the current climate crisis. The fourth industrial revolution is one of 'digital intelligence' which opens up huge potential for empowerment of people at the local level.

For the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, empowerment has meant taking action on climate change through their 2019 Climate Declaration and accompanying projects to achieve carbon

neutrality by 2030. Their Declaration, which has now inspired similar ones in many other communities, provides a compelling call to action for:

Local, national and international communities, governments, organizations and movements to respect the traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples as well as established science and utilize all available powers, resource and abilities to coordinate and mobilize efforts to prevent the rise of global temperatures above 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrialized levels.

■ <http://www.vgfn.ca/pdf/CC%202019%20Declaration.pdf>

Chief Tizya-Tramm's bold vision for the future of Canada is to bring together Indigenous ways of knowing with Western practices to create a powerful partnership. Indigenous communities can share their knowledge on how to balance modern technologies with living with the land to seek resource renewal rather than depletion.

His view is that currently the contribution of Indigenous people is undervalued and, while they don't have all the answers, they have something important and vital to contribute to climate change solutions. As we navigate Canada's future, Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm encouraged planners to keep our minds open, question how we interact with the world, and craft a worldview in partnership with Indigenous peoples that will serve all people.

Workshop: Building Places for Everyone – Edmonton's Infill Planning Toolbox to Support 'Missing Middle' Housing (Module 1)

This workshop promised to "add more tools to our planning tool box" and fully delivered!

In the session with City of Edmonton planners Anne Huizinga and Carley Holt, we learned about the powerful lessons and tools emerging from their city's "Infill Roadmap" planning initiative.

They explained the City's planning challenge in terms of some essential questions, which will likely resonate with many planners:

- How do you welcome more people and homes into older, mature core neighbourhoods?
- How do you drive the conversation with the public forward and not get stuck in the old conversation?

The answers they found lay in evolving their Infill Roadmap of 2014 to develop a new set of viable "infill" actions that had broad public input and support. The City's renewed Infill Roadmap provides a range of issues the City is trying to address, as well as policy and bylaw changes to support development of a wider variety of housing stock.

One intriguing tool was their "Integral City Model" for public engagement. This approach was founded by Dr. Marilyn Hamilton (and scaleable to all types of communities – see integralcity.com) and helps to engage the community's four main voices, defined as:

1. Community organizations/civic society
2. Citizens
3. Business
4. Public institutions



The City of Edmonton’s Infill Roadmap Team brought these groups together in working sessions designed to help them ‘hear themselves, hear each other’ and agree on viable actions. The result? Edmonton’s renewed Infill Roadmap was approved by Council with no one from the public speaking against it, despite infill being the City’s most contentious planning issue for many years.

In addition to the valuable tools they developed through this initiative, they also shared some powerful lessons learned through their efforts, including:

- Good things happen when people talk. Public engagement has to be designed with tools and techniques that result in transparency and trust. Planners need to be stewards of relationship-building with the community
- Good things happen when people share. The City of Edmonton’s planning team is committed to sharing experiences and seeking to learn from other cities and communities.

It was evident from their presentation that another clear take-away from the Infill Roadmap experience is: “Good things happen when people focus on innovation.” Success comes from seeking out different ways of doing things and sharing the responsibility for generating new ideas with the wider community, academics, planners elsewhere, and other innovators.

Workshop Modules 2 to 4 that follow this first module included much more on the City of Edmonton’s Missing Middle design competition, community engagement model, and policy and regulatory improvements. Planners will find reviewing all the “Building Places for Everyone” workshop sessions a great learning experience.

Workshop: Using Google Earth and Census Data to Explore Your City’s Spatial Structure

Prepare to be amazed! I think all of us who attended this highly engaging seminar with Professor David Gordon from Queen’s University’s School of Urban and Regional with Planning were just that.

Before demonstrating the tool that he developed for spatial visioning, Professor Gordon told us how it was born. Like most useful inventions, it started with a good question, in this case from a Federal government minister who wanted to know, “What do we mean by urban?”

Professor Gordon explained that at that time there was no easy answer to that question. Essentially urban was being used to describe anything that is not rural, including the suburbs.

Professor Gordon and his colleagues embarked on a multi-year research project to develop a tool that can tell us much more about population density in Canada’s cities and towns. They used Geographical Information System (GIS), Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) data and Google Earth maps.

Professor Gordon demonstrated how the tool worked by zooming in on towns and cities across Canada to show the distribution

of their population in newly defined “active core” and “suburban” and “ex-urban” areas. .

In showing us how the tool works, Professor Gordon shared some unexpected and interesting findings, including:

- 84% of the population of the Vancouver metropolitan area lives in some kind of suburb
- 67% of Canada’s population is actually suburban
- Peterborough, Ontario is the most highly urbanized CMA in Canada

The study methodology and resulting tool, which can be used and accessed by anyone, is found at www.canadiansuburbs.ca

Planners will enjoy using this tool to find out more about the urban/suburban characteristics and trends in cities and towns they live and work in across Canada. ■

PIBC members can access recordings of the webinars at the CIP Learning Hub: <https://www.cip-icu.ca/Learning-Hub>

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