

COMING TOGETHER TO MOVE AHEAD: 'IT TAKES A VILLAGE' PIBC ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY

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Kúkpi7 (Chief) James Tomma of Skwłāx te Secwepemcúllecw (Little Shuswap Lake Band) with his brother, Ron Tomma, during the official conference welcome.

The 2023 Annual PIBC conference was held from May 30th - June 2nd, 2023, giving PIBC members the opportunity to come together once again – in person and online – to learn, celebrate, share, and reconnect.

The Village of Sun Peaks, located on the traditional, unceded territory of the Secwépemc peoples, provided a spectacular backdrop for many challenging and enlightening discussions about the history, present, and future of our communities.

Olympic skier **Nancy Greene Raine** and **Mayor Al Raine** opened the conference by talking about the goals, challenges, and successes of developing a thriving resort community. Constructed at a time when ski resorts were shifting from training and competition facilities to family-friendly destinations, Nancy described Sun Peaks as a village planned for “human capacity, not just bricks and mortar.”

As practitioners, planning for human capacity both brings us together and drives us apart. How do we balance the needs of one population with the rights of another? How do we

address constraints in terms of land, money, and authority? We are constantly seeking to balance the interests of our communities, our employers, our fellow planners, and our environment. The conference offered engaging and enlightening keynotes from **Jessica Brooks, Lorien Nesbitt, Inge Roecker, and Winki Tam** – touching on issues of housing affordability, happiness, sustainability, and community – while the sessions had us grappling with issues of balance and debating the pros and cons of different approaches to planning’s wicked problems.

I had the privilege of attending several sessions over the duration of the conference and would like to share some key themes and takeaways.

Reconciliation

In their session, *Planning Practice and Reconciliation*, **Angel Ransom** and **Sarah Atkinson** reminded us that “we should not fear changing; we should only fear a lack of change. Fear the status quo – because it is

making our society unwell.”

PIBC’s unprecedented Planning Practice and Reconciliation Committee is committed to actively decolonizing planning practice in B.C. and supporting PIBC members as they decolonize themselves. In doing so, Sarah and Angel suggest that it’s time to rethink what we know about our profession. From the certification of our members to consultation with our communities, they suggest that it’s time to break down the old systems and rebuild new ones together.

Angel and Sarah framed decolonization and reconciliation, not just as a goal to achieve, but as a journey we must all take. They stressed taking the time to listen and learn, sitting with discomfort and allowing others to do the same. One of the most poignant takeaways for me was when Angel defined reconciliation as a give-and-take relationship, where “you bring something, we bring something, and everyone benefits.” We are all learning and unlearning: What would happen if we created the space to have more than one way of doing things?

Storytelling

What is the relationship between storytelling and reconciliation? In their session, *Addressing Historical Wrongs: Perspectives on Municipal Apology Processes*, **Lisa Codd, Denise Fong, Helen Ma, and John Stark** presented their thoughts and experiences on municipal efforts to support reconciliation with the Chinese Canadian community. This session examined the role of local governments in creating and sustaining discriminatory policies and systemic racism, presenting a way forward through connecting with our own – and others’ – stories.

The presentation outlined three key aspects of a municipal apology process: surfacing and acknowledging the truth, aligning apologies with historical harms, and providing actions for redressing past harm.

John and Denise explained that a key part of decolonization is uncovering the stories of



Attendees connecting, socializing and networking at the 2023 Annual Conference Welcome Reception in Sun Peaks.

un- and under-represented members of our communities. While local governments and much of mainstream society have either forgotten about, or are unaware of, legislated racism, these stories give us a chance to understand, connect with, and repair the harms caused by historic actions and the present-day implications of these actions.

I was particularly moved by Helen's statement that "who we are as people influences what we do as planners." She noted that, as professionals, we tend to write ourselves out of the story, as if our history doesn't affect our practice. And, while we must maintain some degree of separation from our work, when we reflect on our own values, we can start to uncover the values that are baked into our systems of governance, understand where communities are coming from, and meet them where they are at.

Collaboration

One of the main themes throughout the conference sessions was that no one party or level of government can do it alone. Whether the "it" is building affordable housing, fostering community happiness, or addressing the climate crisis, the success of many planning initiatives relies heavily on partnerships with industry, community, non-profits, First Nations, and other levels of government.

Zoë Morrison and **Ben Campbell** showcased an example of a successful, multi-partner collaboration in their session, *Master Planning in Dawson City, Yukon*. Zoë outlined the challenges of designing a master plan for a site that was rife with spatial, political, and geotechnical concerns: tailings ponds, permafrost, limited services, design guidelines, mining activities, and challenging access points. This project demonstrates the ability to build successful and mutually respectful partnerships between Indigenous communities, provincial and municipal planners, community members, and

industry actors. There were significant efforts to collaborate on the design and composition of the site and, despite challenges, the project resulted in an approved plan that will guide future development in the area.

Sharing and Engaging

Listening to presentations about the work being done in the region and speaking with planners about their day-to-day challenges, successes, and visions reminds me that we are all working toward a common goal, even if we approach things from different sectors, different points of view, and different communities. Sharing our experiences is critical to our growth as a profession and there are a number of ways you can share and engage with the PIBC community throughout the year.

Planning West is an excellent tool that you can use to share your research, your successes (or failures!), and your expertise. And as the flagship publication for the Planning Institute of British Columbia, *Planning West* hopes to reflect the full diversity of our membership and all the roles we take on. In particular, *Planning West* is seeking articles from:

- Planners in Northern communities in B.C. and Yukon.
- Indigenous Planners and planners working alongside Indigenous communities.
- Planners working in rural communities.
- Planners working on climate initiatives.
- Students.

If writing a feature article is not for you, consider submitting to one of *Planning West's* featured snapshots: "What Planning Means to Me" and "Planning Podcasts." These brief snapshots give PIBC members insight into the thoughts, interests, and activities of their planning colleagues. Please reach out to me at

editor@pibc.bc.ca for more information.

Whether you are a student or a Fellow, you have something valuable to contribute. ***This is our village and we are its members.***

ROAD TO RPP: CERTIFICATION, MENTORSHIP & MORE

Speakers:

Pat Maloney RPP, FCIP *Principal Patricia Maloney Consulting*

Greg Mitchell RPP, MCIP *Senior Development Manager Primex Investments*

Zoë Morrison RPP, MCIP *Senior Planner Stantec*

Conference session summary by Kristin Agnello RPP, MCIP
Editor Planning West

This session provided information about the certification process for individuals hoping to become Registered Professional Planners in British Columbia. Not just for students, this session provided information for mentors, sponsors, and anyone supporting a Candidate on the "Road to RPP."

Pat Maloney offered reflections on her numerous years of experience mentoring and sponsoring PIBC members, as well as developing and administering accreditation exams. She was joined by Greg Mitchell, a planner turned developer, and Zoë Morrison, a planning consultant with Stantec Consulting in Whitehorse, Yukon. Together, the group provided advice on designing a career path, choosing and working with a mentor, and maintaining relationships throughout your career.