

# PLANNING PRACTICE AND RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE UPDATE: THREE YEARS AND COUNTING

Sarah Atkinson RPP, MCIP,  
on behalf of the PIBC Planning Practice and Reconciliation Committee

PIBC appointed the Indigenous Planning Working Group (IPWG) in 2020 to develop and recommend relevant and achievable strategies and actions for PIBC to respond to outcomes from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the MMIWG Report. We have since revised much of our work and scope, and are now formally the Planning Practice and Reconciliation Committee (PPRC).

First, we must acknowledge that PPRC was never an Indigenous Planning Working Group. We apologize for this misstep and the harm it may have caused Indigenous planners. To err is human, but this level of transgression made us pause and reflect on how much learning and work we have left to do. This is the first of many mistakes we will likely make throughout our work, but we commit to listening, learning, and growing. We are always open to feedback and suggestions and can only hope that, in continuing this work, our mistakes will diminish as we improve our decolonization efforts.

This update describes the journey that led us to rename the Committee, and the ongoing learning that is guiding us as we work towards decolonization of the planning profession in BC.

## Planning Practice and Reconciliation

The PPRC has now worked together for three years. We have learned much more than we have given through this process and would like to take this opportunity to bring what we have learned to our fellow planners: our work together, where we are now, and where we see ourselves heading in the next year.

## Beginnings of our Work

Our work started by reviewing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Final Report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* (2015), and *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (2019). The two reports are inextricably linked by collective trauma caused by colonial systems and processes.

Throughout these documents, we see a demand for the fundamental right of respect for First Nations and First Nations rights, culture, knowledge, and traditions. A continuation of business as usual will not heal the deep wounds that affect us all. These lessons can have a profound positive impact on our profession.

Through this work, we realized there was a larger call to action: to decolonize our planning institutions, practices, and approaches. As a result, our work was broadened to encompass a framework of reconciliation for the planning profession in BC and Yukon.

The TRC provides the following definition of reconciliation:

*"To the Commission, reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour."*

We used the TRC's reconciliation statement as a roadmap for our work and

unanimously agreed that the Committee's roadmap would include:

- a. Awareness of the past
- b. Acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted
- c. Atonement for the causes
- d. Action to change behaviour

From there, we were able to state a thesis:

*"How does PIBC address the TRC and MMIWG, but beyond that, expand to actively decolonize the planning practices in BC and support our members in doing this work? How can the Institute undertake Truth and Reconciliation in the planning profession?"*

## Listening and Learning

The PPRC committed to doing things differently and started work to decolonize our strategy and approach. Reviewing the TRC Report, the MMIWG Report, traditional knowledge and teachings, and other research, we felt a need to decolonize our methods and strategies. We felt compelled to answer one of the MMIWG Calls to Justice in our approach to this work:

*"A decolonizing approach aims to resist and undo the forces of colonialism and to re-establish Indigenous Nationhood. It is rooted in Indigenous values, philosophies, and knowledge systems. It is a way of doing things differently that challenges the colonial influence we live under by making space for marginalized Indigenous perspectives. The National Inquiry's decolonizing approach also acknowledges the rightful power and place of Indigenous women and girls."*

We are taking our time with this work; we are sitting in uncomfortable grey areas and not trying to rush to conclusions, actions, and solutions. We commit to listening. The Vancouver Parks Board started a Truth and Reconciliation process and, through their work, realized that to start, they needed to listen:

*"And so we begin the long, complex work of deep listening, of dialogue and sharing that hold the potential to upend the traditional balance of power that has kept other people setting the agenda and deciding who gets to do what in Vancouver's public arts and culture landscapes. Imagine the possibilities, imagine the ways that Vancouver can transform as Indigenous cultural expressions and voices are once again reflected in the land, songs, stories and images of this place. What kinds of shifts can happen when we are guided by a vision of unity built on mutual respect and equality?"*

The Committee unanimously agreed that our first, and ongoing, commitment is hearing about Indigenous experience with planning and planning institutions.

### Listening, Learning, and Action

Through our learning process, it became abundantly clear that we were not an Indigenous Planning Working Group. We restructured our framework and became the Planning Practice and Reconciliation Committee. This PPRC will continue, in

perpetuity, to work toward reconciliation in planning and decolonization of our institution, our profession, and our practices as planners. A sign of accomplishment for the Committee would be the creation of a true PIBC Indigenous Committee. We are far from that reality but are committed to the path.

While we continue the deep work of listening and learning, we have heard messages resonate from guest speaker to guest speaker. To acknowledge the harm and offer meaningful change toward reconciliation, we have essential listening and learning left to do. However, after three years of work, we feel ready to begin some action and, in 2022, PPRC recommended the following actions to the Board;

1. Respect for First Nations and First Nations rights, culture, knowledge, and traditions in PIBC Accreditation.
2. Required Indigenous learning for PIBC Membership, both in the accredited University programs and as ongoing CPL credits.

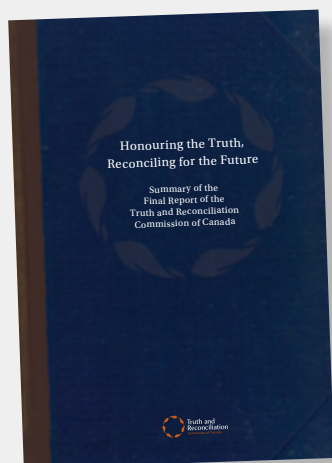
The PIBC Board unanimously agreed to support the above actions and provided PPRC with a budget to implement change. Throughout 2023, PPRC will be taking the following actions:

1. PPRC will hire an Indigenous consultant to work toward a path to PIBC membership that recognizes Traditional knowledge.
2. PPRC will engage with accredited Universities to discuss required courses for planning programs that include Indigenous teachings and awareness of reconciliation and decolonization.

### Further Engagement with PIBC Members

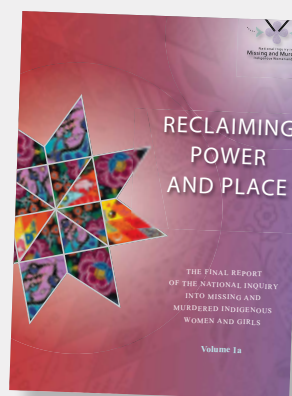
The PPRC is deeply grateful for the knowledge shared with us. It has taught us that the process toward decolonization starts with ourselves. David Suzuki says, "the way we see the world shapes the way we treat it." The teachings we have received from traditional knowledge holders have helped us to begin to see the world differently and we are excited to continue working with our fellow planners and provide ongoing webinars to help decolonize ourselves, our practices, and our work.

The PPRC will present at this year's PIBC Annual Conference in Sun Peaks, where we hope to provide more information on where we are and where we might be going. We will also use *Planning West* to keep our fellow planners abreast of this important work and provide opportunities for continuing our path towards decolonization.



### Further reading:

*Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Vol. 12, Issue 1). (2015). <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.800288/publication.html>



*Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.* (2019). <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>