

# REFLECTIONS ON THE PAST & HOW WE MOVE FORWARD

## AN UPDATE FROM PIBC'S PLANNING PRACTICE & RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE

/ Sarah Atkinson RPP, MCIP, Committee Chair on behalf of the Planning Practice & Reconciliation Committee

June was Indigenous History Month. While we acknowledge that labelling a month "Indigenous History" is a far cry from where we hope reconciliation is going in Canada, we hope that our fellow planners will take this time to reflect on our personal and professional roles in reconciliation. Despite the theme of 'History', this month is an opportunity to think about not only the past but about the ongoing role of institutions in colonization and the practices of Indigenous culture, language, and resilience which have occurred since time immemorial.

For the PIBC's Planning Practice and Reconciliation Committee (PPRC), our reflection is on our past two years of researching, listening and learning about Indigenous truths and planning's role in colonization and reconciliation.

We started in 2020 by exploring what reconciliation meant. This is how the TRC defined 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 took the TRC's reconciliation statement as a road map for our work and unanimously agreed that the PPRC's process would be to learn and understand how the planning profession can take responsibility for:

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

Our work to date has been to cultivate our own awareness of the past. We began by reviewing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report and Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We found the two reports inextricably linked by their stories of collective trauma caused by colonial systems and processes. Throughout these documents, the key message that we identified is a demand for the fundamental rights and respect for First Nations and First Nations' rights, culture, knowledge, and traditions.

We are still in the Truth stage of our work. Early on we realized that there is much to learn about the practices of Planning's contribution to colonization which, while touched on, are not the focus of the reports mentioned above. To meaningfully participate in reconciliation, we recognize that the Planning Profession own exploration of truth to do. To begin the process, we have been listening and learning. We have been privileged to learn directly from Indigenous partners along the way. Over the last year, we have also been undertaking our own research topics and reporting back to our fellow members of PPRC. We are still listening and learning and have a long way to go in our work.

Some of the lessons we have learned have been about the amazing and careful planning which built the vibrant cultures and places of Indigenous communities prior to active colonization and dislocation. Some of the lessons have been about the practices of Colonization of which our profession was/is complicit. Some of the lessons have been about positive ways forward and the power of awareness, acknowledgement, atonement and action to guide reconciliation work.

Over the next year, we look forward to beginning to consider how our lessons can

be transformed into atonement and action. We will continue working with Indigenous partners, teachers, and guides. We will ensure that we root any recommendations with direct input from those partners.

One of our guest speakers asked us to reflect on the question, "am I actively participating in the dominion?" It was a question that struck a chord, and the answer for everyone is likely, yes. It demonstrates that our institution, PIBC, has a lot of work to do, but so too do we as individuals. The PPRC would like to extend an invitation for our fellow planners to ask themselves and their organizations this question and, perhaps, reflect on ways to actively decolonize their work and workplace.

A continuation of the business, as usual, is not going to heal these deep wounds that affect us all. Exploring reconciliation is an exploration of justice, environmentalism, social health and wellness, equity, reciprocity, and resilience. The positive impact that these lessons can have on our profession is profound.

Some resources we have found beneficial include:

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report;
2. Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls;
3. Joseph, Bob. 21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act
4. Nikki Sanchez's TEDxSFU Talk, Decolonization Is for Everyone, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QP9x1NnCWNY>
5. Dan George's Reconciliation Road podcast. Available at: <https://open.spotify.com/show/2tQtsaBRk-e5rk2vwPgLWDe> ■