

2024 BC Land Summit: Collaborations & Connections

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Conference photos: Dirk Heydemann

A unique interdisciplinary conference that promotes collaboration amongst diverse land professionals

Hosted on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw people, the 2024 PIBC Annual Conference – the interdisciplinary BC Land Summit – took place from May 8-10 at the Vancouver Island Conference Centre in Nanaimo.

The concept of the BC Land Summit emerged from discussions between several land use professions and, in 2002, planning began for BC's first innovative and unique joint land related conference – the BC Land Summit. The mutual benefits of collaborating on a joint conference were soon apparent and the decision was made to host a multidisciplinary conference every five years.

The BC Land Summit Society is a non-profit society, which includes five professional member organizations in fields of practice related to land and land-use. The current members of the BC Land Summit Society include:

- Appraisal Institute of Canada – BC
- British Columbia Institute of Agrologists
- British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects
- Planning Institute of British Columbia
- Real Estate Institute of British Columbia

Marking the 20th anniversary of its first joint conference, PIBC served as the host organization for this year's Land Summit. The BC Land Summit was conceived as a way to spark interdisciplinary collaboration, innovation, and conversation between land use professionals – and this year was no exception.

Keynotes and conversations

Nanaimo's Mayor, Leonard Krog, opened the conference with a quote from author Thomas King, stating: "The issue has always

been land." And he's right. From the health of our planet to the health of our relationships, the way we design and manage land plays a pivotal role in our efforts toward reconciliation, climate action, poverty reduction, and equity.

The conference provided the opportunity for attendees to take a three-hour "Deep Dive" into a variety of land use topics. There were also a number of mobile workshops in addition to more traditional breakout sessions on a diverse range of topics.

Summaries of a few of these sessions have been included in this issue, including the following:

Indigenizing Planning

Reflecting the theme of the conference, *Collaboration and Connections*, the opening keynote panel host and moderator Tara Marsden/Naxginkw reminded us that we are in a relationship with the land; it is not a commodity to be used – and used up. She challenged participants to reflect on our relationship with the land and what that relationship means to each of us.

Tara was joined by Jessie Hemphill and Ginger Gosnell-Myers, who shared their

perspectives on how Indigenizing and decolonizing land-use planning promises to benefit us all as we "navigate our own era of collapse." The speakers noted how contemporary training for planners often omits Indigenous planning and land use management, sharing examples of Indigenous city design, architecture, environmental stewardship, and equity-based planning. We were reminded that the UN Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and the principles of Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) are frameworks intended to support *minimum* standards for the dignity, survival, and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. We were asked: How can planners and land use professionals move beyond the minimum and fully incorporate reconciliation and relationships with Indigenous communities into all of the work we do?

Natural Asset Management and the Agricultural Land Reserve

"A little goes a long way, but more is better." So we learned at the session on nature-based solutions for climate resilient cities. In a panel moderated by CIP Fellow Pat Maloney RPP,





BC Land Summit attendees, including PIBC Members, participating in conference sessions and workshops covering interdisciplinary land-use topics.



FCIP, Don Alexander PhD, Chris Osborne RPP, MCIP, Paul Chapman, and Roy Brooke presented a Coles Notes version of the emerging field of Natural Asset Management (NAM) and the biophilic city. Focused more on the thoughtful curation of complexity than on the preservation of vast swaths of green assets, the speakers demonstrated that the benefits of fostering and encouraging biodiversity can be exponential, even where physical space is limited.

Contrasting NAM discussions focused on greening the City were reflections on the successes and challenges of the Agricultural Land Reserve fifty years after its establishment. Intended to preserve active agricultural land, the ALR faces ongoing threats from low-density residential development. Claire Buchanan, Nicole Mak, Reed Bailey, and Jeff Weightman RPP, MCIP shared the successes and challenges of the ALR, including the pressure on the ALR from climate change impacts and a changing legislative – and demographic – landscape. These two sessions highlighted the importance of preserving what we have long fought for – and fighting to reintroduce what we have lost.

Housing Innovations

As planners work to preserve and reintroduce green infrastructure in our cities and communities, we must also address how people live and work in the city. CIP Fellow Michael Geller RPP, FCIP shared his thoughts on how planners can create more affordable housing in British Columbia. From rezoning arterial roads for higher densities to modifying retail

commercial zoning and creating more housing choices in single detached housing zones, this session added a historical context to many of the housing conversations that were taking place elsewhere across the conference.

Elsewhere at the conference, Eric Aderneck RPP, MCIP argued that, at the intersection of planning, real estate development, and related land use matters lies the concept of live/work. He notes: “It’s not working from home, nor is it a business alone.” With so much discussion of housing – how we can build more of it, what its impact is, and how we can make it more affordable and accessible – this session reimaged the housing conversation as a broader, more holistic conversation not just about where we live in cities, but also how we live in cities.

Peer Learning Network

The PIBC Peer Learning Network session included presentations from four practitioners and two lawyers relating to the new provincial housing legislation. Moderated by planning lawyer and PIBC Board Member, Lui Carvello RPP, MCIP the session provided an opportunity for learning, debate, and candid discussion about compliance requirements and strategies relating to a broad range of topics surrounding the new provincial housing legislation. Nafiseh Rashidianfar presented research and addressed questions relating to new short term rental rules. Chris Jarvie RPP, MCIP discussed the successes and challenges of Coquitlam’s pre-approved building design program, while Victor Ngo RPP, MCIP addressed transportation

demand management considerations. The session also included commentary from two planning lawyers: Michael Moll, who spoke about the procedural requirements for SSMUH compliance and CIP Fellow and lawyer Bill Buholzer RPP, FCIP, who addressed newly-updated density bonus and inclusionary zoning authorities, as outlined in Bill 16. The lawyers and practitioners were joined by Eric Nicholls from the Province’s Planning and Land Use Management Branch, who spoke about the history and relationship between the legislative pieces.

As the breadth of this session highlighted, planners across BC are chasing what sometimes seems to be a moving target of new legislative requirements, authorities, and responsibilities – balancing their responsibilities to the Province with their responsibilities to their communities. But although planners are facing unprecedented challenges, from navigating new legislation, to addressing climate change, to rectifying inequities that are the legacy of colonization, the spirit of the conference was clear: Talking to people outside of our planning bubble encourages us to question our beliefs, why we hold them, what we are missing, and – most importantly – who we might be missing.

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