

PSIA-AASI Membership Listening Session Summary Report

January 31, 2021

OVERVIEW

A summary of findings, themes, observations, and resulting suggestions gathered from a 75-minute listening session, comprised of racially, ethnically, and generationally diverse group of ten PSIA-AASI members on January 12, 2021 regarding racial equity.

GOALS

- Collect feedback from task force members regarding racial equity
- Compile themes, patterns, observations by facilitators
- Determine how feedback might inform a plan of action for racial equity at PSIA-AASI
- Provide longer-term recommendations for a path towards becoming antiracist

PROCESS

- One Zoom-facilitated, 75-minute listening session was held on January 12, 2021
- Facilitator Introductions
- Native Land Acknowledgement. We began with an acknowledgement of the occupied land on which we live, work and play, and an honoring of all indigenous people here today
- Tending to our Norms for Courageous Conversations. Adapted from the work of Glenn Singleton, the norms are:
 - T – Speak Your Truth
 - E – Stay Engaged
 - N – Accept and Expect Nonclosure
 - D – Embrace Discomfort
- Circle Process. We described how the facilitation of this space would unfold using the following precepts:
 - Explanation of notetaking to collect data to share in summary report
 - Assurance that any comments would not be attached to specific names
 - Use of a modified circle process - inspired by the indigenous Peace Circle process and designed as a process to decolonize dominant culture
 - Everyone is invited to speak / every voice is valued
 - No cross talk / imagine a talking stick
 - We might nudge for time if necessary
 - A story is building inside the circle / practice radical listening
 - Let the questions guide you to the truth you need to speak
 - In this space it is helpful to amplify/repeat what you heard if it resonated with you

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- Asking three questions. Participants were encouraged to share in turn with minimal dialogue.
 - Question 1: You were invited to this session. What do you understand about why you are here? Thoughts? Feelings?
 - Question 2: If you could imagine what it might take for PSIA-AASI to be an organization authentically working towards racial justice: what needs to be done? In your own words, how would you frame the issues, problems, or what needs to be addressed? What would you say/How would you describe what is in the way or blocking this growth? What is in your favor/strengths?
 - Question 3: Would you like to expand on any of your answers to the first two questions? What did we miss? Something you wish we had asked?

 - Facilitator closing and what to expect next
 - We shared that collective feedback would inform next steps
 - We shared that we would present the final report to the Board at their February meeting, and to the DEI Task Force at their February meeting

FOREWARD

Attached please find our Summary Report of the DEI Listening Session with a racially and generationally diverse group of members. We appreciate the commitment to open distribution of this document to the greater PSIA-AASI community. Transparency is a powerful and critical element in the work of antiracism, as well as in cultivating courageous leadership.

We acknowledge that this exercise occurs in an unprecedented time of upheaval and change--in fact, occurs *exactly* because of this time in which we are living. A viral pandemic, an economy in freefall, the continued, state-sanctioned violence on black and brown bodies, and the white supremacist attack on democracy on January 6, 2021, lay bare the racial and social inequities that underpin this country's reality; the snowsports industry cannot ignore the impact of this instability on individuals, communities, and systems; hence this listening session. A backdrop of uncertainty lingered at the conclusion of our time together. In the midst of this strain, however, we also captured a determined and creative sense of hope and possibility within the group, which we hope to impart to you through this report.

We have curated this content carefully and have sought to listen to the voices of all participants and to faithfully record their experiences, their concerns, and their hopes. We were listening to reveal the gaps, challenges, and places for growth to move PSIA-AASI confidently towards the work of antiracism. This report reflects those findings.

What we also discovered--and what we hope comes through loudly and clearly--is the investment and engagement of every participant in this session. It takes vulnerability and courage for folks to speak truth. Your members care deeply about this industry. They want to believe that PSIA-AASI can be a part of changing the narrative, that snowsports can move towards antiracism, and that PSIA-AASI can commit to doing this work for the long term.

Sincerely,

Christina Chang

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FINDINGS / THEMES

The following is data collected from the listening session, categorized into broad themes

Gratitude, anxiety, and anticipation

- Gratitude that leadership and organization asked for this next step:
 - Thankful to be asked to weigh in on this important topic
 - “I love what I heard today and appreciate that we were able to sit with the discomfort of naming where we’re falling short”
 - Appreciation of the DEI workshops being held for PSIA-AASI members
- Several uses of the word “anxious”:
 - wariness about this effort succeeding, based on what they know about the organization
 - “I sense a real hesitancy in some groups within this community to even talk about diversity”
 - anxiety that there may not be a universal commitment or universal understanding about this work, from PSIA-AASI leadership
 - anxiety that there may not be an understanding of what it will take to build a more diverse organization; that change will not come overnight—this must be a long-term commitment, if true change or success can be realized and measured
 - wariness that this effort is superficial and going through the motions
- Excitement that “we are on the path—we haven’t been here before”:
 - Expressed optimism that this is a next step beyond the DEI workshops, but still unsure about what this particular session would yield
 - Wanting and expecting leadership to be out front on this effort: “we need leadership to be with us, to make these hard decisions about changing the status quo”

Members have a passion for snowsports

- Participants repeatedly expressed a genuine love for this sport, wanting to showcase the great outdoors, and collectively advertise on behalf of snowsports,

to a wider, more diverse audience

- Opportunity to share their passions for snowsports, for educating others and for social justice. How to combine these passions to make meaningful change in the snowsports industry? “This could be a moment of great change”

There is a lack of racial diversity in snowsports industry

- All participants--BIPOC and white participants alike—expressed the need for snowsports to be more diverse. The industry is overwhelmingly white
- White participant emphasized that the imperative be to recruit more black and brown populations into this industry; important that the focus be addressing the dearth of black and brown communities on the mountain, and “not to morph into other aspects of diversity”

There is a lack of racial diversity in PSIA-AASI Community

- All participants agreed that there is a lack of racial diversity in the PSIA-AASI ranks, and worry that PSIA-AASI cannot do the work changing its racial hierarchy on its own, solely from within (see “Entrenched PSIA-AASI Hierarchy”)
- In current leadership, membership, on its board(s), among ski instructors, and within the up-and-coming generation of leaders/ski instructors/membership. In other words, the status quo will not change the future trajectory of this community without dedicated disruption/active effort: “Tweaking around the edges will maintain the status quo, and will not bring the real change that is needed”

It is past time for the organization to begin doing this work of race equity

- The mountain is not diverse; snowsports industry is not diverse. Erasure is a part of the snowsports industry, the language, the conversations. Industry language needs to change; “we need to communicate differently”
- “I want to be a part of an organization that puts out a good product”
- “I want our organization and industry to do better; we can do better”

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- “Everyone should be thinking about this work--including us”

The snowsports industry is welcoming to mostly white, mostly high income communities—It is not welcoming to non-white, non high income communities

- Many brought up the many barriers to entry:
 - Snowsports are prohibitively expensive for most people; inability to access snowsports
 - Geography, cost of equipment, clothing, lift tickets, travel costs, time costs
 - Antagonism directed at non-white participants
 - no “community” on the mountain
 - no instructors that look like minoritized participants
 - microaggressions (“I didn’t know black/brown people could ski,” being stared at, etc.)
 - Gap between *haves* and *have nots* is stark—leading to predominantly white/predominantly higher-income instructors
 - Money is not an object/time is not an object for some instructors, leading to perception of lack of understanding/empathy
 - Others’ time and knowledge is not valued equally
 - Some have housing on mountain; others must commute 2-6 hours without pay
 - Reality: “Looking for a job? Try ski instruction - it’s not that expensive!”
 - Many are faced with the practicality that the work of ski instruction comes with additional expenses
 - the time and expense to train
 - buying equipment: (e.g., 3-6 pairs of skis to get to Level III instruction)
 - commuting
 - living accommodations
 - lessons are discretionary, not mandatory for participating in snowsports: “I don’t *have* to do ski lessons...”

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- Does the snowsports industry recognize the barriers to entry as a problem that needs to be solved? Does PSIA-AASI recognize the barriers to entry as a problem that needs to be solved?
 - How to make a snowsports instructor career work for all, not just for some?
 - “Money and access (and lack of) in this field screams at me”
 - “I resonated with BIPOC story of financial toll—[I’m young in this field], it takes me 2 hours to get to the mountain. Gas/lift tickets are expensive”
 - Participants lamented the many impediments to progress. Pandemic has brought societal inequities into even sharper focus
 - How to create a long career for communities of people who don’t have access to material wealth? Oft-heard advice to *never do the math, if you want to be a ski instructor*

Entrenched PSIA-AASI hierarchy

- Leadership and organizational structure are entrenched, and not designed to naturally pivot in the direction of diversity without long-term, committed, concerted disruption

Internal hierarchy

- PSIA-AASI culture is top-down, hierarchical and rooted in whiteness
 - Membership, leadership, instructors, board, are not diverse, all white
 - Even website is not representative. Marketing needs to lead in this space and bring more diversity to the face of PSIA-AASI
 - Truth is PSIA-AASI is an organization of straight, cis-gender, white men of a certain generation, and keep reinventing itself as the same: straight, cis-gender, older white men. Our newer recruits look the same, just younger
- For PSIA-AASI to have a shot at success in DEI efforts, leadership must lead us, AND they also must feel supported:
 - For our leaders to succeed, we must create spaces for them to explore

authentically, vulnerability, lean into discomfort to get to courage

- For leaders to succeed, they must be supported in their decisions to make hard decisions [that won't always be popular]
- Long-term support for leadership/current members—change won't happen overnight—leadership must be committed to long-term change
- The current hierarchy/structure creates lack of knowledge of even what the challenge [of the importance of racial diversity] is, because of the echo chamber that results when everyone is the same; there is a lack of diversity of perspectives:
 - Embracing change in an organization that has a long-standing tradition of doing things a certain way means that change will be complicated, tricky
 - Current structure does not allow for representation, full participation, listening and/or believing brown and black peoples' experiences
 - A significant transition in the demographic makeup of board and organizational leadership is necessary, without which participants don't see significant change in diversity equity efforts

External hierarchy

- PSIA-AASI's reliance on resorts to bring members/ski instructors into the organization limits the organization's efforts to diversify:
 - The way that people find themselves into ski schools is not inclusive, and creates obstacles to outreach of diverse populations
 - Currently the folks who bring diversity to the mountain and to the snow sport industry are not PSIA-AASI affiliated. How to partner with these folks?
 - Resort population (limited race, ethnicity and wealth demographics) and our dependence on resorts to diversifying our base is biggest challenge to diversifying our instructor population for PSIA-AASI
- The organization has no control over how recruitment of instructors happens at resorts nor how resorts respond to racial justice issues; this hampers the ability of PSIA-AASI to make fundamental changes to its membership

OBSERVATIONS AND TAKEAWAYS

Observation

At the start of the listening session, we noted a lack of clarity about why members were invited to participate. As the listening session continued, however, they found their voices and their passion for the sport coupled with their passion for social justice became evident

Takeaways

- Build upon of the passion of your members, their love of the sport, and their commitment to build an antiracist, racially equitable future for winter sports through PSIA-AASI
- Members (including members of this listening session) want to help, are willing to help, and are waiting to be asked
- Some participants indicated they have been doing the work of diversifying the mountain to communities for many years now—utilize the expertise you have in-house

Notable quotes

- “I want our organization and our industry to be better”
- “I want to be able to say that PSIA-AASI puts out a good product”
- “I want to be an ambassador for the field”

Observation

In an industry that is 88% white, there was an expressed urgency that the topic of race must be addressed.

Takeaway

- There is a need to build an organization with as many diverse voices as possible as urgently as possible

Observation

The current leadership of PSIA-AASI is not diverse, and therefore cannot see what they cannot see, and they do not know what they do not know about what it will take to build a more diverse organization and sport

Takeaways

- Populations who ski are diversifying faster than instructors, but our board comes from instructors, because that is the way the board is elected; structures, bylaws are all set by same white men
- PSIA-AASI leadership can be a part of this change, provided they
 - Identify the what,
 - Identify why it is important, and
 - Articulate how diversity and inclusion will benefit the organization
- Leadership at all levels (organization, boards) needs to be infused with more diversity—racial diversity, ethnic diversity, income diversity, generational diversity, geographic diversity, even extra-membership diversity
- Infusion of different perspectives at the leadership level will allow the board to be more reflective of the changing demographics of the country, and to be better positioned to build a more diverse and inclusive future for the industry
- A more diverse leadership team will have a better understanding of the fundamental idea of what it means to serve diverse populations
- Ask different people to become involved with leadership/boards; look to other sources for leadership

Notable quotes

- "We're all in this together"
- "We need to reach out proactively to diverse members; don't wait for them to reach out to us"

Observation

As instructor recruitment is largely controlled by the resorts, PSIA-AASI's current membership structure will not prepare the organization for a diverse America of the future.

Takeaways

- PSIA-AASI's membership is to a large extent dependent on how the resorts recruit snowsport instructors. Diversifying this sport cannot happen solely through diversifying the pipeline of instructors; PSIA-AASI's strategy must include different ideas besides diversification of instructors alone
- The organization has no control over how resorts respond to racial justice issues

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- Conversations about PSIA-AASI membership, including:
 - Different membership structures: membership scholarships? Family memberships?
 - Partnerships with non-PSIA-AASI members
 - Partnerships with outside organizations focused on diverse populations
 - Currently many folks who bring diversity to the mountain and to the snow sport industry are not PSIA-AASI related – how to bring them into the fold?
 - Amplify/partner other organizations that are already doing work to diversify winter sports
 - Specific partnerships:
 - Winter for Kids
 - Group of black certified skiers and snowboarders (all disciplines) – photo shoot for *32 Degrees*? PSIA-AASI website?
 - Reaching out to directly to BIPOC members, younger members, other members interested in diversity/antiracist/inclusion issues?
 - Other program outreach efforts
 - Mentorships? Identify future leaders?
 - Market and highlight more representation/diversity through articles, blog, website, other marketing collateral: designate folks who will have a diversity lens for the work
 - Reach out to younger demographic for pipelining/future: reach out to schools, feeder programs, start pipelines earlier
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Notable Quotes

- “A welcoming environment at the resorts; that’s where the work needs to happen”

Observation

As a teaching organization, PSIA-AASI has opportunity to educate with an equity lens, and fundamentally change the way training is delivered/how business is done

Takeaways

- Offer classes to general public, not just PSIA-AASI members
- Expand certification offerings to different populations

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- Create Level I certification process that exists independently of ski school, facilitated by PSIA-AASI directly
 - Connect training to people skills in an equity-focused way
 - Incorporate racial equity competency skills into our people skills in the same way we talk about technical training
 - Good instructors should be able to know the one good pair of skis needed to have, if one is on a budget, for example (108s). Also true of instructors wanting to get Level III certification. PSIA-AASI should set example of equity in instruction

OTHER LISTENING SESSION QUOTES

- “This is the only way forward”
- “How can we take our organization forward together?”
- “Craft a template for honesty and openness, and craft a template to be adopted at the resorts”
- “We must embrace this as the only way to go—and we have a long way to go”
- “This should be about the newest member—a budding pro—feeling like they truly belong in this environment, feels welcomed in this environment, no matter who they are.”

NEXT STEPS

- Share the summary report in its entirety to PSIA-AASI community
- The bright spots in your organization include the DEI Task Force. These are committed, passionate volunteers who want to make a difference. Recommend expansion of the DEI Task force as permanent Equity Team, who are empowered to advise leadership on matters of diversity, equity and inclusion, and importantly, recognize their work (i.e., through articles in *32 Degrees*, profiles on website)
- Develop a marketing/communication strategy with an inclusion lens. Build a consistent, dynamic and regular articulation of a commitment to antiracism through the marketing and communication. Update website to be more authentically representative; avoid tokenism
- Establish an official procedure to recruit diverse board members and leadership members
 - Set diversity targets for leadership boards, positions
 - Seed pools and apply “Rooney Rules 2.0” for consistency and equity
 - The Rooney Rule refers to the 17-year old NFL policy that requires league teams to interview non-white candidates for leadership positions. 2.0 refers to updates to the rule, including: requirement and documentation of a consistent process by which all candidates partake equally
 - Ask diversity question/s when interviewing
 - Diversity training/workshops for new leadership members
- Collect data on your membership data, and perform regular equity audits - prepare yourself for what you find, and commit to dismantling the inequities
- Take into account the “Observations and Takeaways” section of the summary report: they represent a wealth of ideas to examine and consider: how will PSIA-AASI help to positively shift the snowsports industry narrative, as the country prepares for a population and demographic shift?

A willingness to bring committed PSIA-AASI members into open, inclusive dialogue is critical in this time of racial unrest and uncertainty in the country. Leadership that manages a member organization of over 32,000 members must check in with their members and their teams, engage in open and honest conversations, share their perspectives and insight, and offer ongoing support. In so doing, PSIA-AASI builds a strong organization that can weather future turbulence and prepares it for a future that is more diverse, more equitable, more inclusive, and more resilient. Thank you for your attention.