

My name is Karla Danan and I am here today as a citizen at large member of the Social Well-being Advisory Committee.

Although I was born at Rockyview Hospital and raised in the Beltline/Mission community, I have been conscious of my positionality as "other" for my entire life. Calgary has always been home, but as a brown young woman, a daughter of a single immigrant mother, an exclusive transit user, a lifelong inner-city resident, as a member of the working class, I find myself to be a minority in most spaces I enter, including this one.

But I am still here in front of you today despite of living in a society where systems and space have historically been built without my community's voices and often without anyone who looks like me on those decision-making bodies.

I am serving on this committee and excited about this new committee and the proposed policy before you because it is a meaningful opportunity to seek ways that the City of Calgary can better alleviate that sense of "othering" that I experienced growing up. I think about how alleviating that "othering" means rendering visible the diversity of our communities. When people are able to see themselves represented, they are better able to understand and grasp their identities, and this creates an important shift in the social consciousness to feel that sense of belonging for people from a range of different backgrounds.

This principles-based policy creates room for an intersectional feminist approach with a critical race lens, intentionally looking at how gender identity, race and ethnicity come into play in community programming, essential city services, and the very make-up of this room today. These are just two examples of the diversity lenses that this policy will employ. Prioritizing the voices of people with lived experience and employing an approach rooted in cultural humility, I am hopeful that adopting this policy will create space to amplify the voices of the multiple equity seeking communities in Calgary and foster a more confident sense of belonging and inclusion for diverse Calgarians.

