

Practical Governance:
The Victoria Declaration and a Relational Approach to Housing and Support Services

by
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Abstract

This study encompassed the Home in the City (HITC) project, a community-engaged research project that sought to create equitable housing governance in Victoria, BC. I worked with community members, service providers, advocates, and university researchers to identify principles and processes that can build collaboration within housing services and networks. HITC participants collectively articulated our shared ideas in *The Victoria Declaration—A Statement on Housing and Support Services*, which was formally endorsed by local organizations, including the federally designated regional homelessness network (2019) and the City of Victoria (2022). Drawing on this relational fieldwork, my dissertation introduces and analyzes a *practical governance method* in which a researcher works with a community to co-create a governance resource. Practical governance is a community governance strategy and an approach to community-engaged scholarship that is grounded in a theory of political relations. As Métis-Cree researcher and lived expert Jesse Thistle (2017) asserts in *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada*, “networks of emplaced significance” are essential to healthy communities. If we want governance that supports healthy communities, it must stem from “emplaced” networks grounded in the specific places or communities that people depend on to meet their everyday needs—relationships that give their lives meaning. Rather than merely criticizing current governance practices, this project’s working assumption was that we need new governance strategies that entail practical ways of making decisions together that centre relational knowledges and lived experience. Unfortunately, current contexts of governance replicate systemic inequities. In response to these challenging contexts, my practical governance method brings emplaced knowledges into a process of collective meaning-making, helps groups navigate serious disagreements, and co-creates new governance processes.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Renee McBeth. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Home in the City: Principles and Processes in Urban Housing Governance”, No. Pro00084817, September 21, 2018.

Dedication

For Louis

Acknowledgments

A “we” created this project—a contingent, complex, and sometimes contentious “we”. Nothing written in this dissertation came to be without the collaboration, support, and inspiration of others. In writing about community-engaged research, I am articulating this “we” here. To write this thesis, I’ve made all sorts of judgments calls. I am responsible for how those decisions shape a dissertation with my name on the first page. I take that responsibility seriously and any errors are my own. Nonetheless, I do not pretend the “I”-parts could ever be clearly distinguished from the “we”-parts of what follows. For this I owe a debt of gratitude that goes beyond any acknowledgements I could ever write.

This gratitude is above all to everyone fighting for housing justice, to everyone building community in encampments, to everyone doing the slow, hard work of actualizing visionary and collaborative services. I must acknowledge and thank a few people in particular: Susan for your dependability, Kym for your incisiveness, Janine for being a champion, Bruce for your dedication, Bernice for being a pillar, Alison for being a badass raging granny, Chrissy for your bravery, Ana for your honesty. Thank you also: Hilary, David Tat., Pete, Trudy, Diana, David T., Heather M., Susan M., Bernie, Nicole, Ashley, Lisa, Ken, Malcom, and Leonard. You were each pivotal and involved in different ways; some of you, unbeknownst to you, were an imagined audience getting me through long hours and days of writing.

Thank you to the whole team from the Indigenous Law Research Unit at the University of Victoria: Dr. Val Napoleon, Dr. Rebecca Johnson, Jessica Asch, Lindsay Borrows, Simon Owens, Tara Williamson, Brooke Edmonds, and Liam McGuigan. Jess you were a companion in facing the thorny questions and the small but critical details. A true orator, Lindsay, you inspired

with your words in the workshops and beyond, even giving a speech on our work to a municipal committee meeting. Thank you, Elder May Sam, for your warmth and support.

At this point I've had almost two-decades of academic mentors to whom I am tremendously grateful. My supervisor, Dr. Roger Epp, elegantly guided me to the finish line. When I was at a cross-roads with the project, Roger understood my desire to write in a way that 'fit' the relational and practical intent of the project. Reading 300 pages while flying across continents, finding sense in my out-of-the-ordinary project, and suggesting carefully thought through solutions that helped pull at the complex tangle of governing relations in the space of the city.

A trusted mentor, Dr. Shalene Jobin cared enough to get into the thick of it with me when she engaged with my work, especially when it came to our shared passion for methods. From Shalene I learned to always think about what specific talents I can bring to any work I do. Shalene models a form of leadership that gives me hope academia might not be so bad. I am grateful to Dr. Joshua Evans for his willingness to open his office door and have a lengthy conversation about housing politics grounded in a real commitment to housing justice. Dr. Cressida Heyes provided years of deeply valued mentorship and shaped the project in vital ways. I will always be grateful to Cressida for greeting me at orientation with a replica Butterdome butter dish. It was sort of a joke, but I loved it, and it made me feel welcome.

I've never once doubted my decision to pursue a PhD in the Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta. Even though I evolved quite a bit over nearly a decade in the program, in the Department of Political Science, I always found a welcoming space and generous interlocutors for my varied yet somehow linked research interests. The Poli. Sci. Dept. deserves its reputation as a space that nurtures critical political scholarship of many stripes. Dr.

Yasmeen Abu-Laban has helped foster this for many of us with her Monday morning writing group.

Long before the PhD, Jeremy Webber saw potential in a young activist who was not the most experienced applicant and gave me a job as Coordinator of the Consortium on Democratic Constitutionalism (Demcon) in the Faculty of Law at the University of Victoria. Jeremy supported me to approach the role in my own way, to do additional training in grant writing, and to participate both the organization and the intellectual dialogues of Demcon's conferences and speaker series, the *Victoria Colloquium in Cultural, Social and Political Thought*. It was in this work I first witnessed the potential of an authentic academic community—the joy of hosting brilliant thinkers, lively intellectual exchange, and at the end of the day, friendship. Jeremy's CRC provided initial funding to support an additional role with the Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU). When that role expanded from the side of my desk to take over my whole desk and more, Jeremy was endlessly understanding and supportive.

In my role as ILRU's Project Coordinator, important seeds of this dissertation project began to grow, as I explain in the Introduction and throughout the text that follows. Working with ILRU's Director Dr. Val Napoleon was fun, and hopeful, and inspiring in ways that have immensely influenced my career, but also how I want to be in the world. Val has a way of cutting to the heart of things and I often hear her voice in my head as I think through difficult situations. Jeremy and Val are the greatest of mentors because they not only supported me in my work with them, but they also pushed me to build my own projects. In the same week, they both took me out to lunch and asked if I was going to do a PhD in what I believe was a coordinated effort. Dr. James Tully was an intellectual inspiration and encouraged me to go to U of A, a beautiful turn of events as I've found an unexpected and cherished home here in Edmonton.

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My doctoral research is an incredibly different project, but still, the mentorship I received during my prior degrees helped lay an essential theoretical foundation. Thanks to Dr. Scott Watson, Dr. Warren Magnussen, and Dr. Michael Asch. Michael’s lunches built a community with a legacy of friendship and intellectual exchange that lives on to this day. I was gifted an incredibly special undergraduate experience at Huron University College, where I had unparalleled support from Dr. Wendy Russell, Dr. Mark Franke, and Dr. Arja Vainio-Mattila.

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Rachel George, Dr. Gina Starblanket, Dr. Kelly Aguirre, Charis St. Pierre, Dr. Joshua St. Pierre, QC Gu, Dr. Chad Cowie, and Dr. Daisy Rafael, for your friendship and support. Thanks also to Arden, Dan, Christina, Anika, Lisa, and Kaitlin, and to Nîpiya and Sîpin.

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Most of all I thank my family. My parents, Diane and James McBeth, are the most loving, compassionate, community-minded people. My siblings, Ryan, Nicole, Amy, and Pedro, my life would be unimaginable without you all. Between you, you've travelled to Alberta over a dozen times since July 2021, making post-baby PhD life possible and enjoyable. Nicole, my life choices would be far worse, and more difficult, without your advice. My in-laws, Pam and Brian, and the rest of the Wildcats, thank you for giving me an Alberta family, and providing the kind of everyday support network most people could only dream of, as people have told me directly. Thanks to my father-in-law Brian Wildcat for reviewing the part of my thesis where I talk about wahkohtowin and related Cree concepts.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

It's October 2023, 2 weeks since Chrissy Brett's 1-year memorial. I'm sitting out on the deck taking in the shivering yellow-leaved aspen framing the long dry field and blue expanse at my in-laws in Maskwacis.¹ Alberta to BC and back. The march of this dissertation. From coast to prairie and back to the coast. A rhythm of sorts. Developed at times, erratic at others. This sense of disjuncture moves me between landscapes and my own sense of where and what is home, with journeys to and from driven by the unexpected. My most recent visit to Victoria was for Chrissy's second memorial march. The first march had taken place the previous September, a couple months after she passed away, suddenly. Many people in her wide circles of family, community, and collaborators have been left trying to make sense of the loss while attempting to fill a cavernous hole left by a great activist, a mother, and indeed, a key collaborator in this research, the Home in the City project.

Home in the City (HITC) was a community-engaged research project that aimed to build equitable housing governance in Victoria, BC, a mid-sized Canadian city. HITC was also my dissertation field research project. As a public-facing outcome of HITC, individuals connected to the housing community co-produced *The Victoria Declaration—A Statement on Governance in Housing and Support Services* (Home in the City, 2019). *The Victoria Declaration* is a set of principles and actions developed in a consensus-based process by a group of community members, services-providers, advocates, and university-based researchers. Approximately 70 individuals were part of co-developing the declaration over the course of four HITC workshops.

¹ This opening story situates me as a researcher in a specific time and place and within relationships that shaped my community-engaged research. In her book, *Upholding Indigenous Economic Relationships: Nehiyawak Narratives*, Shalene Jobin (2023) similarly weaves stories throughout the text that include the time and place of writing. I gratefully emulate this method here.

Chrissy and a group of others attended HITC while rebounding from the forced closure of their Indigenous tent city, Camp Namegans (“We Are All One”), as named by Chrissy (Ross, 2023). Chrissy was pivotal to the shared conversations, writing, and editing processes in HITC that created *The Victoria Declaration* (Home in the City, 2019). She subsequently advanced its principles and commitments within other encampments, in Victoria and beyond. I distinctly remember her calling me from the Oppenheimer Park encampment in Vancouver to tell me the declaration had “jumped the strait” (meaning, across the Strait of Juan de Fuca, part of the Salish Sea that divides Vancouver Island from the lower mainland). Chrissy said she was demanding that any agency entering their overdose prevention site must agree to the declaration principles.

At the memorial, we gathered for Chrissy but marched for housing justice. We yelled at any random strollers downtown on a quiet Sunday: “Housing is a human right!” We stopped for an Indigenous-led ceremony at the spot where Chrissy’s fallen comrade died just the week before. We hugged and reminded each other what Chrissy stood for. Niki Ottosen and Bobby Arbus, two lead organizers and close friends of Chrissy, asserted that Chrissy got more people housed than any bureaucrat ever did—they said she made sure every person in Super Intent City² got into housing when the encampment was split up in 2018.

The way Chrissy told it to me, she never intended to stay more than a couple days at Super Intent City, the first encampment she was part of (C. Brett, personal communication, April 15, 2019). She thought maybe she would stop in every couple of weeks. Her initial involvement in the tent city was after some individual direct action. That earlier action was part of a big personal battle in the child welfare system. Chrissy decided to do a sit-in at the BC legislature

² For more on Super Intent City Society, see <https://intencity.ca/>.

and then at mīqən (Meegan or Beacon Hill Park).³ Her camp out was a visible challenge to a decision taken by child welfare services. She said taking public action like this was a lesson she learned from her parents who had roots in union organizing. During that time, she started letting some houseless folks she met leave their belongings with her since she was there anyway. She told me she saw how having that base was useful to allow people to go about their days and get other things done. It was those unhoused friends she knew from those actions who called and asked her to come start a sacred fire at Super Intent City (C. Brett, personal communication, April 15, 2019).

Once she was spending time in Super Intent City, Chrissy was part of tending a sacred fire and she also became involved in navigating safety issues in the encampment, acting at times as an informal liaison between residents and police and fire authorities. Both the sacred fire and the liaison roles were controversial at times—within and outside the encampment. Despite developing agreements with local police and fire fighter agencies to go through their safety committee, eventually, because they were situated on the provincial courthouse lawn, the provincial fire commissioner came to shut down the encampment. Chrissy described the standoff. She and others refused to accept the eviction: “And so I actually chased the fire commissioner out with a wooden spoon. I’m like ‘Not accepting your papers. I’m not accepting your law. I’m not accepting anything. You need to leave.’” As always for Chrissy, such assertions were a matter of Indigenous sovereignty:

...you don’t have the sales receipt, you don’t have a signed treaty and this is my land, you get the fuck off, this is a sacred fucking ceremony, there’s the fire and if you want to

³ For information on the traditional significance of mīqən for ləkʷəŋən People, see <https://songheesnation.ca/community/l-k-ng-n-traditional-territory>

talk to me about my fire I'll talk to you about the fire, but the resident shit, you need to go talk to the residents. (C. Brett, personal communication, April 15, 2019)

Chrissy focused on the voice of unhoused residents as the ultimate authority. She also took on and defended her role as, in her words, a “liaison that’s a social worker, but not a social worker. Like someone who will talk to the cops for 5 minutes loudly and give us enough time to organize ourselves where we don’t get ourselves in as much trouble as we could” (C. Brett, personal communication, April 15, 2019). The more controversial part was that Chrissy was not from the local territory; she was Nuxalk from up the coast, and she was not houseless. She chose to be there as an advocate and, in her accounting, at the request of residents who asked her to light the fire. Chrissy’s focus was on relationship-building in a reconciliation or decolonization framework.⁴ The realities of mobility, displacement, her own “60s scoop” experience, and being an Indigenous person in an urban centre all impacted her work. She left a legacy of housing justice advocacy because of these relationships that she built. In her absence, the connections she made continue to inspire struggles to build relational housing governance.

The story of HITC and *The Victoria Declaration* was frequently complicated with high stakes for those who were involved. This dissertation is my account and interpretation of the

⁴ This Introduction chapter uses the terms “reconciliation” and “decolonization,” and *The Victoria Declaration* also refers to both, but there are important distinctions between the two concepts. In Canada, reconciliation has tended to focus on repair and reform of existing Canadian institutions and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada [TRC], 2015). Decolonial projects attempt to transform colonial relations of domination, colonial conditions of knowledge production, and dispossession of land (Dei & Lordan, 2016). The emphasis is on situating individuals within a matrix of power relations and colonial rationalities central to colonial dispossession (Mignolo, 2011). While decoloniality is linked to decolonization, Tuck and Yang (2012) insist that decolonization is about the literal transformation of the world, and “not a metaphor.” Decolonization involves transforming both structural and subjectivizing aspects of colonialism (Coulthard, 2014; Fanon, 2008). Reconciliation was a word that Chrissy used and that we discussed in HITC in terms of change that can be made by existing settler institutions, but I propose that in general, the HITC project is best understood as advancing relational self-determination and applying principles from decolonizing methods. That is, our focus extended to the actual transformation of relations of power and authority, and relationships between people and with the land.

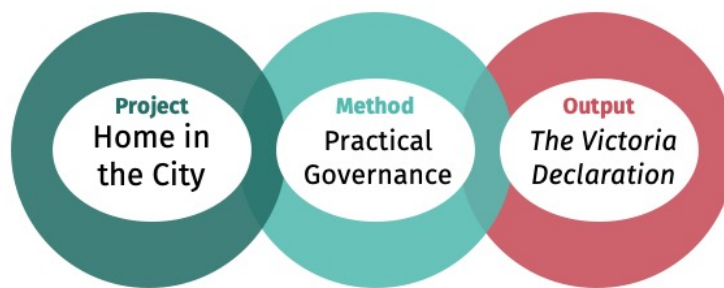
HITC project, and what we can learn about the limits and possibilities it might hold for other collectives in need of new strategic processes. When I started my dissertation proposal, I thought I would write the dissertation in a typical academic format common in political theory. I studied political and feminist theory for many years and the inclined reader will find evidence of that background throughout the dissertation. As HITC and our shared vision developed, the community-engaged and relational contributions of the research became increasingly dominant in my focus and commitments. The project emerged from advocacy, and I always aimed to do action-based research. I also changed over the course of my degree and this project. In the end, I left behind the goal of producing a work of political theory. The research is, rather, an applied work of theoretically informed community-engaged research. The contribution is a method of understanding and co-creating forms of “practical governance.” Practical governance is both an approach to community-engaged scholarship, and a model of governance for co-developing housing and support services. The method can also support theory-building. Although this was not my central focus, I pick up on some of the theoretical threads in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. These chapters—as I also highlight in Chapter 8: Conclusion—analyze the research process in a way that both draws on and contributes applied insights to political theory.

This introductory chapter situates my community-engaged research and who I am as a researcher. This extends into a subsection on how ideas of home, including in my own story, shape HITC. Then I give a high-level summary of the process that created *The Victoria Declaration* and how it has been endorsed and implemented. Next, I introduce the research problem and how I respond to gaps in policy, practice, theory, and methods. Finally, I end with a map of the dissertation. I interlace the text of *The Victoria Declaration*, bit by bit, in the original

order. It is set off from the rest of the text, in italics.⁵ The publicly distributed, formatted version of the declaration is also included in Appendix A. The text is worth reciting in full because it was the primary public-facing output of my research. I use relevant excerpts from the declaration to introduce HITC (“the project”), the declaration (the output of HITC), and practical governance (the method I developed drawing from HITC and the declaration). Figure 1 illustrates the interconnection between the project, the output, and the method.

Figure 1

Project, Method, Output



Practical governance is an applied method of community-engaged research where a researcher works with a community to co-create governance resources. In HITC our governance resource, *The Victoria Declaration*, specifically focused on equity in housing and closely related support services.

*

⁵ Since the whole text is in italics here, sentences that are italicized in the original are not in italics in the chapter.

THE VICTORIA DECLARATION

A Statement on Governance in Housing and Support Services

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We believe in the following:

1. *GOVERNANCE INVOLVES ALL OF US: The governance of housing and support services begins with each of us and the rules we collectively choose to follow.*
2. *ADDRESSING INEQUITIES: There is no separation between the work of addressing inequities and the governance of housing and support services.*
3. *MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE: To live and work well together requires each of us to help build dialogue within our community and across communities. This requires the knowledges of those who access services and the knowledges of those who provide services.*
4. *MAKING COMMUNITY SAFETY CENTRAL TO OUR WORK: We are all responsible for community safety, and for building a range of community responses to harms and conflicts.*
5. *INCLUSIVITY: It is possible to create policies and practices that protect everyone from harassment and violence.*

In light of these guiding principles for our downtown community, WE COMMIT TO THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

1. *Building long-term reciprocal relationships. Where possible, our services will be meaningfully informed by Indigenous laws governing relationships.*
2. *Creating safe spaces and common ground for the benefit of all involved.*
3. *Building the capacity to have dialogue that helps us make decisions together across differences.*
4. *Moving beyond a political and economic culture of scarcity towards building a future based on shared resources and understanding.*
5. *Creating a community that can work together to provide a variety of housing options that meet the needs of our diverse population.*
6. *Enacting the kinds of relationships we need that will create the governance of housing and supports we envision. (Home in the City, 2019)*

The declaration advances a vision for equity and self-determination within the governance of housing services. Specifically, it asserts that we are all part of housing governance, starting with the ways we respond to issues in our own relationships. I elaborate on these principles and commitments over the course of the introduction. I also explain how they inform the central contribution of the dissertation, the *practical governance method*, which is informed by the declaration's ethos of mutual responsibility for responding to housing issues. I ground my discussion of the dissertation's research problem and contribution in stories of real relationships that shape my research, including my story and the story of mine and Chrissy's relationship. The relational and practical forms of governance discussed and advanced in HITC are described in the first paragraph of Page 2, which immediately follows the list of commitment and principles included above.

*

WAYS TO MOVE FORWARD ON THESE PRINCIPLES

The work of housing and support services requires the wisdom of all to serve the needs of our community. Our community includes people in various positions with multiple backgrounds and experiences. Our differences present challenges but we also have ways of providing care and support for each other through the community we create. We believe the root of how we run things begins with each of us. We each choose the rules we follow or contest in our relationships. These rules may be said or unsaid and this involves both formal and informal decision-making. This is how we govern our relationships with each other. The rules we collectively choose to follow determines what the governance of housing and support services looks like. (Home in the City, 2019)

*

Chrissy and I frequently saw eye to eye because for her it was all about relationships and about asserting Indigenous law in the encampments. A central focus of HITC was bringing conversations about Indigenous legal and governance traditions into conversations about the

governance of housing and support services. For many years Chrissy worked “up island” with the friendship centre and in child welfare. People in that context acted more like family, she explained in the interview we did in 2019. Her analysis frequently focused on building relationships and on harms stemming from colonial relations, which was also our focus in HITC. The question of boundaries was a constant one in Chrissy’s child welfare work, as it also was in her housing justice advocacy. Chrissy noted that she and her co-workers had their own BBQs away from the families they worked with. There was important separation from their clients. Still, figuring out boundaries within that close relationality was much of what Chrissy talked about. In 2019, when we did our interview, she was trying to figure out how she could treat everyone like family without adopting everyone; still going home to her sons and caring for herself as she needed to. But she was clear: In Victoria, the divide between those accessing and providing support services felt stark, much more of a professional divide and that family feeling was not there. She thought it should be.

*

1. WE START FROM WHAT WE KNOW, BUT WE HAVE ROOM TO GROW.

We recognize there are real power imbalances between different members of our community, which arise from our differences. These differences occur for many reasons, including race, Indigeneity, gender, sexuality, class and ability. There are also systemic power imbalances between people who provide services and people who access services. We acknowledge all of the work people have undertaken to mitigate the inequities that arise from these differences. We must never turn away from the injustices that lie at the heart of these inequities. We commit ourselves to the hard work of finding ways to overcome these imbalances. Most importantly we believe that there is no separation between the work of addressing these inequities and the governance of housing and support services. (Home in the City, 2019)

*

The HITC project identified ways each of us brings principles and embedded paradigms from our own experience into decision-making. This included confronting White saviour mentalities that treat people accessing services as needy recipients of charity (Spade, 2020). Once, after co-presenting on *The Victoria Declaration* with another member of HITC to the Board of Directors of a large downtown shelter, I reflected on the comments and dynamics I had witnessed in our conversation with the Board. While diverse in employment experience, the composition of the Board appeared to be entirely White people and, in this case, also explicitly Christian. I was raised deeply embedded in evangelical Christian charity work, making these spaces somewhat familiar contexts. I both understand and push back on the ways many housing services are governed as explicitly Christian organizations because I see how that informs a general attitude that starkly separates those providing charity from those receiving it. Such an approach is deeply rooted in Christian thinking, but by no means exclusive to Christian traditions. Nonetheless, at the aforementioned Board meeting, I felt like I could have been speaking to the after-church crowd on any Sunday growing up. Our ideas about everyone being part of governance and addressing inequity through the governance of support services were met with polite smiles and nods and “see you next time” (there was no next time).

A commitment to personal, collective, and ongoing processes of decolonization has pushed me to reflect on the traditions I was raised with in my own family. One of many admirable things about my parents is the importance they place on community and relationships, which for them stems from Christian values. My parents are committed and talented in their capacity to build supportive communities and they gave me a deep sense of responsibility to family and others in need. Without a doubt, there is a complex tension in my ability to take up principles from our Christian tradition without other aspects I believe to be oppressive, although the latter are often intertwined with the former.

When I was 17, one of my best friends came out to a few of us who had been connected for years through our church. The negative reactions of other Christian friends of ours shattered my belief that everything I had been taught could possibly be true. This was someone we all loved—how could this Christian community claim to “be like Jesus” and treat someone so badly? The experience revealed a contradiction between my core values and the way my belief system was being enacted around me. The choices I made after that set me on a different path. I began to question not only the fundamentalism of Christian institutions and the harms perpetrated through evangelicalism, but also other political and economic institutions that I learned were rooted in colonialism, White supremacy, and economic inequality. I was increasingly radicalized in my outrage at the many aspects of my community and society that conflicted with the principles of human dignity, integrity, justice, and mutual aid that I had been taught to uphold.

I have moved away from the religious beliefs that ground the principles of relational community-building and care in my background. Still, my family members share some similar grounding principles in their work to build diverse communities that attend to one another’s needs. Where I come from is a part of who I am in positive ways that contain resources for good relationships and in ways that implicate me in structures of power, privilege, and colonialism.

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We acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonialism. As a result, Indigenous peoples face significant and distinct experiences of displacement and homelessness. We believe that reconciliation will involve a substantial transformation on the part of non-Indigenous individuals and our society’s institutions and systems. We will work to implement the relevant TRC Calls to Action. We will make space for services created by and for Indigenous peoples. Indigenous legal traditions contain important resources for responding to pressing issues in our communities. Services can and should be informed by Indigenous approaches to developing

long-term reciprocal relationships.

We aim to build supports that are shaped by our different experiences and cultures. We acknowledge that this is unceded Lekwungen (Songhees and Esquimalt) territory, where many Indigenous peoples live. This acknowledgement should be part of our conversations about governance. Our different perspectives are impacted by our identities and backgrounds. Our perspectives also come from the street cultures created when we live in community with each other. Through education and action, we will work to create culturally safe spaces and common ground for the benefit of all involved. (Home in the City, 2019)

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The declaration emphasizes the need for non-Indigenous people and institutions to change significantly in order to enact stated commitments to reconciliation. In HITC I am challenging a constituency I relate to: White settlers, who are often the decision-makers in service governance spaces.⁶ While I place the central responsibility for transformation with non-Indigenous people and organizations, the conversations in HITC have broader relevance to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, to policymakers, and community-engaged scholarship, especially related to housing governance and relationality.

⁶ People of colour (POC) who are immigrants or descendants of immigrants to Canada are also frequently decision-makers in governance spaces. I hope some of my analysis may resonate with a wider audience. Here I am simply emphasizing whom I had in mind while doing this research, and whom I have often found myself relating to. In fact, the Tuck and Yang (2014) article that I discuss in the next paragraph also speaks to the ways racialized immigrants can also engage in “settler moves to innocence” in positioning immigrant experiences as commensurate with Indigenous experiences of dispossession. Snelgrove et al. (2014) consider Tuck and Yang’s (2012) critique of the tendency to equate Indigenous struggles for self-determination and other struggles against oppression; solidarity, they argue, can centre struggles that are “incommensurable but not incompatible” (p. 3). One struggle may have a different context, but not necessarily contradict the work of others. In dialogue with Snelgrove and Corntassel, Dhamoon warns about problematically separating issues: “‘your’ issues of Indigenous land are not separate from ‘my’ issues if I care about racism, sexism, and that I must think about how they are related to settler colonialism” (p. 19). Moreover, Dhamoon raises concerns with seeing “colonialisms and racisms as separate” (p. 21). The dispossession of Indigenous peoples in settler colonial contexts is distinguishable from but also linked to European imperialism, both historical and ongoing, in other parts of the world, including India, Africa, the Caribbean (Snelgrove et al., 2014). The challenge of intersectional solidarity is thus to think about both context and relationality. Such an approach centres relatedness in shared struggles, where people may be differently positioned but not outside different intersecting relations of power (Snelgrove et al., 2014). For more dialogues between POC scholars and Indigenous scholars see Maynard and Simpson (2022) and Green et al. (2023).

Given my own positionality and the diversity of the community, it was important that the process was deeply reflexive in regard to appropriation and did not rely only on the methods and philosophies of Indigenous peoples. This is a complex dynamic. On one hand, when non-Indigenous peoples emulate the ways Indigenous people identify their ancestors, and place-based knowledges and traditions, it can at times feel like parroting. It can also look like “settler moves to innocence” and wanting to present oneself as better than other privileged individuals (Tuck & Yang, 2014). More, when people in a position of relative privilege talk about their lived experience, in some contexts an implication of commensurability can obfuscate the important critiques of power that have been forwarded through the struggles of oppressed peoples.

On the other hand, it is also colonial for White people to avoid engagement with identity and culture, focusing on the traditions of Indigenous people and POC, as if we come from nowhere or there are no positive principles or subversive and liberatory subcultures that can be recovered from the dominant society. I think this kind of recovery is possible but needs to be approached carefully, as part of critical political projects, and with reflexivity about missteps. So, despite my concern with the risks, I share my story, as part of my own practice, trying to find ways through the mess and the responsibility of privilege, and move towards liberation from shared entanglements in the toxicity of the dominant society.

I also share as a way of explaining who I am. The story about how my friend was treated by our Christian circle was what Marshall Ganz (2010) calls a “key choice point” (p. 16). It speaks to my decision to go down a different path from those closest to me, but also reminds me that I was raised in a religious context that imprinted obligations to care for and help others. It communicates where I come from, who made me who I am, and what motivates the work I do. This is what Ganz calls a “story of self” and it is just the first step in the public narratives needed

to build social movements; it must be accompanied by “a story of us,” and “a story of now” to make up the three parts of narrative practice (p. 14). As Ganz puts it, narrative practice is about telling “new public stories” that explain why we act and inspire action (p. 8). These stories build on each other to draw out motivation, articulate individual and collective identities, and foster the courage needed to catalyze action. Despite our different backgrounds, Chrissy and I both agreed on a shared priority: pushing the housing community—individuals accessing or providing services, advocates and community members—to critically examine the ways our paradigms are not universally shared, but rather specific to our backgrounds and often impacted by colonial relations.

Being at “Home in the City”

My dissertation is about being at “home in the city” (Anderson, 2013). For me, being home in the city comes naturally. I’ve always lived in cities. I was born in a big city in a poor neighbourhood—North York (now part of the Greater Toronto Area) in Ontario. When I was just age 2 my family moved an hour north to the somewhat smaller, suburban City of Barrie—a population of around 90,000 in the 1990s. Barrie was known as a “bedroom community” of Toronto because of all the people who lived and slept in comfortable homes in Barrie, while commuting daily to Toronto to work. The dominant image of Barrie is comfortable and welcoming, but recently Barrie has been in the national spotlight for passing extraordinarily punitive bylaw amendments regarding individuals experiencing homelessness in the city. The amendment would have made it illegal to provide food, water, and other essential items to unhoused individuals without a permit (Draaisma, 2023). Advocacy groups have submitted the bylaw to the UN Rapporteurs on extreme poverty and the right to adequate housing as a distressing example of the criminalization of homelessness (Harrison, 2023). After a national

backlash, including significant negative media coverage and a coordinated letter writing campaign, the city repealed the bylaw, but is still considering a similar amendment (The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness [CAEH], 2023; Harrison, 2023).

This struggle over basic human rights in Barrie raises important questions about the concept of “home.” “Where is home” can be a hard question for many of us to answer. It’s a hard question for me to answer. While I grew up in Barrie, I spent my high-school years in Hamilton, a city of nearly 600,000 in southwestern Ontario. It was an impactful time in my life and I often say proudly that I’m from Hamilton, even though I haven’t lived there in two decades, and I have no family and just a few friends left in the city. I’ve also lived in London, Ontario where I have long-standing family connections, making it home in another sense. After London, I moved to Vancouver Island to do a Master of Arts degree at the University of Victoria (UVic). In my years in Victoria, which were also years when I was largely disconnected from my parents and most of my immediate family who were living on different continents doing Christian missionary work, the networks I developed through community activism and at the university defined what being “at home” meant to me.

Victoria, BC is a mid-sized Canadian city with an outrageous housing affordability issue. Victoria’s most recent Housing Needs Assessment noted that nearly a thousand people were on the waiting list for affordable housing managed by BC Housing (Capital Region District [CRD], 2020). In Victoria, 21% of residents are in core housing need, which means they live in conditions considered unsuitable, inadequate, or unaffordable. This is significantly higher than the CRD as a whole (14%) and the national average in Canada (13%; CRD, 2020). A 2020 study reported that 113,000 new homes are needed in the city by 2041 to keep up to anticipated

demand (City of Victoria, 2021). At least 1600 people are currently homeless in Victoria.⁷ The City of Victoria is actively involved in responding to housing issues, and has created a municipal Housing Strategy as well as policies that address housing supply and affordability (City of Victoria, n.d.b). Federal, provincial, and regional partners have committed \$90 million in funding for 2,000 new rental units as part of the Regional Housing First Program. In addition to multi-level housing partnerships, the provincial housing authority, and municipal initiatives, a vast array of nonprofit and quasi-public service providers work on housing issues in Victoria. These organizations work together to varying degrees, such as within the local Systems Transformation Working Group and as members of the Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region, which was an active participant in HITC.

I got involved in housing and harm reduction related advocacy in Victoria as part of leftist student group, that I will call Victoria Action Research Collective (VARC), which was just wrapping up some research with residents of a tent city in Victoria when I was hired.⁸ My approach in HITC was informed by methods of action-based research like those employed at VARC, centring individuals impacted by the research. Researchers do not always manage to enact this principle at every step of the research process. In VARC's tent city project, I was thrown into writing up the results of that research despite not being involved in the research. I now have mixed feelings about my involvement in writing up that report without much context or collaboration from participants in the stage I got involved. *The Victoria Declaration* adopts

⁷ As of 2023, one count of individuals experiencing homelessness in the CRD is 1,665, which includes 524 individuals who were completely unsheltered or staying at emergency shelters (City of Victoria, n.d.a). The number of individuals who are staying with friends, in unknown locations, or other provisional housing is incredibly difficult to count, and thus the true scale of homelessness is almost certainly much higher.

⁸ I will anonymize the names of organizations such as this one (which no longer exists) and any others that did not formally endorse the research or *The Victoria Declaration*. I will use the real name of organizations that formally endorsed *The Victoria Declaration* and have thus publicly announced their engagement and support for the research outcomes.

the principle of “nothing about us without us” which has a long history in disability justice activism, HIV/AIDS movements, and is now well-established in research and advocacy around substance use and houselessness (Erevelles, 2002; Paradis et al., 2012; UNAIDS, 1999). In HITC, I refined my own articulation of this commitment to inclusion. Inclusion, as I elaborate in Chapter 7, is about more than consultation; it is the transformation of contexts in which people are included. Inclusion is not about including everyone in every decision every time. Sometimes what’s needed is a wide array of individuals in a coalition; other times, it’s specific groups with proximity to an issue or from a specific community. In HITC, we focused on co-developing new governance models that support more equitable decision-making on multiple levels. This includes collaboratively determining principles that can shape decision making and building community capacity to make decisions together.

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2. *NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US*

Listening is a practice and a skill. We commit to expanding our ability to hear the concerns of others. We will respond to issues and build common understanding through clear communication.

We will gather, seek wisdom, and listen to everyone impacted by a decision. It is difficult to make decisions together, including people who deliver services and people who access these services. Still, we believe that more shared decision making is necessary to make the best decisions. We recognize the need to build collaboration and solidarity among large inclusive groups to address collective issues. We also recognize the need for smaller groups coming from specific communities or addressing a specific issue. This requires participation and decision-making with peers who have experienced the issues. We call on everyone to commit to building our capacity to create dialogue and make decisions together across differences. (Home in the City, 2019)

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The action-based methods I learned at VARC informed my methodology in HITC, as did the relationships I started building in that role. In a paid position, I had the privilege and capacity to assist with projects that involved unpaid activism for most others involved. I quickly got involved in coordinating volunteers for a “guerrilla needle exchange” — a direct action led by individuals impacted and angered by the closure of Victoria’s only fixed site needle exchange. We took shifts handing out needles, pipes, and other harm reduction supplies on a large grass-covered median beside a major thoroughway in downtown Victoria, very close to my home, so close, sometimes I carried the folding table and supplies we used on foot to and from my apartment. The harm reduction activism hit “close to home” in another sense. I thought about my late uncle (whom I was named after), who died in a drug-related conflict. I continue to wonder if harm-reduction supports or decriminalization could have impacted the course of his life.

As part of my role at VARC, I also joined the Committee to End Homelessness Victoria (CEHV). After leaving VARC, I stayed on as a volunteer member of CEHV where I had built relationships. I first started to articulate the plan for HITC in conversations at CEHV. My relationships in CEHV were deeply reciprocal. I was committed to supporting CEHV as a housed member with significant forms of privilege related to Whiteness, education, and housing status. I was also frequently overrun by the demands of work, school, and activist commitments. Sometimes I had barely enough money for rent and food. My struggles were not disregarded by fellow CEHV members, despite the significant forms of privilege I carried. One time, another housed committee member told me she noticed I had been wearing the same shoes for several years and knew I experienced chronic knee and back pain. She took me out to buy me a pair of luxuriously supportive and comfortable shoes that I would not have been able to afford at that time. Sometimes we did well practising mutual aid and challenging inequity. Other times, we

struggled to work across our differences and reinforced inequity. Conflicts within the group, including at the meetings, fragmented our advocacy work and our capacity to work with other groups. I started imagining a project that focused on building solidarity and ways of working together compatible with feminist and decolonizing governance.

I wanted to bring together insights from my advocacy work downtown with approaches I was learning through a university-based coordinating role at the UVic Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU).⁹ At ILRU, I helped organize community-based Indigenous law research projects and was also a facilitator at workshops with Indigenous community partners. I saw the way participants connected with ILRU's *Legal Narrative Analysis Method*. Using principles and processes drawn from oral histories and other sources of Indigenous law, the method assists communities to identify Indigenous legal responses in different areas of law and governance (Napoleon & Friedland, 2015). Collective conversations about stories allowed people to step back from their immediate context and identify principled responses to community issues. Building, maintaining, and restoring relationships—Indigenous relationality—was central in the ILRU community projects, workshops, and reports. Witnessing the impact of the method, I envisioned using ILRU tools to support housing services in downtown Victoria.

An early goal of HITC was to articulate what “home” means. In a summary of HITC’s “purpose and approach” that I shared with individuals and service providers who had been asked to consider signing *The Victoria Declaration*, I paired the goal of understanding what home means with articulating new governance models. I wrote:

⁹ Although ILRU has not formally endorsed *The Victoria Declaration*, they were part of creating it, are named on the publicly available document, and I have permission to use the real name of the unit in this text.

The Home in the City project is hosting workshops and meetings with community members and downtown service providers in order to:

- i. understand and build a shared sense of what “home” means within housing and support services, and
- ii. use these shared understandings to co-create governance resources (see below, *The Victoria Declaration*). We hope our governance work can assist service providers and individuals accessing services to respond to issues, such as community safety. (Notes on file with author)

In HITC, our shared dialogue made space for different ways of relating to the concept of “home” and the place of “the city.” While I did not focus on documenting our different conceptions of home, they nonetheless inform *The Victoria Declaration*.

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We aim to build supports that are shaped by our different experiences and cultures. We acknowledge that this is unceded Lekwungen territory, where many Indigenous peoples live. This acknowledgement should be part of our conversations about governance. Our different perspectives are impacted by our identities and backgrounds. Our perspectives also come from the street cultures created when we live in community with each other. Through education and action, we will work to create culturally safe spaces and common ground for the benefit of all involved. (Home in the City, 2019)

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HITC took place on the traditional territory of the ɫəkʷəŋən (Lkwungen or Lekwungen) speaking peoples of the ɫəkʷəŋən (Songhees) and Xwsepsum (Kosapsum or Esquimalt) Nations. The larger government administrative authority of the Capital Region District (CRD) touches the territory of approximately 20 First Nations, including 11 with reserves and nine with settlement

populations (CRD, 2023). The CRD website specifically acknowledges the following First Nations governments in the region:

Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees) and Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) Nations here in the core area, the W̱SÁNEĆ Nations {W̱JOŁELP (Tsartlip), BO̱KEĆEN (Pauquachin), STÁUTW̱, (Tsawout) W̱SIKEM (Tseycum)} out on the Saanich Peninsula and Gulf Islands, to the west Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), T'Sou-ke, and Pacheedaht, and MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) and Pune'laxutth' (Penelekut) Nations. (CRD, 2023, para. 1)

Although I was not specifically conducting research with an Indigenous community, it was important for our conversations about governance to centre, where possible and appropriate, Indigenous jurisdiction, laws, and governance. The first commitment in the declaration is to build our capacity to create services informed by Indigenous legal and governance traditions through “long-term reciprocal relationships” (Home in the City, 2019, p. 1). In HITC, as I will explain, our commitment to this long-term work was an important part of approaching community-engaged research in a way that learns from decolonizing methodologies.

Victoria is home to Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples from many places. The complexities of urban life necessitate approaches that work across multiple Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches. Still, there were tensions around the way we engaged different legal and governance traditions in HITC. One tension was between a principle of recognizing and centring local Indigenous traditions and a principle of acknowledging and building from my own long-term learning and long-term relationships. I was simultaneously conducting research in Victoria where I had only nascent relationships with individuals in the local First Nations, while I was building and strengthening longer-term relationships with Indigenous scholars and communities on the prairies.

Learning and relationships on the prairies helped shape and inform HITC. My spouse, Matthew Wildcat, who is Cree from Treaty Six territory, co-facilitated two HITC workshops and we discussed the project at length. The declaration refers to signers supporting “the spirit and intent” of the declaration, which is language used commonly in reference to “the spirit and intent” of the Numbered Treaties (Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, n.d., para. 6). As I discuss further in Chapters 2 and 6, after starting my PhD at the University of Alberta, I was part of a university-community collaboration with Cree Elders and community members in Aseniwuche Winewak Nation (AWN). Subsequently, I continued working with individuals who were part of that project within the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge and the Prairie Indigenous Relationality Network (PRN), which has been principally led by Cree scholars. My understandings of Indigenous relational paradigms are thus influenced by Cree paradigms.

As a non-Indigenous researcher who has spent much of the past decade learning from Indigenous teachers and in Indigenous contexts, I struggle with a tension between “deep listening” and appropriation. Deep listening means openness to being changed by what you hear (Tully, 2016). Appropriation takes the situated knowledges of others, such as principles of Indigenous relationality out of the context of Indigenous authority, Indigenous-led initiatives, and dialogic or relational learning that advances Indigenous self-determination. Henry et al. (2016) argue that an Indigenous framework of relational accountability can be applied within a non-Indigenous knowledge framework because it is not about tacking on culture “to make it relevant” (p. 199). In fact, learning and applying relational accountability, as articulated in Indigenous relational approaches is “the key to community-engaged ethically sound research” (pp. 199–200). However, researcher reflexivity is essential to unpack positionality and worldview along with processes that support and maintain community agency (pp. 190–191).

My approach involves applying what I've learned in a context of ongoing relationships that advance individual and collective self-determination, and specifically “relational self-determination” (Kuokkanen, 2012, 2019; Young, 2000). Rooted in a deep sense of relationality within and between communities, feminist and Indigenous scholars have developed a concept of relational self-determination to describe the interplay between forms of collective and individual self-determination. So, for example, Kuokkanen (2012) argues that collective self-determination is deeply linked to gender justice and the rights of women. In Chapter 5, I delve deeper into a specific case considering possible relational responses to a conflict between the self-determining decision of a local Nation and non-Indigenous individuals living on their reserve lands.

Co-Creating and Implementing *The Victoria Declaration*

HITC participants co-developed the core tenets of the declaration during an initial workshop in December 2018, attended by over 60 people. After two additional gatherings to co-write and review the declaration, we settled on the public version in April 2019. While most of the participants in the workshops attended the first workshop, some other individuals became involved as the process developed, a few could not make it to the first workshop but joined for others, and a few other individuals were consulted for input outside of the workshops. In total, approximately 70 people were part of the declaration-writing process. The timeline for my field research was longer, involving about a year of participant observation, additional follow-up interviews, and discussions with participants. The declaration-writing process was a subset of HITC. In the end, HITC extended across four workshops and months of collaborative work before and after.¹⁰

¹⁰ An overview of the research process and data collection methods is provided in Chapter 3, a narrative of the workshops and shared processes is the focus of Chapter 4, and my interpretation of the research results spans the remaining chapters of the thesis.

Our collective discussions and the process of co-writing the declaration were together an exercise in community governance, leading to the creation of a concise and accessible governance resource, *The Victoria Declaration*, which speaks to both vast cleavages in the housing community and moments of shared vision.

There were two waves of energy around the declaration: the first quickly after we released the public version in 2019, and then in 2022 after we had been stalled by the pandemic. In September 2019, the declaration was signed by the Board of Directors of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (GVCEH), now known as the Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region. In a blog post we co-wrote, Janine Theobald, Director of Collaborative Engagement at the Alliance, described how Alliance staff “have been putting the declaration to work in policy and practice” through “user-centered design” work (Beausoleil & Theobald, 2022, Project Updates section, para. 1). The Alliance and the Capital Region District (CRD) incorporated the declaration into the *Community Plan to End Homelessness in the Capital Region* (GVCEH & CRD, 2019). The first inside page of the plan includes the full text of the first page of *The Victoria Declaration*. Implementing the declaration principles has frequently included advocacy around equitable participation in decision-making and policy development related to community housing and homelessness in Victoria.

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3. NO UNITY WITHOUT DIVERSITY, NO DIVERSITY WITHOUT UNITY

In order to build inclusive services, we will honour different forms of knowledge. Balancing multiple perspectives will not be easy work. The difficulty lies in creating ways where both sides are able to communicate their challenges to each other. We will acknowledge the different places we are coming from. We value the knowledges of those who access services and the knowledges of those who provide services. To live and work well together requires each of us to help build dialogue within our community. (Home in the City, 2019)

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The above excerpt from the declaration highlights the kind of theory-building we did in HITC, grounded in efforts of participants to simultaneously think through and act on the issues we were discussing. The challenge, in theory and in practice, was to recognize important differences between HITC participants and build contingent forms of unity that do not minimize those differences. The declaration commits to building dialogue that honours different forms of knowledge. One example of expanding dialogue around housing issues involved the residents at the Fairfield Hotel—a “single room occupancy” building known as an SRO—who formed a tenants’ association, the Fairfield Tenants Association (FTA). The FTA was advocating to the City of Victoria to keep the building open, but with changes and upgrades for resident safety. They explicitly said in this advocacy that they were implementing *The Victoria Declaration* as residents speaking with a shared voice. A local housing provider was brought in to operate the building. The FTA made a safety plan, and some improvements were made, but the conditions remained inadequate. In the end the necessary upgrades were deemed unaffordable, and the building was shut down. The housing provider offered rehousing to each tenant that wanted to be rehoused. Some residents chose homelessness over the housing options provided to them (S. Abells, personal communication, December 27, 2019).

Expanding dialogue and “balancing perspectives” is not easy and does not always lead to agreement. At times Chrissy’s and my viewpoints diverged on how to advance our housing concerns. We were both advocating to housing providers and policymakers, and in her liaison role, Chrissy was also advocating directly to police and fire authorities. One moment when our differences came up in HITC is the focus of a story I return to in Chapter 5. I explain why I did not invite police to participate in the HITC workshops and why Chrissy wanted a couple of specific bylaw officers that she had developed relationships with to attend and learn from our conversations about Indigenous law. It’s an important story that we discussed multiple times. She told me to write about it, and use my name, she insisted. We fought, but we worked it through, and we became close friends and collaborators. Disagreement can be a gift when we come through it this way. It’s where we are tested, where we must reveal what we stand for, and in the process figure out what really matters to us. Disagreement is the heart of governance decision-making and that’s why the story is essential to explaining how relationships are at the heart of what I term the *practical governance method*.

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Police hold a position of power in our society. The inequities faced by our community have resulted in criminalization and traumatic interactions with police. Sometimes the only response available in crisis situations is calling police. These relationships are complex. In some cases, we will build understanding and work to improve relationships among community members, service providers, and police or bylaw officers. This should happen within a context of decolonization and decriminalization. Further, this work should not shift our attention away from community accountability and safety practices that do not include police. We believe that we are all responsible for community safety, and for building a range of community responses to harms and conflicts.

Like all communities, we deal with conflict and have our own ways of responding to conflict. We also have work to do in order to create practices and solutions to help us work

through issues in our community. Sometimes policies that are meant to protect, focus on protecting service providers more than on those accessing care. We believe it is possible to honour personal boundaries while questioning the divisions that exist between those who access and provide services. We believe it is possible to create policies and practices that protect everyone from harassment and violence. (Home in the City, 2019)

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While efforts to advance the declaration waned during the pandemic, things picked up in spring 2022. A group called Neighbourhood Solidarity with Unhoused Neighbours (NSUN) catalyzed a declaration “reboot” to get more organizations to sign on and work towards implementation. After the May 2022 NSUN event, another group, Greater Victoria Acting Together, also endorsed the declaration and incorporated the declaration’s tenets into their housing campaign in advance of an upcoming municipal election. On the new wave of energy around the declaration, NSUN and HITC participants pushed to get the City of Victoria to officially endorse the declaration. In September 2022—building on years-long conversations and advocacy with several City Councillors and the Mayor—Councillors Ben Isitt and Sarah Potts prepared a motion to have Victoria City Council endorse the declaration. We hosted a community gathering outside City Hall before the motion was tabled and eventually a group of us went inside to show support at the meeting. Bruce Livingstone, a lived expert and advocate, addressed the council. Bruce described safety issues he had faced in the shelter system and urged the City to support our relational approach to housing governance. I spoke about the process that generated the declaration, its aims, and outcomes. At a subsequent council meeting on September 29, 2022, the council passed the motion to endorse the declaration. At that meeting, not open to public attendance but publicly live streamed on the City website, Councillor Potts noted the “delegation” that attended from our group at the prior meeting and said the declaration reflects

work to address a key issue already identified by council: difficult conditions within housing can make it difficult for individuals to stay in the housing they have (City of Victoria, 2022).

A declaration is an aspirational document. I personally had concerns about whether a document like a declaration is too aspirational—too easy to agree to and then dismiss. I shared these concerns with others in HITC, but also concluded that the declaration articulates ideas many in the housing community have been trying to advance for a long time. If the declaration could bring people together around these principles and commitments, I decided, then perhaps it could be a useful “tool.”

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4. HONOURING WHERE WE ARE, BELIEF IN A NEW TOMORROW

A declaration is a tool and a living document. We hope our declaration can be a tool to help us build the relationships needed to create healthy communities and make social change. This requires collaboration across differences and across organizations. We believe that everyone has a right to dignity and to a safe and affordable home. Our economic system treats home ownership as an asset, but we can also fight for housing as a social good. For the benefit of the community, we commit to moving beyond a political and economic culture of scarcity towards building a future based on shared resources and understanding.

The work of creating our community should not fall solely on us. We should be supported by both service providers and by governments at all levels. We are a diverse community and we need a variety of housing options that meet people where they are at. Implementing “rights-based” and “Housing First” approaches are an important part of this. We also need integrated models that ensure we are working together and sharing information. We need education on Indigenous and colonial histories and understanding of how race, class, ability, age, gender and sexual orientation intersect. We are committed to creating community by working together to provide a variety of housing options that meet the needs of our diverse population.

Housing makes a material difference in people’s lives. Our work in the governance of housing and supports binds us together by higher ideals. For some, these are spiritual in nature, involving religious values and connections to forces beyond ourselves. For others, these are the

values we owe to each other, of mutual respect, tolerance, trust and equality. And for others, these are deeply-held political values of self-determination for Indigenous and other communities. We share the belief that democracy is not only a political system, but a way of equally valuing each other by valuing each other's voices. All of these values are necessary to enact the kinds of relationships we need that will create the governance of housing and supports we envision.

ADDENDUM: WHO WE ARE

This declaration was created by the Home in the City project, which includes people with current and previous experiences of homelessness and people facing diverse issues related to housing – marginally housed, inadequately housed, unstably housed, or unsafely housed. Our project includes people living in poverty as well as some housed allies who are not. Many of us access services and some of us provide services. We are connected to a range of organizations and groups; although, many of us came only representing ourselves. The group that contributed to the declaration includes community members from diverse backgrounds and communities: visitors to these territories as well as Indigenous peoples, including Elders, from a number of nations close and far. We do not claim to sufficiently represent all of these groups, nor do we all agree on all matters.

This process was facilitated by Renée Beausoleil, as part of her phd research, with Matthew Wildcat and the UVic Indigenous Law Research Unit.

As we finalize this draft, we will seek honorary signers who agree with the spirit and intent of this declaration. We hope many others will sign on and support its implementation. (Home in the City, 2019)

*

We, in HITC, did not easily agree on how to describe who “we” are. As mentioned, 60 people gathered for the principal meeting to draft the declaration, including people who access services as well as staff and board members from at least a dozen downtown service providers, although many came only representing themselves. A sub-group of 35 were part of the follow-up and review sessions. The longest part of the shared editing process may have been settling on the

final section of the declaration, hotly debated at the review meeting, which describes the group involved in HITC.

In any community, there are always many possible ways to define words like “we” or “us” (Ganz, 2010). In narrative practice, Ganz’s social movement theory, he argues that someone needs to narrate an “us” that matters and that needs to come together now. As such, “the story of us” always needs an interpreter (p. 17). No description of “us” can capture the complexity of our positionalities, yet HITC articulated an “us,” a group in that room with a role to play in the governance of housing and support services.

When drafting the declaration, I made a case to the group that it’s not the statement that matters, it’s relationships. To build the relationships that are needed, we needed tools to discuss the issues. The collective insights in the room were needed to respond to the challenges facing the housing community. Telling a “story of now” is about creating a sense of urgency around something that needs to be done. The urgency comes from identifying and empathizing with the story (Ganz, 2010, p. 19). The image of Chrissy chasing the fire commissioner out of an encampment with a wooden spoon is funny. Anyone could pick up a wooden spoon, but Chrissy did it. It’s also a real moment in a very difficult situation. Everyone in that encampment was about to be displaced. Housing plans had to be made, and urgently. The need for relational, culturally safe, physically safe, and community-led responses to intersecting drug poisoning and housing crises is the story of now. Real people like Chrissy make that story matter.

Introducing the Research Problem

Canada’s economy is built around housing as an investment and source of economic growth (Chisholm & Hulchanski, 2019; Loftson, 2017). Over the last two decades, Canadian residential real estate values have shot up, making housing an incredibly lucrative and appealing

place for investors to “store money” (Loftson, 2017, p. 144; Walks & Clifford, 2015). Housing in Canada and globally is being financialized, with housing turned into a global commodity bought and sold on the stock market. Housing assets are often sold in bundles of hundreds or thousands of units or mortgage-backed securities, which are investment instruments based on real estate loans (August, 2022; United Nations Human Rights Council [UN-HRC], 2017).

Housing researchers have demonstrated that housing accessibility is undermined by the financialization of housing because of tensions between the value of housing as a commodity and the value of housing as a social good; that is, its value in being used “as a home” (August, 2022, p. 12; Federal Housing Advocate, 2022).

Research shows financialization is impeding access to adequate housing globally (August, 2022). Financial actors such as banks, pension funds, private equity firms, and others are accountable to investors, not residents. Their priority is increasing the value of real estate and the global commodities they are selling. In urban centres valued as prime locations for lucrative investments, lower- and middle-income households are being rapidly priced-out as housing becomes more unaffordable (UN-HRC, 2017). Increasing real estate values increases unaffordability. In other settings, housing markets are more volatile. Unable to carry debt and credit burdens, lower-income households are vulnerable to extreme housing precarity, including eviction and foreclosures (UN-HRC, 2017).

In Canada, housing is frequently at the top of policy agendas, political debates, and community conversations. Canada’s *National Housing Strategy* reported that at least 25,000 individuals experience homelessness per night in addition to the 1.7 million Canadians in core housing need (meaning they have inadequate or unaffordable housing) (Government of Canada, 2017). Housing scholars associate a sharp increase in homelessness in the 1990s with a declining social housing sector combined with early neoliberal policies that reduced income assistance,

low rental vacancy and high rents, and increased unemployment associated with the economic recession (Gaetz & DeJ, 2017; Loptson, 2017). In the 1990s, the federal government and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) moved away from supplying low-income rental housing towards private sector tax incentives and offloading federal responsibility for housing to the provinces, largely without sufficient funding (Suttor, 2016; Walks & Clifford, 2015). Over the next decade, many provinces further devolved responsibility to municipalities (Carroll & Jones, 2000; Zhang, 2020).

Since then, spending on non-market housing and other social goods has continued to decline and the cost of living has risen, but wages have not risen proportionally (Affordable Housing Solutions Lab [AHSL], 2022, 2023). Research in Edmonton shows that this is especially true for women (AHSL, 2023). Housing prices have grown 30% in Canada since 2020 (AHSL, 2022). While many homeowners benefit from increased prices, others are experiencing massive debt burdens. Others will never be able to afford to buy homes. Rental costs are also surging in many parts of Canada. The proportion of units affordable for the 20% of households with the lowest incomes in Canada is less than 5% in most major centres and almost none in Ontario cities (Hughes, 2023).

Homelessness is gendered, racialized, and colonial. Many commentators claim that there was essentially no mass homelessness in Canada prior to the 1980s. However, Indigenous scholars emphasize that colonialism caused mass displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands and is a key “dimension of Indigenous homelessness” (Thistle, 2017, p. 30). Unsheltered homelessness is often associated with stereotypical portraits of men living outdoors on streets, in parks and other public or semi-public locations (Klodawsky, 2006; Memmott et al., 2003). However, a more accurate picture of homelessness involves the breadth of experiences of housing insecurity and “hidden homelessness” where individuals (disproportionately women)

and families are temporarily housed with family, friends, and in other short-term accommodation, such as hotels and shelters (Fiorentino et al., 2020; Klodawsky, 2006; Peters, 2012). Research shows the disproportionate and distinct experiences of Black women experiencing homelessness are systemically invisibilized (Cronley, 2022). The very tools meant to measure “vulnerability” among people experiencing homelessness under-report and fail to reflect experiences of homelessness for Black women (Cronley, 2022). In some cases, social support networks conceal high rates of hidden homelessness for Indigenous peoples (Distasio et al., 2005; Peters, 2012; Peters & Kern, 2016).¹¹ Homelessness is both produced and exacerbated by racism and disconnection, gender-based violence, transphobia and homophobia, and other unsafe conditions in the housing people can access (UN-HRC, 2017, pp. 10–11).

Financial actors, many argue, are pivotal to addressing housing supply issues. Drastically more housing is needed to meet the housing needs of Canadians. CMHC (2023) estimates that Canada needs 3.5 million new units of housing by 2030 to meet current demands and immigration targets. Housing policy and programs can take minor steps to promote accessibility, but ultimately, the supply-side argument says, the most important policy encourages government, nonprofit, and private sector to build housing. For many policy actors, the housing crisis boils down to a supply and demand issue: if we have an economic and policy context that is appealing to investment, everyone will benefit from increased supply and lower prices (Dugan et al., 2023). In this view, cumbersome taxes and zoning restrictions are obstacles to addressing housing accessibility (Metcalf, 2018).

¹¹ For many Indigenous peoples, being without shelter or accommodation does not necessarily mean one is not at “home,” and thus observers use alternate terms, such as homelessness. Another response is to expand the definition of homelessness. Most contemporary definitions of homelessness include unsheltered homelessness, hidden homelessness, and housing insecurity (Fiorentino et al., 2020; Gaetz et al., 2013).

Canadian housing policy has largely followed this line of reasoning and focused on encouraging investment, including tax breaks for developers and buyers. One of the most longstanding aspects of Canada's market-based approach has been policies that encourage homeownership (Hulchanski, 2007). Government policy has contributed to the transformation of housing and real estate markets, encouraging the rapid financialization of housing through deregulation of the housing sector (AHSL, 2023). Federal policy and the CMHC have been central to securitization of mortgages in Canada (Loftson, 2017). Recent measures to mitigate financialization have not been promising. One piece of legislation, promised in the 2022 federal budget as a means of addressing financialization, focuses only on non-Canadian buyers and exempts any buildings with three or more units (AHSL, 2022; Prohibition on the Purchase of Residential Property by Non-Canadians Act, 2023). The supply-side concerns and lobbying from the real estate sector, appear to outweigh concerns about rising housing costs associated with speculative investment. In fact, as previously noted, the Canadian economy is so dependant on real estate values, governments are quite concerned with not taking action that could threaten that value.

There is a pressing need for more housing supply. Markets have generated a lot of wealth, and a lot of housing (Harloe, 1995). However, there are problems with being narrowly focused on supply issues and market-based solutions. As I explained above, research shows that financialization has increased inequality (August, 2022). Moreover, housing precarity is a financial issue and it is an issue of gender discrimination, racism, and colonialism. Market-based solutions ignore the historical contexts that created housing markets, rooted in colonialism, racism, classism, and gender discrimination. Colonial dispossession enabled the development of private property regimes and real estate markets (Bhandar, 2018; Nichols, 2020). Colonial forms

of property entrenched racial and gender discrimination, discounting Indigenous peoples' land laws, and entrenching patrilineal decent (inheritance traced along the male line) (Carter, 2008; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Middle- and higher-income households that can afford to buy property historically have received, and continue to receive, drastically more housing assistance in tax breaks than policies that focus on housing accessibility for lower-income households (Hulchanski, 2007). Racialized and gender diverse individuals face deeply rooted and historic forms of discrimination in access to rental housing, in availability of credit and rates of borrowing, and in shelter supports (Glick et al., 2019; Gupta, 2022). The housing system is grounded in these and numerous other forms of injustice and inherently ill-equipped to respond to the problems that result from these inequities.

My field research focused on the following questions: Is it possible to build forms of governance that can effectively respond to inequalities related to colonialism, racism, gender, and class? In particular: How does governance shape housing and support services in Victoria, BC? How can we govern in a way that values our diverse backgrounds? What processes and principles are effective for building community in urban housing and support services? What are the specific Indigenous legal principles and processes that apply in this context? These research questions are not typical inquiries into questions explored in theory nor causal factors tested under scientific conditions. They are, however, practical questions that I tested and endeavoured to answer through my community-engaged research, the HITC project, and the process that led to the creation of *The Victoria Declaration*.

Relationship-building and knowledge from lived experience are central to both decolonizing methods and community-engaged research methods (Archibald [Q'um Q'um Xiiem] et al., 2019; Henry et al., 2016; Wilson, 2008). I argue that building more equitable

governance within housing services requires processes that enable groups to generate meaning together, rooted in diverse experiences and “situated knowledges” (Haraway, 2004).

Relationships are central to creating equitable governance processes and to the networks of support, understanding, and grounded principles that inform them. *Practical governance* starts with relationships and “emplaced” understandings (Thistle, 2017, p. 7). Métis-Cree researcher and lived expert Jesse Thistle (2017) asserts in *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada* that “emplaced networks of significance” are essential to all healthy communities (p. 7). If we want governance that can support healthy communities, it needs to be grounded in these “emplaced” networks. The *practical governance method* draws on emplaced relational knowledges to support collective meaning-making and decision-making in housing services.

The idea of claiming a right to housing contrasts the focus on relationships noted above. Although the “right to housing” movement and a new rights-based policy framework have promised to transform responses to homelessness in Canada, their focus on an individual that possesses rights remains within a dominant colonial ontology in which it is difficult to imagine other ways of relating to property, to housing, and to each other. As someone aligned with the right-to-housing movement, I ask a set of secondary research questions intended to both caution and encourage the movement: Can the right to housing be relational? Or, in view of the limits of rights discourses, a narrower version of this question is: Can the right to housing movement share a common cause with Indigenous relational narratives and practices in housing?

I approach my central research problem from different angles within a number of the secondary research problems, but each set of inquiries ultimately informs the overall investigation—how feminist and decolonial approaches help bridge specific gaps in housing literature, policy, and practice that perpetuate the harms and inequalities of colonialism, classism, and gender discrimination. Feminist and decolonial theories identify structural injustices that

shape how people are positioned in relations of governance and the limits of inclusion in systemically inequitable contexts. Our governance work both highlights and responds to factors that can undermine inclusion. Formal spaces of governance may be difficult to access, and inclusion in these spaces may also be uncomfortable and undesirable if it is not attentive to experiences of trauma and harm, reproduces existing unequal power relations, or is tokenistic. Forms of epistemic injustice discount certain testimony (Fricker, 2006; Medina, 2017). Epistemic injustice circumscribes interpretive frames in a way that reflects underlying systemic inequities and fundamentally limits participation of marginalized actors in spaces of dialogue. In other words, we see systemic issues playing out in everyday lives, including the opportunities individuals have to speak and be understood, and no less in governance processes.

To create more equitable governance relationships, *The Victoria Declaration* asserts, people with lived experience will need to be centred in the governance of services; that is, also making decisions about the way services are run and how to respond to challenges within the community. The “lived experience movement” in social policy is both extremely current and deeply rooted in a history of grassroots movements (Parr, 2022). It is a challenge reflected in Canada’s national homelessness strategy, *Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy* (Employment and Social Development Canada [ESDC], 2020). Strongly worded *Directives* instruct the community entities that govern the implementation of *Reaching Home* projects and funding to include people with lived experience, in particular, on the mandatory Community Advisory Boards. The push to include lived experience is also reflected in the final evaluation of the previous strategy, *Homelessness Partnering Strategy*, where every reference to lived experience indicates where inclusion did not happen, despite a very low bar to indicate representation, “one or more person with lived experience” (ESDC, 2018b, p. 21). While the premise that lived experience should inform governance is increasingly evident in the literature,

policymakers and service providers struggle to apply it in practice (Paradis et al., 2012). As a result, people with lived experience may be entirely left out of important decision-making processes that impact their lives. When inclusion is only tokenism, inclusion of structurally disadvantaged groups into governance contexts can reproduce structural inequity such inclusion was meant to overcome.

Reflecting on decolonizing methods, lived experience, and structural inequity within my community-engaged research, I developed a final set of secondary research questions that I address in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, respectively: What does relationship building look like when informed by decolonizing methods? How does practical governance learn from decolonizing methods and lived experience? How can “lived experience” of structural inequity inform governance contexts? These questions are about responding to pressing community issues in a way that builds on the relational strengths of communities. At the same time, they demand a clear-sighted view about the harms that shape experience and the limits of existing approaches.

In the context of debates around urban Aboriginal self-government in the 1990s, Sylvia Maracle—who is Mohawk and spent decades as Executive Director of Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), a large urban Indigenous organization based in Toronto, Ontario—wrote, “Think of how urban service providers should be involved in articulating their own future and the ones who will follow in our moccasin tracks” (Maracle, 2012, p. 115; see also Easby et al., 2023). Service providers play a crucial role in community governance, formally or informally shaping the future of organizations and the present and future of real people who depend on these services. More governance methods are needed to assist groups in navigating tensions that arise in housing communities and other collectives. This is the role of *practical*

governance. My proposed *practical governance method* centres lived experience of structural inequity and homelessness and Indigenous law and governance methods.

Contribution

I began with Chrissy's story because I want to honour her contribution to housing justice and to the HITC project. After her passing, when I was well into writing this dissertation, I did not know how to do right by Chrissy. I am still unsure, but I include what is written here after making my best efforts to confirm that's acceptable to her family and close friends.¹² Chrissy's story, like so many stories, involves and impacts her family and many others. The moments of connection as well as the moments of tension that Chrissy and I shared involved both of us. Since experience occurs in a shared world, it is never entirely individual (Alcoff, 1991; Heyes, 2020). A key contribution of this dissertation is to expand the dialogue on how lived experience can inform housing service governance. *Practical governance* expands the conversation about lived experience by emphasizing the collective dimensions of experience and the ways that collective processes can help those involved to draw meaning from their experiences. Individuals are shaped by experience and our understandings of who we are and how we see the world also shape experience (Scott, 1991). *Practical governance* facilitates conversations about how we can each bring our own experience to inform housing service governance. Collective conversations can help us interpret our experience and figure out how it might inform decision-making principles and processes.

Practical governance recognizes situated knowledges shaped by our backgrounds (Haraway, 2004). Political standpoints can develop from experiences of harmful systems and

¹² Chrissy indicated on her original consent form that she wanted her real name to appear in my thesis and reconfirmed that decision when I asked her about publishing a version of the story I tell in Chapter 5. She reviewed the Chapter 5 story, but was unable to review this introduction since she passed away before I wrote it.

from the positive aspects of our identities: principles, practices, and other resources that can inform political projects (Collins, 2004; Singh, 2015). Practical governance takes intentional steps to help create a context in which inclusion does not simply mean fitting into existing governance. These are necessary steps to move from critique to actual governance transformations.

As I explained at the outset, this dissertation identifies learnings from the successes and limits of our efforts in advancing *The Victoria Declaration*. Drawing on my relational fieldwork, I introduce and analyze the practical governance method. Practical governance is a community governance strategy and an applied method of theoretically informed community-engaged research. Unfortunately, existing contexts of governance replicate systemic inequities. In response to these challenging contexts, practical governance brings emplaced knowledges into a process of collective meaning-making, helps groups navigate serious disagreements, and co-creates new governance processes.

To help articulate the issues and alternative governance models, I learn from the relational approaches of Indigenous service providers, scholars, and knowledge-keepers. I engage with literatures and practices of Indigenous relationality and bring them into conversation with literatures on housing and homelessness policy responses. I also bring together work on political relationality, situated knowledges, and lived experience. The community-engaged research, informed by these literatures, results in a model focused on co-creation and relational self-determination.

Within Political Science and more broadly in research on homelessness, perspectives “from the margins” tend to be marginal. This may be changing, with more research on the experiential reality of being unhoused and accessing systems of social protection (Burns, 2020;

Somerville, 2013). While I appreciate the richly descriptive qualitative methodology of what I call “ethnographic social policy,” it risks rendering marginalized communities and individuals with lived experience as “objects” of research. It also continues to understand both the challenges and responses to community issues entirely as matters of what policymakers do, rather than seeing state policymaking as a significant form of authority that interacts constantly with other forms of authority and ways communities respond to their pressing needs. My research attempts to understand and co-create forms of governance compatible with decolonization, recognizing the significance of the state and social policy in the lives of individuals and communities facing systemic inequity and marginalization, and recognizing Indigenous and other non-state orders as well as diverse practices of informal governance.

As a researcher, facilitator, and participant in HITC, I am informed by a structural analysis of the intersecting systemic issues I discuss, including: the financialization of housing and housing policy frameworks that undermine security of tenure; how colonialism produces Indigenous homelessness and discounts Indigenous legal and governance traditions; the systemic criminalization of visible homelessness; how political and epistemic injustices marginalize people with lived experience. These analyses help unpack complex power dynamics and shape my understanding of the issues.

Insights from experience combine with theoretically informed analysis to shape my arguments. Sometimes my structural analysis has created tensions within my relationships. I start each chapter with a story from the research process. I include other stories and a few auto-ethnographic accounts throughout the dissertation. The narratives demonstrate efforts to navigate contradictions created by oppressive systems in the context of tangible community issues and in community-engaged research. Stories ground my arguments and analyses in emplaced

knowledges and real relationships. In many parts of the dissertation relationships take centre stage within the stories and the literature that I engage. Other parts of the dissertation may feel more distant from relationships, as I engage with literature and political theory that describes structural contexts that produce housing insecurity and intersecting forms of inequity. However, even in the more theoretical parts, I demonstrate how systems are produced by people and impact our relationships. I consider all of the literature in an applied context—the HITC project—from which I have drawn the practical governance method.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 presents three narratives—readiness, rights, and relationality— as distinct sets of understandings of the causes of and responses to homelessness. The narratives encompass mainstream policy responses to homelessness as well as alternative responses within Indigenous relational paradigms. In addition to reflecting different policy frameworks, the narratives point to distinct histories and ontologies that shape homelessness governance. Whereas traditional policy focuses on the individual to understand the causes of homelessness, rights-based approaches are tied to systemic analyses of these causes. Despite such differences, the tacit commitments of the right to housing movement, like older readiness narratives, reinforce the atomistic ontology of colonial property and possessive individualism. I consider the opportunities and limits of rights-based approaches. Specifically, I consider what space is opened by the movement and whether it can also make space for Indigenous relational narratives around housing. This chapter provides context for the relational approach I took in my community-engaged research in Victoria.

I focus on methodology in Chapter 3, explaining the thinking behind the methods used in HITC as well as practical step by step descriptions of the practical governance method. I outline the three key elements of practical governance: shared practical purpose, facilitated meaning-

making, and authoritative decision-making. While subsequent chapters describe how we co-developed and used the method through HITC, this chapter provides some initial context for how this worked. I suggest the method is an approach to building more relational and equitable governance in the housing community, grounded in the diverse community practices and experiences.

In Chapter 4, I employ a narrative style to provide a more in-depth description of the research process, telling the story of HITC and the creation of *The Victoria Declaration*. The field research required convincing myself and others that the process could work; making difficult decisions about when and how to respond to complex and unexpected requests; and framing the project multiple times to multiple audiences, building on a foundation of existing relationships to an expanding circle of newer growing relationships.

In Chapters 5 to 7, I analyze the experiences I described in the narrative chapter, pointing to challenges and lessons learned while co-creating *The Victoria Declaration*. A case study on practical governance frames Chapter 5. I suggest that the practical governance method assisted us to build up capacity to be self-determining through a relational approach and a practical exercise in co-creation, and helped us navigate a contentious housing development situation. I describe a plan created by the Songhees Nation to address a housing crisis facing its members by building affordable housing on reserve and to do so through economic development. A representative from Songhees, speaking at a HITC workshop, informed us that planned developments could displace up to 2,000 non-members currently living in mobile home parks situated on the Songhees reserve. This information led to a significant moment of tension among HITC participants. Practical governance made space for HITC participants to support Songhees

Nation's sovereignty in pursuing housing for First Nations people, and for individuals to voice disagreement with the plan, while advancing an ethic of care for those who are being evicted.

Chapter 6 is about the relationship—and some real or perceived tensions—between lived experience and decolonizing methods. In HITC, we connected learning and meaning drawn from our personal experiences with knowledges drawn from our communities, backgrounds, and Nations. We did not have the necessary invitation and partnerships to make any authoritative statements on local Indigenous laws that might apply to housing, but we built community capacity and commitment to support such work moving forward. Our conversations and the limits we encountered highlighted Indigenous jurisdiction and authority, the complexity of self-determination in urban spaces and the importance of transsystemic law and story.

Chapter 7 identifies tensions that can arise as a practical governance researcher when the decisions one wants to make based on one's relationships conflict with the decisions one wants to make based on a structural analysis. While this tension hints at larger theoretical claims about governance decision-making, I focus here on the implications for the practical governance method. I ground my discussion in a specific disagreement in HITC, where participants had widely divergent views with respect to the role of police. I personally had a structural analysis of criminalization that led me to resist involving police in the workshops. However, I also had important relationships that were put under pressure by the position I held. I argue that practical governance researchers need to balance structures and relationships. My assertion is that these disagreements require deciding and being responsible for one's decisions, even when others disagree, to do so transparently, and to do so as part of a collective process.

I conclude by summarizing the key insights generated by the research, emphasizing that one of the key original contributions of the research is the practical governance method.

Applying the learnings from our process in another place, I suggest, a researcher would need to approach the project at least somewhat differently than I did in HITC. The diverse situated understandings and experiences of home in that place would differently impact and shape such a project. The pre-existing relationships of the researcher would also impact the project. However, the relational and situated focus of the method, invites this kind of careful attention to context. The facilitated processes enable groups to identify a specific purpose that makes sense in their context, and to co-create governance resources that draw on the insights of the specific communities that are involved.

This introduction started with my own story and shared some of what Chrissy told me about her story, too. The purpose here was not simply to relay personal narratives. Rather, I have used this introductory space to show that the research is grounded in real issues and real relationships. Within those relationships, our individual and shared stories, including our stories of home, shaped the HITC project and the process of co-creating *The Victoria Declaration*. More broadly, I draw from our process to show that lived experience both can and does shape governance decision-making, because people making decisions draw on principles and ways of understanding from their own backgrounds. Our process tried to bring the difficulty of building equitable governance into the foreground within an intentional process. I've included the entire text of the declaration, our main public facing outcome, and reviewed some of its impact. I've explained that we took a relational approach that centred relational outcomes and facilitated methods. As a result, we gained understanding of existing formal and informal governance, as well as new modes of practical governance. The contribution of the research centres on the declaration and the practical governance method, which responds to an overarching research problem about governance methods compatible with decolonizing and feminist approaches. In the next chapter, I review debates around responses to homelessness in policy, practice, and

literature, homing in on learnings from Indigenous place-based relational practices which inform the relational approach used in the HITC project.

CHAPTER TWO: THREE NARRATIVES OF HOMELESSNESS—READINESS, RIGHTS, AND RELATIONALITY

How does one reimagine a legal form so central to colonial capitalist modernities? How do we imagine forms of property and place that are un-bound from the racial and commodity logics of abstraction that continue to take root through land laws aimed at maintaining settler possession over indigenous territory? How might we privilege the social uses of property and resist the real estate developers and mortgage lenders that prey on vulnerable communities in their drive to accumulate as much capital as the law encourages and permits them to do?

– *Colonial Lives of Property* (Bhandar, 2018, p. 183)

The key to understanding a healthy community, Indigenous or not, is appreciating that cultivation of the human spirit is grounded in emplaced networks of significance.

– *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada* (Thistle, 2017, p. 7)

In one 2-hour stretch writing this chapter, I’m tempted away by conversations with individuals working on two separate “right-to-housing” projects. The individuals driving these projects are fighting for housing justice and housing for all. While I’m only tangentially connected, in both cases I am keen to be supportive, because I know both these individuals have been pivotal in housing research and advocacy over many years. Across Canada and internationally, many housing organizations, advocates, and researchers are engaged in the right to housing movement. *The Victoria Declaration* also endorses a “right-based” approach (Home in the City, 2019, p. 4). What are the opportunities and limits of a rights-based approach? What might happen to the movement’s approach to rights, if it were to engage meaningfully with Indigenous traditions and practices of relationality?

The right to housing movement has resulted in rights-based housing policy frameworks in a growing number of countries, including Canada (Clarke et al., 2020). The new rights-based approaches are “housing-led,” including *Housing First* programs that provide housing without preconditions alongside mental health, harm reduction, treatment, and education supports as

needed and desired. In 2019, Canada institutionalized their international obligations to the “realization of the right to adequate housing” within Canada’s National Housing Strategy Act (2019, c. 29) and the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate. This new approach promises to be transformative. Rights-based frameworks forgo conditional approaches where unhoused individuals need to demonstrate “housing readiness” prior to accessing permanent housing (Clarke et al., 2020; Pauly et al., 2011). Furthermore, right-to-housing advocates argue that the human right to housing, supported in international law, requires a fundamental societal shift so that the “social function of housing” takes precedent in political decision-making over and above the value of housing as an exchange commodity (August, 2022, p. 12-13; see also United Nations Human Rights Council [UN-HRC], 2017).

While the right to housing movement aims to prioritize the significance of housing as a social good, within dominant narratives of rights, the right to own property is venerated, and often takes priority over social and economic rights like the right to adequate housing (Moyn, 2014). Although rights narratives are rhetorically positioned as different from readiness narratives, both share an atomistic ontology of colonial property that centres a self-possessive individual “ready” for housing or rights-holder “ready” for housing. The individualistic way rights are asserted makes it hard to imagine other ways of relating to property, to housing, and to each other. In contrast, Indigenous relational ontologies invite and enable housing supports and services within a framework of interdependence between humans, other beings, and the living earth (Flamino, 2019; Jobin, 2010). In an effort to reimagine ways of relating to property, I examine emerging rights-based approaches alongside a growing body of research and action focused on Indigenous relational paradigms in responses to homelessness (Greyeyes & Vipond, 2022; Thistle, 2017).

A key insight from this research and action is that colonialism has caused Indigenous homelessness through disconnection from relational networks. Jesse Thistle's (2017) *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada* describes relationality as fundamental to healthy communities and describes these emplaced and interconnected relationships using the phrase, "All My Relations," which is "an Indigenous worldview common in First Nations, Métis and Inuit societies that sees all things in existence as interconnected" (p. 13). The problem, in this view, is caused by damage to "governing relationships" and the solutions must be rooted in the layered social and economic dimensions of relationality (Jobin, 2023). My aim is to shore up the right to housing movement by encouraging those that support it to follow the lead of Indigenous scholars and others calling for shift towards more relational understandings of property, and from rights alone to rights and responsibilities in relation to other beings and the earth (Bhandar, 2018; Corntassel, 2008; Napoleon & Snyder, 2020).

This chapter's epigraph is drawn from Brenna Bhandar's book that explores the interconnections between property ownership and race in settler colonial societies. Bhandar (2018) asks readers to consider transforming the opposition between private property and the social uses of property. She writes:

Could privileging the social uses of property over the rights of owners effectively redistribute the security and social power usually attached to ownership? If the right to housing and shelter were rendered paramount, rather than placed in opposition to the right of the private owner, how would this alter the value of private property ownership and the ideology of possessive individualism? Could using things in a way that is disaffiliated from the typical hallmarks of individual possession (exclusivity, the right to sell, rent, etc.) alienate property ownership from its current form so much as to be unrecognizable as a property right? Is this estrangement of the legal form of property

from itself one way of conceiving of a metamorphosis of ownership as we know it into something else altogether? (pp. 199–200)

This chapter does not necessarily answer these questions, but my aim is to motivate similar conversations. I approach the problem of property from a housing perspective—considering the ways housing is valued, socially and economically, and the ways it is elevated as a right. Rights are historically tied to a colonial ontology and legal form. But can the right to housing be relational? Is there a way to work “in and against” rights or “in and through” rights to find ways to transcend them?¹³ I attempt to work *through* rights in asking what kind of space is opened (or closed) by the movement. I also seek ways to *transcend* rights by asking whether they open up enough space to make common cause with Indigenous relational narratives and practices around housing. I provide only the briefest introduction to lengthy and storied debates about rights because my research question is not about whether one ought to support rights-based frameworks. There are openings offered by the right-to-housing movement, and many people, including me, are exploring those openings. My aim is to push the movement to resituate the right to housing within a different conversation—about social relations and interconnectedness and obligations. Could this, as Bhandar asks, help transform how we think about housing and ownership?

Given the significance of relationality within many Indigenous traditions and within a growing body of Indigenous scholarship, it is not surprising that relationality also emerged as a central theme in my research collaborations with Indigenous co-facilitators and community members. Although I follow others in referring to All My Relations or relationality as a shared

¹³ I borrow the phrasing “in and against” from, for example, the 1979 pamphlet “In and Against the State” by the London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group (2021), and more recently, Katrina Forrester (2023).

pattern of understanding across Indigenous traditions, these understandings are best recognized through engaging the specificity of each such tradition (Wildcat & Voth, 2023). In this chapter, I engage with a core concept of relationality within a Cree worldview, *wahkohtowin*, or “relatedness” (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 74; Jobin, 2023; Wildcat, 2018). I am not a Cree speaker, but I have had the opportunity to learn about *wahkohtowin* and the closely related concept of *miyo wîcêhtowin* (“good relations”) from Cree knowledge holders as I explained in the Introduction (Jobin et al., 2021). I also highlight Val Napoleon and Emily Snyder’s critical Indigenous property theory and the conclusions they draw from specific case studies in Tsimshian law because they consider the ways specific Indigenous laws can apply in housing issues. The relational response in their housing cases studies centres significant obligations, including responsibilities placed on the residents and on the broader community to support individuals to stay in their housing. Relational responsibilities are situated in a broader context of individual and collective self-determination (Kuokkanen, 2019).

Relationality is already at the centre of many Indigenous-led responses to homelessness as a guiding philosophy for services (Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness [ACEH], 2018; Jobin, 2010). Highlighting this relational focus in Indigenous-led services, I consider learnings for the right to housing movement and policy responses to homelessness more broadly. Indigenous self-determination must be centred if the right to housing movement is to learn from Indigenous relational epistemologies. If the movement is even going to engage in overlapping spaces, this cannot happen in an ethical way apart from coextensive shifts towards Indigenous authority over Indigenous housing and homelessness policy. Taking principles of Indigenous relationality out of the context of Indigenous authority, Indigenous-led initiatives, and dialogic or relational learning that advances Indigenous self-determination, is appropriation. Such appropriation undermines relationality. As Indigenous housing scholars and Indigenous political

organizations emphasize, housing policy must make space for both Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous authority in housing (Blake, 2023; Greyeyes & Vipond, 2022; Rumboldt, 2022).

This chapter reviews what I call three narratives of homelessness: readiness, rights, and relationality. Each narrative involves a set of responses to homelessness, rooted in a set of understandings of the causes of homelessness. The narratives are ideologically malleable.

Housing First, for example, a beacon of progressive right-to-housing policy, has also been advanced by conservative governments for its economic efficiency (Baker & Evans, 2016).

Research shows that *Housing First* programs also involve, to varying degrees, some of the same conditions that are supposed to distinguish them from older readiness-based frameworks (Clarke et al., 2020). Even though these narratives are not sealed off from one another, the distinctions highlight shifts in what housing providers, policymakers, and advocates say they are doing.

While the narratives distinguish policy frameworks, they also connect ideas often thought to be distinct. Housing in the “continuum of care” model idealizes a self-possessive individual “ready” for housing. A similar vision of a progressing, self-possessive individual is advanced in the homeownership ideal, which I include as a readiness narrative. The telos of the liberal individual, its ideal achievement, is ownership of property. I draw links across the narratives as well.

Readiness and rights narratives, I argue, rely on similar atomistic ontologies of colonial property. I also emphasize a focus on responsibility in both readiness narratives and Indigenous relational paradigms. In contrast to the individual sense of responsibility in readiness narratives, relational housing responses in the scholarship demonstrate that responsibility to change one’s circumstances does not fall solely on the individual experiencing housing insecurity, but also on the broader community as a network (Napoleon & Snyder, 2020).

Narrative 1: Readiness

Within the traditional “continuum of care” model of service delivery to people experiencing homelessness, an individual moves through a series of transitional congregate housing placements before progressing to permanent independent housing (Gulcur et al., 2003, p. 172). This approach is based on the idea of “readiness.”

The common thread in readiness narratives is that an individual may not be capable or responsible enough to appropriately care for themselves (or for property) at a given time in their life. The same individual could become “housing ready” with the right personal changes, such as learning life skills and work habits, or addressing mental health and addictions issues. As Pauly et al. (2011) explain, “proponents of the linear continuum of care approach have worried that giving homeless people apartments before they were ‘housing ready’ was essentially setting them up for failure” (p. 8). In 2001, the official Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness, a decision-making body established as part of the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative—the central program of the federal government’s National Homelessness Initiative in the early 2000s—developed the *City of Victoria, British Columbia, Community Action Plan on Homelessness* (2001; “Victoria Action Plan on Homelessness” or “the community plan”). The community action plan describes the need for a “continuum of support” for individuals experiencing homelessness “to ensure that homeless individuals do not ‘fall through the cracks’” (p. 10). The first objective of the community action plan is to decrease the number of individuals experiencing homelessness through building different types of housing on the continuum of care; and the second overall objective is to improve and expand support services “consistent with the ‘Continuum of Support’ system” (p. 7).

A linear continuum of care is recommended to ensure individuals in housing distress can access supports adapted to their specific situation. For people who use substances, the report describes different options for different phases of recovery, including housing for individuals using substances, in treatment, or in abstinence-based recovery (Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness, 2001, p. 16). A figure in the community action plan illustrates a single linear arrow indicating the integration of programs and services with emergency shelters, transition housing, and permanent housing (p. 10). A box describing the figure includes a one sentence description: “movement toward self-sufficiency, according to the capacity of the individual” (p. 10). Without this continuum, the authors assert, the result is a “‘revolving door’ syndrome” where individuals tend to lose any stability gained in terms of housing, mental health, and managing addictions, and end up unhoused once again (p. 16). The report also emphasizes the need for transitional housing for youth who are unhoused or aging out of the foster care system. To illustrate the necessity, the authors include the story of a young person who describes needing someone available for regular calls and check-ins and supports to learn how to manage finances, cook, and clean (p. 15). A 2007 Mayor’s Task Force in Victoria, BC identified major limits to the continuum of care approach, including barriers to accessing services and requiring individuals to relocate, sometimes frequently (Pauly et al., 2011, p. 1). The assumptions in *The Victoria Action Plan on Homelessness*, illustrative of continuum of care models, is that people progress in a linear way and that the supports individuals need could not be provided immediately in a permanent housing setting in a way that is integrated, effectively coordinated, and changes over time as needed.

Readiness narratives follow from individualistic understandings of the causes of homelessness—ranging from moral explanations about character and work ethic to medicalized

explanations about mental health and substance use. Teresa Gowan (2010) classifies these understandings under two separate discourses: “sin-talk” (where the fundamental cause of homelessness is immorality and criminality) and “sick-talk” (where the underlying explanation is addictions and mental health issues). Gowan traces the moral narratives to a Protestant work ethic in Europe and then North America. While this paradigm initially promised punishment for immorality and laziness in hell, it became increasingly enmeshed in the logics of liberalism and social Darwinism, with free markets doling out what we each deserve (p. 28). Sick-talk emerges in mid-19th century Europe as critics of the terrible treatment of the poor introduced medical discourses distinguishing between those who were deserving and undeserving of assistance. Destitute children, the elderly, and the ill should be educated or institutionalized, the critics argued, and able-bodied individuals should be sent to work on poor farms or in industry (pp. 33–34). Sin-talk continues to be associated with responses that involve exclusion and punishment, or potentially redemption. Sick-talk is more commonly associated with responses focused on treatment. Both exist today in different forms, but I link them together because of their shared focus on individual circumstances and behaviours—one is ready to get help, ready to change, ready for housing.

The *Victoria Action Plan on Homelessness* reproduces the ideal, heroically independent modern individual as defined by Enlightenment thinkers (Midgley, 2014). As Mary Midgley reads early liberal thinkers, Thomas Hobbes especially, we find the idea that humans are principally motivated by self interest. The Hobbesian self-interested individual both is and ought “to be *rational* in the very odd sense that economists have since developed, that is, to become economic men, wholly devoted to our own interests” (Midgley, 2014, p. 120). Individualism is taken to its limits in Hobbes but is characteristic of an atomistic worldview driven towards

“freedom above all other ideals” (p. 124). In the *Victoria Community Action Plan on Homelessness*, readiness is defined by “movement toward self-sufficiency” (Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness, 2001, p. 10). Self-sufficiency is not defined in the report, but the linear arrow makes it clear there is a “right” path. Throughout, the action plan refers to “substance misusers” who need supports to escape the “revolving door syndrome.” Readiness is implicated in tying the causes and solutions to homelessness to individual choices, and furthermore, equating and normalising a specific set of moral and economic ideals important in liberal capitalist society.

Progress involves meeting certain conditions. The condition of self-sufficiency for the modern individual, as John Locke wrote, was the capacity to own property. Through labour, Locke (1988) argued, man (literally meaning men) changes what is taken from the earth and establishes exclusive rights for its use (pp. 287–288). When land is uncultivated, in Locke’s theory, it is no one’s property (pp. 290–291, 299). If Indigenous people occupied the land, but did not cultivate it, this justified appropriation by settlers who would cultivate the land. However, even if Indigenous people used the land for agriculture, which they did, Locke’s theory asserted that land held “in common,” used as a collective unit, “cannot be considered appropriated or of any value until it is enclosed by the individual” (Arneil, 1996, p. 141). In a case involving settlers on the western frontier of the United States following independence, a series of legislative measures first restricted and then retrospectively pardoned illegal squatters in explicitly Lockean legislation that allowed “homesteaders” who occupied and “improved” land to purchase it from the government (Nichols, 2018, p. 23). However, Indigenous people could only purchase land by the same mechanisms—including the 1862 Homestead Act and the 1887 Dawes Act—if they could prove that they had “abandoned” their tribal affiliation (Nichols, 2018,

p. 26). Owning land and developing the land were both dependent on individual capacity, on self-sufficiency. Robert Nichols (2020) argues that there is a “recursive logic” that justifies settler dispossession of Indigenous land; Nichols emphasizes a simultaneous process wherein land is commodified as property as it is lost to non-Indigenous parties. This means land, which may not have been considered property, comes to be understood as property through the act of dispossession. Dispossession fundamentally changes that which is taken.

Racialized notions of inferiority, combined with the abstract commoditization of land, manufactured empty land—*terra nullius*—available for taking and selling (Bhandar, 2015, p. 279).¹⁴ Abstract legal forms of property were advanced in the Anglo colonies by processes of racialization that delegitimized and thus obscured other forms of property and relationships to land (Bhandar, 2015, pp. 256, 265). In some cases, such as “title by registration,” European ideas were advanced first in property regimes in the settler colonies and then brought back to Europe. “Western” ideas of property consolidated into the absolute form we expect today over a long period of time. The impact of Lockean notions of property were not uniform. For example, in England Locke’s ideas were used to defend the right of peasants against the encroachment of the enclosures (Neeson, 1993). Eventually abstract conceptions of property developed by philosophers such as Locke, Bentham, Mill and others, became the basis of private property law regimes in the settler colonies and in Europe (Bhandar, 2015). Today, the causes and responses to homelessness are deeply intertwined with colonial dispossession of land, private property regimes, and liberal notions of freedom.

¹⁴ *Terra nullius*, or empty land, was a legal category that enabled commoditization of land by positioning Indigenous peoples at an earlier stage of civilization “defined, of course, in spectacularly circular reasoning, by the absence of private property” (Bhandar, 2015, p. 265).

Freedom, in liberal paradigms, is principally achieved through free markets and the protection of private property. Readiness narratives reinforce a vision of individual agency and market citizenship sometimes described as “possessive individualism” (Macpherson, 1962). As described in the political theories of Hobbes and Locke, C.B. Macpherson identified “possessive individualism” as the defining characteristic of the rational and self-sufficient modern individual. The possessive individual was integral to the development of market society, and was “defined primarily through his self-possession, defined by his capacity to alienate his labour in the market place, and his ostensible freedom from reliance on others” (Bhandar, 2018, p. 263). As Karl Polanyi (1944) explains, along with the development of markets in Europe came a new “problem of poverty” (p. 103). Observers in England widely debated what should be done for the poor, but by the end of the 18th century, the prevailing belief was that the market would take care of the poor. Labourers in need of basic sustenance would be “naturally” motivated to work (by hunger) as long as they were prevented from taking private property (p. 114). In Polanyi’s formulation, the development of market society was characterized by a constant push and pull—impersonal market institutions push and threaten to completely subordinate society, and society pushes back. Yet, the dreadful situation faced by the poor, pressured to work in exploitive conditions, was not just an economic problem but a social one: dislocating “those relationships to nature and man in which his economic existence was formerly embedded” (p. 129). The dislocation identified by Polanyi was rooted in the development of a market in labour and in land:

The proposition is as utopian in respect to land as in respect to labor. The economic function is but one of many vital functions of land. It invests man’s life with stability; it is the site of his habitation; it is a condition of his physical safety; it is the landscape and the seasons. ... And yet to separate land from man and organize society in such a way as to

satisfy the requirements of a real-estate market was a vital part of the utopian concept of a market economy. (p. 178)

The ideal of an individual seeking self-sufficiency through the market, guided by market values, above all the importance of private property, threatened to completely shift the moral foundations of society to that of the market system (Polanyi, 1944, pp. 115–116). Yet, the transformation from a social to a market economy in land and labour was not complete in England in the mid-19th century, even as the homestead acts and other legislation noted by Nichols and Bhandar were already being implemented to enact “utopian” Lockean visions of private property in North America. In other words, even in Europe, such “Western” notions of property were not inevitable—people had to be compelled into market relations that undermined land and kinship networks (relationships) and displaced them into industrial cities.

Readiness narratives operate in distinct ways to encourage market citizenship in Indigenous communities. To find relief from settler state domination—which Shalene Jobin terms “the first colonial logic”—including the confining governance of Canada’s *Indian Act*, Indigenous nations are under immense pressure to find economic resources to enable self-determination (Jobin, 2023, p. 63). The opportunities available in the market economy perpetuate a second settler colonial logic: economic exploitation. Jobin identifies Canada’s *Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development*, introduced by the Harper government in 2008, as an example of a contemporary state maneuver to encourage a form of Indigenous citizenship aligned with market interests. The framework says that federal partnerships will be available to “opportunity-ready Aboriginal communities that have stable, efficient and predictable investment climates attractive to business and investors” (as cited in Jobin, 2023, p. 87). As Jobin (2023) explains,

The framework's strategies are about making Indigenous communities "ready" for economic development and corporate partnerships, and especially for resource development on their lands. Through policies such as these, government changes the idea of citizens receiving public goods to that of individualized subjects being held responsible for their choices, and being conceived of and constituted as market citizens. (pp. 87–88)

Pressure to advance self-determination or make one's living through market citizenship creates what Jobin (2023) calls "colonial dissonance," which is the inherent tension for Indigenous peoples when the governing relationships and teachings that guide Indigenous economic practices do not map onto the colonial logics in which their lives and communities are entrenched (p. 140). Economic exploitation targeting Indigenous lands and bodies has been the defining feature of Indigenous-settler relationships since contact (p. 182). Economic exploitation undermines means of subsistence, which impacts economic relations and social relations, and ultimately undermines self-determination (p. 26). The fundamental importance of restoring economic relationships—as relationships "to land, people, and other beings"—becomes a central focus in the Indigenous relational narratives I discuss below (p. 182).

Canadian law and policy encourages market citizenship, celebrating Indigenous wealth generated through taxation of resource revenues, while excluding Indigenous peoples from exercising inherent and collective economic rights as a matter of their own jurisdiction (Pasternak, 2020, pp. 312–313). Canadian jurisprudence is complicit, binding Aboriginal rights to practices "integral to the distinctive culture" prior to contact with European peoples in what has been called a "frozen rights" approach that fails to recognize what sustains and defines contemporary Indigenous nations (Borrows, 1997, p. 43). An underlying system of racial

capitalism, rooted in the racist forms of developmentalism mentioned above, plays out in contemporary settler societies in forms of tolerance for “Indigenous difference” that is rooted in historical rather than modern and sovereign economic rights (Pasternak, 2020, p. 312; see also Simpson, 2008). The colonial narratives that have been advanced by settler governments are racialized “readiness” narratives—progress defined by being “ready” to leave behind Indigenous peoplehood, “ready” to develop land as individuals, “ready” to own property, and “ready” to act as market citizens.

The whole housing policy framework in Canada, including programs to assist individuals in core housing need, focuses on investments in residential real estate markets. The “primary face” of Canadian housing policy encourages homeownership and disproportionately benefits middle- and higher-income households that can afford to buy. As I explained in the Introduction, while deregulating the housing sector, on one hand, federal policy and CMHC have played a central role in the securitization of mortgages in Canada (Loftson, 2017). Securitization and financialization of housing has increased access to credit and home ownership for middle-income households while increasing unaffordability and decreasing accessibility for lower-income households (Loftson, 2017, p. 144). With private property at the heart of liberal individualism, the single-family home aligns perfectly as a norm and an ideal. Homeownership has become the primary means of achieving security of tenure (a relatively secure place to live) as well as a central place to store and extract wealth. Here we find the telos of the ideal liberal citizen: not just ready for housing but also ready to own it!

Housing policy responding to housing need has also been financialized, generating conflicting economic pressures between housing as a commodity and the value of housing as a social good. Many think of the policy and programs that assist low-income households as housing policy *per se*, but this dimension of Canadian housing policy is what housing scholars

call the “secondary face” of Canadian housing policy (Hulchanski, 2007; Loptson, 2017). The secondary face of housing policy focuses on housing accessibility, including housing benefits and social or non-market housing, as well as market-based solutions. Canada’s housing accessibility policy framework from the 1960s to mid-1990s focused on funding and building social housing, with significant investments in public and other nonmarket social housing (Walks & Clifford, 2015, p. 1631). Early neoliberal policies in Canada—“roll-back” neoliberalism—involved broadly withdrawing from socially redistributive policies, and cutting social housing programs (Hackworth & Moriah, 2006). With the onset of recession in the early 1990s, housing policy and governance were increasingly characterized by “roll-out” neoliberalism (expanding marketization) with regulated, market-based approaches focused on public-private partnerships, securitization, and mortgage insurance, essentially, housing affordability through increased access to household credit (Hackworth & Moriah, 2006; Walks & Clifford, 2015). More and more households could, potentially, be ready to own homes.

Private property is at the centre of housing and homelessness policy in Canada. Readiness narratives are evident in responses to housing insecurity that venerate a self-possessive individual and tie that value to the capacity to care for, or ideally, own private property. As the next section explains, the creation of Canada’s first ever *National Housing Strategy* (2017) initiated a new era of housing policy, with legislated mechanisms built on the “right to housing” that co-exist with market-based mechanisms. The notion of needing to be “ready” for housing is supposed to be obsolete in this new era, replaced by an inherent right, though it is yet unclear where and how this right will be actualized.

Narrative 2: Rights

Emerging rights-based policy frameworks centre “housing-led” service delivery and systemic analyses of the causes of homelessness. As a narrative of homelessness, this is the realm of *Housing First*, “the right to housing,” and the more expansive “right to adequate housing.” According to the United Nations’ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OHCHR/UN-Habitat, n.d.), adequate housing is “the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity” (p. 3). This goes far beyond “more than four walls and a roof” (OHCHR/UN-Habitat, n.d, p. 3). Housing must be adequate in terms of “tenure security,” “availability of services,” “affordability,” “habitability,” “accessibility,” location,” and, “cultural adequacy” (OHCHR/UN-Habitat, n.d., p. 4). Rights-based approaches entail both opportunities and limits as a mode of understanding and responding to homelessness. In the rights-based discourse, homelessness is considered both a material reality and a construct resulting from government policy and structural inequity (Gaetz & Dej, 2017). On one hand, approaching housing as a human right expands the narrative beyond individual behaviours. On the other hand, the ways rights are predominantly employed tends to reinforce a system of housing policy and ideologies of homelessness that reinforces colonial property and possessive individualism.

In the late-19th century, a period of significant mass homelessness, labour organizers and some elite reformers advanced early systemic analyses linking homelessness to poverty and specifically unemployment (Gowan, 2011, p. 40). As Gowan (2011) notes, post-WWII, social welfarism, “New Deal” programs, and Fordism reduced extreme poverty and ended mass homelessness (or at least houselessness) in the U.S. and Canada for about four decades (p. 42). In this period mortgage subsidy programs buoyed homeownership and a suburban boom for White working-class families, while the poorest urban communities of colour were targeted for massive

housing projects (p. 43). With the decline of welfarism, starting in the 1970s and 1980s, and then exacerbated in the 1990s, long-term street homelessness rose dramatically. Processes in de-institutionalization beginning in the 1950s in Canada have also been a factor. Many psychiatric hospitals and large-scale institutions were closed but promised community-based alternatives, including safe, affordable housing and low barrier supports did not materialize (Milaney et al., 2022). Research in Alberta shows that the experience of chronic shelter users can replicate “segregation, confinements, control, and surveillance” that was experienced in asylums (Milaney et al., 2022, p. 94). Gaetz et al. (2013) further explain the confluence of factors that has contributed to the Canadian context of homelessness:

the homelessness crisis was created through drastically reduced investments in affordable and social housing in the 1990s, shifts in income supports and the declining spending power of almost half of the population since that time. Currently many Canadians are at risk of homelessness because of the high cost (and unavailability) of housing, inadequate incomes and family violence. (p. 4)

Here the systemic analysis emphasizes the deterioration of the welfare state, market dynamics, and family circumstances.

An early anti-homelessness movement in the 1980s in the United States was fairly successful in arguing for a “basic human right to shelter,” leading to the creation of thousands of emergency shelters (Gowan, 2011, p. 46). While advancing a discourse of human rights, part of what Gowan (2011) calls “systems-talk,” the movement framed individuals without shelter as a sympathetic, White, “deserving poor,” in contrast to an “undeserving” racialized urban poor. Moreover, in the resulting explosion of shelters and soup kitchens run by charity organizations, a

focus on inherent human rights was subordinated to moralistic sin-talk and sick-talk (Gowan, 2011).

In 2019, Canada passed the *National Housing Strategy Act* (“the Act”), which confirms its commitments under international law as a signatory to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which both include the right to adequate housing (National Housing Strategy Act, 2019, c. 29). The Act endorses the “progressive realization of the right to housing” through Canada’s first ever National Housing Strategy (NHS). The NHS was announced in 2017 with \$40 billion in pledged funding and is now billed as an “82 plus billion plan” on the NHS website (CMHC, n.d.; Government of Canada, 2023). Canada’s national homelessness strategy was redesigned and relaunched as *Reaching Home*, now a component of the NHS for the most vulnerable groups in need of housing (ESDC, 2018a). In addition to endorsing the right to adequate housing, the Act promises diverse representation on a National Housing Council, suggesting (not requiring) inclusion of “vulnerable groups,” “persons with lived experience of housing need, as well as those with lived experience of homelessness,” and “persons who have expertise in human rights” (National Housing Strategy Act, 2019, c. 29, s. 8.3). The Act dictates that a Federal Housing Advocate will monitor the implementation and impact of the NHS and report to the Minister responsible for housing. The Federal Housing Advocate is also responsible for identifying systemic housing issues based on submissions, reviews, and commissioned research. Organizations and individuals can make submissions on systemic issues, not “individual disputes,” and then the Advocate can either conduct its own review or request a review panel of members of the National Housing Council (Federal Housing Advocate, n.d. “Can the Advocate solve my individual housing problem?”; National Housing Strategy Act, 2019, c. 29, s. 13).

The first National Housing Council review panel was initiated in April 2023 and focuses on financialization of housing. The focus reflects a systemic housing issue foregrounded in the Federal Housing Advocate's (2022) *2021-2022 Annual Report to the Minister*, that the financialization of housing undermines the value of housing as a social good (p. 13). The Advocate recommends that the National Housing Strategy should challenge financialization of rental properties and "ensure its programs are not contributing to the financialization of housing" (p. 13). Other core systemic issues identified by the Advocate include security of tenure compromised by forced evictions. Here the Advocate's report stresses that "human rights law dictates that forced evictions should only occur as a last resort and only after a full exploration of alternatives" (p. 9). The Federal Housing Advocate recognizes that encampments meet shelter and safety needs while also entailing a suite of safety needs (e.g., lack of clean water and sanitation, use of propane and unsafe heat sources in tents, and more), leading advocates and encampment residents to fight for alternate safe and secure housing options as well as essential services including water, sanitation, heating, and cooling within encampments (p. 7). Encampments provide opportunities for "exercising autonomy and self-determination" and research shows that encampment residents face serious human rights violations related to policing and enforcement of ordinances that "amounts to unsafe eviction and forced displacement" (p. 8).

The new federal housing mechanisms take a systems-level view of housing issues. Homelessness researchers have shown that the development of more systemic understandings of homelessness has resulted in a corresponding shift towards policy responses that account for systemic conditions (Smith, 2022). Systemic causes of homelessness are often associated with a combination of individual and relational factors, structural factors, and systems failure (Gaetz & Daj, 2017, p. 17).

The turn to rights-based approaches is also a product of legal challenges defending a right to housing or at least shelter. Advocates have been fighting for a positive right to shelter since the 1980s, although, as Ben McJunkin (2023) has recently argued, in the few cases they have succeeded in the U.S., the outcome has only been the provision of emergency shelter beds. An important decision by the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2018 determined that criminalization of urban camping is prohibited by the Eighth Amendment “unless alternative shelter is reasonably available” (McJunkin, 2023, p. 132). However, the decision is not a straightforward limit on criminalization, as McJunkin explains,

This result obscures the true motivations for criminalization, transforming the narrative from punishing visible poverty to punishing the failure of homeless individuals to use government resources. It also complicates the efforts of right-to-shelter advocates.

Securing additional shelter services from the government now authorizes more extensive criminal enforcement against homeless individuals who do not, or cannot, utilize those services. (p. 132)

Given systemic issues with the traditional shelter system, McJunkin (2023) asserts, there are many rational reasons individuals may prefer to “self-shelter” (p. 133). McJunkin defends “an alternative vision of the ‘right to shelter’ as a negative right to be free from government interference while self-sheltering” (p. 133). In Canada, the BC Supreme Court ruling in *Victoria (City) v. Adams* (“*Adams*”) (2008), pertaining to an encampment in Victoria, affirmed a constitutional right to erect shelter, but not a positive obligation to provide shelter. The defendants argued a City of Victoria Parks Regulation Bylaw that prohibited erecting any kind of overhead shelter on public land violated their Charter rights. The court agreed but only commented on the issue under the condition that “the number of homeless people exceeds the number of available shelter beds” and also specified that the City could apply limits (e.g., hours

of the day when sheltering on public land was prohibited). Like the Ninth Circuit decision in the U.S., the case has been “ostensibly a victory for homeless advocates” while authorizing the criminalization of homeless campers and the confiscation of their personal property through a subsequent 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. camping bylaw. In the courts, right to housing arguments have both carved out protections and services for people experiencing homelessness and they have enabled further criminalization.

Housing First programs have increasingly taken centre-stage in the rights-based responses to homelessness. Early justifications for *Housing First* were based on an understanding that prolonged experiences of homelessness worsened mental health and substance use disorders (Gaetz et al., 2013). The approach was popularized in the *Pathways to Housing* program in New York City, which reported an impressive 88% of participants remained housed at the end of a five-year study compared to less than 47% of individuals housed through traditional housing interventions (Tsemberis & Eisenberg, 2000). In Canada, the first program of this kind was the *Houselink* program created in the 1970s in Toronto (Gaetz et al., 2013, p. 3). The Harper government embraced the model in a 2013 redesign of its *Homelessness Partnering Strategy*, including almost \$600 million in funding over 5 years centred on *Housing First* strategies (ESDC, 2015). The *Housing First* approach is widely appealing, in part because of its ability to fit within conservative and progressive ideologies—often discussed in relation to rights and justice and also in convincingly pragmatic economic justifications (Baker & Evans, 2016; Gaetz et al., 2013).

In significant ways, *Housing First* is a market-based solution to homelessness. A variety of housing is utilized in *Housing First* programs including purpose-built non-market housing. Often service providers create housing agreements with private landlords. Long-time anti-

poverty activist, author, and former Vancouver City Counsellor Jean Swanson (2015) observes that most *Housing First* funds end up in the accounts of private landlords. Approached this way, *Housing First* is a matter of private property, not necessarily an alternative to it. Research in Australia and Scotland has demonstrated that conditionality persists in rights-based housing programs (Clarke et al., 2020). The national housing policy framework in Scotland reduced this tendency, through mechanisms including an adequate affordable housing supply.

A major struggle of the right to housing movement is elevating housing as a social good above its exchange value as a financialized commodity. However, as Moyn (2014) writes, “As much as [rights] call for social concern, they anchor property—the principle of rights having been most synonymous with this protection for most of modern history” (p. 84). Within rights-based narratives individuals are treated as citizens with “negative rights”—like the right to liberty, the right to “security of the person,” and the right to own property—and “positive rights” that involve social and economic entitlements. Positive rights are understood to require government resources, although the distinction is blurry since enormous resources are also required to provide for negative rights. Human rights discourses vary widely—so much so, Moyn argues, this can undermine their substantive thrust. The dominant humanitarian discourse of human rights is ultimately focused on individual entitlements and tends to marginalize more radical claims to collective rights to self-determination (Moyn, 2014).¹⁵ Within narratives of

¹⁵ In the global context, Samuel Moyn (2014) argues that human rights were a marginal discourse until the 1970s. The notion existed, certainly, not least in the French Revolution’s statement on the “Rights of Man” (1789) and the United Nations’ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR, 1948), but rights in this time were a matter of social democracy. In the post-WWII period when UDHR was created, the Allies promised self-determination to all, but ultimately narrowed this only to nations within Hitler’s empire. Moyn writes, “Human rights turned out to be a substitute for what many around the world wanted: a collective entitlement to self-determination. To the extent they noticed the rhetoric of human rights at all, the subjects of empire were not wrong to view it as a consolation prize” (p. 74). By the 1970s human rights emerged as the more contemporary

rights, the right to own property is venerated, and tends to take priority over social and economic rights like the right to adequate housing. More research is needed to examine the relationship between property owners and rights-based approaches, such as *Housing First* programs. In general, critical social scientific analyses of the ways of “thinking and acting” within *Housing First* programs is extremely limited (Baker & Evans, 2016; Raitakari & Juhila, 2015)

If debates over the right to housing movement remain in the terrain of the liberal rights-bearing individual, the movement will always be a battle of property rights versus social rights. Ultimately, landlords own property, and the interests of owners and investors are privileged by the central institutions of Western society. The economy depends on housing assets and property values. Given the power relations in this struggle, it will be very difficult for the right to housing movement to win ground and get people housed. Despite great fanfare around the right-to-housing provisions in the NHS, confirmed by an Act of Canadian Parliament, critics point out that the Liberal government that created this legislation has not spent significantly more funding on housing than the prior Conservative government. I argue that the reliance on liberal notions of rights, while promising in some respects, can also limit the possibilities of the movement, making it hard to imagine other ways of relating to property, to housing, and to each other. Older readiness narratives, describing an ideal individual who is “ready” for housing, ideally to work, and perhaps even own property, and newer narratives of an inherent right to housing as a matter of social justice are both rooted in the possessive individual. The next section focuses entirely on ways of relating as an approach to understanding and responding to homelessness.

humanitarian concept, used by people struggling for protections against the state. NGOs like Amnesty International gained popularity. Western leaders such as Jimmy Carter began to describe foreign policy in terms of human rights and the term itself became established in popular discourse (p. 73). No longer contained by citizenship rights and government institutions, including the statist framework of the UN, Moyn argues, rights became significant precisely by transcending state institutions (p. 82).

Narrative 3: Relationality

Through the lens of Indigenous relationality, homelessness in Canada is best understood in terms of connection and disconnection (Kidd et al., 2019; Rumboldt, 2022, p. 22; Thistle, 2017). Colonial concepts and policies have created conditions in which Indigenous people can become homeless—or perhaps more accurately, houseless—in their own homelands (Belanger & Lindstrom, 2016; Christensen, 2017). In contrast to colonial ontologies that centre a possessive individual “ready” for housing or entitled to a set of individual rights, Indigenous relational ontologies ground housing responses in a framework of interdependence between humans, other beings, and the living earth (Flamino, 2019; Jobin, 2010). For example, the Cree language embeds relationality:

For Indigenous peoples, the meaning of being rooted and at home encapsulates a connection to our Indigeneity, including to our ancestors, languages, traditions, family, community, land, medicines, and ceremonies, as well as an interconnectedness with all of creation, reflected in the principle of *miyowâhkôhtowin*. (Greyeyes & Vipond, 2022, p. 19)

The Cree concept of wahkohtowin, written in the quotation above with the pre-fix miyo- meaning good, refers to “interconnectedness” and specifically the Cree teachings that “all of creation is related and inter-connected to all things within it,” as described by Maria Campbell (2007, p. 5; S. Jobin et al., 2021; S. W. Jobin, 2023).

Over several university–community collaborations with Cree Elders and knowledge holders from the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation (AWN), I learned about wahkohtowin as a multi-dimensional and foundational Cree legal principle “that guides interpretation and application of Cree law and governance principles” (Jobin et al., 2021, p. 58). Harold Cardinal wrote that wahkohtowin “is one of the most comprehensive doctrines of law among the Cree people and

contains a whole myriad of subsets of laws defining the individual and collective relationships of Cree people” (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 74). As I previously wrote with Shalene Jobin, Hadley Friedland, and Tara Kappo, we learned in practice how wahkohtowin contains interconnected laws and concepts in an early planning meeting for the Wahkohtowin Project. AWN Elders Alice Moberly and Adelaide McDonald, who are both fluent Cree speakers, advised us to rename the project, considering not just wahkohtowin as the guiding concept for our collaborative work, but also the closely related concept of miyo wicêhtowin, which specifically describes practicing “good relations” (Jobin et al., 2021, p. 61).

The image of nested circles is sometimes used to describe wahkohtowin to indicate distinct but interconnected roles and responsibilities within families, with spirit beings, other people, and non-human beings (Jobin et al., 2021, p. 60). Jobin’s research demonstrates that Cree economic relationships are guided by the nested rings of wahkohtowin including principles and practices of establishing, maintaining, opposing, and restoring relationships enacted by spirit beings, other nonhuman beings, a people, such as Cree people, and other peoples (Jobin, 2023, pp. 17, 110). Principles of non-interference are important, and at the same time, there are deeply embedded responsibilities entailed by wahkohtowin (Jobin, 2023, p. 140). The Former President of AWN, David MacPhee, stated in a prior university–community collaboration I was part of: “Wahkohtowin is how we are related to one another, and how things relate to one another. We all exist within larger relationships and these relationships are the foundation for everything else. ... It is critical to recognize there is also responsibility as part of relationships” (Jobin et al., 2021, p. 59). An emphasis on responsibility is key within wahkohtowin and a theme that I will return to shortly in a set of Tsimshian housing case studies, in which relationality does not amount to letting anything go. Decision-makers must consider those in immediate housing need

and the ability of others to continue accessing housing in the long term. That case and MacPhee's explanation of *wahkohtowin* both reflect a specific pattern of reasoning that Wildcat and Voth (2023) identify within multiple Indigenous traditions of relationality—to be “guided by concern for the well-being of others in situations of scarcity” and to consider “how our decisions will impact relationships along various registers” (p. 8).

In the context of housing, the quotation above from Greyeyes and Vipond (2022) emphasizes that *wahkohtowin* is a foundational part of “rootedness” and a fuller concept of home. Home, in this sense, “implies a connection between a sense of place and identity, security, and way of being” (Greyeyes & Vipond, 2022, p. 19). For many Indigenous peoples, being without shelter or accommodation does not necessarily mean one is not at home (Memmott et al., 2003). A fuller concept of home goes beyond provision of shelter to indicate deep connections to spaces of social, spiritual, and economic significance that can remain intact while experiencing housing distress (Distasio et al., 2005). Although place is deeply significant in Indigenous relational paradigms, Ruttan et al. (2008) found that for homeless Indigenous female youth, home was less dependent on specific places and tied more to relationships. Emplaced understandings of relationality can also be in tension with Indigenous mobility. On one hand, the significance of place does not need to mean fixity. On the other hand, research has shown that colonialism and systemic injustice causes displacement, creating “tensions between rural reserve life and urban life, and the movement between them” (Christensen, 2016, p. 18). In northern Canada, for example, research shows that “chronic housing need and unemployment motivates or forces already-vulnerable people to leave smaller settlements for larger centres” (Christensen, 2016, p. 18). These patterns of mobility can go in multiple directions. Peters and Robillard's (2009) research in Saskatchewan shows that individuals experiencing homelessness moved away

from the reserve for resources and employment due to the “breakdown of social networks,” and also, “to maintain social networks through visiting off the reserve” (p. 663), and in others cases, that “lack of resources and the desire to maintain social connections led them back” (p. 652). In all of these cases, dimensions of relationality fundamentally impacted housing status.

Since the term “homelessness” can be a misnomer, concepts like “public place dwelling” or “houselessness” make more sense to some (Memmott et al., 2003). For others, the answer is to develop more robust definitions of Indigenous homelessness. This means acknowledging that Indigenous homelessness can co-exist with longstanding connections to place. When relationship to place is damaged it can lead to a “profound sense of rootlessness” (Christensen, 2013, p. 809). Jesse Thistle (2017) worked with elders, scholars, and service providers to identify 12 dimensions of Indigenous homelessness including the psychological effects of marginalization caused by colonialism and the impacts of “disintegration” of webs of relations in Indigenous society. The dimensions differentiate between historic displacement from Indigenous lands caused by colonialism, contemporary separation from “post-colonial” Indigenous lands (e.g., reserves), and spiritual disconnection from Indigenous worldviews. The latter echoes earlier scholarship from Australia, emphasizing that Indigenous disconnection from traditional territories and kinship networks can amount to “spiritual homelessness” that impacts mental health and understandings of self, country, and family (Memmott et al., 2003). Thistle also identifies dimensions of homelessness related to environmental damage and crises, and several unique dimensions related to mobility, including the need to leave one’s community for safety or economic reasons, as noted above, and the inability to feel at home when raised away from Indigenous community. Disadvantages related to housing and infrastructure intersect with child removals, as Mick Dodson (2010) stresses, both historically (justifying child apprehension

through so-called tests of neglect) and in the contemporary moment (still posing the same risk of removal). The removal of Indigenous children has caused homelessness through disconnection from traditional lands, and unsheltered homelessness through untenable conditions in foster care or within families experiencing intergenerational trauma, including the impacts of their own foster care experiences. Moreover, due to these struggles, younger generations may lack capacity to care for aging family members (Dodson, 2010). All this work underscores, as Dodson writes, that dispossession is “directly linked” to homelessness for Aboriginal peoples in Australia, specifically “exclusion from the lands they traditionally occupied and used,” loss of “control over the location, design and function of their living spaces,” and loss of ability to care for the land (p. 7). There are thus direct links between relational disconnection and dispossession.

Recent scholarship has pointed out that dispossession of land can fit uncomfortably alongside Indigenous worldviews in which land may be understood through relations not reducible to private property (Nichols, 2018). As discussed above, colonial dispossession enabled the creation of modern property regimes. The creation of colonial property—commodification of land—occurred through acts of dispossession. Recognizing this dynamic is important to avoid essentializing Indigenous concepts of land. Otherwise, the assertion that Indigenous worldviews do not allow for ownership of land can be deployed to undermine Indigenous claims to land. For example, Nichols (2018) draws on Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s unpacking of this logic in recent “history wars” in Australia: for example, the assertion that Aborigines did not understand land “as a discreet entity in which one could claim property” or have a word for “property” in their languages, therefore there “could be no meaningful subsequent claim to theft of that land” (p. 13). Failing to recognize how dispossession changes what is taken, Indigenous conceptions of land can be insidiously used against Indigenous people.

The fixity of modern western concepts of property makes difficult to imagine different forms of ownership or a different orientation towards land. Yet, as Napoleon and Snyder (2020) argue, many Indigenous people both own private property and engage in legal and political processes to address structural inequalities (p. 43). The foundation and material consequences of private property need to be unpacked to “create space for other approaches, explorations, and ways to arrange the relationships between indigenous peoples and land, including those drawn from Indigenous societies’ legal traditions and land laws” (Napoleon & Snyder, 2020, p. 43).

To demonstrate how different understandings of property shape relationships to land and relationships between peoples, Napoleon and Snyder (2020) draw on original housing case studies in which Indigenous and colonial property laws result in distinct “responses to non-payment” (p. 28). In some communities, responses to housing debt were mitigated by people acting on historic responsibilities to intervene or help found in Tsimshian law:

The underlying philosophy that emerges from the Kitsumkalum interviews might be described as one which recognizes that each person is part of a relational network that creates a collective responsibility to intervene when one person gets into difficulty. Here the philosophical approach contains an understanding that everyone’s personal circumstances are not just the result of hard work and virtue, rather, anyone could experience difficulties, financial or otherwise, at some point in their lives. (Napoleon & Snyder, 2020 p. 78)

Napoleon and Snyder (2020) also note that a functioning historic kinship network in Kitsumkalum enabled community members “to act directly on their responsibilities to one another” and avoid a major debt issue for the community (p. 78). In their Metlakatla case study the housing committee was divided on enforcing evictions for non-payment with a central

concern for children—“Where will people go when there are kids involved?” (p. 73). However, when the non-payment issue was not addressed, the community ended up with significant housing debt (p. 77). Napoleon and Snyder insist more work needs to be done to articulate specific property theories within these Indigenous legal orders, but also work towards a preliminary “critical indigenous feminist property theory” for resolving conflicts over land and housing issues on reserve. The approach is based on a relational understanding of law and property, and questions about gender are considered throughout decision-making processes, including how gender impacts unequal access to housing (pp. 53-57). Indigenous communities on reserve and in urban housing services are responding to “recognizable and predictable patterns regarding who actually has access to and can afford property” (p. 36). Gender shapes these dynamics and systemic considerations are brought into the decision-making. Indigenous feminist analyses of property and politics examine normalized concepts and institutions of governance (Kuokkanen, 2019, p. 8). Rauna Kuokkanen’s (2019) definition of self-determination focuses on the connection of self-determination to gender justice and to “participants’ everyday life” (p. 10). A relational approach to self-determination is both individual and collective. The relational response in the Kitsumkalum case study did not amount to the obligation to house without responsibility for intervening, or considering the long-term impact on the community. Community members had to consider the community as a whole and those in housing distress.

Concepts of property and ownership shape relationships to land and among peoples. Brian Egan and Jessica Place (2013) assert that Indigenous groups have attended to the “gaps” and tensions around divergent understanding of land in different ways: fighting to keep space open for “maintaining collective ownership”; in some contexts seeking “fee simple” and other forms of ownership resembling private property; or asserting the inseparability of humans from

the rest of the natural world and thus rejecting the “notion of land as a fungible property” (p. 136; see also Blomley, 2003; Bryan, 2000). Attentive to this range of Indigenous ways of thinking about land, Egan and Place write,

The point is not to romanticize or essentialize indigeneity or Indigenous worldviews, but rather to recognize that there are other ways of understanding land and property and geography, where the world is not divided neatly into exclusionary categories of inanimate and animate, human and non-human, and where the idea of land as a commodity that can be broken up into pieces and sold for profit is alien. (p. 136)

The point is to make space for a discussion that expands decolonial possibilities rather than staying within a polarized debate Val Napoleon and Emily Snyder describe, between Western capitalist ideologies where a solution to Indigenous poverty is limited to private property and romanticized Indigenous concepts, which, as Nichols makes clear, can be harmfully appropriated in a colonial context (Napoleon and Emily Snyder, 2020, p. 43). Colonial property shapes the current context, but as Jobin’s work also demonstrates, Indigenous economic relationships cannot be reduced to colonial property. Drawing on Indigenous relationality in the context of housing, there can be multiple conceptions of how care and support operate to give people homes as well as diverse understandings of property.

Maria Campbell (2007) insists on the need to “return to the principles of wahkohtowin” rather than focusing on human rights; Indigenous peoples have “inherent rights,” Campbell emphasizes, and they are found in cultural teachings and knowledges (Campbell, 2007, p. 5). The problem is the way advocacy for rights tends to focus attention outside of Indigenous communities, on laws and mechanisms and definitions of human rights that are not grounded in Indigenous knowledges and teachings of relationality. Human rights fail to rebuild wahkohtowin.

This focus on non-Indigenous definitions of rights reinforces colonial cultures of “dominance and patriarchy,” ignoring the rights of non-human beings and the land (Campbell, 2007, p. 5). When reciprocal responsibilities to the earth and one another are undermined, relationships that create community safety are undermined. Sometimes, however, human rights are the only tool available to the most vulnerable, Val Napoleon has said. The principle underlying Napoleon’s point is also relational—responding to the everyday reality of vulnerable community members. All this work points to relational self-determination. Such a view may also support rights, but it decentres, resituates, or even transcends them within the relational paradigm.

Conclusion: Can the Right to Housing Be Relational?

“If the right to housing and shelter were paramount... how would this alter the value of private property ownership and the ideology of possessive individualism?” (Bhandar, 2018, p. 199).

At this moment in time, many individuals in the housing community are engaging in some way or another with the right to housing movement. It is impossible to miss the space right to housing narratives have gained, quite suddenly and dramatically, in popular discourse, policy and advocacy. I am writing “with” the movement in the sense that my aim is to support the movement and I “critique to that end,” to quote Kim TallBear (2014). I have argued here that to be compelling, ethically, politically, and strategically, the right to housing movement will need to reckon with relationality. *But can the right to housing movement be relational?*

Whereas traditional policy focuses on the individual to understand the causes of homelessness, rights-based approaches are tied to systemic analyses of these causes, including settler colonialism in Canada. Despite acknowledging the harm caused by colonialism, the tacit commitments of the movement reinforce the atomistic ontology of colonial property that centres a self-possessive individual entitled to a set of individual rights. The “right to housing”

movement could elevate housing as a social good in a way that challenges conditionality and the imperative to progress and possess, or it could simply reinforce the possessive individualism of the housing economy. A right is a claim, not a relationship. But, enacting a right to housing almost certainly involves relationships and interdependence.

Colonial dispossession and possessive individualism have damaged what Thistle (2017) calls “emplaced networks of significance” (p. 17). Through the lens of Indigenous relationality, responses to homelessness must account for the layered and diverse ways homelessness materializes and the networks of relations that enable healthy communities (Thistle, 2017). Without a relational engagement with rights, we are left in the dominant tradition of the self-possessive and rights-bearing individual, who can possess property and rights and can be dispossessed of them. Indigenous relationality pushes the conversation from rights alone to the right and the relational responsibility to be self-determining, to support others, and to respond to housing need.

This chapter focused on laying out a theoretical framework for my field research, presenting three narratives—readiness, rights, and relationality—as distinct sets of understandings of the causes of and responses to homelessness. This framework paints a picture of the different policy frameworks, histories, and underlying ontologies that shape homelessness governance. The considerations in this chapter explain why I centred a relational definition of self-determination in my community-engaged research. The next chapter explains how I applied these ideas in the methodology, recognizing the relational work that people do in communities as governance work.

CHAPTER THREE: PRACTICAL GOVERNANCE AS COMMUNITY-ENGAGED RESEARCH METHOD

For years I sat around a table at a downtown shelter as part of a committee of people experiencing homelessness and housed individuals like me. We were a grassroots group with no funding. A study done with this group (2015) notes that the image of passing around bananas and boiled eggs stands as a reminder of the way we informally shared food as we discussed what we called “news from the street” (p. 112).¹⁶ In our group, I heard about serious community safety issues and interpersonal conflicts within housing and support services. I also saw how conflicts within our group—including community safety issues—undermined our ability to work together in response to the housing issues group members encountered. Sometimes these conflicts were rooted in larger systemic inequities between us. A central concern with building more equitable forms of solidarity led me to raise the earliest kernel of an idea for this project with fellow committee members. The prior research (2015) had already pointed out the ways we variously reproduced and challenged oppressive dynamics. I proposed a PhD project identifying responses to relational challenges faced by individuals connected to housing and support services, which I loosely refer to as the housing community.

The aim of my community-engaged research, the Home in the City (HITC) project, was to understand and co-create forms of governance that start with real relationships, and real tensions, in the housing community. Many informal governance decisions are made within our relationships with one another, including when we decide how to respond to community issues. Thus, I suggest that the forms of governance that people use often exceed the formal modes through which they are governed. This is our focus in HITC: to centre relational and informal

¹⁶ The author’s name has been removed for identity reasons.

modes of governance. The goal was not to replace existing governance but rather to learn from and strengthen more equitable forms of governance, starting with informal but grounded and principled relational practices. We co-developed processes that may ultimately inform formal governance decision-making. To address the challenges of solidarity building I identified in my own experiences in the housing community, I began my research with the question: What governance principles and processes can effectively respond to inequalities related to colonialism, racism, gender, and class? My focus was on what governance currently looks like and what it could become. Our co-produced governance resource, *The Victoria Declaration—A Statement on Governance in Housing and Support Services*, goes some way towards answering this question. It lays out points of shared vision for the governance of housing services.

In the process of co-creating *The Victoria Declaration*, the question of “how” to co-develop governance processes began to take centre stage. The central outcome of the research shifted from identifying governance practices and processes to how this can be done: How can we co-develop housing services that value our diverse backgrounds? What methods can we use that make space for diverse engagements with and beyond existing governance? How can we co-create governance practices that decentre colonial law and governance? With this shift, the orientation of my dissertation moved from a more analytical understanding to a solidly practical understanding centred on facilitated processes. As such, the outcome is a *practical governance method*.

I suggest that practical governance is not only a method, but also a methodology.¹⁷ This chapter explains the methodology, the thinking behind the methods I used, including the way

¹⁷ The Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU) *Legal Narrative Analysis Method* can similarly be described as a method (e.g., when specifically using the case brief method I will describe), and as a methodology, when it is applied within a larger research process (ILRU, 2016b).

practical governance is rooted in underlying theory and concepts, and involves an overall process that integrates various methods. In what follows, I first elaborate on the rationale for methods grounded in everyday practices of governance, drawing on literature from Indigenous studies, political science, and social policy. Social policy is an area of scholarship and policymaking that focuses on the ways the state produces social protection, also known as the welfare state. I consider methods that generate social policy “from the margins,” including knowledge from lived experience, that encourage thinking “like a city,” and enact politics of “refusal” (hooks, 1990; Magnusson, 2011; Michener et al., 2022; Scott, 2020; Simpson, 2014). While I appreciate the richly descriptive qualitative methodology of what I call “ethnographic social policy,” I suggest that it risks rendering marginalized communities and individuals with lived experience as “objects” of research. Ethnographic social policy also frames the challenges and responses to community issues entirely as matters of what policymakers do. State policymaking is a significant form of authority that interacts constantly with other forms of authority and ways communities respond to their pressing needs. For some participants in HITC, these are assertions of self-determination or sovereignty that entail refusing colonial forms of governance, while for others state governance is central. I explain how these diverse approaches were reflected in the diversity of work led by HITC participants.

After elaborating on the thinking behind the methods, I provide an overview of the research process, including a timeline and description of the research instruments. Co-creation was the intentional primary focus of the research process, and the co-creation process was accordingly the source of the primary data considered in the thesis. I outline practical step-by-step descriptions of the facilitated methods involved in co-creation in this project, and introduce the practical governance method developed iteratively along with the research process. My

methodology is rooted in participatory community-based and action-based methods. Practical governance is an aligned but distinct methodological approach that focuses on advancing self-determination and transforming relations of governance, differing somewhat from other “community-directed” methods. The practical governance method has three key elements—shared practical purpose, facilitated meaning-making, and authoritative decision-making. These elements come together to both describe and build governance practices.

A Methodological Gap in Political Science and Homelessness Literature

My methodology responds to an applied problem grounded in a real community issue: how to co-develop more equitable governance in housing services. The applied problem parallels two methodological gaps in the literature. In fact, my research responds to two corresponding research gaps: one in political science research and one in research methods concerning homelessness. Political science research on housing and social policy tends to analyze elite institutions and state actors, or the extent to which they collaborate with non-state actors, producing governance research that takes a top-down approach. Research on homelessness often counts and tracks incidences of homelessness and identifies individual and structural factors that lead to homelessness. In both cases, scholarship on the lived experience of social policy and perspectives “from the margins” is also marginal to the field. This may be changing, however, with more research on the experiential reality of being unhoused and accessing systems of social protection (Burns, 2020; Somerville, 2013).

Researchers responding to the gap in community-up governance research tend towards an ethnographic approach. Ethnography is employed as a more robust form of participant observation. Through either extended interviews or years-long immersive research projects, researchers detail the lives, concerns, and experiences of unhoused individuals and marginalized

communities (Bourgois & Schonberg, 2009; Fairbanks, 2009; Gowan, 2010). Qualitative research and ethnographic methods are rightly noted for offering a fuller picture that includes the ways individuals experience homelessness in specific places (“homeless cultures” or “scenes”), between places (as “journeys” and complex forms of mobility), within relational networks, and with respect to the systems and services they navigate (Burns, 2020; Knowles, 2010, 2011; Peters & Robillard, 2009; Ravenhill, 2016). This is, however, a marginal literature. Overall, there is very little scholarship on lived experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness, and even less that connects that lived experience to matters of governance. The notion that research might support individual and collective self-determination of people with lived experience of homelessness is either entirely missing or treated as a side-issue in much of the existing literature. Often the implicit assumption is that telling one’s story will be empowering, without any analysis of how or in what way power relations will be impacted.

Social policies, or a lack thereof, impact responses to homelessness and experiences of homelessness. Nonetheless, social policy and housing scholars have noted an unproductive distance between the two fields, calling for social policy to pay more attention to housing (Hick et al., 2021). Furthermore, social policy scholars say they are aware that welfare state programs shape everyday lives, and that lived experience ought to inform social policy. In fact, Sadie Parr (2022) writes that there is a “lived experience movement” in social policy literature building on other experiential knowledge, self-help, and survivor movements (Al-Hamad, 2019; McIntosh & Wright, 2019). Methodologically, the social policy research that addresses lived experience, tends to track in two main directions that I’ll distinguish here as “ethnographic social policy” and “action research.” Ethnographic social policy research gathers the stories of people with lived experience in rich detail, including a small subset of literature focused on experiences of housing

insecurity and homelessness. As explained above, this scholarship goes beyond surface understanding to account for the complexity and texture of specific experiences of homelessness in particular contexts (Bretherton, 2020; Davidson et al., 2021; Dhilion, 2011; E. Smith et al., 2021; Stonehouse et al., 2022). The researcher collects data through participant observation, in-depth qualitative interviews, and archival research, and then identifies key themes, critiques, and recommendations for policymakers.

Using ethnographic and interview data, Jamila Michener et al. (2020) demonstrate, for example, the importance of the civil legal system to marginalized communities as “a central institution in the implementation of welfare policy” (p. 161). While not usually studied as part of welfare state scholarship, a “bottom-up view” shows the deep linkages between public welfare programs and civil legal processes because marginalized communities use the civil courts to secure resources and remedies from harm, including protecting social rights, fighting illegal evictions, and litigating issues of debt and foreclosure (Michener et al., 2020, p. 161). Michener et al. (2020) argue that when social policy confines its study to “elite produced categories” and policies versus the “needs that give rise to it” the result is incomplete knowledge of the welfare state (p. 155). Studies tend to look at what is already “large and politically salient” and impacting “taxation and spending”; housing policy is a prime example of a policy area that is often overlooked by comparative welfare state scholarship. In contrast, ethnographic research shows that housing is extremely important to lower-income and marginalized communities (Michener et al., 2020, p. 156). Michener et al. argue that there ought to be a new orientation in social policy research informed and tested from the perspective of those who are “its most marginalized beneficiaries” (p. 164). In this view, marginal or “bottom-up perspectives”—what bell hooks calls “‘the special vantage point’ of marginality”—should reorient welfare state research towards

the experiences of individuals navigating state actors, institutions, and organizations that implement welfare policy (cited in Michener et al., 2020, p. 164). So, while lived experience is importantly centred, and ethnographic and qualitative research methods provide important insights, the methodological conclusion in the paper by Michener et al. is that scholarship from the margins requires more studies of poor and marginalized people to find out what they think of the state.

Ethnographic social policy highlights the value of lived experience perspectives in improving understanding and policymaking. Policy innovation is enabled by hearing the demands of those who face its consequences, expanding our understanding of government and letting the priorities of marginalized communities help target new sites of policymaking (Michener et al., 2020). There is a need for research that goes beyond prevalence and causes of homelessness, and that centres rich understandings grounded in lived experience. Ethnographic social policy relays important accounts of lived experience, but for the most part it involves studying individuals and their respective communities and relaying their stories, as opposed to telling one's own story. While I share the impulse to include grounded, place-based, and experiential knowledges in research, my engagement with Indigenous, feminist, and critical race scholars has highlighted the problematic history of approaches that position communities as objects of study.

One way these critiques have been expressed is through texts in Indigenous studies that trace the assumptions that underlie academic knowledge production and position academics as “objective knowers” and communities as “subjects,” challenging the ways knowledge has been extracted from communities (Smith, 1999, 2012). As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) argues in her foundational text *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Western researchers—from early explorers and “amateur adventurers” to contemporary scientists and

intellectuals—have defined, framed, and claimed the knowledge of “Others.” Though by no means the only culprits, anthropologists studying material culture defined and categorized peoples, places, and cultures. Stage theories of development, including theories developed by political theorists who believed Europeans were more civilized than other peoples, were applied by ethnographers to order and rank elements of Indigenous societies, and then the societies themselves (Simpson, 2016, p. 326). Civilizational hierarchies informed the belief that Europeans could govern Indigenous peoples and Indigenous land (Simpson, 2016, p. 327). Today, the epistemic and political context in which Indigenous struggles are interpellated continues to be biased against the equal standing of Indigenous sovereign nations and towards relations of knowledge production that render communities as topics of study. Ideas from political theory informed anthropology, and in turn, anthropological ideas informed ideas about political theory and governance. Civilizational hierarchies in political theory and anthropology, Simpson (2016) argues, result in a racialized paradigm with a continuing legacy that legitimizes the inherent validity and superiority of settler law and governance. Ideas and actions are articulated within a hierarchical settler colonial logic and read through a systemically unjust lens. Like other marginalized communities who have been subjected to harmful forms of knowledge production, Indigenous communities and researchers have pushed back, taking research into their own hands, and insisting on higher ethical standards and decolonizing research methods (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008).

In subsequent chapters, I elaborate on the ways HITC, and specifically the practical governance methodology, responds to these critiques of colonial relations of knowledge production, learning from and applying principles that are also part of decolonizing methods. However, as a non-Indigenous researcher, working in a deeply colonial context, I do not claim that this is inherently a decolonizing methodology, but suggest that the work is aligned. Here I

focus on key elements of the practical governance methodology that brings together lived experience and relational self-determination. In HITC this meant supporting individual and collective forms of decision-making that extended beyond existing colonial law and governance strategies.

Governing Through and Beyond the State

Reclaiming diverse practices and traditions of governance was a focal point in HITC, which began with discussions about the informal ways we govern our relationships with one another in the housing community. Individuals involved in more formal governance in organizations and in municipal and provincial governments were involved throughout. Our co-produced governance resource, *The Victoria Declaration*, was formally endorsed by the City of Victoria. As discussed, social policy is relevant to this research. However, my analysis goes beyond what the state says it is doing.

I build on the insight of urbanist theorists that the ways individuals secure their welfare involve diverse practices of “local self-government” (Magnusson, 2011). The municipality itself can be seen through the lens of the state or the lens of urbanism: a meager extension of the state or a venue for creative political action and a model for non-sovereigntist modes of self-government (Magnusson, 2011, pp. 51–52). Municipalities “mark out a domain for self-government, but refrain from asserting sovereignty. Municipal action does not preclude action by the state, or by so-called civil society organizations or movements” (Magnusson, 2011, p. 53). Municipalities operate with an expectation that they are not the only political authority and demonstrate that multiple forms of authority can and do co-exist. Diverse practices and claims about what counts as governance “beyond the state” include strong assertions of sovereignty, as I will discuss below. In other cases, the claims are “weaker” and are about the ways people make their communities work through informal modes of self-organization (Magnusson, 2011, p. 5). In

either case, the state and formal institutions of governance continue to exist and impact lives, but in this research, they are placed in a different context alongside other forms of law and governance.

Any research focused only on the state, no matter how many perspectives it includes, produces an incomplete picture of the governance of political life (Magnusson, 2011; Scott, 2020; Valverde, 2011). Thinking “like a state”—arguably the dominant political ontology of the modern world—understands political authority in terms of state actors and actions of the state. In contrast, thinking “like a city” is an alternative ontology, focused on diverse practices of governance and forms of authority that shape our lives, including how they change over time (Magnusson, 2011, p. 70). Thinking “like a city” is not just a conception of cities, but of “urbanism as a way of life” (Wirth, 1938). As other urbanists have pointed out, the close proximity of living and diversity in cities make them vibrant and dynamic, and also creates complex governance problems, many of which are solved through complex and intersecting forms of governance and local self-organization (Jacobs, 1961; Magnusson, 2011, p. 168). What is at stake is a claim about what counts as governance and where we look for it. If modern political life is best characterized by diverse practices of self-organization, as Magnusson (2020) argues, the primary point of analysis is what people do to govern themselves and not just what is done by state actors and institutions.

One of the stronger expressions of politics beyond the state, rooted in assertions of sovereignty, can be found within Indigenous studies scholarship focused on forms of self-determining praxis that “turn away” or “refuse” the colonial state (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2014). Based on her ethnographic research with the Mohawk community Kahnawà:ke—her own community—Audra Simpson (2007, 2016) develops “a politics of refusal” to explain the struggles of the Mohawk nation in relation to the Canadian state’s power and authority. As

Simpson (2016) argues, to remake the colonial reality of the present is to refuse to consent to that reality (p. 328). Simpson's work on refusal operates at two levels: as a theory and a method. In my dissertation research, I learn from both: first, in my qualified engagement with ethnographic approaches and other thickly descriptive accounts of lived experience; and second, in refusing state-centric approaches that position settler state governance as the only legitimate and sovereign form of authority.

Simpson (2016) doesn't outright refuse ethnography but remakes it through refusal: "My ethnographic prerogative is to make the practice of ethnography itself a refusal in time with theirs" (p. 331). Understanding that settler colonizers have approached the study of Indigenous peoples as a way of knowing, ordering, and governing, Simpson (2016) refuses to provide all the internal discussions and details of her community's struggles (p. 328).¹⁸ Simpson refuses to give an "easy answer" that observers can parasitically consume and judge. Attentive to the field in which Indigenous peoples' "business" is interpreted, she instead posits a recovered ethnographic practice that is driven by the self-determining authority of Indigenous communities. I'll explain a bit more about these refusals and then link it back to my own methodology.

The refusals articulated repeatedly over time by Indigenous peoples—specifically, Kahnawà:ke Mohawks in Simpson's work—highlight how their struggles operate against and beyond state citizenship and other political structures that rationalize settler control over the territory by attempting to contain Indigenous difference, as though belonging to Canada, as though a minority group within the nation-state (Simpson, 2014, p. 18). Upholding the inherent authority of Indigenous legal and governance traditions, the stance and the theory of refusal

¹⁸ For example, the controversial eviction of non-members from Kahnawà:ke, which was largely represented by the Canadian media as deeply discriminatory.

unsettles frameworks of multicultural rights and recognition. The latter accommodates Indigenous people to the extent that difference remains “cultural” rather than sovereign.¹⁹

At times Mohawks have specifically claimed rights protected under the Jay Treaty. Signed by Britain and the United States in 1794 regarding the boundary between the U.S. and what was then British North America, the Jay Treaty affirmed that Indigenous people are guaranteed rights to free travel across the border and that Indigenous people should not pay tax or duty on goods (Pine Tree Legal Assistance [PTLA], 2016). Despite this, Mohawk transport of cigarettes, in the 1990s especially, was widely represented by the media as “smuggling” (Simpson, 2014, p. 125). Although tobacco companies were eventually found guilty of “conspiring to circumvent tax laws in Canada,” Simpson (2014) explains, “it was Indigenous traffickers who received relentless public scrutiny, even when they barely appeared in the suit or the decision” (p. 126). Simpson (2014) identifies problems here that I’ve already discussed in Chapter 1, where Indigenous people are represented as “lawless,” and their economic activities are seen as a problem when they are collective and do not involve, or in this case, circumvent tax revenue for Canada (Simpson, 2014, p. 129). Rights are acknowledged insofar as they are “frozen” in pre-contact forms (Borrows, 1997). Refusing to consent to the settler state is about instead asserting Indigenous legal understandings.²⁰ Simpson’s concept of refusal is about asserting sovereignty by upholding, based on nationhood, such agreements as the Jay Treaty, and

¹⁹ For example, Simpson (2014) describes situations in which individuals, herself included, have endured major inconveniences, missed flights, tense interactions, and delays of days or weeks at the border while attempting to travel internationally using Kahnawà:ke status cards or passports issued by the Haudenosaunee (or Iroquois). The Haudenosaunee (or Iroquois) are a larger political Confederacy that has existed since before contact with settlers, with communities on both sides of the Canada–U.S. border, including Mohawk communities. The community of Ahkwasásne, for example, has reserve lands that are literally bifurcated by the Canada–U.S. border, although Simpson notes that pre-contact and ongoing Haudenosaunee ceremonial, economic, political, and social relations criss-cross the border (p. 116).

²⁰ For example, the assertion that the cigarette transport took place across water that “belongs to them according to their understanding of territorial ownership” (Simpson, 2014, p. 128).

by insisting on the legitimacy of the Nation's documentation of citizenship, and by asserting authority to determine membership rules and residency rights.

At times participants in HITC approached dominant forms of governance in ways reminiscent of a "politics of refusal." A contingent of individuals came to the HITC workshops from a recently shut down, self-described Indigenous tent city. They made it clear that they refused to consent to the idea that they do not have a home on this land. They insisted that their encampment was a matter of sovereignty, as Chrissy's story highlights in the Introduction. The encampment residents did not consent to their dispossession, nor to the structures of governance that have been imposed upon them.

Refusal is not just about representation but about voice "coupled with sovereignty" (Simpson, 2007, p. 68). In Audra Simpson's enactment of refusal as a method, writing must support the community's refusal to consent to the settler state and liberal norms of citizenship. Simpson's (2007) commitment to writing in a way that upholds and aligns with her community's politics of refusal are "imperfectly glossed as voice" (p. 68). In contrast to the historical norm of anthropologists from outside the community positioning themselves as a representative voice, or worse, as ventriloquizing "the voice" of Indigenous peoples, refusal as a matter of "voice" means articulating community struggles in ways that support the discussions, decisions, and actions of the community (Simpson, 2007, pp. 68–67). As I explain further in this chapter, and in Chapters 4 and 5, the primary way I've centred Indigenous sovereignty in this research was through Indigenous legal and governance methods, and advancing a practical governance method that can facilitate difficult conversations about relational self-determination. In this way, HITC made space for the sovereign assertions of, for example, Indigenous encampments residents, and a

range of other ways Indigenous laws are enacted within formal and informal governance, while foregrounding Indigenous self-determination and the jurisdiction of the local Nations.

Concepts of formal and informal governance were helpful concepts in HITC. At least temporarily, we decentred more formal governance structures—systems governed by elected officials, policymakers, and lawmakers, and organizational structures governed by Boards of Directors and executives. Practical governance starts with informal governance, the important everyday decisions that people make responding to community issues. Informal governance is the governance of neighbourhoods, families, and street family, and it happens through the principles that people carry with them, including from within Indigenous legal orders, “street laws,” informal rules about what is okay and what is not, and decisions about what to do when faced with a crisis. One way people have described *The Victoria Declaration* is in terms of “reclaiming governance” and claiming the part each of us plays in collective decision-making about community issues.²¹ To do this we fostered a narrative that centres people who use services, not just as beneficiaries of services, but as a group of citizens with knowledge relevant to governance-related issues. We applied this thinking in practical governance to support participatory governance practices, building upon the ways people create livable conditions and healthy communities—whether or not governments and systems are working for them.

Different forms of governance interact nonetheless. Many HITC participants are also part of the more formal governance of housing and support services. The way institutions are set up impacts the capacity of people who are connected to those institutions to govern themselves. Practical governance has implications and uses within formal governance as well. The informal

²¹ Joshua Evans helped frame our work as “reclaiming governance” in response to a presentation I gave on the research at the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (Personal communication, November 12, 2019).

governance that led to *The Victoria Declaration* ends up impacting formal governance. As described in the Introduction HITC participants have taken action to secure formal endorsements and implementation of the declaration principles and commitments within local housing organizations and at the City of Victoria.

Participatory Action Research

Action research—fairly marginal within social policy, but a well-established research method in its own right—employs methodologies in which people from affected communities and with lived experience of relevant issues are part of gathering and analysing data (Allan & Sakamoto, 2014; Paradis et al., 2012). Here, the need for the research processes to align with and work towards more equitable ends in both research and society is explicitly emphasized. In most cases the focus is on identifying the needs of those impacted by the research and making recommendations for decision-makers.

My research follows a trajectory similar to that of action research. The action-based aim is to build more equitable governance in the housing community. The research process itself built towards the actual involvement of people with lived experience in governance decision-making processes in a way that I have not encountered elsewhere in the literature. A key understanding that I draw from action research is the importance of rooting knowledge production in an “actionable” theory of change—this means knowledge is generated through some initiative based on a preliminary theory about how you expect change to occur (St. John et al., 2017, p. 9).

Rather than only offering critique of current practices of governance, the working assumption in HITC was that we need to build new ones that start from a plausible and productive theory of change: I propose that building more equitable governance requires

practical ways of making decisions together while including knowledge from lived experience. As explained in Chapter 1, Métis-Cree researcher and lived expert Jesse Thistle (2017) asserts in the *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada* that “networks of emplaced significance” are essential to all healthy communities. If we want governance that can support healthy communities, it needs to be grounded in these “emplaced” networks. These are sets of relationships, grounded in specific places or specific communities, on which people depend to meet their everyday needs and that give their lives meaning. Practical governance brings our situatedness into the centre of the analysis. When analyses and situated or emplaced knowledges are explicitly brought into the conversation, I suggest it is possible to develop critical understandings from the lived experience of systemic and colonial violence and to identify positive resources from the ways we are situated.

In focusing on how to build new governance, the theory of change behind practical governance moves beyond critiques of current systems and beyond just the harms experienced by marginalized communities. Indigenous and marginalized communities have been subjected to a lot of “damage-centred” research (Tuck & Yang, 2014). Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2014) argue that damage-centred research is a colonial form of knowledge production based on a “prominent but unreliable theory of social change” that implicitly holds that accounts of other people’s pain will garner attention and mobilize resources that will improve lives and strengthen communities (p. 812). Audra Simpson (2014) similarly contends that the promise of change stemming from the inclusion of “real voices” can promise to be empowering, but is often superficially implemented, insofar as the inclusion of previously marginalized voices is often embraced without rigorous examination of the context in which voices are included and to what effect (p. 84).

My approach draws together participatory action research that emphasizes knowledge generation through social action, and community-based research methods that emphasize co-producing research within a mutually beneficial university–community collaboration (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Ochocka & Janzen, 2014). Some refer to this kind of approach as community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods to emphasize processes based on knowledge exchange between universities and other institutions, organizations, and communities and also centre “the local and indigenous knowledge of people based in communities of place, identity and interest” (Banks et al., 2013, p. 264). Despite their distinct histories and more subtle differences in focus, participatory action research (PAR) and community-based research frequently overlap and are often discussed together in community-engaged scholarship. The latter is the more general term I use to describe my methodology.

It has become common to hear about “community-directed,” “community-driven,” or “community-first” research. I have written with others about the importance of communities co-creating and co-leading mutually beneficial and respectful research partnerships (Jobin et al., 2021). However, my work in this project and in articulating the practical governance method has helped to clarify what I see as the limits of certain responses to harmful forms of research, including acritical forms of inclusion, and equally, the notion of being “community-directed” as it is taken up in some contexts, as if the researcher is not part of decision-making that directs the research. While I suspect many researchers have a nuanced understanding of how they are “community-directed,” within practical governance the specific focus on decision-making, including the researcher, co-facilitators and all participants, is explicit.

The ethos of my method is “standing with,” which is the term Kim TallBear (2014) uses to describe a simultaneously relational and critical mode of community-engaged research. I work

from my own analyses while “standing with” and in sync with the aims and actions of downtown communities. Communities are heterogeneous and often include disagreement. To “stand with” a diverse community, practical governance built new spaces of dialogue on governance issues. TallBear writes that “standing with” challenges the opposition between research and researched. Rather than a stark binary between researcher and community, HITC built on shared conversations—many of which began long before the project—with friends, colleagues, and community members. The distinctions between myself and research participants don’t disappear entirely—I am conscious of responsibilities and complex power relations that come from my affiliation with a university. In HITC, I was conscious of significant inequities between participants in HITC on many registers. Many participants had relevant lived experience, but rarely had access to and influence within privileged spaces of more formal governance structures. I was both a facilitator responsible for making space for others and a participant in conversations about the project. The research process and results were co-developed, as part of long-term reciprocal relationships.

Practical governance helped me navigate tensions between co-creation and leadership. The focus was on shared decision-making, the project was co-developed, and I was also responsible for making decisions throughout the project. It was important for me to be as transparent as possible about the reasons behind decisions I made and I often made decisions as part of a collaborative process with others. Below I will explain more about how a “facilitative leadership” approach helped me navigate my role as both a researcher and a facilitator in the workshops. First, I will explain decisions I made in my role as a researcher responsible for the study protocol in line with community collaboration and co-creation.

Overview of Research Process and Data Collection Methods

The practical governance method is focused collective meaning-making and decision-making. My approach to data collection similarly centers our collective processes of co-creation. *The Victoria Declaration* was the central output of these processes and is thus the central “data” used to write this dissertation. Simply put, the primary data is the substance of the collective process and its results. The methods we used to co-develop the declaration, shared meaning-making that occurred in and through processes of co-creation, were the most important modes of data collection. This chapter provides step by step descriptions of the methods used in those processes. Chapter Four is a narrative of the shared processes that led to the declaration, and the rest of the thesis is an interpretation of that process, triangulated with insights from academic scholarship and publicly available materials publications, as well as some secondary data collection. Figure 2 below provides a timeline of key aspects of the research process, beginning with preliminary meetings that informed my dissertation proposal and ethics application, prior to any data collection.

The interviews and participant observation added context to the co-created data, playing a secondary interpretive role consistent with the principles that emerged in the shared process. Specifically, I conducted 6 semi-structured interviews and recorded field notes with my observations throughout the research process, especially a 1-year period from receiving Research Ethics Board approval at the University of Alberta in September 2018 until September 2019. I stopped taking systematic field notes after the 1-year period, with the exception of a couple key events noted on the timeline below.

Figure 2*Timeline of Research Process*

Dates	Research Phase	Details
January – June 2018	<i>Community consultations & Dissertation proposal</i>	Purpose: to check for interest and design the study in conversation with relevant organizations and community members; Candidacy exam held at University of Alberta June 2018
September 2018	<i>UAlberta Research Ethics Board Approval</i>	Notification of REB Approval September 21, 2018 (Pro00084817)
December 5, 2018	<i>First workshop: “Community Governance Gathering”</i>	Purpose: to discuss and develop governance principles and processes for housing and support services (specific focus on dispute resolution, horizontal relationships, and alliance building) Number of participants: 55 Number of facilitators: 7
January 17, 2019	<i>Second workshop: “Shared Statement Meeting”</i>	Purpose: to collectively organize the written contributions from the first workshop, discuss and synthesize ideas, and establish a preliminary consensus regarding the substance of a shared group statement, <i>The Victoria Declaration</i> Number of participants: 27 Number of facilitators: 2
January 18-19, 2019	<i>Third workshop: “Downtown Indigenous Laws Workshop”</i>	Purpose: to learn to use the legal narrative analysis method and build capacity to have conversations about Indigenous laws (specific focus on peacemaking and hospitality) Number of participants: approximately 27 (no formal sign-in) Number of facilitators: 9
April 17, 2019	<i>Fourth workshop: “Declaration Review Meeting”</i>	Purpose: to collectively edit and finalise public version of <i>The Victoria Declaration</i> Number of participants: 35 Number of facilitators: 1
September 2019	<i>First official declaration signing</i>	Declaration signed by the Board of Directors of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (now “the Alliance”)

May 10, 2022	<i>“Victoria Declaration Reboot”</i>	Community-led event to re-engage participants and others in conversation about <i>The Victoria Declaration</i>
September 2022	<i>City of Victoria - Council Member Motion to endorse The Victoria Declaration</i>	September 22 gathering of participants held outside City Hall, delegation from Home in the City attends council meeting, the researcher and (1) participant address council; September 29 Council Member Motion passes

After each workshop and most meetings, I took notes on a running document on my computer. I organized this document by phases of the research—planning meetings, workshops, and follow-up—and by focus (e.g. interactions with specific service-providers and groups, engagement with the local Nations, feedback on presentations about the research process). Within data collected under the auspices of participant observation, I was both a participant and an observer. Given the “action research” approach described above, I considered supporting our shared purpose to be part of my role in the project. I also had a shared responsibility along with the other facilitators to help create spaces in which others could participate as equitably as possible. In Chapter 6, I offer practical, political, and epistemic reflections on the complexity of inclusion as an aim in this project and in governance spaces more broadly.

The workshops could be described as large focus groups, but with a specific focus on co-creation rather than transcribed conversations. In planning meetings with my co-facilitators, we discussed what note-taking ought to happen during the workshops. We decided that since the focus was our co-created ideas, we would avoid taking too many notes. A few participants independently recorded their own reflections during and after workshops and sent me a small selection of notes and recorded messages. For example, the secretary of the Fairfield Tenants Association (FTA), a participant in HITC, suggested their work could be a case study of their

attempts to implement the principles of *The Victoria Declaration*, as I discuss in the Introduction. On their initiative and with the support of FTA members, the group's secretary gave me a small binder of notes and communications related to their advocacy efforts. I held on to these and other relevant notes, posters, and handouts in a physical file and reviewed them while writing this dissertation.

I explained in the first workshop that anyone could do a follow-up interview if they wanted to. The interviews were one of a number of opportunities for follow-up on the process. I used a semi-structured interview guide, included in Appendix F. The interviews enabled a more in-depth discussion with a few individuals about their experience in and reflections on the shared process. The interviews were also an opportunity for me to share and receive feedback on some of my preliminary interpretations. The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service and sent to participants for review. Everyone except Chrissy Brett, who passed away, had a chance to review and approve the transcript. If I used a direct quotation in the dissertation, I followed up again to share the part I used in the context of the thesis chapter, giving another opportunity for feedback. Participants could choose to use a pseudonym or their real names, as indicated on the consent form. In my follow up, I reconfirmed with participants if they wanted their real name used or not and provided a date by which they should let me know.

I do not include very many direct quotations from the interviews in the chapters that follow. Nonetheless, they informed my interpretation of the whole process. Sometimes that influence is less direct and sometimes I have made a decision not to foreground the interviews but incorporated the insights and tensions they point to in my analysis.

I conducted narrative literature reviews while preparing my proposal and again while writing my dissertation in thematically relevant areas, including on homelessness and housing governance, Indigenous and intersocietal laws, feminist theories of experience, lived experience

in social policy, community-engaged research, horizontal and consensus decision-making, collaborative and multi-level governance. Taken together, academic literature reviews, my field notes, the 6 interview transcripts, and a small number of other primary documents provided additional context and resources for understanding the process of co-creation that led to *The Victoria Declaration*. The *Declaration* and the relational and facilitated processes that led to it were the center of my analysis, and provided an analytical framework for understanding and guiding my use of the other research data. I reviewed the interview transcripts and my notes, manually noting key themes. I highlighted insights from participants that pointed to or helped explain the challenges and conversations we had in our meetings and workshops, and especially topics covered in *The Victoria Declaration*.

2The Practical Governance Method

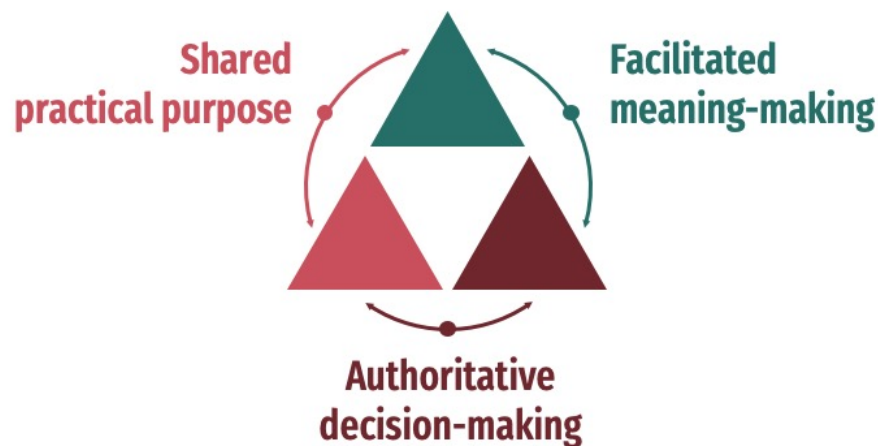
My field research led to a set of research innovations that I describe as a practical governance method, where the researcher or facilitator works with a community to co-create a governance resource. The community-engaged collaboration is focused on how to move from critique to transformative change, a question faced by both theorists and communities. As I discuss further in later chapters, community-engaged initiatives involve complex governance decision-making that needs to balance structures and relationships. Practical governance centres issues and processes that may not be surprising to community-engaged scholars, but it brings the familiar challenges of decision-making into the foreground and then synthesizes several methods to practice making decisions together and facilitate the shared purpose of the group.

Practical governance responds to a need for methods attentive to structural inequity and power imbalances and for effective and ethical processes that can help communities govern together. The method is based on a combination of political claims (about power relations worth struggling over) and efficacy claims—about governance processes to help respond to community

issues, including inequity in housing. At the most basic level, the practical governance method brings together three key elements, represented visually in Figure 2: shared practical purpose, facilitated meaning-making, and authoritative decision-making.

Figure 3

The Practical Governance Method



Shared Practical Purpose

The practical purpose is a shared point of concern, a goal, or vision that brings together a group or community. In this section, I focus on the significance and identification of a shared practical purpose and the conditions and collective capacity needed to achieve it, including multi-level leadership, a public narrative about the shared purpose, and a process of co-creation.

As a researcher facilitating the process, I brought significant direction to the project, while also being community-directed and co-leading with others. I had experienced and talented co-facilitators in this project. Facilitators are trained to resist inserting too many of their own ideas into the process, focusing on the rest of the group creating the outcome. But there were also times during workshops and meetings where I willingly put forward my ideas and was an active

part of a collaborative conversation, suggesting approaches and strategic directions. I was community-led in many important and significant ways, but I was not simply directed by the community. Everyone present was part of the process, and part of the groups' shared purpose.

Critical conversations about the purpose of the group need to be part of the process. In HITC, our purpose and our theory of change, as described above, link governance transformations to building governance practices rooted in relationality. Relations can be good and they can be deeply unequal and oppressive. To some extent the nature of a democratic process means not being able to direct the outcomes of decision-making, but what if participants want to make decisions that support oppression and inequity? Part of the answer rests on “facilitative leadership” that helps develop equity-oriented processes, and conversations that determine principled directions for the group (Ganz, 2010; ICA Associates, 2012). It is in this sense I am concerned by overbroad characterizations of research as “community-directed”: the researcher also needs to take responsibility for making significant decisions throughout the research process, including being part of critical conversations about equitable and ethical research practice, even though the researcher is certainly not the only participant who can lead these critical conversations.

What I'm pointing to is the need for leadership. Building shared purpose requires leadership that is broadly defined and widely enacted. Dominant forms of leadership tend to be closely associated with top-down and patriarchal power. As a result, some radical movements have entirely rejected the concept of leaders, in an effort to avoid reproducing the oppressive hierarchies of the systems the movements are challenging. As Chris Dixon (2014) writes, this skepticism towards leadership is common in anti-authoritarian movements and among anarchists; while writing “with” movements he is part of, Dixon argues that the rejection of leadership is

often misguided in failing to distinguish leadership from domination (p. 254). It also relies on two further misconceptions—that there are no leaders in anti-authoritarian movements, and that “we are all the same.” In fact, when leadership does emerge organically, it tends to reproduce existing societal hierarchies along lines of gender, race, class, and sexuality (Dixon, 2014, p. 250): Differences that demonstrate, we are not in fact, all the same.

Practical governance follows Dixon (2014) and others who argue that grassroots movements can make space for challenging hierarchy without abandoning the concept of leadership. Many social movement organizers build on the expanded definition of leadership developed by civil rights activist Ella Baker (Dixon, 2014, p. 255). For Baker, a leader could be a facilitator, a coordinator, or a teacher, and Dixon adds to this, a nurturer. Each involve skills and responsibilities that are shared and developed among a larger number of people than in dominant leadership models (Dixon, 2014, p. 256). Similarly, based on decades of research and work in the civil rights movement and the farmworkers’ movement, Marshall Ganz (2010) argues that building shared purpose in social movements requires leadership, and specifically, leadership “at all levels” (p. 7). Here leadership is tied to capacity building that can create more leaders. Decentralized forms of organization, like social movements, “can only be conducted to scale by many leaders skilled in this practice, a capacity to train leadership—not only at the top” (Ganz, 2010, p. 7). Spreading out leadership responsibilities requires capacity building and leadership development (Dixon, 2014; Ganz, 2010).

Unfortunately, leadership development is another concept with a lot of baggage. Leadership development is association with individual development and advancement in a cut-throat corporate world (Dixon, 2014, p. 259). There are other models, as Dixon (2014) emphasizes, some of which combine “more horizontal practices” with the more common models

from corporate and nonprofit training (p. 259). This training needs to extend beyond just skills to sharing knowledge and analysis of the thinking behind the ideas in the research (Smith, 1999). In Chapter 5, I draw on Linda Smith's work on decolonizing methods, in which she emphasizes both shorter-term commitments to sharing information during the research process ("reporting back") and longer-term commitments to "knowledge sharing" (Smith, 1999, p. 16). Practical governance applies these principles and further emphasises shared meaning-making that centres participants backgrounds and lived experiences. Capacity building, according to Dixon, also needs to include processes that empower participants as many people have been sent messages that undermine their agency (p. 262). "Empowerment," like leadership, is another word that might not capture the aims of more radical organizing spaces because of commitments to collective organization. Empowerment is associated with very individualized conceptions of what social change is needed, but of course it can and is used in more expansive ways—from *I have more power* to *we have power*.

Simple data aggregation by a researcher does not translate into shared purpose and collective capacity. Although, neither are they created simply by throwing people into a room together. Ganz (2010) writes that "leadership is accepting responsibility to create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty. Leaders accept responsibility not only for their individual 'part' of the work, but also for the collective 'whole'" (p. 1). For Ganz (2010), the central meaning of leadership in any movement is really organizing. But what leaders do is help organize in a way that enables others to develop and act on a shared purpose (p. 1). Ganz uses the term "facilitative leadership," because a leader facilitates conditions that enable others to act in response to community issues. We attempted to articulate something shared in *The Victoria Declaration* in full view of our differences. Distinctions characterize all

communities, but diversity is less visible in some places, and so pronounced in others, including urban settings. *The Victoria Declaration* aimed to express where we find and participate in the group's shared purpose.

Governance, like leadership, is needed “not only at the top” (Ganz, 2010). Practical governance requires capacity-building and sending different messages about who can lead and whose knowledge is needed in decision-making. The HITC workshops were a form of capacity building because of the participatory processes that we used to create the declaration and the training provided. The training, which will be described further below, involved methods that not only discuss governance but also actualize governance by making decisions together. Collaborative leadership was central to the vision of governance we tried to forward with HITC. A few key individuals handled street-level invitations and showed up at community organizations to talk about the governance work we were doing and reminded others about the gatherings.

The HITC project involved individuals from numerous communities and organizations, but we also articulated a shared purpose in building ground-up governance principles where we are “all on the same page,” as one participant put it, and to build energy around a shared narrative that encapsulates that common purpose. Creating the declaration together we began to articulate a shared narrative around the idea that everyone in the room had insights on the governance of housing, and that these insights are shaped by our individual and collective stories. To create more equity in housing governance, we discussed, would require processes of decolonization and centring lived experience, with resulting challenges and tensions that I elaborate in later chapters. The narrative we co-developed in this project drew from our shared insights to challenge inequities in governance: without claiming total horizontality is possible or

desirable, HITC came together to work towards more horizontal relationships and shared decision-making, including among peers, within a participatory process.

Our process in HITC highlighted the significance of co-creation, and how co-creation animates community-engaged governance. It is valuable to create concise written materials that can be shared and debated, such as *The Victoria Declaration*. But the “life” of the work goes beyond the words on paper—the process itself both requires and builds shared purpose. The outcome of a collective initiative built on co-creation is different than that of individual interviews, in terms of the shared energy and purpose developed through the process. Facilitated consensus-building is meant to enable groups to arrive at a collective outcome with content that is inherently unique. The whole—the community and the resource created—is greater than the sum of its parts, which include many possible individual conversations.

Many community-engaged research and advocacy initiatives focus on the aggregation of information. Groups end up with an abundance of data that does not necessarily or easily translate into the community cohesion and vision necessary to create transformative change. For instance, in this project, instead of hosting workshops, I could have started with 50 individual interviews. After synthesizing the information from those interviews, I may have identified some or even many of the same principles and issues in the data. My follow-up interviews certainly indicated similar points of tension. I would also check back, as I did in this project, to ensure those who participated were comfortable with what I wrote about them.²² What’s the difference?

²² Some observations are about situations that involved many of us. The declaration was co-written. I made it clear on the workshop invitation that the event was for my PhD research project (see Appendix B). I noted that I had received University of Alberta Research Ethics Board approval (Pro00084817). As I indicated I would in my ethics application, I walked through the ethics form at the beginning of the workshop. I told everyone they would not be able to withdraw contributions made on cards or verbally in the group co-writing because nothing in the co-written governance resource would be specifically attributed to individual authors.

The difference is the shared purpose built through co-creation, as I will demonstrate in a story about individuals and groups speaking to and using the declaration as a tool, with minimal or no involvement from me.

Someone from Neighbourhood Solidarity with Unhoused Neighbours (NSUN) noticed *The Victoria Declaration* on Janine Theobald's email signature and brought it up at a group meeting. A couple of HITC participants were at the meeting let me know that they told NSUN that they were part of making *The Victoria Declaration*. Shortly after the group contacted me to say they had recently endorsed *The Victoria Declaration*. While individual interviews have been an important complementary research method, the process of co-creation was crucial to building energy around the outcome. Participation in the shared process and outcome is what enabled the shared sense of ownership and advocacy when I had not yet published anything about my research except a couple public facing blog posts and an online magazine article. It was possible for the research to produce a resource that people could take up and speak for in real time because it was co-created. In our process, we fostered a narrative that centres people who use services as not just beneficiaries, but as a group of citizens with knowledge relevant to governance-related issues. Everyone who participated is already part of informal governance in the housing community. Governance is not only formal governance structures. It is also lived out in our relationships and everyday lives. We responded to the gaps I identified in homelessness research and in Political Science by including experiential and situated knowledges—not through a researcher gathering and relaying detailed accounts of this knowledge; but rather, through our process of relational co-creation. We focused on our own governance. Our shared purpose was described by one participant like this:

I'm mostly here because I'm very concerned about governance and how we are governing around each other. You know what I mean? How we—we're like those rats in the cage and we're biting at each other's heels. Where I want us to know that's why we're biting at each other's heels. It's kind of part of the process and we got to stop stigmatizing each other, keeping people—we're keeping each other away. We're doing a lot of lateral violence because we haven't been taught how to fight. And everything in my life has shown me that the system has taken away our ability to fight. Just learn how to fight, work on our own issues. Like the system doesn't want us to. It needs a lawyer. It needs a cop. It needs a this, a manager. It needs, you know. (Kym A. Hines, personal communication, April 16, 2019)

The shared purpose here, as I understand it, is learning how to “work on our own issues” and build relationships. This means to self-govern. Current dynamics in the housing community, in Kym's view, involve thinking the solutions can only be created within systems governed by lawyers, police, managers, and other professionals that permeate the lives of people experiencing poverty and homelessness. Other individuals caught up in the constraints of these systems can easily become the most immediate threat biting at your heels. Kym wants to shift the analysis to bigger structural contexts that keep people down. Unfortunately, these conflicts within communities are hugely significant in people's everyday lives.

Conflicts constantly undermine the ability to generate action and outcomes on strategic campaigns. One or two highly effective and widely respected local activists who had said they would participate in HITC backed away due to ongoing conflicts with other participants. Other individuals impacted by related conflicts did continue to attend and support the process, but at times this required dialogue and clear boundaries discussed in advance.

The collective capacity built through group processes requires collaborative types of leadership, including the ability to facilitate broad participation in collective processes and the ability to draw motivation from our individual and collective stories. *The Victoria Declaration* makes a political claim that “more shared decision making is necessary to make the best decisions....” and that, “this requires participation and decision-making with peers who have experienced the issues” (p. 3). In the same section *The Victoria Declaration* emphasizes “the need to build collaboration and solidarity among large inclusive groups to address collective issues,” alongside “the need for smaller groups coming from specific communities or addressing a specific issue” (p. 3). This balancing of broad collaboration while holding space for autonomous, distinctions-based areas of authority and action would be impossible to achieve if everyone in the downtown community, broadly speaking, had to be involved in every decision. Below I discuss our approach to making shared authoritative decisions. Identifying and moving towards a shared purpose requires facilitative leadership. As I will discuss in the next section, the shared practical purpose also depends on processes that enable groups to articulate shared values and interests and then build towards a vision based on them.

Facilitated Meaning-Making

Facilitated methods can help the group articulate shared purpose. The second element of practical governance—facilitated meaning-making—allows participants to develop principles and strategies to achieve their aims. Here I will emphasize one of the core interventions resulting from my research: the importance of collective processes of meaning-making. Groups can always improve on the ways they generate shared meaning together. Meanings can develop from a range of experiences and situated knowledges. At times, difficulties arise, including interpersonal conflicts and political differences because the ways we interpret experience are

limited by forms of “epistemic injustice” (Fricker, 2006). Epistemic injustice impacts what counts as knowledge and our capacity to interpret experience (Fricker, 2006). These different layers of tension and difficulty are the focus of later chapters. Processes of shared meaning-making provide opportunities for interpretation of experience. Collective processes are key because knowledge from experience is not just a matter of a “stimulus” and a “response” (Alcoff, 2018, p. 66). People can have a similar experience and yet understand it very differently (Alcoff, 2018, p. 54). Variable interpretations of the same event can lead to different political responses, such as when people organize around an issue like the importance of peer involvement in decision-making and programs related to housing and support services. That can create a new kind of knowledge or agency around opportunities for action, including peer-led organizations and initiatives (Alcoff, 2018, p. 67). In other words, there are situations in which we can reinterpret dominant understandings of experience (Alcoff, 1991). These are processes of articulating meaning and generating responses to a specific area of experience, and in a way that values proximity to that experience (Alcoff, 2018, p. 67).

Facilitated processes are helpful in articulating a group’s purpose. Conversely, the purpose helps frame and direct the facilitated processes. Thus, shared purpose and facilitated methods are co-constituted. As I will explain, in HITC we used multiple facilitation methods to support collective conversations. To co-write *The Victoria Declaration*, we used the *Focused Conversation Method* and the *Consensus Workshop Method*, which is a specific method of facilitated consensus-building from the Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA Associates, 2012). Together with researchers from the UVic Indigenous Law Research Unit, we also used the *Legal Narrative Analysis Method*. Each of these group facilitation methods supported the group to think through important issues together, determine a collective purpose, and then co-

create tangible resources to respond. The rest of this section describes each of these methods in a step-wise manner and explains how they are incorporated into the overall practical governance method

Focused Conversation Method

This method has four parts that are represented with the acronym ORID (ICA, 2012). The conversation begins at the objective level of thinking (“O”) where the facilitator asks the group questions that identify the relevant facts and data. Sometimes this phase starts with presentations or time for participants to review background materials. With the next set of questions, the facilitator provides opportunities for participants to react and add to the conversation based on personal experience at the reflective level of thinking (“R”). Pushing the thinking deeper, participants are then asked questions that require analysis at the interpretive level of thinking (“I”), including the significance, value, and meaning of the information that has been gathered. The final questions move the group to whatever decision (“D”) can be made based on the current conversation, for example, what will be produced, how aims will be accomplished and who will take these actions (Stanfield, 2000, pp. 26–28). The *Focused Conversation Method* helps facilitators ask purposeful questions that stimulate broad participation at each stage.

We used the *Focused Conversation Method* at every community meeting and workshop and often several times. For example, at the first community governance gathering in December 2018, we had a full day of discussions about governance of relationships. This began with table conversations about the governance of the space for the purpose of the workshop. I proposed four initial guidelines from ICA meant to help enable participation in the workshop.²³ The

²³ (a) Everyone has wisdom. (b) We need everyone's wisdom for the wisest result. (c) There are no wrong answers. (d) The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. (e) Everyone will hear others and be heard.

practical aim of the conversation was to have the group collectively co-create a fuller list of guidelines to govern our space for that day. In Chapter 4, I will say more about how we put these into action in navigating moments of tension in the workshop. In addition to the practical aim of the guidelines, this process had what ICA refers to as an “experiential aim” that identifies a goal related to what group members will feel or experience, in addition to a practical aim focused on discussing a topic, making a decision, or producing an output (ICA, 2012). In our case, the experiential aim was for everyone to feel part of the process of co-creation. Each group was able to share and discuss who was present at their table and why they were there before getting to their response. We worked through the following set of questions, in the ORID format:

1. [O] Why are you interested in the governance of housing and support services? Why did you come today? Where do you see similarities in your group? Where do you see differences? In your own words, what is your understanding of the purpose of this workshop?
2. [R] What did you think when you first heard about the workshop?
3. [I] What do you hope to get out of today? How do we interact so we can achieve these goals and respectfully work through tensions?
4. [D] If your group could add one rule to the guidelines, what would it be?

While participants may be more comfortable with any given level of analysis, the sequential stages are needed to develop a shared understanding of what the group is discussing; to make space for intuition, emotion, and memory; to interpret what matters most to group members; and to apply the group’s discussion in a response (Stanfield, 2000, pp. 26–28). While there are many other processes that could achieve the same goals, this is one model that can be used in a range

of spaces. The process of creating the guidelines was an example of doing governance while talking about governance.

Consensus Workshop Method

In HITC we facilitated broader participation using focused conversations that enabled everyone to contribute their ideas to the process, then collectively synthesized shared insights using the *Consensus Building Method* (the “consensus workshop”). The consensus workshop is a key tool for organizing a set of insights and or desired outcomes into a shared narrative or consensus. The group comes together to create an outcome that would not have been possible by any individual participant, or even by aggregating information from all the participants. The *Consensus Workshop Method*, a key tool in what ICA, like Ganz (2010), calls “facilitative leadership”—leadership that enables intentionally participatory engagement (Stanfield, 2002, p. xvii). This method is used to facilitate a discussion that, first, provides context and identifies core ideas in a very open “brainstorming” on cue cards or flip chart paper. In the brainstorming, the instructions are clear: you do not need to agree (Staples, 2013). Second, the group pairs and then groups ideas that go together. Third, the group moves through a facilitated process where it names the groups of ideas. Finally, the names given to the groups of ideas are checked with the whole group to make sure they reflect the resolve of the group (Stanfield, 2002, p. 4). This is the consensus. Consensus is defined by ICA as the best decision for that group at that time. In this sense, it is about identifying shared insights among a group, and agreeing to move forward, not determining complete agreement (Stanfield, 2002, p. 155). Consensus here is defined as the decision or commitment developed at that time among that group in response to a specific issue (Stanfield, 2002, p. 155). A *contingent consensus* is necessary to make authoritative decisions, and it speaks to an interplay between resistance and consensus in the facilitated process.

We used the *Consensus Workshop Method* to co-create *The Victoria Declaration*. At the end of the first workshop, we asked everyone to use cue cards to individually write down their key insights from the day. These cards became the substance of the declaration. In this case, the entire gathering was working towards writing these answers, but it was only the first step in the *Consensus Workshop Method*. We continued the process in a second meeting held 6 weeks later. Over the 3-hour meeting, 27 out of the original 55 participants reviewed the answers submitted on the cards (about two cards per person and one idea per card). Each small group reviewed a stack of cards and then we gathered around the open front wall. My co-facilitator Matthew Wildcat led the discussion while I placed and moved cards around on the wall as participants suggested. First, we asked for all the groups to offer a few cards which we stuck on the wall and read out loud. Then we asked people to suggest pairs of cards that went together to form some common idea or insight. After collecting several pairs, we took more cards from each group and people started suggesting cards that went with the existing pairs. After all of the cards had been sorted, everyone agreed that Wildcat and I would create a draft of our statement by writing up a paragraph describing the cards in each group. Finally, based on a previous conversation with Wildcat, I suggested that perhaps what we had created was not just a statement, but a declaration. While the group was clearly tired from the hours of hard work, the meeting ended with quite a bit of enthusiasm about the basic structure of *The Victoria Declaration* which we had co-created.

In the case of HITC, the result of the *Consensus Building Workshop Method* was a set of guiding principles and commitments related to governance in housing and support services. In conjunction with a series of *Focused Conversations*, the *Consensus Building Workshop Method* allowed us to collectively inform and structure the declaration. Using these methods, we applied the theories of collaborative leadership discussed above. We needed a range of leaders to recruit

others to be part of the process. As I will discuss further below, a whole group of facilitators from ILRU led sessions, in addition to myself and Matthew Wildcat. Crucially, we also centred capacity building in our process. The ICA methods gave us tools for speaking together and coming to a consensus on which we could move forward. The clustering and naming of the groups of ideas requires hearing not just what is said, but also interpreting and debating the deeper insights behind our ideas and bringing those ideas together. We later reviewed and edited the draft declaration all together (35 people participated in the review session). The process used accessible and intentional questions that allowed the group to articulate current governance issues and aspirations for an approach to governance based on more equitable relationships. The outcome was *The Victoria Declaration* as a tangible document as well as different forms of collective capacity within the group.

Legal Narrative Analysis Method

With the support of facilitators from ILRU, we included sessions related to Indigenous laws at three HITC workshops. In a dedicated two-day Downtown Indigenous Laws workshop run by ILRU, community members spent time speaking with each other at tables discussing principled decisions and responses to community issues, especially peacemaking and hospitality within specific Indigenous legal traditions, as shared in publicly available stories. This method has been referred to by different names, including the *Story Analysis Method*, the *Adapted Legal Narrative Analysis Method*, or simply the *ILRU Method* (Napoleon & Friedland, 2014, 2015). Whereas ILRU generally partners with Indigenous communities to articulate specific areas of Indigenous law, as a preliminary way into complex considerations of inter-societal laws in cities, we used ILRU tools to think about informal governance. In later chapters, I provide some examples from our Indigenous law sessions, but will bracket the substantive work we did related

to Indigenous law in this research. In Chapter 6, I explain why I decided not to go further with the Indigenous law work in this project, which was a question of defining the scope of this project, but also enacting a politics of refusal and principles learned from decolonizing methods related to relationships and process (i.e., procedural steps such as an invitation, Indigenous leadership, and partnership in running the project). The long-term relationships and community validation needed to articulate specific Indigenous legal or governance outcomes was not possible in this project. I will discuss how we used the ILRU graphic novel, *Mikomosis and the Wetiko*, as a way of starting critical conversations about community issues such as harms, conflicts, human vulnerability, and gender inequity (ILRU, 2011). The priority here was community capacity and relationship building to enable further work led by local Indigenous community members.²⁴

Authoritative Decision-Making

The methods described above help facilitate *co-creation* of outcomes, so process and meaning are important, but so are decisions that people can act on. The third element of practical governance is authoritative decision-making. The method involves initial opportunities to practice making decisions, with the intent of building capacity for more shared decision-making, and thus to prefigure alternatives in how we govern together. We demonstrated that everyone who participated is already part of the informal governance of the housing community, because governance is not only formal governance structures but also lived out in our relationships and everyday lives.

²⁴ For example, ILRU partnered with NLE TU,O Child and Family Services Society for a project focused on “child and caregiver nurturance and safety” within Coast Salish legal traditions. Together they co-created a *Toolkit: Coast Salish Laws Relating to Child and Caregiver Nurturance & Safety* (Asch et al., 2021).

Authoritative decisions enable action that moves towards the shared purpose. Drawing on the methods from ICA Associates, practical governance employs what I refer to as a contingent consensus model. I suggest that a contingent consensus model can help groups move through the enigmatic challenge of democratic movements—enacting deeply democratic processes, without undermining the whole initiative. As a young activist, I saw the problem of ineffective grassroots democracy reproduced in several contexts. Occupy Wall Street, for example, which arose in 2011 challenging corporate capitalist liberalism, and especially the way “the 99%” (everyone other than the richest one percent of people) were left to struggle while the banks were bailed out of the 2008 financial crisis. Unfortunately, Occupy was hampered by ambitious but unmanageable public assemblies, some of which I participated in. However, my concern with the group was also a concern about the movements’ composition as, principally, a group of white radicals, aiming to “occupy” spaces like Wall Street and other symbolic bastions of corporate capitalism, ultimately spending weeks or months camping out in parks and city squares throughout Canada and the U.S., two countries that already exist due to the occupation of Indigenous peoples’ lands (Grande, 2013; McBeth, 2012). To some extent, I moved away from participation in democratic movements of this kind due to my frustration with ineffectiveness, on one hand, and a lack of anti-colonial solidarity, on the other. I continued to have an interest in processes that might support social movements that learn from these lessons how to do better in both areas.

Learning from the history of democratic movements can underscore the reasons for the contingent consensus model advanced within practical governance. Consider another example, the Movement for a New Society (MNS), an anarchist-inspired radical pacifist organization in the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Andrew Cornell (2010), MNS was one of the most influential organizations elevating “contemporary forms of consensus decision making and

decentralized organization in the period just prior to our own” (p. 172). Like other anarchist and anti-authoritarian movements, they prioritized means that would “prefigure” or align with their desired ends, in contrast to reform-oriented efforts that seek change but reproduce the oppressive hierarchies of the systems they are challenging. However, as Cornell asserts, ultimately MNS was “severely hindered” by its approach to consensus and “came to greatly modify and qualify its endorsement of consensus and fully decentralized organizations over time, because it recognized certain ways these practices limited its ability to overcome racism, sexism, capitalism, and imperialism” (p. 172). The idea is that the means of anti-authoritarian movements should match desired ends, but in the pursuit of means-ends alignment, the ends can be undermined entirely.

Consensus processes are challenging and fraught. At the same time, there can be important understandings and meanings they help draw out in the process of coming to a decision. Some scholars take issue with consensus as a normative principle, totally aside from whether they work or not. For example, Jose Medina’s (2012) resistance model emphasizes the centrality of disagreement or “productive dissent” in democratic processes (p. 7). The friction that comes from differing perspectives is necessary before, during, and after any consensus, and it is not always or only about moving towards consensus. Medina writes,

Democratic communication is the communication of diverse experiences and diverse imaginations: it is aimed at putting our practices and institutions in sync with the heterogeneous experiences of diverse members of society, but also with the heterogeneous imaginations that individuals and groups can exercise. (p. 7)

When democratic processes are dynamic, they self-correct through dissent, deliberation, and imagination. Medina raises concerns about the extent to which consensus models can cajole

agreement out of those who might otherwise dissent. The conclusion of a consensus may conceal ongoing reservations among a minority.

While the examples above highlight how consensus can be a drag and a homogenizing force, adrienne maree brown (2017) contends that consensus practices done well enable critical engagement with diverse understandings and shared purpose in a group:

I think people imagine being in the movie *12 Angry Men* when they hear the word “consensus”—no bathroom breaks, endless hero sandwiches, wearing each other down to the least interesting decision. What I mean when I say it is: make sure the people who will be doing the work agree on what is being done, why and how. (p. 144)

Such clarity ultimately increases efficiency, brown argues, because otherwise these differences can redirect the energy of the group. Autumn Brown (2021) argues that the reason many groups fail to reach consensus is “unstated assumptions and unacknowledged differences in worldview” (p. 44). She writes:

Whereas the dominant ideology of group process would have us assume that fissures arise in groups primarily from differences in opinion, or the process taking too long, or people not knowing how to be in conflict, the real problem is so much simpler and also so much harder to see: we think we agree because we think we mean the same things with our words, but we don’t. The fissure is there long before the conflict arises. (p. 44)

This statement underscores the importance of taking time to work through assumptions and bring differences in worldview explicitly into the conversation.

Democratic processes must hold the friction of divergent perspectives to enable a dynamic interplay between what we imagine our communities could be and what we have now. We connect and revise our imagination in relation to our actual experiences. We also critique and

expand our lived experience through social imagination (Medina, 2012, p. 8). The *practical governance method* embraces the dynamic interplay between friction and consensus, holding our differences in tension with the desire to find certain points on which we can move forward together.

The balance between broad collaboration and action led by those most affected would be impossible to achieve if everyone in the downtown community, broadly speaking, had to be involved in every decision. Consensus-building was an important part of HITC, but we had a nuanced engagement with it. This had two key parts: first, the ICA definition of consensus (the best decision for that group at that time) is about identifying shared insights among a group, and agreeing to move forward, not determining complete agreement (Stanfield, 2002, p. 155). This approach was operational because it was accompanied by a clear method and because it is provisional and leaves room for disagreement. The second key part of our approach to consensus is that we did not work through consensus in every case: at times I made important decisions related to the project, informed by the vision that had been shared and co-developed with my collaborators, and in most cases in dialogue with others part of the group. As I elaborate in Chapter 5, it was important that I made these governance decisions that involved navigating complex tensions between my systemic analysis and the relationships I had with others involved in the project. So, while I think “consensus is critical,” as stated in our co-developed guidelines for the first workshop, I also think the *when* and *how* of consensus needs nuance. What I have found to be equally critical to enable shared decision-making, including among peers, is more decentralized and participatory processes, processes of co-creation. We not only discussed the need for these processes, but we also used participatory processes to govern our work together.

The Community-Engaged Research Process

Invitations to participate in HITC started in early discussions with individuals I already knew who are connected to housing support services. Then I used a snowball sampling method to include others interested in discussing governance in this way. To honour the self-determination and expertise of participants, real names and pseudonyms are used variously, as per the preference indicated on the consent form, or if I have any concerns that identifying individuals could increase their risk of harm. I do not use the real names of service providers, except in regard to those that have publicly endorsed *The Victoria Declaration*. Participant observation and six follow-up interviews supplemented the core methods, providing additional context, opportunities for thick description, and reflection on the research process. However, this research was not an ethnography. In this case lived experts were participants in a shared governance process.

While the research results are drawn from a single case study, the research is triangulated with analysis from theoretical texts, grey literature, and policy analysis. The principal data comes from a 10-month period between December 2018 and September 2019. The central research activities in this period included the community governance workshop that culminated with feedback from participants that fed into two follow-up gatherings; the 2-day Downtown Indigenous Laws workshop; in-person meetings, phone calls, and correspondence with participants; participant observation at the workshops and follow-up meetings; and six semi-structured follow-up interviews. The methodology intentionally steers away from too much reliance on interview data so that the outcomes for communities centre the work that was done collectively.

As mentioned, the research process included a community of individuals that access and run housing and support services in downtown Victoria that I refer to as the housing community. These are individuals who have practical knowledge of the issues, as advocates, services providers, and people with lived experience of homelessness—a descriptor that captures half of the members of our group. We employed a “community of interest” model, as defined in Canada’s granting agency’s *Tri-Council Policy Statement*, Chapter 9, as “individuals or organizations who come together for a common purpose or undertaking.”

In Indigenous research contexts, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) describes Indigenous communities of interest as “talking circles of people with similar interests” (p. 127). In Chapter 4, I include an extended discussion of how I was accountable to Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous peoples in both process and outcome. This included planning and knowledge-sharing with Indigenous community members and Indigenous organizations; reaching out to local First Nations to share the vision for the project; involving Indigenous speakers, co-facilitators, and an Elder to support the work at every meeting; and keeping collaborators updated with the process and results. This process supported the autonomy and self-determination of individual community members and the collectives we form as a community of interest, while continually considering and acknowledging the self-determining authority and sovereignty of the local Nations.²⁵

In this chapter, I’ve introduced the practical governance method—an action-oriented, participatory community-based research method. Practical governance centres experiential and situated knowledges. The method is practical in supporting communities to develop governance resources and make decisions together. Practical governance builds on a community’s collective

²⁵ See Chapter 5 for an example.

capacity to articulate meaning from experience and make decisions together. When communities engage with researchers, the form of information collection and meaning-making need not be limited to this or other preexisting methods—the point is to codevelop what makes sense in that context, and practical governance provides one way of doing this. Specifically, it involves co-creating a shared purpose, facilitated meaning-making, and authoritative decision-making that can enable action towards the purpose.

The next chapter provides a detailed narrative of the HITC Project, and specifically, the most intensive phase of the research that led to the creation of *The Victoria Declaration*. In this narrative, three areas of tension begin to emerge, which I will expand upon in the final two chapters of the dissertation. The first is around lived experience, which as I've started to explain, is not just a matter of getting more people into governance spaces, but also building shared understandings in those spaces. However, these processes are limited by relational, political, and epistemic differences and injustices. That is, we are trying to build more equitable governance processes within contexts that are shaped by numerous forms of inequity, including in the ways we interpret experience. The second tension relates to methods of relational self-determination. The ways we make decisions are informed by the ways we are positioned, including our epistemologies and worldviews, creating challenges and possibilities. Finally, the narrative describes several moments in which my structural analysis came into tension with the decisions I wanted to make because of my relationships. Saving the analysis for the following chapter, the goal of the narrative is to provide a different sense of our shared process and the rich ways our diverse governance practices shape such everyday encounters as a community workshop.

CHAPTER FOUR: *THE VICTORIA DECLARATION*

December 5, 2018: Community Governance Gathering

The coffee wasn't finished brewing and the room was starting to feel full. I glanced out to check on the registration table and saw a line of people in the hall, snaking down the stairs. I needed to grab more chairs. I'd seen some extra chairs in the other room during a walk-through the day before. Church venues like this tend to have an ample supply of sturdy chairs. These were the kind with the wood arms and burlap-type fabric, bright orange with the feel of an earlier era, very decent, like the whole well cared-for building. Just the slightest musky smell. I asked a couple of people to help grab the chairs. Almost immediately someone came in with an electric wheelchair. Of course, I should know this, I can't pack in the chairs because the pathways have to stay accessible. Accessibility was one of the main factors in picking this venue. People know where it is, downtown, so most street community members could get there without taking transit and there's an elevator if you had to get to the second floor. But there were still accessibility issues. Another one was people not being able to hear. We had a small amp and microphone for speakers at the front, but the table discussions were the focus; the room was lively and pretty loud. In those early moments just before we started the workshop it was accessibility for wheelchairs I was focused on, while also trying to make space for the people lining the hall, waiting to get in.

The number of people we should have at our first "Community Governance Workshop" was a question from the beginning. There was a core group I knew was coming. A handful of people from the Committee to End Homelessness (or "Committee" for short), a team from the the Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region (or "Alliance" for short) which was at the time known as the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. Their similar names have

been a point of confusion for years. As Committee member and Raging Granny Alison Acker always reminds people, the Committee had the name first. Unfortunately for the Committee, the Alliance/Coalition had more capacity—and actual funding—and that name is often more well-known. We had a couple of housing workers from a service and advocacy organization for sex workers, and a housing worker from the friendship centre (which provides a range of services for Indigenous people, including a growing housing program) came with a local elder who participated in one of their programs. Staff, outreach workers, and managers came from at least half a dozen other service providers and advocacy groups, including harm reduction and health services, housing providers, and an Indigenous health authority. I didn't always know who was coming on work time or on their own time, so I would hesitate to say all those organizations were represented in any official sense. One board member from another large housing provider attended (again, not in a representative capacity). There were at least two quite distinct groups who had been part of Victoria-area tent cities, some with past conflicts who ended up surprised to be working together on this project. One person attended who had been part of a tent city in Nanaimo, a small city but another major centre on Vancouver Island, who drove several hours each way to be there. A handful of people were there from an advocacy organization led by people who use drugs.

I knew a number of these people were going to show up. The confirmed RSVP numbers a few weeks before the event had been pretty low, maybe 12 to 15. Then a week before the event, suddenly, it looked like we might have 50 in our room designed to accommodate 30, and others were asking to attend. One anxious concern, “will anyone even come?” became another: “will everyone fit?” I decided that we could not say yes to anyone else until we heard someone wasn't going to make it. I was torn because people don't necessarily RSVP for events, and when they

do, they don't necessarily show up. Over text the morning of that first workshop I had said a couple more people could come, breaking my own rule. Ultimately, we had over 60 in the room (55 participants plus seven facilitators).

In the moments before we began, my mind raced through the last-minute set-up. Food and drinks were almost out. Facilitators from the Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU) helped put spruce bows and markers on the tables—something for busy hands to hold, which can be tactile and grounding. Blankets and yoga mats were placed in a corner in case anyone needed a place to sit down or decompress. Despite yesterday's practice, the projector—crucial to the facilitation plans for the day—was not working, but we figured it out. I felt an anxious tightness in my shoulders and some lingering stomach cramps, my usual pre-event anxieties exacerbated by health issues in the weeks leading up to the event. Because of my health issues, I had asked Matthew Wildcat to step in as the main facilitator that day. I couldn't have also led the main facilitation. As Matthew put it, my “whole bandwidth” was taken up with attending to details to make it possible for people to be in the space. I'd organized lots of events, but the stakes of this one were higher than most. I had drawn on a decade of carefully built relationships to get all these people into the room. I had promised we would actually co-create a statement as a group. The results, I had assured everyone there and my supervisory committee, would be the substance of my PhD and useful to the community. At some point Matthew whispered in my ear to let others finish with the set up so I could go say hello to people. That's when I started to get energy from the others in the room. It felt kind of thrilling to see people actually show up. Specifically, so many people I knew and respected and others who I'd just heard about or spoken to on the phone. It was gratifying just to be there all together.

Then it was time to start, which felt abrupt after months of planning, delays due to personal health issues, and now being in the midst of visiting. I gave my head a little shake as if that would get me ready to address all these people I'd invited together. I walked to the front of the now packed room and started talking. First, I began with a territory acknowledgement, recognizing that we were on Lekwungen territories, home of the Songhees and Esquimalt nations; I wondered later if I should have also recognized the neighbouring W̱SÁNEĆ nations. I explained that part of our focus will be bringing Indigenous laws into our conversations about the governance of services. Collaborative governance work will require long-term relationship building and I explained that personally I did not have preexisting relationships within the local Nations. I was grateful to have had the help of others with deeper relationships than I have when I was reaching out to the local Nations and sharing my vision and intent for this work. As a result, Christina Clarke, Executive Director of Songhees Nation, would be joining us to speak later in the morning. I introduced Elder May Sam from T'sartlip Nation (W̱JOLELP), who joined us as a result of a preexisting relationship with my colleagues at ILRU. May offered the group a welcome and began her opening prayer, which included a song. The long high tones resonated through the room and the energy shifted with the startlingly beautiful and serious music. May taught us how to refer to Victoria in the SENĆOTEN language spoken in T'sartlip, and explained that she was born in Malahat Nation, just over the straight from T'sartlip, where she had married.

After May's welcome, I spoke again, and explained the context and purpose for the event so that everyone there felt as though they ought to be in the room:

Everyone in this room is either someone I know personally, or someone who was recommended to be here by someone I know personally. In this sense, this whole project

is about relationships, right from the very start. It is also about relationships because we are here to talk about how we govern our relationships with each other.

That's what I remember saying, and it was pretty close to my roughly typed speaking notes. I talked about my dream when I decided to go back to school to do my PhD—to bring together advocacy work I'd done in the housing community with my work at ILRU coordinating research with Indigenous community partners.

The consent form signing was next, and I was definitely a little worried. Even though I had repeatedly mentioned in the email and invitations that anyone who wanted to attend would have to sign a consent form, I was worried that this message may not have come through in some of the verbal invitations. Reading long legalistic documents can be intimidating for anyone, maybe especially for those in the room with less formal education. I worried that the process could be heavy or boring. On the other hand, as I explained to the group, I was going to write about what happened in that room. Everyone who decided to stay needed to understand and agree to that. Two copies of the consent form had been placed in each of the forest green participant folders that ILRU donated for the event. I asked everyone to take them out and I systematically walked through the form point by point. I had worked quite hard adapting from the university template to make things as concise and plain-language as possible, but with all the required elements it was still three single-spaced pages long. I reiterated that this project is part of the requirements for the degree and will support my thesis as well as create practical resources for downtown communities.

After going through the background and purpose of the study, I explained the study procedures which included the preliminary research and writing I'd already done and then hosting this workshop. As written on the consent form, "The aims of the workshop will be to: i)

produce a preliminary document outlining core principles and processes for the governance of housing and related support services in the downtown core, ii) build community among participants through the process of identifying shared underlying principles, and iii) introduce participants to engaging with Indigenous laws using publicly available tools developed by the UVic Indigenous Law Research Unit and discuss the relevance to downtown community organizations.” I went through the time commitment, approximately 5 hours that day, and that we would then organize additional community workshops if there was interest and capacity. There was also the option to have a follow-up interview, which would take an additional 1 to 1.5 hours. If someone volunteered to be part of the follow-up work, then we would have a number of conversations over the next year.

I emphasized that no one was required to participate. People could leave now if they were not feeling comfortable with being part of the study and they could also choose to leave later, or at any time. But, since we were doing a collaborative consensus building process, any ideas shared in the group discussions may become part of a community consensus. It would not be possible to withdraw consent to your suggestions being included in the summary of community consensus, however, you would be contacted for approval to use direct quotations.

When it was time for everyone to sign, facilitators from ILRU helped by going table to table collecting the signed consent forms. Importantly, the facilitators checked that everyone indicated whether they would like to have their real name or a pseudonym linked to their statements, should they be quoted in the research. At that first meeting, ILRU brought four staff, a law student, and a professor.

After all the consent forms had been collected, I explained that Matthew would be facilitating for the rest of the morning. Matthew introduced himself and went over the process for

the day, explaining that we would be co-creating a collective statement starting with table group discussions. Group members would be shuffled. I anticipated and was later told that people were a bit thrown by this. It was a decision Matthew and I had discussed in advance, balancing potential discomfort with the goal of convening conversations with maximally diverse perspectives within the governance of housing services. It seemed important that people not just talk with those they were already familiar talking to. To assign the new tables, we gave out randomized popsicle sticks with coloured tips that were matched with specific tables.

After a few chaotic moments, once everyone was rearranged at their new tables, I taped a large brown paper sheet to the wall. I read out the handwritten guidelines that I was proposing for the workshop discussions (“working assumptions” from the Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs, known as ICA Canada):

1. Everyone has wisdom.
2. We need everyone's wisdom for the wisest result.
3. There are no wrong answers.
4. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
5. Everyone will hear others and be heard.

Although I worried some of these might come off as a bit trite (are there really no wrong answers?), I wanted to set the tone for participation, and this was a list I’d seen work effectively in other workshops using ICA methods. Our workshop, I explained, would be participatory and start with the assumption that everyone who was in the room was specifically invited because they had wisdom that was needed to create the best results.

I asked the table groups to introduce themselves and pick one representative to introduce their table to the whole group. This was a point of uncertainty for me. Introductions are an

important way of situating oneself and others and creating connections in a shared space. They are also a community norm in many workshops or more intimate meetings. However, in a large group the process can easily take an hour or more (up to the majority of the event time).

Not surprisingly, we were met with resistance when we announced that we were not going to start with full room introductions. At some point early on in this phase of the discussions one person approached me and said people are asking for introductions. Another individual stood up and loudly asserted that he could not participate in the table groups without first knowing who was in the room. I knew there would be strong expectations around introductions, but this comment also pointed to underlying tensions in the room.

Matthew responded by acknowledging the concern, explaining that while we saw the importance of introductions, we also had to balance our ability to complete this process with the benefits of longer introductions. Our approach was a way to ensure everyone knew who they were talking to at their tables and introductions would happen with the whole group as well. Matthew's answer seemed to be acceptable, more or less. It was an imperfect approach, but had benefits: not just efficiency, but also the ability to create space for more structured and extensive conversations about where the individuals at the tables were coming from and their hopes for the workshop. As part of the introductions, we asked everyone to discuss why they were interested in the governance of housing and support services and why they came that day.

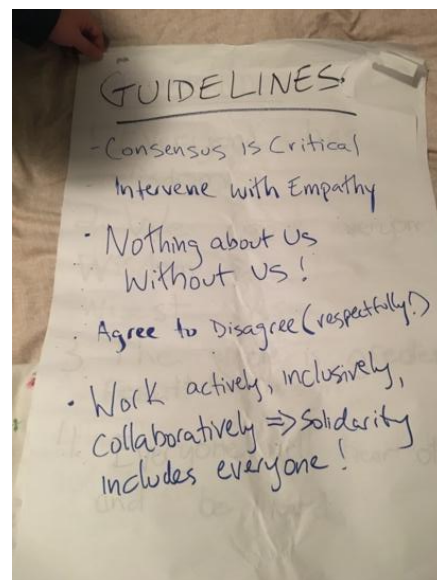
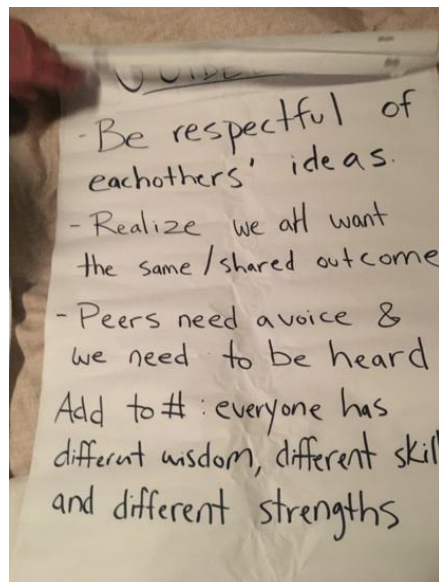
Pushing the conversation to build an understanding of positionality, but without using such an academic word, we asked the table groups to discuss where there were commonalities within their groups and where there were differences. To try and establish some common ground on the reasons we were all there together, the next questions asked participants to explain, in their own words, the purpose of the gathering and what they thought when they first heard about the workshop. From there, Matthew asked the groups to discuss what they hoped to get out of the

workshop and how we should interact to achieve these goals and respectfully work through tensions. Drawing from these discussions, I asked each table group to come up with one guideline to be added to the list I had gone over. Here's what was added:

- Be respectful of each other's ideas
- Realize we all want the same/shared outcome
- Peers need a voice & we need to be heard
- Add to #1: everyone has different wisdom, different skills, and different strengths
- Consensus is critical
- Intervene with empathy
- Nothing about us without us!
- Agree to disagree (respectfully!)
- Work actively, inclusively, collaboratively → solidarity includes everyone!

Figure 4

Shared Guidelines (December 15, 2018)



After the tables were introduced to the larger group and each table added their guidelines, it was time to break for cigarettes and coffee and cookies.

Around break time someone grabbed me away from the main room. I heard a loud banging on the wall just before I walked into the bathroom. The bathroom stall flew open. Another bang as a hand pulled back from impact with the paper towel dispenser. A man glanced up as I walked in and turned quickly to go into the washroom stall, pacing quickly back out again. I didn't fully make out what was said, something about his friend dying. "Are you ok?" I asked. He said something like, "I'm out of here," and left.

The person who had grabbed me, a friend of the individual who had left, went outside to talk with him and then came back into the session and told me he was ok, but it was hard for him to be in the room with people he felt were responsible for a friend's death. His friend stayed. This early interaction indicated the intensity of background issues going on for some people present. Indeed, at times, the conflicts in that room were palpable. While these difficult contexts did arise, the questions we were asking never dwelled here. The discussion questions were all about governance.

When we returned from the break, I spoke a bit about the kind of governance we were there to discuss—specifically, governance that is both formal (relating to people with formal decision-making roles and structures in organizations) and informal (the decisions we all make when we respond to issues such as conflicts within the community). Back at the tables, the groups were asked to discuss a few more questions, posted on the PowerPoint, starting with what the governance of housing support services looks like in Victoria, "where has it been successful, and where it has not been successful?" Then we moved to conflict: "How does the governance of housing and support services deal with conflict or where does it avoid conflict? What do you think about when you think about difficult governance issues?" Finally, we shifted to ask about

success: “When governance works well, what are the key factors behind successes? What are barriers to successful governance?”

Somewhere in these discussions, when I had the group’s attention to move us along to another question, a housing worker raised a concern with the word “governance.” She thought it sounded pretty academic and wanted to know whether there was another word we could use instead. It was a tense moment because the focus of the workshop was governance and we were pretty clearly being called out on being too academic. Looking back, the questions on the PowerPoint were definitely too wordy at times. (Literally, there were extra words that could have been removed to say things more directly.) Still, Matthew held his ground on using the language of governance. I also emphasized that it was a very important concern that had been raised and we had to slow down and talk about what we meant. We paused the table-group process and had a larger group discussion about what we meant by governance. People talked about decision-making, and the housing worker who raised the concern aptly asked, “isn’t it about relationships?” I agreed, it is about relationships. Governance is also about decision-making. And governance is also structures. That was the reason I thought governance was worth holding onto, because it is a word that manages to include all of those things. So, while I avoided other academic-sounding words, in this case I defended one. We were pushing the meaning that might be more common on a board of governors or in the public service, but also wanting to interject in these more traditionally top-down governance conversations.

The conversation transitioned naturally back to the tables. Very quickly lunch was delivered. We hadn’t yet gotten through all the morning questions, but everyone could smell the wild salmon Shepherd’s pie and bannock so we had to stop and eat. Lunch had a fun atmosphere. One street-involved participant was proudly telling everyone that Shirley Lang, our local

Indigenous chef and caterer, was her cousin. The room was loud with chatter, laughter, and a peer from a drug-users advocacy group was playing his guitar. A long-time colleague from the Committee to End Homelessness wrote down some of the lyrics in her notes and gave them to me later. “Lunch time tune: *I am living homeless and it really sucks—and I got all these government people looking after us—I got the capitalist Blues.*”

After lunch we finished the discussion questions and did the final step in the morning process: Everyone was asked to write down their main insights from the day so far, which would become the basis of our shared statement. I told everyone to think about the final question on the PowerPoint and to write down two answers on cue cards (with markers, in big letters, one idea per card). This was a prime example of where our slides needed more editing. The question was way too wordy. I realized as soon as I put up the slide and tried to read it out: “What insights need to inform the creation of a statement on principles and processes of governance for informal governance networks on housing and homelessness in Victoria?” I admitted that this could be said in fewer words. I edited the slide right there in front of everyone. I forgot to save the final version, but it was very close to this: “What ideas need to inform governance in housing and supports services in Victoria?” Perhaps more importantly, what I emphasized going table to table as people started creating their cards, was the idea was to write down each person’s main “take-aways” from the morning: the two ideas that were most important.

As I was floating around to make sure the instructions were clear and people were writing their cards, an interaction with one street-involved participant really stood out to me. She asked me in a quiet voice what we were doing. I said, “what idea matters most to you from the morning?” I noticed she was getting frustrated or overwhelmed. I’m not sure if her feelings were linked with the process or with remembering or with the actual writing. I didn’t want to put on

too much pressure, so I said it's totally fine if you don't want to do it. A few minutes later she came up to me with her two cards, one or two words on each. Even though she did participate in the end, understanding the potential challenges of trauma and memory issues, mental illness, writing skills, and English language fluency, I wonder how we could have made the process more accessible to her, and to generally avoid putting people on the spot to read or write if they are not comfortable with it. One approach would be an option of working in pairs with one volunteer to write.

The Executive Director of Songhees Nation, Christina Clarke, arrived during lunch and said she could stay for a while. She joined one of the tables while we finished this process. After all the cards had been collected, I introduced Ms. Clarke. She spoke to the group about how Songhees has been undertaking a 10-year strategic plan based on broad input from their members. Clarke explained that Songhees was facing a housing crisis. She described housing issues faced by their members—600 band members total and 400 living on reserve—and another housing issue related to the 2,000 non-members living on reserve in trailer parks. She explained that Songhees has 370 acres total and tremendous overcrowding. There is not enough land for single family homes, she said, and what is needed is extended family housing with some common spaces. To build this housing, they planned to use money raised through economic development. Songhees was using federal legislation that allows First Nations to negotiate sector-specific self-government agreements outside of the *Indian Act*. The legislation had enabled Songhees to gain more control over leasing and thereby to collect property taxes from trailer park residents. Ultimately, she made clear, Songhees would be building on their lands and single-family dwellings will not be feasible for everyone currently living on the reserve. Some trailer park residents may be evicted. She explained her concern for members and non-members

facing housing issues. Specifically, the Lekwungen values that underlie the strategic plan applied here. These values included working with good feelings (love, help, respect). The question Songhees was asking with respect to the non-Indigenous people who might be evicted is, “who is caring for them?”

Very quickly I could feel tension in the room. With half of the participants being people with lived experience of homelessness, I immediately realized some might be triggered or angered hearing about the potential evictions from the trailer parks on Songhees reserve. The same participant who had voiced his objection to not doing full room introductions in the morning stood up to comment right away in the question period. “Ten years is too long,” he demanded, “why not build housing now?” The individual asking these questions seemed even more upset after Clarke responded. His subsequent reply was about the need to address the causes of homelessness, that developers are colonizing city halls, gentrifying everything—perhaps not understanding that Songhees is not governed by city hall, or perhaps just a concern that was coming up for him regarding homelessness and development, I’m not sure. At this point things were getting heated. Clarke didn’t appear to be too rattled, but she was my invited guest so I decided to step into the conversation and asked everyone to remember the guidelines we had created that morning: we all agreed that everyone will hear others and be heard. I said I wasn’t sure if this was happening. The person who had been pushing Clarke with the questions seemed to take this reminder pretty well and the situation deescalated quickly. He nodded at me and went to sit down.

The rest of the afternoon provided one way into deeper learning about Indigenous jurisdiction and responsibility, emphasizing responses from within Indigenous legal and governance traditions. Our goals here were very preliminary: to help build a vocabulary and

skills that could support further community conversations about Indigenous laws. Jessica Asch, ILRU's Research Director, began with a very brief introduction to Indigenous law, clarifying that we were not talking about Canadian law related to Indigenous peoples (i.e., Aboriginal law) but rather about Indigenous peoples' own laws. Simon Owen, a Senior Researcher with ILRU, explained that we can understand law as stories. In both Indigenous legal orders and in Canadian common and civil law, legal cases are stories—"significant sites where a problem is recognized, interpreted, assessed, and resolved (or not)." The tools we have to resolve these challenges include applying principles and working out processes. Our existing principles and processes may need to be extended or adapted, which then adds to the knowledge we have to address ongoing and new challenges.

We wanted to demonstrate how it's possible to practise law through talking about stories, and to use an accessible story that would be relevant to the themes of the workshop (including conflict resolution and community safety). The "case" we used was a graphic novel published by ILRU called *Mikomosis and the Wetiko*. ILRU had provided hard copies for everyone, which we included in the participant packages. In one of our planning meetings, I had mentioned that I didn't want to assume everyone would be comfortable reading out loud. My suggestion was that we could have the tables go through the graphic novel together with volunteers taking turns reading pages out loud. The ILRU staff and law students at that meeting took my concern very seriously. They came up with a plan to create a voice-over video of the graphic novel page by page. Law student volunteers, organized by ILRU co-op student Liam McGuigan, recorded the narration along with all of the characters, edited it together with the page images, and posted the video to YouTube, pushing for our workshop as the launch deadline.²⁶ Their dedication to

²⁶ The video is available on YouTube: <https://tinyurl.com/2sc5ebv>

supporting the project was remarkable. Many people were flipping through their books while the video played, and the multi-media helped to break up the presentation style. The themes covered in the story were totally on topic, although with some difficult content.

While the video was playing, I went to sit down to watch at the back of the room and noticed that an outreach worker sitting in the chair right beside me had a look of consternation on his face. Perhaps it was the video content, perhaps he was annoyed about something entirely different in the workshop, maybe it was a side dynamic, or maybe nothing at all—I just remember noticing and feeling a little concerned. As a facilitator, there is a balance to strike between being very perceptive of these kinds of subtle energies within a group, and then making a call to either investigate or just let it be and see if more information arises that you can act on. In this case, I just left it, but that individual did not return to any of the subsequent workshops, so I still wonder what was going on for him.

After the video, we had a number of questions planned for table group discussions. While we knew our engagement would be very preliminary, our hope was to support community capacity to build out fuller discussions about Indigenous laws in the governance housing and support services—building the relationships necessary to do that work. ILRU Co-Director, Dr. Rebecca Johnson, who is both a law professor and a potter, brought clay necklaces she had made the previous summer as reminders of the TRC *Calls to Action* and invited everyone present to come take one as a reminder of what had been discussed that day. I knew we would be continuing similar conversations in more depth in a 2-day Downtown Indigenous Laws workshop in January, but I wasn't sure how much space there would be in that workshop, so I decided not to mention it publicly at the December 5th workshop.

When I addressed the group near the end of the ILRU session, I emphasized that there would be a follow up meeting in January to go through the cards and draft a statement based on the outcomes of the first gathering. Since we were almost out of time, I invited anyone who wanted to stay for a closing circle to stick around. Before that, I would give out stipends to Elders and people with lived experience. I invited others to leave as they wanted or needed. The point of the stipend was to honour everyone's knowledge and contributions, and recognize that those from organizations may be getting paid to be there. However, those with lived experience may need the stipend in order to attend, as they could be missing times to access other needed services or resources. The rules of my relatively small (but significant to us) university grant required signatures to confirm receipt of the small cash stipend—an amount established after consultation with a few people about community standards for this type of event. Thankfully, I had convinced the relevant university contact to allow for a streamlined process that did not require the full payment information originally requested. I was able to call the contact and explain why social insurance numbers and addresses were an undue burden in this context, especially given the relatively small amount of the stipend (compared to many honoraria). In particular, requiring an address and SIN is actually a high bar when providing a small equity-based stipend connected to lived experience of homelessness. If necessary, the address of one of the downtown social service agencies could likely be used. Still, past experience taught me that participants with lived experience of homelessness may already be navigating complex social service systems, combined with stigma, trauma, and other factors that make these processes even more difficult and daunting. So, we had agreed upon a list of names, with a signature beside each name that received the stipend. I had prepared the cash in envelopes before the meeting. Even then, the process was a bit hectic while I gave out stipends to 30 participants.

At the end of the scheduled workshop time, I remember noticing that the Committee to End Homelessness members were all gone quite suddenly. I quickly realized they had to get to their regular committee meeting, held tri-monthly in a room provided by a residential and drop-in home for people experiencing poverty. By the time the stipends had been given out and we were ready to have the closing circle, it was well after 4:00 p.m., nearly an hour from the time we formally closed the meeting. I was surprised to see that around a dozen people had chosen the wait for the circle. The tone of the closing circle was serious and dedicated—everyone who stuck around that long was ready to work together. I felt the first inkling that we might really build something together in this project.

January 17, 2019: Creating the Declaration

We planned a statement-writing meeting for the afternoon of January 17, 2019 at the same downtown church venue. I went to check things out the afternoon before. A kind and serious church secretary in her 50s or 60s met me expectantly and walked with me to unlock the room. It was a different room from our December gathering. This room had its own small kitchen, including coffee pots and oodles of thick white porcelain plates and mugs. It also had doors that opened to the outside. Despite losing some consistency, it ended up being preferable. On the 17th, Matthew and I showed up early with my car full of supplies and went to set up the room. Susan was already there with food for the event (muffins and fruit and snacks based on a grocery list I'd sent her in advance). We set up card tables facing the largest wall in the room and chatted about whether the religious images and symbols, including a large central painting of Jesus, might be a bit intense for some people. Without wanting to be disrespectful, we also needed a large blank wall space for the facilitation, so we gently moved the painting over to a less central location.

Elder May Sam arrived, and others started filing in soon after. On the email invitation, I was clear that we wanted to limit the group to those who had attended in December, so that the same group would be reviewing the cards. I wrote, “It’s important that the cards are organized and summarized by those who were there so that it’s a genuine reflection of the collective wisdom of the room.” Anticipating a smaller number of people would show up, I thought it would also be more manageable to create the statement. I made a couple of exceptions for people who had planned to attend in December, but something came up that prevented them from being there. The room was pretty close to full by the time we started. Twenty-seven out of the original 55 participants returned. In my experience, it was a very strong show of support for a follow-up meeting.

I reintroduced May, who offered a welcome to the territory and another opening song. Then I asked everyone to go around and say their names and where they were coming from that day. I chose that opening question because I liked the different interpretations it allowed. People could talk about their day, or their work, or their perspective, community, or positionality. Again, I was interested in positionality, but didn’t bother naming it as such. After introductions, I gave an opening presentation to remind people what we’d done in the previous meeting. This background information was meant to provide a measure of shared understanding to start the process of co-creating a statement on governance. I went through all of the questions that had been asked in the previous meeting, including the guidelines we had co-created for the space and stopped to explain how I define governance. “Governance is both formal and informal,” I explained, “it involves our relationships (how we treat each other), it involves decision making and responding to conflict, and it involves structures (how organizations, governments and

society are set up).” I included a few images from the previous meeting and people jumped in to point out people they recognized in the photos.

When I got to the slide with the instructions we had provided for creating the cards in December, I reminded people the responses were supposed to be one idea per card (no bullet points), written in marker and in big letters. Each person was to create two cards and then trust that the wisdom of the group would capture everything that needed to be said. I explained that there were a handful of cards that I had rewritten for clarity. I showed what that looked like by holding up an original card and the card where I re-wrote it for clarity. This only happened if the writing was very small, or in pen, or if multiple ideas were on one card in bullet points. For the vast majority of cards, I left them exactly as they were submitted.

Wanting to get people excited about the idea that we were there to co-create something important together, I made a case to the group that it’s not the statement that matters, it’s relationships. In order to build the relationships that are needed, we needed tools. That’s what this was about. In building these shared understandings between us here, while acknowledging our differences, we were trying to create a culture shift—a movement around these shared ideas.

We handed out a stack of cards to each small group and asked the tables to go through their cards and discuss them. After small groups reviewed the cards, we gathered around the open front wall and I handed things over to Matthew to facilitate the consensus-building process with the cards.²⁷ I assisted with placing and moving cards around on the wall as participants suggested. First Matthew asked for all the groups to offer a few cards which we stuck on the wall and read out loud. Then Matthew asked people to suggest pairs of cards that went together to

²⁷ For a fuller description of this method, see Stanfield (2002).

form some common idea or insight. After collecting a number of pairs, we took more cards from each group and asked for cards that should go with pairs already on the wall. Each group of ideas was stacked vertically. Eventually we had vertical lines of cards stretching across at least 10 feet of wall.

Figure 5

Consensus-Building Process



Various debates occurred around the meaning of different cards, but when I recall the card sorting process, the image that often comes to mind is of Malcolm Sword. Inclusion Team Lead with the Alliance, both wise with age and youthful, slightly greying hair, Malcolm stood towards the back of the room with a slightly bent over posture, holding a couple of fingers and a thumb from one hand on his chin contemplatively. His other hand moved vigorously while he puzzled out connections between ideas. This image summed up the exercise for me because it was hard thinking work. I remember looking at all the heads facing forward, intently examining

the wall as more and more ideas were grouped. It was almost 3 hours before we were done. When all the cards were placed, I explained that the next part of the process is naming the groups of ideas and then writing a paragraph that describes the cards in each group. I asked the group what they thought of Matthew and I taking a first stab at the write up and it was all nods and yeses. After that I made a pitch that Matthew and I had discussed in advance but were only going to suggest if the moment seemed right. I said, “what if what we have here is not just a statement but a declaration?” The group agreed with more nods. A number of people were verbally very enthusiastic about the idea of a declaration. I reminded people that we were meeting in the same room the next morning to begin our two-day downtown Indigenous laws workshop. I ended the meeting feeling quite tired, but on a high note. *The Victoria Declaration* was there on the wall in its basic form.

January 18-19, 2019: Downtown Indigenous Laws Gathering

The next morning, I left early and drove out to T’sartlip to pick up Elder May Sam. May invited me into her house to wait for a while and talked to me about the wool work she does there, including sometimes having groups of students over to learn how to make homespun wool. Cowichan peoples are famous for their incredible wool sweaters, but this time May was showing me pictures on her phone of the large wool piece she’d made for an Indigenous languages gathering. May also gave me a wool hat she’d made “to keep me warm in Edmonton” and we talked the whole drive into town about our respective families, including some challenging things. I remember feeling, through the respective sharing, like I’d been supported in an intimate and personal way that surprised me. We had intentionally asked an Elder to participate to support the whole group, but I suppose I didn’t expect myself to also be a recipient of that support.

When we arrived, I quickly saw my friend Bernice Kamano in the hall. Several people were already going in and out of the room. It was close to starting time. When May and I walked

in I was thinking, what do I need to do right away? In fact, everything was set up. ILRU staff had their materials ready to go. The tables were all in order. Susan Abells and others had set out the muffins and fruit and were already making the coffee. There was a sense of working together that stretched through the next 2 days. From ILRU there was Jessica Asch, Simon Owen, Lindsay Borrows, Tara Williamson, Brooke Edmunds, Lana Lowe, and Diana Borges. On the second day ILRU's Director Val Napoleon ran a session specifically on gender and Indigenous law.

Like the other workshops, who and how many people to invite to the Indigenous laws workshop was a careful discussion. We were able to invite everyone who expressed an interest after the December 5 workshop, but asked that everyone commit to the full 2 days. I explained when the workshop started that, unlike the other Home in the City meetings, which were all part of my PhD research, I would not describe any specifics from the Indigenous laws workshop, except to generally explain that we had this gathering and why we had this gathering. Also, people could potentially choose to share about their own experience in a follow-up interview. This workshop was about building our capacity as a community to have conversations about Indigenous laws and to try using an Indigenous laws methodology.

April 20, 2019: Community Review

Our central focus and goal remained co-producing a governance resource across various intersecting differences in background and experience. Back in Edmonton, Matthew and I spent a couple of long nights co-writing on a Google doc to pull all the groups of cards into an initial draft. A number of people reviewed the draft and suggested changes that substantially shaped the final version. Susan pointed out that, with just minor edits, the last sentence of each paragraph summed up a core principle. These statements could be pulled out and brought to the front as a summary of the rest. Lindsay pointed out that this list could be further divided between five core

principles and six commitments. As a result, the first page of the declaration is a preamble or summary that can also be read as a quick view of the whole declaration. I sent an email to everyone who had participated, inviting them to a declaration review meeting on April 20, 2019. We would go through the draft declaration and make changes as I group. I also offered to send an electronic copy to anyone who preferred to review the declaration in advance.

My collaborator, Janine Theobald, from the Alliance found out that, over and above funding support from my university for the December meeting and from ILRU for the January gathering, I was totally out of funding. Janine and the Alliance generously stepped in to support the review meeting. This was more than just much needed financial support. She also booked our group a private room at the library, and purchased, prepared and set-up the food herself. Accustomed to doing a lot of planning and running around before these meetings, this was one of the moments when I felt like it wasn't just my project in which others were participating; it was also a community project that was part of my research. Instead of organizing the meeting, I was able to dedicate my time outside of the review meeting conducting a series of follow-up interviews.

The review meeting was hard work. Thirty-five people attended. After I read the full draft out loud to everyone, there was a very positive response and people seemed excited. Then I asked the table groups to work through the document and note any areas they might want changed. Back in plenary, I took suggestions and made edits on the document in real time with my laptop screen projected on the wall. Some of the changes made the document more accessible. For example, the guiding principle “centring community safety” was changed to “making community safety central to our work.” There was a rich discussion of the first paragraph after the summary, regarding what rules we are referring to when we talk about governance. As a result, we added in the phrase “These rules may be said or unsaid...”. Section I

discusses the power imbalances that arise from our differences and focuses on inequities that arise from differences related to “race, Indigeneity, colonialism, gender, sexuality, class and ability.” Lisa Crossman, a peer support worker with the Alliance, pushed us on something being missing here related to power dynamics, and we added the sentence, “There are also systemic power imbalances between people who provide services and people who access services.”

The paragraph on policing stated, “In some cases, we will build understanding and work to improve relationships among community members, service providers, and police or bylaw officers.” I remember Kym insisting that we should add in another sentence after this: “This should happen with the understanding of a need for decolonization and decriminalization, including decriminalization of all opioids.” This was written in a context of a debate around boundaries with police.²⁸ Someone, I can’t remember who, wanted us to add in a reference to a “rights-based” approach to housing being part of the work, which appears in Section IV. For the most part, the conversations went smoothly, predictably with some people satisfied with the wording or ready for a break sooner than others.

There were a couple of issues that were tough to parse as a group. For example, we spent a significant block of time discussing the section “Who we are.” This was the only section not created out of the cards. However, I told the group that I had already been asked a couple of times to explain who the group was, and anticipated that this would continue to happen as I wrote about this work. I wanted the group to self-identify, but in such an internally diverse group, I should not have been surprised that this conversation was itself difficult. It was very important to integrate people’s different connections to housing and support services. Lisa asked

²⁸ I discuss these debates extensively in Chapter 6. For Kym, any efforts to work with police are only until homelessness is decriminalized, all drugs are decriminalized, and police and jails are abolished. Others in the group are much more willing to work with police as part of ongoing efforts to find housing solutions.

us to include the fact that people in the room had different lived experiences, including homelessness, previous experiences of homelessness, housing instability, substandard housing and so forth. Also, our relation to Indigenous communities and organizations was discussed at length. The group included Coast Salish Elders—our Elder May Sam as well as Indigenous Elders from the street community—but beyond Christina Clarke’s participation in the first meeting, there was no other formal representation from the local nations. This wording was not entirely polished at the end of the meeting, but after quite a bit of discussion, Susan suggested that I go finish off writing that part after the meeting. But she emphasized that I should include the discussion we had just had about how this could not have been facilitated without trust. I was a bit embarrassed to include this, but it was emphasized as important.

We were almost out of time. The room was clearly out of energy and there were still some concerns about the document not being quite finished. As others said during the meeting, I emphasized that the document is a tool to raise further conversations—not the “be all, end all” of all of our views on the issues it touched. That it would be these conversations around it, including about what was missing or imperfect, that would make it useful. In the first sentence of Section IV, after “This document is a tool,” we added, “and a living document.” At the end of the meeting, I spoke to the people who had expressed concerns and they said they felt it was totally different to think about this as a starting point rather than an end point. With that, we agree to release the public version the declaration (see Appendix A).

CHAPTER FIVE: APPROACHING THE HOUSING CRISIS THROUGH PRACTICAL GOVERNANCE

Songhees Nation is dealing with a housing crisis facing their members—around 600 band members total and 400 living on reserve (C. Clarke, personal communication, December 5, 2018). The central factors underlying Songhees’ housing crisis stem from settler colonialism, including a limited land base and repeated encroachments. Exacerbating this colonial history is the pressing crisis of housing insecurity now inundating the entire region. As we learned at our first Home in the City (HITC) workshop (my dissertation field research project), Songhees has developed a 10-year strategic plan based on Lekwungen values (Songhees Nation, 2017). The plan includes housing-related objectives as a step towards their larger goal of ensuring that “Songhees Nation has a sustainable land base meeting current and future needs for cultural, residential, recreational, commercial and community land use” (Songhees Nation, 2017, p. 5). To reach their goals, Songhees has planned to use money raised through economic development, such as through housing developments. Around 2,000 individuals who are not band members currently live on Songhees reserve lands, many in mobile home parks. As Songhees’ Executive Director explained to HITC participants, planned developments would displace residents from the mobile home parks situated on the Songhees reserve.

In 2018, at the first HITC workshop, Songhees’ Executive Director spoke to the group about the closure of one specific mobile home park. The mobile home park was “owned by several Songhees band members (holding a certificate of permanent interest) who partnered with a developer to build an apartment complex - with rental units... It was a private development, but it was also in line with Songhees housing strategy and it was governed by Songhees law” (C. Clarke, personal communication, March 26, 2024). In 2021, Songhees issued eviction notices to

residents of another mobile home park (Duffy, 2022). In this case, Songhees Nation purchased the 39-unit mobile home park from band members with the intent of building housing (C. Clarke, personal communication, March 26, 2024). The eviction notice in the latter case gave residents until June 2024 to leave, and required that residents either take their mobile homes with them or pay for them to be demolished.²⁹ With the looming prospect of losing their housing, the mobile home residents are turning to the Canadian courts (Duffy, 2022). Both parties, Songhees and the mobile home park residents, are asserting property rights though neither are claiming typical fee simple ownership.³⁰ State intervention to stop the evictions through the Canadian courts would undermine Songhees' sovereignty and their plan for addressing the housing crisis among their members.

This situation is a case study in practical governance and it is indicative of what many call “relational self-determination” (Kuokkanen, 2012, 2019; Young, 2000). Human communities overlap. The self-determining decisions of one community can impact another (Young, 2000). The concept of relational self-determination has been used to describe the

²⁹ The BC Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act would prohibit these terms, but does not apply on reserve land, as I will elaborate below. Songhees has jurisdiction over the land as an inherent right to self-determination. It has also made agreements with Canada that enable it to create its own land laws and manage taxation outside of the *Indian Act* through the *First Nations Land Management Act* (1999) and *First Nations Fiscal Management Act* (2005), federal legislation which allows First Nations to negotiate sector-specific self-government agreements. Note that in 2022 the *First Nations Land Management Act* was repealed and replaced by the *Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management Act* (Government of Canada, 2023).

³⁰ The tenants of the mobile home park pay pad rent on a monthly basis, but argue that Songhees has acted like the tenants “owned the land” (McEwen, 2021, para. 5). Located on Songhees reserve lands, Songhees holds “the lawful right of possession” of the mobile home park lands, operated by E George Estates Ltd, as stated in their legal filings (*McEwan v. Songhees Nation*, 2022). Songhees that acquired the interest in the lands from the estate of a band member, Edna George, through a “general assignment of leases” in 2019. In 1976, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development issued an original “head lease” to band members Edna and Albert George. At that time, Songhees passed a Band Council resolution consenting to the head lease and the head lease was registered in the Indian Lands Registry. The head lease was renewed in 1997 up to 2006, at which time it was neither renewed or replaced, which the plaintiffs note in their filings. E George Estates Ltd. continued to operate the mobile home park until all interests in the lease were purchased by Songhees in 2019 (*McEwan v. Songhees Nation*, 2022, pp. 2–3). As per Songhees First Nation Land Code, interests in Songhees' reserve lands can only be transferred to band Members or with the approval of the band council (Songhees Nation, 2011). See below for more.

interconnection between collective self-determination, individual self-determination within a group, and possible impacts on individuals outside of the group (Kuokkanen, 2012, pp. 33–34). This model supports Songhees Nation’s sovereignty in pursuing economic development and housing for First Nations community members while also affirming an ethic of care for those who may be evicted since the concept centres Indigenous self-determination and interconnectedness.

This chapter is not an examination into the economic development proposals of Songhees or about an ideal form of housing provision. In Chapter 2, I provide an extensive discussion of different mainstream and alternative responses to housing insecurity. There are contentious debates in Indigenous political circles and communities, as there are in non-Indigenous communities, about whether market-based solutions support or undermine self-determination. These discussions are relevant and inform the various positions individuals may hold regarding the present case. In this chapter, I bracket these important debates to focus on a practical governance approach to navigating the conflict. My proposed practical governance method builds up our capacity to be self-determining and to work in relation to one another. The situation demonstrates some of the value of the method because it enabled HITC participants to navigate a major tension in our work, even though it did not produce a resolution in the context of our workshops.

The key questions that this chapter asks are: What does relationship building look like when informed by relational self-determination? How does such relationship-building shape efforts to work across Indigenous and non-Indigenous housing governance responses? Long-term relationships and long-term learning are essential to build more equitable governance. *The Victoria Declaration* commits signatories to building the relationships needed to co-create

services that are “meaningfully informed by Indigenous laws governing relationships” (Home in the City, 2019, p. 1). Building reciprocal and strong relationships in the HITC project involved sharing my approach and seeking advice to shape the project, working towards learning and centring knowledges and protocols of the local Nations, as well as reporting back and sharing knowledge with participants. Our relational approach extended beyond typical knowledge sharing to co-creation—a practical exercise in self-determination. *The Victoria Declaration* was created by community to be used by community. The *practical governance method* builds up our capacity to be self-determining and also to work in relation to one another. I introduce the method and demonstrate how it assisted us in navigating a complex housing development situation.

In the first section of this chapter, I describe some key aspects of relationship-building entailed in this project. In the methodology chapter I explained that the practical governance methodology applies principles from decolonizing methodologies and specific traditions and practices of Indigenous relationality. In this chapter I elaborate on what that approach meant for the HITC project and the present case. Specifically, as the principal researcher in HITC I adopted principles that are central in decolonizing methodologies—particularly if working with a community, research process is reflexive, co-developed, collaborative, and supports self-determination of Indigenous Nations, communities, and others. Further, as in other community-engaged research methodologies and decolonizing methodologies, my practical governance methodology involved regular “reporting back” and “knowledge sharing” (Smith, 1999, p. 16). The latter, Smith (1999) argues, means including the thinking behind ideas in knowledge exchange projects while “demystify[ing]” academic knowledge through clear and direct language (p. 16).

To demonstrate how the practical governance method is helpful in the midst of deep contradictions created by colonialism, I discuss how the Songhees Nation's proposed development created tensions with participants in HITC who opposed the plan. HITC participants were neither the residents in the mobile home park nor decision-makers within the Songhees Nation, with only one exception to my knowledge. Nonetheless, HITC participants were implicated when a representative of Songhees spoke to us about the plan and challenged us with a question, grounded in Lekwungen values: who is caring for the mobile home park residents? I use my field observations as a test case for this method and suggest that practical governance offered a meaningful way through a point of tension in our work. The method enabled the situation to be raised and discussed—outside of a courtroom where the conflict would be adjudicated principally in reference to Canadian laws. In practical governance our shared purpose, co-developed prior to the first workshop, involved centring Indigenous laws in housing responses. Subsequently many participants formalized such commitments by endorsing *The Victoria Declaration*, which also commits to grounding housing responses, where possible, in Indigenous laws. Furthermore, as I will explain, Songhees has both an inherent right to self-determination, and an agreement with Canada confirming their law-making authority through the Songhees First Nations Land Code. Songhees' representative had space to voice both a plan that foregrounds Indigenous jurisdiction as well as an ethical question rooted in Lekwungen values. Participants in the group had the opportunity to decide how to respond to what they heard, voicing responses rooted in our diverse standpoints, and to talk through what our contentious conversations might mean in terms of local housing governance.

Practical Governance, Relationality, and Self-Determination

Relationships are at the heart of the practical governance method. Long-term relationships and long-term learning are essential.

Individuals who attended HITC workshops, about half of whom were Indigenous and many from other territories, came carrying their own legal and governance traditions. As a non-Indigenous researcher, who no longer lives in Victoria, it was important for me to be accountable to the specific Indigenous knowledges and protocols of the local Nations when I designed the process and imagined the outcomes of the research. I learn from decolonizing methodologies, but I am not sure whether a non-Indigenous person can lead or even co-lead decolonizing methods since they are about Indigenous control and self-determination. Linda Smith emphasizes that her work is written for Indigenous researchers, and that within Kaupapa Maori research, a decolonizing methodology she highlights, the first defining element is “being Maori” (Smith, 1999, p. 185, quoting Graham Smith). Although, she also notes there are different answers to the question of whether non-Indigenous researchers can be involved. In some interpretations the answer is “by definition, no...”; others say “not on their own, and if they were involved in such research, they would have ways of positioning themselves as a non-indigenous person”—for example, as “Treaty partners” (Smith, 1999, p. 184).³¹ Building from the work of Smith and others, my understanding is that decolonizing methods involve crucial protocols for non-Indigenous people. I do not claim that practical governance is necessarily a decolonizing method. HITC is working in a deeply colonial context, in a city, in a settler colonial country. Nonetheless, we followed protocols, procedures, and principles that I learned from Indigenous and

³¹ Kaupapa Maori research, Smith (1999) notes, must involve the mentorship of Indigenous elders; stem from Maori worldview, philosophy, and principles; and connect to “the wider project of Maori struggles for self-determination” (pp. 184–185).

decolonizing methodologies. As I discussed in the Introduction, there are serious tensions in attempting to apply learnings that support the self-determination of Indigenous communities, as a non-Indigenous person, leading the project in important respects, and also co-leading with Indigenous collaborators. Building reciprocal and strong relationships in the HITC project meant sharing where I was coming from, listening carefully when openings were offered, and not always conducting or writing about certain research where openings were not offered. I found it takes a lot of reflexive and collaborative work to figure out how I carry my shared responsibility to build the necessary long-term relationships. This reflexive and collaborative spirit is embedded in *The Victoria Declaration*: building long-term reciprocal relationships is at the heart of how we can work to co-create governance in housing services.

Importantly, *The Victoria Declaration* models how to build services rooted in Indigenous legal and governance traditions which emphasize relationality. At the same time, I decided that I was not in a position to write about certain parts of the conversations we had related to Indigenous laws: we were not invited to do so by the local nations and we did not have the community-led research, extended conversations, community engagement, review, validation, and more that would be necessary to create even a preliminary theory or statement about local Indigenous laws.

I had already been part of these communities as a community advocate for a decade prior to beginning this project, but I am also non-Indigenous and have not experienced homelessness, meaning I have both insider and outsider relationships in the community (Innes, 2009). This specific position I was in meant I knew most of the people who were part of the project. Now I was explicitly organizing workshops as part of my dissertation field research. While starting with my pre-existing relationships was an ethical choice for me, I had new relationships to build since

I also listened to the advice of those I knew regarding who else might want to be part of these conversations. For comfort and a sense of safety in numbers, it also made sense for individuals with lived experience to attend with peers—around half of the participants had experience of homelessness and many do peer support work in housing and harm reduction services. I often knew one or two people but was just meeting other individuals in these peer groups. The HITC project emerged from experiences and relationships that were both pre-existing and developed along with the project.

While I was getting ready to start the project, I had meetings with individuals connected to a range of housing and social service organizations to discuss the aims and structure of the project. At the latter organizations I either had pre-existing relationships or individuals I knew facilitated introductions. The preliminary discussions were important because they gave me an opportunity to put my approach on the table. I did not go into these conversations with a blank slate. The idea had been shaped and rooted in 10 prior years of organizing and relationship building in the community. I had learned in prior work with ILRU not to enter a community research project empty handed. ILRU researchers always do their own homework with publicly available sources and come to their community partners with some synthesis and robust questions to discuss (Napoleon & Friedland, 2015; Asch & Johnson, 2023). Although this project was different than ILRU's Indigenous law research projects, I drew on the underlying principle that offering your initial ideas gives collaborators something to respond to, add to, and correct as needed. I was open to specific input on the research methods, questions, and concepts, but really what I mainly got was confirmation that people thought the project was an idea worth pursuing and wanted to be a part of it. Individuals I met with often focused on shaping the project relationally, suggesting who else ought to be part of the proposed workshops.

One substantive focus co-developed in these conversations was bringing conversations about Indigenous laws into the workshops. After three workshops, including our 2-day Downtown Indigenous Laws Workshop, it was clear to those involved in these conversations that we did not want colonial law to be re-centred as the only legitimate law in our community. We did not make any statements on local Indigenous laws for housing. Our conclusion was only that those who signed onto the declaration would commit to doing this long-term work, where possible, by building the necessary relationships.

Reflecting our discussions of Indigenous law and governance, the first commitment in *The Victoria Declaration* asks signers to make space for services informed by Indigenous laws, but in the context of long-term reciprocal relationships. That work, building services informed by Indigenous laws, is happening. It is being led by others, and our aim was to build our capacity to be supportive of that work, where appropriate, over the long term.

A core feature of HITC was co-leadership and knowledge-sharing with Indigenous community members and Indigenous organizations. There are processes and protocols that I tried to navigate respectfully in initiating a project on Ləkʷəŋə (Lekwungen) territory. I approached the City's representative on reconciliation issues—city councillor Marianne Alto who is now Mayor of Victoria—and asked her to pass on a letter to the local Nations. I couriered a letter to Chief Ron Sam at Songhees Nation introducing the project and requesting an appointment to discuss protocol. My efforts to reach out resulted in a collaboration with Christina Clark, who attended representing Songhees as their Executive Director. I subsequently sent letters to Chief Sam to share a draft and then the final version of the declaration in 2019. I reached out again in early 2024 to explain that I was writing in my thesis about what Ms. Clarke told us and how the group navigated our different perspectives, inviting any feedback or concerns. When I was in

Victoria for my community defence, I delivered a draft of this chapter to the band office and again included a letter expressing my openness to discussing anything written here. I have not heard back. I did not necessarily expect to, but felt it was important to communicate, nonetheless. Still, I have questioned whether it is ethical to include this chapter without feedback from Songhees. Is the lack of response a sign that I am overstepping? After lengthy consideration, I decided that Clarke came representing the Nation, asked to speak quite formally in a research workshop, and I think it is important to reflect on what we learned from what she shared. I also shared a draft version of this chapter with Clarke and she was able to provide a few comments which led to changes in the text. One point Clarke emphasized in our follow-up exchange was that an apartment block can house more people by increasing density and that “Songhees continues to provide low cost housing opportunities for the region” (C. Clarke, personal communication, March 26, 2024).

The alignment of practical governance and decolonizing methods involves personal elements and collective elements. The personal elements require self-reflexivity with respect to equity and ethics. Personal reflection was essential to all the steps I took prior to beginning the research and the difficult decisions I continued to make throughout the project. Carefully navigating and reflecting on collaboration is a core principle of community-engaged research. Community-based research methods, as Linda Smith (1999) asserts, must pay careful attention to process and they must support self-determination (pp. 127–128). These are the collective elements of community-engaged research. In the practical governance method, the process of co-creating a governance resource fosters self-determination in a way that goes beyond knowledge exchange to co-creation by actually co-creating governance resources.

The dynamic I want to highlight is a shift from gathering community knowledges that are synthesized by the researcher and returned to the community towards a shared process in which collectives create together. Certainly, I also conducted research in a more traditional sense—conducting interviews, making observations, and synthesizing what I learned with primary and secondary sources. Co-creation adds to these processes something distinct. It is a shift from a personal project to a collective one. *The Victoria Declaration* is not just accessible to communities, it has been co-developed by and with community members and is being used by community members. In creating the declaration together, people with lived experience did not just offer ideas; they were core research members who analyzed, synthesized, wrote, and edited the document. This processual involvement was a practical and concrete performance of the HITC project's focus on self-determination and relationality. That is, the research method was also an important component of its outcomes. Not just because it led to a document about self-determination, but because it was a *practical* exercise in epistemic self-determination. Moreover, *practical governance* builds up community capacity to be self-determining and to work in relation to one another.

Within our focus on governance, we also expanded typical processes of knowledge mobilization and exchange that exceeded the public presentation of our findings or creating public facing documents. While we did indeed do those things, HITC was action-based in advocating with an increasing number of supporters for others to endorse and support implementation of the declaration.

Sharing the insights generated through my research as well as consistent and direct communication about the research process were both important, alongside the processes of co-creation around the declaration. I follow Smith (1999) in emphasizing and distinguishing

between “reporting back” and “knowledge sharing.” In the first instance, the goal is keeping those involved up to date on what is happening with the project; in the second the goal is to communicate insights and interpretations about the larger questions of significance to shared concerns and goals. Reporting back involves ongoing follow-up, which has happened in a huge number of meetings about the work, from more formal presentations to organizations to informal coffee dates during regular trips to Victoria as well as many phone calls and emails. These efforts focused on broad participation within HITC. Knowledge sharing is the commitment researchers have to share information with communities, including people who may not have had extensive formal education, in a way that goes beyond “surface information” (Smith, 1999, p. 16). In the HITC project, this commitment to democratizing knowledge became especially important because we were working together to determine principles and processes that could inform real governance decision-making. In addition to its practical importance for the HITC project, knowledge sharing has broader theoretical and ethical dimensions. Researchers must “demystify” academic knowledge, use clear language, and never leave out the thinking behind ideas in knowledge exchange projects with communities (Smith, 1999, p. 16). Demystifying knowledge was essential in HITC. Analyses of structural inequity, law, and theories of governance — our topic areas — often involve abstract and opaque academic dialogue.

In our first workshop, my co-facilitator Matthew Wildcat and I held onto the word “governance” even though one person said it sounded too academic. They were right—it is an academic word. Yet, we continued to use the concept and to centre it as a focus. We decided it was important to use this word because it refers at once to several elements of the project: to relationships, to decision-making, and to decision-making structures. Moreover, governance processes are often inaccessible to individuals who were part of HITC, and we were reclaiming

our place in governance conversations. At the same time, the comment pointed out that we needed to stop and discuss the meaning and reasons behind our use of governance, not only as a word but as a concept. I reflected on the interaction in an ongoing way and consulted with others to develop increasingly accessible definitions of governance to use in opening subsequent sessions with examples of what we meant by governance in our context. For example, I shared this definition at the GVCTH Annual General Meeting, when the declaration was signed by their Board of Governors: “We all play a part in governing our communities because we make decisions in relationships we are part of, decisions that impact others” (Author’s speaking notes). In fact, it was the need for constant reflection and dialogue after every workshop and in various meetings that led to the learning of what I call the *practical governance method*. Relationships were essential to reporting back and knowledge sharing, from asking for advice on who should be involved to introductions with service providers and advocating for implementation of the declaration.

Point of Tension: Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Housing Governance

In our first HITC workshop, we directly encountered a disjuncture between responses to two distinct but related housing crises—one facing members of Songhees Nation, and the broader housing crisis in the whole region. The disagreement can be boiled down to two main issues. First, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Victoria experience housing precarity, but housing insecurity intersects with different circumstances. Songhees Nation, in particular, grapples with a distinct history of colonial dispossession and a political context in which Indigenous self-determination is continuously undermined by ongoing settler colonialism. The mobile home park residents being evicted to make way for Songhees’ planned housing development also face structural inequities—such as those noted on their GoFundMe page

related to class, age, and ability—that combine to exacerbate the overall housing crises faced by all people with insecure tenure in the region (McEwen, 2021). In contexts of layered structural inequities, sometimes housing responses envisioned within Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities are incongruous, as in the case of the mobile home evictions on the Songhees reserve. Thus, the second issue is about authority and responsibility: who has jurisdiction and how should they be responding? Ultimately, Songhees Nation is asking a key question underlying the issue—since Songhees has responsibility principally to its own members, who is caring for the mobile home park residents living on their reserve?

Prior to contact with settlers, as noted by Songhees Nation (2013), the Lekwungen lived collectively in Big Houses and not single-family dwellings. The effect of settler morals and norms was disconnection from this traditional housing model which constituted a way of living: “Such a basic and intrinsic way of life, being together under one roof, is both a cause and effect of viewing family and community as fundamental to society” (Songhees Nation, 2013, p. 24). Lekwungen peoples had various winter and summer camps throughout what is now Greater Victoria and the San Juan Islands. Their economic and land base was undermined following contact with White settlers. Settlers brought disease and guns that killed many community members and led to the creation of a smaller number of Songhees villages (Duff, 1969, p. 5). With the creation of Fort Victoria (originally Fort Camosun), many Songhees moved to the Victoria Inner Harbour to trade goods and work in the construction of the Fort; several Lekwungen village sites were established in the inner harbour (Duff, 1969). One village site was in what is now James Bay. Around 1855, when settlers wanted to build the British Columbia legislature, this Lekwungen family group was compelled to moved to Esquimalt Harbour on lands that became the Esquimalt reserve (Duff, 1969, p. 5). A second, larger village site was near

where the Johnson Street Bridge stands today, directly across from the Fort, at p'áləc'əs, or Songhees Point (CRD, 2023; Songhees Nation, 2013, 2023). This site, occupied from 1843 to 1911, became the first Songhees reserve (Keddie, 2003, p. 7). The nation was displaced once again just a few decades later when the reserve was relocated in 1911 to the present-day Songhees reserve (Songhees, 2013, p. 24; also see, CRD, 2023).³² The old reserve at Songhees Point is now the site of condominiums (Keddie, 2003, p. 7). Those condos may be a cruel irony or merely the reality of intense condo development in Greater Victoria, but they are notable in the face of the current conflict over Songhees' own attempt to build condos and apartments.

Today, Songhees has 138.1 hectares of total reserve land and over 600 members (CRD, 2023).³³ Shortly after the British established Vancouver Island as a colony, the Hudson's Bay Company leased the colony from the British. James Douglas, initially as HBC Head Factor and then as Governor of BC, made 14 agreements with First Nations on Vancouver Island, including Songhees.³⁴ The Southern Vancouver Island agreements were nearly identical except for descriptions of the signers and the territory covered by each agreement. The brief texts were written in pen on a total of nine foolscap sheets, in part by Douglas at the time of signing, with additional text subsequently added in the final versions sent from Britain 6 months later (Cook et al., 2021, p. 8; Duff, 1969). The written texts describe compensation paid to the Lekwungen in

³² Some Lekwungen people moved to Discovery Island during the smallpox epidemic in 1862 and Songhees continues to have reserve lands on Discovery and Chatham Islands (Duff, 1969, p. 5).

³³ Note that some of this land is not inhabitable for humans, making the land base available for housing even smaller. Also note that a 2013 provincial land transfer deal transferred several properties to Songhees in Victoria and Esquimalt (Editorial: Land Settlement, 2013). In 2022, the City of Victoria supported Songhees Nations efforts to acquire three properties in central Victoria through the British Columbia treaty process, including one of the properties that was part of the previous land transfer (Helps, 2022; Sidaway, 2022)

³⁴ These agreements are variously referred to as the Douglas Treaties or Fort Victoria Treaties. I refer to them as Vancouver Island Treaties in keeping with the language used in recent collaborative research and a gathering co-hosted by Songhees and the University of Victoria (History, Law) focused on Indigenous and non-Indigenous understandings of the agreements (Cook et al., 2021; *Vancouver Island Treaties*, 2017).

blankets and protect the Indigenous signatories’ “village sites” and “enclosed fields” and “their right to hunt over ‘the unoccupied land’ and guarantee their fisheries ‘as formerly’” (Vallance & Foster, 2017). Oral histories dispute the written texts which refer to land purchases (Lutz, 2017). Although there are different perspectives on the agreements within Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, local Elders explain that the agreements were about sharing the land with settlers and acknowledged the responsibilities local Indigenous peoples have to the land (Cook et al., 2021, p. 5; Elliott, 2017).³⁵

Lekwungen peoples continue to enact responsibilities on their ancestral homelands, exercising forms of self-determination on and beyond their reserve lands. For example, Songhees band members have actively revitalized traditional land management in Greater Victoria, including cultivating kwetlal (camas, an important traditional food staple and trade item for coastal First Nations) that was compromised by colonial dispossession and suppression (Corntassel & Bryce, 2012, p. 158). Songhees Nation is now working with five other Coast Salish Nations to negotiate a modern treaty (Te’mexw Treaty Association, 2023). Despite these significant efforts, most of Songhees’ traditional territory is no longer under Songhees’ effective jurisdiction for housing its members. As we learned at our HITC workshop, Songhees is facing a housing crisis and has developed a 10-year strategic plan that prioritizes housing through management of their land base and economic development. Songhees’ Executive Director Christina Clarke explained to our group that the plan is based on Lekwungen values. As stated in

³⁵ In a recently published interpretation of the WSÁNEĆ agreement, Tsartlip Elder, STOLČEL John Elliott Sr, asserts that the meeting with Douglas took place because the WSÁNEĆ had threatened to attack the newly established Fort Victoria. Elliott’s (2017) text states:

There were crosses marked on paper to signify a sacredness to the meeting. And, how the newly arrived people recognized our responsibilities to the land. And, that with the new beginning that we would live on these lands with respectful relationship to one another. The WSÁNEĆ and the White people. This was to make a new beginning because there was a threat on the Fort Victoria by the WSÁNEĆ. (p. 3)

the strategic plan, these values are: “Eyē? Sqâ'lewen, with One Heart and One Mind, we commit to Help one another, to Forgive one another and to Love one another with Respect, Honesty and Courage” (Songhees Nation, 2017, p. 1).

HITC also focused on housing and upon building governance grounded in Indigenous legal and governance traditions. These resonances created a common ground of discussion between the two projects, but HITC and the Songhees’ 10-year plan had divergent goals. Their goals focus within the Nation and ours focus on building relational and practical governance for housing services downtown. At least one workshop participant, who came with a group from a peer organization, and who I did not know prior to the workshop, was visibly upset after hearing that a planned housing development would displace the residents of a mobile home park on the Songhees reserve.

Clarke made clear that Songhees Nation would be building on their lands and that single-family dwellings would not be feasible to house those living on the reserve. She explained her concern for both members and non-members facing housing issues. Specifically, the Lekwungen values that underlie the strategic plan applied here. Drawing on the values in the plan, Clarke stated that Songhees was asking in regard to the mobile home park residents: “Who is caring for them?”

A heated interaction followed in the question period. Based on the forceful verbal response of one participant and the sense I got in the room, I expect other participants anticipated the difficult implications of what Clark was sharing about the planned development. Another mobile home park was closed on Songhees reserve in 2017, and several others have closed in the region as housing prices and demand have risen (Wilson, 2017). It is possible workshop participants were also aware of tensions around those cases, in which most of the homes were

unable to be moved and ultimately demolished (Lawrence, 2018). Everyone present would certainly be aware of the extremely limited affordable housing options in the greater Victoria area (Duffy, 2022). After lengthy questioning from one HITC member, I eventually stepped into the dialogue, asking everyone to consider whether the conversation was in alignment with the shared guidelines we had co-created that morning. I welcomed debate in the workshop and aimed to hold space for everyone to share. I also carried responsibilities as a host, facilitator, and leader in our shared process. I had made careful efforts to ensure Songhees was invited, in recognition that we were working on their territory, and I wanted Clarke to feel welcome and heard. In co-developing our shared purpose before the first workshop, we said we would centre Indigenous laws in our conversations about housing governance. To me this meant respecting the sovereignty of Lekwungen Nations and efforts to advance Indigenous self-determination throughout Lekwungen ancestral homelands—the entire region—not least on the small parcel of land that Canada recognizes as a space of Songhees jurisdiction. I was also working hard to create a space in which the lived experience of participants was recognized. For about half the people in the packed room, losing one's housing and experiencing homelessness was not just a theoretical idea; it was a reality for them. Everyone in that room either had direct personal experiences of homelessness or extreme housing precarity, or had worked closely with unhoused individuals in their everyday lives. Many people describe trauma as part of losing housing and being unhoused. As the host, I recognized that the information Clarke shared might be triggering for many in the room. In our approach, these experiences are also centred as informing different political standpoints, in this case, the standpoint of some HITC participants involved disagreeing with Songhees' approach.

Since the workshop, both the development Clarke mentioned and another 90-unit housing development have moved ahead. In the latter case, as mentioned above, residents have been issued a notice to vacate, removing their mobile homes and all improvements by June 30, 2024. Some residents, who describe themselves as mostly older individuals on a fixed-income and some “physically and mentally vulnerable” without a lot of options in a limited housing market, are challenging the eviction in the B.C. Supreme Court (Duffy, 2022). Residents involved in the challenge state on their GoFundMe page that for at least some of them the eviction “definitely means homelessness.” They state:

We feel that the Songhees Nation are within their rights to conduct business and profit from the use of their traditional lands. However, we also believe that this should not be to the detriment and at the expense of their neighbours and members of their community. We have lived with them for decades. They have taxed us for all of this time as though we owned the land we have lived on, and now they have turned around to say that our homes are “worthless” and that we actually own nothing, despite decades of acting like that was not the case. (McEwen, 2021, para. 5)

In this text there appears to be an emergent critique of the colonial situation that pits Indigenous people against the residents. The mobile home park residents use the terms neighbour and community. On one hand, one could ask whether they would make a similar argument with respect to a corporate landlord that is not a First Nation. Were they treated the same as all mobile home park residents in the province? Are the tenants themselves treating the situation different because it is a First Nation? On the other hand, if the landlord was not a First Nation exercising their own Laws, different rules would in fact apply in regard to other mobile home park residents in the province of British Columbia, including mandatory compensation (British Columbia

Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2018). The BC Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act does not apply in this case since Songhees has jurisdiction over the land under the authority of the First Nations Lands Management Act, as I will explain. However, the BC government rules could presumably be informing the mobile home park residents' expectations or ambitions in taking the case to court. If this mobile home park were located elsewhere in the province, not on First Nations land, the Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act would require 12-months' notice for eviction (Songhees gave 3 years' notice), \$20,000 compensation for tenants when a park is being closed, and additional compensation if the assessed value of the home is over \$20,000 and cannot be relocated (Songhees offered no compensation). In addition, these provincial rules, which I reiterate do not apply to Songhees, also prohibit charging tenants for disposal costs, and Songhees' eviction notice requires tenants to pay for demolition of homes that are not moved (British Columbia Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2018).

In 2011, Songhees enacted the Songhees First Nation Land Code, publicly available on their website, which states that their people have "occupied and benefited from their lands and resources since time immemorial," that members of the Nation "have a profound relationship with the land and its resources, a responsibility passed down through the generations," that "the Council of the Songhees First Nation, as the government of the Songhees First Nation, has the jurisdiction and responsibility for land and resource Laws of the Songhees First Nation" (Songhees Nation, 2011, p. 4). In other words, Songhees has historic and ongoing jurisdiction over their land and resources. They have enacted a Land Code which enables them, as an inherent right to self-determination and as part of an agreement with Canada, to create their own land and resource laws outside of the bounds of the *Indian Act*. Further, the Nation has the ability to collect taxes on reserve land, regulated by the First Nations Tax Commission under the *First*

Nations Fiscal Management Act. The residents claim that they are part of Songhees' community and that Songhees has taxed them "as though" they "owned the land" (McEwen, 2021, para. 5). The mobile home park residents assert that it is unfair, perhaps hypocritical, for the Songhees Nation to displace them from their homes. Nonetheless, their feeling that they "owned the land" is contradicted by Canadian law and by Lekwungen laws. As noted in Songhees' Land Law, their profound relationship to the land since time immemorial gives the Nation "jurisdiction and responsibility" over the land. There remains, however, a question of whether anyone has any responsibility regarding the mobile home park residents. If so, who? What kind of deliberation is necessary to address this question? I do not claim I could or should adjudicate this question. I also suggest, in accordance with Songhees' jurisdiction a Canadian court is an inherently limited context in which to hash this out. Songhees' representative came to our Home in the City meeting and raised the matter, so while we certainly could not produce any resolution, we did find ourselves navigating different perspectives surrounding the issue. The context created by the practical governance method enabled these different perspectives to be shared and contested.

The forms of structural inequity facing Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous communities both involve an enormous amount of housing precarity which intersects with different circumstances. As noted, Songhees' self-determination and their land base continues to be circumscribed drastically by settler colonialism. Colonialism intersects with economic inequality and growing housing unaffordability. In Canada, housing is the central means through which wealth is stored and accumulated (Loftson, 2017; Walks & Clifford, 2015). The mobile home park residents face structural inequities, as they note, related to poverty, age, and ability that combine to exacerbate the overall housing crises faced by all people with insecure tenure in

the region. There are extremely few alternate affordable options for the mobile home park residents.

Despite these distinct-yet-related experiences of precarity, the residents in the court case and Songhees Nation respond to structurally produced crisis in different ways. Songhees' plan centres Indigenous sovereignty by planning for economic development and housing for their community members; the mobile home park residents appeal to state-centred forms of redistributive justice. The residents want the Canadian courts to step in and give them justice. From the standpoint of the mobile park residents, it is completely reasonable to presume the Canadian government should be responsible for correcting what appears to be unfair treatment in regard to these individuals' homes. In this case, struggles to address inequality in the dominant society clash with Indigenous self-determination and economic development. The situation highlights the tensions that can arise in attempting to build decolonial governance in a community of interest already committed to state-centred modes of redistributive justice.³⁶

If we start from a perspective of Indigenous law and governance, the situation requires considering the self-determining authority of Indigenous communities. Songhees Nation is exercising their jurisdiction in addressing the housing crisis among their band members. In a framework of Indigenous law and governance, analyses of the history, boundaries, and negotiation of authority are central. The current situation is produced by colonialism, including repeated acts of marginalization within Songhees' traditional territory, displacing Songhees from their historic settlements, undermining mobility around the territory, and then displacing the community from their initial post-contact reserve lands. Colonial notions of private property

³⁶ For a discussion of the incommensurability of decolonization and other social justice movements, see Tuck and Yang's (2012) "Decolonization Is not a Metaphor" (2012).

were imposed through these acts of dispossession, which created colonial property regimes (Bhandar, 2018; Napoleon & Snyder, 2020; Nichols, 2020). Like other First Nations, Songhees is navigating the “colonial quagmire” of private property—asserting longstanding relationships to land and responsibilities to land that span past and future generations, and generating income through economic strategies involving tax regulators, developers, and housing markets. Neither Songhees nor the mobile home park residents are claiming typical fee simple ownership, as I explained above. State intervention to stop the evictions through the Canadian courts would undermine Songhees’ sovereignty and the plan they’ve generated for addressing the housing crisis among their members. As Songhees has stated in their legal filings, the First Nation does not currently have “a sustainable land base to meet its current and future needs for cultural, residential, recreational, commercial, and community land use. With respect to residential use in particular, there is a shortage of Songhees Nation public housing for members in need” (*McEwan v. Songhees Nation*, 2022, p. 4). The Nation has decided to meet these needs through economic development and building housing.

Given this material context, what is a practical governance response that takes seriously the internal perspective on Indigenous governance shared by Songhees? In what ways might the broader non-Indigenous society around Songhees Nation respond to the question of who is caring for the mobile home park residents? Given the expensive reality of building housing and the complexity of governing housing responses, in the Canadian context research shows that effective housing outcomes generally require the collaboration of multiple levels of government and civil society actors (Bradford, 2014, 2020; Doberstein, 2016; A. Smith, 2022). The approach of HITC and *The Victoria Declaration* insists also on the collaboration of individuals experiencing housing insecurity (Home in the City, 2019). In the context of Canada’s housing governance framework, Canadian government actors and local housing organizations might get

involved to assist the residents being evicted. However, if the state is involved, are there ways to avoid simply imposing jurisdiction, and rather to work across Indigenous and non-Indigenous housing governance responses? Furthermore, if Songhees jurisdiction is taken as a given in this situation, as we said we would in HITC, then the available options also need to take Songhees jurisdiction seriously. The plan Songhees created to respond to the housing crisis faced by its members can be understood as a matter of self-determination. This situation may well invite principled debate within their own legal tradition and across legal traditions, as people discuss and take positions informed by their own standpoints.

A practical governance approach would engage with the governance principles of the surrounding society, which also must deal with its housing crisis, as well as the principles laid out by Songhees. This model supports Songhees Nation's sovereignty in pursuing economic development and housing for First Nations people while also having an ethic of care for those who may be evicted. We heard from Clarke, representing Songhees Nation, that they are asking who is caring for the mobile home park residents on their reserve. Songhees' question offered a way through these tensions grounded in a relational analysis and Lekwungen governance. Building relationships requires navigating tension and disagreement. When there is jurisdictional conflict, relational self-determination centres obligations to those in need but also Indigenous self-determination. *Practical governance* offers facilitated methods that could support collective conversations that make space for voicing different standpoints on the plan and ways to respond.³⁷

The non-Indigenous society around Songhees, including government actors, housing organizations, and the broader public, could be involved in addressing the housing crisis facing members of our community currently living on the Songhees reserve. The principles of *The*

³⁷ See more information on standpoint theory in Chapter 6.

Victoria Declaration would suggest building relationships with the current residents, including stepping up with resources to co-create a solution. Otherwise, we fail twice: we fail community members in the mobile home park, and we fail to support Songhees' self-determining response to the housing crisis facing their members. In the case of Songhees' plan and the mobile home park closures, as in other tough situations we faced in HITC, we were grounded by our commitment to building shared conversations about our relationships with one another. We drew on those relational commitments, and the knowledges that inform them, to navigate the intersecting and sometimes incongruous ways we are responding to housing crises faced by local communities. To move beyond critiquing current models of governance in housing services, we need to work on building alternate approaches within our collectives. We attempted to build a space that centres Indigenous jurisdiction and Indigenous laws and governance in HITC. We only just started to build our capacity to advance our aims. We did have success in building support for the principles and commitments in *The Victoria Declaration*. Responding to Songhees' principled question and engaging the concerns of the mobile home park residents could be a critical step towards implementing our shared commitments.

CHAPTER SIX: LEARNING FROM LIVED EXPERIENCE AND DECOLONIZING METHODS

May Sam, an Elder who supported Home in the City (HITC), is from MÁLEXEL (Malahat) First Nation, only about 8 kilometers as a bird flies or on a boat across the inlet from WJOŁEELP (Tsartlip) First Nation, and about 40 kilometers northwest of downtown Victoria up the main island highway. Tsartlip, where May lives and is a member by marriage, is one of four WSÁNEĆ communities (Tsawout, Tseycum, Pauquachin, and Tsartlip), who are Northern Straits Salish Peoples located on Southern Vancouver Island (Asch et al., 2021, p. 14). The Tsartlip reserve is about 20 kilometers north of downtown Victoria on a peninsula. May is famous for her traditional Coast Salish wool work and knitting, and beloved for her caring warmth (Legacy Gallery, 2023). She has been working as an Elder in Residence with the First People's House at the University of Victoria (UVic) for many years. Through that role at the university, and specifically a pre-existing relationship with my colleagues at the UVic Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU), May agreed to join us in the HITC project.

The felt connection that May brought to our meeting rooms is hard to capture in academic writing. When she sang at the opening or closing of the meetings, or blessed the food before we ate, I felt a peace in my body and saw a shift in others' bodies and faces. It was a refreshing feeling washing over when I heard the tonal vibrations. I could both hear and feel the tones of her singing land on the body. It was a lived experience. That doesn't mean one cannot try to explain. It simply might not be captured now in this paragraph.

The meaning of lived experience is hard to capture. Secwepemc scholar Georgina Martin (2018) notes that within Indigenous methodologies that draw on lived experience and story, meaning is not always understood quickly, or necessarily understood at all. Meaning-making is

possible, not inevitable, and it requires interpretation of what one has heard and learned. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 5, decolonizing methods challenge the ways knowledge has been extracted from communities (L. T. Smith, 2012). Academic researchers, predominantly White and non-Indigenous, have been told to step back and make space for Indigenous communities to lead, conduct, and disseminate their own research. Decolonizing methods emphasize processes that are respectful, enabling, and healing for communities (Smith, 2012, pp. 127–128). Such methods are rooted in Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, and emphasise communities, ceremony, language, story, reciprocity, and relationality (Kovach, 2009; S. Wilson, 2008). For example, drawing together Coast Salish scholar Jo-Ann Archibald Q’um Q’um Xiiem’s (Archibald, 2008) Indigenous Storywork methodology with narrative practice focused on lived experience, Martin (2018) emphasizes that lived experiences, like traditional stories, are used by Indigenous storytellers to teach. In HITC, we discussed stories from within specific Indigenous legal traditions and how they could inform responses to harm and conflict needed in the housing community.

The key question of this chapter is: How does practical governance learn from Indigenous and decolonizing methods and lived experience? I have already begun to describe the relationships between practical governance, Indigenous methodologies, and lived experience. These relationships are not necessarily obvious or simple. Learning from Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies requires Indigenous leadership and partnerships with Indigenous knowledge-keepers and communities. As a non-Indigenous researcher, I co-led important parts of the project with Indigenous collaborators, but nonetheless there were limits, as I will explain. We were working in a diverse community in the inner city; many Indigenous people were involved, but it was not a project with a specific Indigenous community. Decolonizing methods

centre on Indigenous Nations and communities, renewing relationships between people and land. In HITC, we discussed and interacted with Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and transsystemic governance forms. We also centred lived experience. Lived experience is commonly represented as a matter of individuals, one's own story, which is not unexpected in dominant neoliberal frameworks characterized by possessive individualism. There are situations when an individual's lived experience could be at odds with decolonizing methods. However, the practical governance method centres both lived experience and Indigenous law and governance methods.

Practical governance of housing services requires processes that enable groups to generate meaning together, rooted in diverse experiences and situated knowledges. Learning from both lived experience and decolonizing methods, practical governance situates experience both within and beyond one's own lifetime. Experience is shaped by longer histories of colonialism, by epistemic and ontological differences, and by the shared experience, languages, traditions, and governance of peoples and Nations. Victoria is the traditional territory of two *ləkʷəŋən* (Lekwungen) nations in the downtown area, Songhees and Esquimalt, which are also Northern Straits Salish Peoples and part of the larger Coast Salish world.³⁸ In what follows, this chapter describes how *The Victoria Declaration* aligns with decolonizing methods while centring lived experience. In particular, I interpret the claims of the declaration, and argue that an underlying focus was building governance from “situated” forms of knowledge, such as Indigenous place-based relational knowledges (Haraway, 2004; Thistle, 2017). Such an approach underscores the importance of collective meaning-making that identifies governance principles and processes in stories and lived experience.

³⁸ There are many distinct Coast Salish nations that speak distinct Salishian languages and live on and around the Salish Sea (which spans Victoria and significant parts of Vancouver Island, the lower mainland and Vancouver in Canada, as well as parts of north-west coast and Seattle in the United States) (Asch et al., 2021, p. 20).

Learning “From What We Know” in *The Victoria Declaration*

The Victoria Declaration approaches lived experience in a way that aligns with decolonizing methods in its aspirations. It does that by addressing experience not just as individual experience, but as experience shaped by diverse knowledges that comes from “our identities and backgrounds” (Home in the City, 2019). The phrase “lived experience” is not used in the declaration. The idea of lived experience is nevertheless apparent in the notion of starting “from what we know,” which is the title of a section of the declaration which I will quote at length:

1. WE START FROM WHAT WE KNOW, BUT WE HAVE ROOM TO GROW.

We recognize there are real power imbalances between different members of our community, which arise from our differences. These differences occur for many reasons, including race, Indigeneity, gender, sexuality, class and ability. There are also systemic power imbalances between people who provide services and people who access services. We acknowledge all of the work people have undertaken to mitigate the inequities that arise from these differences. We must never turn away from the injustices that lie at the heart of these inequities. We commit ourselves to the hard work of finding ways to overcome these imbalances. *Most importantly we believe that there is no separation between the work of addressing these inequities and the governance of housing and support services.*

We acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonialism. As a result, Indigenous peoples face significant and distinct experiences of displacement and homelessness. We believe that reconciliation will involve a substantial transformation on the part of non-Indigenous individuals and our society’s institutions and systems. We will work to

implement the relevant TRC Calls to Action. We will make space for services created by and for Indigenous peoples. Indigenous legal traditions contain important resources for responding to pressing issues in our communities. *Services can and should be informed by Indigenous approaches to developing long-term reciprocal relationships.*

We aim to build supports that are shaped by our different experiences and cultures. We acknowledge that this is unceded Lekwungen (Songhees and Esquimalt) territory, where many Indigenous peoples live. This acknowledgement should be part of our conversations about governance. Our different perspectives are impacted by our identities and backgrounds. Our perspectives also come from the street cultures created when we live in community with each other. *Through education and action, we will work to create culturally safe spaces and common ground for the benefit of all involved.*

(Home in the City, 2019; emphasis in original)

In the preceding excerpt from The Victoria Declaration, the emphasis is building governance from knowledge that stems from different perspectives, experiences, and cultures. In the first paragraph of the quoted section, the focus is on differences that stem from systemic forms of oppression. The declaration suggests that the governance of housing services ought to be focused on addressing inequities—which it lists—faced by those who access services. Addressing inequities is governance. The next two paragraphs of the quoted section specifically focus on injustices related to colonialism. Then the declaration goes on to suggest building “supports that are shaped by our different experiences and cultures” (Home in the City, 2019). One way of understanding the declaration’s claim that “different perspectives are impacted by our identities and backgrounds” is through the concept of a “standpoint” or a “situated” form of knowledge (Collins, 2004; Haraway, 2004). While dominant notions of objectivity claim to

produce knowledge that is universal in its perspective, standpoint theory recognizes that we all come to see the world through particular knowledges and practices (Harding, 2004, p. 28).

When I refer to “situated knowledges,” this includes Indigenous place-based knowledges, experiential knowledges, and the political standpoints that can be developed from experiences of injustice. Feminist standpoint theorists and Black feminist thinkers note that lived experience results in unique perspectives. However, they also emphasize that experiencing oppression, in particular, can enable a critical (and communicable) understanding of socially dominant groups and institutions (Harding, 2004, p. 7). Different standpoints make possible different analyses of power (Collins, 2004, p. 28).³⁹ Experiences of oppression are not necessarily mobilized into a political standpoint (Collins, 2004). To transform experience into a “standpoint” requires both analysis—“to see beneath the surface of the social relations in which all are forced to participate”—and political struggle (Collins, 2004, p. 37). That is, the social relations that produced an experience of oppression are not necessarily obvious, as they may be normalized in ways that make them hard to identify.

When service providers talk about working within a reconciliation framework, they often focus on colonial history and relations. The latter is important. We did also discuss colonial relations in HITC. However, we shifted the focus from only talking about colonialism to examining what governance could be if informed by Indigenous place-based and situated knowledges. The specific response suggested within the declaration is to build services “informed by Indigenous approaches to developing long-term reciprocal relationships” (Home in

³⁹ For example, some early standpoint theorists drew from the Marxist understanding that the proletarian working class have specific critical insights about capitalism as a system of oppression.

the City, 2019). The link between decolonizing methods and lived experience in the declaration is situated and place-based knowledges.

Indigenous scholars, elders, and housing service providers have widely asserted that Indigenous homelessness is caused by disconnection from “emplaced networks of significance,” as articulated in Jesse Thistle’s (2017) *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada* (p. 7; see also Rumboldt, 2022). Place-based relationality is central to decolonizing understandings of home and responses to homelessness, as I discuss in Chapter 2. In HITC, we centred insights and methods from Indigenous relational paradigms and from Indigenous legal traditions in our core focus on how we build governance starting with our relationships with one another. Learning from these wider efforts and from HITC, I argue that equitable and relational housing governance must resituate engagements with lived experience to reflect the ways experience is never entirely individual; it comes from a shared world, impacted by our distinct histories, traditions, and structural contexts.

Learning from Stories

There are resources in Indigenous stories that can inform responses to complex community issues. “Indigenous values, philosophies, resilience, and resistance” are all found in Indigenous stories (Archibald, 2019, p. 9). These resources can, Archibald (2019) emphasizes, “help ease the pain of intergenerational trauma that may surface when sharing lived experience stories, especially those of the Canadian Indian residential schools or those who were taken from families and put into mainly non-Indigenous foster homes or adopted out” (p. 9). We found this to be true in the HITC workshops. The analysis of stories at least somewhat distant from one’s own situation, as I discussed in the Introduction, enabled some distance from the difficult and complicated realities of participants’ own stories, reclaiming the “power and beauty” of the

stories “to help others learn from them” (Archibald, 2019, p. 9). We worked with Indigenous stories to think about principled responses to community issues. Collective discussions about the issues, decisions, and principles in stories and oral histories, as I will explain, is one way of engaging Indigenous legal orders (Napoleon & Friedland, 2015). Val Napoleon (2007) explains that law can be understood as legitimate because of the deliberative democratic processes it entails, and the ways it can be used to challenge injustice:

Law is one way to deal with questions of oppression and the abuse of power. If we understand law as an intellectual process that all citizens engage in, then we can use that process to enable people to tackle the uncomfortable issues in our communities. (p. 18)

Napoleon’s participatory view of law may be hard to accept for those who have experienced law as harmful and oppressive. In Chapter 7, I provide a lengthy discussion of harms caused by the criminalization of homelessness—which often entails legal measures. Napoleon not only makes the case for a more democratic version of legal processes, but she also turned it into a participatory Indigenous legal methodology, the *Legal Narrative Analysis Method*, developed with Hadley Friedland, which we used in HITC (Napoleon & Friedland, 2015). One of the most important things I learned in the years I worked with Napoleon at ILRU was that the realities of oppression can be acknowledged as context, and, at the same time, gathering stories of trauma and pain does not have to be the focus of community-engaged research. We wanted individuals to have room to speak from experience, and to create supportive and “brave space” for challenging oppressive dynamics (Brown, 2021). But we focused on the ways difficult community realities can inform new ways of relating within governance responses.

The HITC project took place in an urban context and contributed to a crucial transsystemic approach to urban Indigenous laws. As stated in the above selection from *The*

Victoria Declaration: “We acknowledge that this is unceded Lekwungen (Songhees and Esquimalt) territory, where many Indigenous peoples live” (Home in the City, 2019).

Transsystemic law comes from the dynamic interaction between different legal orders. As a result, an area of law concerning the interaction of multiple legal systems emerges, which is referred to as transsystemic or intersocietal law (Battiste & Henderson, 2021; Promislow, 2012).

As Anna Flamino (2019) writes, transsystemic engagement in urban spaces can draw on “trans-Indigenous” approaches that apply Indigenous legal procedures from distinct Indigenous traditions in “urban Indigenous deliberative space,” including protocols and laws of local Indigenous nations. Our project began from this premise, by acknowledging that there are multiple legal systems that interact in peoples’ lives. Specifically, Canadian legal systems (common and civil) and Indigenous legal orders (from different specific Indigenous societies) shape, and are shaped by, the ways people see the world; these legal orders are distinct while also having long histories of interaction (Flamino, 2019; Napoleon & Friedland, 2014). Our commitment to a transsystemic approach responds to an urban reality:

A specialized urban trans-Indigenous approach, that recognizes the importance of welcoming, diplomacy, and belonging, is required when urban staff members working at an urban Indigenous organization come from several distinct Indigenous nations and language groups, while the urban Indigenous clients are also coming from a number of distinct Indigenous nations and language groups. (Flamino, 2019, p. 159)

Transsystemic law is part of the broader space of governance HITC attempted to carve out in housing services. This intervention was particularly important because we were working in an urban context where the composition of our participant group reflected the diversity of peoples that gather in cities.

Especially in densely populated urban settings, distinct place-based knowledges overlap. People are mobile. They bring knowledges and principles with them when they move. Thus, there is a need for transsystemic conversations between Indigenous legal traditions. Decolonizing methods also require non-Indigenous people to examine the situated knowledges that shape our principles and thus inform our governance decision-making:

One of my tenets is that a society's legal order and laws will reflect how its members understand themselves and their world, their place in the universe, and others, including non-human life forms. It is our cosmologies and ontologies that determine the kind of legal traditions we create, because fundamentally our laws will reflect what we think of ourselves and others. (Napoleon, 2001, p. 164)

Different legal and governance systems are not positioned on equal footing however; there are power imbalances that continue to play out within and between colonial and Indigenous legal systems. Digging beneath the content of a legal order and laws themselves to the ways one thinks of law, Val Napoleon challenges people to consider “the ways law makes us think.” Napoleon emphasizes that all law is socially constructed over long periods of time. Internal power imbalances exist between those subject to the law and those that have the power to decide and enforce law, but also in the power dynamics between different legal orders. Efforts to engage with transsystemic law are always difficult and imperfect, because state law is so dominant and does not simply or easily give up this space. However, transsystemic approaches are also important because they are fundamental to rebuilding Indigenous governance and jurisdiction that was disqualified and disregarded by colonizing nations. Pivotaly, Indigenous legal orders also contain crucial resources for responding to pressing community issues, including housing governance issues, as the Songhees case study demonstrates.

Downtown Indigenous Laws Workshop

I have learned about Indigenous relational paradigms through years of university–community collaborations, including prior work with ILRU. Co-facilitators from ILRU assisted with planning, funding, and facilitating HITC workshops. ILRU facilitators brought discussions of Indigenous law into each of our gatherings and introduced participants to key ideas about Indigenous laws. First and foremost, ILRU facilitators emphasized that we were talking about Indigenous peoples’ own legal traditions as opposed to Aboriginal law (Canadian law pertaining to Indigenous people). They ran 2 full days with us in a dedicated Downtown Indigenous Laws Workshop that gave participants an opportunity to engage with stories from Indigenous oral histories through the *Legal Narrative Analysis Method*. The method developed community capacity to have conversations about Indigenous law and to use the methods. However, we were not in a position, with the invitation and necessary relationships with knowledge-holders from the local Indigenous nations, to engage with local Indigenous laws beyond what was shared by participants such as Christina Clark from Songhees, our Elder May Sam, and a number of participants from the downtown community who are also from local Indigenous communities.

As discussed in the Introduction, there was a tension in HITC between recognizing and centring local Indigenous traditions and building from my own long-term learning and long-term relationships. I was simultaneously conducting research in Victoria, where I had only nascent relationships with individuals in the local First Nations, while I was building and strengthening longer-term relationships with Indigenous scholars and communities on the prairies. In Chapter 2, I discussed some of my learnings in the Wahkohtowin Project, a land-based collaboration built

around traditional brain tanning of a moose hide.⁴⁰ I was invited to assist with the project because of my work with ILRU, including the coordinating role I had in prior projects with community partners in the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation (AWN).⁴¹ I was a research assistant in the planning phase and a teaching assistant during the course. In a planning meeting, AWN Elders—speaking entirely in Cree and translated by an AWN community member—suggested we should engage local youth in the course. I suggested and was then tasked with leading the creation of a photobook project (Jobin et al., 2017). The photobook was a course component for the students, who were partnered with AWN youth to take photos and co-write narrative that explained what wahkohtowin looked like in practice within the community. We received ethics approval to research and write about the process and I later co-authored an article about the project (S. Jobin et al., 2021). After the Wahkohtowin Project, I worked with individuals involved as part of the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge and the Prairie Indigenous Relationality Network (PRN). I still work closely with PRN, which has been principally led by Cree scholars though with expanding partnerships with Blackfoot scholars. In HITC we had Cree facilitators (Wildcat, Napoleon), we discussed some traditional Cree stories, and there were Cree participants from the street community in Victoria. It would be impossible to deny the Cree influence on my thinking and in HITC.

At our first workshop we used the ILRU Cree law graphic narrative *Mikomosis and the Wetiko* (ILRU, 2011) which uses a narrative that shows how power imbalances can play out in law—both within and between legal systems. This graphic narrative is a contemporary story

⁴⁰ As I explain in more depth in Chapter 1, wahkohtowin is a Cree and Métis legal principle that has been described as the governance of relationships, grounded in human relatedness, and relations with non-human beings and the Earth (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 74; Wildcat, 2018; Jobin et al, 2021; Jobin, 2023).

⁴¹ The full name of the project and the course was “The wahkohtowin Project Intensive: miyo-wîcêhtowin Principles and Practice.” We generally used the “Wahkohtowin Project” as a way of referring to the whole initiative, including the course and the related research.

available in the public domain that allowed us to discuss the colonial imposition of settler legal orders as well as critical governance questions related to community safety and gender inequity. I had concerns about accessibility when it came to reading the text. After I shared my concerns at a planning meeting, several ILRU co-op students created a video, voicing over the images on the pages of the graphic narrative. The students pushed to “launch” the video online in advance of the HITC workshop, amid the pressing schedule of their law school course work.⁴²

The story of *Mikomosis and the Wetiko* begins with a Cree community facing starvation in an especially harsh winter. A young girl is abused by her mother, Sapwastee, and later Sapwastee is killed by another community member, Mikomosis, at the request of community elders who believe she has become a wetiko. In Cree and Anishinabek stories, a wetiko (or windigo) is sometimes defined as a cannibal, or a being with a heart of ice. Legal scholar Hadley Friedland explains that a wetiko can be understood as a Cree legal concept that refers to someone who has become harmful (Friedland, 2018). The narrator tells us that Mikomosis has implemented a decision made according to Cree law. He is executed by the “red coats” (Northwest Mounted Police) who want to make a lesson of him to demonstrate that colonial law is paramount.

To provide a sense of the kind of work we did using the *Legal Narrative Analysis Method*, I will describe the session we did using ILRU’s Cree law graphic narrative, *Mikomosis and the Wetiko*. We drew from the *Mikomosis and Wetiko Teaching Guide* created by ILRU, but I also adapted the questions to our theme. In particular, I added questions from the ILRU (2016a) *Gender and Indigenous Law Toolkit*, as well as a couple of questions in line with the ICA Focused Conversation Method, which I describe in detail in Chapter 3. This method involves intentionally asking questions in four sequential phases: questions that establish facts and

⁴² The video is available on YouTube: <https://tinyurl.com/v8372fvr>

background information, then moving through reflection and making connections to personal experience, then interpretation, and then decisions (determining whatever outcome or conclusion makes sense for a given conversation).⁴³ These were the discussion questions and steps:

Mikomosis and the Wetiko Workshop Questions

1. What is the main idea or issue in the story?
2. What kind of reaction, positive or negative, did you have to the story?
3. Who were the decision-makers and what decisions did they make? What reasons did they give for their decisions?
4. What are the messages about women in the novel? What might this story look like if told from Sapwastee's perspective?
5. What are the responses to harm in the novel? What other responses to harm would you suggest? Who should be included in deciding how to respond when someone is harmed?
6. Write your answers to Question 5 on the flip chart paper. Pick a group member to share your answers to with the larger group.

These questions cover the basic components of the *Legal Narrative Analysis Method* developed by Hadley Friedland and Val Napoleon, but with personal reflection added at Step 2 and questions about gender explicitly added at Step 4. I can't remember if groups actually got to the final step, writing answers to Step 5 on the flip chart. In any case, the point was to have these conversations. We wanted to introduce not only the concept of Indigenous peoples having their own legal and governance systems, but also to give the group a chance to think in a participatory way through a specific "case," involving both Cree law and the interaction between Indigenous laws and colonial laws.

⁴³ See Canadian Institute for Cultural Affairs (2018).

Mikomosis and the Wetiko is a story about community safety and how a community responds when a person has become violent. In this case, the woman was harming herself and others. At the same time, a decision made within Cree law is later punished under Canadian law. The story describes harms caused by colonialism. We used the case to centre a conversation about gender, including violence against women. Using questions from ILRU's (2016b) *Gender and Indigenous Law Toolkit*, we discussed the ways law is gendered—meaning that, gender impacts different experiences of the law and legal decision-making. Using facilitated methods, we directed our community conversations towards thinking about principled processes and responses, including critical conversations about the responses within both legal systems and the challenges that arise when legal systems themselves are in conflict.

As I described in the narrative, ILRU's Co-Director, Dr. Rebecca Johnson, offered everyone clay necklaces she had made as reminders of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) *Calls to Action* and our workshop session on Indigenous laws. On at least two occasions since I have been walking downtown Victoria and encountered individuals from the workshop wearing these necklaces. Both showed me their necklaces without any prompting and assured me they remembered where they came from.

We spent 2 full days doing similar work at the Downtown Indigenous Laws workshop drawing on Indigenous oral histories using a set of Cree and Dene stories offered by the ILRU facilitators (who included Cree, Dene, Anishinaabe, Māori, and non-Indigenous individuals). While we knew our engagement would be very preliminary and not grounded in local traditions, our hope was to support community capacity to have fuller discussions about Indigenous laws in the governance housing and support services—especially building the relationships necessary to do work grounded in local Indigenous laws.

One of the distinct aspects of this workshop and our process generally was the focus on governance and decision-making in and through our work. The idea was not to gather information so that others could use it to make decisions for the community, but to build capacity to support communities in articulating their own governance principles, to make decisions based on those principles within the community, and to advocate together for decisions based on those principles.

In HITC, one way we enacted decolonizing methods involved conversations about lived experience, where we each come from, including the ways experience is shared and involves collectivities.⁴⁴ The Cree law graphic narrative and all the stories we discussed were introduced as stories of peoples and nations. They say a lot about human behaviour and human issues, and those from outside that worldview may see something they can understand or learn within them. But it is important to acknowledge that the principles and the teachings come from within each specific Indigenous tradition. When one draws meaning from experience those insights are often rooted in our communities, traditions, and nations.

This is the shortest core chapter in my dissertation. That makes sense because I decided not to write anything specific about local Indigenous laws for housing. Although this was discussed early on as a component of the project that would make sense given the involvement of ILRU, I decided in conversation with my collaborators at ILRU that it was beyond my capacity. I started with my relationships and this project made sense from where I was positioned, but a focus on the relevant Indigenous laws in this context would require the right relationships and partnerships with local nations and knowledge holders, not to mention a much longer timeline. In

⁴⁴ Collectivities can be more formal, such as First Nations and other governments, or less formal, such as HITC and other advocacy and housing groups. See Chapter 2 for more on the range of formal and informal governance systems we engaged in HITC.

fact, others are leading such work at time of writing. I continue to have conversations about similar long-term work and what procedural steps might be necessary, including local protocols, and the need for the right invitations and partnerships with knowledge keepers. My relationships, my invitation to work in the community, and my university ethics approvals were insufficient to write about Coast Salish laws. Even with all the right relationships, there are incredibly rich and complex debates around who, when, and how one can write about local stories—debates that I decided simply fell too far outside of the scope for this particular project. We were already tackling a lot with the diverse group we were bringing together to co-create a governance resource. So, as I noted in Chapter 1 and explained to participants at the opening of the gathering, I am not going to write about the content of our Downtown Indigenous Laws Workshop. This choice felt important for many reasons, including to assure participants that they were not being “researched” while endeavouring to engage with content that was brand new to many in the room. My decision was also in line with a politics of refusal that supports the self-determination of the local Nations, and in the absence of an invitation to do so.

I can say, however, that the workshop led to incredible transformations within our community in HITC. People who I had never seen speak in meetings, spoke proudly of their Indigenous backgrounds and how they connected to the stories we discussed. Others called me later and to say how amazing the session was, and one Indigenous participant specifically emphasized the idea that everyone there got to be “honorary lawyers” for the day (something Napoleon told the group). I saved the voice mail and have permission to share some of it here:

Ah good evening Renee. It's _____ calling....

I was just reflecting on the fellow facilitator on the second day happily announcing that we were honorary lawyers, holy cow! That was so cool to hear. Anyway

that was very very verrry inspiring, those kind of sessions. We need more of that. That was a very good time out for me to stay grounded, as much as possible.

....

Anyway, just, thank you thank you thank you, for making me an honorary lawyer, all of us. Thank you. Okay, bye. (Personal communication, January 20, 2019)

Chrissy told me in her follow-up interview how there were people at the Indigenous law workshop who spent multiple days together that had previously been issuing death threats to others in the room, and even hugged at the end. For Chrissy, the work with ILRU restated and reinforced assertions she had been making around the significance of Indigenous law in encampments and in the housing solutions needed. Here is what she said about HITC and the ILRU training we did:

I think it was the way you were able to bring governance in as something that we all have and explaining it to other people way better than I do about. And how ILRU teaches how those governance structures are different and that it then allows things that I've been saying for years to be validated (Chrissy Brett interview, April 2019)

I also made it clear that I would describe the methods and tools that we used and explain their significance within the project as a whole. Thus, in this chapter, I've described our work with ILRU's publicly available graphic narrative, *Mikomosis and the Wetiko*.

Still, as a project on governance, I also felt strongly that I could not simply ignore the central significance of Indigenous law and governance on the territories we worked. It was important for Christina Clarke to come and speak to us about how Songhees Nation's strategic plan builds from Lekwungen values and governance. It was important for my co-facilitator Matthew Wildcat to discuss his work on "relational governance"—how First Nations co-govern services together (Wildcat, 2020). And, it was important for me to partner with my former

colleagues from ILRU in bringing Indigenous laws into our conversations about housing. Ethically and politically, it was still important to centre conversations and capacity building related to Indigenous laws, as we did in sessions at every HITC gathering. These conversations informed the final outcome, *The Victoria Declaration*, as I noted in the opening to this chapter.

Practical governance requires reckoning with the critiques of knowledge production advanced by Indigenous scholars and communities. I do not necessarily claim that practical governance is a decolonizing method, but I would strongly assert that practical governance learns from and aligns with decolonizing methods. In a truly decolonized setting, I do not necessarily claim that practical governance is a decolonizing method, but I would strongly assert that practical governance learns from and aligns with decolonizing methods. In a truly decolonized setting, these lands, we might say Turtle Island (though likely in an Indigenous language) would be fully governed within an Indigenous legal and political order. Practical governance is an intervention in deeply colonial settings, which creates limits, and there are specific limits to what I can do ethically as a non-Indigenous researcher. Still, practical governance learns from both decolonizing methods and lived experience. In my own learning from decolonizing methods, applied within practical governance, the principles that matter most include reciprocal partnerships with Indigenous peoples, stepping back (e.g., as a non-Indigenous scholar in particular, when an invitation to partnership is not there), responsibility to communities, reporting back and knowledge sharing, Indigenous jurisdiction and self-determination, and learning from Indigenous stories and lived experience. Practical governance is an intervention in deeply colonial settings, which creates limits, and there are specific limits to what I can do ethically as a non-Indigenous researcher. Still, practical governance learns from both decolonizing methods and lived experience. In my own learning from decolonizing methods, applied within practical governance, the principles that matter most include reciprocal

partnerships with Indigenous peoples, stepping back (e.g., as a non-Indigenous scholar in particular, when an invitation to partnership is not there), responsibility to communities, reporting back and knowledge sharing, Indigenous jurisdiction and self-determination, and learning from Indigenous stories and lived experience.

Conclusion

I picked May up at her home before one of the Downtown Indigenous Laws Workshop days. We shared a moment of personal connection when I explained why I had cancelled the first workshop date we had booked with her (and in fact everyone and everything had been booked and cancelled). I was having one of a number of miscarriages I experienced during the most intensive phase of the HITC project. May gently held space for the emotional and physical pain I was juggling with relational and research obligations involving over 70 participants and co-facilitators in HITC. I thought May was coming to support others at the workshop, not me. I was a bit embarrassed to receive her support myself. But she shared from her own experience as well and there was a felt connection that resulted from the honest exchange. May gave me a hat she knit, with wool she pulled, to keep me warm back home in Edmonton. May also connected with HITC participants by sharing about how homelessness has impacted her family. Our connection and our sharing of personal experiences reminded me that everyone can encounter hard times and may need the support of others. The underlying principle for me was mutual aid and the importance of building community for the benefit of everyone involved.

In HITC we connected learning and meanings drawn from our personal experiences with knowledges drawn from our respective communities, backgrounds, and nations. In doing so we learned from decolonizing methods and lived experience. While we were unable to engage robustly with Coast Salish laws, what we did achieve was building a conversation around the importance of doing just that. The first commitment in *The Victoria Declaration* reflects this

understanding—it is necessary to build services, where possible, based on Indigenous laws governing long-term reciprocal relationships. The caveat “where possible” indicates real limits: where these relationships are today. In this project we only scratched the surface. We built community capacity to support future work. At the time of writing, that work—building housing services informed by Coast Salish laws—is happening. It is being led by others. Our aim was to build our capacity to be supportive, where appropriate, over the long term. We were able to honour the situated knowledges that participants brought from lived experience and from their diverse backgrounds. Articulating situated knowledges is complex and goes beyond individual experience to the ways lived experience is shaped by the historic and contemporary stories of collectivities and Nations. To then incorporate the knowledges we draw from lived experience into governance decision-making, as I explain in the next chapter, creates other challenges, because governance contexts themselves are already predicated on systemic inequities.

CHAPTER SEVEN: LIVED EXPERIENCE IN INEQUITABLE CONTEXTS— BALANCING STRUCTURES AND RELATIONSHIPS

It is increasingly common to hear about “lived experience” in the context of housing and support services. Building on other experiential knowledge, self-help, and survivor movements, Sadie Parr (2022) argues that there is now a “lived experience movement” in social policy literature (Al-Hamad, 2019; McIntosh & Wright, 2019; Michener et al., 2022). Lived experience, Parr writes, is about “living through” (p. 2). The idea is that one has lived through something difficult and has a specific kind of knowledge that comes from proximity to the event.⁴⁵ The principle behind including lived knowledges has a longer history rooted in grassroots movements, which have asserted that those affected by policy and programs should be part of every piece of related research, policy development, and program implementation (Pauly et al., 2011).⁴⁶ While policymakers and service providers acknowledge they should include lived experience, they struggle to do this in practice. Governance contexts are rife with inequities among the stakeholders, and these inequities shape how lived experience informs policy and programs.

When inclusion is only tokenism, inclusion of structurally disadvantaged groups into governance contexts can reproduce structural inequity that such inclusion was meant to overcome. Tensions between stated commitments and substantive inclusion produces a policy challenge that is evident in Canada’s current and previous national homelessness strategies. The

⁴⁵ For example, Linda Alcoff’s (1991, 2018) writing about experience, as a survivor of sexual violence, focuses on proximity to events as an opportunity for interpretation and explanation.

⁴⁶ This principle has been asserted by disability justice movements (Eales & Peers, 2020; Erevelles, 2022), HIV/AIDS activists (UNAIDS, 1999), substance user groups (Mercer et al., 2021; Canadian Association of People Who Use Drugs [CAPUD], 2021), and people with “lived or living experience” of homelessness (Neufeld et al., 2019; Boilevin et al., 2019; Paradis et al., 2012).

current strategy, *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy*, and the report on the final evaluation of the previous strategy, the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy*, both indicate a serious gap between the increasing acknowledgement that there is a need to meaningfully involve people with lived experience, and their actual involvement (ESDC, 2018b, 2020). In the final evaluation of the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy*, every reference to lived experience identifies instances where people with lived experience (PWLE) were not included in policy planning and implementation, and recommends stronger directives to increase representation, as found in *Reaching Home* (ESDC, 2018b, 2020). The latter, which is entirely implemented by designated community entities that distribute national funding—usually a municipal government or non-profit—suggests that there are varied opportunities to include PWLE. However, the report on the previous strategy states that only 47% of communities had representation from one or more PWLE on their advisory board (ESDC, 2018b, p. 21). As explained in Chapter 1, the former *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* and now *Reaching Home* are the core federal housing strategies in Canada. The evaluation of the former strategy is just one publicly documented instance of what I observed and heard about extensively in my community-engaged research, the Home in the City (HITC) project. Service providers struggle to substantively include PWLE in ways that are not tokenistic, alienating, or worse.

This chapter responds to a final key question drawn from my research: How can lived experience of structural inequity inform governance contexts? Three sets of reflections structure the chapter: practical, political, and epistemic. I begin my practical reflections by examining a specific form of structural inequity, the criminalization of homelessness. Learning from a conflict around the inclusion of police in the HITC workshops, I describe tensions that can emerge between one's relationships and one's structural analysis. I use the *Legal Narrative*

Analysis Method to examine the situation (Napoleon & Friedland, 2015). I emphasize the need for both deliberation and disagreement in practical governance, as we learned in co-creating *The Victoria Declaration*. Many governance contexts are predicated on and reproduce structural inequity. Inclusion is often inattentive to power dynamics. Sometimes boundaries are important to ensure safer spaces for equity-deserving groups, and thus, inclusion doesn't necessarily mean including everyone all the time. The practical governance responses that I suggest require transforming governance spaces, responding to trauma and harm, and challenging tokenistic representation. In my political reflections, I argue that practical governance researchers need to balance structures and relationships in decision-making. Collective processes support collective interpretation of experience, including experiences of oppression, and the meaning that experience could have for governance contexts. Finally, at an epistemic level, I contend that disagreements over practical decisions underscore the importance of transparent processes of collective interpretation, meaning-making, and decision-making. Processes of meaning-making that centre lived experience may lead to better knowledge, but more importantly, they support more equitable governance and better relations.

Practical Reflections

The Criminalization of Homelessness—One Form of Structural Inequity

Representation of people with lived experience on Community Advisory Boards is indicated in the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* evaluation as “one or more person” (ESDC, 2018b). The contested and power-laden aspects of lived experience are missing altogether. PWLE are simply added to a list of stakeholders along with groups such as police and landlords (ESDC, 2018b, pp. 22, 37). The structural context that matters here, in particular, is one in which homelessness is systemically criminalized. In this section, I provide a detailed explanation of the

criminalization of homelessness, suggesting this is matter of structural inequity involving intersectional systems of oppression, including systemic racism and colonialism. I am not suggesting that groups with unequal power should not collaborate. Nick Falvo (2020) writes about a challenge exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic where individuals have been released from custody without adequate planning for housing support services. There are certainly contexts where it makes sense for housing and support services to connect with police and correctional services and with landlords, including to facilitate access to housing. My point is that service providers and social policymakers recognize they should include people with lived experience in governance in principle, but they often fail to do so in practice precisely because they do not account for the ways governance contexts themselves can reproduce structural inequity. Thus, it is essential to understand structural forms of inequity.

The criminalization of people experiencing homelessness is well documented and involves a range of laws and policing practices that specifically target the activities and movements of unhoused individuals, “not so much for what they do, but for *who* they are and *where* they are” (O’Grady et al., 2011, p. 21). A study on the policing of youth homelessness in Toronto found that “homeless youth receive an inordinate amount of attention from police,” with 78% of 244 homeless youth respondents reporting encounters with police, the vast majority of which the youth perceived as harassment “due to the fact that they are young and homeless” (O’Grady et al., 2011, p. 11). Criminalization tends to occur when individuals occupy public spaces while visibly living in poverty and/or using public space in distinct ways because of lack of access to private space; that is, as a result of social exclusion. Key mechanisms of the criminalization of homelessness include discriminatory enforcement of pre-existing legal measures in ways they would not generally be applied to housed individuals, new laws and

statutes that constrain the activities of people experiencing homelessness such as panhandling and sleeping in public space, changing the physical environment to restrict the public use of space (i.e., installing park benches that don't allow people to lie down), targeted surveillance meant to make it more difficult to inhabit public and semi-public spaces, incarceration of people who are homeless (due to discriminatory enforcement, inability to pay for bail and inadequate access to legal representation), and discharging people from custody without planning and supports, increasing the likelihood of homelessness and further contact with law enforcement and reinforcing a reciprocal relationship between prison and homelessness (O'Grady et al., 2011, p. 21).

Criminalization must be understood as part of a broader socio-political context, not limited to the actions of people who are homeless, or the actions of individual police officers (O'Grady et al., 2011, p. 14). This larger context reveals conflicts over citizenship: which citizens and what activities are permitted or restricted in public and semi-public spaces and who has the ability to influence relevant policy and police practices (O'Grady et al., 2011, p. 14). All of the mechanisms of criminalization are intertwined with political discourse, media representation, and public perceptions that frame homelessness as a dangerous form of disorder that threatens the safety of the general public (O'Grady et al., 2011, p. 27). Moreover, research shows that the association of marginalized populations with social disorder tends to increase where there is a decline in both social and welfare supports and in the incomes of middle- and lower- income earners (O'Grady et al., 2011, p. 14). In other words, societal and political structures shape the ways unhoused individuals are treated in relation to housed individuals, including other people living in poverty.

When public safety measures are enacted based on stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness—often assumptions about who is dangerous and criminal—this is social profiling (O’Grady et al., 2011, p. 22). As the O’Grady et al. (2011) study notes in the experience of Black and Indigenous homeless youth, the ways individuals are “singled out for greater scrutiny or differential treatment” based on a social condition such as homelessness can occur in combination with stereotypes about race, resulting in intersectional impacts of social and racial profiling (O’Grady et al., 2011, pp. 12, 22). The racialized policing of homelessness, as Freistadt (2016) asserts, is not just a matter of individual officers’ biases, and not just a matter of homelessness being more common among specific racialized communities. If this is the limit of one’s analysis, it is easy to explain high levels of police contact as corresponding to who becomes homeless, and racial identity can be understood as incidental as long as police officers are not prejudiced. In fact, at the intersections of policing, homelessness and race are distinct experiences. The intersectional harms of criminalization are rooted in “ongoing socio-economic, spatial, and colonial processes that policing both reflects and perpetuates” (Freistadt, 2016, p. 69). In other words, systemic racism in policing goes beyond intentionality and individual bias and instead describes how policing reproduces racial inequalities (Freistadt, 2016, p. 70). Freistadt’s research describes racialized policing in Edmonton based on the stories of 22 individuals experiencing homelessness. All but one of the Indigenous individuals in the study reported that police officers occasionally or regularly transported them to the northeast end of the downtown inner-city, to the “north-side” McCauley and Boyle Street neighbourhoods with the lowest incomes and highest violent crime rates in the city as well as the majority of the city’s homeless-serving agencies. The remaining individual stated that he generally went to the north-side anyway when not busking downtown. Although it is important to note that many residents are deeply connected to and proud of these neighbourhoods, the research participants reported

feeling safer and wanting to remain in the Edmonton's downtown district (also on the "north-side" of the large North Saskatchewan River which divides the city) and Whyte Avenue (a "south-side" neighbourhood) where they lived. It is accepted police practice to relocate intoxicated individuals to shelters, Freistadt explains, but these drop-offs also took place when individuals were not intoxicated and were accompanied with assertions that the individuals ought not return to the affluent consumer spaces where they had been hanging out or panhandling. Underscoring the racialized dimension of this practice of dislocation, white individuals experiencing homelessness reported being allowed to stay in the Whyte Avenue and Downtown areas, with only one white man describing a similar experience of being dropped off near the north-side shelters (Freistadt, 2016, pp. 72–76). Freistadt argues that urban development agendas are complicit in this racialized police practice with their focus on developing specific areas around consumption and leisure, while concentrating homeless-serving organizations in other areas, with the Boyle–McCauley area having both the largest concentration of shelters (p. 80).

Both continuity and change are evident in the criminalization of homelessness in different places and time periods. For example, Eric Goldfisher (2019) describes how the policing of homelessness in New York City shifted as city officials changed their language from referring to "encampments" to "homeless hotspots." Whereas encampments were identified by infrastructure, such as tents and tarps, "hotspots" were defined in police memos as areas where "two or more people gather without a structure." Although this could describe anywhere housed people gathered, the policy was enforced, mainly through issuing more "move along" orders, based on a visual politics of "looking homeless" linked to community complaints (p. 1563). In gentrifying neighbourhoods there was more enforcement of "hotspots" and thus Goldfisher notes that there is a relationship of co-production between financialized housing and homelessness,

making homelessness more visible in distinguishing “homeless people from housed people in nearly identical uses of public space” (pp. 1560–1561).

Some policing practice may arguably increase the visibility of homelessness. However, the literature on policing of homelessness more often focuses on the exclusion of unhoused people from public space and on removing the visibility of “disorder.” This is especially the case in so-called “prime” urban spaces, spaces that are desired for economic development and investment. On the other hand, Forrest Stuart (2014) argues that in “marginal” urban spaces, policing may be better understood in terms of “recovery management.” Observed during field work in an area of Los Angeles characterized by extensive visible homelessness and a concentration of “mega shelters,” this disciplinary mode of policing focuses on modifying behaviour within the area rather than excluding individuals from the area, “curtailing opportunities for improper conduct and compelling homeless people into social services and recovery programmes” (p. 1921). Like other forms of criminalization, officers selectively enforce existing ordinances, in this case, increasing the use of citations and other “punishments” the longer individuals resist shelter and rehabilitation services. Other mechanisms include issuing move-along orders that are supposed to prevent individuals from settling in one place to use illicit substances, and limiting access to resources not tied to the local mega shelters (including ticketing outsiders who attempt to provide assistance such as meals or clothes) (pp. 1918–1920). While officers cannot force people into the shelter programs, they use available ordinances with significant discretion to “indirectly compel” people into shelters and services (p. 1918).

According to Chris Herring (2021), Stuart’s focus on the ways punitive law enforcement is used to discipline individuals into accepting therapeutic services misses the ways shelters are themselves used as tools to increase the criminalization of homelessness. Based on his own

extensive ethnographic field work in San Francisco, Herring contends: “shelters are not simply welfare *ends* in and of themselves but, rather, essential *means* toward increasing police repression” (p. 267; emphasis in original). Herring found that offers of shelter space were not “aimed at rehabilitation,” but instead a way to dislocate and dispossess, especially to get rid of tents and highly visible homeless encampments. Following the ground-breaking 2018 U.S. federal court ruling, *Martin v. Boise*, police are required to offer shelter to an individual before they enforce an ordinance against sleeping or camping in public (p. 270).⁴⁷ As a result, Herring observed that a series of new shelters in San Francisco, initially oriented around low barrier entry and facilitating transitions into permanent supportive housing, were increasingly accessed through referrals from police rather than outreach workers, and offered increasingly brief stays not tied to longer-term housing. Moreover, when police offered these one night to one week stays at the shelter, individuals were required to give up all their belongings except a backpack. The removal of tents and increased police presence in the areas surrounding the shelter produced a public facing image of a successful social policy, represented by officials primarily as a matter of increased cross-sector coordination in the interest in public health and sanitation, but in fact led at the top by a police commander (p. 276–278). Whereas the growth of shelter and other welfare-based responses to homelessness are usually represented as developments that exist in parallel or contrast to punitive policing responses, this case identifies a “symbiotic relationship” in which “increased welfare provision comes to support the intensified punishment of the poor” (p. 279). Both policing and services become what Herring describes as “complaint-oriented,” with success measured in appeasing the demands of businesses and housed residents and

⁴⁷ The ruling states that if there is an inadequate number of shelter beds available for individuals experiencing homelessness, prosecuting individuals for sleeping or camping in public violates their Eight Amendment rights against cruel and unusual punishment.

reducing visible poverty and homelessness (p. 280). More research would be necessary to make any strong claims regarding how these results apply in Canada. However, research in Victoria and Vancouver has consistently pointed to discriminatory policing, including social and racial profiling; the privileging of housed residents' perceptions of safety over those of unhoused residents, and; unlawful arrests, searches, and seizure of property of unhoused individuals (Howard et al., 2002; Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group [VIPIRG], 2012)

This discussion introduces just a few of the many complex and intersecting dimensions of the background conditions within and against we were trying to build alternative modes of governance in the local housing community. This context goes beyond interpersonal relationships, but it also impacts them. The legislated role of police entails inherent power imbalances that shape relationships and outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. In other words, relationality exceeds individual relationships. Power relations between people and property produce particular understandings of and access to public and private space (Easthope et al., 2020). Relations between financialized housing and homelessness increase the visibility and policing of homelessness (Goldfisher, 2020); responses that criminalize homelessness can impact and even appropriate welfare-oriented services (Herring, 2021); and colonial relations create conditions in which Indigenous peoples can be homeless on their own territories and subject to racialized policing (Freistadt, 2016; Thistle, 2017). All these structural relations put pressure on relationships in communities, making some interactions uncomfortable or unsafe for marginalized community members, but also creating a political impetus to build forms of governance that can respond to this structural context and to the ways these issues play out in everyday interactions.

Political Reflections: Balancing Structures and Relationships

At times commitments to building relationships can conflict with our understandings of the broader structural contexts in which we make governance decisions. General principles such as inclusivity are quickly tested in real world contexts that involve complex power dynamics. Including some people may undermine the inclusion of others. When Chrissy Brett asked me if she could invite a couple of bylaw officers to our first workshop in fall 2019, I had to consider both structures and relationships in my decision. These officers had gained her trust over the previous few years when she was an advocate in tent cities. As Chrissy pointed out, our focus is responding to harms and conflict, and even if we hope to start developing more community capacity for other responses, right now the police play a central (and legislated) role in responding to harms and conflicts in our community. I trusted Chrissy, as an Indigenous woman with experience responding to serious community safety issues, when she said that sometimes she needed to rely on these trusted relationships with police. It was also clear that saying no would strain a relationship I was building with a leader in the community, who many people had suggested would have important insights to contribute to the governance work we were doing, including building governance informed by Indigenous laws.

Here's the problem. I knew there would be others at the workshop who do not have the same relationships with police as Chrissy I was working with, in particular many other community members who are street-involved and likely to have had negative and potentially traumatizing interactions with police. It was not just that I felt torn between different interpersonal relationships, but also that these relationships were impacted by wider structural conditions.

While acknowledging the productive effects of structural contexts, as I've demonstrated here in relation to the policing of homeless, I still needed to decide how to respond in the context of my own real relationships. In community governance work we are sometimes faced with situations where the decision we feel compelled to make as a result of a relationship with an individual is not the same decision we might make if we stepped back to consider the structural context. I had to balance my judgments about individuals and their relationships and experiences with my understanding of the structural role police play. I consulted with a couple people who were helping me organize and have knowledge of recent debates around police presence at events including people experiencing homelessness. For the initial workshop, I decided that no, police would not be included in this community process. I explained to Chrissy that I was open to future engagement, but that the group should meet first and decide its own next steps (without police present).

Before our Indigenous laws workshop in the new year, Chrissy again proposed that these officers would probably be open to learning another perspective on law. She said that she had been asserting Indigenous law in tent cities and felt that part of our work should be communicating that Indigenous people's own laws may be a factor in some encounters with police. I seriously considered the request and put it to the group. This kind of discussion was more viable at this point since a subgroup of participants had indicated they would be participating in the follow-up meeting. The result was a lot of texts, emails, phone calls, and other conversations about the situation. I heard stories of recent conflicts with police and concerns about whether everyone could be fully prepared when our invites are sometimes shared by word of mouth. Boundaries around police involvement came up in almost every conversation—while a clear “no” might apply to our planning meetings, we could perhaps share

certain outcomes when they become public or holding other meetings with police. Since this was for a training workshop, not a general invite to all of our work together, there was a fair amount of openness among participants to including police. I also said that if anyone would feel uncomfortable, we would not extend an invitation. Ultimately, we did not. At the workshop, the individual who had been most strongly opposed to police participation proposed that police should do this training but organize it on their own and invite participants from our group.

I made the decision not to invite police to the workshops, in line with my initial response and my own structural analysis, but my commitment to the relationships I had and was building meant these decisions had to be made within a process. Working in community meant I could not just dismiss the request out of hand without considering the position of the person making the request, consulting others, and being open to complexity in the outcome.

Applying the Legal Narrative Analysis Method to a Contemporary Story

Now, I will offer another way of understanding the situation and my response to it. In this case I will use the *Legal Narrative Analysis Method* developed by Hadley Friedland and Val Napoleon, which we used in our workshops with the support of facilitators from the UVic Indigenous Law Research Unit (Napoleon & Friedland, 2015, pp. 22, 31). The method builds on ancient traditions of teaching with stories in Indigenous societies (Archibald, 2019; Bird, 2007). Building on this, John Borrows adapted common law methods (for the analysis of Canadian court decisions) to instead draw Indigenous legal principles from individual Indigenous stories (Borrows, 2002). Friedland and Napoleon, from whom I learned the method, expanded on Borrows' work to apply the method to many stories (Napoleon & Friedland, 2015, p. 21). The method involves analysing stories in order to respond to questions about specific human issues. The method enables a transparent dialogue about decisions and the reasons behind them, in a

way that is attentive to the immediate situation, the broader context, and underlying principles. In what follows, I put this contemporary story into a case brief template that Napoleon and Friedland incorporated into the Legal Analysis Method (Napoleon & Friedland, 2015, p. 23). The template is modelled on the sort of case brief used in many Canadian law schools, but I specifically use Napoleon and Friedland's adapted version used at ILRU Indigenous community workshops and synthesized along with many other stories in research on specific Indigenous legal traditions. Breaking things down this way here, my intent is to demonstrate a collective process of interpretive analysis and to invite others into the conversation we had around this situation.

Police Presence Case Analysis

*

Issue: What is the main human problem the story focuses on?

In a collective community process, how do you respond when asked to include individuals who have built trust, but also exercise power that marginalizes and criminalizes community members?

Facts (relevant): What facts matter?

- Request made by a community member to include two bylaw officers in a community governance process.
- The focus of the process was building horizontal relationships and conflict resolution.
- These specific officers had taken significant steps to build trust and good relationships with people experiencing homelessness; had been there in real ways when people needed support.
- Community member worked as an informal liaison along with encampment residents to develop agreements with police and fire to go through the encampment safety committee.

- Police use their power to enforce laws that can protect community members, but research shows that policing has harmful impacts on people visibly living in poverty, perpetuating racial inequalities, and criminalizing people experiencing homelessness.
- The process involved individuals with experience of homelessness who may have experienced trauma as a result of encounters with police.

Decision/resolution: What is decided or how is the issue resolved?

- First meeting:
 - Consulted with a number of people helping organize and with knowledge of recent debates around police presence at homelessness-related events.
 - No invitation extended.
- Second meeting:
 - Put the request to the group and discussed.
 - Invitation was not extended.

Reason (Ratio): What is the reason behind the decision or resolution? Is there an explanation in the story? Is the reason said or unsaid?

- Workshop 1:
 - Need to meet first as a group so that we can build trust (said)
 - Open to future engagement, but the group needs to be prepared and part of those conversations first (said)
- Workshop 2:
 - Many agreed this might work for a training workshop, but not a general invite to all of our work together (said)
 - Some still felt uncomfortable (said)
 - At the workshop, participants proposed that police should do this training but organize it on their own and invite participants from our group (said)

Bracket:

- Is this decision about a political position or a matter of safety for participants?
- If we do engage with police, should it be with the specific officers who built relationships, or with all police?

*

Using the case brief requires one to break down the thinking behind specific decisions in a transparent way, providing reasons for the responses, including those that are said (explicitly explained in the account) and those that are unsaid (implicit and interpreted subsequent to the account that has been shared). Identifying the relevant facts usually comes directly from the story, but I have found that there is also room at this point in the method to think about the immediate situation as well as the broader context. Thinking about context can also raise bigger questions that might not be answered within an individual story. The “bracket” section is a space to identify important unanswered questions or points of uncertainty. Friedland and Napoleon explain that answers to bracketed questions can sometime become clear after reading many stories within a specific legal tradition or explained by individuals deeply immersed and knowledgeable in that tradition. In my case, the bracketed questions are probably matters that would need to be worked out over time and with more deliberation among the group.

In the HITC project, we used this method extensively in our 2-day Downtown Indigenous Law Workshop. As explained in Chapter 6, I decided not to write about the content of those discussions because we were not in a position to complete all the components of the method. ILRU generally partners with Indigenous communities to articulate specific areas of Indigenous law. While we were not able to do that in this case, we used ILRU tools to build our capacity to have deliberative conversations together about practical community issues, including responding to individuals in need and especially responding to harm and conflicts. This work helped us think about how everyone in the group had knowledge relevant to the ways we manage our relationships with one another. While individuals in the group also have roles in the more formal governance of organizations, the focus on how we each respond to community issues centred on informal governance of relationships.

Using this method with our group, in a context that is not grounded in a specific Indigenous legal tradition, might raise questions about appropriation. I have asked myself these questions and struggled with the answers. Importantly, we did not simply take this method and apply it to a non-Indigenous context. Rather, the context in which we did this work was inter-societal and drew on long-term relationships with the individuals and the principal organization that developed the method. ILRU facilitators participated in all of the gatherings and together we discussed the project from its earliest planning stages, including the idea of using “new stories” as a way to expand and apply the method in this context. The reality of Indigenous peoples’ engagements across legal traditions, often out of necessity, is especially evident in cities. ILRU facilitators and Indigenous participants (about half of our group), mostly from the downtown community, brought situated knowledges from a range of legal traditions.

Using the *Legal Narrative Analysis Method*, the researcher would generally repeat this form of analysis with other cases, and then using many case briefs, they would synthesize the key principles and processes in an “analytical framework” (Napoleon & Friedland, 2015, pp. 28–29). All aspects of ILRU’s methodology are done in collaboration and in conversations with Indigenous community partners. In an ILRU research project partnered with an Indigenous community, the synthesis would bring together cases from published stories, oral histories, interviews with elders and community members, as well as embedded learning and linguistic methods (Napoleon & Friedland, 2015, p. 32; Asch & Johnson, 2023). Drawing from just one case is not ideal, but as a way of showing how this works, I can begin to fill in a few parts of the framework that might emerge in relation to the inclusion of police officers in a community governance process. However incomplete, in the context of this case, the analytical framework would require responding to important questions, including questions about processes, such as “who are authoritative decision-makers?” (Napoleon & Friedland, 2015, pp. 28–29). In this case,

that would include the facilitator and the whole group. The processes section of the framework also addresses what steps were involved in determining a response. Those seen here include consultation with community members, those it impacts, the whole group, and trusted allies as well as explaining the decision. In starting to identify possible responses, the framework asks, “what principles govern appropriate responses and resolutions to harms and conflicts between people?” Principles that might be drawn from this case include setting clear boundaries and openness to future engagement. Then the framework identifies obligations and rights: “What principles govern individual and collective responsibilities?”—this might include honouring relationships that have been built and considering power imbalances—and “What should people be able to expect from others?”—perhaps the right to express concern and to be heard.

Finally, the framework looks at underlying principles present in many of the stories. In this case, I would suggest this might include transparency, accountability, consultation, inclusion based on context, attention to power-relationships, but again, this work would require collective discussion including many more cases. There are many other stories that could be briefed in this way, including stories about specific interactions with police, or situations that avoid police involvement. It is hard to imagine how communities will build principled alternatives to policing as it exists today—to act on *The Victoria Declaration*’s statement that “we are all responsible for community safety”—without these kinds of collective conversations about how we would or could respond to harms and conflicts in our communities.

Organizing information drawn from a set of stories within the analytical framework requires further reflection on the processes through which decisions are made and a range of possible responses. This framework can be a starting point for thinking about a cohesive body of law, or in our case, an area of governance. It is a way of thinking about what a principled

response might be in a given context. All of the components of the framework, especially normative concepts like rights and principles, come from and need to be worked out in applied situations. Returning to the principle of “inclusion” discussed above, in a context of real and complex relationships it is easy to see that inclusion doesn’t necessarily mean including everyone all the time. There are times when boundaries are important, especially when unequal power relationships are involved and where one individual or group has demonstrated that they will use that power to harm another. In creating *The Victoria Declaration*, an important idea that came up in our discussions and in the final text was the need to make space for collaboration in large open groups as well as work in smaller closed groups, including spaces for organizing with a specific community, peers with lived experience, or a group dedicated to addressing a specific issue. Within HITC, ILRU staff advised me on an ideal group size for the Downtown Indigenous Laws Workshop and since space would be limited, we prioritized invitations to Indigenous community members and community members with lived experience of homelessness.

Disagreement and Deliberation in Practical Governance

As we worked through input related to police in *The Victoria Declaration* writing process, some participants maintained that there is a need to build relationships between police, service providers, and community members. For others, their structural analysis of the harms associated with policing called for building alternative community responses that do not involve police. Here is what we ended up writing in the declaration regarding relationships with police:

Police hold a position of power in our society. The inequities faced by our community have resulted in criminalization and traumatic interactions with police. Sometimes the only response available in crisis situations is calling police. These relationships are complex. In some cases, we will build understanding and work to improve relationships among community members, service providers, and police or bylaw officers. This should

happen within a context of decolonization and decriminalization. Further, this work should not shift our attention away from community accountability and safety practices that do not include police. We believe that we are all responsible for community safety, and for building a range of community responses to harms and conflicts. (Home in the City, 2019, p. 3)

The text of *The Victoria Declaration* maintained a structural analysis of the relationship between policing and precariously housed people. Practically, this structural analysis came up against the relational governance model we were building together. We did not resolve the tensions between participants' divergent political and strategic positions. In fact, these differences become a really important part of the processes of meaning making because participants, myself included, did not agree and had to talk through our differences.

Space for deliberation is missing in basic “mix and stir” type inclusion, such as the example I referred to above in the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* evaluation where representation on Community Advisory Boards is indicated as “one or more person” (ESDC, 2018b). Despite the systemic criminalization of people experiencing homelessness, PWLE were simply added to a list of stakeholders along with groups such as police and landlords (ESDC, 2018b, pp. 22, 37). The impetus to develop a critical standpoint from experience falls out of sight in the homelessness policy mentioned above and appears to reflect a broader tendency towards depoliticizing lived experience, becoming a language used “fluently” by the powerful rather than a critique of power (Appiah, 2020). Because our approach to governance is rooted in relationality, conflict resolution and deliberation were central to the processes that led to *The Victoria Declaration*. Because lived experience involves marginalization, the HITC project could not bypass the difficult questions and incommensurable responses that shape many PWLE's relationships to police in their daily lives.

Transforming Governance Spaces

Responding to Trauma and Harm

HITC focused on transforming governance spaces in an effort to respond to trauma and harm while moving towards collective meaning-making and decision-making about ideas and principles that should inform housing governance. Recognizing that trauma and harm are part of lived experiences of oppression, our practical governance responses entailed (a) planning a facilitative process that was trauma-informed, and (b) creating an alternative context for governance and working on our own oppressive dynamics within the group. Here are some examples of each that show how the theoretical and practical intersect.

The first challenge arose in two cases when participants raised concerns about emotional and physical safety in our workshops. In the first case, the situation caught me off guard during the session. Another participant called my attention and we both spoke briefly with the individual who felt housing providers in the room were responsible for the death of one of their friends. In this case, our format of bringing people together did not work and that participant ended up leaving.

In another case, a safety issue involving an ongoing conflict between two participants came up in advance and we were able to work through the situation by discussing boundaries, seating arrangements, and what support that person might want or need in the workshop. They were able to participate. In this case, through a collaborative process in our own governance, we were able to facilitate participation.

Anticipating these challenges, we worked in advance to create a trauma-informed setting, using a relationship-oriented process and intentional facilitation. The idea of being trauma-informed or trauma-sensitive space means being conscious of how certain conversations could

trigger past trauma, including how trauma can have an impact on both one's brain and one's body, intentionally considering how to make spaces safer and more welcoming, including intersectional factors that might shape feelings of safety, and "considering how background, culture, genders, and age influences different people's experiences" (Asch et al., 2021, pp. 53–54). Being a trauma-sensitive facilitator might mean thinking in advance about how one could respond in potentially triggering conversations, being transparent about plans for group sessions, seeking feedback, listening actively, and "having additional helpers available" who are identified to participants (Asch et al., 2021, pp. 54). In HITC, I worked with my co-facilitator, Lindsay Borrows from ILRU using a trauma-informed facilitation tool focused on planning for free movement and bodily autonomy, validation and support, inclusivity, and well-being (physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental). We choose a venue that was familiar within the downtown community, with moveable tables and chairs, space for wheelchairs, the ability to serve food, easy access to fresh air and more. Building from my pre-existing relationships, community members who became involved in the process took on the role of inviting others, stopping by community-based organizations to talk about the governance work that we were planning to do. As much as possible, emailed invites were followed up with phone calls and personal visits, which gave space for concerns to be shared.

As explained in previous chapters, we used several facilitative methods to discuss governance issues as a group, starting with co-developing the group guidelines and the ILRU graphic novel, *Mikomosis and Wetiko*. The real harms of oppression—living in poverty, trying to survive a housing crisis and a drug poisoning crisis, being an Indigenous person displaced from or within one's territory—were important context for our work. We focused on governance decisions that can respond to these issues. The facilitation tools we used addressed the context of colonialism and intersecting forms of inequity and allowed us to shift from focusing on the

harms themselves, such as dislocation, gendered violence, or homelessness, to identifying the main community issues, key decision-makers, responses to harm, and processes for decision-making. In this sense, our response to these harms was within co-creation—the collaborative planning, the collective discussions, and later co-creation of the declaration.

We were not able to challenge all of our internal power imbalances. The process was far from perfect, and at times only exemplified how big the harms are and insurmountable our differences felt. At other times, we went some distance towards creating the kind of process we envisioned in which almost 70 diversely situated individuals co-created a tangible community resource that pushes towards significant transformations in this governance context.

Challenging Tokenistic Representation

Tokenism occurs when individuals are told they should be part of something, but then at every turn are not actually included in meaningful ways. Decision-makers can mobilize limited representation from affected populations to legitimate policy without necessarily including their suggestions in the results. Megan Billings, a Tenant Legal Advocate I interviewed, explained how she has seen this play out when governments ask for, as she puts it, “the peoples’ voice” on matters related to housing:

So I see it a lot as [governments] asking for the perspective from renters or them asking for the perspective of advocates. Realistically, in the end, they listen to our advice and it’s almost like this tokenistic kind of—they have our names on the list and they can just come and put checkmarks, “Yeah, we listened to you.” And then they come up with this policy or they come up with some type of document at the end of the consultation that says, “Oh yeah we did our due diligence” and then, of course, there’s nothing really that’s actually moving forward for those folks that they had asked for their time to give. Yeah, there’s definitely a lot of frustration in that. (Interview, April 15, 2019)

The same advocate had experienced advisory meetings being scheduled around those with formal positions in organizations so that they become inaccessible to people with lived experience who are often volunteering while others are paid to be there. On one hand, she explained, are situations where meetings are inaccessible, and on the other hand, they can be a “tokenistic kind of platform” (M. Billings interview, April 15, 2019). It is the symptom of superficial responses to deeper issues of inequity and resulting forms of epistemic injustice that I will return to below.

With HITC, the structure of the gatherings was intentional in trying to create space conducive to broad participation and debate within groups, including among a significant number of peers, and across groups, including among individuals who are advocates, researchers, and service providers.

Moving Towards Collective Meaning-Making and Decision-Making

In HITC we worked together to develop political analyses that articulate specific standpoints on issues of housing governance. We analyzed governance contexts together, drawing on lived experiences. Then we made a political claim to our legitimacy as contributors to governance spaces and governance-related dialogue. We tried to co-create a space of dialogue around governance issues that resembles that kind of spaces we envisioned together. The impulse towards increased inclusion needs to be balanced with an analysis and understanding of the structural context. In my follow-up interviews, one community advocate spoke about just how common this concern is:

So all the time, I think about when people bring in one person with lived experience, or two people with lived experience into a committee meeting or into a meeting so that they have that lived experience voice. And it’s like professionals and service providers and

things like that. How comfortable is that person? I've experienced where they can list it as made with affected populations. (F. Saunderson interview, April 17, 2019).

This quote brings up a key theme from the project, that I will call the “critical mass” issue.

Having a significant number of peers matters. At the first gathering we had 54 participants, of which 29 identified as having lived experience. This was intentional to ensure that no individual would be asked to represent a homogenous lived experience perspective. However, as Saunderson points out, we should ask not just who is there but also whether people are comfortable participating. Many nonprofit boards mirror the structure of corporate boards and a professional class that can alienate PWLE from the dialogue. This alienation may relate to the culture of the board, the composition of the board, or the kind of documents reviewed, including long and intricate financial reports. The languages and norms of professionals sitting on boards—through education, professionalization, and other aspects of class—can limit inclusion. The issue is equitable representation, within equitable governance contexts.

In HITC our focus was on moving from offering input to actual decision-making. Our process was focused on informal governance in the community, decisions that we all make to respond to community issues, which consistently focused on community safety. Discussion and debate over how to respond in specific scenarios was a central focus of our Indigenous laws workshop, as well as the graphic novel discussion at the first workshop, and numerous participants expressed wishing we did more of this part. Unfortunately, that was outside of the scope of this project. Another project could be done focused specifically on Indigenous laws for housing services and there would be certain principles and procedural steps as required in Indigenous and decolonizing methods, as I discuss in Chapter 6.

The central way we practised making decisions together as a group was in co-creating the declaration. I could have conducted extensive interviews on this subject, and I may have ended up with a set of ideas similar. The result of our process of co-creation—built from collective discussions and shared decision-making—was a resource of shared authorship and shared ownership. Over the course of the past 3 years, at least monthly, and in some periods weekly and even daily I have heard reports of the declaration being raised in numerous venues, of individuals who were part of the process standing up in meetings to say they were part of creating it, and others who have gotten involved since calling for accountability to its tenants. The biggest weakness of the declaration, as with any aspirational document, is whether it will be implemented and to what effect.

The collective processes were also politically significant because they generated meaning from lived experience. As feminist theorist Linda Alcoff (2018) explains, people can have a similar experience but understand it differently (p. 54); alternate interpretations of a situation can also generate new responses to that situation (p. 66). Public contestation over who is or should be involved in decision-making can create a new kind of “know-how” or agency about opportunities for action, such as movements to establish peer-led organizations and initiatives. Alcoff (2018) refers to “the practical activity of interpretative articulation,” which describes collective processes that generate understanding within an area of experience. Interpretation is linked to that context. Those that have experienced the issues will have knowledge that should be privileged in making sense of the experience through new terms and concepts: “survivors retain best access to the contentful nature of that which they are processing” (Alcoff, 2018, p. 67). While our experiences crucially inform our understandings—with lived experience providing the

most immediate access to the issues being examined—processes of meaning-making are also necessary, which can inform the ways we respond in specific contexts (Alcoff, 2018).

One could reasonably argue that making space for lived experience matters even without the collective or political part. Isn't sharing therapeutic? Isn't it empowering? While participants in this research spoke about the personal importance of sharing their story as part of their own healing and empowerment, collective processes of meaning-making go beyond individual statements of fact. The insight here, which I draw from feminist theory, is that experience is not entirely individual; it relates to events in a shared world, and it is always subject to collective interpretation. This is one of the reasons why creating spaces for collective dialogue is so important. It is one way of explicitly facilitating interpretive activity. Our facilitated processes moved step wise among smaller and then larger groups discussing different understandings of governance in housing and support services, experiences of governance working well and not going well, leading up to a final decisional question about what mattered most in our discussions. This required knowledge from lived experience but also analysis of the meaning that experience has, and the responses that are needed, all of which extend beyond the individual. When we speak publicly and collectively about experiences of oppression, it can begin to transform key governance relations.

Epistemic Reflections

Epistemic injustice refers to forms of unfairness that relate to what counts as knowledge, or how knowledge is achieved. Understandings of our experiences and ourselves emerge in a field of social understanding that involves epistemic injustice. Knowledge and analyses from lived experience can describe and be limited by both epistemic and specifically hermeneutical disadvantages (Fricker, 2006). When a broader context for interpretation of certain experiential

phenomena is absent, it can be difficult to make sense of our own experiences, and difficult to resist distorted conceptions of these experiences (Fricker, 2006, p. 100). My final set of reflections in this chapter centre epistemic issues, including our attempts to gain “critical distance” and respond to epistemic injustice through the practical governance method (Heyes, 2020, p. 41).

One important feature of epistemic injustice is what Miranda Fricker (2006) calls “hermeneutical disadvantage,” which she points out is a structural issue that is more or less distinct from the intent of an individual to understand. There are many experiences that others may not understand, but when “background social conditions” allow dominant groups to influence social understanding, the gap in interpretation constitutes an injustice that is discriminatory and systematic (Fricker, 2006, p. 100). The example Fricker uses is what we would now call sexual harassment, but prior to the concept being named and widely recognized (i.e., “sexual harassment as flirting”). On the cusp of second wave feminism, women’s unequal power in relation to men meant that they were not part of generating a collective meaning of this experience. The harms here are epistemic because they can impact confidence in one’s knowledge of the world and of oneself (Fricker, 2006, p. 104). Such “lacunas” may be authoritative in shaping how our identities are socially understood, but not all authoritative ideas have the same hold on us (Fricker, 2006, p. 106). For example, one might find it easy to reject many stigmatizing stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness while accepting or even internalizing others. When a sense of dissonance emerges between the social understanding and what we find to be true about ourselves, there are opportunities to dissent and reject the dominant construction.

Social constructions of poverty and homelessness are often medicalized and pathologizing (Gowan, 2010). This shapes the social frame for the emergence of PWLE as an identity, as evident in the Directives for the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* which describe a person with lived experience of homelessness as someone recovering from a condition: “[lived experience] is also associated with recovery, which implies the person with lived experience is developing greater self-sufficiency in their pursuit of personal goals and functional capacity, despite ongoing symptoms” (ESDC, 2016, “Directive 13”). While many people do describe their journeys through recovery and/or harm reduction, the phrasing here defines individuals experiencing homelessness as if lacking housing is itself an illness with symptoms, or even in the most generous interpretation, a condition resulting from illness.

In the HITC workshops, we reiterated that everyone in the room had knowledge relevant to governance-related issues and that this wisdom was needed in our conversations. The conversations took place, first, in lower-stakes small group discussions, followed by sharing among the larger group. The idea was to position everyone as a “knowing agent” (Alcoff, 1991, p. 23). At the end of the first workshop—a full day of smaller and larger group conversations – everyone contributed their main “take aways” from the conversations on two cue cards each. These cue cards were organized in groups of ideas by the follow-up group 6 weeks later. The same group was invited back so that there was continuity in who participated. The follow-up group identified shared insights and principles in the groups of cards and these sets of ideas were written up as the first draft of *The Victoria Declaration*, which reiterates as its first guiding principle: “Governance involves all of us: The governance of housing and support services begins with each of us and the rules we collectively choose to follow” (Home in the City, 2019, p. 1). The follow-up group met again to collectively review and edit the declaration. In this way,

the group collectively engaged in interpretation of the ideas that had been contributed. It is hard to measure impact on something like epistemic injustice, but going any distance in this requires taking a critical look at our assumptions about identity and how it relates to experience.

Our experience with the workshops demonstrated that lived experience requires processes of meaning-making, which requires both personal stories and systemic analysis. The problem with many appeals to experience, Joan Scott (1991) famously argued in “The Evidence of Experience,” is that they essentialize identities (p. 791). Such appeals treat identities (like “woman,” or “person with lived experience of homelessness”) as already-existing categories that simply need to be revealed or represented, rather than complex processes that also shape and create identities (Scott, 1991, p. 797). We might think we are just describing a situation while upholding specific ways of thinking about who people are, as individuals or as members of a whole social group. Thus, experience can also be shaped by an attributed subjectivity. We can internalize dominant ideas about our experiences. We—and others—give meaning to events of our lives, and sometimes that meaning can change over time. We therefore have ways of creating knowledge and agency around our experiences.

Since many harmful ideas are internalized, it can help to look at how some ideas, concepts, and cultural norms are historically constituted and become “forms of unfreedom given to us as deep personal truths” (Heyes, 2020, p. 28). Our immersion in our own historical and political conditions means we can never see ourselves totally clearly, but it does not mean we give up on attempting to look at ourselves with an analytic gaze, trying to see what background conditions impact and shape us, and thinking about the power relations wrapped up in those conditions (Heyes, 2020, p. 41). On one hand, we tried to build a politics inspired by important, often deeply personal stories, but we also need “to maintain a critical distance on those stories, to bracket their specificity and our immersion in them to relate them to larger horizons of

possibility” (Heyes, 2020, p. 41). The facilitated methods of practical governance ask participants to talk about community issues in terms of specific scenarios, the systemic context, and commitments that could help enact our own ideals. Attempts to create critical distance in this project involved critiques of normalized conditions paired with envisioning the communities that we want to build and thinking about what it might take to get there.

Conclusion

Lived experience in governance requires more than just including more people in existing governance structures. The examples and concerns I noted in HITC are extremely tangible, related to interpersonal harm and conflict. Practical reflections call attention to internal power dynamics in governance spaces. Below the surface are underlying political issues connected to the realities of oppression that shape lived experience. Epistemic and hermeneutical injustices may be even more difficult to uncover, but they shape what counts as knowledge and the ways we interpret experience.

In the face of these challenges, people with lived experience, service providers and policy makers are trying to respond to the challenge of connecting lived experience to governance decision-making. At a practical level, the response I propose through the practical governance method involves processes of co-creation that are trauma- and equity-informed. Considering equity in representation, including a significant number of peers, trauma-informed facilitation, and co-led or peer-led governance can help transform governance spaces. At a political level, governance processes require engagement with the power laden aspects of experience and processes of collective interpretation that can inform decision-making. At an epistemic level, what matters is that people with lived experience are part of processes that make meaning from experience. However, creating better knowledge is not the end point. The goal identified in this

research and the resulting practical governance method is making meaning from experiences in a way that can build better governance, and in particular, better relations.

Governance decisions made in the context of real relationships in community, what I refer to as practical governance, cannot be determined according to *a priori* theoretical principles or structural analyses alone. Practical governance decisions demand collective deliberative processes, processes that themselves may even focus on identifying important principles and analysis that can guide decision-making. But being committed to working in community means outcomes may be complex. People won't necessarily fit into neat normative positions and our assumptions about them in relation to structural realities—they may have their own complex relationships to consider. Collective governance processes also provide opportunities for working out critical questions and analyses within our responses to community issues. In this way governance is productive, not just of oppression, but also of alternative political possibilities. A commitment to building shared conversations in community is practical, not in the sense of always being easy, but in enabling people to move forward on pressing issues.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION—A DIFFERENT STORY OF HOME IN THE CITY

Same view, different season. This time, as I write, I see my son's tracks circling stumps and stubble of last year's crop of hay, still reaching higher than the unseasonably light cover of snow. I find a sense of familiarity growing in this particular rural prairie landscape. Even though this is not my home. My home is in the city.

Popular culture, and to some extent urban theories of the global city, characterize cities in terms of quick moves—property rapidly bought, sold, and developed; global finance; and life “in the fast lane.” As a child I loved to play a computer game on CD-ROM called *Jones in the Fast Lane*. To win the game, players had to accumulate the most wealth, education, status, and happiness. Every “week” (1 week passed per turn), players had to make enough money to pay rent and bills. The weekends occurred between turns and the game randomly extracted funds from player's bank accounts to cover the cost of fun times, like trips to Las Vegas, as determined by the game. Although the game was released in 1990, the cost of living in the game was high. A cheeseburger cost \$77. Rental rates were enviable, ranging from \$300–\$500, but the “Rent Office” could be ruthless, greeting players with the message, “Welcome to the Rent Office. Don't snivel. Just pay your rent and leave” (“Jones in the Fast Lane,” 2023). The game is a narrow picture of urban life. The grind of the work week, bills, rent, groceries. All unabashedly defined by capitalism and Whiteness. Players could choose to be one of four avatars, all visibly White. While the game may capture some material reality in procuring the necessities, for the most part, such a picture of how people live their lives in cities is starkly out of touch. I've tried to paint a picture of a city where multiple experiences of community, identity, and authority interact and sometimes collide. Victoria is an expensive city, and while not as fast-paced as other “global” cities, the downtown core is increasingly populated with high-rise condominiums targeted at a wealthy minority.

The approach I took in my community-engaged research was rooted in diverse understandings and experiences of “home in the city” (Anderson, 2013). I organized what we called the Home in the City (HITC) project with a group of community members, services-providers, advocates, and university-based researchers. HITC aimed to build equitable housing governance in Victoria, BC, and was simultaneously my dissertation field research. As a public-facing outcome of HITC, individuals connected to the housing community co-produced *The Victoria Declaration—A Statement on Governance in Housing and Support Services* (Home in the City, 2019). The declaration is a set of principles and actions developed through a consensus-based process. It has been formally endorsed by local organizations, including the federally designated regional homelessness network (2019) and the City of Victoria (2022). It has moreover lived on as a tool for people in Victoria, and even “jumped the Strait,” as I noted in the Introduction. In this dissertation, I’ve presented my interpretation of the process that created the declaration, and what limits and possibilities it might illuminate for other collectives in need of new strategic processes.

The Victoria Declaration asserts that we are all part of housing governance. The declaration advances a vision of equity and self-determination within the governance of housing services that “begins with each of us and the rules we collectively choose to follow” (Home in the City, 2019, p. 1). The most fundamental way we are all part of governance is in how we each respond to issues that arise in our relationships with one another. The model that results from the process that generated *The Victoria Declaration* focuses on co-creation and relational self-determination. This is to say, our inherent interconnectedness means there are also complex intersecting relations entailed in individual and collective self-determination.

In HITC, our relational approach, as introduced in Chapter 2, responds to the challenge of Indigenous scholars and service providers who are advancing Indigenous relationality in housing

and homelessness programs. Indigenous relationality refers to distinct emplaced theories and practices of Indigenous peoples that share a focus on building, maintaining, and restoring relationships. Relational networks of support and the grounded principles that inform them are essential to decolonizing governance processes. In developing this approach, I brought together literatures on Indigenous relationality and housing. Indeed, I contend that Indigenous scholars and service providers already make this link in housing responses grounded in building supportive communities. These interventions, I argue, are badly needed in the broader policy debates on responses to homelessness.

Older frameworks that make access to housing conditional on a linear vision of individual progress are increasingly being sidelined, though not fully replaced, by an emerging discourse about the “right to housing” that has been institutionalized in the Government of Canada’s (2017) *National Housing Strategy*. The new rights-based frameworks, while rhetorically quite different, remain rooted in possessive individualism and colonial ontologies of private property. Further, while important grassroots advocacy has helped establish rights-based frameworks in Canadian law and policy, rights-based approaches don’t always translate well within Indigenous relational paradigms and related responses to homelessness. Roger Epp (2008) captures the issue in a story in *We Are All Treaty People* where he recalls attending a meeting with Elders in Maskwacis. The meeting was almost entirely in Cree, but one English word stood out to Epp: “rights.” Epp’s sense was that “rights” did not translate into the Cree language, but also perhaps the word “rights” enabled people to communicate something that could not be said in another way (p. 136). In Chapter 2, I note that Maria Campbell similarly takes issue with an overreliance on rights frameworks, which she argues, tend to be based on non-Indigenous laws, mechanisms, and definitions of rights. Advocacy for rights tends to focus

attention outside of Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledges (Campbell, 2007). The point is not to dismiss work focused on rights. As noted previously, Val Napoleon asserts that there are times when human rights are the only tool available to the most vulnerable. Rights can be relational, Napoleon insists, if they support the self-determination of vulnerable community members navigating oppressive power relations. I support the idea of a right to housing. Yet, I've attempted to push the movement to consider both the opportunities and limits of the right to housing and to consider whether the movement can make common cause with relational housing narratives and practices. I've suggested it is possible to support rights, while resituating or even transcending them within a framework of relational self-determination that emphasizes the complexity of our interconnectedness.

Practical Governance as a Methodological Contribution

The Victoria Declaration's participatory ethos of self-determination is paired with mutual responsibility in responding to housing issues. These key concepts also inform the *practical governance method*, which developed iteratively alongside the declaration. Chapter 3 explained that, in this dissertation, one of the key original contributions of the research is the methodology. Practical governance is a new approach in which a researcher works with a community to co-create a governance resource. As an applied method of theoretically informed community-engaged research, practical governance weaves together distinct facilitated methods.

The key aspects of practical governance are shared practical purpose, facilitated meaning-making, and authoritative decision-making. Practical governance focuses on decision-making challenges that will be familiar to many community-engaged scholars and service providers. It makes these familiar challenges transparent and suggests facilitated methods through which groups can practice making decisions and developing governance resources together. In practical governance, processes of co-creation are specifically designed to identify and advance—to

facilitate—the shared purpose of the group. The shared purpose could be a shared point of concern, a goal, or a vision. The latter is what Ganz (2010) calls a “story of now” that demands a public narrative around the issue and a collective response. The method is focused on efficacy, using facilitated processes that result in outcomes communities can use. The method is also attentive to structural inequity, and the resulting epistemic injustices in governance spaces. This dissertation highlighted tensions and disagreements within the groups, instances where we failed to create a space that worked for everyone, and moments of doubt articulated by myself and others. Still, rather than simply including more stakeholders in existing governance, practical governance helped the group move through these serious challenges, demonstrating that the method can assist groups in co-developing new governance processes. Co-creation animates all of this—building commitment to a shared purpose, developing meaning from experiential and situated knowledges, and making authoritative decisions together.

The goal is not just to produce more knowledge, but rather, to transform relations. Theorists, policymakers, and community members all encounter questions about how to move from critique to change. I argue that the declaration matters less than the relationships that enabled it to be co-produced. However, I also contend that *The Victoria Declaration* and other governance resources are tools that can help groups develop shared understandings and relationships needed to respond to community issues. In HITC, our “story of now,” the key challenge we face, is building relational, culturally safe, physically safe, and community-led responses to intersecting drug poisoning and housing crises. Real people and real relationships are the heart of that story.

Theories and Practices of “Home in the City”

Practical governance is a method that can assist groups to co-create relational practices of governance, and it can also support theory-building. The theoretical aspects of the project, as I

explained in the Introduction, were not as significant as I thought they might be when I started the project. As the project developed, the applied aspects of the method and our co-created declaration eventually took centre stage. Still, the method is both informed by and adds theoretical insights based on the applied research.

Most of the theory-building enabled by the practical governance method was highlighted in Chapters 5 to 7, which are organized around three central questions drawn from my community-engaged research:

- What does relationship building look like when informed by relational self-determination?
- How can practical governance learn from decolonizing methods and lived experience?
- How can “lived experience” of structural inequity inform governance contexts?

The answers to these questions have implications for both theory and practice. In practice, current models of governance are struggling to respond to these challenges. There are very practical ways in which relationships were essential to planning and facilitating the HITC project, as I described in Chapter 5 and throughout the dissertation. However, there are broader implications to thinking about responding to intersecting housing crises within a framework of relational self-determination. We live in a shared world in which individual and collective self-determination impacts others. I suggest that supporting self-determination also involves thinking about the relational implications of community governance decisions. Cities are complex spaces to work out the self-determination of Nations because people gather in cities from many different places.

The second question above links decolonizing methods and lived experience. Here my theoretical conclusions focus on the ways individuals bring principles and embedded paradigms

from lived experience into decision-making. This could range from White saviour mentalities I discussed in the Introduction to principled responses to community issues drawn from Indigenous legal and governance traditions that were the focus of Chapter 6. While dominant models focus on the lived experience of an individual in their lifetime, in HITC our practical governance method linked contemporary lived experience with learning from histories, ontologies, and epistemologies of peoples and Nations. Again, cities have specific locations and jurisdictions that make this complex. In our case, Victoria is close to the reserves of multiple Coast Salish Nations, and the downtown core is part of their traditional territory. Victoria is also home to people from other Indigenous Nations, newcomers, and settlers, who bring aspects of their own experience and backgrounds in making their homes there. These are very old and very difficult questions about whether and how visitors or uninvited guests can ethically define what home means, with respect and in solidarity with those who are from that place. Our work on downtown Indigenous laws was limited because we did not have an invitation to talk about Coast Salish laws. Nevertheless, what we did do revealed certain realities of the city, highlighted Indigenous territory and authority, and made a case for the importance of transsystemic law and story.

Equitable governance of housing services requires processes that enable groups to generate meaning together, rooted in lived experience and situated knowledges. Unfortunately, the contexts in which these situated knowledges and lived experiences are supposed to be included often reproduce structural inequities. The intersectional causes of housing precarity and homelessness are systemic, and they play out in governance decision-making. Sometimes inclusion is just about getting more stakeholders at the table and not actually transforming the dynamics at that table. More methods are needed to help build inclusive and collaborative governance that transforms the ways we relate to one another and make decisions together. In the

practical governance method, where emplaced knowledges are explicitly brought into a process of collective interpretation, I suggest it is possible to develop both critical understandings and positive resources from the ways we are situated.

Many of the lessons learned in the research focused on how diverse experiences and backgrounds can inform governance processes. Our group in HITC described “Who we are” in terms of our diversity:

This declaration was created by the Home in the City project, which includes people with current and previous experiences of homelessness and people facing diverse issues related to housing—marginally housed, inadequately housed, unstably housed, or unsafely housed. Our project includes people living in poverty as well as some housed allies who are not. Many of us access services and some of us provide services. We are connected to a range of organizations and groups; although, many of us came only representing ourselves. The group that contributed to the declaration includes community members from diverse backgrounds and communities: visitors to these territories as well as Indigenous peoples, including Elders, from a number of nations close and far. We do not claim to sufficiently represent all of these groups, nor do we all agree on all matters. (Home in the City, 2019, p. 4)

Being at home in the city is not just about where one sleeps and eats (although it is also about those things). It can also be a matter of “urbanism as a way of life,” living in dense proximity to diverse peoples (Wirth, 1938). Of course, diversity is everywhere, but it is especially pronounced in urban settings. To build the project, I drew on theories of urban life and thinking “like a city” that I discussed in Chapter 3 (Magnusson, 2011). Such thinking points to diverse practices and forms of authority through which individuals and groups govern

themselves, which exceed the state and other formal governance structures. Thinking “like a state,” in contrast, is a dominant political ontology that understands political authority in terms of state actors and actions of the state (J. C. Scott, 2020). In HITC, we acknowledged the centrality of the state and social policy in the lives of individuals experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. We also expanded our notions of governance, resituating the state among the distinct formal and informal governance traditions in the housing community. Sometimes these were informal modes of self-organization, and other times they entailed strong assertions of sovereignty, such as those of Indigenous Nations. The working out of relational forms of self-determination is thus essential to recognize these overlapping layers and modes of governance.

Urbanism has impacts beyond the city, the urban theorists argue, and impacts life in rural areas as well. As I’ve been learning living in Edmonton, ruralism also defines more than the rural. In Edmonton—a prairie city, more precisely “aspen parkland”—there are many people who live in the city but are “at home” outside the city. While living in Edmonton, many people readily self-identify in relation to surrounding rural areas, from towns, farms, and reserves elsewhere on the prairies.

I’ve come to see this dynamic in my own family as well. As I explained in the introduction, I lived in London, Ontario for just a few years, but have emplaced connections there that can, at times, generate a feeling of home. Both sets of my grandparents lived in London—on my mom’s side just for a few years. On my dad’s side of the family, my grandparents both moved “to the city” after high school from the small farming community of Blythe, Ontario. Blythe was always present in my grandparents’ home: framed Blythe Festival Theatre posters, pictures of “the farm,” stories of going back to help with the harvest, family reunions in Blythe, and visits from relatives who still lived in the Blythe area all kept those

connections intact. In this sense, Blythe seemed to represent “home” for my grandparents in ongoing ways; although, they were undoubtedly “Londoners” for the entire rest of their lives. My parents met when they both lived in London, my older brother was born there, and my sister, who completed her undergraduate degree in London at the same time as I did, still lives there with her family. These connections make going to London kind of like going home, in a sense. My grandparents had emplaced ways of understanding and relating to the farming community where they grew up. People can live in the city while being shaped by ruralism “as a way of life.” This all speaks to the diversity of meanings “home” contains, rooted in place and relationships, both within and outside of cities, with different meanings in different places.

Applying Practical Governance in Other Contexts

The practical governance method could be used in other places, but it would require careful consideration of context, history, and relationships in that place. Edmonton and Victoria are very different places. I started the dissertation by describing the difference in terms of prairie and coastal landscapes. Another way to understand the differences could be, as I’ve suggested here, the way Edmonton residents sometimes define themselves in terms of the rural homes from which they came to the city. The conceptions of home are different.

I could have undertaken this project in Edmonton, where I had just arrived to enroll in my PhD program and knew only a couple of people, rather than building from nearly a decade of relationship-building in Victoria. The project would have been possible, but I would have approached it very differently. I would have taken a lot more time simply meeting people, attending events, sharing who I am, what I do, and why. I would have tried to gain some sense of existing programs and projects, and possible alignment with my principles, skills, and experience. I would not have assumed I would be invited to get involved. Should an invitation

have been extended, I would have considered what I might learn and contribute. A practical governance project in Edmonton would be different than our HITC project in Victoria because I would be starting from a very different place. Today I have more developing relationships in Alberta, including in Edmonton. It's not the case that the project could only have happened in Victoria, or somewhere I already knew people.

The practical governance method has promising applications in other settings. It assisted participants in our HITC project to navigate unexpected and complex challenges and it involves lessons that other groups could certainly apply in developing new strategic processes. Practical governance involves a relational approach among individuals connected to a specific issue that can be determined based on what makes sense within a specific community. The group can undertake a practical exercise in co-creation, determined by their own shared purpose. The purpose or vision itself can be identified within preliminary conversations using participatory methods with proven results, just as I synthesized and adapted methods that I gratefully learned from others (Asch et al., 2021; ICA, 2012; ILRU, 2016a, 2016b). The methods brought together in practical governance make space for disagreements and critical understandings. Crucially, practical governance does not stop with critique. It builds on the insight that experience itself is simultaneously individual, situated, and shared. Collective processes can help groups make meaning from experience, identify grounded principles and points of shared vision, and co-create new governance processes that use situated understandings to address the lived realities of being at home in the city and beyond.

POSTSCRIPT: A COMMUNITY-BASED DEFENCE

A few years ago, a lot of people in this room and I started something called the Home in the City project. Home in the City was both a community project and my PhD research. Today I'll be presenting some key aspects of what I wrote in my thesis about all the work we did together.

I'm here to share this research and get feedback and approval here before I go have my defence at the university. (Author's speaking notes, January 31, 2024)

Over 50 people showed up for my "final report-back" to the community—which I conceptualized as a "community defence." We met at a community centre that is part of a large service provider downtown Victoria in a medium-sized gym, where a geometric mural of ocean waves and mountains broke up the otherwise simple white walls in the gym. The venue was well-equipped with tables and chairs, a small industrial kitchen, and bathrooms. A small but much-appreciated pot of funding paid for food and an Elder honorarium.⁴⁸ To stretch the funding, I decided to supplement catered sandwich platters with groceries. An hour before I planned to be at the event, I found myself going over the presentation in my head while furiously and somewhat comically cutting vegetables, cheese, and garlic sausage in my hotel room with a butter knife.

Elder May Sam was going to do a blessing and opening at 3 pm before we started serving the food, but suddenly it was 3:10 pm—the room was filling up and I had instinctively invited people to start eating. May suggested she could do her opening after the food and visiting. In her opening, May spoke about how I've grown a flower, my thesis and my young son at the same time. Watering it, tending it, and watching it all grow. This was powerful for me personally. I had the chance to meet May in Tsartlip the day before, along with my in-laws and my son. At lunch, I read her the parts of my thesis I wrote about her, including the way she had supported

⁴⁸ Funding was provided by the University of Alberta Intersectionality Institute, the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Governance, and Neighbours in Solidarity with Unhoused Neighbours.

me with my fertility struggles during the PhD. Standing beside May at the event, holding my child on my hip, felt like completion of a circle.

May spoke about speaking hul'qumi'num as a child, her first language, and that Matulia was the word her father had always used for Victoria. Then May sang a song. I said some of what I wrote in the thesis about May's song. I hadn't planned this part but was brought back to the experience of the tones of May's song landing on the body. Once again, I felt the room shift. I spoke about how the song made me feel more grounded, and how May helped us to find such moments of rebalancing throughout the Home in the City (HITC) project. I saw a lot of heads nod in response. We would appreciate her support in grounding the group once again after some tense moments at the end of the gathering.

There was no screen or projector in the venue, so in lieu of slides, I decided to make a handout summarizing the key points in my thesis. Dr. Danielle Taschereau Mamers helped brainstorm the handout and then offered to hand draw it as a "comic" (see Appendix J). I began my presentation with the story of where the project came from for me: the dream of bringing the housing advocacy work I was doing downtown together with work I was doing at the university. In my work with the Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU) I felt like we were building things. Simultaneously, I was inspired organizing housing and harm reduction related initiatives downtown. And I was frustrated. I thought we could find better ways of working together drawing on the strengths of the downtown community. I found tools for thinking in feminist and decolonial theory. There were also exciting approaches I'd been part of using within Indigenous-partnered research, such as the *Legal Narrative Analysis Method*. We had a chance to bring many of these tools together within HITC.

I intentionally wove a land acknowledgement into my opening story with key places and moments that highlighted colonial dispossession and the ongoing jurisdiction of the Lkwungen

and WSÁNEĆ nations. When I lived in Victoria, I loved to hike up PKOLS, I said, sometimes multiple times a week. Recently, I explained, while reading about the Vancouver Island Treaties (also known as the Douglas Treaties) I had a moment where colonialism was starkly real to me, imagining James Douglas meeting the WSÁNEĆ on top of PKOLS. As I wrote in Chapter 5, Tsartlip Elder, John Elliott Sr. (2017) describes the meeting on PKOLS that led to their Douglas Treaty. He says:

There were crosses marked on paper to signify a sacredness to the meeting. And, how the newly arrived people recognized our responsibilities to the land. And, that with the new beginning that we would live on these lands with respectful relationship to one another. The WSÁNEĆ and the White people. This was to make a new beginning because there was a threat on the Fort Victoria by the WSÁNEĆ. (p. 3)

Douglas asked for a respectful relationship with one another, and he made 14 similar agreements on Vancouver Island, including with Lkwungen peoples. Lkwungen and WSÁNEĆ peoples had village sites throughout the area, including territories specific to different family groups. I explained that I marked a few of these places on the map at the top of the comic beside the title of the project and my name. My goal with the map and the stories I told was to acknowledge the local Nations, and I concluded by specifically indicating that we were gratefully gathered on the territory of the Lkwungen speaking peoples of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

Using the summary comic as a guide was a freeing presentation style. Gaining momentum, I relied less and less on notes. I moved through the comic, top to bottom, explaining what panel I was on from time to time. It helped that we designed the comic as I was planning the talk. I was able to articulate concise synopses of the fundamentals, including a version of my that gets straight to the point: How can our different lived experiences and traditions inform

housing governance? We built on community knowledges and facilitated methods to co-develop equitable governance processes within housing and support services.

Of course, the project was not always simple or lucid, and I described the way I navigated tough conversations. All piled up in text bubbles, the comic depicts me being literally squashed by critical questions. There were challenges, but I was overall undeterred. In fact, the project had many supporters from the beginning, but it took shape through the critiques and collaborative conversations. Alongside my engagement in academic gatherings and literatures, HITC was co-developed in many conversations with individuals who participated. I got feedback after the event that I could have included more people in one frame that depicts who I met with throughout the project.

I described the first lively HITC workshop to many nods around the room. I reviewed the whole process—we discussed the issues in several sessions, wrote individual feedback on cards, had more conversations, including our Downtown Indigenous Laws Workshop, met again to sort and describe the cards, and finally co-edited the draft declaration. “There were two waves of energy around the declaration,” I said. “GVAT also endorsed it!” someone jumped in to say.

Introducing the practical governance method—the first time I had ever done so in a public setting with HITC participants—I kept things brief but did review each of the elements. I went deeper into some of the thinking behind the elements. I wanted to make a strong case for why this is the take-away from our shared work and why I think it is needed at this moment in time.

Practical governance is about enabling better decision-making, as I pointed out on the second to last panel of the comic. The method can help groups co-develop processes to respond to community issues; often the most pressing questions are around community safety. Using the practical governance method in HITC, we identified moments where we could move forward

together, but we did not always agree. People in the room would remember moments of tension in the workshops. For example, the last section of the declaration, “Who We Are,” was hotly debated. “In a widely diverse group, defining who “we” are should not be easy,” I said in my presentation. Practical governance creates space for disagreements to be voiced and we can also learn from them.

When I spoke about lived experience, I felt energized by my confidence in what I was saying and by the strong show of support from individuals with lived experience in the crowd, including a cheer from the back—a peer with current lived experience and a vocal advocate for peer-led governance in tent cities and low-barrier supportive housing. There are a lot of assumptions made about lived experience, I asserted in the presentation. Too often people take for granted the idea that one or two people with lived experience in a board room means there is diverse representation from impacted populations. Representation can be tokenistic when participants’ views are not incorporated into real changes. You may have a relevant experience — that proximity to the issue matters—but it is hard work to figure out what lived experience means for governance decisions, how housing supports are run. We need collective processes where people can build ideas off one another. Perhaps, I hear you say something and then realize I do not see things that way at all. Maybe I agree with something I heard and that makes me think of something else. Different meanings, principles, and processes can start to take shape within these shared conversations.

I responded to some weighty questions after my talk, including questions about the entrenched challenges: These are systemic issues and what practical advice do you have for organizations that either do not want to change or find it difficult to change? How does this project build on other work in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, for example, that outlines

principles for work with people with lived experience? In response to the latter question, I noted that these are exactly the kinds of approaches that inspire me. They articulate important and high standards for community direction and involvement throughout any research process. The standards are also difficult to achieve for exactly the reason underlying the former question: structural conditions make existing governance hard to change. Whereas the existing resources, such as those from the Downtown Eastside, outline what is needed, practical governance can support groups to live up to those principles. Rather than just attempting to force more people into existing governance structures, practical governance suggests new governance strategies. The idea is to co-develop methods and processes that can facilitate community-engaged research that also co-creates effective outcomes for communities. Thus, my contribution is really about the process, not just about signing a declaration, or saying we will have a more people on board (I would argue that such efforts are also important, but simply insufficient on their own). The work is hard because the issues are complex, and they are structural.

One audience member from a local advocacy group suggested that I make the whole thesis into a graphic novel. That individual followed up later to say they did not mean the whole thesis, but more about how to do the method. Someone from another group suggested that I should come back and do a training in practical governance. One audience member emphasised the need for a comprehensive list of individuals and organizations that have endorsed the declaration.

After a few more comments, it was almost an hour into the presentation, and I was tempted to wrap everything up. All the chairs were still faced forward to me, and given the participatory focus of the work, it did not feel right for the whole conversation to be mediated through me at the front of the room. I asked groups to discuss a few questions at their tables:

What was your involvement in the creation of *The Victoria Declaration* and how does it connect with your own work? After some more input from the table groups, knowing time was a little tight, I asked people to think silently about this question: What is the significance of *The Victoria Declaration*? Then, I suggested, discuss with your table: What is one way your involvement motivates or inspires your own future work?

One group asked for more time to talk about the first question. I hesitated, but then said, no. I asked one of the individuals asking for more time to instead share with everyone. I was glad I held my ground and moved things along. I have known this individual for many years, and we even co-wrote an article for the local *Street Newz* together years ago. The individual also happens to be a former Mayor of Victoria and a retired social work professor who wrote a book on anti-oppressive practice for social workers. I was not surprised when the comments were important and incisive: there is a problem with the big housing organizations—they don't have inclusive structures. At the same time, the individual noted they are on a board of a community association, and their board is not inclusive either. So, they are in a process of changing the structure to have representatives of different sub-constituencies to become more inclusive, a sort of networked approach to expanding representation. I appreciated the honest acknowledgment that many of us are part of problematic structures that we are struggling to change.

"Is the City's endorsement of *The Victoria Declaration* still in place?" asked one group, noting the recent turnover of the City Council. It is. The deeper point followed: "If so, what parts do, or don't the current council endorse?" I took this as one of a number of questions on accountability and implementation. One unhoused participant spoke about conflicts with bylaw officers and service providers. This individual was enthusiastic when I talked about needing to co-create the solutions. "It cannot just be the problem is over there," I said, "but how do those

impacted get to be part of responses?” Another lived expert raised the idea that there is hope that comes from being a meaningful participant in a process. An unhoused participant shared experiences of persistent displacement, traumatic losses, personal belongings impounded, fighting to keep a dry blanket. It was serious stuff. I stepped into the conversation, acknowledged the importance of what had been shared. An Indigenous outreach worker said her piece: there are a lot of teams out there providing support. The same unhoused individual stepped into the conversation and shared more difficult, honest realities of hard living and camping in public space, constant struggles with authorities tasked with moving you along.

I asked Elder May Sam to help us all feel grounded before we left. What has been shared, she said to the group, is hard. May looked and moved in a semi-circle, motioning all around the room, emphasising as she spoke, indicating and acknowledging everyone with her arms. What each person shared matters. Everyone in this room cares so much, she said, to incredible effect. What stuck with me most: she said, we won’t give up. She talked about being grounded and how she was going to sing a song that she had recently heard at another event where hard conversations took place. The song was moving, and the energy did feel better after that.

Sacred. Or haunting.

An empty table begs the question.

Who is missing, front and centre?

Janine tapped me on the shoulder during the small group discussions, “I can’t stop looking at this table with no one at it. It’s like it’s there for the ones in our group who have passed.”

When I was inviting people to the event, there were seven women from HITC I couldn’t figure out how to get in touch with. All Indigenous women. Either no phone number, or the

number I had was not in service. An old note told me to call Shirley through a service provider. It was the only call that went through. Someone called me back an hour later to say Shirley passed away during covid. Colonial violence was deeply, wrenchingly real in that moment.

The sharing at the end of my community defence was hard. The missing community members was even harder. We talk about making space for lived and living experience. There is loss and struggle in the lived experience of combined opioid and housing crises, hard living, and criminalization. After the meeting, I lost sleep over it, wondering if I struck the right balance, caring for the stories offered in the space, holding difficult realities as part of the process.

I said in my talk that practical governance invites disagreement and hard conversations. Harm and trauma are not the whole conversation though. Sharing and feedback after my presentation also pointed to housing systems that are not working and frustration with law enforcement. Valid critiques of current systems do not capture the whole conversation either. Our focus was not just harm or critique, but rather, co-creating principled processes and responses.

Since the presentation, I have had conversations about future directions for the declaration and practical governance. I have let everyone know that I am already committed to my next project here in Edmonton. The proposals speak to the way the project and the method may move in Victoria, and I hope in other contexts, too. The proposals include evaluating a current project using *The Victoria Declaration* principles as the benchmark; organizing an event promoting the declaration; advancing the declaration within other municipalities in the Capital Region District; implementing practical governance in organizational governance; using practical governance to develop a municipal safety and well-being plan; and presenting the declaration at a conference as an example of possible approaches. There are a few ways I plan to

contribute to the proposed next steps, for example, creating an *Illustrated Guide to Practical Governance* and co-developing a training workshop on practical governance. My hope is to support the practical application I see building in all these contexts, which I think, is the best I could hope for practical governance.

Message. A method.

Grown on coast and prairie.

Co-create and reciprocate.

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Appendix A

The Victoria Declaration—A Statement on Governance in Housing and Support Services

HOME IN THE CITY PROJECT

THE VICTORIA DECLARATION

A Statement on Governance in Housing & Support Services

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We believe in the following:

- 1 GOVERNANCE INVOLVES ALL OF US**

The governance of housing and support services begins with each of us and the rules we collectively choose to follow.
- 2 ADDRESSING INEQUITIES**

There is no separation between the work of addressing inequities and the governance of housing and support services.
- 3 MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE**

To live and work well together requires each of us to help build dialogue within our community and across communities. This requires the knowledges of those who access services and the knowledges of those who provide services.
- 4 MAKING COMMUNITY SAFETY CENTRAL TO OUR WORK**

We are all responsible for community safety, and for building a range of community responses to harms and conflicts.
- 5 INCLUSIVITY**

It is possible to create policies and practices that protect everyone from harassment and violence.

In light of these guiding principles for our downtown community,

WE COMMIT TO THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

- 1** Building long-term reciprocal relationships. Where possible, our services will be meaningfully informed by Indigenous laws governing relationships.
- 2** Creating safe spaces and common ground for the benefit of all involved.
- 3** Building the capacity to have dialogue that helps us make decisions together across differences.
- 4** Moving beyond a political and economic culture of scarcity towards building a future based on shared resources and understanding.
- 5** Creating a community that can work together to provide a variety of housing options that meet the needs of our diverse population.
- 6** Enacting the kinds of relationships we need that will create the governance of housing and supports we envision.

WAYS TO MOVE FORWARD ON THESE PRINCIPLES

The work of housing and support services requires the wisdom of all to serve the needs of our community. Our community includes people in various positions with multiple backgrounds and experiences. Our differences present challenges but we also have ways of providing care and support for each other through the community we create.

We believe the root of how we run things begins with each of us. We each choose the rules we follow or contest in our relationships. These rules may be said or unsaid and this involves both formal and informal decision-making. This is how we govern our relationships with each other.

The rules we collectively choose to follow determines what the governance of housing and support services looks like.

1

WE START FROM WHAT WE KNOW, BUT WE HAVE ROOM TO GROW

We recognize there are real power imbalances between different members of our community, which arise from our differences. These differences occur for many reasons, including race, Indigeneity, gender, sexuality, class, and ability. There are also systemic power imbalances between people who provide services and people who access services. We acknowledge all of the work people have undertaken to mitigate the inequities that arise from these differences. We must never turn away from the injustices that lie at the heart of these inequities. We commit ourselves to the hard work of finding ways to overcome these imbalances.

Most importantly we believe that there is no separation between the work of addressing these inequities and the governance of housing and support services.

We acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonialism. As a result, Indigenous peoples face significant and distinct experiences of displacement and homelessness.



We believe that reconciliation will involve a substantial transformation on the part of non-Indigenous individuals and our society's institutions and systems. We will work to implement the relevant TRC Calls to Action. We will make space for services created by and for Indigenous peoples. Indigenous legal traditions contain important resources for responding to pressing issues in our communities.

Services can and should be informed by Indigenous approaches to developing long-term reciprocal relationships.

We aim to build supports that are shaped by our different experiences and cultures. We acknowledge that this is unceded Lekwungen (Songhees and Esquimalt) territory, where many Indigenous peoples live. This acknowledgement should be part of our conversations about governance. Our different perspectives are impacted by our identities and backgrounds. Our perspectives also come from the street cultures created when we live in community with each other.

Through education and action, we will work to create culturally safe spaces and common ground for the benefit of all involved.

2

2

**NOTHING
ABOUT US
WITHOUT US**

Listening is a practice and a skill. We commit to expanding our ability to hear the concerns of others. We will respond to issues and build common understanding through clear communication.

We will gather, seek wisdom, and listen to everyone impacted by a decision. It is difficult to make decisions together, including people who deliver services and people who access these services. Still, we believe that more shared decision making is necessary to make the best decisions.

We recognize the need to build collaboration and solidarity among large inclusive groups to address collective issues. We also recognize the need for smaller groups coming from specific communities or addressing a specific issue. This requires participation and decision-making with peers who have experienced the issues.

We call on everyone to commit to building our capacity to create dialogue and make decisions together across differences.

3

**NO UNITY WITHOUT
DIVERSITY, NO DIVERSITY
WITHOUT UNITY**

In order to build inclusive services, we will honour different forms of knowledge. Balancing multiple perspectives will not be easy work. The difficulty lies in creating ways where both sides are able to communicate their challenges to each other. We will acknowledge the different places we are coming from.

We value the knowledges of those who access services and the knowledges of those who provide services.

To live and work well together requires each of us to help build dialogue within our community.

Police hold a position of power in our society. The inequities faced by our community have resulted in criminalization and traumatic interactions with police. Sometimes the only response available in crisis situations is calling police. These relationships are complex. In some cases, we will build understanding and work to improve relationships among community members, service providers, and police or bylaw officers. This should happen within a context of decolonization and decriminalization. Further, this work should not shift our attention away from community accountability and safety practices that do not include police.

We believe that we are all responsible for community safety, and for building a range of community responses to harms and conflicts.



Like all communities, we deal with conflict and have our own ways of responding to conflict. We also have work to do in order to create practices and solutions to help us work through issues in our community. Sometimes policies that are meant to protect, focus on protecting service providers more than on those accessing care. We believe it is possible to honour personal boundaries while questioning the divisions that exist between those who access and provide services.

We believe it is possible to create policies and practices that protect everyone from harassment and violence.



4

HONOURING WHERE WE ARE, BELIEF IN A NEW TOMORROW

A declaration is a tool and a living document. We hope our declaration can be a tool to help us build the relationships needed to create healthy communities and make social change. This requires collaboration across differences and across organizations. We believe that everyone has a right to dignity and to a safe and affordable home. Our economic system treats home ownership as an asset, but we can also fight for housing as a social good.

For the benefit of the community, we commit to moving beyond a political and economic culture of scarcity towards building a future based on shared resources and understanding.

The work of creating our community should not fall solely on us. We should be supported by both service providers and by governments at all levels. We are a diverse community and we need a variety of housing options that meet people where they are at. Implementing “rights-based” and “Housing First” approaches are an important part of this. We also need integrated models that ensure we are working together and sharing information. We need education on Indigenous and colonial histories and understanding of how race, class, ability, age, gender and sexual orientation intersect.

We are committed to creating community by working together to provide a variety of housing options that meet the needs of our diverse population.



Housing makes a material difference in people's lives. Our work in the governance of housing and supports binds us together by higher ideals. For some, these are spiritual in nature, involving religious values and connections to forces beyond ourselves. For others, these are the values we owe to each other, of mutual respect, tolerance, trust and equality. And for others, these are deeply-held political values of self-determination for Indigenous and other communities. We share the belief that democracy is not only a political system, but a way of equally valuing each other by valuing each other's voices.

All of these values are necessary to enact the kinds of relationships we need that will create the governance of housing and supports we envision.

ADDENDUM: WHO WE ARE

This declaration was created by the Home in the City project, which includes people with current and previous experiences of homelessness and people facing diverse issues related to housing – marginally housed, inadequately housed, unstably housed, or unsafely housed. Our project includes people living in poverty as well as some housed allies who are not. Many of us access services and some of us provide services. We are connected to a range of organizations and groups; although, many of us came only representing ourselves. The group that contributed to the declaration includes community members from diverse backgrounds and communities: visitors to these territories as well as Indigenous peoples, including Elders, from a number of nations close and far. We do not claim to sufficiently represent all of these groups, nor do we all agree on all matters.

This process was facilitated by Renee Beausoleil, as part of her phd research, with Matthew Wildcat and the UVic Indigenous Law Research Unit.

Signers agree with the spirit and intent of this declaration. We hope many organizations and individuals will sign on and support its implementation.

Appendix B

Invitation to Initial Home in the City Workshop, December 2018



Background:

The key to understanding a healthy community, Indigenous or not, is appreciating that cultivation of the human spirit is grounded in emplaced networks of significance.

– Jesse Thistle, *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada* (2017, p. 7)

Governance reflects different ways people are positioned in society: it emerges from what Cree-Métis researcher Jesse Thistle (2017) calls our “emplaced networks of significance,” and it can either hinder or support the good relationships that enable healthy communities.

This project considers whether it is possible to build forms of governance that can support community-building and effectively respond to inequalities related to colonialism, racism, gender and class. In a collaboration between researcher Renée McBeth Beausoleil and individuals connected to service organizations in Victoria, we will unpack and develop governance processes and principles relevant to housing and support services. Our focus is dispute resolution, horizontal relationships and alliance building. The research outcomes will include practical resources for community use.

Plan for the first workshop:

Wednesday, December 5, 2018
9am until 3pm
First Metropolitan Church, 932 Balmoral Rd.

The focus is dispute resolution and alliance building.

Agenda includes:

- Building consensus on responses to conflicts in housing and support services
- Brainstorming about process that work
- Identifying shared underlying principles

Also, with the help of facilitators from the UVic Indigenous Law Research Unit, we will try out some tools for introducing Indigenous principles and laws that might help with this discussion.

We gratefully acknowledge our work is taking place on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen speaking people of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

Please let Renée know if you are coming by November 28, 2018 (contact below). Stipends will be provided for participants with lived experience and Elders.

This is a University of Alberta graduate student research project – consent forms will be provided at the event. The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta (Pro00084817).

For more information contact: Renée rmcbeth@ualberta.ca or 587-599-5363

Appendix C

Invitation to Home in the City Workshop, January 2019 (Declaration Writing Meeting)



SHARED STATEMENT MEETING

Thursday, January 17, 2019
1:30 until 4pm
First Metropolitan Church, 932 Balmoral Rd., Room 200

The focus is creating a shared statement based on the cards from the December 5, 2018 meeting.

Focus question:

“What ideas need to inform a statement on informal governance in housing and support services in Victoria?”

Agenda:

1. Review the cards from Dec 5
2. Group the cards with similar themes and describe them
3. Use the themes to create a shared statement
4. Debrief and plan next steps (e.g. how to keep the conversation going, include others and share with interested organizations)

Please let Renée know if you are coming as soon as you can (contact below). Stipends will be provided for participants with lived experience and Elders.

This is a University of Alberta graduate student research project. The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta (Pro00084817).

For more information contact: Renée rmcbeth@ualberta.ca or 587-599-5363

We gratefully acknowledge our work is taking place on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen speaking people of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

Appendix D

Invitation to Downtown Indigenous Laws Home in the City Workshop, January 2019



INVITATION TO INDIGENOUS LAW WORKSHOP JAN 18-19, 2019

As part of the Home in the City project, the UVic Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU) has offered to facilitate a two-day introduction to Indigenous law workshop for people connected to housing and support services in Victoria, including people with experience of homelessness as well as a few students.

We would love to have you there. This is a chance for a small group to learn the ILRU methodology developed by Val Napoleon and Hadley Friedland, which draws out Indigenous law from stories. For more info about ILRU visit: www.uvic.ca/ilru.

Space is limited and the workshop builds over two days so we are ideally looking for a two-day commitment (although we understand some may need to come and go).

- When:** Friday, January 18th & Saturday, January 19th from 9 am until 4 pm each day
- Where:** First Metropolitan Church, 932 Balmoral Road, Room 119
- Why:** We are working on the traditional territory of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. We aim to include Indigenous laws and principles in conversations about how we govern our relationships and our work on this territory.

Breakfast and lunch will be provided as well as a small honorarium for lived experience and Elders.

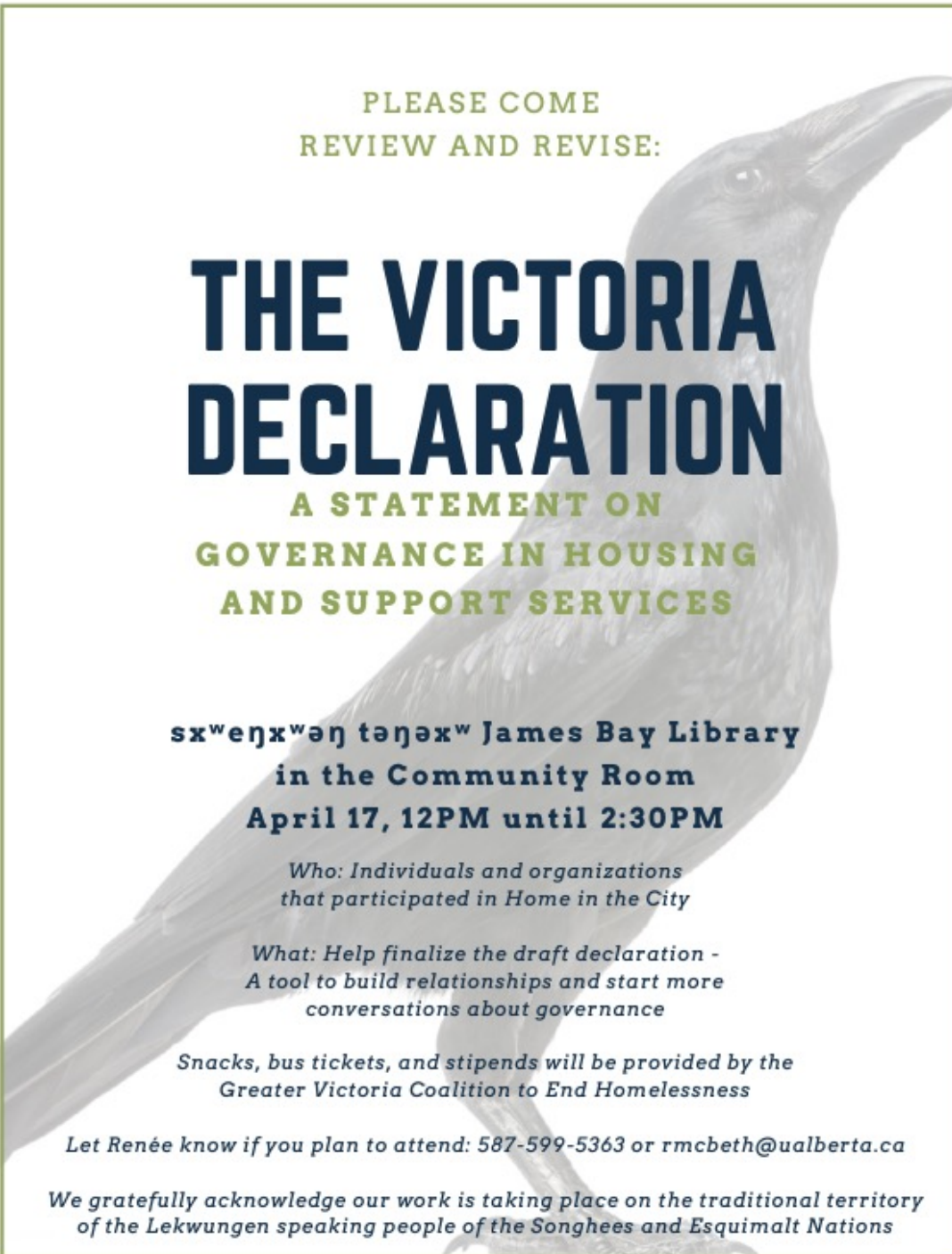
Please contact Renée to RSVP or for more information: rncbeth@ualberta.ca or (587) 599-5363.

Looking forward to working together in 2019.

We gratefully acknowledge our work is taking place on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen speaking people of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

Appendix E

Invitation to Home in the City Workshop April 2019 (Declaration Review Meeting)



PLEASE COME
REVIEW AND REVISE:

THE VICTORIA DECLARATION

A STATEMENT ON
GOVERNANCE IN HOUSING
AND SUPPORT SERVICES

sxʷenxʷəŋ təŋəxʷ James Bay Library
in the Community Room
April 17, 12PM until 2:30PM

*Who: Individuals and organizations
that participated in Home in the City*

*What: Help finalize the draft declaration -
A tool to build relationships and start more
conversations about governance*

*Snacks, bus tickets, and stipends will be provided by the
Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness*

Let Renée know if you plan to attend: 587-599-5363 or rmcbeth@ualberta.ca

*We gratefully acknowledge our work is taking place on the traditional territory
of the Lekwungen speaking people of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations*

Appendix F

Discussion Guide – Follow-Up Interviews

1. Can you start by introducing yourself a little bit?
 - a. And can you tell me, in what ways do you see yourself as connected to housing and support services or downtown communities more generally?
 - b. How did you get involved with Home in the City? (Or, what brought you to the Dec 5th workshop?)
2. Are there any aspects of the Home in the City meetings that stood out to you or stuck with you afterwards? Was there anything that came up that really connected to your own experience?
3. Were you left with any questions about the process or anything that happened in the meetings so far?
4. One of the things I hoped to do in this interview is share some of my early thoughts from my research so far and get feedback. Would that be ok? I've split my thoughts into two main parts.

- a. Here's the first part:

In the process we've been doing in Home in the City, for me, the grounding core of our work is the importance of building good relationships. But the reason I'm quite committed to talking about relationships in terms of "governance" is because governance involves relationships, and structures, and decision-making. So, this means being concerned with how we take care of relationships, but also with the structural contexts that that impact our relationships. When I say "structures" this could be the way an organization is set up, or the systems created by governments, or patterns of behavior that are in institutions and in the actions of individuals that play out as racism, colonialism, ability, classism. These structures, of course, create huge power imbalances. And, governance is helpful because it involves the decisions we make to actually respond to issues, both informally in our relationships and within the formal structures of organizations. But, I think what I've seen is how important it is to have ways of bringing together concerns with relationships and with structures, where neither outweighs the other in our decision-making.

- i. I'm wondering, what comes to mind for you when I talk about governance in this way, in terms of relationships and structures?
 - ii. Anywhere you've seen a focus or lack thereof, on both relationship building and addressing unjust structures?

- b. Second part:

Sometimes groups try to address power imbalances by including more people, like peers and other community members in decision-making. The challenge here is meaningfully including a wide range of people in decision-making. What can happen is consultations that are long and don't lead to practical outcomes. When these processes are ineffective, the views of

staff and professionals can end up representing the common good. Or, opaque top-down decision making can be justified as necessary for everyone's safety or necessary to get things done.

- i. Have you seen this in your experience?
 - ii. Have you seen exceptions where organizations do quite a good job including more people in decision-making?
5. I think of our declaration is an example of a tool to help build relationships and start conversations about governance, especially how we govern our relationships and create more equitable relationships. I hope what we've been doing can help us learn, through success or failure, more about how to build processes that involved significant range of people (from street, activists, orgs, academic). After Thurs the group may agree to make our draft declaration public and I'm just wondering
- a. Who else should we be bringing this to? [to discuss the declaration or to perhaps sign on]
 - b. Do you have any other suggestions for next steps or directions we might go with this work?


Appendix G

Poster: Victoria Declaration Reboot, May 2022

HOME IN THE CITY PROJECT

THE VICTORIA DECLARATION


A Discussion on Governance in Housing & Support Services Hosted by Neighbourhood Solidarity with Unhoused Neighbours (NSUN)



Location: James Bay United Church / ZOOM
(511 Michigan St, Victoria)

Time: Tuesday, May 10, 2022 from 11 am – 1 pm

Agenda:
Do you have any questions about the declaration?
Have you had recent experiences that relate to the declaration?
What is the relevance of the declaration? What are its limits?
Where should we go with this next?



THE VICTORIA DECLARATION
A Statement on Governance in Housing & Support Services

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We envision a future where:



- 1. GOVERNANCE INVOLVES ALL OF US**
The governance of housing and support services begins with each of us and the rules we collectively choose to follow.
- 2. ADDRESSING INEQUITIES**
There is no separation between the work of addressing inequities and the governance of housing and support services.
- 3. MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE**
To live and work well together requires each of us to have honest dialogue with our community and across communities. This requires the knowledge of one's own views and the knowledge of those who provide services.
- 4. MAKING COMMUNITY SAFETY CENTRAL TO OUR WORK**
We are all responsible for community safety, and for finding a range of community responses to harm and conflict.
- 5. INCLUSIVITY**
It is essential to have policies and practices that protect everyone from harassment and violence.

In light of these guiding principles for our communities, we:


WE COMMIT TO THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

- 1.** Building long-term regional partnerships, where people, our resources and the municipality community co-organize and govern relationships.
- 2.** Creating safe space and common ground for the benefit of all citizens.
- 3.** Building the capacity to have honest dialogue and action towards building a future based on shared resources and understanding.
- 4.** Creating a community that can work together to provide a range of housing and support services that meet the needs of all.
- 5.** Ensuring the kinds of relationships that support the governance of housing and support services.

Read the 2020 Victoria Declaration:



Join by ZOOM:



Created by Bruce Livingston

Appendix H

Social Media Call-Outs, September 2022



Appendix I

City of Victoria Council Member Motion to Endorse *The Victoria Declaration*



**Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of September 29, 2022**

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** September 22, 2022
From: Councillor Sarah Potts and Councillor Ben Isitt
Subject: Endorsement of Victoria Declaration on Housing and Support Services

BACKGROUND

The Victoria Declaration on Governance in Housing and Support Services was co-created in a consensus-based process in 2018 and 2019, involving more than 50 community members, about half of whom are Indigenous and half of whom have lived experience of homelessness.

The Victoria Declaration has been endorsed by organizations including the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, Greater Victoria Acting Together and Neighbourhood Solidarity with Unhoused Neighbours. The process that culminated in creation of the Declaration was supported by the Indigenous Law Research Unit at the University of Victoria and the University of Alberta's Home in the City Project.

The Declaration is an aspirational document, articulating principles for equitable and collaborative governance of housing and support services in Greater Victoria. It provides a baseline for expectations regarding service delivery. And it depends on people continuing to work towards the commitments.

It is recommended that the City of Victoria endorse the Victoria Declaration and share it with other local governments in the Capital Region, requesting favourable consideration and resolutions of support.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Endorses the Victoria Declaration on Governance in Housing and Support Services.

Respectfully submitted,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Councillor Sarah Potts.

Councillor Sarah Potts

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Councillor Ben Isitt.

Councillor Isitt

Attachments:

1. Victoria Declaration on Governance in Housing and Support Services

Appendix J

Social Media Call-Out Following Council Member Motion



Appendix K

Handout, Final Report Back, January 2024 (“Community Defence”)

