1640 Riverside Rd: Case Study Research on the Decolonization of Contemporary Architecture and Design Practice

by Kristina Zālīte, Cory Douglas, Alyssa Semczyszyn, Kim Cooper, and Ron Hart

This research project was funded by Landscape Architecture Canada Foundation and VanCity Community Investment Grant

Cover and back image by Cory Douglas
Graphic design and illustrations by Kara Crabb and Robyn Adams

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Summary

This study investigates changing relationships and ways of knowing during the architecture and landscape architecture design process in the context of designing supportive housing that is reflective of the local cultural landscape. Our research team - Architects Ron Hart and Kim Cooper, Landscape Architects Alyssa Semczyszyn and Kristina Zalite, and Cultural Coordinator Cory Douglas- live/work on the unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. The purpose of this study is to reflect on our team's design process and, perhaps more importantly, what we missed during the development permit process, and how we can do better in trying to decolonize our design process.

The case study site is a 0.5-hectare parcel owned by British Columbia Housing Management Commission (BC Housing). The land is on unceded Matsqui and Semá:th (Sumas) First Nations land, part of the larger Stó:lō Nation, and land of Halq'eméylem-speaking people located in what is often known as the Coast Salish Territory of British Columbia. The site is surrounded by industrial and commercial development. It is adjacent to a regularly-inundated floodplain and channelized watercourse that connects to the SeÍ:tslehōq' (Sand Drifting) or Marshall Lonzo Creek natural watercourse, eventually connecting to the Stó:lō (Fraser River) which is BC's largest drainage basin and which discharges to the Salish Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

The study uses grounded theory and relational research methods to illuminate ideas shared between the project designers, community members, and Host Nations. A literature review outlines concepts of decolonizing, relationality, and inclusion of local culture – and it is this team's understanding and agreement that Indigenous inclusion is a practice that should be undertaken by Indigenous people.

Findings show that cultural advisory services were delivered through a continuous cultural engagement which created a sense of heightened creativity, a continuum of knowledge coordination, and a compounding of values. Findings also show that building relations in the design team established trust and heightened creativity. The design team added what we have called "placeholders" for programming the site with imagined designs. These placeholders are maintaining space in the site design, and a budget line-item, for future design of ethnobotanical gardens, creative artistic motifs, and places for and cultural practices.

The case study revealed ways in which the design process fell short of decolonizing approaches. The design lacks new language across all scales (site specific using Halq'eméylem language and the larger cultural and biophysical context); voices of Host Nation Elders, artists, and youth; values-based language; and certainly, ways of decolonizing that we have not yet considered. The research process revealed a gap in the capacity training of and between the consultant team, client, and Host Nation. Capacity, anti-colonial, and anti-racism training could help the development of all parties to become better learning organizations to make the transition from individual to organizational decolonizing practices.

The study concludes by outlining possible future research that investigates consultancy practices, development industry process and language, and additional relationality between consultants and the development industry. This report was a one-and-a-half year endeavor that we hope will spur on deeper research and practical change. We are grateful to the Landscape Architecture Canada Foundation, Vancity Community Investment Grant, and BC Housing for providing an opportunity for our team to do this research.

Introduction

This study investigates changing relationships and ways of knowing during the architecture and landscape architecture design process in the context of designing supportive housing that is reflective of the local cultural landscape. Our team searched for ways to improve our design process with the design goal of providing excellent housing infrastructure, and to creating a healthy and culturally supportive space for all residents.

The purpose of this study is to reflect on our team's design process and, perhaps more importantly, what we missed during the development permit process, and how we can understand decolonial design. We are looking to develop more inclusive, equitable, and creative strategies for our design work.

Reseach / Design Team

Our research team includes the following project consultants who live/work on the unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. We are a group of settler descendants of mixed European ancestry working in a consultant team with Cory Douglas (Modern Formline Design, Sḵwx̱wú7mesh First Nation member with Haida and Tsimshian ancestry). We are Kristina Zālīte (Zāle Design), Alyssa Semczyszyn (Prospect & Refuge Landscape Architeture), Ron Hart and Kim Cooper (Ron Hart Architect).

We are grateful to the Landscape Architecture Canada Foundation and Vancity Community Investment Grant for providing an opportunity for our team to do this research. We are grateful to BC Housing in their willingness to investigate their own institutional change and to provide in-kind support. This article is one portion of our ongoing personal and organizational investigations about our colonial pasts.

Kristina Zālīte

Cory Douglas

Kim Cooper

Alyssa Semczyszyn

Ron Hart

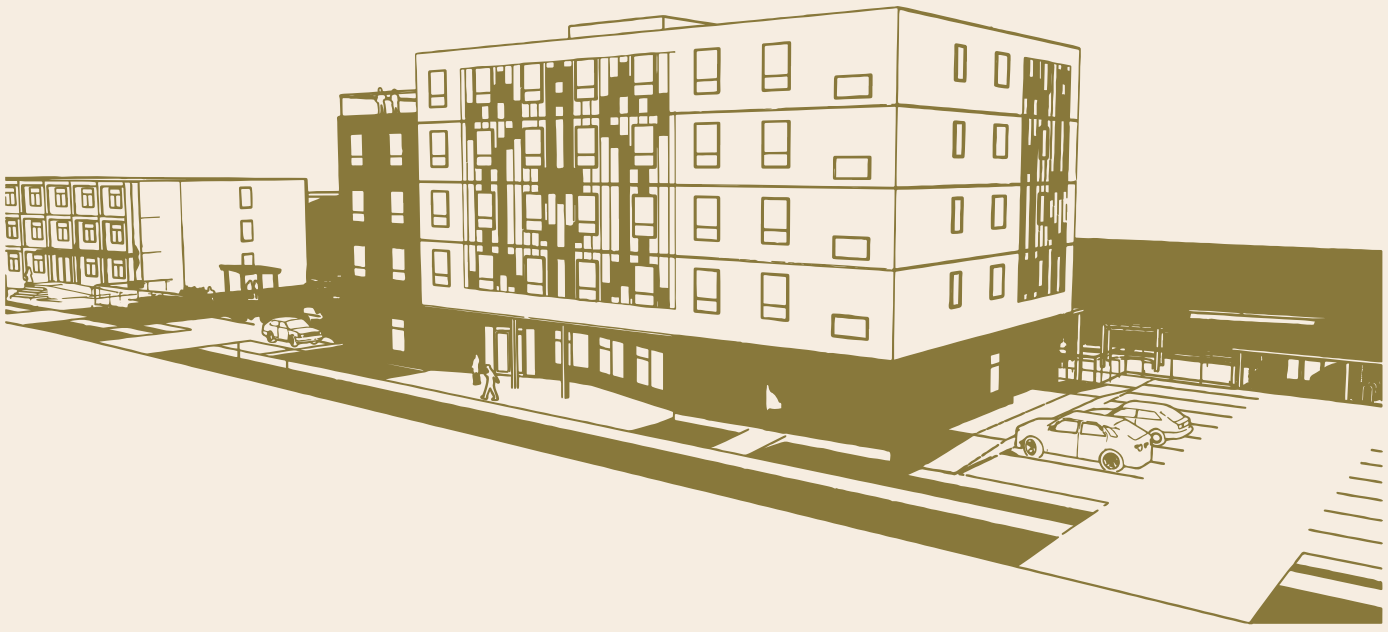
Site Context

British Columbia Housing Management Commission (BC Housing) is in the process of developing a 0.5-hectare housing site on Matsqui and Semá:th (Sumas) First Nations land. The Matsqui and Semá:th (Sumas) First Nations are part of the larger Stó:lō Nation, and land of Halq'eméylem-speaking people located in the Central Fraser Valley region and in the Coast Salish Territory of British Columbia. The site is on unceded (stolen) lands.

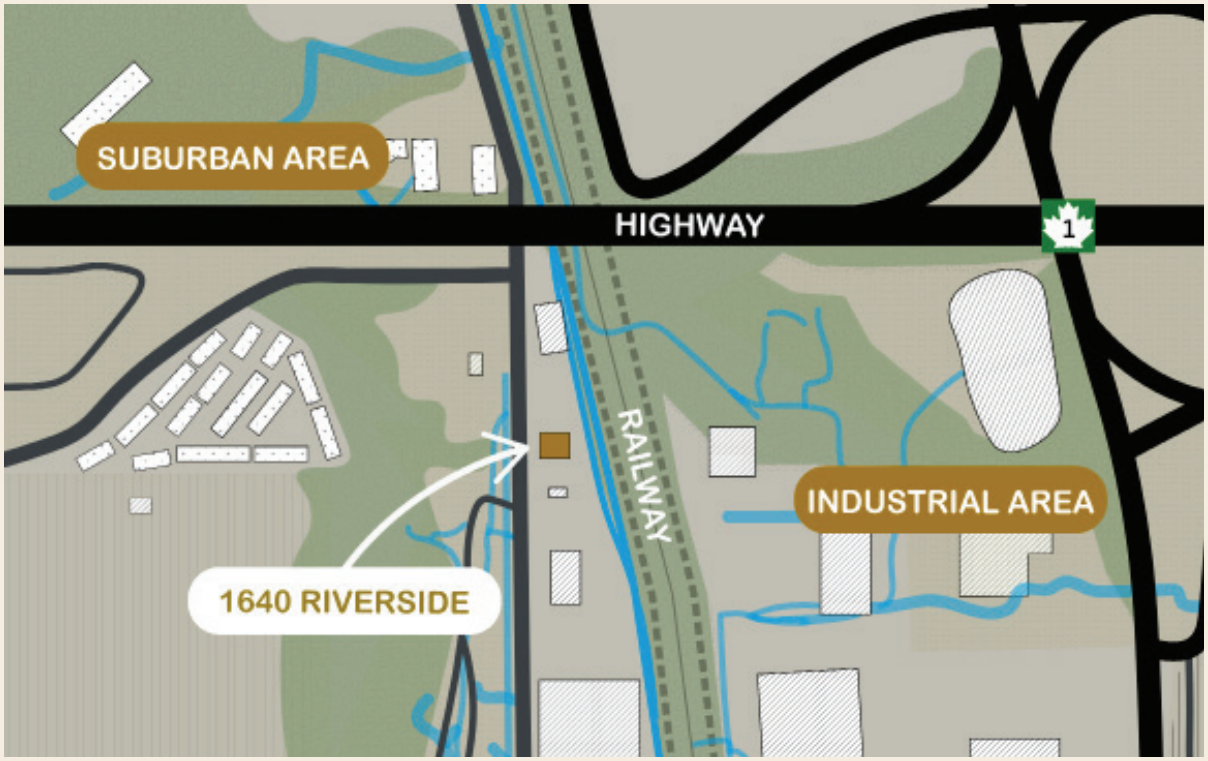
The project address is 1640 Riverside Road, Abbotsford, British Columbia. At the time that this report is being prepared the project is in the detailed design stage, moving towards Building Permit submission to the City of Abbotsford planners for their approval to proceed with construction documentation.

The site is heavily developed and is surrounded by railroad tracks, Trans-Canada highway, large commercial development, industry, and nearby residences. It is immediately adjacent to a floodplain and is regularly inundated. The uniqueness of this project is that it is a very small site with very high user needs and a restricted operational and maintenance budget. The consultants have worked on BC Housing projects in the past and are familiar with the operation constraints and typical budgets.

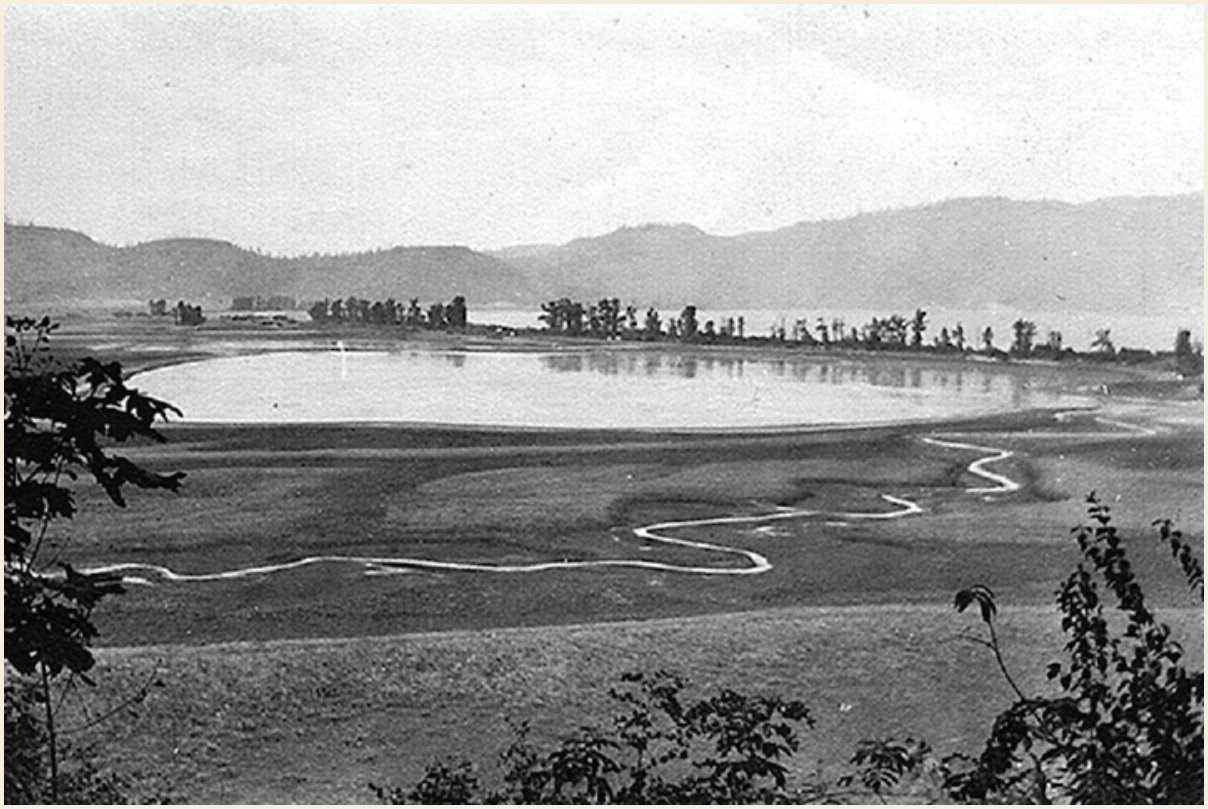
The design is for a 5-storey housing facility that covers 31% of the site. The landscape design includes spaces for circulation, gathering, ceremony, Indigenous plant gardens, and outdoor pavilions. The site includes a setback protected environmental area with a non-piped, channelized watercourse that connects to the Seí:tslehōq' (Sand Drifting) or Marshall Lonzo Creek, natural watercourse. Lonzo Creek feeds into the Stótelō (Little Creek) or Sumas River and eventually the Stó:lō (Fraser) River (*Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre* and Sumas First Nation website).



Design elevation.



The site is situated between industrial and suburban areas, between creeks and unpiped watercourse channels.


Sumas Lake before it was drained in the 1920s. Source: The Abbotsford News and The Reach photo.

Research Approach

Methods: This paper uses case study methodology outlined in *Landscape Architecture Research: Inquiry, Strategy, Design* (Deming & Swaffield, 2011) and *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Wilson, 2008), where the latter provided not only methodology but also research principles that guided this study.

The methods include (1) a review of literature about decolonizing practices and (2) Grounded Theory method of finding patterns in expression/language/meaning of unstructured interviews, recorded discussions, and group talk-story conversations. We followed the guiding principles of creating relationships through the research life cycle, and to let ideas develop through the formation of relationships (Quinless, 2022; Wilson, 2008). We tried to maintain a research process that was equally important as the outcome of the research.

Partner and Community Conversations: During the design and research process, our team consulted with community members, including Aliya Tejani, Project Manager at the BC Housing Development; Aleksander Petkov, Candace Lavallee, Hayden Kramp, and Kayden Bennett at the Cole Starnes and Riverside Shelter, Lookout Housing & Health Society Service Providers; Matsqui host nation Chief Alice McKay and Brenda Morgan; Sumas host nation Chief Dalton Silver and Councilor Chris Silver; Danilo Caron of Urban Systems Engineering; and Jennifer Cutbill of Lateral Agency.

Critical Decolonizing Concepts for Designers

Decolonizing as design professionals means knowing that the architectural and building industry have contributed towards the erasure of indigenous presence in our country. The field of landscape architecture studies and practice should aim to "understand not only the geopolitical power of landscape in systems of colonization, but also its underlying coloniality" (Dang, 2021, p.1005). For Tiffany Kaewen Dang, this means tackling the concept of land back through relearning approaches to the built environment which have been "naturalized through the practices of landscape professionals", including development, conservation, management, and reclamation (2021, p.1011).

> **"Placemaking and design have long been complicit in holding up colonial narratives of place. Colonial legacies are often celebrated [...] and the design of communities are often largely made by designers, architects, and developers of European ancestry, which means that only the Western worldview of place is represented."**
>
> **Sxwpilemaát Siyám / Chief Leanne Joe**
> (Raphael, Lily. 2022, p.136)

North American colonization brought the Doctrine of Discovery, providing legal rights to lands that were mistakenly deemed to be 'discovered' by white Christian immigrants; the notion that land is *terra nullius*, empty or unoccupied unless it was labored upon; and a spirit of conquest, hierarchy, land division and dominion (Rattray, 2020; Dang, 2021; Belanger, 2018, 2020 and 2023). Decolonial engagement requires us to question these and other supremacist planning practices which permeate into our institutions and industry. Decolonizing includes "examining and dismantling the institutions and structures in place that favour settler society with regards to land use, business ownership and entrepreneurship, financing and community development" (Sxwpilemaát & Raphael, 2022, p.24). Decolonizing requires examining the system that condones settler sovereignty over land/water/air/earth. Furthermore, decolonizing acknowledges the legal structures that have disrupted Indigenous "epistemological, ontological, and cosmological relationships to land…" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p.5). For instance in May of 2023, Sumas First Nation Chief Dalton Silver called for the revocation of the Doctrine of Discovery, speaking out that it is important in advancing Indigenous rights to understand that the flesh and blood of the Sumas Nation ancestors are everyone and are interconnected with the land (Sumas, 2023).

Decolonizing engagement can include embedding a values-based Standard of Care and stewardship practices into design processes (Caron, 2023; Desjarlais Jr, 2021; Morin, 2022) “Decolonizing the Design Process with Five Indigenous Land-Based Paradigms” invites designers to approach their process with humility and openness, to find a vision to help guide the design direction, to be guided by intuition, and to ask ourselves what gifts we can give to our community partners (Bailey, Black, & Coar, 2022). This standard of care may trickle down into how organizations are run and how meetings are conducted. This standard of care may include personal and organizational anti-racism training such as learning about systemic racism, implicit biases, and personal/collective/generational trauma. As professionals we can take small steps towards creating collaborative examples of how we can work together to make reparations on a small scale.

Another step in a decolonizing process can include activism against, and seeing alternatives to, the standard, Western ways of framing knowledge. Some new approaches to seeking knowledge may include loving, healing, replanting, retracing pathways of despair and trauma, developing indigenous economies, reorienting our reference points for knowledge, designing and engineering indigenous solutions, and more (Smith, 2021). Decolonizing the design process includes recognizing other designer’s skills, knowledge, and differences; and that we need visionaries as much as we need practical designers (Guenther, 2022). Design practitioners can change prevailing norms by learning the protocols and placenames of individual nations, and by spending time with elders and community members to learn the history and future community needs (G. Fahlgren, 2017).

Relationality is being acutely aware that “an Indigenous epistemology has systems of knowledge built upon relationships between things, rather than on the things themselves” (Wilson, 2008, p.74). Building relations includes looking for collective knowledge and transcending from ‘conflict’ to ‘paradox’, especially when there are different ways of seeing the world (O’Toole, 2023).

“If there is a movement underway that could have a profound effect, it would be the notion of relationality, and applying that and teaching that through architecture.”

Della Costa
(2021)

Critical theory research paradigms such as feminist, race, and class theory consider researchers as inherently biased. Wilson takes this one step further and adds that a constructivist research paradigm sees a personal and meaningful interaction between the investigator and the subject as a key component of the research. Contrary to the standard case study methodology used in landscape architecture such as outlined in the seminal “Case Study Method for Landscape Architecture” (Francis, 2019), this research rejects the premise that researchers can be free of bias and that the researchers can avoid subjectivity. Attempting to develop a world view of Relationality was also a strategy used throughout this research, which meant that forming bonds with the research and other researchers was prioritized over remaining objective and maintaining ownership over the knowledge that was sought.

This research study finds that the ***inclusion*** of Indigenous cultural items should be implemented by Indigenous people. As a team of mostly uninvited guest settlers, we look to our advisor and Host Nation members for practices of cultural inclusion. We support the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge, values, ways of being, and Etuaptmumk/Two-Eyed Seeing (Marshall, 2021; Sxwpilemaát & Raphael, 2022). Wanda Della Costa has called this form of inclusion ‘Transition Imaginary’, where, similar to Wakanda city in the Black Panther movie, Indigenous futurism is imagined through symbols, fashion, architecture, and value systems (Dalla Costa, 2019 and 2023).

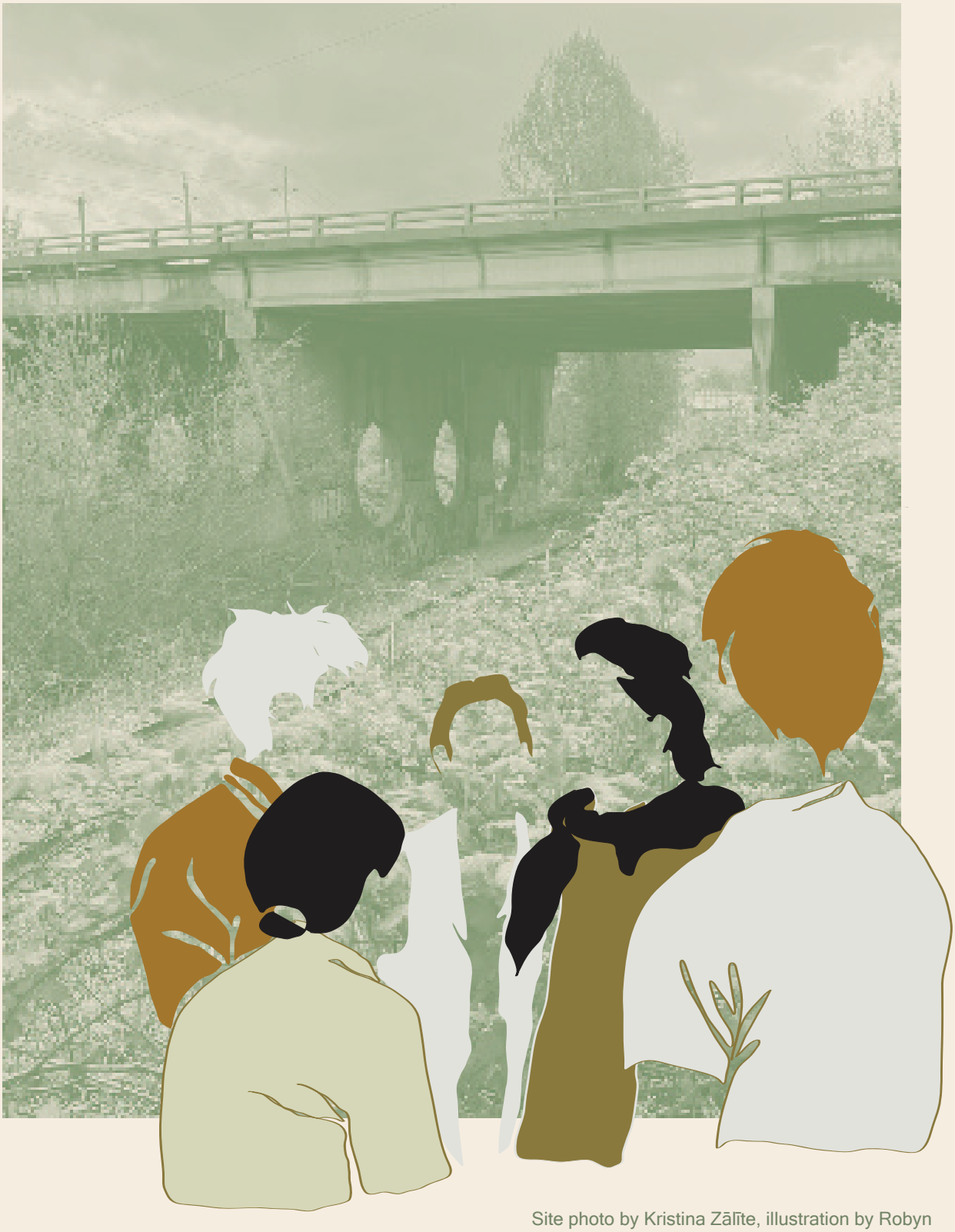
For the Vancouver Mural Festival it means bolstering Indigenous visual culture through blanketing the City with Debra Sparrow's xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) weaving murals. For Nalaine Morin, Tahltan Territory, Arrowblade Engineering Consulting Services, this means including Tahltan knowledge maps into the engineering design process, when they are deemed non-confidential (Morin, 2023). Inclusion can incorporate First Nations technologies of transportation, housing, bridge infrastructure, and food production (Herman, 2023). Cultural inclusion should never be limited to the design outcomes. Inclusion should influence the design process.

For Colleen O'Toole, mixed-race engineer, this means being agile and flexible during the design process and including indigenous science and language such as non-colonial place names (2023). Gerry Eckford's has observed whilst working on landscape projects in Vancouver with indigenous participants that there is a greater sense of value given to health, such as with the garden as a place that provides food, medicine, and culture; the narrative and storytelling traditions, which inspired the formation of a central gathering space that had a powerful sense of place; and softer edges to the new building (Eckford, 2017. Pp. 5-6). Taking a critical step further, cultural inclusion in the design process should include hiring Indigenous community members to be part of the design team (Lam, 2022).

"If you look at the standard design process and not just the outcome: how many opportunities do we, as Indigenous designers, receive to lead projects? To respectfully and timely 'consult' with our elders? To use our language to define 'programming', activities, or spaces? Can you imagine a large-scale Indigenous project being designed and discussed in our language from start to finish? Concepts explained through our own interpretation in our language?"

Griffith Thomas
(2019)

Findings



Site photo by Kristina Zālīte, illustration by Robyn Adams, design by Kara Crabb and Robyn Adams.

Q: What could we change in the development industry?

A: Reframe project procurement and find aligned values.

BC Housing cued the consultant team for aligned values when they secured a contract for Indigenous advisory services. The response by Cory Douglas and Ron Hart to reframe the project schedule was potentially the single most impactful action taken in our process of decolonizing. While the RFP allowed for a portion of fees for cultural engagement, Cory and RHA wove cultural advisory services through the entire design process. They created a project schedule that included cultural advisory services throughout the entire planning and design lifespan. In doing this, RHA was inviting a conversation to become continuous and iterative, where the consultants could touch base throughout the whole design process. This continuous cultural engagement allowed Cory Douglas to review design changes and revisions, to be available for phone calls, and to be an ongoing advocate for Indigenous inclusion during necessary design revisions. Cory's background in graphic, sculptural, and architectural design provided a fluency in collaborative project advisory and cultural coordination services.

> **"We want to deconstruct the RFP as a way to really value the design process."**
>
> **Cory Douglas**
> (2023)

Instead of engaging in a single, fragmented educational workshop or a meeting, Cory Douglas was continually consulting with our design team. This gave the project a sense of continued creativity, a continuum of knowledge coordination and a compounding of values. There was a reimagining of a project that is wealthy and healing, where "the creation of wealth is built on cultural knowing" (Sxwpilemaát & Raphael, 2022, p.97). Paralleling this engagement was the research literature review, which also allowed for additional time spent on learning about the site. As part of this research study, additional time was given to documenting the cultural and biophysical attributes of the site, allowing for a better-informed site analysis.

In May 2022, the Canadian Architect Magazine describes how methods of procurement can be positioned to create wealth on local economies, and leaves us with the questions of, "Does the architectural firm hire a local Indigenous community member to be a part of the design team?"

“How can non-Indigenous architects
ally themselves
with Indigenous architects in Canada
in working to make the architecture,
engineering, and design world
a more supportive place
for Indigenous and other BIPOC architects
to grow their capabilities and careers?”

Lam et al.
(2022, p.64)

Site photo by Kristina Zālīte, illustration by Robyn Adams, design by Kara Crabb and Robyn Adams.

Q: How can we steer good consultant coordination?

A: Build relationships and establish mutual trust.

This research project comes at a time where I (Kristina) had been experiencing overwhelming 'urgency culture' in my landscape architecture practice. Lengthening municipal processes cause clients to speed up drawing schedules and skip coordination processes. However, the Riverside project was an antidote to the feeling of prioritizing speedy deliverables over creative consultant coordination.

Cory Douglas brought his personal-self as well as his professional-self forward, giving our team cues to open sharing and trust building. This allowed us to work in an atmosphere of support, inclusion, and relationship-building. Being relational with one another was a measurement of the safety that we felt towards being creative and uninhibited to make mistakes.

Another key proponents of relationship-building was Aliya Tejani, BC Housing Project Manager, who had a specific goal to create a trusting relationship where the designers felt comfortable being creative and thinking outside of the box. Although Aliya did not verbalize this goal during the design process, she revealed this later that she had this clear objective. She told us during this research study that when she saw some good energy between the designers, that she chose to give us the freedom to be creative and non-conforming

A: **Everyone is kind of pretending to be the well-oiled machine.**

C: **That is the corporate industry. Can I swear and be myself in my own language?**

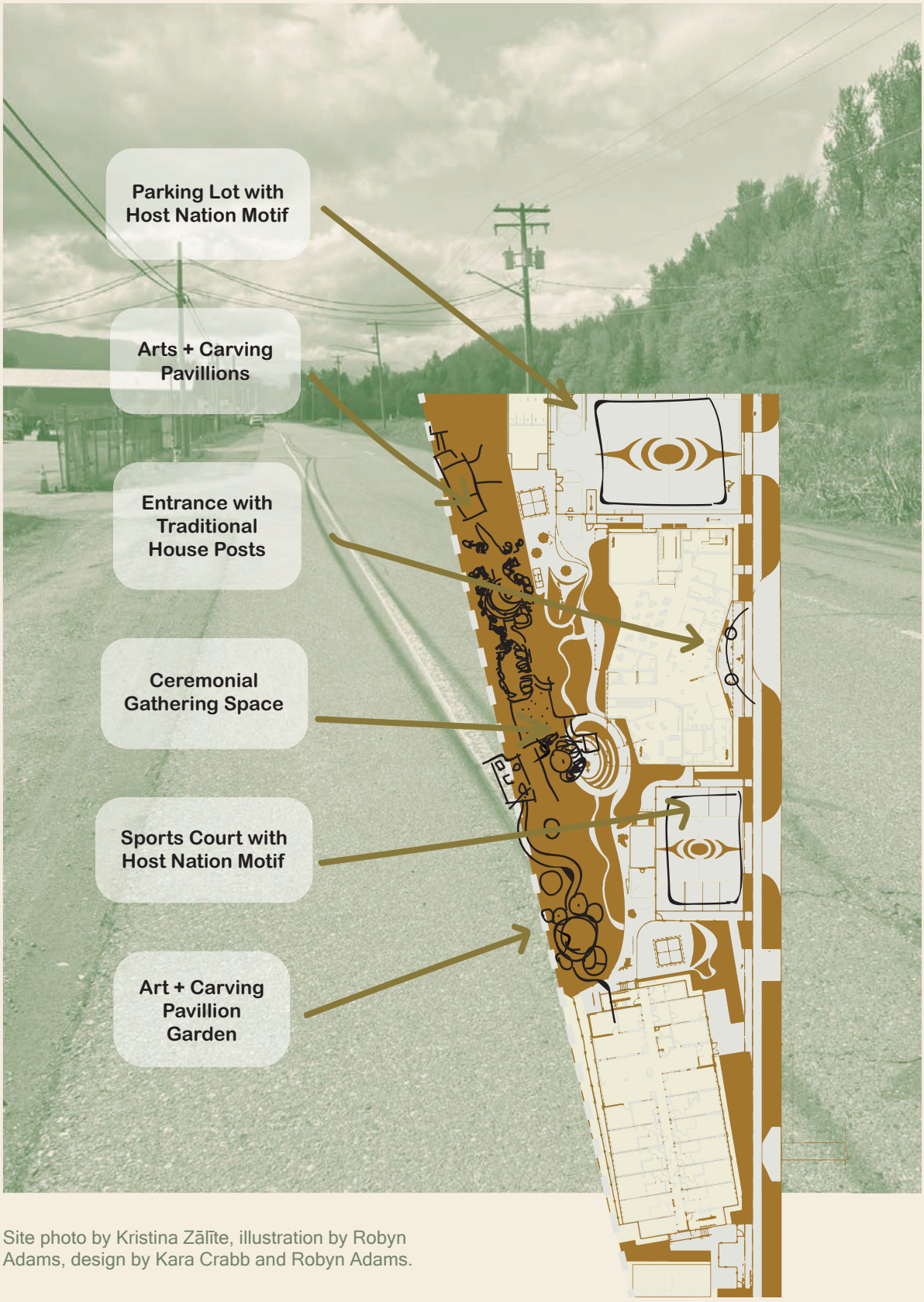
A: **I wonder if the pandemic supported people to be more themselves by allowing us to be seen in our homes with our "full person" selves?**

C: **I feel that the relational element has to be easier, like asking and caring about how people are rather than sticking to agendas.**

Alyssa Semczyszyn and Cory Douglas, personal communications, (04/11/2023)

These gestures of trust building and relationship building created a space where common interests were established and where creativity could flourish. Within the lens of Shawn Wilson's Relationality (2008), our working relations could be described as egalitarian, inclusive and had the tone that we could disagree whilst not being disagreeable.

Finding 3: Placeholders



Site photo by Kristina Zālīte, illustration by Robyn Adams, design by Kara Crabb and Robyn Adams.

Q: How can we design spaces for cultural inclusion?

A: Embed placeholders for imagined new futures.

Our project kicked off with Cory Douglas's Art & Reconciliation Workshop, which focused on formal distinctions between Northwest Coast and Coast Salish art, and how the representation of local First Nations art can contribute towards a decolonizing process. Embedded in the workshop were teachings about protocols, storytelling as a design process, and appropriate use of language. This workshop became the springboard for ideas such as:

- curved walkways
- a strong indoor-outdoor experience; and
- including visual/sensory experiences, where residents can identify and feel pride in their culture and/or surroundings

Visual placeholders were added across scales, from embellishing the exterior facade with a woven homage to Coast Salish culture to surface materials with Coast Salish embossing. Because this design project is in its early stages of design, we included place markers for individual Host Nation artists, crafters, builders, and creatives to detail (and perhaps build) at a future date.

> **"Typically for community outreach, we go to Chiefs, councilors, directors, and managers. Another great resource is Indigenous artists, folks who specialize in weaving, carving, language, and any other cultural identifiers. [...] It should be a low barrier opportunity for various members of the community to engage in the project."**
>
> **Cory Douglas**
> (2023)

Finding 3: Placeholders

Our meeting with Matsqui host nation Chief Alice McKay and Councillor Brenda Morgan reminded us of the dire need for housing (personal communications, May 19, 2022). The Chief and Councillor helped our design team to identify significant values for the site, urging us to position ethnobotany and the spirituality of animals at the core of the site design. Using ethnobotanical plant species would allow for hands-on relationships with the land and required a large, covered, outdoor plant-processing shelter to be included in the design. Specific plants and ornamentation depicting culturally significant animals (bears, deer, and eagles) were integrated within design elements.

Our meeting with Sumas host nation Chief Dalton Silver and Councillor Christopher Silver acknowledged that this project would be housing some of the most vulnerable populations in the Abbotsford area (personal communications, June 3, 2022). The Chief and Councillor told us to advocate for more inclusion of Indigenous design motifs, and references to significant stories and symbols, such as wolves who transform into humans, *skalauw* (beaver), *maxwm* (makum tea) and *tammasan* (wild rhubarb). Placeholders are a key aspect of the design because space has been intentionally dedicated to the future inclusion of Indigenous-led artists and designers, which will improve the site's ability to tell stories to its visitors and residents.

Landscape Architect Alyssa Semczyszyn recommended that rather than design a separated veggie or healing garden, that medicinal and ethnobotanical plant species could co-exist throughout the entire site. The team imagined the Riverside site as a place where residents themselves could express their creativity, where "every medium can become a cultural canvas to play on" (Douglas, 2023). For instance, in an outdoor covered space where residents could practice arts, crafts, processing plant materials, building, fixing things, etc. And a central outdoor meeting space could double as a place for ceremony, sweats, and a place where the many resident musicians could give concerts. And on an outdoor art wall where residents can show off their drawings/paintings/graphics. We received the expression of support from BC Housing, who would be looking for funding to include these cultural elements in the design.

Limitations

23 Language

26 Capacity-Building

Site photo by Kristina Zālīte, illustration by Kara Crabb and Robyn Adams, design by Kara Crabb.

source: www.firstvoices.com

Q: What didn't we do in this design process?

A: Attend to language development.

Our team has not yet included new language in the design project. We learned throughout research process that decolonizing should include language which introduces concepts of abundance (instead of scarcity), relationships and capacity building (instead of object-deliverables), natural infrastructure (instead of engineered infrastructure), and stewardship (instead of liability). Shifts in language can embrace people (instead of users), audience of focus (instead of target audience), co-creators (instead of beneficiaries), quality (instead of quantity), and approaches (instead of solutions) as ways to do allyship work in the design realm (Creative Reaction Lab, White Supremacy and Design oral presentation, November, 2020). We recommend that our clients shift their language focus to be inclusive of voices that represent artists, elders, and youth. We recommend that our project managers use language that sets the tone for different ways of knowing that invite intuition, dreaming, and envisioning together.

> **"If you start early and you look at reframing the language and the values at the outset, before the RFP is even written, you can change language from scarcity to abundance, from object deliverables to relationships and capacity building."**
>
> **Jennifer Cutbill, personal communications,**
> (06/14/2023)

Another way to decolonize the language of the drawings could have been to illustrate the site, its larger cultural and biophysical context; such as a watershed, foodshed, or cultural community 'shed', and to see the interconnectedness of these infrastructures.

> **"There is a massive gap between industry language and Indigenous community language."**
>
> **Cory Douglas**
> (2023)

Limitation 1: Language

Quite literally, decolonizing the language could include illustrating the drawing set in the Halq'eméylem language. For example, inclusion of Halq'eméylem plant names identified as plants of importance by the Host Nations, such as:

elílá:lhp	*salmonberry*
th'éxth'ex	*stinging nettle*
sxwṓsem	*soapberry*
sxwṓsem	*blackberry*
yelyóle	*wild rhubarb*
mó:qwem	*Labrador tea*
spá:th	*bear*
tl'élqtele	*deer*
sp'óq'es	*eagle*
sqelá:w	*beaver*
stqó:ya	*wolf*
qó:	*water*
sxíxets'	*forest*
xet'kw'á:ls shxwelí	*carving wood place*
q'ép shxwelí	*gathering together place*
sq'eq'ó shxwelí	*being together place*
lexwyó:qwem	*place on the river*

source: www.firstvoices.com

Site photo by Kristina Zālīte, illustration by Robyn Adams.

Q: What didn't we do in this design process?

A: Training for capacity building.

Although we had consultant educational time with cultural advisor Cory Douglas, we did not have training that was targeted to develop ourselves as learning organizations. During our research meetings, we identified that we wanted to plant seeds for change, but that we lacked specific capacity-building knowledge and vocabulary for imagining different ways of working. Decolonial training could include capacity building as a team of contractors, managers, operations personnel, local Host Nation knowledge keepers/youth/elders/ artists/creatives, and all consultants on the team.

In Tema Okun's *Dismantling Racism* Workbook, she says, "One characteristic of white supremacy culture is not allowing time, energy, or money to reflect on how to improve your organizational practices. This is an aspect of perfectionism, as well as not having appreciation for the work that people are doing. As an antidote to white supremacy perfectionism culture, organizations can develop a learning organization" (Okun, n.d.)

During the course of the research, we learned from Jennifer Cutbill of Lateral Agency some capacity-building exercises. Examples include:

1. Re-imagination of the critical infrastructures (from engineering to ecological)
2. Deepening our creation of safe space by inventorying our worst ideas and other things that could go wrong
3. A letter-writing exercise in which we dream together of a future project where we live on this site in a 20-year or 100-year timeframe, and
4. Co-creating a site/building management plan that accounts for future generations, say a 100-year management planning document

We recommend trying these exercises in other design projects, and potentially finding their intersection with Architect and Professor Wanda Dalla Costa's Indigenous Placekeeping Framework, a design method with four components of being community-led, relationship-led, process-based, and place-based (Fahlgren, 2019).

Cory Douglas

Discussion

Future steps in this design-research path may include an analysis of construction, real-estate, and development industry process and language: procurement and its process, bid forms, maintenance plans, specifications, and other design standard forms to try to uncover embedded colonial narratives and to offer alternatives from language of liability to one of stewardship. Other discourse analysis could include rigour which is “focused upon interpreting the way that meaning is expressed through words and text” so that we can identify the patterns of expression about the design process (Deming, & Swaffield, 2011, p.161). Future research could include cross-referencing other projects and conducting a comparative study for a secondary research review. A comparative analysis between landscape architectural & architectural design principals against Indigenous aesthetic principles can include an analysis of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s use of the Indigenous creative principles of repetition, duality, multidimensionality, abstraction, layering, reenactment, and presencing, and how these principles “disrupt the noise of colonialism” (Simpson, 2017, p. 200).

To begin and continue a journey of decolonizing design practices, we recommend that clients include a cultural consultant / advisor / planner / designer / coordinator in design teams. We recommend that development industry clients prioritize First Nations businesses through procurement. We recommend that municipal planning & development staff approach systemic change by collaborating with designers in ways that we can disrupt the colonial approaches of the development process together. In the words of Rena Soutar, landscape architects need to look at our colonial lenses and to rethink past practices before we do Indigenous engagement (Lypkie, 2019). Our research finds that we need to do this work as organizations as well as individuals.

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