Coexistence Planning and Indigenous Urbanism: Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

by

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Abstract

This study investigated the precedent-setting collaboration between the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Board (VBPR) and the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, or 'MST Nations,' an ongoing initiative which aims to formalize Indigenous self-determination and rights to the city, or 'Indigenous urbanism,' through coexistence planning practices. The thesis examined coexistence planning efforts in Vancouver, British Columbia, a city that has designated itself a City of Reconciliation since 2014. The Province of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver have set an example by becoming the first Canadian province and Canadian city to respectively pass legislation pertaining to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The question has been how cities could practically implement the goals of coexistence planning and meaningfully redress colonial urbanism beyond tokenism. There has been a gap in the research literature at the intersections of Urban Studies and Indigenous Rights and Title to answer this question. This research explored the potential of coexistence planning principles to meaningfully address Indigenous Rights to self-determination through a municipal lens. This study looked at how coexistence planning can be a potential catalyst and liminal space for Indigenous resurgence and urbanism as it allows for a reconceptualization of urban planning in support of a collaborative approach to governance, and meaningfully considers Indigenous self-determination at the root of shaping urban spaces. This research project examined an example of these coexistence planning principles in action in Stanley Park, an iconic, internationally recognized park in Vancouver, British Columbia, while considering its replicability across other urban parks.

Keywords: Coexistence planning; Indigenous rights; cultural visibility and expression; reconciliation; urban Indigenous planning; Indigenous resurgence

Dedication

This research is dedicated to the the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations and their community members who have tirelessly advocated for Indigenous rights and resurgence in the city and have cared for these lands since time immemorial.

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List of Acronyms

CoV	City of Vancouver
DRIPA	Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act
FPIC	Free, prior, and informed consent
MST	Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh
SPIGC/WG	Stanley Park Intergovernmental Committee and Working Group
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNDA	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act
VBPR	Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

Aerial view of Stanley Park and Lions Gate Bridge with City of Vancouver skyline in background (June 14, 2023). Photo credit: author

Chapter 1. Introduction

This study seeks to investigate the precedent-setting collaboration between the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Board (VBPR) and the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations ('MST Nations') that aims to formalize Indigenous self-determination and rights to the city, or 'Indigenous urbanism' through coexistence planning practices. Based on definitions provided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Indigenous self-determination refers to the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples to freely determine their political status, economic, social, and cultural development, and to have control over their lands, resources, and institutions. It recognizes the right of Indigenous Peoples to make decisions and choices that affect their lives, communities, and futures, in accordance with their own values, traditions, and priorities. In an urban context, self-determination emphasizes the ability of Indigenous Peoples to exercise authority and decision-making over their lives and communities, while maintaining their cultural identity and connections to their Indigenous heritage, recognizing that Indigenous Peoples are not solely tied to reserves or traditional lands, but exist and *belong* in urban environments.

It examines coexistence planning efforts in Vancouver, British Columbia, a self-proclaimed City of Reconciliation. In particular, the VBPR has taken robust steps relative to other City bodies, to realize reconciliation, in part by setting a collaborative approach to land stewardship with the MST Nations. One of the most notable steps being the official agreement with the MST Nations to establish the Stanley Park Intergovernmental Committee and Working Group (SPIGC/WG) to engage in coexistence planning and create the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan.

Coexistence planning is an emerging approach for Indigenous-settler relations in the field of urban planning to embed reconciliation into the planning practice; it is a collaborative process between Indigenous and non-Indigenous authorities to intersect their modes of governance, socio-spatial organization and urban land-use planning systems (Porter & Barry, 2016). In this first chapter, I will discuss the utility of this approach and describe important terminology and language that is associated with the framework of planning for coexistence.

1.1. Research Significance

1.1.1. The Framework for Collaborative Governance for Reconciliation

The Province of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver are the first Canadian province and Canadian city respectively to pass legislation pertaining to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP or The *Declaration*)[1]. The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (VBPR) is the is the only elected park board of its kind in Canada and possess complete jurisdiction of 250 public parks, including any structures, programs and activities, fees, and improvements that occur within those parks (*Vancouver Charter*, SBC 1953, Chapter 55, Part XXIII — Parks). In the spirit of reconciliation, implementing the principles of UNDRIP and meaningfully addressing Indigenous Rights to self-determination, the VBPR has acknowledged that First Nations are integral rights holders in the future of public parks and lands. In early 2022, the VBPR made the decision to explore how they might move forward with plans to comanage the city's parks with the MST Nations (VBPR, 2022). This decision comes eight years after the establishment of the Stanley Park Intergovernmental Committee and Working Group (SPIGC/WG). The SPIGC/WG set the precedent to engage in collaborative governance over parklands in Vancouver, by aiming to formalize Indigenous self-determination and rights in alignment with UNDRIP and addressing the land dispossession of Stanley Park.

There is a long history of displacement of Indigenous Peoples from lands that are now parks, most notably in Stanley Park, Vancouver's first and most iconic 'park' on land that was home to many Indigenous communities evicted by the City, resulting in the loss of invaluable land used for gatherings, food and medicine (Todd, 2021). In 2014, the City of Vancouver sought to address this dispossession by adopting a framework to guide its work as a self-proclaimed City of Reconciliation (CoV, 2014). In that same year, the SPIGC/WG was formed. Since then, the VBPR has created 11 strategies within their authority in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)[2] of Canada's

[1] The Government of Canada adopted UNDRIP in 2016, which outlines the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, land, and recourses, and calls for reconciliation.

[2] The TRC Calls to Action are 94 recommendations addressing the legacy of residential schools, urging action for reconciliation and redress by governments, churches, and institutions across Canada (Truth and Reconciliation & Commission of Canada, 2015).

Calls to Action and to recognize the rights of First Nations in unceded territory (VBPR, 2015). The 94 Calls to Action outlined in the TRC in 2015 was a driving force for many Canadian municipalities to implement reconciliation efforts into public policy, and Vancouver was considered a leader in building momentum for this. The VBPR (Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, 2022a) specifically emphasized of their acceptance of Call to Action #47:

> *We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts.*

Following this, the VBPR conducted community consultations to produce a "Truth-Telling Report" that presented the key issues and recommendations to change the omnipresent colonial mindset. Stanley Park was noted in these discussions and continues to be highlighted in ongoing conversations about VBPR's role in decolonizing parks as it represents a deeply impactful symbol of colonial impacts in terms of parklands in Vancouver. This document is analyzed further in Chapter 5 in concert with other VBPR documents. The Truth-Telling Report underscores that Stanley Park contains examples that are applicable across the wider parks system.

1.1.2. Establishing a Framework and Colonial Audit

Recognizing its own colonial legacy and role, including the forced removal of Indigenous Peoples from their land to create parks such as Stanley Park, the VPBR has been undergoing a "Colonial Audit" since 2018 to produce an internal review of relationships, spending, and colonial influences to challenge dominant narratives and build off concurrent projects that have overarching goals to seek truth and reconciliation.

One of the major concurrent projects that the VBPR have been engaged in is *VanPlay*, their master plan for parks and recreation which was approved by Park Board Commissioners in October 2020 (VBPR, 2020). The full suite of *VanPlay* documents includes a 100-year vision, a 25-year outlook, and 10-year implementation plan. The VBPR set off on a mission to better understand its inequities through the parks and recreation ecosystem by engaging with the community to identify these inequities and analyze this data to produce an action plan and strategy to tackle these inequities

(Vancouver's Parks and Recreation: Inventory and Analysis. Report 1, 2018). This research analyzes and evaluates the *VanPlay* documents, and other VBPR projects as part of this research project, to better understand the ongoing work and related initiatives running concurrently with the SPIGC/WG and Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to other reconciliation initiatives at both the CoV and VBPR, in October 2022, the City of Vancouver (CoV) council passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Strategy, making Vancouver a national and world leader in developing a strategy towards UNDRIP and reconciliation. This carries forward the related initiatives outlined in *VanPlay* and the VBPR's adoption of the TRC Calls to Action (11 Recommended 'Reconciliation Strategies). As highlighted in *VanPlay*, an important component to reconciling and building relationships on respect and trust with the MST Nations is to properly acknowledge and protect the cultural significance of their lands. Some of this recognition is being supported by the work of Archaeologist Geordie Howe, the first archaeologist to be hired by a Canadian municipal body with expertise on First Nations cultural history. Howe has been involved in the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan and coordinating with the SPIGC/WG. Stanley Park's significance goes beyond its recreational and ecological functions, as there are many sensitive cultural sites within the park that require a different dimension of planning and that protects these lands and honours Indigenous cultural histories and practices.

Stanley Park is a destination park in the City of Vancouver that "provides critical neighbourhood park functions to local residents" (*VanPlay*, Report 1). Parklands across Vancouver are particularly valued public assets as Vancouver's image as a green city relies on maintaining wide access to greenspaces. The City of Vancouver is touted for its Greenest City Action Plan[3] and leading the way for other municipalities globally to recognize the importance of sustainability and climate policies. Parks and beaches, especially large ones like Stanley Park are safe havens during extreme heat waves and allow for socialization and unorganized recreation, which became especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic when parks were acutely recognized for their critical role in urban infrastructure (Rosa & Dunlop, 2022). Health, climate change, access to

[3] The Greenest City 2020 Action Plan (GCAP) was a decade-long initiative led by the City of Vancouver with the ambitious goal of becoming the greenest city in the world by 2020. Of the ten goals and 18 targets identified in GCAP, the City reported that they hit eight of eighteen targets, and made significant process in all ten goal areas (City of Vancouver, n.d.-b)

greenspaces and community recreation are some of the key reasons parks are vital to urban communities. Despite the indisputable importance of parks, there remains a disparity in who has access to these spaces, and how historical and recent planning decisions have impacted access, especially. Moreover, the focus on parklands and greenspaces as economic growth machines for maintaining Vancouver's image as a prosperous, highly competitive, desirable, and livable city was one of the primary motives for the Greenest City Action Plan. More recent park planning policies in Vancouver are bringing attention to "equity-denied communities" that have disproportionately lower levels access to parks (*VanPlay* Framework, 2020). This research will take a focused look at some of these equity-based practices and their applications and connections with coexistence planning principles.

1.2. Research Aims

This research has three aims.

1. Evaluate the application of coexistence planning in the VBPR.
2. Bring forward insights on how urban parks can provide opportunities for land to be reclaimed in support of Indigenous self-determination, cultural identity, and rights.
3. Contribute to empirical research on the role of municipal governments in decolonizing urban planning and design.

This research will contribute to the larger bodies of literature on coexistence planning and Indigenous urbanism. With that in mind, my research question is: what are the existing relationship dynamics between the VBPR and MST Nations since the establishment of the SPIGC/WG? Furthermore, what insights can be derived from the planning methodologies and policy mechanisms that have contributed to shaping this relationship? The first part of my question will be answered through the lens of coexistence planning.

1.3. Historical and Modern Significance of Stanley Park

A detailed historic overview of Stanley Park is illuminated by Jean Barman in her book *Stanley Park's Secret.* Stanley Park is named after Lord Stanley of Preston, who served as the Governor General of Canada from 1888 to 1893. Long before this, a

village called X̱wáýx̱way (translated in English to Whoi Whoi) was one of many village sites on the Burrard Inlet that was inhabited by members of the MST Nations (Barman, 2007). Where this traditional site once was, now holds the park's iconic seawall and Lumberman's Arch. X̱wáýx̱way was considered the "principal site" of the area, which was confirmed during the road building process around the park began in 1888 where middens up to "eight feet deep and four acres in size" (Barman, 2007, p. 20). The residents of X̱wáýx̱way and other nearby village sites were promised a fair amount of time to move to other reserve sites, assuming that any amount of time could be considered fair. Barman (2007) proposes that this was the impetus of the erasure of Indigeneity in Stanley Park, to make room for a "sanitized" and romanticized version of Indigeneity, brought in to showcase what the VBPR and the City of Vancouver considered the more "advanced" Indigenous Peoples, the Haida (p. 26, 27). The history of how Stanley Park was unsettled and expropriated from Indigenous communities reveals the true depths of curation and government fraudulence that went into establishing this great urban forest for what it is today.

As of 2024, well over a century after the park's establishment, re-inscriptions of Indigenous identities and cultural practices on the land are starting to be reclaimed. First Nations and Indigenous communities are now able to hold permitted events, ceremonies and sacred fires in the park. Parks are often viewed as the best parts of the city, a place for play and where everyone is welcome. However, Matt Hern, scholar and co-author of *On This Patch of Grass: City Parks on Occupied Land*, argues that parks are very prescribed spaces, where many activities and uses are disallowed, including the traditional Indigenous practices of foraging that took place in Stanley Park, where T'uy't'tanat Cease Wyss, a Sḵwxwú7mesh artist and ethnobotanist has made attempts to gather herbs and was denied of this practice despite that generations of her family have been living on and harvesting from these lands (Johal et al., 2019). Hern contends that parks have historically been built with the intent of pacifying through public performances of "whiteness," and despite the VBPR's mission to "provide, preserve, and advocate for parks and recreation services to benefit all people, communities, and the environment," parks are still overly regulated, and not truly public spaces (Johal et al., 2019; City of Vancouver, n.d.-b). The importance and value of creating safe spaces on parklands for cultural expression, intercultural sharing and art has been acknowledged in the 2017 Truth-Telling Report released by the VBPR, written by Kamala Todd,

community planner, filmmaker, and Urban Studies faculty member at Simon Fraser University and adjunct professor at the University of British Columbia. Recent efforts to increase the visibility of Coast Salish identities on parklands have been made, including the Susan Point (a famous Musqueam artist) Welcome Gateways in Stanley Park, however, there is still a long way to go for Indigeneity in Stanley Park to come full circle.

1.4. Research Structure and Positionality

To investigate the emergence and implementation of coexistence planning principles through Stanley Park, the SPIGC/WG and the larger VBPR framework, I take an approach of storytelling rather than a case study approach. Although my research aims were left intentionally open to identifying larger patterns and themes that may be applicable across other Canadian cities, the foundation of my research is set spatially within the context of Vancouver and the three Host Nations' land that the City of Vancouver occupies. I view this research as an opportunity to learn from leaders in the community, practitioners and activists to connect their stories and analyze them in relation to my conceptual framework. The following chapter will present my conceptual framework through piecing together three bodies of literature to ground my research question in academic scholarship. In Chapter 4, I will establish my research design and methodology and argue for its specific design elements that will support an ethical research approach in the spirit of Indigenous research methodologies.

I am an Asian-Canadian researcher, with a mix of Korean and European ancestry. My Korean background has deeply influenced my identity and passion for learning about urban inequality, cultural displacement and dispossession. Being raised by two immigrant/settler families with vastly different experiences has shaped the way I view my positionality as a researcher. The colonial system conceptualizes race and identity through percentages, something that Indigenous Peoples are painfully familiar with as blood quantum was used systematically against First Nations to strip them of their identities and rights. Relational complexities are important to acknowledge in an urban Indigenous research project (Fast & Kovach, 2019), and thus, situating myself as a settler who has benefitted immensely from colonization and colonial governments is vital to appreciate the common Indigenous protocol of introducing myself to the reader, the participants of this research, and the larger field of study that respects urban Indigenous realities. Moreover, this research was funded by the Social Sciences and

Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), a colonial institution that is supporting me on this learning journey of intercultural planning systems. I am overwhelmingly grateful for all the support I have had in my network, and the privilege I have experienced in my lifetime that many others are not awarded.

> *"In the context of a First Nations perspective of the university, higher education is not a neutral enterprise. Gaining access to the university means more than gaining an education -- it also means gaining access to power, authority, and an opportunity to exercise control over the affairs of everyday life, affairs that are usually taken for granted by most non-Native people" (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p. 11).*

Chapter 2. Context

2.1. Multi-level Governance, Legislative Provisions, and Frameworks

There are numerous publicly available resources that offer in-depth reviews and analyses of the legal frameworks and commitments to supporting Indigenous Peoples rights to self-determination, self-governance, and sovereignty at multiple levels of government. In particular, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) publishes public reports and issue updates on important matters such as UNDRIP, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* Action Plan, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action, along with other legislation impacting Indigenous Peoples. These guiding frameworks and provisions serve as the foundation for the CoV's and VBPR's reconciliation efforts and policies. Due to collaborative efforts with Indigenous Peoples and leaders at international, national, and provincial levels, municipal governments can model their frameworks to better support Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Previously, the responsibility to address Indigenous Peoples' Rights, Title, interests, and well-being was mainly seen as under the federal government's purview, with some services delegated to provincial authorities. However, as evidenced by the 2021 Census data, the number of Indigenous Peoples' residing in urban areas across Canada is significantly increasing, with Vancouver having the third-highest population in the country (Statistics Canada, 2022). Vancouver's urban Indigenous population was estimated at 14,000 or 2.2% of the population in 2016 (CoV, 2017).

Approximately 61% of Indigenous Peoples live in urban settings due to factors such as employment opportunities, access to education, health care, and social support services, which also draw non-Indigenous individuals to cities (National Association of Friendship Centres, 2021). In recognition of this, municipal governments play a crucial role in transforming political, social, and economic structures to support and acknowledge the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples (M. Simpson & Bagelman, 2018). Recognizing Indigeneity in urban landscapes becomes a means of upholding Indigenous self-determination. This research is situated within these contexts, aiming to demonstrate how the VBPR's initiatives align with broader legislative efforts. This study's

focus arises from the current political climate and era of reconciliation, acknowledging the distinct policy developments that give rise to coexistence planning practices.

2.1.1. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Canadian government's adoption of UNDRIP took place in 2016. It was first adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, but Canada voted against it at that time. The main reasons for Canada's initial opposition were concerns related to language in the provisions of the Declaration that referred to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), as well as the right to redress for lands, territories, and resources (Government of Canada, 2007). Despite the delay, in 2021, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDA or *UN Declaration Act*) received Royal Assent and became effective with the purpose of "implement[ing] the UN Declaration based on lasting reconciliation, healing, and cooperative relations" (Justice Canada, 2023). The preamble of UNDA confirms that "the Government of Canada acknowledges that provincial, territorial and municipal governments each have the ability to establish their own approaches to contributing to the implementation of the Declaration by taking various measures that fall within their authority" (Justice Canada, 2023).

In 2023, the first iteration of the UNDA Action Plan was released as a result of "consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples to identify the measures necessary to ensure federal laws are consistent with the UN Declaration, and to co-develop an action plan to achieve the objectives of the UN Declaration" (Department of Justice Canada, 2023). UNDA attempts to keep consistencies between UNDRIP, UN Declaration Act, and the TRC Calls to Action. The UNDA Action Plan was released without a concise vision statement, but included several interim vision statements provided by Indigenous partners who were involved in the creation of the Action Plan. One of the vision statements included was the following:

> *"True reconciliation requires making space for Indigenous voices that have been systemically denied, dismissed, or unheard. It also includes recognizing distinctions within those voices, such as the established rights of modern treaty nations. The systems in which Canada has been operating were not designed for reconciliation. In fact, in most circumstances, they were designed to do the opposite. As Canada works towards active reconciliation through this action plan and other initiatives,*

it is vital we do not leave the voices of modern treaty nations behind. Developing and implementing the Action Plan in a meaningful way means decolonizing engagement formats, decision-making processes, and reporting requirements. The Alliance is trusting our treaty partners to take our words, values and advice into your departments and approval processes, and advocate for change when needed."

- Chief Laura Cassidy of Tsawwassen First Nation, on behalf of the Alliance of BC Modern Treaty Nations

In March 2021, the CoV Mayor and Council unanimously approved a motion to implement UNDRIP within the City. This motion established a Task Force, consisting of a Steering Committee with elected representatives from MST Nations and the City, as well as a Technical Committee with staff from the City, local Nations, and urban Indigenous organizations (CoV, 2021a, 2022a). The Steering Committee began collaborative work in July 2021 and developed the City of Vancouver UNDRIP Strategy, which was endorsed by all three Nations (CoV, 2022a). On October 25, 2022, City Council approved the UNDRIP Strategy, comprising 79 Calls to Action; the CoV Indigenous Relations team is now co-developing an action plan, engaging departmental champions, including the VBPR for implementation (City of Vancouver, 2022a).

2.1.2. Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action

UNDA was largely supported by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) 94 Calls to Action in 2015. The TRC was established to address the legacy of residential schools and provide recommendations for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The purpose and intent of the 94 Calls to Action are to acknowledge and redress the historic and ongoing injustices faced by Indigenous Peoples including, but not limited to, the history of residential schools, loss of Indigenous languages, cultures and education systems, address issues in child welfare, the justice system, prioritize Indigenous health and healing, investigate missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and foster reconciliation through public awareness and frameworks (Truth and Reconciliation & Commission of Canada, 2015). The Calls to Action provide a roadmap for governments, institutions, and individuals to create meaningful change in addressing the ongoing impacts of colonization on Indigenous communities.

Seven years after TRC Calls to Action was released, governments have yet to make significant progress on the majority of the 94 calls. AFN noted in their June 2022 report that minimal or moderate progress had been made on 46 Calls to Action (Assembly of First Nations, 2022). The Yellowhead Institute identifies in their December 2022 Calls to Action Accountability report that only 13 Calls to Action have been completed (Yellowhead Institute, 2022). A key issue they highlighted was the lack of transparency to validate that progress has been made, or timelines to produce results. The Yellowhead report investigates the barriers that have stalled action and questions the limitations to the framework of "reconciliation," including the absence of a shared understanding of what reconciliation is and considers what the solution could be to these failures. The Indigenous Watchdog, a non-profit, online database led by Douglas Sinclair that provides systematic updates on the status of the Calls to Action, identified in July 2023 that 37% of the Calls to Action are either not started or stalled.

Their findings point to an overall fatigue from Indigenous communities to engage in reconciliation and decolonization work. As governments continue to grapple with the responsibilities that they have to respond to the TRC Calls to Action and implement the provisions of UNDRIP, shifting paradigms will be required to resist the "political paralysis" that persists with each systemic barrier "that continue[s] to plague reconciliation" (Yellowhead Institute, 2022, p. 44). Even the nature of the terms reconciliation and decolonization are significantly contested under the normative authority and colonial order that these frameworks are employed (Elliott, 2016). The federal government maintains this normative settler-colonial order, basing actions and decision-making on government priorities rather than "the perspectives and input of First Nations" (Assembly of First Nations, 2023, p. 6).

2.1.3. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

In concurrence with the international and federal preceding frameworks, the Province of British Columbia (BC) took a significant step in advancing reconciliation by passing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA or *Declaration Act*) in November 2019. To further align with UNDRIP and create a reconciliation framework, the BC government released the DRIPA Action Plan in March 2022 after consulting with Indigenous leaders (Government of British Columbia [BC], n.d.). The Action Plan outlines a five-year strategy accompanied by annual reporting to achieve the

objectives of UNDRIP across the province (BC, 2022). DRIPA represents a pivotal moment in progressing the TRC Calls to Action, providing the foundation for provincial laws and agencies to align with UNDRIP and promote reconciliation and decolonization work in BC. Furthermore, DRIPA enables shared decision-making with Indigenous governments, strengthening truth and reconciliation efforts in BC.

The progress on reconciliation in BC is ongoing and the legal framework continues to evolve and adapt to meet the distinct needs and aspirations of Indigenous communities. This progress has not been linear and is influenced by changing political dynamics, ongoing negotiations and litigations, and the varying stages of government-to-government relationships. The successful implementation of these legal provisions relies on fostering collaboration and maintaining open dialogue between the provincial government and Indigenous governments.

2.2. The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

The VBPR is a unique construct in comparison to other municipalities in North America. It is the only municipality in Canada that has an elected board of commissioners, who are responsible for the management and oversight of 250 parks, as well as destination gardens, 24 community centres, and three golf courses (City of Vancouver, n.d.-a). Included in that portfolio is Stanley Park, a 404-hectare destination urban park with beaches, a 10-kilometre waterfront pathway called the “seawall,” restaurants, performance spaces, an internationally admired aquarium and research facility, sports and recreation facilities.

Stanley Park is the reason for the VBPR’s existence as the Park Board was originally established in 1888 to oversee just this one park (Rosa & Dunlop, 2022). Former Park Board Chair, Stuart Mackinnon, argues that despite not originally being intended to oversee the entirety of what it does now, it has supported Vancouver’s development by ensuring park spaces are well managed and maintained (McElroy, 2019). Moreover, Mackinnon clarifies that the Park Board’s role is to govern, while the operations over parklands are staff’s responsibility.

The strategic and sustainable management of urban parklands is critical to protecting these lands against the ongoing challenges and pressures on cities related to

climate change, sea level rise, species loss, habitat destruction, and water quality. The *We Rise Together* report, published by Parks Canada with recommendations from the Indigenous Circle of Experts' posits the importance of the integration of Indigenous Knowledge systems in environmental regulation such as Ethical Space, a principle of engagement between settler governments and Indigenous Peoples whereby the opposing knowledge systems are mutually respected and equally valued and binding in decision-making (Parks Canada, 2018). Ethical Space can be understood as a precursor to reconciliation and coexistence planning, as it creates a venue for collaboration and is framed by other foundational agreements including UNDRIP, the Canadian Constitution, and/or Treaties, Agreements, DRIPA and other Indigenous Agreements and Protocols (Parks Canada, 2018). Stanley Park has been under threat of severe environmental challenges over the years and is in dire need of long-term solutions to remain resilient to external threats, including the high levels of use from tourists and residents.

2.3. Indigenous Stanley Park

Stanley Park is Indigenous land. Although it serves as a destination park today, most of the land's history was occupied by Indigenous Nations. This land, like most of the land in British Columbia, was never ceded through signed treaties and is still rightfully Indigenous land. Historian Jean Barman has paved the way for other researchers to contribute to literature that is determined to make known the truth behind the creation of Stanley Park. Barman has done extensive research to tell the stories of the forgotten families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch and Brockton Point – old village sites in the park. Barman (2005) unveils the secrets of how the City of Vancouver and the VBPR was founded to systematically dispossess Indigenous communities so that Stanley Park could become the perfect green urban oasis right next door to the city of glass high rises. Barman also noted that the park also has historical significance for many of Vancouver's early immigrant communities, including Chinese, Japanese and South Asians (Fumao, 2014). This early settler history is arguably why Stanley Park is still viewed so endearingly by local residents today. In Barman's research, the story she was often told by interviewees is that "We would go to Stanley Park, and we were just as good as anybody else" (as cited in Fumao, 2014). Today, there are roughly two hundred unhoused people who call Stanley Park their home, which the city by-laws allow so that

people can take shelter in the park grounds overnight but must pack up in the daytime (Rosa & Dunlop, 2022).

Sean Kheraj, historian and author of *Inventing Stanley Park* discusses both the cultural and ecological transformations that took place on Stanley Park during European colonization. Kheraji illustrates the pivotal transformation that shifted the legacy of Stanley Park:

> Just as colonization transformed the peninsula, so too did its designation as a public park. Park creation, or "emparkment" as some have called it, was not simply a matter of preserving land from urbanization; it was a different kind of urbanization in which nature was exploited for the cultural and physical benefit of city-dwellers, becoming a recreational resource for non-consumptive use. The invention of Stanley Park did not separate humans from nature but instead altered an already deeply interwoven relationship (2013, p. 56).

Kheraji (2013) dives deeply into the colonization of Stanley Park, explaining the calculated ways in which destination parks in North America are created. In addition to the obvious anthropological histories of the park, Kherai (2013) provides the geomorphological history that physically created the park since the thawing of the last ice age which provided the conditions for habitable lands as early as three thousand years ago (p.16). Due to Indigenous oral histories and archaeological evidence, there are significant archival records that prove that the Stanley Park peninsula was a site of multiple thriving villages, shared between Coast Salish groups of hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ (as well as Hul̓q̓umín̓um̓ and Halq'eméylem dialects) and Sḵwx̱wú7mesh sníchim (Squamish language) speaking peoples, including the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

Dr. Selena Couture, professor and author of *Against the Current and into the Light: Performing History and Land in Coast Salish Territories and Vancouver's Stanley Park*, presents Stanley Park has a place of 'performances,' an Indigenous method that embodies knowledge transfer, cultural expression and intercultural influence to challenge the prevailing colonial narratives of Stanley Park. Couture (2019) analyzes the City of Vancouver's archival records, bringing attention to interventions in the records by the city's first archivist, Jams Skitt Matthews. Matthews' interventions demonstrate the instability in colonial archival system as he caused a domino effect that led to the misrepresentation of Lord Stanley, the Governor General of Canada from 1888-1893

and the namesake for the park, and the fabrication of his iconic dedication speech which still sits engraved on his statue at the entrance of the park. Couture (2023) emphasized that there has continuously been Indigenous resistance to these colonial performances, through Indigenous performance that offers alternative narratives of the land's history.

Aerial view of Stanley Park and Lions Gate Bridge (January 10, 2023). Photo credit: author

2.4. Developing a Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan

The Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan is being co-developed by the MST Nations through an extensive planning process, with the intention to create a 100-year vision for Stanley Park (VBPR, 2018). This process was initiated and guided by the Stanley Park Intergovernmental Committee and Working Group (SPIGC/WG), “consisting of leadership and members of the Nations and Park Board Commissioners and staff, the comprehensive plan will aim to develop, articulate and carry forward a compelling vision for the park, as well as a set of guiding principles to govern all aspects of park design, planning and management in order to realize this vision” (VBPR, 2018, p. 2). The initiation of this process came out from the initiative of the three Nations that advised the VBPR of the immense harms the Park Board has caused since its inception, and requesting that prior to any decisions, planning processes or initiatives related to the park require meaningful consultation. This new government-to-government relationship did not occur overnight, but over years of relationship building and meetings that took place from 2011 to 2014, until the formation of the SPIGC/WG was solidified with the first official meeting and exchanging of gifts in late 2014 (Rosa & Dunlop, 2022). This was followed by a “visioning workshop” in 2015 which revealed different recollections of histories of the three Nations, as well as shared values which helped lay provide a foundation for the plan (Rosa & Dunlop, 2022).

In 2016, there was an intergovernmental gathering in the park to plant three cedar trees to symbolize the binding of the three nations to pursue this work together with the park board. Additionally, the VBPR hired an archeologist, Geordie Howe, to support the protection and management of ancestral remains. In 2017, SPIGC/WG supported the hiring of a dedicated Stanley Park Planning, Emily Dunlop, as well as a Reconciliation Planner, Rena Soutar. The hiring of these three positions involved the MST Nations, to allow them to infiltrate Park board systems (Rosa & Dunlop, 2022). The intention behind this renewed governance structure is a “whole-systems-thinking approach,” an Indigenous method for understanding interdependencies within a system, which has been exceptionally important in the Inventory and Analysis stages of the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan (Rosa & Dunlop, 2022).

The Musqueam Indian Band issued a statement on January 22, 2022, acknowledging the motion presented to the VBPR to explore co-management of

parklands within their traditional territories with the MST Nations. Musqueam also highlighted their ongoing commitment to working closely with the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and the VBPR on the Stanley Park Intergovernmental Working Group to develop a “long-term comprehensive plan for Stanley Park that will protect important heritage sites and integrate Musqueam cultural teachings, protocols and history into the management of the park” (Musqueam Indian Band, 2022).

Park Drive has existed since 1888 originally built to allow for “pleasure drives” around the Park, first by horse and carriage and then by automobile by the early colonizers of Vancouver (Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, 2022f). The Stanley Park Mobility Study revealed that earlier estimates of the annual number of visitors to the park was vastly underestimated, originally thought to be 10 million is actually 18 million annual park visits, by 9.5 million people, the majority of visits being by one-time visitor tourists.

2.5. Park Politics

Due to Park Board’s unusual construction, the threat of instability in its management and oversight should not be overlooked. As with all colonial governance structures and party politics, planning for seven generations[4], an Indigenous method for planning, has not been entirely feasible. Recent uncertainties in the VBPR have emerged since the election of a new Board of Commissioners, under the ABC party of Vancouver. The ABC party originally campaigned to eliminate the elected Park Board and transfer its responsibilities to Vancouver City Council, which is considered the normal municipal governance model across Canada (Fumao, 2021). This campaign promise was quickly reversed after the ABC party assumed office, due to bureaucratic difficulties and other priorities taking precedent. While this research was underway, on December 13, 2023, the Vancouver City Council passed the motion to ask the Province of British Columbia (BC) dismantle the elected VBPR (CoV, 2023b). Despite persistent

[4] The Seventh Generation Principle, originating from Haudenosaunee philosophy, advocates for decisions today to be sustainable for seven generations into the future. Although it is often used for “green” marketing, its roots trace back to the Great Law of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, influencing political and social structures since the 12th to 15th centuries. Today, it is applied to various aspects like energy, water, and relationships, emphasizing sustainability for future generations. It is particularly relevant in Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships, promoting long-term sustainability and mutual respect (Joseph, 2020).

opposition from VBPR Councillors and former staff, the ABC majority City Council maintains that the VBPR is an antiquated governing system, and that the current state of Vancouver's parks, recreation services, and infrastructure are in poor condition, due to the inefficiencies of working within an outdated structure (CBC News, 2023; CoV, 2023b; McSheffrey, 2023). Three former ABC Park Board Commissioners wholeheartedly disagreed with this shift and are now sitting as independents (Kulkarni, 2023). Moreover, some are calling the motion "undemocratic" to eliminate an elected body in the middle of its term, and without a unified vision on the transition nor the purpose of removing the VBPR (Chan, 2023). Although it is debated what the Park Board should be doing more or less of, if its existence is useful or not in municipal politics, and if they are doing a good job in the eyes of the public, parks cannot be separated from the political sphere of urban planning.

The potential role that the elected body of park commissioners may have in planning for coexistence can also be radically transformative. Due to the focused portfolio of the Park Board, its ability to call for motions that push for innovative governance practices is enhanced, such as the ones being examined in this research to create the SPIGC/WG, the adoption of eleven reconciliation strategies, the creation of the VanPlay Framework and Equity Initiative Zones (EIZ), and to explore what co-management of its lands with the MST Nations could look like. The benefits to having a dedicated governance model for parks in Vancouver can be advancing research, developing unique protocols and investing more time and financial capacity in managing parklands.

Urban parks play an integral role in the political system of municipal legislation. Academic research on the recreational, social, physical, environmental and economic benefits of urban parks point to the critical functions and roles that parks have in creating healthy communities (Pretty et al., 2007; Shuib et al., 2015). However, other scholarly perspectives point to the lesser discussed issue of parks being romanticized in urban planning literature and perceived as the antidote to the grimy industrialized urban city (Couture et al., 2018). The delicate balance of parks having clear value to public realm as open and free space for recreating, while also being structured as orderly spaces where stringent rules, regulations and customs are placed to adhere to the colonial settler ideals of parks is complicated. This research takes the stance that parklands and the uniqueness of VBPR might provide opportunities for land to be reclaimed in support

of Indigenous laws and self-determination, despite that the existence of parks were once created, and in many cases still are positioned and regulated to disposes Indigenous populations and assert settler colonial influence.

Chapter 3. Conceptual Framework

This chapter establishes my conceptual framework to synthesize three main bodies of literature to connect the theory of coexistence planning to the history of colonial urbanism in Canadian cities and the future of Indigenous urbanism and resurgence. My conceptual framework is based on the following bodies of literature:

1) Colonial urbanism: the challenges and implications of colonial institutions on planning for reconciliation and inclusion

2) Coexistence planning theory and praxis

3) Indigenous urbanism and resurgence

To ground my research in the concepts behind coexistence planning theory, I engage with three bodies of literature. First, I turn to reconciliation and inclusion in urban planning to provide analyses of contemporary urban reconciliation efforts in Canada and the attempts to redress the injustices of colonial urbanism. This literature examines planning through a lens that is critical of municipal settler governments to establish how the origins and intentions of planning have caused perpetual harm to Indigenous communities. This will include a brief historical analysis in connection to the background context chapter to confirm how colonialism and the institutions it produced (i.e., municipal, provincial, and federal governments and corporations) have intentionally created convoluted jurisdictional boundaries to address the spatial, geographical, legal and cognitive identities for existing Indigenous Rights (Cornell, 2013).

My next body of literature focuses on defining coexistence planning and how it has emerged in urban planning in British Columbia. This body of literature explains how modern land claim negotiations in BC have unsettled the discourse on recognizing Indigenous Rights and political notions of property and overlapping jurisdictions as they relate to understanding parks as a colonial enterprise. This literature forms my argument around how the contemporary (colonial) politics of recognition are upheld by the planning field and therefore, the demands for the reassertion of Indigenous Rights within all jurisdictions, including urban boundaries, is critical to coexistence planning (Porter & Barry, 2016).

The third topic in the sequence of this literature review merges the first and second bodies of literature to connect the theory of coexistence planning to specific issues of colonial urbanism and proposes potential solutions. The practices called for by coexistence planning stem from initial steps taken by Canadian cities to recognize Indigenous Peoples and propel settler governments towards Indigenous urbanism, an important step to “unsettling the colonial urbanism in Canadian cities” and enabling Indigenous resurgence in the urban context, a concept that is described as Indigenous nation-building and rewriting Indigenous narratives into planning history (Fawcett, 2021; Matunga, 2013).

3.1. Colonial Urbanism

There is a notable lack of engagement in Urban Studies literature with Indigenous Rights, sovereignty, and self-determination in cities (Porter, 2013; Tomiak, 2017). This might be explained by the failures of urban planning systems to acknowledge Indigenous territories in an urban setting, and that municipal governing bodies have only recently begun engaging with Indigenous Peoples beyond a top-down land use planning strategy (Porter, 2013). Colonial urbanism is a process that has controlled the cultural identities of Indigenous Peoples and groups, such that their ability to self-determination was and continues to be obstructed, and these “boundary legacies” continue to impact Indigenous governments’ ability to reclaim practical power and spatial authority urban spaces (Cornell, 2013, p. 39). Cornell (2013) defines boundary legacies as the ways in which colonial powers demarcate and divide Indigenous Peoples from the rest of society and from each other for political organization and power. As argued by Couture et al. (2018), the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous Peoples can be seen in the production of urban space and parklands as highly regulated, manicured and manipulated parcels of land designed for the benefit of modern setter societies. Thereby, the existence of urban parks as they are currently governed and constituted, are enterprises of colonial violence that remain ever-present in “settler cities” (Couture et al., 2018; Tomiak et al., 2019). The term ‘settler city’ is not meant to reassert any claim that cities are inherently non-Indigenous spaces or to exclude Indigenous Peoples from urban development, rather it is used to describe “a [colonized] place embedded in broader Indigenous networks and territorial relations” (Tomiak et al., 2019, p. 3).

In urban planning, there is an increasing emphasis on rethinking the boundaries between the planners and the planned (Barry & Thompson-Fawcett, 2020). Numerous Indigenous scholars have also developed critical analyses of initiatives that seek to decolonize land management and interpret the contemporary status of land dispossession throughout Canada (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018). As stated by the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP), the profession's goal for reconciliation is to become "meaningfully embedded in planning practice in Canada," and for planners to "build relationships with Indigenous Peoples based on mutual respect, trust, and dialogue" (CIP, 2019, p. 5). Planners are at the front lines of city design, and thus have reinforced the expropriation of Indigenous lands and supporting the fragmentation and management of urban Indigenous Peoples and identities (Cornell, 2013). Operating under the definition of a settler city, to meaningfully redress colonial urbanism requires planning and design to go beyond tokenism to reverse these practices and address "the right to participate in spatial production and the appropriation of urban space" (Nejad et al., 2019, p. 422).

Settler colonialism (also referred to as settler colonial urbanism, when discussed in urban contexts) is a term used to describe this historical overtaking and displacement or removal of Indigenous Peoples with the intention to build a state for newcomers (Fawcett & Walker, 2020; Tomiak et al., 2019). Although the ethnocultural diversity of Canadian cities, including urban Indigenous populations, has grown immensely since the *Indian Act* was established in 1876, the institutions and practices that uphold colonial urbanism are still controlled by Western systems of authority and assumptions of superiority (Fawcett & Walker, 2020). Reclamation of land in a setter city goes beyond infiltrating the colonial systems to re-establishing Indigenous laws within the city.

The ongoing implications that the federal *Indian Act* has on Indigenous sovereignty exist evidently in settler cities, including through the colonial authority over urban reserves, which interrogates what taking the land back looks like in an urban context (Tomiak, 2017). This colonial authority can be seen through the history of the Seẏáḵw Village in today's community called Kitsilano, a 91-acre parcel of land called Kitsilano Indian Reserve No. 6 (Sterritt, n.d.). This land was expropriated for railways, and eventually, in 1913, the Province of British Columbia forced the illegal sale due to the *Indian Act* allowing reserve lands to be purchased by a municipality if it falls within the city's boundaries (Sterritt, 2022). The land was picked away at and developed to

include the Burrard Bridge, the Vancouver Museum, the Planetarium Vancouver, and Vanier Park. This story is not unique, the *Indian Act* permitted the residents of any "Indian reserve which adjoins or is situated wholly or partly within an incorporated town or city having a population of not less than eight thousand" to be legally removed without their consent if it was in the "interest of the public and of the Indians of the band for whose use the reserve is held" (Barman, 2007). The authority of the federal government allowed the provinces to expropriate reserve lands for the benefit of settler cities, which one-by-one, unsettled Indigenous Peoples from Vancouver (Barman, 2007). Today, the "script is [being] flipped," as Indigenous Nations are reclaiming their lands, including Seȟáḵw, the Squamish Nation's largest 'land back' project (Sterritt, 2022).

Understanding that Indigenous Peoples' rights are both limited and supported by the legacy of colonial urbanism, the liminal space in which concepts of Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and self-governance exist, is why coexistence planning is critical to supporting the reclamation of urban space and cultural integrity. Loh & Heiskanen (2020) explain that the use of the concepts of sovereignty and self-determination in the 2008 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples based Indigenous Rights and claims to sovereignty on "self-government, cultural autonomy, and control over natural resources" as opposed to international independence, which is how the concept is typically used in discourse on International Relations (p. 294). Thus, Indigenous sovereignty and rights to self-determination exist in this "third space of sovereignty," challenging the status quo of settler statehood through the continuous efforts of Indigenous Peoples' "to resist colonial rule, whether by demanding rights and resources…or by asserting certain cultural practices in their daily lives" (p. 294). It is a framework through which Indigenous Nations and municipal governments may seek to explore how to negotiate the terms of their jurisdictions and responsibilities through the acceptance of "hybrid liminality" and unsettling the modern colonial orders of governance (Loh & Heiskanen, 2020, p. 295).

3.2. Coexistence Planning

As introduced earlier, coexistence planning is an emerging approach for Indigenous-settler relations in the urban planning field to embed reconciliation into the planning practice. The idea of coexistence is to repeal and transform the modern state practices such as urban, land-use and environmental planning that have erased and

restricted Indigenous governance processes (Porter & Barry, 2016; Howitt & Lunkapis, 2010). This section examines the gaps in the status quo standards of planning, proposing that practitioners ought to promote a relational concept of planning to reach a more transformative acknowledgement of Indigenous demands for recognition and acceptance of overlapping political and spatial jurisdictions so that urban space can be shared in a more equitable way (Porter & Barry, 2016, p. 5). To expand on the first body of literature to demonstrate that 'Western' conventional planning has reinforced state powers and the erasure of Indigenous Rights and interests. Planning for coexistence, on the other hand, considers Indigenous concepts of space and "claims for recognition and empowerment within their own cultural landscapes," modelling the challenge of shifting from physical co-occupation to equal rights in the city (Howitt & Lunkapi, 2010).

Contemporary 'Western' planning systems struggle to support the coexistence of existing Indigenous Rights in urban development processes (Howitt & Lunkapi, 2010). In the urban context, Indigenous recognition is still largely conceptualized as a "stakeholder group," as opposed to a mutual occupant, partner, or rights-holding bodies (Nejad et al., 2021, p. 95; Porter & Barry, 2016). Conventional municipal approaches to engaging with Indigenous communities often rely on representatives from the non-profit sector, rather than government-government relations due to a lack of established protocol agreements, treaty settlements, or a general paternalistic view of Indigenous governments (Heritz, 2018; Porter, 2013; Pysklywec et al., 2022). Coexistence planning principles call for a clear engagement framework to empower Indigenous governments to contest the current systems and secure Indigenous participation in decision-making. However, with the imposed boundary legacies mentioned in the previous section, municipal-Indigenous relationships are challenging to navigate due to the federal and provincial hierarchical structures of authority (Curry, 2019). The lack of legal precedent to trigger the duty to consult in municipal planning is part of the legacy of colonization that continues to limit Indigenous governments' authority in urban spaces. Cities, and more specifically, urban parks are spaces made for multiple cultural expressions of place, as a public good that should be reconstituted in recognition of Indigenous Rights, lands and territory. I hope to bring attention to these nuanced issues and consider the "contact zone," as explained by Porter and Barry (2016) between Indigenous and 'Western' laws and planning mechanisms as an opportunity for reclamation of land and access.

To conceptualize coexistence is not necessarily to support consensus or even the duty to consult and accommodate based on Canadian federal law, but instead, the existence of more than just the dominant expression of claims of space. Both federal and provincial government bodies have a legal responsibility to fulfill the duty to consult when it considers conduct that might adversely impact potential or established Aboriginal or treaty rights. In municipal governments, this is seemingly not required, at least not in the same sense with risk of legal ramifications. The Crown's duty to consult with Indigenous Peoples, at the time of writing, is only applicable to federal and provincial governments. However, Canada's policy position has been reactive to precedents set out in Supreme Court cases to constantly clarify the extent and procedural requirements to fulfilling the duty to consult. Porter (2013) problematizes mapping and spatial boundaries formed by 'Western' legal titles and provokes the view that cities are deeply implicated in engineering urban areas through the lens of 'traditional' claims as opposed to highly contested urban sites. This gesturing can be seen in Stanley Park, a manicured display of nature and Vancouver's most prized park, that was contrived using 'post-colonial' conceptions of Indigenous representation (Mawani, 2003). Although the duty to consult with Indigenous Peoples is part of Section 35 of the *Constitution Act* of 1982, the notion of the municipal duty to consult is scarcely mentioned in the research literature or in public policy strategies (Pysklywec et al., 2022). Even though both BC and Vancouver are setting an example by being the first Canadian province and Canadian city respectively to pass legislation pertaining to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the concept of the municipal duty to consult is not clearly part of either strategy, at the time of writing. However, municipal governments could be interpreted as "agents of vehicles for the Crown," which could pragmatically address the deficits in the professional planning field if the municipal duty to consult becomes enforced on a national level (Hoehn & Stevens, 2018). Nonetheless, despite the prospect of this change, Indigenous Rights to the city should not require a legal battle as they were never forgone even in their urbanized state.

The planning profession has considerably evolved to acknowledge the importance of relational planning with Indigenous Peoples, however, the competency requirements for planners in Canada are not comprehensive enough to effectively employ coexistence planning on a national level (Porter & Barry, 2016). The concept is more familiar in Australia since the Australian High Court introduced the legal notion of

the term in the legislation that recognizes Indigenous Rights (Howitt & Lunkapi, 2010). Porter and Barry (2016) draw attention to the tendency for planners to fixate on 'Indigenous (in)capacities' to address what are actually inequities in the planning system. They argue that these deficits are more likely a deflection of the intercultural capacity deficits in 'Western' planning for engaging with Indigenous customary laws and their responsibilities to support the Indigenous right to self-determination (p. 174). A deeper conceptual framing of coexistence, which is where my research is situated, is the reconceptualization of space, values, and political jurisdictions for positioning Indigenous urbanism and resurgence (Porter, 2013) — which I argue for in the following section.

3.2.1. Coexistence Planning Concept Framework

This table is an analytical reflection of the literature and theorizing of coexistence in urban contexts. The strategies outlined (Table 3.1) are not "best practices" or a way to measure success of coexistence efforts. Coexistence planning is an evolution of planning theory and practice and does not have one single definition or measurable outcome. The intersections between Indigenous and urban planning are where opportunities for new planning methods and strategies can be developed for more collaborative governance with Indigenous Peoples.

Table 3.1. Conceptual framework for coexistence planning to identify and analyze key principles and practices across the three overlapping bodies of literature

Coexistence Planning	
Key principles	**Urban indicators and strategies**
Arts and cultural programming	• Indigenous spatial appropriation (i.e., artist residencies, performance, cultural practice) • Visual and symbolic placemaking on the land and in public space • Participatory approach to spatial production
Challenging dominant narratives and assumptions	• Reconceptualizing hierarchical levels of governance and control towards a principle-based approach, in alignment with Indigenous-supported legislation (i.e., UNDRIP, TRC Calls to Action) • Establishing foundational respect for Indigenous knowledge and oral histories in research and policy
Protocol embedded in legislation	• Establishing Indigenous laws in municipal legislation to re-evaluate culturally inappropriate by-laws and policies

	• Recognition of cultural multiplicities and distinctive protocols in Indigenous Nations and communities
Indigenous management	• Co-creation of policy with Indigenous land management principles • Asserting Indigenous authority and decision-making in planning
Land relationship planning	• Re-evaluation of the human-land relationship and interdependencies through Indigenous worldviews • Co-creation on project and planning visioning
Community engagement	• Time and resource investment in building relationships and trust with community members • Understanding capacity challenges and collaborating with Indigenous cultural practitioners, businesses, and urban organizations on city programming

Note: These indicators are inspired by consistencies in coexistence planning literature (Howitt & Lunkapis, 2010; Matunga, 2017; Porter, 2013; Porter & Barry, 2016)

3.3. Indigenous Urbanism and Resurgence

The final piece of my conceptual framework links coexistence planning with solutions for colonial urbanism and setter city narratives. The literature on city planning with Indigenous governments has significant potential that I explore in this section. As explained earlier in this chapter, there remains a gap in the research literature at the intersections of Urban Studies and Indigenous resurgence. The concept of Indigenous urbanism refers to the reshaping of cities and framing reconciliation through "Indigenous resurgence or culturally rooted practices that seek to reclaim place, land, and relational responsibilities" (Fawcett, 2021, p.53). These two terms are used to describe the movement towards reasserting Indigenous cultural identities and right in an urban context. This section establishes my normative and conceptual stance that "enabling Indigenous urbanism begins with creating a material and discursive sense of place for Indigenous inhabitants in the everyday lived experience of Canadian cities" (Nejad et al., 2019).

Scholars of Indigenous resurgence suggest that planning policies require an "epistemological shift" to prioritize Indigenous lived experience over non-Indigenous municipal officials and to challenge the current socio-spatial structures of power and politics of knowledge (Nejad et al., 2019, p.417). Framing urban reconciliation efforts through the 'right to urbanism' adds a relevant contribution to the scholarly field and debate on spatial justice and self-determination. Nejad et al. (2019) inform the Urban

Studies field that planning and design ought to be taken beyond tokenism to address "the right to participate in spatial production and the appropriation of urban space" (p.422). Thus, Indigenous resurgence is more radical and transformative than notions of reconciliation, as it involves the regeneration of nationhood, laws, language, land stewardship and all-encompassing Indigenous ways of knowing (Simpson, 2016; Fawcett, 2021). Examining urbanity should be approached through an Indigenous lens, as argued by Guimont Marceau et al. (2023). They argue that Indigenous societies were built on "urban characteristics" such as cultural gatherings, communication and economic networks and exchanges, diverse land uses and organized governance systems (p. 176). Acknowledging that Indigenous urbanism predates colonial urban forces and infrastructure challenges the notion that Urban Studies is not fundamentally an Indigenous field of study (Guimont Marceau et al., 2023; Todd, 2023).

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar and a member of Alderville First Nation critically engages with concepts of Indigenous resurgence and analyzes the relationship that resurgence has in the spaces of Indigenous daily life. Simpson (2016) uses the term "grounded normativity" to interpret the objectives of Indigenous resurgence, which explains that Indigenous Peoples have a unique set of cultural values and ethics that are grounded in their intimate relationship with a place and the land. She theorizes that the practice of grounded normativity would create a dynamic ecosystem whereby self-determination and community could be centred throughout decision-making. Then, the role of coexistence planning would become to improve the built environments and political structures of cities to promote reconciliation through grounded normativity that demonstrates the cultural visibility and socio-spatial inclusivity of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous urbanism scholarship highlights Indigenous Peoples' rich contributions to cities and contends that intercultural understanding between newcomers and Indigenous communities is critical to building solidarity among urban residents (Smith, 2019; Khan, 2019; Nejad et al., 2021). This scholarship supports the important political and cultural projects being piloted by the VBPR to establish Indigenous Peoples and First Nations as the hosts of the land that are welcoming settlers to the city. The literature explores the silence between racialized minority groups and Indigenous Peoples as a deficit in urban planning and decolonization. Khan (2019) advocates for shared "narratives of partition" between immigrants and Indigenous Peoples as a

pathway for solidarity and resistance from settler colonial narratives. In support of this idea, Nejad et al. (2021) note that “the coexistence of Indigenous Peoples and immigrants does not mean that both groups should be considered as equivalent to each other or one more important than the other in a robust concept of urban diversity” (p. 92). Indigenous people are not one homogenous group to the same degree that non-Indigenous people are not either. Insofar as anti-racism and multiculturalism in cities are key to planning just and equitable cities, the disruption of the settler-Indigenous binary can support a deeper conceptualization of Indigenous resurgence. Above all, cities must be seen as places of Indigenous authority so that recognition of multiplicities of culture, planning and management can coexist.

As mentioned throughout this chapter, deconstructing colonial narratives (the *truth*, in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada) is a precondition to reconciliation. In Smith’s (2019) examination of representation in media, films, and performance she argues that the way in which urban Indigenous lives are portrayed in film and art can prompt a reconsideration of Indigenous Peoples and Urban Studies. Explications of historical and colonial narratives in popular culture and urban spaces are what lead to the contradiction of Indigenous people and urbanity. This contradiction was the core goal of settler city narratives and remains a paternalistic oversight of Indigenous agencies to separate Indigenous claims and rights from cities (Smith, 2019). The miscategorization of urban Indigenous populations as an ethnocultural stakeholder group reinforces the problems with colonial urbanism. Emerging policy and discourse towards intercultural approaches and cross-cultural communication are accompanied by the epistemological shift towards Indigenous resurgence, placemaking, and participation in planning (Nejad et al., 2021). The “welcoming newcomers to one’s homeplace, as host, may indeed be one of the most powerful expressions of sovereignty and occupancy as a political and cultural community” (Gyepi-Garbrah et al., 2014, p. 1808 as cited by Nejad et al., 2021, p. 96). This research project examines an example of this active Indigenous resurgence and recognition of an iconic, internationally recognized park while considering its replicability across coexistence planning principles. The following chapters explore my research question through a deeper analysis of the documents that are relevant to the themes introduced in this conceptual framework. Through the data, I contextualize the ways the VBPR has made attempts to incorporate

coexistence planning and Indigenous urbanism into their framework and initiatives for planning and managing Stanley Park.

Chapter 4. Research Design and Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used in this study. This research produced qualitative empirical research, centered on the work of Indigenous Peoples and practitioners in the field of planning for coexistence and reconciliation in urban parks. I used two main sources of data collection: document analysis and semi-structured interviews. To reiterate, my research has three main aims. First, to evaluate the application of coexistence planning in the VBPR. Second, to bring forward insights to how urban parks can provide opportunities for land to be reclaimed in support of Indigenous self-determination, cultural identity, and rights. And third, contribute to the pragmatic discourse on the role of municipal governments in decolonizing urban planning and design.

To achieve my research aims, I utilized publicly available documents and semi-structured interviews in conversation with my conceptual framework as means of triangulation to ensure credible results. The adaptation of my methodological approach became necessary due to limitations in scoping interviewees and the unavailability of internally disclosed documents. During my data collection, I decided I needed to go on the lands I was learning more about to better understand “land as pedagogy” and open myself to Indigenous storytelling and perspectives of Stanley Park (Simpson, 2014). After completing Chapter 5 and presenting my findings, I revisited my key informants, seeking their collaboration to refine my results, validate the findings, and incorporate updated information. This step was crucial in the context of the constantly evolving and shifting nature of the work at the VBPR, influenced by various external pressures.

I took the approach of studying through stories and lived experiences, as opposed to a case study approach. However, many of the same academic parameters for an exemplary case study apply as this research seeks to investigate an example of coexistence planning, an evolving practice for cities that is of general public interest with underlying issues that are nationally important (Yin, 2018). However, this research design aimed to align with Indigenous research methodologies focused on storywork and decolonizing methods by rejecting a standardized, one-size-fits-all research design to prioritize respect and reciprocity (Smith, 2013; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). This

approach concentrates on a relational connection that I, as a young scholar and student with a resumé built primarily on colonial government positions, have to the topic of planning for coexistence (Fast & Kovach, 2019). As suggested by Fast (2019), understanding the relational connection the researcher has garners how the research is meaningful to the community, the field of study, and the participants.

Moreover, my stance in this research was to move forward with humility and without an extractive intent, meaning that I did not seek to extract trauma or pain from the historical wrongdoings of the colonial institutions that have impacted Indigenous Peoples on these lands. As Eve Tuck identifies (2009) “damage-centered research” only seeks to document damage-centered narratives of colonization that cause harm rather than social change, which is what is often the intent of research involving contexts of colonization. I aimed to ground this research in Dylan Robinson’s (2020) *Hungry Listening* conceptual framework that involves recognizing the presence of “settler colonial listening positionalities” by engaging with this research critically with a reflexive and relational approach to my findings. Dylan Robinson is a xwélmexw (Stó:lō/Skwah) scholar and artist, whose work I was introduced to by Dr. Selena Couture, due to her work in performance studies and decolonizing practices. In agreement with Tuck’s argument that damaging research will not facilitate social change by simply making people aware of injustices, Robinson asserts that the unidirectional benefit of settler listening and public dialogues to raise awareness of problems raised by Indigenous people are *not* actions of redress or resurgence of Indigenous knowledge. Moreover, it is important to note that non-Indigenous research should never be ‘experts’ on Indigenous Peoples. Understanding this, I consider Robinson’s (2020) framing of Indigenous refusal and resurgence in Chapter 5 and 6, to analyze the Western urgency for time and access to Indigenous knowledge and the grounded normativity of Indigenous practices, protocols and knowledge that refuses the extractive and authoritative relationship between Indigenous and settler groups.

4.2. Data Collection

4.2.1. Document Analysis

My first method of data collection was document analysis of publicly available data, reports, grey literature, and city documents and proposals to gain better

understanding of the SPIGC/WG and the manifestations of coexistence planning. Due to a non-disclosure agreement between the MST Nations and the VPBR, the SPIGC/WG is exempt from Freedom of Information Requests. An informational call with a Planner at the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (VBPR) indicated that I may be able to request certain internal documents if representatives of the First Nations agree to release this information. After receiving ethics approval, I reached out to two Planners at the VBPR working on reconciliation strategies to request these documents. After conducting interviews and email correspondences with Park Board staff, it became clear that it would not be possible or appropriate to retrieve any internal documents from the SPIGC/WG. Although this was discouraging at first, it led me to the realization and findings, which I will delve into deeper in Chapters 5 and 6, my inability to access resources and data from the Reconciliation Team and their work is a testament to their respect for safeguarding Indigenous knowledge and protecting the relationship between the VBPR and the MST Nations.

In my document review of publicly available resources, I focused on analyzing reports, council meetings and presentations published by the VBPR and the City of Vancouver. Analyzing these documents became the foundational component of my research design, allowing me to investigate the timeline of my study through public documentation over the last 9 years, and formulate codes and themes across the larger ecosystem of the VBPR that are critical in discussion around planning for coexistence and reconciliation in Vancouver. Below are key documents that were included in my review and analysis:

- Framework for City of Reconciliation (2014)
- Park Board Meeting Minutes and Presentations (2014-2023)
- Park Board Reconciliation Strategies (2016)
- Truth-Telling: Indigenous Perspectives on Working with Municipal Governments (2017)
- Park Board Reconciliation Mission, Vision & Values (2018)
- Scoping of a Colonial Audit (2019)

- Development of a shared, city-wide commemorative policy for monuments and memorials was identified as one of key implementation actions in VanPlay Playbook: Vancouver's Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan G.8.2 Monuments and Memorials Framework (2019)
- VanPlay Framework and supporting documents (2020)
- Reconciliation Report Updates (5), City of Vancouver, 2016-2021
- Culture|Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture Vancouver Culture Plan (2020)
- Culture|Shift Progress Report, City of Vancouver (2021)
- Motion, Co-Management of Vancouver Parklands with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations (2021)
- Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the City of Vancouver (2021)
- Data presented in November 2021 at the Colonial Audit: Interim Progress Report, illustrate the current under-representation of Indigenous languages, place names and peoples, as well as equity-denied communities.
- VBPR's Local Food Systems Action Plan (2021)
- Joint CoV/PB Commemoration Framework – Guiding Principles, Vision & Emerging Priorities (2022)

4.2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with key informants allowed me to identify any coexistence efforts that have emerged in the VBPR according to the perspectives of those who have a close relationship and understanding of these goals and praxis. Data from interviews provided a critical understanding of the story of Stanley Park and the unique experiences and stories behind the reconciliation initiatives, plans and public

documents. One of the strengths of semi-structured interviews is the ability to exercise flexibility and reciprocity through storytelling and conversational data collection, an Indigenous method of knowledge transfer (Babbie, 2018; Kovach, 2009). As previously mentioned, this interview style allowed me to create a relational connection with participants by maintaining an open, oral conversation, that observes Indigenous methodologies of oral knowledge sharing. Questions posed to interviewees determined indicators of coexistence planning theory, such as collaborative projects, cultural valuation, shared responsibility, Indigenous-led decision-making, and equal structures of discourse.

From the outset of this research, I prepared for limited interview participants as the nature of the research ongoing, and the capacity of practitioners working on these initiatives is extremely limited. The interviews were with participants who held breadth of knowledge on the initiatives and scope of the VBPR's work and/or those who possessed working relationships with VBPR. I requested interviews with eleven participants and held six interviews of approximately one hour each by the end of my data collection. One interviewee opted to withdraw from the study after the interview, leaving the data from five interviewees to be utilized to inform this research. I cross-referenced information from the public facing documents and the five participants. Through iterative revisions with the interviewees, I validated emerging themes and drew comparisons across the data sets to strengthen my analysis.

Of the five interview participants, three consented to be named. The three named interview participants will be referred to by name in the following chapters: Kamala Todd, whose role with the CoV is currently as a consultant with the City of Vancouver's Manager's Office on the Vancouver UNDRIP Strategy and has a longstanding relationship with CoV and VBPR working in other capacities within Indigenous Relations, Indigenous art projects, and reconciliation initiatives; Emily Dunlop, Senior Planner at VBPR leading the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan, hired as a liaison between VBPR and the Host Nations, Dr. Selena Couture, Professor and Author of *Against the Current and Into the Light: Performing History and Land in Coast Salish Territories and Vancouver's Stanley Park (2019),* as well as other publications on performance studies, an interdisciplinary field that observes ethnographic practices including the dynamics of parklands. The remaining two interviewees have been assigned codes to respect their privacy: PLAN1, a Planner with experience working for one of the local Nations and has

an ongoing focus on advancing reconciliation in planning; PLAN2 a Planner with a research background in Indigenous food sovereignty and a community-centred approach to decolonizing planning systems.

4.2.3. Reflective Exercise

During the data collection phase, I participated in a reflective exercise through an organized tour company called Talasay Tours. As part of the research methodology, it was important for me to experience Stanley Park through an Indigenous lens and deepen my understanding of the park's ecological history and cultural significance of some of the park's landscape. The tour took place on a Saturday afternoon in March, and was guided by an Indigenous Ambassador and Storyteller, who holds a wealth of knowledge about the natural ecosystems and species inside Stanley Park, as well as broader knowledge about the historical families and villages that resided in the park before it was a park.

After the tour, I completed a journal entry (See Appendix) about the spaces and people I interacted with, the stories I heard, and my reflections about this experience. This sub-set of data was immensely helpful to ground myself in place and consider Stanley Park and the City of Vancouver presented through an Indigenous lens.

4.3. Data Analysis

To analyze my data (interviews and documents), I exercised intentional objectivity in my coding practice, in order to capture all accounts of my research, from the seemingly mundane and marginal notes to exceptional, noteworthy ones (Saldaña, 2013). Moreover, my research design also aims to address the politics of knowledge and research, a concept that Smith (2012) criticizes as the social sciences field continues to rely on the conventional 'Western' methodology of research and the positivist paradigm. Smith (2012) asserts that research involving Indigenous Peoples can often fail to adequately acknowledge the participants of the study and "steals" knowledge if there is a non-reciprocal relationship (p.228).

To further understand the important of Indigenous data sovereignty, the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNDGS) offers training on respecting

Indigenous data sovereignty, through understanding First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP®), which is integral to maintaining ethical relationships and Indigenous self-determination. During my research, I participated in a workshop on OCAP principles and deepened my understanding of the legacy of unethical research on First Nations communities, including data management issues and culturally insensitive research practices that are still ongoing in settler institutions, including the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) that is required for this research. The TCPS 2 includes a chapter on research involving Indigenous Peoples to facilitate ethical research. However, TCPS 2 does not consider community privacy, only individual participant's privacy which does not protect against potential community harm (MacGregor, 2023). In consideration of this, my research design and analysis are rooted in the ethics of a responsible community-researcher relationship by leveraging Indigenous scholarship as a framework to assess public information, following principles of OCAP and practicing critical self-reflection (Fast & Kovach, 2019). I utilized existing research and Indigenous scholarship as an indicator to validate how the VBPR is demonstrating their commitment to decolonization and willingness to plan for coexistence of Indigenous laws and perspectives with colonial ones in tandem.

I employed a constructivist approach to acknowledge that multiple perspectives emerged in the findings, respecting the knowledge that is captured by maintaining reflexivity while weaving through participants' stories, and picking up themes and key information as I followed along (Babbie et al., 2018). These methods were important to resist the telling of a single story, given that my research question was based on how the participants understood the principles of coexistence and Indigenous urbanism, the findings are nuanced and are discussed in Chapter 6. Moreover, as Smith (2012) suggests, using Indigenous research methods and approaches can lead to highly productive and creative research relationships that underscore the importance of consent and intellectual property rights, while challenging existing paradigms to contribute to a more comprehensive perspective. As this research engages with matters that impact and involve Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous-founded methods will be part of my analytic reasoning, which is also integral to coexistence planning approaches.

I coded and analyzed the data collected through a grounded theory approach, using inductive reasoning to identify patterns and re-assess documents to validate my

perspectives and maintain reciprocity (Babbie, 2018; Charmaz, & Bryant, 2008; Saldaña, 2013). With this analytic method, I transcribed my interviews and focused on rich, detailed and multi-layered findings that are better suited for a thematic coding analysis, as argued by Saldaña (2013). Reflexivity remained critical in my analysis as a means to validate and “fill in the gaps” in my analysis and maintain an ethical research practice, as explained by Guillemin and Gillam (2004).

Photo of coniferous trees in Stanley Park (March 12, 2023). Photo credit: author

Chapter 5. Findings

In this chapter, I present my findings on the VBPR's efforts related to coexistence planning. Utilizing the indicators adapted through the coexistence planning literature (see Table 3.1), I analyze the state of the relationship between the VBPR and MST Nations, and present key themes and tools employed that either follow or hinder coexistence planning. This chapter is divided into three sections: 1) institutional structure, 2) conceptualizing Indigenous-settler relations, 3) and visibility, reflection, and language. These themes emerged through open, iterative, manual-style coding, where I identified recurring patterned and connected codes to form central categories across my data sets. While the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan continues to be a central element of this research, attention is directed towards the wider array of planning approaches and tools taking place within the VBPR. These approaches and tools have exerted influence over the transformation of the CoV's engagements with MST Nations and the urban Indigenous population. By means of scrutinizing VBPR, CoV, and media documents, analyzing participant interviews and observational data, this chapter demonstrates the diverse ways in which components of coexistence planning manifest within existing planning toolkits and frameworks of the VBPR.

5.1. Institutional Structure

Early on in this research, I discovered there is an active non-disclosure agreement (NDA) between MST Nations and the VBPR. This NDA serves as a fundamental tool to safeguard historically sensitive information related to the lands in Stanley Park, which have been historically exploited for extraction and manipulation (Dunlop, 2023). Furthermore, as the SPIGC/WG is currently internally focused on building trust and shared visions, there are limitations on what information is publicly released and available in documents. Staff noted that the extent of information I could gather from my interviewees could be constrained by their commitment to uphold the NDA and that they might not be able to share specific details about the ongoing internal work that has not been made public yet. While this presented a challenge in obtaining detailed insights into the discussions within the working group, it emerged as a significant research finding. Despite incremental progress and actions to date, the

primary focus has been on establishing a solid foundation of trust between the VBPR and MST Nations.

The VBPR staff who participated in this research openly shared their experiences and perspectives, and their transparency and support are recurring themes throughout this chapter. However, there were challenges in conducting this research due to the limited number of staff with the time and capacity to speak with me. Additionally, navigating through a complex web of publicly accessible documents and online resources proved challenging, as there was no discernible guide for effective navigation.

The following section details the VBPR's current state and internal organization, establishing the groundwork for the remainder of the chapter. This section examines the progress of the Colonial Audit, an internal review addressing colonial influences and their enduring impacts within the VBPR. It also discusses the approach of 'comprehensive planning' for decolonization and unpacking its significance to the VBPR's relationship with MST Nations. Furthermore, this section explores internal capacity struggles and tensions between authorities and decision-making bodies.

5.1.1. Undergoing a Colonial Audit

Reconciliation and decolonization efforts within VBPR are being steered by the Decolonization, Arts, and Culture team. A pivotal juncture was marked in 2021 with the creation of the role of the Decolonization, Arts, and Culture Manager within the VBPR to lead the new Decolonization, Arts, and Culture department. This role is charged with overseeing three key domains: the Arts, Culture, and Engagement team, the Reconciliation Planning team and the Arts and Culture Planning team. The Arts, Culture, and Engagement team, functions as the "programming arm," supports grassroots initiatives through collaborations with cultural practitioners and artists (VBPR, 2018b; VPLAN2, 2023). Throughout my research, I encountered a growing challenge in untangling the complex interplay of various factors that support the implementation of Indigenous Rights and coexistence planning.

The Colonial Audit constitutes an integral facet of the VBPR decolonization efforts. As articulated by an interview participant (VPLAN2, 2023), the imminent audit assumes a pivotal role in rectifying historical narratives, thus illuminating the concealed

colonial legacies intertwined with the Park Board's history and ongoing function. This audit is envisaged as a truth-telling document with the explicit purpose of disseminating awareness regarding veiled and obscured historical accounts, and how this emerges in current VBPR practices. During a documented VBPR meeting in July 2022, Donnie Rosa, the General Manager, underscored the profoundly instructive nature of the Colonial Audit, emphasizing its formidable nature (VBPR, 2022c). In a presentation to the Council, Spencer Lindsay, the Reconciliation Planner at the time, stated that the process had initiated a process of internal introspection for them, ultimately leading to the refinement of objectives and the delineation of scope of the audit (VBPR, 2022c). Lindsay cautioned that the audit's focus would not be on prescribing recommendations or solutions; instead, its core function would be to uncover and underscore hidden truths.

The VBPR has somewhat openly admitted to encountering challenges in retaining Indigenous staff, primarily attributed to the burnout associated with the demanding tasks linked to conducting a Colonial Audit and executing the reconciliation strategies of the VBPR. Rosa affirmed that this type of endeavour requires arduous mental and physical labour, forcing those involved to confront intergenerational trauma. In their presentation, Lindsay (2022) stated, "for myself, the deeper we dig, the harder it's been for me to see the ways that the system is ingrained to oppress Indigenous people across the board."

Within this context of auditing the VBPR's internal systemic issues, the notion of cross-departmental data management emerged as a potential instrument for assessing the efficacy of a prospective decolonization action plan, to follow the results from the Colonial Audit. Notably, while the initial intention was for the audit to culminate in the formulation of a decolonization action plan, the current focus has centered on completing the audit itself. Simultaneously, at a Park Board Meeting in July 2022, the team working on the Colonial Audit referenced the City of Toronto's potential utility as a model for devising a reconciliation action plan (VBPR, 2022f). Despite initial plans to release the Colonial Audit in the fall of 2022, at the time of writing (Feb. 2024), the projected completion of the audit is for spring 2024.

5.1.2. Comprehensive Planning

A key juncture in the evolution of the partnership between the VBPR and MST Nations can be attributed to Emily Dunlop's designation as the Senior Planner overseeing the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan. During our discussion, Dunlop (2023) confirmed that she was specifically hired "by the Park Board and the Nations together as a collaborative process to lead the Comprehensive Plan." Dunlop (2023) advocates for the necessity of a comprehensive plan for Stanley Park, underscoring the imperative for decisions to be underpinned by a holistic perspective that factors in the broader context, intricate interrelationships, and multifaceted challenges inherent within the park's milieu. She characterizes her role as inherently collaborative, with a primary objective of cultivating a genuine and equitable partnership with the Indigenous Nations. Importantly, she clarifies that while she was contributory in furthering this endeavor, the groundwork for this initiative had been laid over a substantial period through the tireless advocacy of the Nations themselves.

The establishment of the SPIGC/WG marked a pivotal milestone, coinciding with the conception of a comprehensive plan for Stanley Park. This conception stemmed from the initiative driven by the MST Nations to hold the VBPR accountable and attempt to translate and harmonize their distinct ways of knowledge into an operational tool, which could be effectively employed through a collaborative process (Dunlop, 2023; VPLAN1, 2023). However, Dunlop (2023) explained that beyond the comprehensive plan itself, which is the tangible policy tool they are working on, what is most important to her role and success of the plan is much longer term and intangible. In our conversation, she shared the following: "This is their home. This is their territory. The Park Board is an organization that in this sort of colonial system has jurisdiction within their territory… and we need to learn how to work with the Nations to really commit to that long-term relationship" (Dunlop, 2023).

Dunlop (2023) stressed the paramount significance of comprehending the intricate components that constitute the park and the intricate interplay among them. Integral to this all-encompassing "comprehensive" strategy was the active inclusion of the Nations in the recruitment process, a facet that strengthens internal trust-building within the VBPR. A significant insight gained during the course of her tenure is the inevitability of errors when doing "decolonizing" or "reconciliation" work. Dunlop (2023)

does not shy away from acknowledging that mistakes have been and continue to be made, even among senior-level staff and Park Board Commissioners. Encouraging fellow planners to embrace these instances of missteps, she underscores the importance of accountability—embracing these errors and acknowledging them directly.

Dunlop (2023) acknowledged the contributions of Rena Soutar, the Senior Manager of the Decolonization, Arts and Culture Team, in propelling the Park Board to its present juncture. Soutar emerged as an instrumental and hands-on leader, skillfully infusing Indigenous perspectives into all projects under her purview. The discernible impact of Soutar's endeavors resonates palpably across the expanse of reconciliation updates and records of Council meetings. Her role and leadership trajectory have notably facilitated the cultivation of a culture shift within all departments at the VBPR. This shift has been realized, in part, through training initiatives and leading by example under her leadership (Dunlop, 2023). Dunlop (2023) affirmed that this messaging and focus on reconciliation and decolonization is "embedded into our culture now [at the VBPR], and a big part of that is the leadership we've had. I would say to any organization that's wanting to do better in this work—you have to have strong leadership that is not afraid to make this part of the culture, and that's at *every* level."

Notably, this momentum has enabled the institutionalization of a modulated hiring procedure throughout the VBPR. Dunlop (2023) explained that this approach involves the incorporation of embedded queries pertaining to perspectives on reconciliation as an integral facet of the hiring process. However, it is important to note that while this stipulation exists, there is no overt mandate for candidates to possess prior experience in engaging with Indigenous communities or a profound grasp of Indigenous planning paradigms and histories. Predominantly, the emphasis gravitates towards fostering a culture of continuous learning, placing the onus on individuals to proactively seek out and avail themselves of the extensive array of online resources, courses, and literature pertinent to this field of work while providing opportunities for peer-to-peer mentorship on project work.

Recognizing the profound significance of Stanley Park to MST Nations and Vancouver residents, the SPIGC/WG supports the development of a comprehensive plan (VPLAN1, 2023). While there are motivations to ensure inclusivity in the development of the plan to capture all concerns facing the park, the current agreement

between the VBPR and MST protects the historical information on Stanley Park, unless the Nations give specific permission to disclose that information. Dunlop (2023) clarified that the NDA is a tool employed by the VBPR to enable MST Nations to share Indigenous knowledge in confidence. Faced with some limits to what was able to be shared, this research drew a focus on documents that were publicly available at the time of writing. The Park Board planner confirmed that this plan seeks to encapsulate the needs, visions, and aspirations of the entire community over the next century (VPLAN1, 2023). It is not yet known whether this will require ongoing evaluation and planning as the vision evolves, or if there will be public involvement.

If this plan is to truly embody the VBPR's commitment to its decolonization journey and its aspiration to redress historical injustices against the Indigenous Peoples of these lands, it will require an iterative strategy to incorporate multifaceted issues and to realize a vision grounded in equity. As one of the Park Board planners (VPLAN1, 2023) explained, this pursuit exemplifies reconciliation in action. Moreover, this interview participant rationalized that while substantial dimensions of this undertaking are yet to be realized, their overall outlook remains characterized by optimism and confidence in both its eventual success and its present standing.

Dunlop (2023) expanded upon the core objective of the comprehensive plan, describing its departure from a project-centric urban planning approach to one that embraces Indigenous epistemologies that aim to holistically comprehend and account for the park's interconnectedness. In her justification, she shared the following:

> There's a tendency to observe certain things about a city or an area, and make decisions based on what you observe, but Indigenous ways of knowing really call into question like, are you really seeing everything? Because the timeframes, for example, on [City] projects, are so fast that you can't possibly study everything you need to study to really understand what's actually happening in an area…and there seems to be an understanding within Indigenous cultures that you need to make sure that you're taking stock of everything going on…and so doing a comprehensive plan for Stanley Park, it's exactly that. It's understanding all of the different layers and components that make this place what it is currently, what all the sorts of challenges that the park is facing, and how they're interrelated (Dunlop, 2023).

She explained that this approach acknowledges the wide-ranging implications of decisions and "ripple effects" that may go unnoticed. As she described, rather than

falling into analysis paralysis, this method involves a deliberate allocation of time to comprehend the park's current state, its layers, components, and interrelated challenges. Dunlop (2023) explained that conceptualizing a century-long trajectory does not entail crafting an exhaustive hundred-year work plan, but instead signifies a higher-level acknowledgment of future trajectories aligned with Indigenous traditions—stretching seven generations ahead. A recurring observation throughout this research reinforces Dunlop's viewpoint: the VBPR has consistently extended the timelines for reconciliation and decolonization initiatives. While some of the delays in the last few years can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviewees pointed to an approach that aims to counteract what one Park Board planner referred to as "white urgency" (VPLAN2, 2023). This is also evidenced through the VBPR's Reconciliation Mission, Vision and Values that were adopted in 2018, the first value being "patience," as "untangling [colonialism] takes time" (VBPR, 2018d).

This undertaking involves assessing aspects of Stanley Park's current status that are misaligned with this overarching vision or pose threats to its long-term viability. Consequently, it is essential to prioritize prompt interventions addressing decisions requiring resolution within the next 30-50 years. These encompass immediate concerns like population growth, density, climate change, and aging infrastructure. Dunlop (2023) affirmed that the discussions within the SPIGC/WG inherently involve a process of validation and alignment concerning new decisions or projects. The primary focus is on ensuring that the vision harmoniously aligns with the viewpoints and aspirations of all partners present at the table.

5.1.3. Capacity Struggles

Interview participants were all quick to acknowledge the challenges of staffing capacity and the demands placed on Indigenous Nations. Indigenous governments are limited in the current framework provided that includes compensating them for their staff time and expertise based on City-prioritized projects, while also exploring various models to provide support, such as funding positions or liaisons. Nonetheless, imbalances persist due to the sheer volume of requests from all external bodies including other levels of government, and private and nonprofit sectors.

The CoV's Arts Culture and Community Services begun hiring staff to support their Reconciliation mission in 2016. In 2016, the CoV Social Policy department created a temporary Indigenous Planner position which was made permanent in 2018, now called "Indigenous Social Planner." Kamala Todd, who was the CoV's first Aboriginal Social Planner (from 2000-2006) and first Indigenous Arts and Culture Planner (from 2018-2020) and works currently as a consultant with the City of Vancouver. According to the City of Reconciliation Update in June 2019, this position has continuously "worked closely with the urban Indigenous communities and leads the City's efforts in this area. The work includes stewardship of the City's memorandum of understanding with Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council, acting as staff liaison to the Urban Indigenous Advisory Committee, leading the City's healing and wellness responses, and advising on reconciliation efforts of the Division and interdepartmental work. In 2018, together with input from MST representatives, Arts, Culture, and Community Services established and filled an Indigenous Arts and Culture Planner position. The Indigenous Arts and Culture Planner works in many areas of work within Cultural Services, including, but not limited to: providing advice on arts, culture, and heritage aspects of projects, planning and processes interdepartmentally" (CoV, 2019a).

Interviewees with a first-hand understanding of the internal organization pressures to advance reconciliation through various initiatives expressed the negative impact of constantly being asked to meet intense deadlines, leading to burnout among staff. Multiple interviewees mentioned that there are ongoing challenges of Indigenous staffing and staff retention at the VBPR and the CoV. While acknowledging the need for a safe and welcoming environment for Indigenous staff, multiple interviewees acknowledged the burden placed on Indigenous staff to carry out decolonization work and reported the issue of bringing Indigenous staff into a colonial organization, emphasizing the complexity of decolonization efforts within such a structure. Todd (2023) stressed the importance of perspective and relationships with Nations, but also recognized the need for non-Indigenous staff to challenge the system and call out issues related to colonialism and white supremacy. Todd recalled working closely with a planner at the VBPR who was doing this "challenging the system" type of work without even realizing it. Although there is no step-by-step approach, settler planners putting "reconciliation into action" can be done through a multitude of ways, and often comes

from those who practice “humble listening” and “recognize the knowledge and authority” of Indigenous Peoples (Todd, 2023).

The CoV’s third Reconciliation Report (CoV, 2019a) included “work[ing] with MST to establish funding for each Nation to have a City of Vancouver liaison and/or engagement position,” but it is not clear whether these opportunities have been created, or if the VBPR has any parallel positions to address the heavy workload required to meet the deliverables outlined in their reconciliation work plan. It is important to note that the VBPR has a distinct mandate and unique set of responsibilities based on the *Vancouver Charter,* separate from the CoV. However, the CoV noted in its fourth Reconciliation Report that City staff shall continue to collaborate with VBPR staff on Reconciliation implementation, and learn from the VBPR’s whole-systems approach (CoV, 2020, p. 4) .

Based on Rena Soutar’s recommendation, the VBPR followed suit in starting their own Colonial Audit process. The interim progress report on the CoV Colonial Audit, made public on September 28, 2021, as part of the regular reconciliation updates, underscored a significant development in the CoV’s strategy. In a bid to ensure impartiality during the audit's scoping process, the City engaged Reciprocal Consulting. This consultancy was tasked with overseeing the preliminary scope of the CoV Colonial Audit and maintaining an objective stance throughout their evaluation. Additionally, the update divulged a "renewed Indigenous Engagement Strategy," devised to address the escalating influx of referrals emanating from the CoV, VBPR, and the Vancouver Public Library (VPL). While not explicitly documented in either VBPR or CoV reports, one of the planners interviewed (VPLAN2, 2023) affirmed that at least in the VBPR, engagement with MST Nations incorporates customary provisions for referral fees and compensation.

One interviewee (VPLAN2, 2023) acknowledged the substantial workload and requisite capability demanded of both the VBPR and the Nation representatives participating in Park Board and City-led initiatives, including the SPIGC/WG. While the CoV shares information on grants awarded to art, music, social, cultural, safety and housing projects, there is less transparency in their regular reconciliation updates regarding the funding support and agreements to support the dynamic and complex reconciliation work underway specifically at the VBPR.

Persistent challenges in terms of capacity are manifested through ongoing internal competency gaps. The second recommendation derived from the Park Board's response to the TRC's Calls to Action is to “work with First Nations peoples and other civic bodies to identify, create, and deliver appropriate and actionable staff training on Indigenous issues and reconciliation.” Currently, this training does not constitute a compulsory requirement, as confirmed by an interviewee (VPLAN1, 2023). However, "relationship education workshops and resources" are frequently extended to all CoV and VBPR staff, alongside the formulation of a structured training framework which includes three learning pathways assembled by the CoV’s Equity Office related to Decolonization and Reconciliation (CoV, 2023a). Additionally, guidelines have been devised to offer overarching support to staff in adhering to established protocols, particularly those intertwined with the MST Nations' corresponding referral procedures and the facilitation of their involvement in City-led initiatives and projects.

As the VBPR and CoV persist in implementing renewed strategies for meaningful engagement with MST Nations and urban Indigenous communities, internal staff expressed optimism about transitioning from exclusive VBPR jurisdiction to a model of shared decision-making. One of the Park Board planners (VPLAN1, 2023) envisioned relinquishing some VBPR jurisdiction in favour of adopting Indigenous laws and governance, aligning with Indigenous worldviews. Short-term goals include fostering understanding among non-Indigenous staff and residents, leading to a collective aspiration for this paradigm shift. The planner proposed that the aim right now may be more inconspicuous in terms of raising awareness about coexistence planning and Indigenous Rights and Title implications. Recognizing the existing defensive stance that some members of the public express toward Indigenous use of city spaces, they acknowledge ongoing challenges driven by reluctance to share space, rooted in persisting prejudicial attitudes toward Indigenous Peoples and a lack of understanding about Indigenous Rights and Title.

5.1.4. Challenging Authority

In nearly every VBPR official report, it re-states the passage from the *Vancouver Charter* that they have exclusive jurisdiction and control over all parks within the CoV, including assets tied to these lands. Any decisions and policies that are filtered through the VBPR are in turn, filtered through a lens of colonial authority through the provincial

and municipal legislation that creates its institution. Simultaneously, the VPBR is reluctant to claim full responsibility over the foundational policies that predetermine the limits to their ability to plan for coexistence. However, the VBPR has opted to challenge some of this normative colonial authority through their work in Stanley Park, and through the motion to explore co-management of all of Vancouver's parklands (VBPR, 2022a). Additionally, one of the VBPR Planners shared that "relationship building" is one lens that the Park Board uses when discussing this line of work.

The concept of land back is one that VBPR and the CoV are beginning to deepen their understanding of, through tools such as SPIGC/WG, the VBPR's Local Food Systems Action Plan, the CoV's Culture|Shift Report, and the CoV's UNDRIP Strategy. When considering the culture shifts both internal and external to the VBPR, one interviewee shared the following:

> "I think, that there's definitely receptiveness to [land back] as a concept, and what that would look like, I think, obviously would depend on so many factors, and at the Park Board… we don't own the land, so from my understanding at this point in time we can't literally: give the land back without conversations with other levels of government. But I think there's lots of ways that Park Board can incorporate that concept into the work especially in terms of Indigenous Peoples, like MST being able to regain stewardship and control over their parklands" (VPLAN2, 2023)

Echoing this sentiment, the other Park Board Planner interviewee advocated for a strategy of inclusivity by "calling people in" to this endeavor, aiming to foster educational growth and open-mindedness among staff, Park Board Commissioners, and City Councillors (VPLAN1, 2023). These conversations and culture shifts are a result of the current political context and era of reconciliation. The highly anticipated VBPR Colonial Audit will hopefully raise attention to the historic and ongoing reluctance within the VBPR's official documents to address challenges in changing the status quo that prioritizes colonial planning approaches, as there are clear limitations posed by shifting governmental landscapes and evolving political inclinations.

The approval by the VBPR to explore co-management with MST Nations leaves uncertainty regarding potential obstacles that may arise from the City or the Province of British Columbia to hinder this process. Moreover, the VBPR has representation within the working groups surrounding the implementation of the UNDRIP Calls to Action (VPLAN2, 2023). However, the UNDRIP Task Force is a CoV led framework, and has

provided recommendations to ensure alignment between the CoV and VBPR on the Calls to Action related to parks, such as governance, use and cultural access to the land and parks (CoV, 2022a).

One of the Park Board Planners spoke of the friction between what it might look like to return control to the MST Nations, while keeping in mind the necessity of parklands and the resources they provide to so many urban residents. They reasoned that “we need park space, but also, we need to respect Indigenous Rights and Title, and in certain situations return control. And so, does returning control mean that they are determining what to do with [the land]? That might mean that is a park it might mean that it's not. But it would be really irresponsible for us to say, “have it back but it has to be a park, and yeah I guess that means you're managing it and we’re not going to provide any resources” —that would be the ultimate injustice” (VPLAN1, 2023).

Todd (2023) discussed the idea of co-management and working together with local Nations to make decisions regarding the direction of planning projects and priorities for their communities. She voiced apprehensions regarding prevailing power dynamics and underscored the imperative for a paradigm shift towards acknowledging and upholding the authority and rights of the local Indigenous Nations. Despite perceptible advancements, an overarching undercurrent of self-assumed authority persists within the broader context of the CoV. This disposition, however, has undergone substantial improvements since Todd's initial involvement with the CoV in the early 2000s. Presently, she observed a firsthand transformation in the dynamics among staff members, characterized by a willingness to interrogate established systems, critique instances of white supremacy, and overtly denounce colonial legacies. This change was in part fueled by projects such as *Storyscapes*, an Indigenous storytelling project which Todd initiated at the City of Vancouver in 2003. This included the public art call for Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh artists at Brockton Point totem pole site, which resulted in the installation of Coast Salish design house posts by Musqueam artist Susan Point in 2008 (CoV, 2008). That same year, an environmental art project that reflected on the park’s ecology and cultural history included work by Squamish artist and plant knowledge holder, T'uy't'tanat Cease Wyss (City of Vancouver, n.d.-c; Todd, 2023).

The presence of a permanent Indigenous Planner at the CoV brought about further shifts in city-wide decision-making processes, on top of broader initiatives and

culture shifts including the VBPR's TRC Calls to Action Report (VBPR, 2015), followed by a CoV TRC Calls to Action Report (CoV, 2016), ignited culture shifts along both the CoV and VBPR's path towards reconciliation. In 2014, upon designating itself a City of Reconciliation, the City made one its most impactful shifts in its history by formally acknowledging it is built on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations (City of Vancouver, 2014b). Other interviewees also acknowledged a shift in awareness among staff and the public regarding the erasure of Indigenous presence in Stanley Park.

Notwithstanding these developments, the current approach primarily revolves around engagement and consultation, where the CoV's priorities take precedence in determining the necessity for consultation and co-production processes.

> "The Nations or the urban Indigenous community [are] participating, because if they don't then things are going to go ahead anyway and their voices will be absent…I wouldn't say that the City [of Vancouver] is like, okay, we're doing this because the Nations have asked us…it's still the City's agenda of the time."

Todd (2023) argued the need to challenge colonial mythology, white supremacy, and power dynamics within planning systems. She emphasized the importance of humility, recognizing Indigenous continuity on the land, coupled with a recalibration of (dominant, or colonial) narratives to cultivate coexistence and acknowledge Indigenous authority and rights. SPIGC/WG is seen internally as a significant model for collaboration, adaptation, and ongoing evaluation of the process. Participant interviews revealed that much of the work directed towards merging Stanley Park and Indigenous cultural narratives has been carried out through collaborations with individual artists, plant knowledge holders, and cultural leaders. These collaborations have often occurred outside of formal government-to-government channels, but often still involve formal Nation protocols or staff involvement, with the incorporation of artistic and cultural dimensions being a comparatively nascent development.

The CoV's local Nation Engagement Strategy acknowledges that despite the local Nations asserting their inherent constitutionally protected Rights and Title, the responsibility for consultation with First Nations is with provincial and federal government and absolves itself of the formal legal obligation to consult "in most instances" (City of Vancouver, 2021). The VBPR appears to share this perspective, constraining its

approach to relationship-building, including with the SPIGC/WG, as a process exempt from legal jurisprudence. While this stance may not necessarily hinder the VBPR's capacity to establish meaningful relationships and engage in good faith consultation, it falls short of fully acknowledging the imperative to uphold Indigenous rights to self-determination.

5.2. Conceptualizing Indigenous-Settler Relations

Coexistence planning principles centre on mutual reflexivity, emphasizing a shared understanding between settler and Indigenous perspectives. The VBPR's commitment to decolonizing park planning underscores its dedication to fostering a stronger relationship with MST Nations and advancing its stewardship objectives collaboratively. This section outlines the diverse strategies employed by the VBPR in pursuit of these goals. Moreover, the findings below present the VBPR's conceptualization of their approach and interpretations regarding the potential manifestations of coexistence planning, both within the context of Stanley Park and within the broader VBPR ecosystem.

5.2.1. Decolonizing Planning

Decolonization has become one of the main terms and concepts the VBPR (and CoV) uses to describe their efforts to support Indigenous Rights to self-determination, sovereignty, and reclamation of urban space and decision-making over lands within their jurisdiction. The *VanPlay* Implementation Plan outlines some of the mechanisms in which the VBPR can support decolonizing planning and provides departments with an approved set of guidelines and goals to strive towards. Specifically, initiative R.2.11 seeks to "Decolonize Park Board recreation amenities, services and programming (Reconciliation Through Recreation Strategy)." The term even appears in staff position titles, as the Decolonization, Arts and Culture Manager, who oversees the bulk of this work within the VBPR. This position includes "integrating decolonization" and "[applying] a decolonizing arts and culture lens to park planning and development," with the ultimate goal to "decolonize itself" (CoV, 2021).

During the 2022 Park People Conference, a national gathering in Canada for park professionals and leaders in urban studies, Rena Soutar, and Spencer Lindsay

shared insights in a presentation on the decolonization of park practices. Soutar attests that parks are not “culturally neutral,” as they bear the imprint of human interaction (Park People, 2023). Referring to the development of the Colonial Audit, Soutar and Lindsay view engaging in the necessary challenging conversations as an integral step toward decolonizing park practices (Park People, 2023). The use of this term, “decolonizing” was also confirmed through the interviews with Park Board planners regarding their roles and team’s objectives within the VBPR (VPLAN1, 2023; VPLAN2, 2023). Despite recognizing the inherent challenges in decolonization efforts within the obvious colonial structure, there was no question about the appropriateness of using the term.

Dunlop (2023) highlighted the Decolonization, Arts and Culture team and their role in reconciliation and decolonization efforts within the VBPR. She acknowledged the importance of cultural awareness, experience, and understanding when communicating with Indigenous Nations. The presence of Reconciliation Planning Analysts within Decolonization, Arts, and Culture team indicates a clear focus on reconciliation and decolonization efforts. In a job posting for a Reconciliation Planning Analyst, it stated that the position supports implementing the Park Board’s Reconciliation Strategy and working on policy development and strategies including the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan and *VanPlay*. The Park Board planners that I interviewed both shared that in their perspective, decolonizing planning encompasses the process of addressing historical injustices, fostering respectful relationships, and creating space for Indigenous voices and perspectives within planning and decision-making processes (VPLAN1, 2023; VPLAN2, 2023). By hiring dedicated staff to assist in this work, the VBPR is developing a robust staffing strategy to support the plethora of projects that they have committed to support MST Nations and urban Indigenous communities.

In terms of creating a successful park planning team, Dunlop (2023) argued the need to challenge traditional planning approaches, which tend to overlook crucial aspects of the land, communities, and the impacts of urban planning. She emphasized the importance of re-establishing Indigenous ways of knowing into planning, which necessitates a holistic grasp of all interconnected elements of neighbourhood-focused plans to city-wide planning and master plans.

Over the past decade, since Vancouver was designated as a City of Reconciliation, substantial efforts have been made towards decolonization. Much of this

work has underscored the significance of collaboration and the establishment of trust and relationships with the local Nations. As mentioned earlier, interviewees consistently identified “relationship building” as a cornerstone of their endeavors to create space for Indigenous voices and perspectives in planning and decision-making processes. While assessing the effectiveness of relationship building can be complex, Todd (2023) commended the approach of a Park Board planner she collaborated closely with. This planner exhibited active listening and a willingness to engage in collaborative thinking when working alongside Knowledge Holders from local Nations. Todd noted that often, those making the most meaningful contributions are characterized by their humility, effecting change through a continued commitment to centering Indigenous voices.

Another aspect of decolonizing park planning includes taking guidance from the community. The *VanPlay* initiative R.2.0 identifies a short-term objective “to conduct a survey by, and of, urban [Indigenous] youth to measure perceptions of safety and welcome at parks and community centres to develop outcomes and recommendations that result in more opportunities for urban Indigenous youth to use Park Board services, and engage with and provide feedback to Park Board recreation” (VBPR, 2019). Throughout the development of key policy mechanisms and planning initiatives, the VBPR has consistently relied on community surveying and targeted public outreach as a means to include the perspectives of the community. The general approach is to incorporate the voices of “equity-denied” groups in as many planning decisions as possible (VBPR, 2019).

One “equity-denied” group the VBPR has struggled to foster meaningful relationships with, is the urban Indigenous population, particularly in terms of engagement and decision-making. Interviewees noted that VBPR conducts extensive outreach and collaboration with individual artists, holders of plant knowledge, and community members outside of formal government-to-government channels. However, the SPIGC/WG exclusively involves representatives/staff members from MST Nations. While the CoV has partnerships with urban Indigenous representatives, such as the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) (CoV, 2019b), the VBPR’s focus and objectives lean more towards intergovernmental partnerships.

5.2.2. Practitioner Reflections

During the interviews, I asked each participant, “How do you describe this type of work?” None of them were familiar with the term “coexistence planning.” I asked them to share the terminology or language they commonly use when discussing their work with friends, family, colleagues, and the public in a professional context. While there were commonalities in the responses from all participants, there was a general reluctance to adopt a “formal” framework in their work.

Todd (2023) highlighted the concept of relationality, emphasizing the interconnectedness of humans and the environment and the responsibility we have to understand and protect those relationships. She mentioned the Cree term “*wahkohtowin*,” which represents the act of being related to each other and carrying responsibilities. Although she did not grow up learning her own Cree language, she has many cultural teachings from her own background, and, being born here, she has learned from the Nations of these lands that “we have responsibilities to the land, to the ancestors, to other beings.” Indigenous languages can help provide the guidance and concept for everything being interrelated.

Dunlop (2023), and the other Park Board planners (VPLAN1, 2023; VPLAN2, 2023), provided similar explanations of their line of work as relationship builders. They mentioned terms like co-management, land back, but also expressed the need to critically examine and understand these concepts in the context of Indigenous approaches and perspectives. This group of participants favoured language of collaboration and partnership, and Lien (2023), from SPES, spoke to her professional background that focuses on consultation and engagement between industry and Indigenous Peoples, as well as strengthening those relationships in resource and environmental sectors.

In an alternative approach to this question, Dr. Selena Couture, a white settler scholar of Performance Studies and Associate Professor at University of Alberta (2023) touched on the historical uses of language and terminology concerning Indigenous and settler populations. She highlighted the term “colonial resident” as a descriptor and explores the terminology for white individuals and visitors within the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ language. Couture’s research and education on the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ language, specifically

the downriver language, sheds light on the historical origins and evolving meanings of these terms that were used during the early days of colonization and contact. The term used to refer to ‘white people’ originated during the gold rush era, a period marked by a significant influx of white individuals arriving to extract gold (Couture, 2023). Often unprepared and in dire circumstances, these newcomers were described by Indigenous Peoples upriver and in the local area with a term that essentially meant 'the hungry ones.' This term is still employed today to characterize the settler-Indigenous relationship (Couture, 2023). Couture expressed that it signifies an extractive dynamic characterized by insatiable hunger, not only for resources but also for knowledge, culture, and other urgent desires that define the dynamics between Indigenous and settler communities (Couture, 2023).

Couture (2023) also proposed a complementary framework for comprehending the process of “decolonizing planning.” She introduced the concept of the “eddy of influence” as a framework for grasping the dynamics of intercultural performance and coexistence. This term characterizes the continuous and dynamic flow of influence, which over time, alters the shape and course of this flow. Couture (2023) employed this framework to envision the sites of intercultural performance taking place in Stanley Park. Here, one witnesses both the Indigenous Peoples utilizing performance as a means to sustain the lands and waters, and simultaneously, settler colonists endeavoring to transform the park into a space aligned with their own cultural ideals. As Vancouver is often misbranded as a ‘new’ city, lacking deep historical roots, understanding the implications of the eddy of influence might help explain to settlers how and why Indigenous performance and resurgence on the lands can combat colonial influences. In 2016, Musqueam artist and performer Quelemia Sparrow exemplified this through her threatre show, *O’wet/Lost Lagoon,* which highlighted her family’s history in Stanley Park and reclaiming pieces of their culture, language, and practices (Warner, 2016). Couture (2023) proposed that this framework may serve as a tool for navigating the subtleties inherent in the collaborative processes that are central to coexistence planning.

5.2.3. Ecological Stewardship

There are a lot of miscommunicated narratives that Stanley Park is an old growth forest, but in reality, due to settler colonization, the park is very much a human-manipulated space and a rather young forest (Couture, 2023). Nonetheless, the park still

possesses significant ecological and habitat value for a wide variety of species. Moreover, the park still sits on ancient lands and many of the plants and species are descended from old ancestors (Todd, 2023). In conversations with internal staff, and validated through public documents, Stanley Park has been noted as the ‘ground zero’ for colonial impacts in terms of parklands in Vancouver, as this park represents a deeply impactful part of history and relationship to the land for MST Nations.

“Park Stewardship” is identified as an ongoing project for the VBPR. The project is described as “relationship-building and collaboration on a number of active community stewardship sites and projects across the city.” Management and jurisdiction over Stanley Park have been sensitive issues, involving various parties like Park Rangers, Urban Forestry staff, members of the SPES, the public, and members of Indigenous communities. There are “Environmental Stewardship Coordinators” hired by the VBPR that have parallel work to the Decolonization, Arts and Culture team. The work of these staff members is tied more directly to advancing and sustaining ecological conditions in urban parks and supporting stewardship projects with community groups and the public.

Dunlop (2023) maintained the significance of safeguarding and enhancing the ecological well-being of Stanley Park in concert with MST priorities and interests. She underscored a shift towards adopting ecological approaches in the management of urban forestry, departing from earlier practices influenced by colonial perspectives. Indigenous Nations are increasingly recognized as valuable sources of knowledge and teachings regarding the park’s ecology. For example, the VBPR acknowledges that Indigenous food and medicine plants can be utilized to support the City’s Biodiversity Strategy and other city-wide goals (VBPR, 2021, p. 76). This recognition is actively promoted by the Vancouver Urban Food Forest through a range of public events and workshops. They draw a parallel between “naturalizing parks” and the broader concept of “Indigenizing parks” (VBPR, 2021). It is imperative to note that Indigenous governance, rights, and land repatriation are fundamentally intertwined with the pursuit of these objectives.

> “Indigenous models of stewardship have long shown resilience and adaptability, and modern Indigenous stewardship makes extensive use of traditional and western modes of knowledge to address climate change and other environmental challenges.... Decolonizing parks space for food use makes space for Indigenous people to demonstrate traditional modes of community care.” (VBPR, 2021, p. 74)

In a similar context, the CoV recognized arts and culture as the “fourth pillar of sustainability” in the Culture|Shift report (Vancouver Culture Plan), citing the influence of MST Nations’ languages, art, and culture on the prosperity of the lands and waters. The Culture Plan specifically draws attention to how cultural influences shape environmental conditions and stewardship practices. Since the recognition of the influential role of Indigenous knowledge in advancing city-wide objectives, the VBPR finds it more seamless to align itself “with Vancouver Plan’s commitment towards Reconciliation, Equity, and Resilience” (VBPR, 2021, p. 76). The Vancouver Plan is a 30-year overarching land use framework for the city, that was approved by Council on July 22, 2022 (CoV, 2022c). This interconnected approach between the two jurisdictions underscores the city's commitment to integrating Indigenous perspectives across various sectors to promote a more inclusive and sustainable urban environment.

Without conducting a comparative analysis between the Nations and the VBPR’s plans, it remains uncertain which aspects of the VBPR strategy are directly addressing the specific priorities of the individual Nations and their community members. In discussing this issue, one of the Park Board planners mentioned that “the way that [the VBPR] is operating is that we’re not going to assume that just because we think something’s a good idea that the Nations also think that’s a good idea. Decisions [about] Stanley Park will first go to the Intergovernmental Working Group” (VPLAN2, 2023). While this is a positive practice, there is not a necessarily a proactive consideration of their priorities across other parks or VPBR initiatives and appears to be more influenced by the overarching municipal agenda. Although MST involvement is routinely sought, if the Nations lack the time or capacity to respond to the VBPR’s numerous initiatives concerning their community, they will, by default, have to permit the VBPR to proceed without a full assessment of how their projects align or do not align with their priorities otherwise the project may not proceed.

5.2.4. Parks as Evolving Spaces for Indigenous Relations

Couture (2023) discusses the multifaceted nature of parks, acknowledging their historical origins and original intentions. Initially designed for settlers' leisure and physical well-being, parks were also designated as protected areas, shielded from resource extraction activities such as mining and logging. In my conversation with Couture, we delved into the disruptive impact of European settler notions of property and

ownership, examining their ramifications on Indigenous relationships with land and resources. Couture (2023) expresses optimism about the potential for parks to be sites of positive change and meaningful collaboration. From her experience supporting the Colonial Audit as a subject matter expert, she acknowledges the efforts of the VBPR in implementing TRC Calls to Action, including creating an intergovernmental working group to address the complex relationships with Indigenous communities around Stanley Park.

Interviewees discussed several projects organized by the VBPR that explored the intricate aspects of stewarding parklands in Vancouver. These projects confronted the multifaceted challenges at the community level, including issues like NIMBYism (Not in My Backyard)[5] and racism. One project that stood out was the Vancouver Urban Food Forest initiative. This project served as an illustrative case, showcasing significant community opposition due, in part, to misinformed narratives concerning the implications of Indigenous food sovereignty and disagreements pertaining to land use planning (VPLAN2, 2023).

The project focused on establishing a food garden within Burrard View Park, a sizable 2.77-hectare park located in the Hasting-Sunrise community. The VBPR encountered adverse and discourteous feedback from a small faction within the community. This group disagreed with the proposed placement of the food garden in the park's southeast corner, arguing that the current usage was more suitable for "informal play and socializing" (VBPR, 2022b). The primary objective of this initiative was to promote Indigenous food sovereignty, amplify Indigenous voices, and designate dedicated space for Indigenous-led gardens within the urban landscape. This work was specifically in response to the identified initiative in *VanPlay*, to work with MST Nations and urban Indigenous communities to “support Indigenous food systems in parks and recreation” (VBPR, 2019).

The VBPR recommended proceeding with the southeastern site option. This option was believed to offer "enhanced opportunities for comprehensive community

[5] NIMBYism refers to a phenomenon where individuals or groups within a community oppose the introduction or implementation of certain projects, initiatives, or developments in their neighbourhood, even if they might support these endeavors in principle, often due to a lack of consideration for equity.

engagement, collaborative programming, and the activation of a complementary field house" (VBPR, 2022b). The report underscored that during the public engagement phase, the opposing group employed tactics of "intimidation, anger, and explicit racism" in their efforts to influence the decision-making process. Ultimately, despite these challenges, the project received approval. This case exemplifies the divergence of perspectives among different interest groups regarding the development of parklands, the typical prioritization of certain viewpoints, and the strategies for conflict resolution amid robust disagreements.

The VBPR's Local Food System Action Plan proposes working with Indigenous collaborators using established co-management frameworks. The collaboration oversees parks, recreation spaces, land, and waterways, aligning with Indigenous food sovereignty objectives. The Local Food System Action Plan underscores the present scarcity of area and resources and the need for transformation to rectify the absence of support for Indigenous food sovereignty. This transformation, integral to the decolonization of park spaces, holds the potential to address challenges related to climate change and the environment. Remarkably, Stanley Park and its surroundings are not designated as a primary area for resource allocation toward existing, ongoing, or future food-related assets and services within the Local Food System Action Plan. However, as the SPIGC/WG is working on the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan, there will likely be discussions on accessing traditional foods and medicines as part of this work. Ambiguity surrounds whether the SPIGC/WG is collaborating separately with the VBPR to discuss solutions pertaining to the provision of space for harvesting, ceremonial activities, traditional food practices, and feasting. These activities hold historical significance within Stanley Park, and all of Vancouver, as they were pivotal to Indigenous villages' prosperity. Some of these historical ecological systems I learned about through participating in the Talasay Tours' "Talking Trees Tour" in Stanley Park as part of my land reflections for this research.

Stanley Park holds a significant amount of physical space within the downtown core for Indigenous reclamation and resurgence, with potentially less barriers than other urban spaces would be subject to such as zoning by-laws, private real estate, and public infrastructure. While the VBPR acknowledges the integral rights of First Nations to public parks and lands as part of its commitment to "seek truth and reconciliation" (VBPR, 2018a), the goal itself does not explicitly outline the subsequent steps beyond

acknowledgment. One of the Park Board planners reflected on how “parks are so important to all the residents of Vancouver, and we became acutely aware of that during the pandemic especially when people had nowhere to go, if they don’t have a big yard which most people don’t in Vancouver, they are going to parks, to just *be* and to visit them and recreate too” (VPLAN1, 2023). In the context of understanding Vancouver residents’ love for the outdoors, Todd (2023) commented on the challenges settlers face in acknowledging Indigenous land rights in an urban setting. She proposed that coexistence as a word might help people understand that this is really about recognition of those rights and the continuity of Indigenous presence on the land. Overall, the practitioners in my interviews acknowledged the potential of coexistence planning as a valuable concept for enhancing understanding in Indigenous-settler relations, despite having limited prior familiarity with the concept.

5.3. Visibility, Reflection, and Language

The language used by municipal governments and departments to delineate Indigenous-settler relations has undergone substantial transformation over the years. Indigenous languages and concepts provide valuable insights into the dynamics of relationships between people and the land. The CoV’s traditional inclination to cultivate its image from a settler standpoint is apparent in the names of parks, streets, the installation of plaques, public artworks, and urban design. This section presents findings related to the significance of language and expression, exploring how these factors mold personal connections to place and shape engagement with urban environments. The findings are organized through four themes, cultural practice and protocol, civic memory practices, expression and placemaking, and “hungry listening” (Robinson, 2020).

5.3.1. Cultural practice and protocol

In her ongoing work as a consultant with the CoV, Todd (2023) has focused on on addressing colonial erasures and amplifying Indigenous visibility and perspectives. She stressed the importance of involving both Elders and youth, following community guidance, and respecting cultural protocols in planning initiatives. Todd (2023) touched on her experience and involvement with a project back in 2011 called the *Vancouver Dialogues: First Nations, Urban Aboriginal and Immigrant Communities* (Dialogues

Project)[6] which included the storytelling of MST Nations and the community. Additionally, she spoke about how *Storyscapes*, a multimedia community arts project that gathered Indigenous Peoples and marginalized communities to share their stories of Vancouver helped assert Indigenous histories and visibility on the land (Todd, n.d.-a). She explained that in leading up to this early recognition of First Nations history in Vancouver, she took guidance directly from the community to ask "What is a priority? What should we do for a story gathering project." At that time, she was told that hearing stories from their Elders, and providing their youth the opportunity to hear those stories was a main priority. However, historically, the VBPR and CoV have not consistently followed proper protocol in these matters (VBPR, 2022d).

Related to protocol, Dunlop (2023) addressed the iconic totem poles situated in Stanley Park, recognizing their enduring popularity among tourists seeking an encounter with First Nations culture. It is commonly assumed that the local First Nations crafted and placed these totem poles here many years ago. However, the truth is that they were not responsible for all of them, nor did they position them in their current locations. The VBPR commissioned the installation of totem poles from territories belonging to other communities, like Haida Gwaii and various Northern Coast peoples at this site in Stanley Park (Todd, 2017, p. 23). Although the totem poles draw in tourism and revenue to the park and the VBPR, they go directly against established protocols. Nevertheless, there exists a strong yearning for this historical connection to the land, a sentiment that the VBPR is keenly attuned to and eager to address (Dunlop, 2023). The Susan Point house posts were funded by the CoV in partnership with the VBPR in an effort to redress the protocol breaches of the totem poles and increase representation of MST Nations in a highly visible location in the park (Our City Our Art, 2016).

Todd (2023) highlighted the achievements of the *Storyscapes* Public Art project, which she played a role in facilitating. She noted that this initiative marked the first instance within the CoV where a public art call was exclusively extended to individuals from the MST Nations. Todd emphasized the importance of adhering to protocol during this initiative, including direct input from a local Nation member who provided guidance and participated as a juror in the application review process. Notably, the project

[6] The Dialogues Project was a social planning initiative led by the City of Vancouver between January 2010 and July 2011 to share histories and strengthen relations between the urban Indigenous community and newcomer/immigrant communities (Suleman, 2011).

ensured that the jury proceedings were overseen by a representative from one of the MST Nations. However, Todd (2023) pointed out that current protocols should aim for even greater inclusivity, striving to incorporate a representative from each Nation, which has become standard practice.

Dunlop (2023) referenced an insightful statement made by Rena Soutar, highlighting that by withholding historical context, we deprive people of the opportunity to form a meaningful connection with a place. She draws a parallel with Canadians traveling to ancient sites in Europe, emphasizing the importance of such visits as a means of anchoring oneself in and comprehending a culture. Dunlop (2023) asserts that historically, this connection has been obstructed for visitors to Vancouver, a narrative they aim to reshape in Stanley Park. This shift is not only in support of local tourism but, more significantly, to reestablish the link between MST Nations and the park's history.

Dunlop (2023) emphasized the importance of preserving and sharing the history of Stanley Park and the Indigenous Nations connected to it, and points to initiatives like the replacement of flagpoles with flags representing the MST. Approved by the VBPR in 2022, this endeavor was designed to involve a flag-raising ceremony in collaboration with Indigenous Nations (VBPR, 2022e).The ceremonial event took place on May 16, 2023, at spapəy̓əq Pápiy̓eḵ, commonly recognized as Brockton Point in Stanley Park (CoV, 2023). Events and ceremonies like this are meant to be moments of reflection. Dunlop (2023) discussed the need to increase visibility and understanding of the park's history, including the role of totem poles and other cultural artifacts. The MST flags at spapəy̓əq Pápiy̓eḵ are a clear example of increasing Indigenous visibility in the park.

Chief Jen Thomas of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation emphasized the symbolic significance of displaying their flag, alongside those of their Squamish and Musqueam relatives, at spapəy̓əq Pápiy̓eḵ as a means to reconnect to their traditional territory (Tsleil-Waututh Nation [TWN], 2023). Councillor Dennis Thomas further reflected on the broader meaning of these flags, underscoring their representation of the shared territory firmly rooted at spapəy̓əq Pápiy̓eḵ. Thomas provided historical context, noting that the site was once a significant village for their Nations, serving as a hub for trade with non-local nations prior to contact (TWN, 2023). Notably, he stressed that the flags are a source of pride and education for Tsleil-Waututh youth (TWN, 2023).

“Displaying the səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nation’s flag, alongside the flags of our relatives Squamish and Musqueam, at spapəy̓əq Pápiy̓ek̓, a place enjoyed by the local community and visitors throughout the year, is one way that Tsleil-Waututh Nation is putting the face of our Nation back on our traditional territory.” Chief Jen Thoman (TWN, 2023)

Debra Sparrow, a member of the Musqueam Nation who also attended the flag-raising ceremony, expressed the following sentiment: “This is not a park. It never was a park. This is our home, our villages, villages that we shared with our relatives and the Squamish and the Tsleil-Waututh” (Kerr-Lazenby, 2023). Additionally, Sxwíxwtn (Wilson Williams), an elected council member of the Squamish Nation, highlighted the ongoing collaborative efforts between MST Nations and VBPR to introduce storyboards and additional signage across the park, offering a more detailed account of the Indigenous history of the area (Kerr-Lazenby, 2023). Williams proudly affirmed that he feels a sense of safety for the Nations to express their identity and share their history with visitors (Kerr-Lazenby, 2023).

The VBPR has implemented efforts to adhere to established protocol, which ironically entails a rigorous set of regulatory procedures for approving any modifications or activities within the park, including Indigenous performances, artwork, and traditional practices. Considering that Stanley Park includes several villages, which were home to the local Nations, (was once a village and home for Indigenous Peoples), one can only imagine the frustration of having to comply with the laws and jurisdiction of a historically oppressive and disrespectful colonial institution. A notable example of Indigenous resistance to VBPR jurisdiction is the unauthorized artwork on a tree trunk in the park, often referred to as the "Two-Spirits Tree Carving" (Devlin, 2022). While such unsanctioned Indigenous artwork is both aesthetically striking and a manifestation of Indigenous resistance, it may potentially run counter to MST protocol. The VBPR officially does not recognize this carving, which could suggest an implicit understanding or agreement between VBPR and MST Nations regarding its appropriateness.

The City of Vancouver recognized arts and culture as the “fourth pillar of sustainability” in the Culture|Shift report (Vancouver Culture Plan), citing the influence of MST Nations’ languages, art, and culture on the prosperity of the lands and waters. The Culture Plan calls recognizes the cultural influences of the MST Nations on the environment and stewardship practices, and the importance of reflecting MST visibility through Vancouver’s cultural landscapes and determining ways to redress

dispossession and cultural erasure (CoV, 2020a, p. 35). One of the ways in which the VBPR has sought to create space for Indigenous performance, arts, and culture is through the A-Frame Activation Host Nations' Cultural Residency project at Second Beach in Stanley Park. The objective of the residency project is to fulfill the 11 Reconciliation Strategies adopted by the VBPR in January of 2016, by supporting Host Nations presence, and to practice their culture on their own terms. The residency is also aligned with recommendations from the Truth-Telling Report, to prioritize MST voices and expose members of the public to local Indigenous perspectives (VBPR, 2022a). The A-Frame building is used as an exclusive studio space for the selected artist, which is currently held by T'uy't'tanat Cease Wyss, an Indigenous Matriarch of the Skwxwu7mesh, Stó:lō and Hawaiian people, who is the resident artist for a 3-year term that began in the summer of 2022 (Wyss, n.d.-a).

At the A-Frame, Wyss hosts a range of activities including cultural and spiritual teachings, storytelling sessions, music performances by Indigenous musicians, plant workshops, and opportunities for public volunteer gardening (Wyss, n.d.). In collaboration with her daughter, Senaqwila Wyss, she has partnered with the local festival, Vines Art Festival, to extend her outreach and welcome the wider public as well as other Indigenous Peoples to the land at Second Beach, Stanley Park. The Vines Art Festival is an annual event held in various parks in Vancouver, with a core mission of supporting diverse local artists who are committed to advocating for land, water, and relational justice (Vines Art Society, 2023).

Todd (2023) highlighted Wyss's transformative work during her residency at the A-Frame, which has been instrumental in advancing Indigenous performance and traditions on the land. This included securing a fire permit for Second Beach, an achievement Todd viewed as a significant step in reclaiming space and practicing Indigenous culture. While the process of obtaining a permit for traditional Indigenous practices like fire ceremonies still bears traces of colonial authority, the increasing authorization of these activities holds the potential to lead us back to a state where they are considered normal and customary.

The VBPR regards parks as urban infrastructure, encompassing local food initiatives, farmers markets, fieldhouses, gardening and kitchen programs, and associated amenities (VBPR, 2021). Additionally, parks play a crucial role in providing

ecosystems, habitats, and mitigating carbon emissions within urban settings. They also hold significant value as spaces for Indigenous Peoples to engage in land reconnection and reclaim the infrastructural aspects of parklands. These values align with the broader objective of enhancing cultural vitality, redress, decolonization, and reconciliation, a central focus of the Vancouver Culture Plan. Plants, in this context, symbolize a profound bond between Indigenous communities and the natural environment. The Vancouver Urban Food Forest initiative provides a platform for VBPR to partner with Indigenous Peoples in conserving and restoring Indigenous plants, serving as a potential model for kinship restoration.

Equity initiative zones (EIZs), outlined in *VanPlay*, offer an additional avenue for VBPR to address equity disparities in urban park infrastructure and food resources. Given that Indigenous Peoples are recognized as marginalized communities by both the CoV and VBPR, a central objective of both the Local Food System Action Plan and *VanPlay* is to cultivate “relational relationships,” rather than “transactional” ones (VBPR, 2021, p. 51). This approach aims to facilitate a more balanced distribution of park resources. Additionally, it seeks to establish a welcoming and secure environment for Indigenous Peoples to engage with park infrastructure and funding opportunities.

The Local Food System Action Plan highlighted the importance of acknowledging Indigenous Rights and Title within the VBPR structure. It is noted under Action 1.1, to draft an agreement between VBPR and Indigenous Cultural Practitioners “to frame Indigenous cultural practice as a land use typology,” identifying that this work is already underway. In connection to this, Action 1.2 seeks to work with MST Nations and urban Indigenous communities to “convert preferred sites within the parks and recreation system for Indigenous-centered spaces” (VBPR, 2021, p. 84) Of all 38 Action items, there are 7 Actions centered on Indigenous rights and food sovereignty. As the Local Food System Action Plan was created as a 5-year Action Plan, there have been no further updates since the plan was approved in 2021 on the progress made towards these initiatives.

5.3.2. Civic Memory Practices

One of the key policy tools to support the VBPR’s decolonization efforts currently in development is the Joint CoV/VBPR Commemoration Framework. This framework is

designed to address the longstanding issue of neglecting the histories of the Host Nations and the marginalization of equity-denied communities within the commemorative landscape (Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, 2022d). According to the draft Commemoration Framework report, the existing Park Board and City policies fall short in terms of supporting commemoration that aligns with the City's commitments to truth and reconciliation, decolonization, equity, and cultural redress. Moreover, these policies do not effectively synchronize the processes across the two entities (VBPR, 2022d, p. 1). This raises the potential for a dissonance between the objectives outlined by VBPR in its collaboration with Host Nations for the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan. Any progress made thus far has had to navigate existing policies, which may lack the capacity to fully respect Indigenous self-determination.

In the interim report presented to the VBPR that contains draft “Guiding Principles, Vision & Emerging Priorities,” civic memory practices are described as manifestations of institutional and collective interpretations of cultural values (VBPR, 2022d). This includes the narratives woven into public acts of commemoration, such as the naming of streets, parks, and other civic assets, as well as the representation in monuments, memorials, and plaques (VBPR, 2022d). The interim report duly recognizes intangible cultural assets, particularly “Indigenous memory practices,” which find expression in various forms like song, dance, ceremony, oral histories, storytelling, artwork, and place (VBPR, 2022d). It underlines that Indigenous memory practices are often dynamic and rooted in the land and ceremonial practices, establishing an intrinsic link between Indigenous heritage and the land itself (VBPR, 2022d). However, what remains unaddressed in the report is the significance of how Indigenous knowledge is often transferred privately, away from the purview of settler society. Presently, the interim report does not identify avenues through which settler colonial institutions like the CoV and VBPR can actively support Indigenous memory practices. Additionally, it lacks guidance for settler groups seeking to engage with Indigenous ways of remembering, which is a vital aspect of the history of these lands.

Interviewees reflected on their experience and understanding of Indigenous cultural heritage and performance. Todd (2023) stressed that an essential aspect of commemoration lies in listening to the stories passed down through oral histories. Indigenous history is traditionally transmitted and preserved through storytelling. Todd cited her own learning experiences through the stories shared by people from the

Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, including the many stories shared during Storyscapes and the Dialogues Projects. These stories provide a profound understanding of the wealth of knowledge preserved through storytelling, as they provide understandings of the land, of the laws, and of the planning traditions. Todd (2023) expressed the hope that this knowledge would gain greater legitimacy in people's minds, emphasizing its influence on planning and decision-making processes.

5.3.3. Expression and Placemaking

The Pilot Indigenous Park Naming Process is an initiative undertaken by the VBPR within the Commemoration Framework, in collaboration with the CoV and MST Nations. This framework, that is still currently in development at the time of writing, will provide guidance for future Indigenous naming endeavors as well as wayfinding, signage, functional commemorative installations like water fountains and street furniture, preservation of cultural heritage sites and assets, incorporation of Indigenous design principles, establishment of memorial plantings, and the organization of city-led, supported, and permitted events (cite 2022 Interim report). In October 2017, City Council identified two public plazas - the Queen Elizabeth Theatre Plaza and the North Lawn at the Vancouver Art Gallery - for renaming in collaboration with MST Nations. On June 18, 2018, during a ceremony that incorporated Coast Salish and City of Vancouver protocols, the following names were officially unveiled: o šxʷƛ̓ ənəq Xwtl’e7énḵ Square (located on the north side of the Vancouver Art Gallery) and o šxʷƛ̓ exən Xwtl’a7shn (formerly known as the Queen Elizabeth Theatre Plaza). The term "o šxʷƛ̓ ənəq" signifies a place of cultural gatherings, encompassing events like weddings, funerals, namings, honoring ceremonies, and rites of passage. The term "o šxʷƛ̓ exən" denotes an inviting place, and this name is a commemoration of the Walks for Reconciliation. These names are meant to signify a collaborative effort between the CoV and local Indigenous Nations to honor cultural significance and promote reconciliation. Typically, public events and festivals at these plazas still refer to the original names for clarity and lack of public familiarity with the new names.

On June 17, 2022, a park located at Smithe and Richards St. was gifted a name from MST Nations, in both həńq̓əmiṅəm̓ and Sḵwx̱wú7mesh languages. The naming of sθəqəlxenəm ts'exwts'áxwi7, meaning ‘rainbow’, was chosen by the Nations because the land where the park now sits was once forested with large trees and had many

sources of water, including a marsh where the sun and mist would form rainbows. Indigenous artwork and plants were installed at the park. There was a significant effort to provide learning opportunities for park-goers of the significance of this naming project, including audio pronunciations in both languages, and a video on the story of the park (City of Vancouver, n.d.-e).

"The Vancouver Park Board looks after more than 230 parks. Their names – be they Stanley, Ebisu, Emory, or Bobolink – give these spaces character, and provide a sense of history, community, and belonging to us all" (CoV, n.d.-b). Acknowledging the importance of expression and placemaking through naming, the CoV acknowledged that "past naming work hindered opportunities for relationship building" (City of Vancouver, 2022a, p. 5). Presently, the CoV and VPBR have initiated the joint Commemoration Framework to co-develop better policies and process for naming civic assets, through consultation and engagement with MST Nations and the public. At the time of writing, the policy project outlined four Emerging Priorities (VBPR, 2022c):

1. Make Space for Host Nations to Assert Self-Determined Memory Practices

2. Reckon with Colonial History + Narratives Celebrating Conquest

3. Centre Equity-Denied Communities' Stories + Memory Practices

4. Foster Belonging, Multiplicity, + Connection Across Communities

The collaborative effort also involved a comprehensive review which they called a "jurisdictional scan," which examined the commemorative practices of 20 cities and 2 provinces (VBPR, 2022c, p. 7). Notably, the chosen jurisdictions were predominantly located outside of British Columbia, apart from Victoria (BC). The selection encompassed well-known American cities characterized by denser populations and notably distinct commemorative landscapes, such as Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago. A key consideration is the establishment of criteria for the deaccessioning of commemorative pieces associated with colonial figures, which involves assessing the impact on Indigenous communities. However, what the VBPR and CoV are still working on developing are procedures for conducting such assessments. The focus on potential harm as a criterion to evaluate if commemorative piece should be renamed or removed could potentially downplay the impacts of the dominant colonial "blank slate" narrative of

Vancouver's identity, fabricated by early planners and developers in the City, which can compound overtime through seemingly neutral commemorative landscapes (Todd, 2023, p. 222).

Debra Sparrow, Musqueam weaver, artist and knowledge-keeper has worked with unwavering dedication to change the colonial landscapes of Vancouver through her "Blanketing the City" mural series project, bringing traditional Salish blanket designs to the city through the form of large murals on urban buildings and infrastructure (Todd, 2023). Sparrow's concept of blanketing the city, was adopted into the Vancouver Culture Plan, Culture|Shift, as its subtitle "Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture" (CoV, 2020a; Todd, 2023). Colonial expressions, placemaking and imaginaries have long overshadowed the truth behind the urban facades that have been erected in the City to exclude Indigenous identities (Guimont Marceau et al., 2023; Todd, 2023). It remains uncertain whether colonial institutions possess the necessary capacity to grapple with their colonial histories and effectively apply these assessment tools to renaming, removal, or reinterpretation projects. This presents a noteworthy challenge moving forward for the VBPR and CoV, to follow their own guidelines in respecting Indigenous protocols and looking for MST's guidance in moving beyond shallow, performative commemorative practices. The CoV and VBPR recognize that they have not fully adhered to Indigenous protocol in their recent actions, as outlined in the following statement:

> Recent commemorative issues showed the Park Board and City's lack of knowledge around Host Nations' protocols. While the City was working with Squamish Nation to determine the future of the Gassy Jack statue and site, the City's lack of periodic communications to inform the broader public of the ongoing work created the conditions for harm to occur during the unsanctioned removal of Gassy Jack by community members. Park Board's erection/ removal of the Barge Chilling/ Í7iy̓el shn sign also demonstrated a lack of understanding and caused harm. Understanding protocols is critical to understanding what culturally-sensitive information should not be shared across the organization or with the general public (VBPR, 2022c, p. 5).

On a positive note, the SPIGC/WG process has been recognized as a successful initiative, aligning with MST protocols (VBPR, 2022c). However, as the intergovernmental approach and adherence to shared protocols progresses with the CoV and VBPR, it will be crucial to promptly communicate these procedures to the public. The recent controversy surrounding the Gassy Jack statue is indicative of a

similar level of concern within the broader Indigenous community regarding the commemorative landscape in Stanley Park. For example, Siwash Rock, a popular landmark in Stanley Park has long been known and voiced by Indigenous Peoples as a "disrespect[ful]" and "derogatory" name (Schmunk, 2017). The plans to rename the rock with involvement from MST Nations have been publicly noted in the media since 2017 and is still noted on the VBPR's webpage as a project underway in 2024 (CoV, n.d.-e). To prevent further incidents of this nature and ensure that broader communities do not inadvertently violate these protocols, SPIGC/WG should prioritize enhancing public updates, where deemed appropriate by MST Nations, on key progress and upcoming initiatives.

5.3.4. Hungry Listening

Couture (2023) referenced the work of xwélmexw (Stó:lō/Skwah) scholar, Dylan Robinson, specifically his book *Hungry Listening*. She highlights Robinson's exploration of non-extractive dynamics and arts-based practices, particularly in the context of sound studies, performance, and music. "Hungry listening" characterizes an extractive practice within settler colonialism, in which settler perspectives and positionalities hold sway and exhibit bias within performance spaces (Robinson, 2020). Performance and art serve as channels of expression, with Stanley Park serving as a significant stage for both Indigenous and colonial expressions. In many Indigenous cultures, performance and art are deeply intertwined with identity, values and rights. Therefore, the restoration of such practices, including those once prohibited by colonial authorities like potlatches, assumes a central role in the process of decolonization (Todd, 2017).

The Truth-Telling Report highlighted an observation from an Indigenous participant, stating that "residents and visitors [in Vancouver] are hungry for the history of this place" (Todd, 2017, p. 17). Those engaged in the Truth-Telling consultations facilitated by VBPR reflected upon the significance of incorporating local Indigenous place names in public areas, particularly in parks. Both MST Nations and VBPR have noted a surge in Indigenous-focused tourism in Vancouver, indicating a rising desire to engage with and appreciate Indigenous culture within the city. Dunlop (2023) further underscored the growing interest in this type of tourism, extending beyond Stanley Park to the broader region of the Lower Mainland and throughout British Columbia.

The Truth-Telling Report remarks that Stanley Park remains an ongoing missed opportunity for the VBPR to actively demonstrate reconciliation. One participant proposed that MST community members could be offered the chance to sell their art and manage the gift shop at the totem pole site within the park (Todd, 2017). However, the VBPR opted to contract a non-Indigenous company for this purpose. Additionally, the name of “Stanley Park” itself is cited as a source of persistent harm and disrespect (Todd, 2017). This is unsurprising, given that Lord Stanley symbolizes the colonial origins of Canada and was never a resident of Vancouver. Although it was noted that these ongoing concerns are being reviewed by SPIGC/WG, no changes or indications have been publicly made that point to a change in this regard.

Chapter 6. Discussion

This research revealed a diverse range of coexistence aligned projects with the work of the SPIGC/WG. The VBPR's planning tools and projects model coexistence planning in several facets of the framework (see Table 3.1), while other tools remain bounded to a colonial structure. Nonetheless, valuable insights and recurring themes emerged, contributing to the identification of specific elements supporting the VBPR's ongoing efforts to decolonize and implement coexistence planning approaches. This research contributes to an existing body of literature and shares practitioner reflections on implementing coexistence planning principles and provides a concurrent analysis of the VBPR's planning ecosystem and relationship between Indigenous and settler planning systems.

MST Nations are playing a crucial role in implementing practical strategies for urban coexistence planning, demonstrating their commitment to reclaiming inherent rights and forming strategic alliances for the betterment of their communities. While their direct involvement in this study was not observed, their influence is apparent in how their knowledge sharing shaped the VBPR's actions and advanced planning practices rooted in Indigenous epistemologies, cultural traditions, and land-based knowledge. Future studies should ideally involve Nation members and Indigenous cultural practitioners to offer a holistic perspective on the themes explored in this research. The following sections will discuss the insights gained from the planning approaches and policy mechanisms that have shaped this aspiring coexistence relationship. Thus, this study contributes to the growing field of research focused on empirically assessing coexistence planning in action.

6.1. Equity, Resurgence, and Municipal Planning

The VBPR's authority over parklands is still embedded into the colonial government's legal structures that are rooted in federal law. Nonetheless, the VBPR is diligent about avoiding labeling Indigenous Peoples as stakeholders, underscoring Indigenous Rights in official documents. My analysis reveals a distinct effort to distinguish between Indigenous self-determination and other equity practices, however, the two are often spoken about in tandem. Indigenous urbanism literature addresses the

problematic settler-Indigenous binary (Nejad et al., 2021), a challenge the VBPR confronts by exploring the realities of equity-denied[7] communities and linking these issues to the City's colonial histories. By acknowledging the unique needs of these communities and centering equity-denied voices, the VBPR perseveres towards its decolonization goal, which aims for collaborative governance with MST Nations. Equitable power distribution and shared jurisdiction differs significantly from initiatives that merely incorporate Indigenous Peoples within settler planning systems among other underrepresented groups (Matunga, 2017). Considering this, a crucial question arises: What does "equity" truly mean for Indigenous Peoples?

Studies have demonstrated that Indigenous resurgence necessitates a fundamental shift from normative colonial authorities to the grounded normativity of Indigenous laws and regulations (Simpson, 2016; Fawcett, 2021). The VBPR recognizes Vancouver's parklands as an arena to practice "land back," and explore alternative kinds of sovereignty, shared space, and multi-government participation (VBPR, 2021, p. 75) . While it says that it cannot reinstate complete ownership to the MST Nations, it can exemplify land return by reinstating Indigenous stewardship and decision-making to MST (VBPR, 2021, p. 75). In alignment with this idea, Couture (2023) discusses the concept of parks as "third spaces." She emphasized that parks were not initially created to be inclusive or open to Indigenous peoples, but rather a place built for the regulated recreational and leisure activities, tailored towards a Eurocentric ideology of community, social connection and belonging. The historical context in which parks were primarily set aside for settlers and their specific purposes, excluding Indigenous communities, is not widely understood by the settler society (M. Simpson & Bagelman, 2018). This research finds that the VBPR aims to effectively shift these colonial ideologies towards honouring cultural practice and the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples, to the extent that parks today could serve as a middle ground for achieving sovereignty and coexistence between Indigenous and settler populations. This insight underscores the potential

[7] The City of Vancouver's Equity Framework and other City documents prefer the use of equity-denied to "more explicitly recognize the refusal to include certain groups (not strictly limited to the four [equity-seeking groups] designated by the Federal government)" (CoV, 2021b).

conceptualization of parks as metaphysical “third places”[8] facilitating coexistence between settler and Indigenous spaces and imaginaries about parks.

Similar findings and arguments can be found in other bodies of literature such as studies on impact assessment, where Matunga’s (2017) third space concept is applied to facilitate a new process of impact assessment that employs Indigenous planning theory to create a coexisting form of impact assessment, rather than integrating Indigenous interests into the dominant settler approaches (Jolly & Thompson-Fawcett, 2021). Rather than being a subset of a planner’s toolkit, planning for coexistence employs the same practices used in Indigenous impact assessment including grounding relationships to place, supporting self-determination, and community authority over planning (Jolly & Thompson-Fawcett, 2021). The third space can also be applied in literature on nature-based solutions (NbS) to critically examine and challenge the normative colonial authority of settler planning practices (Rees & Doyon, 2023). This serves as a means to counteract what Rees & Doyon (2023) describe as “autopilot colonialism” perpetuated by settler NbS researchers and practitioners. This body of literature further solidifies the conceptual framework of coexistence planning as an applicable approach that advocates for a parallel space where there is mutual understanding and interdependencies between government authorities.

Critical phases in the VBPR's planning process reveal some inconsistencies in applying a coexistence methodology. In initial project planning, authority primarily rests with the VBPR, with consultation with local Nations and the urban Indigenous communities occurring subsequently to inform decisions. In SPIGC/WG, however, there is an established collaborative decision-making model at the Committee level, and a collaborative operational model at the Working Group. Concurrent VBPR planning projects and decolonization work are generally in alignment with the CoV’s Equity Framework. The CoV’s Equity Framework states that “the ongoing colonialism faced by the Host Nations and urban Indigenous people is unique and separate from the oppression that other equity-denied groups face” and therefore, “equity work must be centered on upholding, recognizing, and protecting inherent and constitutionally

[8] The Third Space concept is highlighted in the work of Hirini Matunga, scholar that specializes in Māori and Indigenous approaches to planning (Matunga, 2017). This framework complements the theory of coexistence planning, to merge settler and Indigenous planning in a collaborative space.

protected Indigenous Rights" (CoV, 2021b, p. 3/15). However, equity and sovereignty are distinct concepts, though often intertwined when discussing Indigenous Rights.

A pertinent challenge inherent to the process of decolonizing a setter colonial institution like the VBPR is the requirement to resist the institutional inertia that favours assimilation "to create an inclusive Canada without disrupting the status quo" (McCormack, 2020, p. 34). The VBPR perceives decolonization as achievable through internal adaptations within the existing institutional framework, rather than a categorical imperative to dismantle it. Although there is no "concise neat model of [Indigenous] resurgence" there are consistent pathways to community regeneration that include reconnecting with land, language, food, medicines, mentoring, and pushing past fear and complacency (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 613). While the VBPR and the ongoing work of the SPIGC/WG has played an instrumental role in advancing its envisioned objectives and pursuits of reconciliation, it remains inconclusive as to which visions and pathways are collectively embraced by the MST Nations in dialogues concerning the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan.

Alfred and Corntassel (2005) argue that colonial legacies limit Indigenous identities to state-defined legal and political frameworks, diverting efforts from community decolonization and imposing Indigenous Peoples to adopt or mimic state institutions through land claims and self-government processes (p. 600). Furthermore, Alfred and Corntassel (2005) explain that decolonization is not an institutional process, but a process of reorientation that begins with the self, and overtime will manifest in state agendas and authorities (p. 611). Because of this contemporary struggle of "purported decolonization" from within colonial institutions, equity frameworks may not be a suitable model to foster Indigenous resurgence and self-determination. The paradoxical result of "logical inconsistencies" in institutional decolonization approaches, may, in practice, continue to entrench Indigenous Peoples into the colonial institutions they aimed to challenge. (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 612). Moreover, as urban planners seek to engage in equity and justice-based frameworks, there is a risk of unequal recognition between groups, including between Indigenous Nations with overlapping land claims, potentially "flatten[ing] identities" and causing further harm (O'Donnell & Doyon, 2023, p. 1480). In discussing equity and justice in environmental planning, O'Donnell and Doyon (2023) argue for embracing a more "epistemic" justice framework could address the historical and ongoing systemic planning injustices as it is based on "engaging with

diverse ways of knowing and being" (p. 1481). Despite the lack of inclusion in Urban Studies literature, epistemic justice could add a community lens to municipal equity planning that is not prescriptive to what equity or justice should look like for each City department (O'Donnell & Doyon, 2023).

Indigenous Peoples in Canada possess inherent rights that are unique and distinct from settlers[9]. The ethnocultural mis-categorization of Indigenous Peoples has been an ongoing issue as the settler-colonial forces and Canadian literature on literary studies undermined Indigenous Rights and nationhood through utilizing terminology such as "multicultural" or "minority/ethnic groups" to describe Indigeneity (McCormack, 2020). This mirrors the categorization of Indigenous Peoples as an "equity" group. Adopting this language further builds up Canada's "mosaic" of settler-colonial architecture that allows Indigenous Peoples to have a role in the mainstream Canadian society, laws, and jurisdiction alongside other non-European immigrants and people of colour (McCormack, 2020). McKegney coins this the "multicultural master-narrative" in political contexts as an assimilative tool to imagine Indigenous Nations as 'cultures' within the Canadian context (McKegney, 2014 as cited by McCormack, 2020, p. 29). The declaration of the VBPR to formally collaborate with MST and the establishment of the SPIGC/WG was a starting point for their potential to fulfill their goals of reconciliation. The step forward to planning for coexistence, as argued by Sandercock (2004) is to recognize that Indigenous sovereignty and Rights are the fundamental issue in planning, superseding considerations of mere inclusion and participation. As VBPR evolves its understanding of its role in upholding UNDRIP principles in alignment with federal and provincial legislation, and applying a more radical approach to decolonization, the next steps may require a deeper rethinking of municipal planning for Indigenous Rights.

6.2. The Complex Nature of Parks

This research explored the colonial dispossession of urban parks, namely Stanley Park within Vancouver and MST Nations movement to reclaim their rights through cooperating with VBPR's governance system. As this research confirmed, the

[9] Indigenous Peoples inherent rights are rooted in both international law and domestic legal frameworks, including the recent legislation under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, 2023. Section 35 of Canadian *Constitution Act*, 1982 also explicitly recognizes and affirms the existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of Indigenous Peoples.

foci of the VBPR's colonial roots are in Stanley Park, and therefore, it makes sense that before the rest of Vancouver's parklands can be explored for co-management and co-creation, the Stanley Park problem needs to be addressed (VBPR, 2018a). This research found that the VBPR's focus on collaborative planning and visioning connects with coexistence planning principles and supports movement towards resurgent urban Indigenous land-based practices and worldviews of interdependent relationships with the land. Additionally, capacity and resource investments in fostering relationships and collaborating with Indigenous governments and organizations on city programming was observed. However, there are persistent struggles for practitioners to coordinate and action the work required while navigating settler colonial power structures and municipal politics. This research found that as the VBPR is still in the "truth-telling phase" as it works towards a fulsome Colonial Audit in 2024, there are still many areas of unknown and gaps in the VBPR's framework and capacity to fully enable Indigenous resurgence at an operational level and address the ways that the institution has impeded its ability to decolonize (VBPR, 2018a).

Stanley Park as a destination park requires a unique kind of management over access and mobility that presents challenges to the VBPR especially as it tries to understand the priorities MST Nation members and Vancouver residents value the most. Dunlop (2023) refers to these pressures as the "tourism paradox" in a presentation to the VBPR – people come from all over the world to visit the beautiful scenery, but of course, are disappointed if their access to it is stunted by limited road infrastructure (Dunlop, 2023, 9:19:35). The increase in visitation, especially by tourists, although is positive in many ways, is causing stress on the VBPR to make tough decisions related to mobility and prioritizing some modes of transportation over others. Issues related to access and future infrastructure developments in Stanley Park risks further deviation from the park's pre-colonial history and its traditional ecology.

The SPIGC/WG considers the Mobility Study as an integral extension of the comprehensive plan, due to the significance of mobility and access within the park. In a Park Board Meeting on November 27, 2023, Emily Dunlop outlined the current Stanley Park Mobility Study timeline, emphasizing its top priority status, with an anticipated final report in April 2024 to be presented to Park Board Commissioners, which will inform the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan (Dunlop, 2023, 9:07:35-9:33-17PM). Notably, the Stanley Park Mobility Study has engaged extensively with stakeholder groups, involving

more than 159 stakeholder groups through meetings, events or surveys—significantly surpassing the 50 stakeholder groups that were engaged for the Vancouver Plan, the city-wide 30-year vision and land use strategy (Dunlop, 2023, 9:19:47-9:20:57).

The framing of the Mobility Study discusses these trade-offs involving ecological impact and the transformation of urban landscapes for settler access and activities. It prompts critical consideration of the VBPR's true priorities and whether they align with Indigenous ways of knowing and being, Indigenous food sovereignty, and Indigenous Rights and interests, or if they will continue to prioritize the recreation and tourism industry and "those who participate in dominant colonial culture" (VBPR, 2018a, p. 4). The substantial engagement with stakeholders in the Mobility Study and diverse discussions on the valuation of parklands raise concerns about the potential undervaluation of Indigenous resurgence in the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan, should the results from the Mobility Study push VBPR Councillors to continue the trajectory aligned with the production and continued growth of a setter colonial city.

Modifying urban landscapes for recreational use rather than sustaining productive food systems, the original purpose of most lands before colonization and park creation, has notable ecological and cultural consequences (Simpson & Bagelman, 2018). Since Indigenous ways of knowing include humans within their concepts of the natural word, Indigenous identities are closely tied to the land base, animals, plants, and cultural histories (Salmón, 2000). In Lekwungen territory on Vancouver Island, an intricate food system cultivated with care for millennia was largely dismantled by the local city's parks department through 150 years of landscaping alterations and chemical pesticide treatments (Simpson & Bagelman, 2018). This transformation aimed to make the lands more conducive to settler recreation activities. Conflicting understandings of territory and ecological functions between western mindsets (such as municipal park officials and settler environmentalists) and Lekwungen knowledge holders echo parallel issues in Stanley Park where settler ecologies unintentionally inflict harm by reinforcing settler colonial normative appropriations of space (Simpson & Bagelman, 2018).

Indigenous resurgence necessitates a shift in priorities, drawing attention to seemingly subtle decisions regarding maintenance of urban parks to prioritize Indigenous ecologies and lived experiences over municipal policies and landscape management practices (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). Corntassel (2012) simplifies this

concept, stating that “by focusing on “everyday” acts of resurgence, one disrupts the colonial physical, social and political boundaries designed to impede our actions to restore our nationhood” (p. 88). Emphasizing resurgence moves away from reconciliation, a term that is often problematized by Indigenous scholars, as it implies a “forgive and forget” colonial-based framework that seeks to legitimize settler occupation through the guise of reconciling colonial injustices (Corntassel, 2012, p. 91).

6.3. Practitioner Training and Education Systems

The VBPR is committed to a culture shift at every level of the institution, and although there are strong indicators of this progress, continuous learning among practitioners and councilors remains imperative. During my analysis, I observed a lack of defining Indigenous Rights and self-determination beyond the literal meanings, demonstrating a limited engagement with theories of Indigenous resurgence and coexistence. Notably, underlying assumptions persist in Park Board and City documents, where the concept of sole jurisdiction and settler positionality predominates in major planning decisions concerning parks. While the VBPR has initiated the development of an intergovernmental relationship with MST Nations, it operates within an unconventional post-colonial framework. In this framework, the colonial institution of VBPR facilitates the progress of decolonial efforts. Hunt (2014) characterizes parks in the Canadian context as “colonialscapes,” which refer to the concept of *terra nullius* and the colonial realizations of authority over land. These colonialscapes represent settler appropriations of space, shaped by western geographic imaginaries established through oppressive tools like maps, archival records, laws, and technologies, ultimately erasing Indigenous spatial authorities (Harris, 2004; Hunt, 2014; Yee, 2022). Despite the VBPR's efforts to incorporate a storytelling approach in certain projects (Todd, n.d.-b) and develop frameworks to honor Indigenous oral histories, its goals and frameworks continue to operate within this colonialscape, falling short of fully accepting the legal pluralism for the lands they oversee.

Relying on Indigenous languages is integral to creating spaces of coexistence and “kincentric ecologies,” which is a term used to describe kinship ties between humans and the land (Salmón, 2000; Yee, 2022). An illustrative example in həl̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ is the term ’imushné’tun, which is used to describe a visitor, but when deconstructed, translates to 'a person who walks alongside' (Couture, 2023). Couture (2023) explained

that she envisions herself as a white settler scholar embodying this term, potentially serving as a model for other scholars and practitioners to understand coexistence planning. The utilization of Indigenous language goes beyond a gesture of respect and resurgence as “Indigenous language gives life to things by the use of verbs, whereas in English things are often nouns,” which can support Western practitioners’ comprehension of Indigenous ecologies and laws (Yee, 2022, p. 87). Couture (2023) drew further parallels highlighting the “Two Row Wampum” concept originating from treaty negotiations with the Haudenosaunee around the time of the Royal Proclamation of 1763. It involves a beaded wampum belt and encapsulates the idea that each party will navigate their own paths without interference, yet they will work alongside one another (Onondaga Nation, n.d.). Couture (2023) connects historical dynamics to contemporary coexistence initiatives, recognizing commonalities across diverse regions.

Additionally, in my discussion with Couture (2023), she presented the Cree term *wahkohtowin* as a concept for deeper exploration to approach both the interconnectedness of relationships with the land and the interplay between Indigenous and settler forms of governance. Wildcat (2020) explores the “wahkohtowin movement” as a way to introduce legal pluralism and relational sovereignty and governance over areas of shared concern. Due to settler colonialism, First Nations governments are forced into exclusive, discrete sovereignties, as they tend to focus on how they can provide services independent of colonial political authorities and emphasize their independence (Wildcat, 2020). The movement towards interdependence of systems is where meanings of wahkohtowin can apply and it “encompasses the act of being related, a worldview that everything is related, and a set of laws or obligations around how to conduct good relationships” (Wildcat, 2020, p. 172).

Navigating relational work in settler-colonial spaces presents inherent challenges marked by hierarchical concepts of knowledge and extractive approaches of retaining knowledge, research, resources and even human relationships (Tynan, 2021). Settler practitioners and researchers may find extractivism affecting their practices and education systems, influenced by ideas of data collection and Western research methods (Tynan, 2021). In contrast, Indigenous land-based practices and education systems fundamentally reject a resource-extraction-based economy (Corntassel, 2012).

The historical transmission of Indigenous knowledge[10] occurs through storytelling within families and communities, a practice often overlooked by Western professional and academic institutions (Hunt, 2014; Simpson, 2011, 2016; Yee, 2022). Despite this oversight, storytelling forms the basis for maintaining relationality and coexistence (Simpson, 2011). Leanne Betasamosake Simpson contends that a resurgence in skilled storytellers within Indigenous cultural practices will contribute to an increased abundance of stories in our futures, echoing knowledge into the present collective consciousness (Simpson, 2011, p. 66). Recognizing the crucial role of Indigenous knowledge and teachings is essential for settlers committed to supporting decolonization and resurgence. It extends beyond performative gestures, integrating Indigenous culture into everyday practice and providing future generations the autonomy to chart their pathways to Indigenous resurgence (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Corntassel, 2012).

6.3.1. Free, Prior and Informed Consent

A significant finding from this research observed that the VBPR is practicing free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)[11] with their non-disclosure agreement and collaborative work with MST Nations on the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan through the SPIGC/WG. To establish trust and unearth truths with caution, preserving this relationship in confidence respects the intellectual property and cultural safety of the Nations and the Councillors and staff that are involved in this work. However, FPIC-based decision-making has not conclusively been implemented across all VBPR projects and initiatives. Authority and control over process would provide Nations with inherent choice over what is being proposed, when, and how the project will be implemented. Although this may be the case with some Indigenous-led VPBR projects, there is not a

[10] Indigenous knowledge can be defined in many ways, one definition provided by Dr. Ellen Inga Turi is: “a systematic way of thinking and knowing that is elaborated and applied to phenomena across biological, physical, cultural and linguistic systems. [Indigenous] knowledge is owned by the holders of that knowledge, often collectively, and is uniquely expressed and transmitted through Indigenous languages. It is a body of knowledge generated through cultural practices, lived experiences including extensive and multigenerational observations, lessons and skills. It has been developed and verified over millennia and is still developing in a living process, including knowledge acquired today and in the future, and it is passed on from generation to generation” (Maloney, 2019, p. 18).

[11] FPIC is an international standard outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which underscores the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples to make voluntary, fully informed decisions regarding actions that may impact their territory and rights with sufficient time and resources to consider the implications (University of British Columbia, 2019).

comprehensive agreement between VBPR and MST Nations that includes a consent-based protocol. With any land use changes that will impact Indigenous Rights, having decision-making control over how a proposed project is assessed, what information and knowledge is being considered, and how its monitored and sustained are all important to planning for coexistence (Howitt & Lunkapis, 2010; Porter, 2013; Porter & Barry, 2016). This process needs to be defined by MST Nations with the VBPR, and a potential co-management framework needs to include agreements about how consent will be achieved and what decision-making mechanisms are in place to ensure integrity over a process that withstands a changing political landscape. Hence, it needs to be tied to the City's legislative framework and charter.

While FPIC does not grant veto power to Indigenous Peoples, "FPIC entails negotiation, dialogue, partnership, consultation and co-operation between the parties concerned, in good faith, [and] with the objective of achieving consent" (Maloney, 2019, p. 10). Additionally, there are no human rights in Canada that are absolute, meaning that "there's a constant tension between the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples and all others" (Maloney, 2019, p. 11). The challenge for governments to follow FPIC principles is in part, attributable to a limited understanding and narrow interpretations of distinct Indigenous laws and customs (Simpson, 2014; Yellowhead Institute, 2020). The "domestication" of UNDRIP into federal, provincial and municipal policies in Canada, meaning that "domestic legal precedents will be paramount over international principles" (Yellowhead Institute, 2020, p. 18) Indigenous peoples had established their own legal frameworks and governance systems prior to European settlement that often conflict with colonial government interests (Corntassel, 2012; Hunt, 2014; Simpson, 2016; Simpson & Bagelman, 2018). The imposition of colonial socio-legal imaginaries has delegitimized Indigenous peoples and their worldviews (Hunt, 2014). The normalization of erasure and settler colonial myths, which assert that Indigenous life is incompatible with urban living, reinforces settler-created spatial divisions and settler state policies that enable urban planners and municipal officials to understate Indigenous Rights in the city (Tomiak et al., 2019). While the VBPR is mandated to manage Stanley Park through contracts with the federal government, the absence of a signed treaty leaves unresolved land claims registered to Stanley Park (Todd, n.d.-b). These claims, hopefully, will be addressed in the future. Until then, practitioners are restricted by the parameters by

which their jurisdiction allows them to enable Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous-led planning practices.

6.4. Infiltrating Colonial Systems

Cities are well-positioned to engage in discourses on institutional and systemic issues critical to reconciliation and supporting Indigenous self-determination, given their proximity and shared interests with local Indigenous communities on issues such as resource management, cultural preservation, social services and infrastructure (Porter, 2013; Simpson & Bagelman, 2018; Vizina & Wilson, 2019). Although working groups and committees at the municipal level can effectively address local issues and sustain relationships, their financial capacities are notably limited compared to provincial or federal levels. The VBPR plainly self-reports this concern, stating that “Reconciliation goals often fall down the priority list when timelines, budgets, or fundamental systemic change is required” (VBPR, 2022). Establishing trust between Nations and municipal governments is crucial, and Dunlop (2023) emphasizes that like any good relationship, the process of reconciliation requires the building of trust over time. Of course, an organization that experiences greater turnover and political instability in the workplace will have a much harder time fostering those critical relationships.

The VBPR's Reconciliation Mission, Vision, and Values underscore the importance of patience, acknowledging that “colonialism didn’t happen overnight. We will pace ourselves for the marathon, not the sprint” (VBPR, 2018b). In addition to patience, the VBPR outlined four additional values: clarity, pragmatism, leadership, and learning, intended to inform VBPR staff collaborating with the Park Board Reconciliation Team (PBRT) in the decolonization of the Vancouver Park Board (VBPR, 2018c). This research prompts practitioners to critically examine if these values truly align with Indigenous cultural values and objectives for resurgence, or if they reflect internal goals oriented toward incremental progress in the direction of equity for all.

What this research observes is what I refer to as the ‘Indigenous urbanism paradox’, where major cities like Vancouver have advantages to support decolonization work, but what Indigenous urbanism literature notes is “that the city – due to its inherent openness – is the ‘Achilles Heel’ of the settler-colonial project” (Porter & Yiftachel, 2019, p. 180). This body of literature on settler-colonial studies have recently employed

concepts such as *urbs nullius* to discuss gentrification or erasure of Indigenous presence in cities and demonstrate that as settler cities are innately structured for constant growth, urban Indigeneity interplays with this evolution and requires a dynamic understanding of Indigenous resurgence in the present and futures of city spaces (Coulthard, 2014; Porter, 2013; Porter & Yiftachel, 2019). The VBPR's mandate and power relations interact with this paradox as its support for cultural practices and repatriation of lands in collaboration with the CoV's UNDRIP Task Force are in friction with the very beginnings of the VBPR to protect and improve green space and places for settler recreation (CoV, 2022a; VBPR, 2018a).

Reclamation of land in a setter city goes beyond infiltrating the colonial systems to re-establishing Indigenous laws within the city (Cornell, 2013; Hoehn & Stevens, 2018; Pysklywec et al., 2022; Simpson, 2016). Articulating Indigenous Rights transitively to suggest that colonial cities are containers of Indigenous communities rather than sites of "Indigenous mobilization for land control, cultural recognition, sovereignty and social justice" undermines Indigenous urbanism and resurgence (Porter & Yiftachel, 2019, 183). One possible way to avoid this type of language that alludes to a paternalistic settler-colonial dynamic is what Yee (2022) calls "re-storying" the land in a way that "challenges settler colonial narratives that have overwritten Indigenous lands" (p. 98). Yee (2022) cites other work observing the re-storying of lands in a city through "land as pedagogy" to retell histories from the perspective of the land as the teacher to provide evidence for Indigenous knowledge, practices, and claims to land (Simpson, 2016). Re-storying and rejection of settler colonial frameworks for Indigenous resurgence is radical, and thus, requires those in decision-making positions to radically transform their understanding of the institutions and power relations they make up (Corntassel, 2012; Simpson, 2016; Yee, 2022). This process starts internally with settler practitioners recognizing that their positionality may be inherently unjust "in relation to the land and Indigenous Peoples" (Alfred, 2016 as cited by Rees & Doyon, 2023), and that coexistence planning requires risking the perceived stability of colonial systems (Howitt & Lunkapis, 2010; Matunga, 2017).

The renewed governance strategy that the VBPR has enacted through the SPIGC/WG places practitioners in the 'contact zone' to operate in space of coexistence (Porter & Barry, 2016). However, this research did not find conclusive evidence of Indigenous authority in the VBPR's decision-making procedures, and therefore,

Indigenous land management and co-creation of policy was not confirmed. Although building trust and relationships was a consistent theme supported by key informants at the VBPR, and the CoV has supported increasing intergovernmental relations across departments (CoV, 2022a), the coexistence of mutual settler-Indigenous authorities is lacking from the current tools. The SPIGC/WG provided the VBPR with a platform to recognize MST Nations as rights holders and look at ways to improve land-relationship planning in Stanley Park. Based on Dunlop's (2023) contributions, the protocol surrounding these conversations related to knowledge and histories of these lands is of the utmost importance to the VBPR. Considering the concept of land as pedagogy, this protocol is crucial as practices of settler surveillance, control, criminalization of land practices such as hunting, fishing, and foraging have caused undue violence to Indigenous Peoples for the preservation of so-called parks (Simpson, 2014). This research found that there is palpable emphasis on following protocol as the VBPR reintegrates Indigenous performance and spatial production into parks.

Between the VBPR and CoV's concurrent Colonial Audits and various reconciliatory tools, some references indicate a potential repatriation of cultural sites (CoV, 2022a, p. 22-25), while others suggest a move towards collective/collaborative stewardship or increased cultural sensitivity through specific policies and procedures (VBPR, 2019, p. 20). The current situation aligns with an inclusive approach aimed at incorporating Indigenous voices and visibility, evident in actions such as park naming (VBPR, 2019, p. 21), and the implementation of Indigenous food sovereignty policies and initiatives (VBPR, 2021). However, key informants highlight that MST Nations face significant burdens due to engagement requests from other colonial government departments, a message that is affirmed in the literature (Corntassel, 2012; Coulthard, 2014; Hunt, 2014; Rees & Doyon, 2023). Given the substantial size and fewer resources of Indigenous Nations compared to settler municipalities, practitioners can inadvertently perpetuate colonial asymmetries (Barry & Thompson-Fawcett, 2020). Additionally, while the VBPR focuses on centering Indigenous visibility, there is still a notable absence of formalized agreements for co-managing or co-creating parks and culturally significant sites, although they have been recommended for future development (CoV, 2022a, p. 25). Indigenous communities are compelled to participate in settler bureaucracy, yet the reciprocity in engaging with Indigenous laws is still absent. This asymmetry enables the

reinforcement of settler institutional power imbalances (Barry & Thompson-Fawcett, 2020; Rees & Doyon, 2023).

Chapter 7. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore and evaluate the application of coexistence planning in the VBPR. The focus was on understanding how urban parks could function as liminal spaces for Indigenous resurgence and the reclamation of urban spaces, land, and cultural practices. This study found that the VBPR has found ways to operate within a liminal space or “contact zone,” (Porter & Barry, 2016) navigating between colonial and Indigenous urbanism, as evidenced by its efforts in intergovernmental initiatives, coexistence planning, and addressing cultural visibility and Indigenous Rights on parklands in Vancouver. However, there are still missing actions from the commitments set out by the VPBR based on colonial boundary legacies, as introduced in Chapter 3.1, that inhibit redistributions of authority and jurisdiction, and reinforce settler normativity (Cornell, 2013).

Improved relations between the VBPR and Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations were observed since the establishment of the SPIGC/WG. This improvement resulted from transformative shifts among staff and Councilors in their understanding of Indigenous Rights and the acknowledgment of truths that were previously erased from Vancouver's history. Storytelling from Indigenous communities played a crucial role in reshaping the VBPR's approach to planning, encouraging a more relational perspective. Incorporating Indigenous perspectives through storywork and policies around the inclusion of traditional knowledge were fundamental to this institutional transformation. These changes were crucial in affirming that the City of Vancouver is not a blank canvas or a mere amalgamation of multicultural elements. It is an Indigenous city. Stanley Park and the broader Vancouver landscape symbolizes a crucial chapter in Canada’s colonial history, as it sits at “the final frontier in the archetypal last spike story, inextricably linked with proud pioneer tales of settlement” (Todd, 2023, p. 214). While uncertainties persist regarding the various pathways and outcomes for unsettling normative colonial structures, the VBPR has demonstrated a principle-based approach, aligning policies with Indigenous-supported legislation, including TRC Calls to Action, UNDRIP, and FPIC. Despite the integration of these approaches and paradigm shifts within the VBPR culture, the implementation and sustained adherence to these commitments remain undocumented, necessitating future research and development in this domain.

In exploring the challenges faced during this research, engaging key informants posed a notable obstacle. The study conducted a detailed review of VBPR's past policy mechanisms supporting coexistence planning principles, focusing on the SPIGC/WG and major progressions in VBPR's reconciliation journey. Research scope limitations arose from delayed timelines for the VBPR to release the Colonial Audit, key informant availability, and provisions safeguarding the sharing of information between MST and VBPR through their work on the Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan and the limited progress made to date. Moreover, practitioners working towards decolonization and reconciliation are under pressure due to the ever-changing political landscape affecting work timelines and capacity allocation. The story I was able to tell through this research was based on the invaluable guidance and participation from my key informants, who I was privileged to speak with and learn from. However, I struggled to engage with several potential key informants that would have helped weave in a greater diversity of perspectives into this research but were unable, unavailable, or unwilling to participate.

The absence of the VBPR's Colonial Audit during data analysis was an unfortunate circumstance, and the anticipation of its release in Spring 2024 is expected to provide valuable insights into colonial forces within the VBPR. Recognizing the inherent risk in conducting research at this pivotal juncture in VBPR's project timelines and reconciliation commitments, I firmly assert that research of this nature demands sustained consistency, longitudinal observations, and systematic inquiry. Such an approach is essential to hold cities accountable for their commitments and identify key lessons and adaptations to evolving circumstances. Furthermore, future studies on this topic should observe other positionalities, including MST staff, Indigenous community partners, artists and knowledge-keepers, and the interaction between different municipal or regional bodies to critically examine the impacts of boundary legacies.

This research adopted a storytelling approach, and as such, the study’s findings do not aim to fill specific knowledge gaps. Instead, they involve a focused examination of the stories crucial for advancing discussions in Vancouver and other settler-colonial cities regarding coexistence planning and the role of municipal governments in decolonizing urban planning and design. While the purpose of this study was not to discover new theories or unveil new information, the findings contextualized intersectional research approaches and critical theoretical frameworks relevant to the examination of Stanley Park. The study also contributed empirically to interrogations of

coexistence planning in urban parks, presenting a distinct interpretation within the existing literature on the urban paradox and positioning urban parks as sites for Indigenous resurgence. The results demonstrate that urban parks are, in fact, arenas to practice land back and Indigenous grounded normativity on the landscape, supporting self-determination and sovereignty through everyday cultural practices. Additionally, this study recognizes that Indigenous Peoples have historically regarded land as pedagogy, consistently engaging in acts of resistance and resurgence in “parks” throughout colonial history. It is only recently that settlers have come to recognize and appreciate the value of traditional, oral, and land-based knowledge.

The conclusions drawn from this research should not be extrapolated beyond the temporal, spatial and informational limitations of this study without deeper analysis and inquiry. A fellow SFU student, Courtney Vance, a Northern Tutchone-German researcher critically examined the planning ethos of “Vancouverism” in her 2023 study (Vance, 2023). Vance’s (2023) conclusions highlighted an emphasis on "damage-centered" notions of Indigeneity and underscored a regrettable lack of awareness and complacency among non-Indigenous planners in their perspectives of Vancouver. Despite my findings demonstrating non-Indigenous (VBPR) planners working with humility and prioritizing protocol in their practice, the sizable institutions, comprising over one hundred VBPR staff and thousands at the CoV, along with decision-makers at higher institutional levels, likely do not have comparable education, experiential knowledge, or motivations for decolonizing their system and relinquishing authority to MST Nations.

This research imparts a key lesson to urban planners, practitioners, and decision-makers within municipal institutions: effective coexistence planning, decolonization, and reconciliation efforts requires the active rejection of settler-colonial tendencies favoring constant growth and the perceived authority/superiority of colonial laws and knowledge. It necessitates settler institutions to yield their sole jurisdiction status and embrace coexisting governance systems.

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Appendix.

Reflective Exercise Journal Entry

Talasay Tours – Love the Land – Talking Trees Tour (March 12, 2023)

I arrived about 15 minutes before the tour started. The Indigenous Ambassador and Storyteller “Tour Guide” met me at the identified meeting spot, the bus loop. I arrived before the other attendees, two other students that were visiting Vancouver on their Spring Break. While the Tour Guide and I waited for the other attendees to arrive, we started to do a land acknowledgement. This acknowledgement was not what you think of when you think of the term land or territory acknowledgement. It was simply a conversation, where we took the time to consider where we were standing, the environment around us, and the Nations who have existed here since time immemorial. We stood by the bus stop in front of the map of the park that tells you “You are Here” to help park-goers with wayfinding around the trails and facilities. The Tour Guide pointed to the map while he was speaking, giving tidbits of knowledge about the various corners of the park, lots of stories I had not heard of before. He pointed along the shoreline of the map, now known as Coal Harbour. He explained that Indigenous Peoples and Hawaiians made families and settled in the Coal Harbour area. These waterfront villages were prime real estate for British settlers, so they kept getting pushed further inwards. There were also Chileans and other blended families in these village sites.

The other attendees arrived. We exchanged pleasantries and continued with our extended and interweaving discussion-based land acknowledgement, which morphed into larger conversations and lessons about history and how it is told. We walked along the trails, following the Tour Guide's lead as he pointed out various plant species, such as the Douglas Firs, Red Alders, skunk cabbage, various shrubs, mosses, and fungi. Our Tour Guide was practically an encyclopedia for all things Stanley Park. Not only this, but he told amazing stories about the park. He told us the story of the golden spruce and Siwah rock (which is inappropriately named by settlers and the VBPR and is slated to be changed soon). They are stories I will cherish but are not mine to share. It was special to hear Indigenous stories on the land where they come from.

We talked about foraging in the park for food and medicine. He told us a story about how Hazelton, a village in Northern BC, got its name from trading for hazelnuts in the Stó:lō, Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh territory. I had no idea hazelnuts were an Indigenous species. Learning this made me wonder about all the local plants and crops that are Indigenous to these lands that I have not fully appreciated. Not only were hazelnuts abundant on these lands, but Stanley Park used to be an incredibly well-maintained forest garden of many different plant species such as Pacific crab apple trees, salmonberry bushes, and salal just to name a few. Where the tour began at the bus loop, the Tour Guide said used to be an orchard. The thought that in an urbanized and manicured space, a thriving garden of nourishing food and medicines could have existed was hard to wrap my mind around, but it was equally exciting to consider. To the average park-goer, the park ecosystem feels effortless. It is so well kept that someone without any ecological education might think it functions naturally, without human intervention. Although I know that is far from the truth, it is comical to think that early colonizers assumed that the forest gardens existed naturally without thoughtful stewarding. The Tour Guide called this the “garden of Eden mentality,” and asserted that nothing was an accident on these lands – it was the result of thousands of years of understanding the landscape, maintaining, and harvesting from the lands and waters.