

# **Transformative Planning Practice and Urban Indigenous Governance in Vancouver, British Columbia**

**by**

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## Ethics Statement



The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

- a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics,

or

- b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University;

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## **Abstract**

A majority of legislation, policies and research about Indigenous rights in Canada has taken place at the federal and provincial levels. However, there is very little understanding about Indigenous rights in urban contexts. Nevertheless, over half of Indigenous people in Canada live in cities, making it necessary to gain a better understanding of how municipal governance can recognize Indigenous rights. Urban and regional planning is central to addressing Indigenous rights in cities because of the profession's significant role in land acquisition and ability to influence social, cultural and political control. But because planning has been instrumental to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, it raises the question of whether the same professional tools could or should be used in an effort to undo the oppression and neglect of Indigenous peoples. This thesis aims to understand what specific transformative planning practices are potential approaches for improved urban Indigenous governance. This study investigates the practices of non-Indigenous planning professionals that urban Indigenous non-profit organizations in Vancouver have identified as being effective in furthering their organizations' goals. I seek to answer two questions. First, what are the planning practices of these non-Indigenous planners that make them effective according to the Indigenous people they work with? Second, how do these practices connect to designing urban Indigenous governance with the purpose of incorporating and expressing Indigenous rights in cities? By exploring these questions this thesis hopes to uncover what future planning efforts are called for to expand Indigenous rights in the city.

**Keywords:** Indigenous governance; planning practice; Indigenous rights; Aboriginal; transformative planning; urban governance

## **Dedication**

To my parents.

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# Chapter 1.

## Introduction

A majority of legislation, policies and research about Indigenous rights in Canada has taken place at the federal and provincial levels. However, there is very little understanding about Indigenous rights in urban contexts. Nevertheless, over half of Indigenous people in Canada live in cities, making it necessary to gain a better understanding of how municipal governance can recognize Indigenous rights. Recently, scholars have looked to questions of Indigenous rights at the local level regarding collaborative governance (Sandercock, 2015), coexistence with non-Indigenous communities (Porter, 2013), and in civic policy-making (Walker & Belanger, 2013). *Urban Indigenous governance*<sup>1</sup> is a term used by some scholars to describe greater recognition of Indigenous rights in municipal governance (Tomiak, 2009; Graham, 1999).

For several reasons, the implementation of urban Indigenous governance has proven complicated and contested. Unlike First Nations on reserve, urban Indigenous communities are multi-national and do not share a common hereditary land base. Federal and provincial governments have tended to view urban Indigenous issues as the jurisdiction of municipal governments, which have, in turn, retreated from Indigenous issues because of legislative precedent

<sup>1</sup> Graham uses the term “urban Aboriginal governance” and Tomiak uses both “urban Indigenous governance” and “urban Aboriginal governance”. For the purpose of this thesis, I use the term “urban Indigenous governance” because Indigenous is more inclusive, while Aboriginal is a term used by the Canadian government to mean First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, but it is exclusive of Indigenous people who do not fit these categories.

set at the federal level<sup>2</sup>. In contemporary Canadian cities, Indigenous people are rendered ‘ordinary citizens’, meaning without Indigenous rights. However, Indigenous people do not abandon their inherent rights because they live in cities<sup>3</sup>.

In the context of Indigenous rights in Vancouver, it is important to note a distinction between Coast Salish people and Indigenous people from elsewhere in Canada who reside in Vancouver. Vancouver is located on unceded Coast Salish Territories. The subject of this thesis focuses on questions of governance and Indigenous rights for urban Indigenous communities, not Coast Salish people who have claims to local land and resources. While all Indigenous people have inherent rights, the way these rights have traditionally been recognized by the Canadian government has largely been tied to ‘Indian Status’, membership to a First Nation band, and the geographic area the government recognizes as a reserve. Indigenous rights that are not land-based, and therefore not geographically specific, are most relevant to urban Indigenous communities.

Scholars have identified urban and regional planning as central to addressing Indigenous rights in cities because of the profession’s significant role in land acquisition and ability to influence social, cultural and political control. However, the role of planning in affirming Indigenous rights is especially fraught. Some scholars have made the argument that “planning is the main mechanism by which Indigenous dispossession of lands and rights took – and in many cases still takes – place” (Ugarte, 2014, p. 405). Because planning has been instrumental to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, it raises the question of

<sup>2</sup> The *Indian Act* is federal legislation dating to 1876 that outlines the legal relationship between the Canadian government and First Nations.

<sup>3</sup> The Government of Canada enshrined Indigenous rights in the Canadian Constitution in 1982. Subsequent federal and provincial courts have defined these rights on a case-by-case basis. Indigenous rights include rights to self-determination and self-government, rights to land and resources including for hunting and fishing, and rights to practice culture and religion. Indigenous rights predate contact with settlers and are understood as inherent.

whether the same professional tools could or should be used in an effort to undo the oppression and neglect of Indigenous peoples.

Scholars interested in urban indigenous rights focus on a particular stream of planning called *transformative planning* with Indigenous communities, which seeks the transformation of social, economic, political and cultural structures of Indigenous oppression (Walker, 2008). This is planning that prioritizes Indigenous self-determination in the dismantling of structural inequalities facing Indigenous peoples. Transformative planning practice takes place at both a structural level and at an individual level (Ugarte, 2014). At a structural level, transformative planning with Indigenous communities intends to challenge and transform broad structural inequalities created by colonialism. At an individual level, transformative planning places personal responsibility on planners to counteract the ways planning can perpetuate colonial power imbalances. Both at structural and individual levels, scholars suggest non-Indigenous planning as a profession and planners as professionals need to create strong partnerships with Indigenous leaders in order to be effective (Porter, 2004).

A growing body of research on transformative planning practice with Indigenous communities examines the role of planning in urban Indigenous governance (Sandercock, 2015; Walker, 2008; Tomiak, 2009; Lane & Hibbard, 2005; Walker & Belanger, 2013; Ugarte, 2014). This area of work contributes significantly to positioning planning as a means of transforming local level political agendas to serve Indigenous community interests. However, the biggest gaps in the literature concern transformative planning at the grassroots level of urban Indigenous communities. This is surprising because wider transformative planning scholarship holds a significant focus on planning 'from below' whereby researchers and planners work closely with communities to realize their aspirations (Sandercock, 2015). This literature identifies that planning practice has the potential to transform systems of municipal governance to better meet the needs and aspirations of urban Indigenous communities.

Research about the individual level of transformative planning practice has been limited to work about relations between Indigenous on reserve and neighbouring non-Indigenous communities (Sandercock, 2015) or with regard to Indigenous resource claims in natural resource planning (Porter, 2013). This field of research lacks noteworthy examples of urban case studies where the Indigenous population is multinational (Lane & Hibbard, 2005). Literature about the structural level of transformative planning practice, on the other hand, includes urban case studies on improving the interface between municipal governments and urban Indigenous communities (Walker & Belanger, 2013). However, this research lacks examples of the perspectives of the people working on the ground with urban Indigenous communities and their leaders. More scholarship is needed to learn about urban planners working ‘from below’ at the grassroots level (*i.e.* not in government positions) both because research could improve the partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and because Indigenous people are more likely than municipal staff to affirm Indigenous rights.

Scholars have recognized that Indigenous non-profit organizations play a fundamental role in the fabric of urban Indigenous communities. These are very important organizations for urban Indigenous governance because they are dedicated to representing and meeting the needs and interests of the urban Indigenous population (Peters, 2005; Ouart & The Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre, 2013). It is important to explore the practices and perspectives of individuals who are working to plan the systems and services that interface directly with the urban Indigenous population.

This study investigates the practices of non-Indigenous planning professionals that the leaders of urban Indigenous non-profit organizations in Vancouver have identified as being effective in furthering their organizations’ goals. I seek to answer two questions. First, what are the transformative planning practices of these non-Indigenous planners? Second, how do these

practices connect to designing urban Indigenous governance with the purpose of incorporating and expressing Indigenous rights in cities?

The first question relates to the individual level of transformative planning practice identified in the literature. The question speaks to respecting the inherent rights of Indigenous people as first peoples of Canada regardless of whether they chose to live on First Nations reserves or in cities like Vancouver. I focus this first question on non-Indigenous planners to understand how this group, whose members are all committed at some level to self-determination can be effective allies in the course of structural change. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have very different roles to play in Indigenous self-determination, including times when non-Indigenous people should not participate. However, planners working in Canadian cities should not misinterpret urban Indigenous governance as a call to disconnect from self-determination. All planners need to participate in this conversation in order to increase the likelihood of transforming cities to honour Indigenous rights.

I ask the second research question because of the growing debate in the literature about what planning practice has to do with Indigenous rights in the city. This second question relates to the structural level of transformative planning practice identified in the literature cited earlier.

Given that planning has been such a problematic practice for Indigenous communities in the past (Stanger-Ross, 2008; Blomley, 2004), I want to understand what specific transformative planning practices are potential approaches for improved urban Indigenous governance. By exploring the limits of these professionals' practices in working towards goals of urban Indigenous governance, I hope to uncover what future planning efforts are called for to expand Indigenous rights in the city.

For the empirical portion of this research, I adopted a grounded theory approach (Charmaz & Bryant, 2008). I interviewed nine key informants with in-depth professional experience with Indigenous non-profit organizations in Vancouver. These interviewees fall into two groups: “Group A” was comprised of four respondents who have significant professional experience leading Indigenous organizations in areas of health services, youth services, family services, and work with police, vocational training, and post-secondary education. I conducted interviews with Group A leaders to gain insights regarding the interface between Indigenous non-profit organizations and status quo municipal governance from the point of view of these non-profit leaders. I asked these interviewees to describe what has worked for them and their organizations when partnering with non-Indigenous urban professionals, both representatives from the City and independent contractors. The Group A interviewees are all Indigenous people.

I asked Group A interviewees to refer me to non-Indigenous planning professionals who have been instrumental in helping urban Indigenous organizations in achieving their goals. I interviewed five people in this second group, “Group B”, to understand the practices of planners working with the organizations represented in Group A. I designed the referral process of the study to ensure Indigenous leaders set the criteria of what benefits their communities.

In the following chapter I review scholarship that provides context for this study. I provide an overview of how I designed this study to answer the two research questions in Chapter 3. I present results from the first group of interviews, Group A, in Chapter 4. I present the results from Group B interviews in two chapters: Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 demonstrates the three areas of planning practice described by Group B interviewees: working within a framework of self-determination; learning about Indigenous cultures; and connecting non-profits to resources. In Chapter 6 I demonstrate six examples where interviewees

describe mediating between status quo governance and urban Indigenous governance. Also in Chapter 6 I provide findings where interviewees discuss limits to urban Indigenous governance that may hold the potential to better implement Indigenous rights in cities. In Chapter 7 I conclude this thesis by synthesizing key empirical findings and conclusions from the literature to inform future investigation into transformative planning practice and urban Indigenous governance.

## Chapter 2.

### **Literature Review**

This study investigates the transformative practices of non-Indigenous planning professionals whom urban Indigenous non-profit organizations in Vancouver have identified as being effective in furthering their organizations' goals. I seek to answer two questions. First, what are the transformative planning practices of these non-Indigenous professionals? Second, how do these practices connect to designing urban Indigenous governance with the purpose of incorporating and expressing Indigenous rights in urban contexts?

In order to understand how non-Indigenous planning professionals work to further the goals of urban Indigenous non-profit organizations in Vancouver, I engage with three groups of scholarly literature. First, I turn to literature about how urban planning has been detrimental to Indigenous communities. Literature about Vancouver shows how planning and planners have dispossessed Indigenous peoples of land and resources in order to create the city of Vancouver. Despite efforts over time to exclude Indigenous people from cities, over half of Indigenous people in Canada currently live in cities, not on First Nations. This demographic trend is true for Vancouver, where predictions are for future urban Indigenous population growth. The results of colonization have created inequalities Indigenous peoples experience in cities. I use this literature to make the case that urban planning professionals should work in ways that aim to benefit, not damage, growing urban Indigenous communities.

Second, I use *urban Indigenous governance* as a main concept for my study because the literature uses this term to describe Indigenous rights to self-government in a municipal context. In Canada there is a changing political and legal landscape surrounding Indigenous rights. Scholars have identified the need to expand self-government models beyond First Nations reserves. I review several challenges to urban Indigenous governance – conceptual and practical – that are presented in the literature. These challenges are barriers to clearly understanding what urban Indigenous governance looks like in practice. The most significant challenge is the tension between urban Indigenous governance and status quo governance. This tension is present, to a varying degree, in all discussions about self-determination because asserting autonomy of Indigenous peoples indicates conflict with the Canadian settler state. The degree to which municipal policy reflects Indigenous rights to self-determination indicates greater or less tension with the status quo. This tension is relevant to the practice of non-Indigenous planners working with urban Indigenous communities because the outcomes of their work may conflict more or less with the status quo. The extent to which urban Indigenous communities stand to benefit from the work of non-Indigenous planners may depend on how much planners are willing to commit to self-determination. Unlike the planning practices outlined by in first body of literature, how can planning and municipal governance oppose colonization and affirm Indigenous rights to the city?

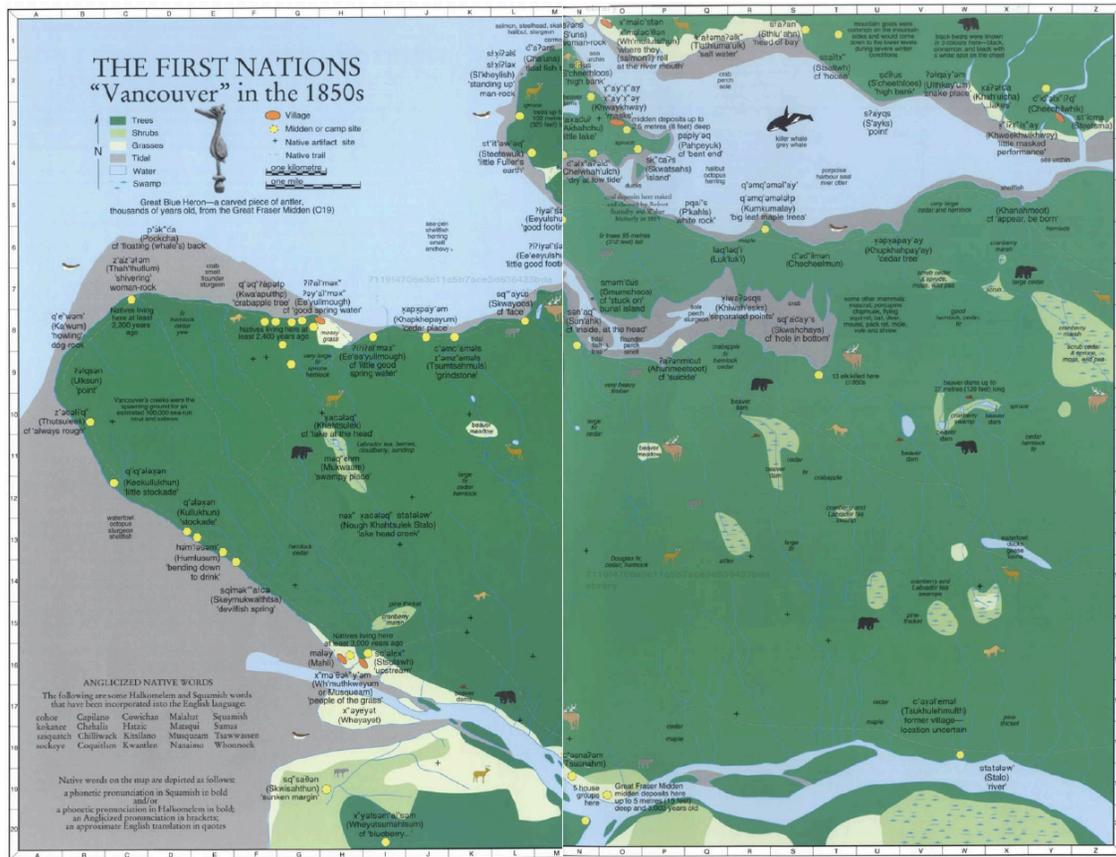
In order to examine this question I explore a third literature having to do with *transformative planning practice*, which is a term used by scholars to describe planning practices that confront and alter systemic social inequalities, in this context those created and maintained by colonialism. There is an unequal power dynamic inherent when non-Indigenous professionals work with Indigenous communities. Figuring out how an overwhelmingly White profession can work effectively in an interface between urban Indigenous communities and municipal governance is important to furthering urban Indigenous governance. If

these professionals do not understand Indigenous communities in a context of historical marginalization, they will lack the ability or knowledge to create systemic change. As the work of urban Indigenous leaders becomes more visible in municipal governance – including those working as planners – non-Indigenous planners who take urban Indigenous governance seriously are important actors in implementing changes that benefit these communities. They have the opportunity to transform governance systems to the benefit of Indigenous communities. To date scholars have identified transformative planning practices on the part of planners working within local government. Other scholars have identified the face-to-face transformative planning work of planners working with First Nations in reserve contexts. However, there is a gap when it comes to understanding planning at the grassroots level of urban Indigenous non-profits. This gap is significant because these organizations have long played a role as community hubs for urban Indigenous families and individuals. Transformative planning practice from within City Hall needs to be complimented with on-the-ground planning that furthers the self-determination goals of these non-profits. Together the literatures I review in this chapter provide the conceptual framework for understanding how non-Indigenous urban professionals can practice transformative planning in ways that support urban Indigenous governance.

## **2.1. Municipal colonialism in Vancouver**

In this section I look to literature about how urban planning professionals have created cities to the detriment of Indigenous peoples. It argues that urban planning practice has been used as a tool for colonization. I discuss specific literature about Vancouver and how planning professionals in this city have dispossessed Indigenous peoples. I also include demographic information that shows quantitatively the systemic barriers faced by urban Indigenous people in Vancouver. Improving cities in ways that benefit Indigenous residents is a

pressing task facing planning professionals working in cities like Vancouver where growing Indigenous communities face serious inequalities.



**Figure 1. “First Nations In ‘Vancouver’ in the 1850’s” (Macdonald, 1992).** Used with permission of Talonbooks. Not to be additionally used or reproduced without permission.

When Europeans first arrived in what would later become Vancouver they conceptualized this space as empty wilderness. This dominant settler notion of *terra nullis* portrays Canada before contact with Europeans as a blank slate to be populated (Razack, 2002). Actually, Canadian cities including Vancouver are located on the sites of Indigenous settlements (see Fig. 1). European settlers often extinguished these settlements to make way for cities (Stanger-Ross, 2008). Colonial cities were designed to function as “site[s] of Empire” in networks extending control over vast resources (Porter, 2013, p. 295). The Canadian settler state has relied on certain professions over time to help ‘civilize’

these Indigenous spaces and delineate certain areas as civilized/wild; urban/rural; Native/non-Native. According to Coulthard, among the most important professionals in this effort were “urban planners ... [who] went through great efforts to expunge urban centres of Native presence” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 173-174). Planning was central to early colonizing efforts and it continues to frame cities as places for private landownership by settlers (Blomley, 2004; Hibbard & Lane, 2004). Mantunga furthers this point by showing that urban planning is a profession that has “generally been complicit in the colonial project, a weapon brandished to erase/eradicate Indigenous peoples or at least contain them in rural enclaves or urban ghettos” (Matunga, 2013, p. 4). Indigenous people often inhabit the poorest areas of the city or geographically segregated rural reserves. The creation of First Nation reserves is itself a colonial practice that has pivoted on regional planning. Rather than understanding reserves as authentic Indigenous homelands and cities as colonial spaces, contemporary cities are contained within larger territories of Indigenous peoples (Peters & Andersen, 2013).

Planning practices have been particularly advantageous for colonizers because, as Sandercock points out, they comprise a “whole range of spatial technologies of power” (Sandercock, 2004, p. 118). She goes on to argue that over time the Canadian settler state has relied on planning practices to help create “legal and/or violent arrangements and appropriations” and exclude Indigenous peoples from the most desirable geographic places (Sandercock, 2004, p. 118). The planning profession has been slow to welcome non-Western centric epistemology and “until relatively recently, indigenous voices have been subsumed by non-native practitioners” (Jojola, 2008, p. 41). Some scholars including Porter demonstrate how contemporary non-Indigenous planners have purposefully used their professional practice to exclude certain Indigenous voices (Porter, 2004).

In Vancouver, scholars have identified how planning practice has displaced Coast Salish people and dispossessed them of their rights to these lands (Blomley, 2004; Stanger-Ross, 2008). Stanger-Ross shows how city planning is one of the “key mechanisms of colonial expansion” that shaped Vancouver into a command centre for the resource accumulation of the settler state (2008, p. 543). During the period between the 1928 and 1950’s in Vancouver, Stanger-Ross argues, urban professionals engaged in municipal colonialism. Vancouver’s first official community plan, the 1928 *Plan for the City of Vancouver*, operated to appropriate Indigenous spaces within the city. Officials from Vancouver’s Parks Board, City Council, municipal legal counsel, and business community dispossessed the Squamish and Musqueam people of their land under the banner of urban vitality and development. For example, in order to create what is now Vanier Park, in the 1940s planners and other officials from the City of Vancouver wrestled the Kitsilano Reserve from the jurisdiction of the Federal Government’s Department of Indian Affairs. Today this exclusion persists in Vancouver. The urban spaces that are most associated with Indigenous communities – notably the Downtown Eastside – are “cordoned off” marginalized, poorer, inner city areas (Razack, 2002, p. 129).

In addition to geographic marginalization, colonization has created many systemic barriers facing Indigenous people in cities. These barriers result in urban Indigenous people experiencing worse socioeconomic outcomes in indicators of education, health, income, and home ownership than non-Indigenous people in Canada (Walker, 2008). In Vancouver, when Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations were compared in 2006 study, Indigenous residents were twice as likely to experience unemployment, their annual median household income was \$12,000 less, their infant mortality was twice as high, the instance of HIV/AIDS and diabetes among them was disproportionately high, and they accounted for 30% of the Vancouver metro region’s homeless although they only made up 3% of the general population (Cardinal, 2006). These statistics

clearly indicate the need for urban planning professionals to work towards making Vancouver a more equitable environment for Indigenous residents.

Vancouver is the Canadian city with the third largest Indigenous population and the third highest proportion of the overall urban population (Cardinal, 2006). Although in 2001 only 3% of the Vancouver metro region population was Indigenous, this group increased at twice the rate of non-Indigenous population from 1996 to 2001 (Cardinal, 2006). These trends are not unique to Vancouver or British Columbia. Nationwide, Indigenous population has been rapidly urbanizing over the past few decades. In 1961 roughly 13% of Indigenous people across Canada lived in cities; this number grew to over 53% by 2006 (Norris, Clatworthy & Peters, 2013; Norris & Clatworthy, 2011). This dramatic increase of urban Indigenous residents is especially notable because of the context of historic exclusion of Indigenous peoples from Canadian cities.

Increases in urbanization are more nuanced than individuals and families moving to cities from rural areas or reserves, or the relatively high birthrates among Indigenous populations (Walker, 2008). For example, growing self-identification as “Indigenous” may indicate that urbanites perceive increased safety in identifying as Indigenous (Norris, Clatworthy & Peters, 2013). The visibility of Indigenous people living in cities has increased as well as the total number of urban Indigenous residents. In cases of Indigenous people moving to cities, scholars have found patterns of maintaining strong ties with rural and reserve residences, and a “churn” pattern of migration between reserves or rural areas and cities (Graham & Peters, 2002). Just as Indigenous people did not naturally begin living on reserves, nuanced ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors have influenced Indigenous urbanization trends.

Planning practice needs to take seriously both the urbanization of Indigenous communities and the socioeconomic barriers facing them. However, scholars warn that planning work should avoid a deficit-based approach

(Andersen, 2013; Newhouse & FitzMaurice, 2012). For example, scholars like Smith (1999) and Wilson (2008) argue that researchers need to look beyond statistics in order to value the capacities present in Indigenous communities. Indigenous epistemologies, they suggest, should be used in addition to Western research methods. Other scholars including Andersen (2013) and Cardinal (2006) make similar arguments about the inability of statistical measurements fully inform urban policy making because they often portray Indigenous communities in terms of lack. Andersen cautions planners to avoid only measuring “Aboriginality in terms of ...difference” with non-Indigenous communities (Andersen, 2013, pp. 269). For example, despite facing systemic inequalities when compared to non-Indigenous groups, a 2011 study demonstrates that most Indigenous residents of Vancouver report that they like living in Vancouver in part because of the quality of life here (EnviroNics Institute, 2011). The report states that, notwithstanding “violence, poverty and health challenges... thousands of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit are establishing themselves, or continuing long histories of multi-generational residence, in Canadian cities, including Vancouver” (EnviroNics Institute, 2011, p. 50). Planners need to look beyond deficit-based approaches in order to use professional planning practice to benefit Indigenous communities.

To conclude this section, I turn to Vancouver based Cree-Métis and German community planner Kamala Todd who argues that city planners have a unique responsibility to make opportunities for Indigeneity to be re-written into the landscape of Vancouver. Todd’s perspective demonstrates a how planning can reclaim urban environments as Indigenous places. In her 2014 talk, *Indigenize Our Urban Eyes*, Todd laments how in Vancouver planners lost the “perfect opportunity ... to celebrate, incorporate, work with and weave in the Indigenous narratives” in the recent development of the False Creek neighbourhood (see Fig. 1). In her call to re-write Indigeneity back into the urban landscape, Todd points to urban planning practices that can integrate urban with Indigenous, and

historic with contemporary. Todd asks planners to look for ways to “deepen the roots of where we live and deepen our understanding and to hear from the Coast Salish people themselves of what is the history of this place” (Todd, 2014). This example reminds us to not see cities as *terra nullis* to be colonized. What is more, planning is not a profession without positive contributions to make for Indigenous communities. Instead, planning has had a strong role in colonization *and* an equally strong potential to benefit urban Indigenous communities.

## 2.2. Defining urban Indigenous governance

In this section I define *urban Indigenous governance*, I demonstrate why it is a central concept for this study, and I describe challenges to Indigenous rights in cities. The literature defines urban Indigenous governance as the ways urban governance in Canadian cities can express Indigenous rights to self-determination. Few scholars explicitly use “urban Indigenous governance” and instead variably choose to write in terms of *self-determination*, *self-government* and *self-governance* in urban contexts (Tomiak, 2009). While that scholarship makes significant contribution to the literature, two scholars, Tomiak (2009) and Graham (1999), use the more specific term<sup>4</sup> “urban Indigenous governance”. This term is more specific in two ways: one, it explicitly speaks to urban contexts; two, governance describes how governments and other actors including the private and non-profit sectors all play major roles in contemporary cities.

According to Graham, urban Indigenous governance “refer[s] to the institutions, services, and political arrangements dedicated to meeting and representing the needs and interests of the urban Indigenous population”

<sup>4</sup> Graham uses the term “urban Aboriginal governance” and Tomiak uses both “urban Indigenous governance” and “urban Aboriginal governance”. For the purpose of this thesis, I use the term “urban Indigenous governance” because Indigenous is more inclusive, while Aboriginal is a term used by the Canadian government to mean First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, but is exclusive of Indigenous people who do not fit these categories.

(Graham, 1999, p. 376). By explicitly using 'governance' this term reflects the ways multiple state and non-state actors may engage in arrangements to "modify service delivery or provide political access for Indigenous people living in urban areas" (Graham, 1999, p. 376). Tomiak uses Graham's definitions in building her argument that urban Indigenous governance should achieve goals of transforming cities in ways that better implement inherent Indigenous rights. For Tomiak, social change is central to urban Indigenous governance because it asserts that municipal level actors can and should play a part in changing systems whereby Indigenous people in Canadian cities are unfairly marginalized. There is tension between urban Indigenous governance and status quo governance because the former seeks "ways in which [existing] processes, relationships, and structures can be transformed to better reflect the needs, rights, and aspirations of urban Indigenous communities" (Tomiak, 2009, p. 31). Tension between urban Indigenous governance and status quo governance will depend on the extent to which power dynamics between Canadian settler society and Indigenous communities are transformed.

Self-determination is the inherent right of Indigenous peoples to lead and make decisions about their own lives and communities. Scholars writing about Indigenous self-determination demonstrate different interpretations of this concept, providing evidence of a somewhat loose term in the literature. Interpretations seem to fall along a continuum of the degree to which Indigenous autonomy is asserted. As a general rule, the more that self-determination and Indigenous autonomy is asserted, the greater the conflict with the status quo.

Scholars who are the most 'radical' in their interpretations situate Indigenous self-determination as a fundamental right of Indigenous people as original inhabitants of Canada (Alfred, 2014; Coulthard, 2014). As Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred states, "We have the right to live by our own laws, to worship our own gods, and to carry out our culture in our homeland – that is what

Indigenous rights means” (Alfred, 2014). These are collective rights that derive from Indigenous peoples’ residence on these lands since time immemorial.

Those writing about urban Indigenous governance interpret self-determination as transformational by definition: “the inherent right of Indigenous peoples to govern their own affairs as original occupants through the *reformulation* of settler state-Indigenous society relations (Walker & Belanger, emphasis added, 2013, p. 198). Self-determination for these scholars is contested because it is interpreted as “sharply curtail[ing] the legitimacy and jurisdiction of the state while bolstering Indigenous jurisdiction over land, identity and political voice” (Maaka & Fleras, 2000, p. 92).

Interpretations of self-determination present in the literature that conflict less with the status quo include those who support self-determination from a practical rationale of achieving the best outcomes. For example, self-determination is also used to describe Indigenous people as decision makers in their own communities or applying Indigenous values to key services like the healthcare of Indigenous clients (Barwin et al., 2013; Minore & Katt, 2007). These scholars make strong arguments in support of Indigenous self-determination as best practice for the delivery of services for Indigenous communities. Mainstream actors may find these interpretations of self-determination more agreeable and even more easily understood. As Walker points, self-determination as a rights-based orientation to community aspiration “is still largely misunderstood in non-Indigenous society” (2008, p. 24).

In practice urban Indigenous governance is a “relatively unwieldy political arrangement” (Tomiak, 2009, p. 36) and in practice it is challenging to achieve the complexities that are required for its implementation. Questions surround which authorities would be involved in spelling out the steps towards implementing urban Indigenous governance. Furthermore, it is unclear what resources, processes, and populations would come under the purview of urban

Indigenous leadership. In her analysis of urban Indigenous governance in Winnipeg and Ottawa, Tomiak (2009) identifies three main challenges to urban Indigenous governance. First, the heterogeneity of the urban Indigenous population contributes to the lack of understanding of how urban Indigenous governance could work in practice. Much of the existing governance surrounding Indigenous identity originates from colonial lawmaking, which aimed to assimilate Indigenous people. Today Indigenous identity is viewed by the Canadian government as legitimate depending on the terms defined in the Indian Act. Urban Indigenous communities include Indigenous people who have Indian Status and others who don't according to the state. Status and non-status divisions have very real effects on the lives of Indigenous peoples (Lawrence, 2004). Status is directly related to self-government, which is "tightly circumscribed by state practices related to legal status, geographical location, and resourcing" (Tomiak, 2009, p. 37). Urban centres also include Indigenous people from a wide range of Indigenous groups. Therefore, Tomiak concludes, "the multi-national composition of urban Indigenous communities has made claiming collective Indigenous rights more challenging" (Tomiak, 2009, pp. 35-36).

Second, urban Indigenous communities have a "lack of land base" compared to reserve lands of First Nations (Tomiak, 2009, p. 37). In Vancouver, local First Nations do have reserve land bases contiguous with the city *and* have legal claims to lands within the city, but these are claims exclusive to those local first nations. It is challenging to conceive what resources and geography urban Indigenous governance policies would lay claim to for this heterogeneous population.

The third challenge is the jurisdictional 'hot potato' described in section 2.1 regarding urban Indigenous policy. The Federal government's jurisdiction includes relations with First Nations on reserve, but when considered off-reserve, the assumption is that Indigenous people are "ordinary citizens" – meaning

without Indigenous rights” (Tomiak, 2009, p. 37). This notion conflicts with many interpretations of inherent Indigenous rights and the normative stances of self-determination that seek to exercise these rights. Furthermore, provincial and municipal authorities “have generally been reluctant to assume responsibility for Indigenous-specific programming” because of the view that this is the jurisdiction of the federal government (Tomiak, 2009, p. 37). Overcoming these challenges to urban Indigenous governance is a major issue facing urban Indigenous communities that aim for greater self-determination. Addressing these challenges is part of what planning professionals face when working with urban Indigenous non-profits.

Urban Indigenous governance is very relevant to the work of urban Indigenous organizations, many of which, like Friendship Centres, focus on service delivery. These organizations are vital to the well-being of urban Indigenous communities and have a long acted as central hubs for community gathering and service delivery (Spence & White, 2013). Urban Indigenous organizations are growing in number playing an increasingly important role in cities in a growing number of policy sectors, including “economic development; child, youth, family, senior services; education; and justice; as well as cultural fields” (Peters & Andersen, 2013 p. 25). These organizations are characterized as “urban service institutions such as health care or education institutions, as well as advocacy organizations that represent urban Indigenous people in dealing with issues among themselves and in the broader urban context” (Graham, 1999, p. 376). Graham identifies the multiple roles that these organizations play stating that, “in the urban context, Indigenous service and advocacy organizations are frequently one and the same” (1999, p. 376).

These organizations play a very strong role in the urban Indigenous community in Vancouver. In 2011 the Environics Institute found that “seven in ten Aboriginal peoples ... [in Vancouver] use and rely at least occasionally on Aboriginal services and organizations in the city” (Environics Institute, 2011, p.

44). The study showed that support for these Indigenous organizations is widespread among Indigenous residents regardless of how much a respondent personally frequented the organization. In Vancouver these urban Indigenous organizations “are used primarily for specific services, but also for a sense of community and belonging” (Environics Institute, 2011, p. 44). These organizations are sites of Indigenous self-determination because Indigenous staff people run them and their programs focus on Indigenous service-delivery models, culturally specific programming and political events relevant to Indigenous community. There is a robust range of Indigenous-specific services offered by a substantial number of Indigenous organizations and non-Indigenous organizations in the Vancouver region. In a report prepared for the City of Vancouver Social Planning Department, Gray (2007) identifies 73 unique “Aboriginal specific organizations and ongoing initiatives” and 39 “mainstream organizations with Aboriginal initiatives and programs” (pp. 86-96). All of these organizations list addresses or local contact information in the metro Vancouver region. The range of Indigenous initiatives and services is extremely diverse ranging from radio shows about Indigenous community issues, to drop-in support centres, to youth-led groups, to government offices, to health services. These organizations are dynamic places that play a strong role in the urban Indigenous community.

Recently, the Federal Court established, in the 2002 ruling of *Canada v. Misquadis*, that Aboriginal political organizations could represent urban Aboriginal interests (Belanger, 2013). In doing so, Belanger states, “the court defined off-reserve Aboriginal people as a group of self-organized, self-determining and distinct communities, analogous to a reserve community” (Belanger, 2013, p. 69). These decisions indicate a need to understand Indigenous rights in ways that expand understanding of self-government as limited to Band Councils on reserve lands. The title of Belanger’s chapter, “breaching reserve boundaries”, indicates how the court found the government

was discriminating against urban Aboriginal people by not recognizing their rights in equal ways to those living on reserve.

Scholars have identified that these organizations are the closest approximation of Indigenous self-government in cities (Peters, 2005; Quart & The Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre, 2013). Paradoxically, while these organizations have grown over time in size and complexity, they demonstrate both an increasing independence from government management and an ongoing dependence upon government funding priorities (Peters, 2005). This means organizations face major constraints that limit their ability to take urban Indigenous governance beyond the Indigenous leadership the programs and services they provide. Understanding these challenges helps to explain why implementing urban Indigenous governance is often contained to an interpretation of self-determination that is less contested.

Status quo municipal governance presents a unique set of challenges for urban Indigenous non-profit organizations. Since the 1970's cities in Canada have displayed shifts away from traditional government toward neo-liberal urban governance. A greater reliance on public-private partnerships in municipal service provision in recent decades may "open up space for greater Indigenous community involvement" (Tomiak, 2009, p. 35). However, a reduction in fiduciary and social service responsibilities of the state has seriously constrained the ability of non-profits to succeed in providing quality services (Tomiak, 2009).

Walker is critical of how contemporary status quo governance does not provide sufficient funding for Indigenous non-profit organizations (Walker, 2006). In part this criticism is because non-Indigenous policy makers control the limited funding available to Indigenous non-profits. By maintaining control of limited funding sources, federal and provincial governments "[create] policy/programme parameters and centrally designed accountability frameworks [whereby] the state maintains its ability to guide and reward collective organization at the local level

at its discretion” (Walker, 2006, p. 190). Urban Indigenous governance, although contested, should provide real opportunities for the greater self-determination of Indigenous organizations, individuals and communities. To date, urban governance has “not provided urban Indigenous community organizations with a meaningful degree of decision-making power, autonomy, and resources” (Tomiak, 2009, p. 35). Municipal actors, especially planners, should engage with this challenge by furthering urban Indigenous governance. Although there are varying interpretations of self-determination, which conflict more or less with status quo municipal governance, there is a demonstrated need to recognize and act upon Indigenous rights in the city. Figuring out how non-Indigenous planners can work towards self-determination is necessary for affecting this change in municipal governance. In the next section, I address this area of planning practice.

### **2.3. Defining transformative planning practice**

In the remainder of this chapter, I review literature about transformative planning practice. I highlight scholarship about the transformative planning work of non-Indigenous planning professionals vis-à-vis Indigenous communities. Many scholars writing about planning practice and Indigenous communities explicitly recommend planners do transformative planning (Sandercock, 2015; Walker, 2008; Tomiak, 2009; Lane & Hibbard, 2005; Walker & Belanger, 2013; Ugarte, 2014). Friedmann (1987) first began to describe transformative planning as practice whereby planning theory and planning practice inform each other in practitioners’ ongoing work. Scholars have since used Friedmann’s concept to analyze examples of planning with Indigenous political actors seeking greater self-determination (Lane & Hibbard, 2005).

Transformative planning with Indigenous communities is defined as “identifying and implementing strategies that transform structures of Indigenous

political, social, cultural, and economic oppression” (Walker & Belanger, 2013, p. 201). This is planning that prioritizes the dismantling of structural inequalities facing Indigenous peoples. Scholars writing about transformative planning practice identify that planning has the potential to transform systems of governance to better meet the needs and aspirations of urban Indigenous communities. As such, transformative planning is a “means to transform the institutional bases of indigenous subordination in postsettler states” (Lane & Hibbard, 2005, p. 182). Similar to urban Indigenous governance, transformation that conflicts with and challenges the status quo is central to transformative planning practice. Also like aims of urban Indigenous governance, a primary goal of transformative planning practice is realizing greater self-determination by “augment[ing] the ability of Indigenous urban communities to actualize aspirations based on their own assessment of needs and preferences” (Walker & Belanger, 2013, p. 201). Scholars call on planners to assume professional roles as change agents to aid these processes of transformation.

According to Sandercock, transformative planning practice aims to “shift towards more equitable, social and political relations between Native and non-Native residents” (Sandercock, 2015, p. 391). Transformative planning practice is work that mediates transformation in this interface that can further urban Indigenous governance. Recognizing and acting at key moments, non-Indigenous planners can mediate in this interface with the purpose of helping Indigenous communities access tangible benefits of greater recognition of their inherent rights. According to Porter, transformative planning is useful to Indigenous communities when practitioners act at “strategic moments of opportunity that can result in recognition of Indigenous rights and responsibilities and the material privileges that should ultimately flow.” (Porter, 2004, p. 109)

There is a growing body of work about Indigenous planning by Indigenous scholars (Jojola, 2013) and growing recognition that Indigenous epistemology should be valued in research methods (Wilson, 2008), and planning practice

(Sandercock, 2004). The work of Indigenous professionals – including planners – needs to be made more visible. Still, a central focus of transformative planning practice literature is about non-Indigenous planners. It is unlikely that in the near future Indigenous professionals will obtain sufficient authority and recognition in municipal governance to further urban Indigenous governance alone. Scholars understand that the current “rules of the game” are set and maintained by non-Indigenous actors and the ‘settler state’ within which Indigenous organizations exist (Sandercock, 2004, p. 121). Sandercock argues that while these status quo structures need “radical revision”, the role of transformative planning practice is to help “Indigenous organizations to operate within state-based systems and to find strategic moments of opportunity that result in the recognition of Indigenous rights” (Sandercock, 2004, p. 121). Therefore, given the close relationship between planning and colonization outlined in Chapter 2.1, how can the planning profession transform governance to work for Indigenous peoples? Furthermore, how can mainly White professionals play a positive role in self-determination?

There are two main streams of thought in the literature on transformative planning practice that provide insights on how to answer these questions. The first is about what local governments can do to conduct planning in ways that work for urban Indigenous communities. This first literature mainly addresses the practices of municipal planning departments as a whole. The second is about lessons non-Indigenous planners have learned by working with Indigenous communities. This second literature addresses face-to-face practices of individual planners. Underlying both of these literatures is a concern for addressing the power imbalance inherent when non-Indigenous planning professionals work with Indigenous communities. I review each in turn before identifying a gap in the literature about grassroots planning with urban Indigenous non-profits.

The first literature of transformative planning practice is about how municipal governments can and should improve their relationships with urban

Indigenous communities and local First Nations. Walker demonstrates cities sit at an “interface” vis-à-vis Indigenous communities (2008). In his 2008 study, Walker worked with a team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous urban professionals and academics to identify “five priority areas for improvement in practice by municipal planners and officials in departments such as community services, urban design and economic development” (p. 21). They formulated a multifaceted approach to changing how a local government works with local Indigenous groups. They identified five areas of work: “1) citizen participation and engagement; 2) governance interface-municipal and Indigenous; 3) Indigenous culture as municipal asset; 4) economic and social development; and 5) urban reserves, service agreements and regional relationships” (Walker, 2008). Walker is careful to show how such endeavours of transformative planning will fail without providing Indigenous people access to real power and authority in the urban context. Walker is explicit in arguing that Indigenous people and cultures are valuable assets to a city. Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, Walker argues, stand to benefit from changes in these five areas.

Walker’s insights are real actions that cities and city planners should be taking. In subsequent co-authored publications, (Walker & Belanger, 2013; Walker & Matunga, 2013) and (Walker, 2013), Walker and his collaborators describe further planning practices to improve cities for and with Indigenous residents. For example, co-production is a type of community consultation approach whereby an Indigenous community shares relatively high levels of authority with the government planning office (Walker, 2013). Another practice enhancing the ‘Aboriginality’ of urban cultural identity, these authors suggest, will improve civic processes and policy-making (Walker & Belanger, 2013). An example within urban design is to visually represent Indigenous peoples and cultures in the built form of a city (Walker & Matunga, 2013). Like nation-to-nation relations at a federal level, municipal governments should make official accords and commit to protocol agreements with both urban Indigenous representatives

and First Nations (Walker & Belanger, 2013). These authors take self-determination seriously and emphasize the importance of “the partnership between state actors and community-based actors” (Walker, 2013, p. 152). Accountability to Indigenous stakeholders aims to ensure these planning practices are not tokenizing Indigenous involvement. Planners should ensure “mechanisms exist for recognizing and implementing self-determination” (Walker & Belanger, 2013, p. 200). If planners are focused on scaling up Indigenous rights - and they work closely with Indigenous communities to co-produce these actions - then working from this top-down position may be very effective.

Looking to planners in positions of power to improve municipal governance may help better align it with the aspirations of Indigenous residents. However, because this literature focuses on the changes to be made from within city hall, it focuses on actors who are positioned within the status quo and at a relatively far social distance from urban Indigenous communities. As demonstrated in Chapter 2.2, the extent to which planners are willing to work towards urban Indigenous governance is related to the extent they are willing to conflict with the status quo. Therefore, it is important to look at planning practices at a grassroots level located closer to urban Indigenous organizations.

A second area within the literature on transformative planning practice is about face-to-face transformative planning between non-Indigenous planners and Indigenous communities. This literature describes an individual, personal level of practice. This scholarship suggests a need for a more radical reckoning on the part of non-Indigenous planners with Indigenous rights and self-determination. Porter (2004), for example, critiques the idea that making Western planning practices more inclusive of Indigenous peoples can overcome its tradition of excluding Indigenous people. The barriers facing Indigenous communities do not stem from a lack of consultation in mainstream planning process, Porter argues, they stem from a lack of rights. As she states, “no amount of inclusive, radical or democratic planning practice will shift the effects

of (post)colonial structures and relations of power on Indigenous nations without a fundamental recognition of rights” (Porter, 2004, p. 105). Porter suggests transformative planning with Indigenous communities requires planners question their own assumptions about the efficacy of planning itself. By doing so planners may be able to more fundamentally shift the systems they are working within.

Porter suggests that in order to achieve this level of transformation, non-Indigenous communities planners must begin by transforming themselves and adopt an extremely self-reflective praxis. Porter describes this planning practice in terms “unlearning one’s privilege” (Porter, 2004). This entails an extremely critical reflection of why certain practices and knowledges are privileged. This scrutiny results in planners “changing our own attitudes and values, or at least critically reflecting on how they operate in our own daily practices” (Porter, 2004, p. 109). When working cross-culturally, and especially when working from a position of cultural privilege, this approach to planning practice is crucial. By engaging in this deep reflection, planners can adopt “an attitude of genuine humility, a genuine acceptance that we do not have answers and that sometimes we might be a part of the problem” (Porter, 2004, p. 105). This literature prompts planners to question the assumptions they make in their approaches to their work in order to craft a planning practice that truly serves the community.

Porter is careful to point out that the concept ‘unlearning one’s privilege’ is not about wholesale rejection of Western planning and epistemologies. Non-Indigenous planners should not “succumb to a deeply held white desire to ‘Indiginize’” (Porter, 2004, p. 105). Neither, Porter argues, should transformative planning practice seek the “impossibility of a ‘return’ to pre-colonial existence” (Porter, 2013, p. 291). To do so would wrongly ignore the state of contemporary Indigenous-settler relations and the “reality of life for Indigenous communities” (Porter, 2004, p. 106). Instead, non-Indigenous planners need to personally work through unexamined biases, deeply question the inequalities they encounter, and bring their reflections forward into their practice. And although

this individual level is key to working with Indigenous communities, it still “is simply not sufficient to achieve wider structural social change, or ideals of social justice” (Porter, 2004, p. 105). Many other actors, processes, and relationships need to be changed in order to ultimately result in greater material and immaterial benefits for Indigenous people in Canada.

Unlike the first area of literature about transformative planning practice, which focuses on planning practices of municipal planning departments, the unit of analysis in this area is the planning practices of individual planners. This focus enables this literature to delve into the approaches that planners need to engage in real face-to-face activities that take place between non-Indigenous planners and Indigenous communities. Both units of analysis provide useful insights because there are multiple levels of transformation necessary for social change.

This second area of scholarship is often illustrated by case studies from the point of view of a planner working for an Indigenous community rather than a planner working for a municipal government. Because these planners are working under the directive of Indigenous community leaders, their perspectives may be positioned at a close social distance from the Indigenous community they are working for. If transformative planning practice aims to implement greater self-determination for Indigenous communities and peoples, this unit of analysis is significant to ensure this work is credible and realistic for the grassroots level.

Although not exclusively, the case studies presented in this second area of literature are often non-Indigenous planners working with First Nations with their own reserve land base. In a majority of these cases the planners are working with these groups on land-based planning work. These planning scenarios focus on natural resources like parks and forestry management planning (Porter, 2013). The Indigenous communities in these case studies are homogeneous in the sense the individuals who belong to this community belong to the same Indigenous nation. Furthermore, members of the nation, although

they likely hold disparate views on the land use decisions, all have a similar claim to a common set of physical resources.

These planning contexts can provide important but limited insights for working among Indigenous people in cities. Porter makes the observation that over the last few decades there have been significant shifts in the non-urban areas of planning practice like “natural resource management, environmental, and protected area planning” (2013, p. 283). In those areas, Porter observes a widespread shift toward a greater onus to consult with Indigenous stakeholders. However, for urban planning, Porter finds there is no corresponding “shift to recognition for Indigenous people who live in cities, and for Indigenous people whose traditional territory is now urban” (2013, p. 284). As demonstrated in Chapter 2.1, urban Indigenous communities represent people from many Indigenous nations. These are communities without a defined, state-recognized, common land base to which they may exercise rights-based claims. This presents complicated considerations that are specific to urban Indigenous communities when engaging in planning about Indigenous rights.

Ugarte (2014) argues that these two streams in the literature see the transformative potential of planning practice differently. The first stream is focused on how structures and systems need to be transformed for institutional recognition of Indigenous rights. The second stream sees individual planners as agents for change. Both areas of transformation are important, according to Ugarte, who argues that the challenge is linking these two levels of change. The first stream views recognition of Indigenous rights within a broader context where “planning, and in particular planners as individuals, seem more constrained in their ability to generate structural transformation on their own” (Ugarte, 2014, p. 411). The second stream adopts an “ethics-based” point of view that perceives the potential transformative power of planning as in the practice of individual planners (Ugarte, 2014, p. 410).

The recognition in the literature that the urban context of Indigenous rights to self-determination involves challenging questions for planners. Sandercock recently posed this question, “what forms of planning governance might now be necessary and appropriate to fully and justly recognize ‘the persistent footprint’ of Indigeneity in settler cities” (Sandercock, 2015, p. 391). This study responds to this question by investigating planning practice of professionals in Vancouver working in an interface with urban Indigenous non-profits. I interviewed planners who are working with Indigenous organizations in Vancouver about their planning practices vis-à-vis urban Indigenous governance.

As literature in Chapter 2.2 demonstrated, urban Indigenous non-profits are key hubs for urban Indigenous communities in Vancouver. There is a gap when it comes to understanding planning at the grassroots level of urban Indigenous non-profits. This gap is significant because these organizations have long played a role as community hubs for urban Indigenous families and individuals. Transformative planning practice from within City Hall needs to be complimented with on-the-ground planning that furthers the self-determination goals of these non-profits. Planners who are selected by leaders of these organizations as working towards their goals of self-determination may provide insights about planning and forms of governance that so far remain largely unanswered in the literature.

## Chapter 3.

### **Research Design & Methodology**

In this chapter I outline the research design and methodology for this study. I give an overview of data gathering, sampling and analysis methods, and provide background information on the interviewees. To reiterate, this study investigates two main questions. First, what are the transformative planning practices of non-Indigenous planners who have been deemed effective by the Indigenous people they work with? I ask this question to understand how non-Indigenous planning professionals may support the goals of organizations that focus on serving the urban Indigenous community. Second, how do these practices connect to designing urban Indigenous governance with the purpose of incorporating and expressing Indigenous rights in urban contexts? I ask this second question because there is growing debate in the literature and among Indigenous activists about how to express the rights of Indigenous people living in cities.

#### **3.1 Sampling & Analysis Methods**

To answer these questions I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine key informants. The interviewees fall into two groups: Indigenous leaders of Indigenous non-profit organizations located in Vancouver (Group A), and non-Indigenous planning professionals (Group B) who were selected based on the recommendation of Group A as being effective in furthering their organizations' goals. I designed the study so that the Indigenous leaders of the organization directed the referral process. This was critical in order to avoid sampling

respondents who believed their practice was effective but in truth, was not effective according to Indigenous community leaders. To do so, I first interviewed the Indigenous leaders and asked them some questions about their career and their work with their current organization. This first round of interviews established their credentials as leaders of urban Indigenous non-profits. Then I asked them about what non-Indigenous professionals had been especially useful to the mission of their organization and to elaborate on exactly why they had been useful. Those individuals referred by Group A became my Group B interviewees.

I identified the Group A interviewees through preliminary data gathering that I conducted in 2013 and 2014. In 2013 I completed a student practicum position as part of a graduate course with an Indigenous organization in Vancouver. As a student volunteer I observed professional partnerships between Indigenous leaders of the organization and non-Indigenous planning professionals. Throughout the semester I became familiar with other urban Indigenous organizations and met some of the leaders of these organizations. As described in Chapter 2.2, these organizations provide a range of services in areas like health care, employment and training, cultural services, as well as act as community gathering hubs for the urban Indigenous community.

In August 2014 I met with the Executive Director of the organization I had completed the student practicum with to informally test whether the goals of this research project would be relevant to the work of that organization and to this person's experiences as a professional. I wanted to find out if there were non-Indigenous professionals who had made significant positive impacts on the organization. This initial informal discussion confirmed that this study would be possible and relevant to the experiences of the leader of this organization. The Executive Director informally agreed to participate in the study and to refer me to those suitable as Group B interviewees.

This initial discussion also led me to expand my investigation to include a range of non-Indigenous urban professionals that do planning work, not only those working as planners for the municipal government. This person told me that some planners working for the City of Vancouver had played a significant role in achieving the goals of their organization. However, other people doing planning work but not working for the government had also been effective. This conversation led me to consider that there was a range of people engaged in planning practices that were seen as beneficial to the organization. In designing the research methods to include interviews with Indigenous leaders from urban Indigenous organizations, I was able to ensure that I had a thorough understanding of the organizations, how and why non-Indigenous professionals were seen as acting to the benefit of the organizations.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with both Group A participants and subsequently with Group B participants. I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews to allow interviewee reflection, ongoing explanation and in-the-moment opportunity for clarification. I approached interviewees for an interview and presented them with a consent form outlining the research goals and questions. Two copies of the consent form were signed so that all participants had one for their reference. I conducted seven in-person interviews and two phone interviews. I obtained consent from all interviewees to audio record the interviews. I transcribed all the audio recordings. The interviews lasted an average of one hour.

I analyzed transcript data using inductive analysis methods based in grounded theory. Grounded theory is a systematic, but flexible, theory of construction where “data analysis and data collection inform and shape each other and are conducted in tandem” (Charmaz & Bryant, 2008, p. 375). Using this method I coded the transcripts with memos emerging from the data. I chose this type of analysis because it is especially appropriate for the study of social processes and social change (Telleria, 1998). These analysis methods

encourage the discovery of explanations to why and how groups are involved in changing their social world. Discovering which meanings converge or diverge between the Group A and Group B was especially useful in answering my research questions.

### **3.2 Profile of Group A Interviewees**

All four Group A interviewees are Indigenous professionals leading Indigenous non-profit organizations in Vancouver. All four have significant experience in this sector both as staff personnel and in leadership positions as the president of the board of directors of at least one Indigenous organization. Serving as a board member is a role that is usually a non-remunerated. All four interviewees also held remunerated work positions in the urban Indigenous service delivery sector at the time of the interviews. In their remunerated roles, two of the four people work in organizations heavily focused on health promotion. The other two work in “wrap-around” service organizations, meaning they provide a wide range of services including social and cultural programs, training development opportunities, health promotion, and volunteerism, to name a few. Their interviews provide perspectives of administration and front-line service-delivery roles both in urban Indigenous non-profits and in Indigenous service-delivery departments within non-Indigenous organizations. Two interviewees are women and two are men.

One interviewee is a senior manager of a larger Indigenous non-profit in Vancouver. This person has run for municipal elected office in the Metro Vancouver region. This interviewee has held previous positions within federal government and served on multiple advisory boards in the Metro Vancouver region.

The second interviewee works in a position dedicated to serving Indigenous people in Vancouver as a mental health worker with the local health authority, which is not an urban Indigenous non-profit, but an arm of the provincial government. This interviewee has over 15 years of experience serving as a board member of an Indigenous non-profit including in the role of president. This interviewee continues to play an active role as a board member.

The third interviewee works as an Indigenous community development coordinator, working with Indigenous youth and families through non-Indigenous non-profit organizations. This interviewee has acted for over five years in a leadership of an Indigenous organization focused on building positive relationships between police and Indigenous community members.

The fourth interviewee is the senior manager of a larger Indigenous non-profit in Vancouver. This interviewee brings past experience working in government positions. This interviewee has served on numerous advisory boards in Metro Vancouver region.

All of these interviewees are Indigenous, but none of the interviewees is local Coast Salish First Nations. Therefore it should be noted that these interviewees, although Indigenous, are all 'visitors' to the Coast Salish Territories where Vancouver is located. In the context of this study about urban Indigenous governance, it is important to note that there is a distinction between Coast Salish people and Indigenous people from elsewhere in Canada because claims to local land and resources currently being made by some Coast Salish groups is based on hereditary use of these resources. While all Indigenous people have inherent rights, the way these rights have traditionally been recognized by the Canadian government has largely been tied to 'Indian Status', membership to a First Nation band, and the geographic area the government recognizes as a reserve. Indigenous rights that are not land-based, and therefore not geographically specific, are most relevant to urban Indigenous communities. A

full exploration of the implications of how the perspectives of these interviewees are related to their identity as Indigenous but not as local Coast Salish is beyond the scope of this study. Still, this distinction is important in terms of exploring the experiences of urban Indigenous people living off reserve, especially their complex identities and relative powerlessness (in terms of Indian Status), which is the focus of this study. It appeared to me throughout this research project based on information from the literature, from observation and from these interviews, that the leaders of local Coast Salish First Nations are focused on decision-making on their reserves, not Indigenous people living in Vancouver. On the other hand, the urban Indigenous community is the focus of the work of this study's interviewees.

### **3.1. Profile of Group B Interviewees**

Group B interviewees are five non-Indigenous professionals with significant work experience with urban Indigenous organizations. Referrals from Group A resulted in the referral of two people who have worked as planners for a local municipality. The three other interviewees are consultants and urban professionals who have worked in a range of planning capacities including governance, consultation, strategic planning, advocacy, and liaising work with government. Their professional practice involves significant planning capacities although not all would be described as “planners” in terms of a professional classification that is accredited by a formal professional association or certified by formal training.

One interviewee's work involves helping urban Indigenous organizations to develop governance strategies. His professional practice over the last 26 years has included significant “organizational consulting ...with a number of [Vancouver] urban Indigenous organizations around governance and strategic planning”. A core part of this work involves working with leaders of an

organization in developing “standard elements of good governance” including board development, creating appropriate checks and balances within the organization and ensuring appropriate oversight and accountability of the organization. Prior to working as a consultant, this interviewee worked in senior positions in health care crown corporations and in provincial government in eastern and Prairie Provinces. It was during that time that he began to work with Indigenous organizations in a role that directed funding to programs on First Nations and serving on related boards of directors that were both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

A second interviewee’s work involves strategic planning and board development with numerous urban Indigenous organizations, and consultation work facilitating provincial government’s engagement with both urban and rural Indigenous communities. In these roles the interviewee facilitates consultations, engages with groups to solicit feedback, and develops medium and long-term plans and directives. This interviewee has been working with Indigenous groups for twenty-five years.

A third interviewee worked as a planner for a local municipality, as a planning consultant in the non-profit sector including significant planning with First Nations an urban Indigenous groups, and as a planning educator.

A fourth is a physician who has retired from full time medical practice but continues to work part time at medical clinics where the many of the patients are Indigenous. This interviewee worked within municipal government as a medical health officer in a local municipality.

A fifth interviewee previously worked as a planner in Metro Vancouver who currently holds a senior management position with the City of Vancouver. In analysing the transcripts, it became clear that this interviewee is an outlier among the five Group B interviewees. This interviewee was the only person currently

working as a municipal employee. Perhaps as a result, many of her comments seem to be expressing official views of the practices of the City as a whole, rather than her own personal, individual practice. I interviewed this person at her office in City Hall, which also might also have led the tone of the interview to be more formal and more representative of her employer's opinions than if the interview had taken place elsewhere.

The findings from these Group B interviewees answer the two research questions of this study: First, what are the planning practices of these non-Indigenous planners that make them effective according to the Indigenous people they work with? Second, how do these practices connect to designing urban Indigenous governance with the purpose of incorporating and expressing Indigenous rights in cities? The findings for the first question are presented in Chapter 5. Findings for the second question are presented in Chapter 6. Findings from Group A interviewees, which provide context and referral method for Group B are presented below in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4.

### **Group A Findings: Perspectives of urban Indigenous organizations**

In this chapter I present findings from interviews with four Indigenous professionals working in leadership positions with Indigenous organizations in Vancouver. These findings fall into three main categories. One, interviewees described their organizations and how they achieve their goals of benefitting the urban Indigenous communities in Vancouver. Self-determination was the most important aspect of the organizations' work according to the interviewees. Two, interviewees described challenges their organizations experience in the interface with mainstream municipal governance in terms of bureaucracy, funding relationships, and scepticism that status quo actors are likely take action to support their organizations. Interviewees also highlighted some positive changes they have observed over time in municipal policy in Vancouver vis-à-vis urban Indigenous organizations. Three, interviewees described what has made some non-Indigenous planners effective in working towards the goals of their organizations and referred me to potential interviewees for Group B interviews.

Together these findings provide insights into both the achievements of these organizations and the challenges they face in providing services to the urban Indigenous population in Vancouver. These findings are relevant to questions about the role of non-Indigenous planning professionals working with urban Indigenous organizations because these leaders are the number one gatekeepers to working with their organizations. Furthermore, in regards to questions about governance and the future of urban Indigenous rights in cities,

understanding the perspectives of the Indigenous leaders of these organizations is crucial because they would be poised to act as key stakeholders in such conversations. Interviewees' explanations of why they referred certain non-Indigenous professionals provide an understanding of how these individuals work with organizations that prioritize self-determination.

#### **4.1. “Filling the Gaps”: Urban Indigenous non-profit organizations in Vancouver**

Group A interviewees described the unique benefits their organizations provide for the urban Indigenous population of Vancouver. Interviewees highlighted several aspects of their organizations including: Indigenous-specific programming, good organizational governance, Indigenous staff people, and a long-term commitment to maintain services despite limited and sometimes erratic funding. In each of these areas, interviewees identified self-determination as central to how these accomplishments were achieved and why they provided unique benefits to the urban Indigenous community. Interviewees illustrated each of these organizational aspects using examples from their work.

Interviewees told me that the most important and distinct aspect of their organizations is the Indigenous-specific programming they offer. Designing programs and services around Indigenous cultures is a huge asset from the perspective of these interviewees. One interviewee stated that Indigenous organizations in Vancouver provide a range of services and “in those areas we have identified the need of delivering culturally appropriate services”. This range of services includes those touching on “housing, health, children and families, culture and language, education, employment and training, and justice”. Providing culturally appropriate services for Indigenous communities means Indigenous culture and self-determination are present in how the program is

conceived at a conceptual level and at a practical level when Indigenous personnel deliver the programming.

Interviewees described an uphill battle in advocating for Indigenous-specific programming to mainstream decision-makers. Because self-determination involves independence from mainstream decision-makers, these interviewees explained they often experience resistance from these decision-makers when implementing autonomously made decisions, even though this independence is what makes these programs effective. To these interviewees, this independence allows organizations to be more connected at the grassroots level to the urban Indigenous community. One interviewee described the benefits of self-determination in the bottom-up planning of services compared to top-down decision-making this way:

I think we always have to be listening to our [Indigenous] people, the people we are serving. It [should not be] from top-down, from Vancouver Coastal Health [Authority] or from federal government or any kind of organization dictating to us ... how we should be providing services for the people we are serving. I think it should be the other way around. I think it should be the [Indigenous] community that should be telling us what kind of services we should be providing for them.

This interviewee used the example of incorporating Indigenous spirituality into mental health services to describe the distinctness of culturally relevant services and the challenges these organizations may face in advocating for such services. Explaining the challenge in advocating for more healthcare services that are centered on Indigenous culture, the interviewee asked, “Who’s to say that we can’t have spiritual content in our delivery of services just because we believe in them and non-Natives don’t believe in it?” The interviewee explained how urban Indigenous organizations are the best suited to work with grassroots experts in the community. The interviewee said, “we have spiritual leaders that we pay to work for our clients, [and]... our Native people appreciate that and want that kind of service.” However, this interviewee explained how such services might be

overlooked or delegitimized by mainstream decision-makers who “don’t give First Nations spiritual content merit”. When health authorities devalue Indigenous-centred health programs the staff of these organizations are in the position of advocating for their ongoing availability. These findings indicate that it is crucial for non-Indigenous planning professionals who aim to be effective in working with Indigenous organizations to understand the value of Indigenous-specific programming. Joining the leadership of these organizations in advocating for these services, it seems, would be seen as a beneficial way non-Indigenous planners could support these urban Indigenous organizations.

Indigenous leadership at the executive level of these organizations was mentioned as a key feature. According to one interviewee the success of many urban Indigenous organizations is due to solid organizational governance with Indigenous leaders at the helm. An Indigenous board of directors ensures “the discussion and the knowledge and expertise that’s at that board level comes from people who have lived experience, who are part of the community, who are actually living in the world that they’re discussing”. Self-determination in the leadership of these organizations strengthens the decision-making abilities of the organization. Furthermore, the interviewee explained, the Indigenous leaders who are serving on the boards of these organizations, bring a range of professional backgrounds and personal lived experience. Board members have professional positions in government, education, banking, “as well as having a mix of members at large within the community who know, through experience what the needs are”.

Interviewees described the importance of Indigenous people in leadership positions both on the boards of directors and as frontline staff. One interviewee described how, “as Indigenous people, we best know what our folks need and we have some capabilities of making decisions on behalf of those people as well as making decisions about what might be best for some of them”. For example, as one interviewee described, “because I’m First Nations myself I feel like I can

contribute best to the Indigenous community; I know the community, I know the subculture, I know the spiritual content, I know the language barriers, I know the social barriers that revolve around the First Nation person in the urban setting.” Another interviewee described how traditional governance of Indigenous societies guides the governance of Indigenous organizations. A range of elements including “very strict cultural laws to guide our behaviour, our community behaviour, our actions, where we put our energy, where we put our values” is present in the governance of Indigenous non-profits.

Another reason interviewees see their organizations as uniquely valuable to the urban Indigenous population is because they prioritize maintaining services during times of funding cuts. Driven by their Indigenous-specific mission and vision, these organizations ‘fill the gaps’ at times when governments reduce services to urban Indigenous population. Interviewees described their commitment to maintaining services even during times when government funding erratically begins and ends with little consultation with the communities due to changing political priorities. One interviewee stated:

I think the biggest role that [urban Indigenous non-profits] play is filling the gaps with the off-loading that happens when provincial governments stop services, stop programs, [meaning] they are no longer in place. Federal governments [make budget cuts and the results are] the same. When they have big changeovers, and programming is no longer available, it's always the urban Indigenous non-profits that pick up slack and provide those extra services within their organizations.

For example, in February 2014 the Harper Government made a “massive overhaul” to funding for Indigenous Friendship Centres causing many programs to struggle to keep their doors open after April 1, 2014 (Wohlberg, 2014). These unexpected funding changes caused the British Columbia Association of Indigenous Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) to release a statement calling the cuts “a crises” in their communities (Morgan, 2014). The press release stated the previous funding contracts with the federal government for certain programs had

been in place for 40 years and the Centres had received insufficient notice of the changes (Morgan, 2014). Group A interviewees stressed how their organizations do their best to maintain programs and services to Indigenous families and individuals in times when there otherwise would be an “interruption of service” (Wohlberg, 2014). The interviewees described this commitment as a unique asset of these organizations compared to mainstream organizations or funding sources. An interviewee explained the ability of organizations to fill these gaps with fewer resources “stretches our capacity to the limit”. Scholars have identified that more general offloading of services through a reduction in government responsibility has created strains on a systemic level for these organizations. As scholars have pointed out (Walker, 2006), the roll back of state services without transferring resources for Indigenous organizations to take on these responsibilities is a huge stressor for these organizations’ capacities. As these Group A interviewees indicated, this results in harm to the families and communities who rely on these services. Furthermore, when governments maintain control over funding criteria during times of transition, this represents a lost opportunity for Indigenous communities to decide how best to allocate their own resources (Walker, 2006).

Despite their best efforts organizations are not always able to withstand drastic funding cuts to programs. One interviewee described how the 2014 sudden reduction in federal funding for Indigenous youth programming in Vancouver affected over fourteen different programs in the Vancouver region. Although many of these youth programs were longstanding and “deeply rooted” in the community, when funding was eliminated “they all had to shut their doors”. The interviewee described the severe effects of this sudden loss of funding negatively impacted the community. She said the program closures were “shocking and upsetting to a lot of people [including] a lot of youth ... [who] were very confused and frustrated [because] they basically had to stay on the street.”

This claim is substantiated by news reports (Wohlberg, 2014) and the BCAAFC, which described the effects of the 2014 federal funding cuts this way:

With ... funding for high risk Indigenous youth also being eliminated, we will see a further rise in the number of Indigenous children taken into foster care, higher rates of suicide, increased levels of child hunger, and increased suffering of our young people. (Morgan, 2014)

This example indicates how, at times, government and urban Indigenous organizations work at cross-purposes. The lack of adequate notice of the funding cuts reveals an absence of consultation and a failure of the government to involve urban Indigenous organizations in the decision-making that affects them. These Group A interviewees described how their organizations are valuable to the community because of the Indigenous-centred services including Indigenous service providers and organizational leaders. In times of scarce funding, these organizations attempt to provide a continuity of services and advocate for funding to be reinstated. These findings seem to indicate that professionals from outside urban Indigenous organizations may be especially useful to these organizations by helping to navigate challenges that threaten the viability of Indigenous-specific services in cities. Non-Indigenous planning professionals who aim to work with these organizations may be most effective if they are able to understand why these organizations are valuable, recognize the nature of the challenges they face, and endeavour to support their goals of providing Indigenous-specific programming.

## **4.2. Urban Indigenous governance**

Group A interviewees described a desire to increase Indigenous autonomy and rights in cities but pointed out several challenges to implementing urban Indigenous governance. These challenges included the bureaucracy involved in implementing new policies, and the fact that the municipal level has not traditionally had jurisdiction over Indigenous self-government policy.

Interviewees also described the urban Indigenous organizations they work for as the closest approximation to implementing the self-government rights of Indigenous people living in cities. Interviewees identified the Metro Vancouver Indigenous Executive Council (MVAEC), which includes representatives from Indigenous organizations in the region, as an example of regional urban Indigenous governance. Despite working at cross-purposes at times with mainstream government, interviewees said they had observed recent positive shifts in the relations between local government and urban Indigenous organizations. Interviewees described their responses using examples from their work.

When asked about urban Indigenous governance, interviewees responded favourably to the idea of greater Indigenous rights in the city. However, interviewees identified challenges because municipal policymaking has not traditionally been involved in Indigenous rights. One interviewee explained, “we [Indigenous organizations] would like more say in what we do for [Indigenous] people but we don't want to just add more bureaucracy”. This interviewee suggested that focusing on ways to support greater self-determination, not self-government, would make most sense in the municipal context. Because provincial authorities ultimately regulate Canadian municipalities, it is challenging to consider urban policy that would supersede the provincial level. The interviewee explained that because “municipal laws and the ability to make municipal laws [generally] are devolved down from provincial government, it would be hard to draw a parallel [to self-government at federal level]”. Unlike negotiating First Nations self-government rights at the federal level, there is very little precedent for negotiating municipal policies that support self-government rights.

Interviewees presented two suggestions about existing models of urban Indigenous governance. The first example is urban Indigenous organizations themselves. As one interviewee said, perhaps “organizations that are community

based that are empowered to make decisions about programs and services” may be the best existing models of recognizing the rights for urban Indigenous communities. Another interviewee stated, “Well I think, in a sense, it’s really all we got”, referring to urban Indigenous organizations. These responses support perspectives in academic scholarship that also identify these organizations may be the best existing vehicles for urban Indigenous governance (Peters, 2005; Quart & The Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre, 2013). These responses also provide further reason for future research to continue to investigate these organizations. Because of the challenges around urban Indigenous governance, urban Indigenous organizations may be on of the closest existing models to greater rights, autonomy, and resources of Indigenous people in cities.

The second model interviewees provided of urban Indigenous governance is the Metro Vancouver Indigenous Executive Council (MVAEC), which is a regional council made up of representatives from 24 urban Indigenous organizations. Two of the four interviewees are currently employed at organizations that are members of MVAEC. One interviewee described how MVAEC represents a strong self-government model because “it’s a unified voice and it is a voice that has gained respect from municipal, provincial and federal government levels”. One of MVAEC’s roles is to provide a means for individual organizations to work more collaboratively and to strategically apply for government grants instead of competing with each other. In this way these organizations are attempting to exert greater control over grant allocation and shift decision-making authority away from status quo government. Ideally, the interviewee recommended, in the future a regional Indigenous governing body like MVAEC would take on all decision-making about where funds and projects should be allocated among the organizations. Grant allocation capacities should be handed off from government agencies to regional Indigenous organizations.

This transfer of responsibility should also be supported with suitable funds to compensate for this work according to the interviewee.

All interviewees described tension between status quo governance and Indigenous organizations. Interviewees described how they believed that at times interfacing with mainstream governments was detrimental to their organizations. One interviewee suggested it was important for organizations to collaborate strategically in order to counteract government action that could divide the community. Specifically speaking about competition for grants, the interviewee stated, “We have to be able to withstand things like governments that come along and purposely divide us using various means”.

Another interviewee maintained that status quo governance is linked to past colonial policies. The interviewee perceives the “prevailing attitude” of colonization that was fundamental to European settlements across Canada is still “just under the surface” in contemporary public policy. Successive governments, he stated, have a historic lineage of public policies. This interviewee’s observations reveal non-Indigenous professionals working with these organizations need to pay close attention to how contemporary and past policy contexts are related. Today, the interviewee suggested many non-Indigenous government actors support urban Indigenous governance because of guilt about racist government practices.

...now it’s come to a point where almost everything that’s happening that even allows us to run these organizations has all been almost on the basis of guilt on the part of people saying, ‘ok well, we’ve got to let these people do what they want to do, up to a point’.

These findings indicate a high level of distrust vis-à-vis status quo governance can exist including from Indigenous professionals who regularly partner with mainstream government and non-Indigenous individuals.

Despite these ongoing issues, several interviewees cited recent improvements in how their organizations and Indigenous communities are treated by local government. Interviewees said they feel their organizations have received greater recognition by local government actors and have been involved more as partners in regards to Indigenous issues. An example one interviewee used is municipal government outreaching to urban Indigenous organizations in 2011 as part of the federal Off-Reserve Indigenous Action Plan. The interviewee said the increased recognition and acknowledgement from local governments of these Indigenous organizations was a positive change. Even though the Action Plan is a federal level plan, the interviewee described the importance of relationship building with government at the local level. This indicates local government should build on these improvements by continuing to build relationships with urban Indigenous organizations. The interviewee explained how urban Indigenous organizations were able to help local government in their outreach efforts by referring other Indigenous organizations. These findings indicate that although there is a desire among respondents for Indigenous groups to have increased control over urban services and a greater say in local governance, there are also concerns and need for clarification about what models of urban Indigenous governance would look like. Two existing models, urban Indigenous organizations and a regional council that represents these organizations, were identified as currently expressing Indigenous rights in an urban context.

### **4.3. Working with non-Indigenous planners: Acting on self-determination is key**

The third category of findings is responses from interviewees about their experiences working with non-Indigenous planning professionals. Interviewees identified both effective non-Indigenous individuals and their effective professional practices. The most important practice interviewees identified was

the ability for non-Indigenous planning professionals to work in ways that support self-determination and prioritize Indigenous leadership in decision-making.

One interviewee described two 'types' of non-Indigenous professionals using terms of understanding or not understanding self-determination. The interviewee stated, "some of them get it and some of them don't; it's just the way it is". 'Getting it' to this interviewee is, truly understanding and practicing ally-ship in self-determination. The interviewee explained, non-Indigenous professionals working in terms of self-determination means "understanding that they shouldn't be doing things for you or to you [and] that they should be enabling you to do whatever you can on your own". The interviewee described this professional quality as instinctive for some people and very challenging for others. The interviewee also said this quality had to do with understanding an Indigenous worldview.

All four interviewees described the importance of relationship building over time in ensuring successful work with non-Indigenous counterparts. For one interviewee, the reason certain non-Indigenous professionals stood out and were especially effective in their work was their commitment over time to the work of the Indigenous organization. Speaking to planners who worked for the City of Vancouver, the interviewee described the most impressive staff as "the ones that stay connected and involved beyond [their role as a staff person] either because they didn't fulfill all that they wanted to fulfill or they have other ideas that they want to try out [with an Indigenous organization]." Another interviewee gave accolades to the current City of Vancouver mayor, Gregor Robertson, and other councilmembers, describing them as "very supportive and cooperative and have recognized the need to work more closely with the urban Indigenous community".

According to the interviewees, building relationships between urban Indigenous organizations and non-Indigenous governance actors should start by acknowledging the achievements of the organizations. Key to this first step is

recognizing the expertise of Indigenous organizations about Indigenous issues. In other words, the best practices are founded on self-determination. The interviewees argued for the need for working relationships with non-Indigenous actors to come from “building that recognition and acknowledgement that we can and are providing better than standard services [unlike] mainstream [services]”. Non-Indigenous actors, the interviewee stressed, need to partner with Indigenous organizations when it comes to Indigenous issues.

And so in that recognition and acknowledgment they [mainstream actors] seek us [Indigenous organizations] out to be partners because they know they need to learn more. ...if they want their foot in the door they have to partner with us. If they want recognition and trust from the [Indigenous] community they have to partner with us. Because out there on their own they're not recognized and they're not trusted.

In this description, it seems the interviewee is talking about a power shift that is a necessary part of this recognition and acknowledgement. Another interviewee identified how planning and consultation with Indigenous communities has shifted towards more participatory approaches. The change indicates a greater prioritization of self-determination and community involvement in designing Indigenous community services.

[Indigenous community] development has changed drastically- [it] has changed from a helping standpoint to a participatory one. So I think that's a big change that's coming more across the board now that people and organizations are inviting that participatory advocacy, that self-advocacy, that capacity building.

These interviewees described how important it is for non-Indigenous actors to recognize the existing capacities of Indigenous communities in leading organizations and services. Using this recognition as a foundation for professional practice, non-Indigenous professionals can work to further shift the responsibility, authority, and autonomy towards the Indigenous organization. This is working within a practice of self-determination.

Interviewees provided examples of City of Vancouver policies that they believed had recently been transformed in ways that were beneficial to the urban Indigenous community. Interviewees indicated there were non-Indigenous decision-makers working for the City who understood how these shifts in government policy might better reflect Indigenous rights. Two interviewees highlighted the City of Vancouver's declaration in 2014 that Vancouver is on unceded Coast Salish territory as a policy that improves relationships between the City and Indigenous peoples in Vancouver. Although this recognition is largely symbolic, it provides an important recognition of local history. One interviewee explained how this declaration from municipal government demonstrates a drastic change in policy over time.

Vancouver has officially recognized that the city itself is on unceded Salish territory, which back in the day ... would have been unheard of for Vancouver or any other city to make that kind of declaration. But it's been made and by and large the world hasn't fallen apart.

Despite the symbolic importance of this declaration, interviewees suggested that this is the type of beneficial change they perceive municipal governments could make in the eyes of Indigenous community groups. Non-Indigenous actors who can leverage support for such transformations, it seems, would be helping to shift municipal governance – even symbolically, as in this example – in ways that better recognize Indigenous rights in cities. An interviewee said that to date these changes have remained symbolic and he doubted many non-Indigenous people would support transforming governance beyond symbolic recognition. He believed that would, “might, in their minds, infringe on other peoples' rights”. Whether or not there are ways that non-Indigenous planners could further a policy framework that would recognize Indigenous rights in cities without compromising the rights of other residents has yet to be determined.

The findings presented in this chapter provide an understanding of the perspectives of four leaders of urban Indigenous organizations in Vancouver

(Group A) and help provide insights on how non-Indigenous planning professionals could be effective in their work with these organizations. These interviewees described self-determination as the most important aspect of their organizations. They stressed the importance of Indigenous peoples' involvement in the decisions and services that affect them.

It should be noted that the organizations these interviewees work with are established, recognized and visible non-profit entities that regularly work with government, although at an arm's length. It is possible, although certainly not certain, that Group A interviewees perceive of Indigenous self-determination in ways that tolerate more conservative views of self-determination, especially those of non-Indigenous actors. Therefore, it could be that as a whole, interviewees' perspectives on Indigenous self-determination may represent less 'radical' interpretations than others, for example some scholars cited in Chapter 2. This is an important point because what Group A interviewees deem as effective practice in urban governance may be less aligned with more 'radical' interpretations of Indigenous self-determination. Because Group A referred Group B interviewees, Group B may likewise report less 'radical' interpretations of self-determination.

Findings in this chapter also included interviewees' explanations of tensions and constraints their organizations experience when interfacing with status quo municipal governance and especially in times of inconsistent government funding. Urban Indigenous governance, or greater Indigenous rights at the municipal level is something these interviewees said they want especially if it means greater autonomy, recognition and authority on the part of urban Indigenous organizations. However, interviewees identify the practical challenges of implementing change especially when it comes to altering status quo government structures. On both a governance level and an individual level, interviewees identified favourable qualities of partnerships between their organizations and non-Indigenous actors. Interviewees indicated Indigenous

organizations may be gaining more authority, at least symbolically, on Indigenous issues in the city. For example, the City of Vancouver's declaration of unceded Coast Salish territories was mentioned as a marker of improved relations with local mainstream government. Throughout, interviewees returned to self-determination as a key concept and practice in their work. These findings of Group A interviewees include descriptions of how their organizations are challenged in an interface with status quo governance. Their descriptions reveal potential areas where non-Indigenous actors may be able to focus their efforts in ways that Group A interviewees would see as beneficial. These findings also reveal ways future transformations of municipal governance could potentially incorporate the voices and opinions of Indigenous leaders in regards to Indigenous rights. It is clear that a solid understanding of self-determination and some commitment to working with self-determination as a goal, both conceptually and practically, may be a likely indicator of effective practice of non-Indigenous planning professionals.

## Chapter 5.

### **Group B Findings: Transformative Planning Practices**

In this chapter I present findings from interviews with non-Indigenous planning professionals (“Group B”) who were identified by leaders of urban Indigenous organizations (“Group A”) as helping to achieve their organizations’ goals for self-determination. The findings presented in this chapter provide findings about the transformative planning practices of these non-Indigenous professionals. These findings identify some shared characteristics of interviewees’ practices that suggest why Indigenous leaders have identified them as ‘effective’.

Findings from these Group B interviews fall into three categories of transformative planning practices. First, interviewees used Indigenous self-determination as a guide in their professional practice. Second, interviewees described deep learning about Indigenous culture as a key element of effective work with Indigenous organizations. Third, interviewees reported that connecting Indigenous organizations to key non-Indigenous resources and partners made them effective in helping these urban Indigenous organizations achieve their goals.

## **5.1. Self-Determination as Transformative Planning Practice**

As outlined in the Literature Review, Indigenous self-determination is a broad, nuanced concept that encompasses varying interpretations and is influenced by context. To review, scholars writing about transformative planning practice usually interpret Indigenous self-determination as the inherent right of Indigenous peoples to determine their own lives and make decisions about their own communities by transforming relations with mainstream Canadian society (Tomiak, 2009; Walker & Belanger, 2013; Maaka & Fleras, 2000). Other interpretations of Indigenous self-determination expand rights-based arguments by rejecting the idea that it is beneficial or possible to negotiate inherent rights with mainstream stakeholders (Coulthard, 2014; Alfred, 2014). Still other interpretations focus very little on Indigenous rights and instead interpret self-determination as a practical pathway to better health and social well-being. In the context of research about Indigenous wellbeing, self-determination has been interpreted as policies and practices that support Indigenous leaders to operate Indigenous organizations and programs at least somewhat autonomously (Barwin et al., 2013; Minore & Katt, 2007).

According to this last and broadest definition of Indigenous self-determination, all five Group B interviewees described their professional practice as guided by self-determination. Beyond this broad consensus, Group B interviewees' interpretations of self-determination varied. These interpretations varied in interviewees' descriptions of why they believed Indigenous autonomy, in the context of urban Indigenous organizations, was important. The interviewees all described professional situations where they negotiated their response to the directives of leaders of Indigenous organizations. Two interviewees explained they followed these directives using an ethics-based rationale. One interviewee described following these directives using a practical-based rationale. Two interviewees said they disagreed at times with the directives of their Indigenous

colleagues and explained how they negotiated their practice in response to disagreement.

Recalling that Group B interviewees were recommended based on their ability to understand self-determination and work in an environment where self-determination is the goal, it is useful to look closely at the nuances in their interpretations of self-determination and why they believe Indigenous autonomy is important. When compared with the academic literature on self-determination, the interviewees' perspectives on Indigenous self-determination were less 'radical' as a whole than those suggested by many scholars. These interviewees' perspectives on self-determination conflicted less with the status quo than those of scholars like Coulthard (2014), for example, who rejects the idea that negotiating rights with non-Indigenous governments is a pathway to recognition of rights.

Among the five interviewees in Group B, two described their own professional practice in terms that most strongly asserted Indigenous autonomy using an ethics-based rationale. These two interviewees work as consultants for Indigenous non-profit organizations. These interviewees' said their work often involves being hired by urban Indigenous non-profits to do organizational consulting and strategic planning. One interviewee described working with Indigenous organizations in terms of receiving direction and following through on what had been asked of her, stating, "I can only act on their [the Indigenous community's] behalf and take my direction from them". The second interviewee explained how his professional role with urban Indigenous organizations took on a supportive stance and ensured that he avoided any role that would be "directive". Using the term "self-determination", the interviewee explained how the tasks of his work fall entirely under the direction of his Indigenous counterparts. The interviewee explained that making a clear differentiation between his professional role and that of the leaders of Indigenous organizations is how he works to recognize self-determination. He added that this approach to

his work is a way to ensure that “Indigenous people [are] taking charge of Indigenous lives, families, and businesses and what they want to do”. He said that taking a leadership role when working with Indigenous organizations would be “disrespectful” and “add to the problem”. The responses of these two interviewees demonstrated strong commitment to Indigenous autonomy. They described completely deferring to the direction of their Indigenous colleagues. These interviewees interpreted self-determination as an Indigenous right and stated they were professionally committed to the autonomy of Indigenous leaders from ethical point of view.

A third interviewee who worked as a public health officer described two ways she supported Indigenous autonomy in her professional practice and used a practical-based rationale to explain her actions. One, she described aligning the mandates of her job with pre-existing and independent directives of urban Indigenous organizations. Two, she acknowledged the expertise of Indigenous leaders and organizations when it comes to health services for urban Indigenous communities. This interviewee framed her commitment to self-determination as pragmatic and beneficial in terms of public health objectives, and did not frame her practice in terms of Indigenous rights.

Speaking to the first way her practice supports self-determination, this third interviewee explained that partnering with Indigenous organizations would best achieve public health goals. This interviewee approached these partnerships with “allies in the community” in ways that ensured the Indigenous organizations directed their programs. She explained, “It just seemed sensible that that would be my job to support them [urban Indigenous organizations] as they developed their programs”. She said she first made sure to clarify what values and goals she shared professionally with the organization, which allowed her to throw her support behind an Indigenous organization’s existing projects. In this way the interviewee could support the autonomy of Indigenous leaders and “give away a certain amount of control... stand back and let the people do

their work”. The interviewee described her practice as heeding the directives of her Indigenous counterparts. “I used to say that when I was in the community as I was learning, the way I could look really smart was just to do what people like [name of Indigenous counterpart] told me to do.” She said she supported the existing work of urban Indigenous organizations by following the leadership of her Indigenous counterparts.

Speaking to the second way that self-determination guided her practice, she described the importance of Indigenous personnel in service delivery. She spoke to a practical interpretation of self-determination when she talked about Indigenous staff working in the everyday interface with urban Indigenous people. Using the example of a program for expectant mothers, the interviewee described how she ensured that Indigenous women worked as the front-line staff.

If we were going to attract [Indigenous] people to a service, and we wanted them to be able to benefit from the service then it would be important to have familiar faces who could help be the interface between their experience and the very intimidating mainstream, whether it's doctors or nurses or whoever.

The interviewee explained her professional commitment to self-determination as ensuring Indigenous staff worked directly with urban Indigenous community members. Compared to the first two interviewees, this third interviewee’s pragmatic rationale for self-determination conflicts less with the status quo because it was framed in terms of her own particular objectives to achieve public health outcomes instead of a commitment to self-determination based on ethics.

The fourth interviewee described his professional commitment to self-determination in terms of following the directives of an organization’s Indigenous leaders even though he disagreed with some of their decisions. Despite instances of disagreement, the interviewee explained he continued to work with the organization over time and curtailed his own expectations. In one example, the interviewee disagreed about how the organization should have interacted

with the provincial Ministry of Health, and in another example, about the organization's course of action to build a new facility. In these instances the interviewee talked about how he would have prioritized building relationships with non-Indigenous partners, which he felt the organization's leader did not do. He stated, "I have disagreements with [name of Indigenous leader]" and "I would have approached [these partnerships] differently". However, the interviewee said he ultimately deferred completely to the decisions that the leader of the organization made.

That [decision] wasn't for me to decide; that was for him [name of Indigenous leader] to find out. And for whatever his reasons, and I'm not even sure that I know them, he decided not to pursue [the partnerships].

The interviewee described managing this tension by curtailing his own agenda and in this way, he used principles of Indigenous self-determination and respect for Indigenous autonomy to guide to his practice.

The interviewee reported working towards Indigenous self-determination by supporting the implementation of an organization's project over several years, and by following the directives of the organization's leadership. However, the interviewee disagreed with the specific decisions made by Indigenous leaders, which is a more complicated position regarding self-determination. It is unclear whether these findings indicate less or more professional commitment to Indigenous self-determination when compared to the first three interviewees' perspectives. Ultimately, his description of professional disagreements presented a test of his commitment to Indigenous autonomy and self-determination, which he seems to have passed.

The fifth interviewee described certain professional practices she believed were supportive of the goals of urban Indigenous organizations. She spoke from the perspective of her role at the City of Vancouver and therefore talked mostly about the relationship between the City and urban Indigenous organizations,

rather than her individual practice. In doing so, she described how she believed she was working to support these organizations in their goals of self-determination. She said that the City has been purposeful in developing a relationship with urban Indigenous organizations, saying “we look to them as our partner”. She said the City relies on these organizations to influence City policy because, “Indigenous non-profits... play an important role [as] the eyes and ears of the City; they can see things that are needed [by the Indigenous community]”. She said she believed that the City had a responsibility to support these organizations and build their capacity so they can provide a better quality of service to the Indigenous populations they serve. She said that greater capacities of these organizations would have a “spill over effect” to the Indigenous community. Furthermore, she said the work of these organizations is crucial, because the City is not mandated or qualified to do service delivery. At this broad level of support for urban Indigenous organizations, this interviewee demonstrated she supported self-determination and explained her support in terms of a practical-based rationale of benefit to the community.

In terms of her own professional role, the interviewee talked about several initiatives she had worked to improve the relationships between Indigenous communities and the City of Vancouver. She said she had played an instrumental role in supporting the City’s Year of Reconciliation and also in developing relationships with local host First Nations as part of the 2010 Olympic games. She explained her belief that diversity training was very important for City staff to increase cultural competency about Indigenous issues and she said it was extremely important for Indigenous people to lead the trainings. She talked about her professional role in developing an Indigenous mentorship program and promoting diversity training as a way to increase the likelihood that the City would hire Indigenous staff people.

So what I hoping for is, to be able to create an Indigenous mentorship program [so that Indigenous people] will be mentored by our lawyers in the City, our accountants in the City so that they can actually apply

for jobs here [at the City] and more from the professional level and the management level [rather than entry level].

She maintained that hiring more Indigenous personnel is a strategy for making City departments more representative of the urban Indigenous community.

The interviewee explained she had disagreed with a recommendation from City's Vancouver Urban Aboriginal Peoples Advisory Committee, a group of Indigenous leaders appointed by City Council as advisors. The interviewee said the Committee recommended the City create a separate Indigenous relations unit, similar to at the provincial and federal levels. In her opinion, a separate Indigenous unit would lead to less integration of Indigenous staff, and would run the risk of marginalizing Indigenous leadership and Indigenous directives.

My worry is that if you have [if the City has] an Indigenous unit with two staff, three staff, then everyone else is going to say, "I don't need to do that [because] this [Indigenous] department [is] responsible. Anything that deals with Indigenous [matters], go to that department".

Instead, this interviewee suggested a long-term strategy whereby cultural competency training for all City staff would influence hiring practices and create greater chances for Indigenous people to be hired in each department. The interviewee explained,

[Such a strategy would help] influence each of the departments so that you [the City employer] are more likely to hire Indigenous people within your department. For example, Engineering has Indigenous people working there; Planning has Indigenous people working there.

Such a strategy, she suggested, would have a positive effect on more City workers, because they would have the occasion to work alongside Indigenous co-workers. She said creating fairer hiring practices would mean, "[City staff] people can see and interact with the [Indigenous] person directly". The

interviewee argued that cultural competency training would “influence cultural change within the system, systemic change... long-term”.

The interviewee’s practices sit at the margin of supporting Indigenous self-determination and autonomy. In terms of a broad level of supporting Indigenous organizations, this interviewee describes her support of self-determination. The interviewee described ways that she supported these organizations through her work at the City and the value they hold for Indigenous communities and for a city government. However, in terms of following the directives of Indigenous leaders this interviewee failed to describe professional practice that supported self-determination. Directly opposing a recommendation made by Indigenous leaders advising the City seems to indicate weak professional commitment to Indigenous self-determination. Furthermore, the practices this interviewee proposed – diversity training as a strategy to hire more Indigenous staff across all municipal departments – could be interpreted as integration or assimilation, not self-determination. However, the interviewee’s concern that implementing this recommendation would result in marginalization in the context of city government may be well founded. There is evidence that some scholars agree that diversity training and hiring Indigenous staff across departments are transformative planning practices municipalities should adopt, although these practices are not necessarily in support of self-determination. Walker (2008) sees “municipal human resource strategies” as necessary to improve the interface between municipalities and urban Indigenous communities (p. 31). Like this interviewee, Walker suggests incorporating Indigenous perspectives across departments. Walker also recommends “staff training, recruitment and retention initiatives [should] be tailored as appropriate to foster the advancement of Indigenous staff” (2008, p. 31).

It seems very unlikely that the Indigenous Advisory committee would agree with the interviewee that a separate Indigenous department would marginalize or, in essence, diminish the self-determination and power of

Indigenous people in leadership positions with the City. It is unclear why the interviewee did not see it beneficial to implement her own suggestions of diversity training and hiring Indigenous staff within all departments *and* implement the committee's suggestion of creating a separate unit.

Findings from five Group B interviews demonstrated that all respondents have professional practices that are in line with a broad base interpretation of self-determination. All interviewees reported professional support for Indigenous leaders to run Indigenous organizations somewhat autonomously. Beyond that broad convergence, these interviewees' responses varied in terms of their interpretations of self-determination. The variation among their interpretations ranged from: deferring completely to the directives of the Indigenous leaders, to working for self-determination for practical reasons, to challenging and ultimately supporting the directives of Indigenous leaders, to directly challenging the directives of Indigenous leaders out of concern their directives would result in marginalization.

## **5.2. Cultural Learning as Transformative Planning Practice**

In this section I present findings from Group B interviewees' descriptions of learning about Indigenous cultures as a practice that may make them effective in working with urban Indigenous organizations. These interviewees framed learning about Indigenous cultures in ways that maintain their own identity as a cultural outsider. The interviewees said learning about Indigenous cultures influences them to gain more humility in their professional practice. Through their descriptions of continual learning and self-reflection, interviewees situated their appreciation of Indigenous cultures in a framework of understanding about social inequality.

Three interviewees described a process of cultural learning that took place early in their careers and continued to inform their work with urban Indigenous organizations. Interviewees said they learned about cultures simply by spending time with Indigenous people and Indigenous organizations. They said they learned about Indigenous cultural customs and worldviews, which later influenced their professional practices. One interviewee characterized herself at the early part of her career as someone who “didn’t have a clue” about Indigenous cultures and the systemic discrimination facing Indigenous peoples. She reflected that her education was devoid of learning about Indigenous people, stating, “I had grown up and gone to school in areas where, basically, Indigenous people were invisible.” Another interviewee said learning about Indigenous culture was necessary for her to be able to work with Indigenous groups stating, “first of all I had to learn”. Learning about Indigenous culture is the bedrock of the transformative planning practice for three interviewees, which they described as ongoing professional learning.

One interviewee suggested non-Indigenous planners working with urban Indigenous organizations should “take every opportunity possible to experience Indigenous culture”. This interviewee said that values “inherent within the [Indigenous] culture” have become a key part of his practice in working with these organizations. The interviewee described shifting his professional practice away from working in ways that are “second nature” for him and, over time, working more with “different nuances and different ways that [Indigenous] people look at how to work together as a group.” For example, the interviewee said that he now ensures that a meeting may begin with a blessing or an opening from an Elder, or an Elders council may be asked to attend a meeting to guide decision-making. This interviewee said learning about Indigenous cultures directly impacted his professional efficacy because of the strong interplay between culture and planning practice. He was able to gain “a deeper appreciation for Indigenous culture and for the way that Indigenous people would come to the

issue of planning, for example, or governance, or program development, [or] service delivery”. Cultural learning helped him work with Indigenous organizations to achieve their goals in these areas.

Non-Indigenous professionals working with Indigenous organizations described how learning about Indigenous cultural protocols meant they adjusted their practices to make room for Indigenous cultural work. This was especially true for examples interviewees gave about facilitating group sessions. Two said they changed their practice to reflect different interpretations of ‘a good use of time’. For example, when working with Elders on a planning consultation, an interviewee described the professional challenge of taking time to listen to their comments while also ensuring all points of the consultation were discussed. The interviewee described her facilitation role as “be[ing] able to flow with it [the discussion] and move with people as they’re sharing and know when to pick up on things and say, ‘OK, let’s follow that line’”. Another interviewee adjusted his professional practice with Indigenous organizations out of recognition that “time was a little bit more fluid”. His idea of the agenda changed according to new priorities that participants identified. As Sandercock suggests, “this type of planning work requires exceptional interpersonal, relationship-building and facilitation skills” (2015, p. 396).

Another interviewee said it was important to take the time to learn about Indigenous cultures because it is a key part of building partnerships between municipalities and Indigenous communities. Otherwise, she stated, “We really don’t understand a lot about their protocol so it’s really about learning about their protocol [so we can understand] how we [are] going to be working together in a respectful way.” Interviewees described the importance of investing time in developing relationships in general. One interviewee said by focusing on developing relationships, “You see opportunities and people that have skills, to try to match them up and not to be hyper-worried about a specific timeline

because sometimes you just can't push things or things come in the way – so to just be patient”.

Interviewees described how learning about Indigenous cultures prompted them to reflect on their own social privilege and incorporate that insight into their professional practice. Transformative planning practice occurs when knowledge and action inform each other to help a practitioner transform structures of inequality (Friedmann, 1987). In these examples, these interviewees described how knowledge gained through learning about Indigenous cultures directly impacted their actions in their professional practice. These findings reflect how transformative planning practice combines planning theory and planning practice to inform a practitioners' ongoing work in an iterative manner.

Interviewees used their learning about Indigenous cultures in ways that defined their own identity as a cultural outsider when working with Indigenous groups. One interviewee recalled recognizing how her privilege and cultural identity had been a barrier to effectively working with urban Indigenous community groups; “You know, I was a privileged person, I couldn't possibly understand where they [Indigenous community members] came from.” The interviewee described how this recognition reinforced her understanding of the value of Indigenous staff working with Indigenous communities. Learning about Indigenous cultures and histories led the interviewee to strengthen her professional support for urban Indigenous organizations because training for non-Indigenous staff, she found, will never equal lived experience. She shared her insight that, “most of us have attitudes that are unexamined and although we can be worked on and educated, we may not still actually ‘get it’ some of the time.”

Another interviewee also described cultural learning in terms of her own identity as a cultural outsider, which informed her support of self-determination.

Her identity as a “visitor” translated into professional practice that retains respectful relationships.

So I always feel like I'm a visitor. I've had the very good fortune of working with these [Indigenous] agencies and there's a nice trust. But really, I'm not Indigenous. .... Right at my core there are things I don't understand.

The interviewee explained that learning from Indigenous leaders often challenged her own cultural learning. The interviewee described this practice as “unraveling some of what you've learned” and said she incorporated that critical lens into her professional practice.

In my view, it's like I have to take my eyes out from the socialization I've had and try to put some new eyes in, or try to look at the world in a little different way.

She explained that by recognizing the impact of socialization and cultural difference, she was “always learning to see” in her professional practice.

I think that I [am effective because I] am curious, open, and maybe I have a little humility, I hope. [By] really recognizing that there's so much that I don't know. ...I learn a lot from people. So perhaps that's it. And I care. A lot. What I do is important to me. ... It's fulfilling for me. Because I'm learning.

This openness to learning is part of maintaining humility in her professional practice. The interviewee said her practice stems from “not feeling as though I need to impose what I believe or the way that I see things. So then I'm open to hear what other people have to say.”

In the context of working with Indigenous organizations, three interviewees described recognizing and maintaining a ‘cultural outsider’ identity reflecting on how their own cultural and personal privilege influences their professional practice. The interviewees framed what they learned about Indigenous cultures through ongoing reflection and understanding, which enabled their practice to better confront social inequalities Indigenous communities face. Three

interviewees described cultivating a deep self-awareness of their own privilege stemming from membership in the dominant culture. These Group B interviewees described learning about Indigenous cultures as a way to gain competency in their planning practice.

### **5.3. Connecting to Resources as Transformative Planning Practice**

Group B interviewees reported that connecting non-profits to financial resources was a way they were effective in working with Indigenous organizations. Interviewees described telling the organizations about grant opportunities, building partnerships among organizations, and providing advice to the organizations on financial strategies and investments. Interviewees explained that bringing tangible resources to an organization was one of the most influential ways they thought their work could benefit urban Indigenous organizations. Using their connections, specialized knowledge or financial experience as part of their professional practice helped the interviewees to be more effective in their work.

All five interviewees spoke about their knowledge and understanding of the financial strains urban Indigenous non-profit organizations experience. One interviewee said she understood the challenge for organizations that must negotiate limited funding opportunities meanwhile maintaining their autonomy. Generally, funding for advocacy organizations, the interviewee explained, “either comes from charitable sources, or it comes from the government”. Because these Indigenous organizations are largely service providing organizations, a majority of their funding comes from government contracts and grants. The challenge for the leaders of the organizations is to maintain some autonomy over government-funded projects and programs. The interviewee described the position of the Indigenous leaders as needing to “stare down the government

fundings, and maintain an arm's length relationship so that they can define the things that are important". This relationship can put organizations into a "handicapped" situation because "they have to fit into government funding guidelines". A strong understanding of how organizations struggle to work autonomously rather than per the directives of the government informed the actions of interviewees, helping them to be effective in their practice. Interviewees said that they believed this understanding has enabled them to be effective in helping Indigenous leaders navigate the challenges of complying with funders' requirements while maintaining autonomy.

A second interviewee described how he advised Indigenous organizations about financial strategies. He said he understood the organizations were "overly cautious" because they faced stigma from stereotypes about Indigenous organizations mismanaging funds. The interviewee explained, "They were afraid ... if you lost money, for example in an investment or whatever, then people would say, 'oh there they go wasting money again'". The interviewee encouraged organizations to invest in order to provide the organization with greater returns. The interviewee also advised organizations to create foundation entities in addition to their non-profits so they could "do different things under Canadian Revenue Agency ...[which provides access to] a lot more [financial] opportunities that you can take advantage of." He explained, although "it took me about five years to convince the board [of directors of one organization] that this would be a really smart thing to do, [now] we've done it and now we have [name of foundation]". The interviewee added he continued to be involved as a "director of that foundation and so the foundation board is made up of Indigenous people and a few non-Indigenous people".

A third interviewee emphasized the real financial constraints Indigenous non-profit organizations experience to run core services. These strains extend to an operational level because they affect the everyday ability of organizations to provide services. The interviewee noted how organizations' staff is burdened with

“spending a lot of time on administration [rather] than focusing on the service”. She described herself as someone with “quite a lot of experience doing grant funding,” which helped her to understand these organizations’ funding challenges. The interviewee also described understanding the ways that the funding system could be improved to reduce unnecessary burden. She explained, “[Indigenous] non-profit groups are being forced to ask for funding from a variety of different funders... sometimes non-profit organizations fill in three to four different [funding] applications and are having to report out on three to four different outcomes, which is crazy, right?” Admittedly, this is a general problem that also affects many other non-profit organizations; however, because urban Indigenous residents are statistically much more likely than non-Indigenous residents to have poor social, economic, and health indicators, the risks they face if funding for urban Indigenous organizations is not obtained are greater.

A fourth interviewee said he continues to support Indigenous organizations’ goals by connecting them to potential partners, resources, and funding. Referring to one particular project, the interviewee explained how it has “gone through ups and downs but it’s coming back and I’m trying to take other resources [to support the project]”. The interviewee said his professional role is to “keep the idea [of the project] alive and see if there’s an opportunity to make it possible” in the future. The interviewee emphasized a driving part of his practice is acting consistently in a supportive role over the long-term.

A fifth interviewee described how she is effective in her work with Indigenous organizations because she is motivated to find funding for their projects. The interviewee described how securing a rather small, but sustained, amount of funding could have a significant positive impact on Indigenous organizations and members of the community. The interviewee used the example of funding a bus service that would transport Indigenous Elders to an organization for a weekly program.

[The solution/funding] has to be somewhere. Never say no. Never say it's not possible. You know, everything's possible and this is ridiculous, so there's got to be a way that we can find it. So that doesn't necessarily mean that I can be successful in things. But I have a tenacity...

She went on to say that she saw connecting Indigenous non-profits to funding is a driving force in her work. She explained, "When I start seeking out funds and then I start going after it and then I just, like a little bit of a pit bull, just go for it. Go after it." When a solution to a problem presented itself, the interviewee was motivated by a relentless drive to achieve project funding.

In this chapter I first presented findings where Group B interviewees described their interpretations of Indigenous self-determination. According to a broad definition, all interviewees described supporting self-determination to some degree in the context of the work of the urban Indigenous organizations. Beyond this broad consensus, Group B interviewees' interpretations of self-determination varied in how they described their responses to the directives of the leaders of Indigenous organizations. Interviewees talked about their reasons for following these directives from an ethics-based rationale, from a practical-based rationale, or why they disagreed with the directive. Second, interviewees said they learned about Indigenous culture as a foundation to their professional work. This learning was described as two levels. One level was developing a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture; the second level was developing greater self-awareness of how their status as a cultural outsider influences their planning practice. Third, I presented findings where interviewees described creative ways they brought much needed resources to urban Indigenous organizations, which included potential partners, investment advice, and grants. These findings suggest some ways that these non-Indigenous professionals believed their planning practices have enabled them to be effective according to their Indigenous clients. In the next chapter I present findings where interviewees express challenges to urban Indigenous governance.

## Chapter 6.

### **Findings: Transformative planning practice and urban Indigenous governance**

This chapter contains findings that help answer my second research question: How do transformative planning practices connect to designing urban Indigenous governance with the purpose of incorporating and expressing Indigenous rights in cities? Urban Indigenous governance has been defined in the literature as “the institutions, services, and political arrangements dedicated to meeting and representing the needs and interests of the urban Indigenous population” (Graham, 1999, p. 376). These findings fall into two categories. First, I provide examples where both “Group A” and “Group B” interviewees identify ways they could imagine transformative planning practice going forward. They provided examples of *opportunities* for professional practice – instances where urban Indigenous governance could be enhanced in order to better recognize the needs and capacities of urban Indigenous organizations. In the second half of the chapter I present Group B interviewees’ descriptions of the limits of their practice regarding urban Indigenous governance. These are challenges that, according to Group B interviewees, are beyond their professional commitment to self-determination described in Chapter 5. These challenges highlight areas where future research may identify effective strategies and practices that would further Indigenous rights in the city.

## 6.1. Balancing advocacy and support

Group A and Group B interviewees identified opportunities where non-Indigenous planners could play a greater professional role in supporting the work of urban Indigenous organizations in Vancouver. These findings speak to ways non-Indigenous planners could go beyond their individual level practices with Indigenous organizations. They described key places to mediate between these organizations and mainstream actors in order to garner wider support for their work and reduce the barriers they experience. These examples of potential professional practices highlight instances where interviewees are dealing with real tensions and contradictions when it comes to advancing recognition of Indigenous rights in the city. When confronted by external pressures, interviewees (both Group A and Group B) described instances where non-Indigenous professionals either directly advocated for Indigenous rights or supported them indirectly. Group B interviewees distinguished between these two roles, explaining their perspectives on why balancing these roles is a necessary part of transformative planning for greater recognition of Indigenous rights in urban governance.

Interviewees gave examples of instances when institutional barriers impinged upon Indigenous organizations or their leaders. One interviewee said “funding rules, history, racism” all challenge the success of these organizations. Interviewees said status quo governance actors, especially governments, often do not understand urban Indigenous communities. She said these barriers manifest as tension between these organizations and status quo governance making it “difficult to communicate across one group of people to another”. This, in turn, is likely due to many government actors not developing a deep understanding of urban Indigenous communities. One interviewee said a lack of priority and inadequate communication results in direct damage to urban Indigenous organizations.

Sometimes it's easier for them [mainstream governance actors] not to actually know as much about the [Indigenous] community organizations as they should because [that way] they don't have to notice the impacts of what their [policies] are doing [to the community organizations].

She said that non-Indigenous planners can help by identifying what those issues are and then “go to bat within one's own organization” to help transform those challenges. This interviewee spoke about influencing mainstream arenas in ways that advance the goals of Indigenous organizations.

Another Group B interviewee described the need for the City of Vancouver to better champion urban Indigenous initiatives and organizations. The interviewee stated “I think the City could be much more aggressive [in prioritizing projects of urban Indigenous non-profits]”. One project that was particularly important and relevant to City government, this interviewee said, was building new facilities for several Indigenous organizations. New facilities, he said, were a matter of political priority: “We have three major Indigenous organizations in the city. They all need good facilities and it should be possible to do it.” The interviewee went on to identify the City's influence could make new facilities a reality saying, “It boggles my mind that they [City staff] haven't taken that on.” He referenced the City's recent declaration of a Year of Reconciliation and partnership with the organization Reconciliation Canada.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps, he said, that partnership signalled greater priority in the City of Vancouver for Indigenous issues, stating, “Hopefully [new facilities] will become more of a priority because of the whole move toward reconciliation, but I'm not sure it will.” The interviewee suggested that the City should sponsor studies to find the best locations for new facilities for urban Indigenous organizations, convene government and non-

<sup>5</sup> The City of Vancouver declared 2013-2014 a Year of Reconciliation and, according to a Group B interviewee who worked for the City, committed \$500,00 to support the events, projects and a city-wide dialogue process about the devastation residential schools caused Indigenous people and communities in Canada.

government partners, provide incentives in zoning or City-owned land to developers, and help see the project through to completion. This commitment would require assembling a team of City staff. He imagined a scenario in which a City leader mandated:

I need a lawyer, I need an engineer, I need a planner, a housing person and a social planner and we're going to sit down and we're going to develop a strategy with [the Indigenous organization] and we're going to get this done and if Plan A doesn't work we're moving quickly to Plan B because within two years there's going to be a shovel in the ground.

According to this interviewee, the main barrier keeping the City from taking such action was simply a lack of political priority. The interviewee said the City did not understand the significance of urban Indigenous organizations nor fully see the ways that they benefit Vancouver. On the other hand, he said, the organizations do not see the City as “actually be[ing] in a position to really help them... and not knowing how to approach the City in an effective way to do that”. However, the interviewee firmly placed the onus on the City for stepping into a greater leadership role and prioritizing this type of initiative, calling the lack of priority for building new facilities “institutional incompetence”. The interviewee talked about the importance of having “very supportive people” within the City staff who would be willing to advocate for such projects from within the administration. But the City had “too many priorities, too many initiatives” revealing a lack of focus and clarity regarding the future.

Another Group B interviewee described playing a role in helping organizations combat government policies that are inappropriate. The interviewee described a general example about a time in his practice when an Indigenous organization wanted the Ministry of Children and Family Development to recognize that a certain policy was problematic and incongruent with values of Indigenous culture. Because the organization received funding from this government Ministry, raising this issue was not without potential financial risk.

The interviewee described acting as a mediator to help the organization make its argument for greater Indigenous self-determination in policymaking.

And so in that [Indigenous] organization the issue of self-determination becomes more prominent because there may be policies created by the Ministry of Social Development or Social Services. ...And those policies are not necessarily grounded in Indigenous culture. And so there's a much bigger dialogue and discussion where the [organization's] board for example, says, 'what the policy says is contrary to the values of our culture'. And so they have to argue with the funder. And sometimes the funder agrees and sometimes they don't. And so then [the organization] just perseveres, just continues to make the argument that this policy might make sense in a non-Indigenous organization, but it's contrary to the culture of Indigenous people and so it shouldn't be done the way they want it done.

The interviewee's role in this case was to act as an intermediary and help the organization explain why the policy was problematic to the government funder. In this instance, the interviewee bridged the perspectives of the Indigenous organization and the non-Indigenous policymaker. The interviewee stated, "I'll help develop arguments that they [the urban Indigenous organization] can take to argue the case [in a way] that a non-Indigenous person would get from a policy standpoint." Rather than directly going to the policy maker and advocating for the policy change, he worked with the organization's leadership to confront and alter status quo governance. This example indicates how non-Indigenous planners can help transform governance by negotiating greater recognition of Indigenous rights in the policies of government Ministries. This interviewee went on to explain on how his professional role is to support Indigenous organizations rather than advocating directly for Indigenous rights.

Supporting the Indigenous leaders to do what they decide to do. I don't see my role as being out there out front. I support them and they're the leaders, they take the action. So I might work with them on ideas and stuff, but it's *them* that does it [advocacy]. And that's the way that should be.

The interviewee's practice firmly rejects any participation in advocacy for the Indigenous community. The interviewee said a 'behind the scenes' style of advocacy stems from a deep respect for self-determination.

So far in this chapter I have cited instances where interviewees' professional practices mediated between urban Indigenous non-profits and status quo governance in order to reduce barriers to the organizations' success. These findings are examples of how advocate and supporter roles in the professional practices of non-Indigenous planners were undertaken to benefit urban Indigenous organizations. Some of these instances were *opportunities* where they would have liked to help achieve the goals of urban Indigenous non-profits rather than their actual practice. To borrow a phrase from the literature, the findings presented here are instances where interviewees identify "strategic moments of opportunity that [could] result in recognition of Indigenous rights" (Porter, 2004, p. 109). These findings demonstrate how these planning professionals play a mediating role between status quo municipal governance and urban Indigenous governance. These are examples where interviewees described dealing with real tensions involved with planning practice aimed to transform governance to better recognize the work of Indigenous organizations in the city.

## **6.2. Challenges to urban Indigenous governance**

In this section I present Group B interviewees' responses to questions about inherent Indigenous rights in cities. These findings report challenges interviewees said limited the extent to which they could perceive expanding Indigenous rights in cities beyond the rights to maintain somewhat autonomous leadership of urban Indigenous organizations. These challenges represent legitimate concerns about the future of implementing Indigenous rights in cities. Three Group B interviewees talked about challenges to urban Indigenous rights

in the city and, of these three, two interviewees went on at length. It is unclear why some interviewees were more reluctant than others to explain the limits of their practice in expanding Indigenous rights, but it is important to analyze the comments of those who did because they lay bare very real challenges these planners grapple with in working to implement urban Indigenous rights within the context of current municipal governance. Figuring out more precisely what the future of urban Indigenous governance would entail and how to negotiate Indigenous rights in a city located on the hereditary lands of local Coast Salish, while it is also home to ‘newcomers’: both multinational Indigenous people from across Canada and a multicultural populace from around the world are major tasks. Coming to terms with these challenges is arguably the next and most pressing task for those interested in advancing conversations about urban Indigenous governance.

One interviewee described how understanding inherent Indigenous rights has been a significant professional challenge. She said she was only beginning to understand the leaders of Indigenous organizations’ perspectives on Indigenous rights.

There's a [Indigenous] leader that I've worked with for a long time, for 25 years, and for all that time he's been talking about title and rights. But I'm really learning about title and rights *now*. Even though he's talked about it for all this time. So I think that there are things that we get slowly, slowly and they sort of seep in.

At a broad level, this finding speaks to the ways mainstream actors may struggle to understand Indigenous rights. As Walker points out, self-determination as a rights-based orientation to community aspiration “is still largely misunderstood in non-Indigenous society” (2008, p. 24). Even those working most closely with urban Indigenous organizations, like this interviewee, may not comprehend what Indigenous rights mean. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2, the urban context of Indigenous rights presents specific challenges in the field of

Indigenous rights. Although researchers have raised these challenges, very few answers have been presented in the literature.

Two other Group B interviewees went on to raise their own questions about urban Indigenous governance and in doing so expressed the limits of their professional commitment to Indigenous self-determination. These interviewees noted that a lack of existing models for implementing greater Indigenous rights in the city made it difficult to understand how to recognize Indigenous rights in an urban context. Instead, interviewees talked about existing strategies for creating equity that they were more familiar with like increasing resources to urban Indigenous non-profits. For example, one interviewee reiterated support for culturally specific programs and self-determining organizations, but stopped short of seeing ways that municipal government could recognize Indigenous rights.

Should Native people have special governance rights in the city? Somebody would have to explain to me how that would work and why. Should they have fair access to facilities, should there be special facilities that are targeted to their needs? Absolutely. But I don't know what a governance model would mean within an urban context other than to be extremely fragile over time.

This interviewee went on to describe his professional support for Indigenous non-profit organizations within a framework of reparations, but did not speak from a perspective of Indigenous rights. He described how Indigenous communities should receive compensation for the discrimination they experience: “I think [Indigenous] people have been treated terribly; there's a need for compensation and more than compensation”. However, he disagreed that reparations should extend beyond compensation because other cultures have also been treated unfairly. He stated, “In terms of self-governance, from my perspective, almost every culture in the world has been pushed around, pushed off their land.” The interviewee described governance goals of “fair access” and justified “compensation” but didn’t speak to Indigenous rights as unique and inherent to Indigenous people as the original inhabitants of Canada. Because there is no

existing governance model the interviewee would not discuss rights-based urban governance that extended beyond the organizations he works with and the culturally specific services they provide.

These two interviewees expressed disbelief regarding the possibility for local level governance to play a role in recognizing the rights of urban Indigenous people. When asked about rights of Indigenous people in an off-reserve city, one interviewee replied by stating, “I don’t understand what you mean by ‘carry their right to self-government’ [from reserve to an off-reserve city]...I just don’t quite understand how if they are living here [in Vancouver] how they carry their self-governing right.” She was sceptical about the possibility of urban Indigenous rights being incorporated into local governance because existing Indigenous rights are under the jurisdiction of the federal government in Canada. The recognition of Indigenous rights, she said, is “something that is really under the provincial and federal government [and] the City has no rights to say anything [regarding Indigenous rights]”. The interviewee explained that if a city government were to recognize rights of Indigenous residents in ways that were not approved by higher levels of government, the province may have reason to dissolve the municipal government altogether. The interviewee said the influence of city governments is precarious in terms of advocating for greater recognition of Indigenous rights. The city government, she said, doesn’t “have the right to get into that discussion or negotiation”.

The interviewee said that all city residents and visitors fall under municipal laws, regardless of cultural identity. She compared this to how non-Indigenous visitors to First Nations reserves would come under control of the laws of that Band Council government.

The same if we go into Musqueam [reserve]. Then we still have to go and follow their rules. We can't say that, “well because we have rights of the citizens of Vancouver that we come in and we still, we can do things that we want or that's according to what I understand to my right”.

Similar to a consulate in a foreign country, she said, visitors to the consulate are still under the laws of the city in which the consulate is located. She drew the distinction between individual rights and collective rights pointing out that these land-based rights are negotiated between First Nation band councils and provincial and federal governments. The interviewee explained how the City's declaration of unceded territory does not indicate recognition of the rights of individuals, but instead recognizes collective rights as negotiated between First Nations and senior levels of government. She explained, "Unceded territory is not the right given to individuals, it's the right given to the nation, that's why they are the [First] Nation [leaders] representing everyone to sit at the table and negotiate the treaties ... with the senior [Canadian] government." The interviewee highlighted how the urban Indigenous community has no official representative or government when she asked, "so what would be the group negotiating on behalf of urban Indigenous community with the city government?" Ultimately, the interviewee did not see local government playing a role in recognizing the rights of urban Indigenous residents.

These two interviewees mentioned that because future generations of city residents may be more likely to have both non-Indigenous and Indigenous ancestry, it may be challenging for urban governance to recognize Indigenous rights in the city. For both interviewees, the urban setting itself was problematic because intermarriage or intercultural mixing would make it confusing to understand inherent Indigenous rights. These challenges led one interviewee to ask the following questions.

With people living in a city, you can't control who they're going to marry and in two or three generations what does that all look like? It's worth puzzling through, who will actually be the Native people? How many will there be? How much resources do they need to have a fair standard of living?

Both interviewees focused on Indigenous rights based on "certain genetic criteria" of city residents. For these interviewees, determining 'blood quantum'

was a challenge for understanding who would be able to access certain rights. One interviewee described how Vancouver residents in the future would all have 'mixed' backgrounds, and referred to this as a positive thing, stating, "in the next generation down the road, we're all going to be colour blind... We're all going to be mixed". This response indicated significant tension between this interviewee's professional commitment to Indigenous self-determination and the interviewee's ideas about how urban governance can recognize the rights of Indigenous people. Assimilation, or 'watering down' of Indigenous heritage, has been discussed in the literature as a source of stress on Indigenous communities (Lawrence, 2004). Scholars have argued that blood quantum is not a true marker of Indigenous identity; instead it is a tool of the colonial government to control and assimilate Indigenous people. These two interviewees' comments about intermarriage and a 'colour blind' society demonstrate the logic of status quo governance. One interviewee questioned how recognition of the rights of urban Indigenous groups today would be maintained in the future.

But there comes a point where as you start looking into the future, it's one thing to compensate and more than compensate for losses, it's another to say that in perpetuity people who meet certain genetic criteria will have an extraordinary say over way more resources than they would need to have a good quality of life.

The interviewees bring up important questions about the practicality of a rights-based argument for urban Indigenous governance. However, they may conflict with professional practice that fully embraces self-determination.

The other interviewee found it challenging to understand how municipal governance would recognize Indigenous rights in the city because urban Indigenous communities have no existing taxation powers. The interviewee said, because of the need for Indigenous organization "to figure out how to get funding... they're not completely on their own but maybe they shouldn't be because you need to have some oversight over what people do". The interviewee's concern about taxation and funding reaffirms the dominant role of

status quo government in creating the terms of the relationship that urban Indigenous organizations have with the state. The interviewee's description of the need for 'oversight' indicates a disconnection with concepts of self-determination and the ways that Indigenous communities aspire to govern themselves.

When interviewees were asked about municipal governance that would better recognize inherent Indigenous rights in Vancouver, only two interviewees presented responded at length by providing a range of challenges. The challenges they described are real questions that arise regarding the implementation of urban Indigenous governance. On the whole, Group B interviewees' planning practices do not demonstrate strategies for establishing greater urban Indigenous governance from the perspective of inherent Indigenous rights. Overall the interviewees, either did not address this issue, or demonstrated limited knowledge of existing concepts and strategies to further inherent Indigenous rights. Interviewees' responses thus reveal limits to their professional commitment to Indigenous rights and self-determination. These findings reveal that non-Indigenous professionals who are describe themselves as committed to Indigenous self-determination, may not necessarily commit to urban Indigenous governance because of questions about implementation and their lack understanding of how they could answer these questions with their professional practice.

## Chapter 7.

### **Conclusion**

Today, over half of all Indigenous people in Canada live in cities. It is unlikely that these numbers will decrease in the coming years, meaning that urban planners, Indigenous community leaders and urbanites in general need to conceive of ways to understand the inherent rights of Indigenous people in urban contexts. Scholars responding to these questions have recently suggested the concept of urban Indigenous governance. To borrow from Sandercock, there is a growing body of literature that asks, “What forms of planning governance might now be necessary and appropriate to fully and justly recognize ‘the persistent footprint’ of Indigeneity in settler cities”? (2015, p. 391). Planning and planners are, in some ways, unlikely candidates for the focus of an inquiry regarding Indigenous rights because historically both have been instrumental in the dispossession of Indigenous people. However, within recent planning literature as well as within the planning community in Vancouver, there is evidence that certain planning practices may be beneficial for urban Indigenous communities. In the literature, transformative planning with Indigenous communities has received significant attention. In Vancouver, urban Indigenous organizations have long acted as important hubs for Indigenous communities, both in the delivery of services and as centres for community cultural gathering.

The specific questions investigated in this thesis asked how non-Indigenous planning professionals might work effectively to further the goals of urban Indigenous organizations in Vancouver. First, what are the transformative planning practices of non-Indigenous planners who have been deemed effective

by the Indigenous people they work with? Second, how do these practices connect to designing urban Indigenous governance with the purpose of incorporating and expressing Indigenous rights in cities? Interviews with four Indigenous leaders of these Vancouver non-profit organizations (“Group A”) and five non-Indigenous planning professionals (“Group B”), who were referred by Group A, resulted in findings and some conclusions that may be drawn from these findings.

This study did not aim to measure interviewees in terms of their adherence to concepts of Indigenous rights in the literature. However, findings that emerged from these interviews and a review of the literature seem to reveal that scholars see the task of understanding urban Indigenous governance as more urgent than the interviewees in this study. Despite being immersed in a professional world where Indigenous rights are very salient, some Group B interviewees were neither convinced of the applicability nor well versed in the meanings of rights-based arguments.

Interviewees in both Group A and Group B expressed serious concerns about the challenges to realizing Indigenous rights in cities. Neither group offered readily available ideas about how to implement rights-based urban Indigenous governance. Instead they brought up questions about how governance could be implemented to recognize these rights. The multicultural urban population of Vancouver, the fact that Vancouver is located on the unceded hereditary lands of Coast Salish groups, and the multinational makeup of the urban Indigenous community are all potential challenges interviewees posed to furthering urban Indigenous governance. Furthermore, urban Indigenous communities have often fallen into a jurisdictional gray zone where few existing precedents can help show a pathway forward.

According to a broad interpretation, both Group A and Group B interviewees talked about the importance of self-determination, a nuanced

concept with multiple and wide ranging interpretations. All interviewees declared their commitment to the success of the urban Indigenous organizations they work with. All Group B interviewees described professional actions they had taken that they believed helped Indigenous leaders run their organizations and maintain the culturally specific programs they offer urban Indigenous communities in Vancouver. Some Group B interviewees offered ethics-based rationales or pragmatic rationales for why these programs are important and why they should be led in a self-determining way.

Group A and Group B interviewees described how these organizations face an uphill battle in maintaining their programs and maintaining some degree of autonomy from mainstream government, especially funders and policy makers. There was a sense that the first order of business at hand is always meeting the immediate need to keep their doors open. Group B interviewees described some practices aimed to be useful to the organizations in mediating and assisting them in facing these challenges. All interviewees expressed the fundamental importance of having financial stability and adequate funding.

Additionally interviewees suggested concrete transformations they could imagine that would support the viability and success of these organizations. Building new, expanded and permanent facilities for these organizations is a clear recommendation that these findings offer to those interested in urban Indigenous organizations in Vancouver. From anecdotal evidence I gathered outside the scope of this study, I can add that owning facility space is a priority for some of these organizations that are unequipped to keep up with the rising costs of rental market real estate in Vancouver's core, a location infamous for recent unaffordability that marginalizes low-income and homeless residents. The hiring practices suggested most strongly by one Group B interviewee, while not necessarily a model to self-determination, should be adopted by non-Indigenous businesses, governments and organizations.

Several interviewees emphasized the challenges of short-term and limited funding and identified two strategies that might help address these challenges. One, offering longer-term funding contracts so that staff of urban Indigenous organizations would be able to spend more time doing their most important tasks: developing and delivering quality programming, instead of filling out forms and writing reports to prove their own efficacy. Longer contracts would also better reflect the ongoing needs and capacities of urban Indigenous communities. Two, handing over decision-making authority on granting processes to Indigenous regional councils, like MVAEC (Metro Vancouver Indigenous Executive Council), would allow leaders with the most expertise to decide together how to allocate funds. These transformations would further the ideals of self-governance by placing greater decision-making responsibility in the hands of Indigenous leaders.

In undertaking this study, I endeavoured to come to terms with how non-Indigenous planners can work to ensure our cities become more socially just. This study emphasizes the importance of non-Indigenous actors. In the forward to Regan' book Unsettling the Settler Within Taiiike Alfred states,

Writing from a settler perspective primarily for other settlers the author avoids the trap that so many non-Native scholars fall into – telling Native people how we must live. Instead, she hones in on what settlers must do to fix 'the settler problem.' By this, she means that non-Natives must struggle to confront their own colonial mentality, moral indifference, and historical ignorance as part of a massive truth telling about Canada's past and present relationship with the original inhabitants of this land. (Alfred, 2010, p. x)

Conclusions from this investigation affirm that we must come to terms with how to navigate a commitment to Indigenous rights. Regan states, "we must work as non-Indigenous allies to 're-story' the dominant culture version of history" (Regan, 2010, p. 6). Many of the opinions of the non-Indigenous scholars and interviewees presented here reveal that they too take this commitment seriously. Many described how they knew they had to develop professionally and manage

their professional behaviour in light of the challenge of working in a space directed from a different epistemology, perhaps different values, and a history of mistrust and potentially disdain. This investigation's findings reveal promising potentials of planning practitioners working with urban Indigenous communities.

A unique blend of skills is necessary to attend to nuances inherent in transformative planning practice with urban Indigenous communities. The most effective professionals, it seems, must be able to maintain one eye on needed social work (health care, employment training, housing), another on aligning cultural learning, another on an exploitative history, another on funding sources and programmatic language, another on the geography of colonial and Indigenous urban land use, meanwhile balancing between advocacy and supportive roles in a professional commitment to self-determination. Some of the planners in this study described a lack of understanding of how the rights of Indigenous urban residents hold potential to impact their work. In the short term, using a pragmatic rationale for self-determination may more easily engage non-Indigenous planners in conversations about urban Indigenous governance. For example, making the case for self-determination in terms of addressing the social determinants of health may invite a wider range of planners to use their professional capacities to support urban Indigenous organizations and communities. However, more conversations about Indigenous rights in the city are needed so that Canadian cities may better reflect all urban residents in the long term.

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